7 The End of German Colonial Rule: Repatriation

Introduction

The signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 marked the end of the hostilities between Germany and the Allies but logistically there was much to be done. Indeed, November 1918 does not mark the beginning or the end of the repatriation story, to which our attention now turns.

Repatriation had in fact occurred during the conflict and was not something that had to be developed from scratch after the ceasefire. As Jean-Jacques Becker noted, ‘[D]iplomacy never ceased to matter during the First World War’, and there were frequent attempts, either through the Red Cross or neutral governments such as Sweden, to get the belligerent powers together to discuss repatriation. Lord Newton, as head of the Prisoner of War Department, spent a considerable amount of time abroad at repatriation meetings. However, the changing nature of this diplomacy during the conflict meant that negotiations over repatriation were long, drawn out, and frequently came to nothing. This chapter will sketch out the process of repatriation during the war and the post-Armistice period. It also looks at how access to the extra-European world became more restricted for Germans and other ‘enemy aliens’ into the 1920s as well as at ideas of colonial irredentism in interwar Germany. The term enemy aliens was enscripted in British law in 1905 in reference to control of immigration.\footnote{\textsuperscript{1} Jean Jacques Becker, ‘War Aims and Neutrality’, in Horne, \textit{A Companion to World War I}, p. 213.} It became the preferred term to use when referring to Germans and Austrians; the term foreigner was too broad, and something more specific but not explicitly referencing the Central Powers needed to be applied.\footnote{\textsuperscript{2} John Horne, ‘Introduction’, in Anne-Marie Pathé and Fabien Theofilakis (eds.), \textit{La captivité de guerre au XXe siècle: Des archives, des histoires, des mémoires} (Armand-Colin, Paris, 2012), pp. 21–31, p. 25.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{3} TNA, CO323/809, 44829, War Cabinet memorandum, August 1919, ‘Exclusion of Germans from British Colonies and Protectorates’, 27 June 1919. For in-depth discussion on enemy aliens in Britain see Bird, \textit{Control of Enemy Aliens in Great Britain}.}
Of course, German prisoners of war and civilian internees from the extra-European theatre of the war made up only a small percentage of the overall number of prisoners to be repatriated. Reinhard Nachtigal estimated a number of around 1.5 million prisoners that had to be sent home from the Western Front, with close to 740,000 Germans captured by the Allies. The victorious Allies were naturally keen to secure the return of their 770,000 or so soldiers first before turning their attention to sending home prisoners from the Central Powers. Nachtigal also gives a figure of 300,000 prisoners of war in the Near East, the African Colonies, and Asia. The majority of these were Ottoman prisoners held in French or British hands. This book began by stating a number of around 25,000 Germans living in the Reich colonies before the war, with an estimated 20,000 having spent time in Allied captivity. However, the fluid and sometimes temporary nature of captivity, coupled with various wartime repatriations, makes it difficult to say with certainty how many of these people were left in captivity at the end of the war. The cross-border internment of civilians from German South-West Africa in South Africa, for example, and the various attempts to repatriate them, either back to German South-West Africa, to Germany or by shipping of prisoners to Australia, complicates the tracking of these prisoners. If one includes those prisoners taken from Tsingtao, whose number stayed constant during the war, then one can hazard an estimate of 15,000 prisoners from the former Reich colonies still in captivity globally at the Armistice.

The repatriation process was ongoing and it was the constant desire of the British War, Foreign, and Colonial offices from very early in the war that all extra-European German prisoners should be returned 'home', leaving room for the British to expand their influence and secure their new and old colonies. Most of the civilian prisoners from Togo and Cameroon were sent back to Germany in early 1915. However, policy changed that year and repatriation became much more problematic. Disagreements between Britain and Germany over exchanges of civilians, invalids, and men above military age meant that many people who otherwise would

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5 Ibid., p. 172. The ICRC estimated that in September 1917 there were 110,000 prisoners of war in Britain and the British Empire; they did not provide figures for civilian internees. ICRC, C G1 A 09–10, Note sur la situation actuelle des prisonniers dans les différents pays, Geneva, September 1917.
6 The Foreign Office gave a figure of 11,000 civilians in captivity in British hands outside Britain in the summer of 1918. TNA, FO 383/416, 198294, 29 June 1918, memorandum. This figure seems to be an underestimation.
7 Excluding those in Dahomey and Fernando Po.
have been sent home had to spend the war under curfew or behind barbed wire. There were questions over whether military age was to be up to forty-five or fifty-five years old. Early on in the war, the War Office voiced its reluctance to lower the age of repatriation to forty-five as Germany was short of officers.\footnote{FO 383/75, 11847, reduction in age of internees, 24 August 1915.} Prisoner policy continually evolved throughout the war and only really began to reach an established structure towards the end of 1918, with the decision to send prisoners in the British Empire to the final holding destination of Australia. However, before the escalation of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 there had been extensive repatriation, especially of civilians. The Allied blockade was not aimed at preventing prisoners from returning to Germany, but unrestricted German submarine warfare; the extra demands on shipping to bring in troops; food and raw materials from the empire and elsewhere; and the use of shipping to supply the Allies, especially France and Italy, made it more difficult to justify allotting valuable allied shipping to repatriating prisoners of war.\footnote{While the blockade became ‘total’ in March 1915 although there remained holes until a permanent committee was established in Paris in June 1916. Stevenson David, 1914–1918, p. 248.}

**Repatriation during the War**

During the war there were extensive, if not altogether successful, talks on prisoner repatriation. Offers of parole, that is, freedom to leave the camp, for captive officers were still in evidence in the colonies, and some were repatriated after giving their parole, as in the case of Eduard Haber discussed in Chapter 2. There were numerous petitions and appeals for exchanges sent to the Foreign Office or directly to some of its staff. While there were individual exchanges for consular officials and retired officers, the institution of *man-for-man exchanges* was not going to be the norm in the First World War. Edwin Williams, a released British prisoner from Ruhleben, the civilian internment camp in Berlin, claimed that one of the camp officials, a Herr von Kessler, treated prisoners badly because his son was interned in a British camp in Ceylon. Proposals to exchange von Kessler’s son with a British prisoner in Germany were rejected as, according to Horace Rumbold of the Foreign Office Prisoners Department, ‘we have absolutely set our faces against individual exchange’. Moreover, in von Kessler’s case Rumbold felt the British would be ‘bribing the father to carry out his duties in a manner in which he ought to carry them out anyhow’.\footnote{Bodleian Library Oxford (BLO), MS Rumbold Dep 19, Rumbold to Jackson, 19 October 1915.} Similarly, Dr. Walther Sulzbach, held in Ahmednagar,
appeals on his behalf from a friend in Germany for an exchange or, at least, a transfer to the more suitable climate of Britain turned down. As the India Office argued, ‘[P]ersonal convenience of the prisoner appears to be the only grounds urged for his transfer to a place of internment in England. We have refused similar applications made to us by prisoners of war at Ahmednagar and consider it undesirable to make [an] exception in this case’. ¹¹

Personal ties in Britain did not usually help one get out of internment either.¹² In one situation, Lord Newton received a request from an old family friend, Lady Courtney, that some friends of hers, Germans who were interned in the Belgian Congo, be transferred to internment in Britain. He noted in his reply that it was no wonder in view of ‘German precedings [sic] that they should object to being handed over to the Belgian government’, but they were prisoners of the Belgians and would remain so.¹³

While the Foreign Office was keen to get any British civilians, notably those in Belgium, out of German hands and repatriated, shipping restrictions caused problems when it came to exchanges. Moreover, public perception of repatriation during the war was mixed. While newspaper articles at once decried the perceived bad treatment of British people in German hands and complained of the good treatment afforded Germans in Britain, the British government was still unwilling to agree to demands for exchanges. In a war that required the total and equitable mobilisation of society, exchanges could cause problems for the public war effort as, according to Rumbold, ‘Only those who could command sufficient influence could bring about individual exchanges’. This would disadvantage those prisoners who were ‘poor and unknown people whose cases might be ever so much more deserving than those of the better classes’.¹⁴ In any event, Britain, with its greater number of civilian internees, held all the cards, although negotiations over repatriation almost always broke down over German demands for full exchange, that is, the repatriation of all civilians, as opposed to Britain’s proposed exchange quotas that would have left Britain with a surplus of prisoners. Lord Newton noted that the Admiralty Office and the War Office were against full exchanges even for civilians, as they regarded ‘every released civilian as an addition to the German Army’.¹⁵

¹¹ TNA, FO 383/77, 134067, 18 September 1915, telegram from the Government of India to the Foreign Office.
¹² The previously mentioned Baron von Tucke was an exception.
¹³ LSE, Courtney MSS 12/58. Lord Newton to Lady Courtney, 9 May 1917.
¹⁴ BLO, MS Rumbold Dep 19, Rumbold to Jackson, 19 October 1915.
¹⁵ Legh (Lord Newton), Retrospection, p. 227.
The repatriation of civilians from Cameroon and Togo fitted the ideal strategy for how the British wanted to deal with their internees. With some exceptions (interned who were handed over to the French, some missionaries who were allowed to move to the Gold Coast, or the handful of Germans who were allowed to remain in Lomé), all Germans were swiftly removed from Togo and Cameroon early in the war. The combatant prisoners and male civilians of military age were kept in Britain, mainly on the Isle of Man or at the officer camp at Lofthouse Park. Here we will look at the conditions on board transports.

On the fall of Duala, as discussed in Chapter 5, all German civilians were ordered to assemble at the hospital, ostensibly for registration, but in reality for deportation that soon followed. This was similar to the takeover of Lomé and Luderitzbucht (German South-West Africa), although civilians from Luderitzbucht were only brought as far as South Africa and then allowed to return home. In Duala, conditions on the transport SS *Obuassi* were deemed by General Dobell to be more than adequate, and he considered that complaints about the rations, treatment, and ship’s quarters were coming merely from a disaffected minority. Yet reports from the military headquarters in Sierra Leone were more in line with the German prisoners’ complaints. Major General John Frederic Daniell, commanding troops in West Africa, wrote: ‘I think, however, it is my duty to point out that the ship, *Obuassi* as she is now, is in my opinion quite unfitted to convey so many men, women and children to England at this time of year; and could not be made fit without extensive alteration’. Daniell, who was in charge of providing guards for the ship, filed this report at his own initiative and strongly recommended that, ‘if the SS *Obuassi* is to be sent out again to remove the prisoners from Sierra Leone’ she may be properly fitted out first. In such an event, it is essential that she be provided with a stock of warm clothing and great coats, as the prisoners here only have tropical clothing and the resources of the colony are inadequate to provide what is needed.

The paramount strategic objective for the British in fighting in the colonies was securing British military lines of communication and disrupting German ones. Prisoners of war were to be interned, and civilians were all

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16 One representative (preferably non-German) from each firm based in Lomé was allowed to remain to handle the winding up of their respective companies’ affairs.
17 TNA, FO 383/34, 153629, Dobell report to the Foreign Office, 14 October 1915, report dated 28 September 1915.
18 TNA, MT23/418, J. F. Daniell, Military Headquarters Sierra Leone, to Secretary of the War Office, 2 November 1914.
19 Transports from Cameroon stopped at Sierra Leone en route to England.
20 TNA, MT23/418, J. F. Daniell, Military Headquarters Sierra Leone, to Secretary of the War Office, 2 November 1914.
earmarked for repatriation to Germany. In the Cameroon campaign this was roughly how events transpired, although with some vocal complaints about the harsh way German civilians were turned out of their homes and packed on transport ships for Europe with inadequate living quarters. In India, the camps at Belgaum and Ahmednagar were to be only temporary accommodations, with the view being that all civilians would be sent back to Germany before the conflict was resolved. However, with the sinking of the Lusitania, shipping shortages due to unrestricted submarine warfare and resources being directed towards Europe, and the lengthening of the war in East Africa this policy changed. Most importantly, the British government decided on 13 May 1915, about one week after the Lusitania sinking to intern all German males of military age as ‘in existing circumstances, prima facie, all adult males of this class [German males of military age] should, for their own safety, and that of the community, be segregated and interned, or, if over military age, repatriated’.  

Prioritising shipping lines for military and naval transports meant that the Admiralty was not just restrictive on shipping; it banned all passage through the Suez Canal, especially for ships containing enemy subjects, leading to the suspension of repatriation of German prisoners from India. Britain had invested huge resources in the defence of the Suez Canal with 40,000 troops held in reserve alone to protect the lifeline of the empire. German unrestricted submarine warfare also limited British ability to repatriate prisoners. A Foreign Office response to a petition by prisoners in Malta for the release of their wives and children noted ‘the signatories should be informed that the detention of families in East Africa is wholly due to the German practice of indiscriminately sinking British and neutral ships and murdering passengers’.

A letter from the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry argued that in evacuating female prisoners the British would be ‘responsible for the lives and well-being of these passengers, the majority of whom are a better class of people, who are being forcibly repatriated in wartime and

22 TNA, FO 383/279, 50992, Admiralty to the Foreign Office, 9 March 1917. Prisoners taken to camps in Egypt did, however, pass through the Suez Canal. Josef Kraupa, Als Österreicher kriegsgefangen in Ägypten, in In Feindeshand, p. 104.
24 TNA, FO 383/430, 16356, 26 January 1918, reply to prisoners of war in Malta’s letter.
against the will of their husbands and fathers’. The Austro-Hungarians also complained about the use of third- and second-class berths for their civilian returnees. In response to the letter the British government pointed out that as German U-boats were the sole danger involved in repatriation, the Austrian government would be best advised to ask Berlin to guarantee safe passage. Horace Rumbold responded to the ‘impatient note’ by writing, ‘I am at a loss to know why “better class” people should be thought more entitled to protection from submarine attack than any other non-combatants […] the only danger to them is the one for which the Austro-Hungarian and German governments are responsible’.  

Rumbold went further to note that among the first batch of people to be repatriated were twenty prostitutes and five brothel keepers, and he questioned whether ‘these persons would be held to be included in the category of “better-class people”’.  

Britain did not intend to intern Germans in India in the long term, however, limits on, and dangers to the shipping of prisoners influenced its decision making.

More importantly, from a British Foreign Office perspective, the argument against repatriating prisoners also centred on the British population who were abroad. How would it look, commented one Foreign Office official, if they spent a great deal of resources on ensuring the safe transport of German civilians from India to the Netherlands while banning mothers and children who were in Australia from returning to the United Kingdom while the war was on? This notion was succinctly put by the same official in November 1917: ‘It is to my mind an intolerable thing, even for the sake of getting rid of these Germans out of our colonies, that we should give them safe-conduct back to their country so that they are free from the attacks of the German submarines, whilst our women and children are either obliged to remain abroad or have to face the perils of the submarine campaign […] it is not right that we should accord to our enemies facilities which we are unable to accord our own people’.  

The sinking of the *Lusitania* also signified a change in the attitude towards prisoners and internees in the Pacific. It was not only submarine warfare that brought the reality of war home to Australia and New Zealand: The sinking coincided with initial reports of the disaster at Gallipoli and the publication of the Bryce report, which highlighted

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27 TNA, ADM116/1543, Repatriation of Enemy Aliens from British Overseas Dominions, 9 November 1917, memorandum and minutes (signature illegible).
alleged German atrocities. In Australia and New Zealand, this bred a more vehement form of anti-German patriotism that not only caused logistical problems, such as the refusal of crews to man ships carrying German prisoners or internees, but also initiated calls for the mass internment of all Germans, denying those who could have independently left the countries the means to do so. This new stance created tension, for example, between the public and the New Zealand government, whose willingness to stick to the centralised rules on prisoner treatment enacted from London was seen as too lax.

Discussions over the repatriation of prisoners continued until after the end of the war but hit several problems. German protests over the treatment of its U-boat crews in 1915 and, as Heather Jones as shown, the use of forced labour were particularly thorny issues that disrupted negotiation. In repatriation discussions, German civilian internees from the East African theatre, as well as all civilian internees outside Europe were considered by the British as a separate entity from those civilians held in the British Isles. It is important to note that the Admiralty gave the delegates specific instructions not to raise the question of captured U-boat crews. According to Winston Churchill these crews should be held in detention barracks as ‘criminals’ rather than prisoners of war. Plans were enacted, although never completed, in July 1918 to have all civilian internees either in India, Hong Kong, or Singapore, sent to Australia where they were to remain under the supervision of the Australian government. However, in reality, the Dominions and the India Office always followed the Foreign Office’s guidance on prisoner treatment, leading to some protests in the local press in New Zealand and South Africa.

On 15 December 1915, Otto Gleim of the RKA sent a detailed report to General Ludendorff outlining its position on proposals to extend repatriation agreements between Germany and Britain for the exchange of women, children, and other noncombatants in Europe to the German colonies and German-occupied Europe. This was in preparation for the meetings between the two belligerents at The Hague the following summer. The report focused on each of the colonies in turn and concluded

29 Francis, To Be Truly British, p. 133.
32 TNA, ADM116/1543, telegram, Walter Long to the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, 9 January 1918.
that any proposed exchanges should only count for civilians from the territory of German East Africa. ‘Conditions have developed to the contrary where it is now only the release of women and children from German East Africa that is in question’. 33 This brought the civilians of German East Africa into a bartering game between the German and British governments with regard to exchanging them for British civilians in occupied Belgium. But why would Germany omit the chance for exchanges of civilians from its other colonies?

Gleim’s report presented the case for excluding the other colonies as follows. First, repatriation of civilians from German South-West Africa went against German interests in the colony. Although initially many German civilians had been interned in South Africa or repatriated, by 1915 with the end of the fighting in the colony most of those interned were released and allowed back to their farms and businesses. According to the terms of capitulation, almost all the civilians in German South-West Africa were not interned. The only prisoners present in the colony were the military prisoners of war at Aus and Okanjande although there were some civilian prisoners from German South-West Africa interned in Pietermaritzburg and Natal, but most including the ex-governor Theodor Seitz remained on parole in Luderitzbucht and elsewhere in the colony. It would not help the German case in potential postwar discussions over retention of colonies if there were no Germans present. This logic is also present in the argument for excluding New Guinea from any agreements. New Guinea was a similar case to German South-West Africa, the terms of capitulation being almost identical.

In Togo and Cameroon, Gleim noted, there were no German civilians present by late 1915. The English and French, according to the RKA, had ‘evacuated all German settlers ruthlessly and in violation of international law’. 34 Nonetheless, the question of repatriation was not applicable here as practically all German civilians had been repatriated and the military combatants were interned in the United Kingdom thus coming under separate exchange agreements.

In Samoa, the RKA found that all German plantations had been closed and all Germans were now in New Zealand (although, in fact quite a few Germans remained in the former colony). As with civilians from New


Guinea, and German South-West Africa, the RKA argued that civilians in internment in New Zealand were technically free to return home whenever they pleased. This argument was erroneous, and even if civilian internees in Australia and New Zealand had been free to leave their camps and return to Germany, how they were going to find and pay for transportation would have been a major problem. The RKA also added that those interned in Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand came under the exchange agreement of 1915 covering civilians held in Britain at the outset of the war, as they were being held on British soil.  

This was argued by former governor Erich Schultz in relation to his internment and handling in New Zealand. As Britain oversaw a centralised prison camp system and New Zealand had no direct relations with Germany, Schultz claimed that he was essentially in prison on British territory and therefore entitled to the same treatment as those prisoners in Britain. Unfortunately for Schultz, the British disagreed and, due to a lack of exchange agreements, ensured that he stayed interned until the end of the war.  

As the RKA believed that civilians from German South-West Africa, New Guinea, and Samoa were technically free to go home whenever they wanted (although the reality was quite different) and because those from Togo and Cameroon were already in Germany it only remained for the German East Africans to be dealt with. The RKA report urged General Ludendorff (perhaps showing the extent to which Ludendorff was the war leader at this point) to argue that the same conditions, that is, freedom to return to Germany, be given to civilians from German East Africa. This would mean that there would be no exchange, rather just a release of German civilian internees in German East Africa, while Germany held onto its British civilians in Belgium and other occupied territory. The RKA did recognise the difficulty in the fact that war was still being waged in German East Africa, but attempted to argue that the same rules of exchange should apply to all German colonies. In the conclusion of their report, they went as far as to argue that reprisals would be used to force Britain to release prisoners in German East Africa: ‘[A]s far as the unlawful internment of German women and children in East Africa is concerned it is not comparable to the internment of civilians in Belgium, but if necessary reprisals will be enacted to bring the British into line with the principles of international law and humane treatment’.  

35 Ibid.  
36 BA, R1001/2629, Schultz to the Swiss Consul, 20 April 1919.  
37 ‘Der Fall der widerrechtlich gefangen gehaltenen Frauen, Kinder pp. In Deutsch-Ostafrika wegen der völligen Verschiedenheit der Verhältnisse mit der Zurückhaltung der feindlichen Untertanen in Belgien pp. nicht in Zusammenhang gebracht werden darf, vielmehr gegebenfalls durch Vergeltungsmaßregeln eine den Grundsätzen der
appears from this report that the RKA wished to disconnect the colonies from the war in Europe while the British wanted to use internees from German East Africa to gain concessions for British civilians in Belgium. This had negative consequences for German civilians in internment in places such as Belgaum, Entebbe, and Blantyre as the breakdown in exchange negotiations not only prolonged civilian internment but also led the British to look to other parts of its empire to send their prisoners. The planned destination for prisoners was to be Australia, where the prisoners’ presence was not seen as a threat to internal security, unlike in the other colonies.

**Australia as the Ultimate Destination**

Internment in Australia, as outlined in Gerhard Fischer’s comprehensive study on the subject, began with the outbreak of the war. Germans living in Australia were almost immediately rounded up and sent to civilian camps, the largest being Liverpool in New South Wales. As highlighted in earlier chapters, these internees were then joined by Germans from New Guinea. While not all Germans in New Guinea were evacuated to Australia at the beginning of the war, the vast majority were. As the war dragged on, more New Guinea Germans were brought to the Australian mainland. Long after the Armistice, in 1923, the Australian government removed the last of the German settlers from New Guinea. Fear of the influence of Sinn Féin and Bolshevism among soldiers in Australia forced the government of Australia to seek outlets for those returning from the battlefields of Europe. This was in part influenced by the free passage scheme for British ex-servicemen and -women that was in operation between 1919 and 1922. As Kent Fedorowich argues, although the war had halted imperial migration from Britain, it subsequently presented imperial policy makers with a chance to reinvigorate the British Empire. This emigration was one of the reasons Fedorowich puts forward for the lack of extremism in British politics during the inter-war years. Disgruntled servicemen would find their wanderlust after the...

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Völkerrechts und der Menschlichkeit entsprechende Behandlung der Frauen und Kinder durch die Engländ er erreicht werden muß’. BA, R1001/877, Staatsekretär des Reichskolonialamt to Ludendorff, 15 December 1915.

38 Dr. Braunert, the accused ring leader in ‘the Cox Affair’, and recovered from his attempt to take his life, became an official camp doctor, and visited patients across all the camps in Australia.


40 Ibid., p. 25.
experience of the battlefields in France satisfied in forging a living in a new land.\textsuperscript{41} Fears of the economic hardship caused by the war and the risk to public safety posed by ex-servicemen were very real. The demobilisation of six million people coincided with the scaling down of the war economy. This fear of shortage manifested itself, for example, in race riots in British seaports when white working class targeted ethnic groups including African and South-Asian workers and their property.\textsuperscript{42} These factors pointed more towards the exclusion of former German colonial settlers from the new Mandates.

By 1918, Australia was to be the ultimate destination for all remaining colonial German civilian internees and prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{43} The Singapore mutiny in 1915 seemed to confirm British fears of the negative influence that German prisoners could have on a population whose loyalty was uncertain. However, retrospective investigations into the mutiny showed that, while some German prisoners took advantage of the unrest to escape, they were far from being the main instigators. Rebellion in Singapore was influenced more by the unrest of mainly Muslim Indian soldiers who were under the misguided impression that German prisoners of war would immediately join them once they were freed from their camps. Although the role of Germans as a fifth column menace was overplayed, the Colonial Office decided it would be wise to have all the prisoners (especially those from German East Africa) sent to Australia. These plans, mainly drawn up by the Colonial Office, were never fully realised before the end of the war. Australia was not the ideal choice but the alternatives of repatriation or internment in South Africa (another unpopular option) were closed and there was no question of the internees being transferred to the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{44} The Singapore German prisoners, mainly from the \textit{Emden}, were sent to New South Wales, where they remained for the rest of the war in officers' camps.\textsuperscript{45} In December 1918, a public meeting in Singapore resolved to petition the British government ‘that for the safeguarding of the decencies of life and preserving good order and government, no German subject should for at least ten years after the declaration of peace be allowed to land, reside or trade within the Colony of the Straits Settlements or the Federated Malay States’.\textsuperscript{46} A similar petition was signed at a mass meeting at Natal, South

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 27.
\textsuperscript{42} Jenkinson, \textit{Black 1919}, p. 217.
\textsuperscript{43} ADM116/1543, War Office Prisoners of War Department Memorandum and Minutes, 18 March 1918.
\textsuperscript{44} TNA, ADM116/1543, telegram, Long to the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, 9 January 1918.
\textsuperscript{45} TNA, FO 383/436, 109002, Statement of H. Hannke, 21 July 1918.
\textsuperscript{46} IWM, RP/1, \textit{Singapore 1918}. 
Africa, in January 1919, where a motion was passed that ‘for the peace of the world and for the safety of the British Empire and the welfare of the native races, none of Germany’s former colonial possessions should be restored to her and that all German and other enemy residents therein should be repatriated’. Similar meetings with similar resolutions were held in Johannesburg, Richmond, and Port St. Johns among other South African towns.  

After receiving complaints from civilian internees who were housed on Stone Cutter’s Island in Hong Kong, the Foreign Office decided that it would be best also to send these prisoners to Australia. Sending prisoners to Australia would serve two purposes: Firstly, Australia was due to its large white population seen as somewhere Europeans could live healthy lives, therefore removing any German grounds for complaints about its climate conditions. Secondly, as Fischer argued, it provided a good opportunity for Britain to shore up colonial holdings and remove any German commercial competition from the colonies. Internment in Australia of Germans who were living there during the war and of later arrivals contributed to the upholding of the ideological legitimation for Australia fighting in Europe and created a concrete experience of war on the home front. However, the prisoners from Hong Kong likened their experience of being shipped to Australia to that of eighteenth-century convicts. ‘The notion of “transportation” became a powerful means to interpret their experience in Australia’.  

Internment in Neutral Countries and Postwar Repatriation

There were, however, complicated talks between the powers during the war over the issue of possible internment in neutral countries. Although, as we have seen, the former Governor Schultz pressured the British government for a transfer to Fiji, he was denied. The main countries designated for neutral internment were the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The role that the International Committee of the Red Cross played in the treatment of prisoners has already been discussed. In line with its work in inspecting camps and helping prisoners get in touch with family and friends, it lobbied for exchange agreements. The most notable such agreement was that reached at The Hague in July 1917 between Britain

47 TNA, FO 383/494, 3751, Resolution Regarding the Solution of the German Colonies, 22 March 1919. Meeting held 24 January 1919..
48 Fischer, Enemy Aliens, p. 146
49 Ibid., p. 63.
50 Ibid., p. 144.
and Germany to recognise ‘barbed wire disease’ and civilian and military prisoners’ eligibility for internment in camps in neutral Switzerland.\textsuperscript{51} However, the first bilateral exchanges of prisoners were arranged in 1917 through efforts made by the Dutch and Swiss governments and not the ICRC. It was not a smooth process and there were never any conclusive agreements regarding who qualified for internment in neutral countries.

In March 1918, the debate on repatriation was still unresolved but arguments in favour were prevailing, especially once a proposed exchange had been worked out with Germany for British subjects in Belgium and France to be swapped for German East Africans. The problem remained that ‘if the arrangement is adopted the Colonial Office will be subjected to very great pressure to remove the ban which at present exists against British women and children crossing dangerous waters’.\textsuperscript{52} Ship space was limited and reserving space for German civilians would naturally prevent British women and children taking spaces should they be allowed to travel. In addition, there was a natural reluctance to expose British nationals to the dangers of sea travel during the U-boat campaign. Of secondary concern was that German civilians would gain an insight into the workings of the convoy system, but such information was ‘no doubt obtained from crews of neutral ships which join with the convoy’.\textsuperscript{53}

There was also the question of what ships to use. The Germans in negotiations were willing to foot the bill for chartering neutral Dutch vessels for the purpose, an offer that was refused on prestige grounds and connected to the travel ban on British subjects. There was also a problem with getting British crews. Australian crews had almost mutinied in Perth, and refused to board ships containing German civilians for repatriation. A group of thirteen German Catholic priests had to be removed from a ship bound for England after the crew refused to work. The priests were allowed to stay at a Catholic institution in Sydney until passage could be secured for them through the United States.\textsuperscript{54} While the case of the Australian crews did not completely prevent repatriation, it did highlight a hostile public mood.

\textsuperscript{51} The first conference was held at The Hague in June 1917, ICRC, C G1 A 09–08 and the second in Geneva in the following September, ICRC, C G1 A 09–10.
\textsuperscript{52} TNA, ADM116/1543, 18 March 1918, Prisoners of War Department 34091, Memorandum and Minutes.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} BA, R67/825, Liverpool, New South Wales, U.S. Consul report, 24 September 1916. A similar case occurred with the repatriation of missionaries from Cameroon when the crew of the SS \textit{Tanius} refused to sail with the German priests. The solution there was to put the missionaries on Portuguese ships. TNA, FO 383/179, 1777396, Crew of SS \textit{Tanius}, 7 September 1916 and ibid., 88082, Crew of SS \textit{Tanius}, 9 May 1916.
As Heather Jones argued, in the case of German prisoners in France, even after the war the image of the German prisoner remained an inherently dangerous figure – ‘a potential perpetrator of violence’. In a different context, prisoners from the colonies were seen as an inherent destabilising factor in the re-establishment of British authority overseas. The idea that ‘enemy aliens’ in India or the new Mandates would damage the prestige held by the British among indigenous populations through the mixed message of their return after having been thrown out of the colonies or through their potential to foment revolt themselves was widely held in the Colonial and Foreign offices.

The absence of the controlling influence of colonial settlers, especially of missionaries certainly worried the British, but not to the extent that they retained German missionaries in the former German colonies. The withdrawal of the Basel Missions from West Africa placed a large part of the work in the hands of African pastors and teachers and weakened the influence of orthodox Christianity. After the expulsion of German missionaries in East Africa, it was necessary to quickly replace them with trusted Allied ones to ‘spike the potential for false prophets’ and to introduce benevolent agencies to disprove German propaganda that claimed the British were merely ‘malicious militants’. Any breakdown in Christian practices through the expulsion of missionaries would have dire consequences according to Bishop Neville of Zanzibar: ‘[W]ithdraw the missionaries and you withdraw the champions of order, law and civilisation, you undo the good work of half a century, and return the native to his primitive barbarism’. In Cameroon, there were reversions to ‘witchcraft’ and other tribal practices. In German East Africa, the Holy Ghost apparently appeared to one boy after the evacuation of German missionaries. He began to speak in tongues, including German, and ran about ‘without any sort of clothing’. More worrying for the colonial administration, the movement sparked by this boy rapidly ‘went downhill to the demonic’.

55 Jones, Violence Against Prisoners, p. 257.
58 TNA, FO 383/289, 141406, Bishop Neville to Foreign Office, 30 December 1917. In the late 1950s, one of the contributing factors to the challenge presented to colonial administration in Kenya was the radicalisation of Kikuyu ‘oathing practices’. Caroline Elkins, Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya (Owl Books, New York, 2005), p. 25.
60 Wright, German Missions in Tanganyika, p. 141.
The racially prejudiced attitude towards indigenous converts to Christianity was bluntly summed up in a report on German East Africa in 1916: Indigenous converts were ‘cunning and deceitful to a degree seldom realised […] but should their white masters be removed they become harmless and a danger to themselves for it is only as a carrier they excel and not as a collector of information’.  

However, to establish stability and control in the newly taken-over colonies it was essential to win the indigenous population over to the British side while maintaining colonial social structures. Announcements were made to the indigenous populations to explain the change in administration. For example, in Rabaul, New Guinea, after the Australian takeover of the colony, a ‘Proclamation to the Natives’ was read out in Pidgin English explaining that there would be a police force made of Melanesians before finally asking them to ‘give three good feller cheers belonga new feller master. No more God save um Kaiser. God save um king’.  

It is difficult to gauge the reaction to these type of documents, but the British Australian newspaper noted that the ‘three cheers were given with surprising vigour’.  

In January 1919, the British administrator of German East Africa, H. A. Byatt, requested the Colonial Office to retrieve the skull of Sultan Mkwawa from the Berlin Museum as ‘this action would give the widest satisfaction to the Wahehe tribe and afford tangible proof in the eyes of the natives that German power has been completely broken’. The skull was deemed so important that it was included in Article 246 of the Versailles Treaty, which demanded its return within six months of signing the treaty. However, the skull could not be located until 1953. What impact the failure to retrieve the skull had on Wahehe loyalty is unknown. Consolidating power in the former German colonies after the war was important for the British and to do this it was necessary to show that Germany had been defeated and would not be returning to reclaim its colonies. 

At the Paris peace conference, there remained some faint hopes that the Allies would allow Germany to retain its former possessions. The Beti chiefs from Cameroon, led by Karl Atangana, even lobbied King Alfonso XIII of Spain for support for this idea. However, and despite the King’s

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63 BA, R1001/2611, The British Australian, 19 November 1914.
64 TNA, FO608/215/27, ‘Recovery from Germany of the Skull of the Late Sultan Mkwawa’, 1 January 1919.
66 Quinn, In Search of Salt, p. 76.
delusions of grandeur, Alfonso was not a decision maker at Paris and none of the victorious powers were keen to give up possessions they had won through bloodshed. The only positive note for Germany was that German civilians in German South-West Africa remained relatively unmolested. Japan’s insistence at the Paris Peace Conference on retaining Tsingtao and the Kiaochow Concession caused serious problems, but secret Allied agreements made during the war to give Japan control of the area had to be honoured. Japan retained control of most of the Shandong peninsula, eventually ceding control of it not to Germany but to China. German East Africa was under the control of the British, who had bargained with the French and allowed Paris to control the former German West African colonies; this status quo was effectively approved by the Paris Peace Conference. New Guinea and Samoa were to be kept out of German hands and any non-Australian or non-New Zealander emigration to these colonies was controlled. For policy makers, it was clear that German settlers could not be allowed to return to their plantations but would be shipped to Germany.

After the Armistice, most extra-European prisoners returned to Germany through Rotterdam with a stop in Britain. Dealing with the disembarkation of prisoners in the Netherlands caused some problems between the Dutch and British governments. The Netherlands had remained neutral throughout the war, and indeed many of the ships that transported German prisoners home were neutral Dutch vessels. Tensions had arisen between Britain and the Netherlands (as well as with many other neutral countries) over British naval arrests of German citizens on board Dutch vessels. On arrival at Rotterdam each returning German prisoner and his/her possessions were searched by British naval officials. In addition, complaints were made against the ship’s captain, a Captain Crossman, who apparently would not allow drinking water on the boat, struck civilians in the face, and allegedly forced three women to strip naked for corporal examinations. The Dutch objected to these searches, as it was a contravention of the Netherlands’s status as a sovereign power. Under pressure from the Dutch government, Britain ceased this search policy, entrusting it to the Dutch, but it meant that more rigorous searches of prisoners were conducted in British ports. This did not soothe the anger of ships’ captains who claimed that after each trip to the Netherlands they had to replace ship cutlery and bedding that were stolen by their passengers.

68 TNA, FO 383/501, 4989, Report by Ruoff (Secretary of the Committee of Repatriation), Rotterdam, 5 February 1919, received 9 May 1919.
69 TNA, FO 383/501, 5065, report of ill-treatment of Germans on repatriation transport ships, 13 May 1919. It was decided to search the ships in Falmouth before leaving for the Netherlands. This did not stop the pilfering from the ships, however.
There was tension during the war between the British and the Dutch over the Royal Navy's persistent stopping and searching of Dutch vessels at sea. These searches were conducted not just on Dutch ships, but also on other neutral vessels and resulted in the arrest of a statistically insignificant number of Germans. The navy was successful in finding military supplies onboard Spanish ships intended for the German Schutzruppe on Fernando Po. The Netherlands were never implicated in the supply of aid to the enemy overseas, although there was some suspicion about the Dutch East Indies. Nevertheless, Dutch ships were often stopped at sea. The searching of German returnees in Dutch ports by the British navy was one affront to Dutch neutrality that was not allowed to stand, and the navy had to back down.

Repatriation at the end of the war was a complicated issue. Who exactly was going to pay for the transportation? Would the German government have to pay, or in the interests of getting the prisoners back to Germany quickly and thus lessening the burden of their maintenance would the British cover the travel costs? There was also the issue of who was to ship them. The German government from a prestige point of view would have liked to bear the costs and arrange the shipping. Britain, with similar prestige concerns, decided early in 1918 that Germany would not be allowed to charter ships and that the British government would deal with all the costs and bill Germany later. Thus, the ships were mainly hired from British or neutral shipping companies, although some vessels of the German Woermann line were used as in one case in South Africa where British crews refused to take German passengers.

As during the war, the swift removal of the Germans from the colonies was the most desirable outcome. However, in France, prisoners of war had become part of the local economy. Immediately following the Armistice, the French enlarged their prisoner of war labour company system. The prisoners, far from being set free, were viewed not only as dangerous enemies but also as a vital labour source to be employed in the reconstruction of war-damaged French towns. In different circumstances, while the postwar German government did not relish the idea of one million potential revolutionaries being held in the country, German-held Russian prisoners found their release delayed through

70 TNA, ADM1/8457/119, Director of Intelligence Division to Captain Fuller, 31 July 1916.
71 TNA, FO 383/430, 122, interdepartmental meeting on repatriation, 1 January 1918. Mr. Green, of the Colonial Office suggested as early as January 1918 that Germany should not be allowed to charter ships, on prestige grounds.
72 TNA, FO 383/539, 3750, 22 March 1919. Telegram, Buxton to the Colonial Office, dated 5 March 1919.
73 Jones, Violence Against Prisoners, p. 260.
an Allied scheme to deny the Bolsheviks any potential new recruits.  
In contrast, with the exception of Canada, where a large numbers of civilian internees were engaged in agriculture, the British Dominions wished to be rid of their mainly civilian internee camp populations. There was still a public balancing act to be played, of course. It would not have looked very good from the point of view of Australia, for example, if it returned all its German prisoners first, before receiving its own Australian prisoners of war back from Germany. Furthermore, the French refusal to send prisoners back at the Armistice also meant that the British and Americans, in the interests of keeping a united front delayed their repatriation schemes but eventually both broke ranks and the British repatriation of its German prisoners of war began in earnest in September 1919.  
Albert Achilles’s memoirs provide a good account of how wartime and postwar repatriation arrangements functioned on the ground. He noted, ‘We were transported as prisoners on a German ship to Europe because the British could not stand the idea of Germany having colonies’. Achilles’s account shows that the transfer of prisoners from camp to camp did not end with the war. Repatriation from remote areas of the globe necessitated that prisoners be transferred in stages. Achilles wrote that he was first moved from Ahmednagar (where he had spent the majority of his time in captivity) to a holding camp nearer the port (Ramandrog). The lack of shipping meant he spent a further six weeks in this holding camp, before being sent back to Ahmednagar in December 1919 as the ships in Bombay were not forthcoming. He was eventually transferred to Port Said, Egypt, in mid-January 1920. As he was suffering from what he claimed was Spanish flu, Achilles and the many others who were afflicted were detained in Port Said for fear of infecting other ship passengers. This essentially meant further internment. After four months in Port Said, in April 1920, a ship was eventually found to take him and his fellow inmates home. After a further stopover in Gibraltar, they arrived in Brunsbüttel on 20 April 1920. They arrived at the quay to a large crowd waiting for them while the band struck up a song about a black child who had been kidnapped while playing on the beach, symbolising for Achilles how the

75 Jones, Violence Against Prisoners, p. 301.
76 ‘Auf einem deutschen Schiff wurden wir als Gefangenen nach Europa transportiert, nur weil uns die Engländer unsere Kolonien nicht gönnnten’. Achilles, Erinnerungen aus meiner Kriegsgefangenschaft, p. 81.
77 Ibid., p. 93.
German colonies were lost. The Germany the prisoners came back to was different from the one of their imagination over the long years of living abroad and then being interned, and the return home was bittersweet.

**Postwar and Enemy Alien Legislation**

As previously noted, the German government was interested in getting stories of ill-treatment of German civilians by black troops through its questionnaires for returnees on their experience of war. These questionnaires also dealt with property rights. Alongside the immediate military necessity of securing the takeover of the colonies, the acquisition of German property was an essential part of the British long-term strategy. The German government was naturally keen to know about how the British dealt with German property, and with questions directly addressing the destruction, robbery, and current uses of company and private property.  

Complaints were written to the British about the loss of income from plantations, the forced evacuation from homes, and the takeover of German property by British forces. Little was done after the war, however, to return any of these assets to their original owners. This was not only the case for the Germans from Togo and Cameroon but also for all the former German colonies and the British Empire. In the interwar period the DKG received many petitions from former German settlers to investigate their property claims. One unsuccessful proposal to secure the return of property was to set up a company through contacts in America that would buy back German property in the colonies. It was hoped that the Americans would be enticed to collude with promises of German-owned plantations contributing to the breakup of the British cotton monopoly. Property claims put the DKG in a difficult position. It had no real political power and could only direct claimants to contact the British, Australian, or relevant Mandate authorities.

In line with the wartime strategy of securing the German colonies through the expulsion of the German population, British policy makers hoped to devise a way to keep ‘enemy aliens’ from returning. The draft of the convention that was to replace the Berlin Act 1884–1885 allowed for the citizens of any power to settle in the colonies. The Colonial and War offices were, however, anxious to prevent Germans and Austrians from returning, especially to either British East Africa or mandated German East Africa. In the initial stages after 11 November 1918, the War Cabinet...

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78 BA, R1001/3946 Fragebogen (questionnaire for returning Germans), 1915, p. 298.
79 BA, R8023/864, Seitz to Foreign Minister Stresemann, 12 May 1927.
encouraged all the governments of Dominions and Protectorates to legislate prohibiting all Germans from entering, residing, and trading locally for a period of five years after the war. The consequences of the return of Germans to the colonies ‘could only be grave internal disorder and possibly bloodshed’. As well as the strong local feeling against the readmission of Germans to the colonies, there was the fear of Germans fomenting disloyalty to Britain and of the ‘disastrous effect on the native mind of the return of the German whom he has seen ignominiously removed’. Perhaps the single most important consideration alluded to in the Colonial Office memorandum to the War Cabinet was the effect of the return of Germans to the colonies on the development of British business. It was paramount, according to the Colonial Office, to exclude Germans and Austrians from colonies and Mandates, due to the ‘importance of restoring our over-sea trade without being hampered by the unfair competition of our late enemies’.

While the Treaty of Versailles was unclear on the restriction of movement in British colonies, Protectorates and Dominions, it was clear about the Mandates: ‘The Government exercising authority over such territories [the Mandates] may make such provisions as it thinks fit with reference to the repatriation from them of German nationals and to the conditions upon which German subjects of European origin shall, or shall not, be allowed to reside, hold property, trade or exercise a profession in them’. This gave the British and other Mandate powers a free hand to decide who to allow into the newly defined territories. Despite this, the secretary of state for the colonies, Walter Long, noted that once Germany joined the League of Nations it would be very difficult to maintain a policy of exclusion. The proposed solution was the passing of legislation enabling local governments (in Mandate cases, Britain and the Dominions) to keep Germans out but without laying down as a principle that all Germans must be excluded. As usual in these cases, the Dominions were expected to comply, and at the time of the memorandum Canada had already, through an Order in Council, enacted exclusionary legislation.

New Zealand too was ahead of the secretary of state in this regard. In December 1918, the Wellington government brought in the War Legislation and Statute Law Amendment Bill, which required persons

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80 TNA, CO323/809, 44829, War Cabinet memorandum, August 1919.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
84 TNA, CO323/809, 44829, War Cabinet memorandum, August 1919.
85 Ibid.
of ‘enemy origin’ to apply for and be granted a licence before purchasing land in New Zealand. The bill also allowed for land that had been purchased legally by enemy aliens to be taken back by the state for public purposes.\footnote{Francis,\emph{ To Be Truly British}, p. 257.} The bill was hotly debated, but was passed with only one amendment, that it did not apply to those born in New Zealand. The land seized from the German settlers was, as elsewhere, passed on to returning servicemen.

In New Zealand, the Revocation of Naturalisation Act affected many of the settlers on Samoa, who had through the close links between the islands become naturalised British citizens.\footnote{The act came into force from September 1917.} The most prominent case was of Karl Hanssen, which we have looked at in earlier chapters. Hanssen, who had been allowed to continue working for the Deutsche Handels und Plantagen Gesellschaft until his diaries had been intercepted by the censor, also had his naturalisation revoked after the war. He was, however, one of the few lucky ones to successfully challenge the act and in 1923 had his New Zealand naturalisation restored.\footnote{Francis,\emph{ To Be Truly British}, p. 253.}

Hanssen was fortunate. However, the DKG archives document many other stories of those who were not so lucky. For those in South-West Africa, the war affected them economically. Although the majority of civilians here had not been interned during the war and did not face repatriation, there were difficulties for those who had been bankrupted by the conflict in getting their family members back to South-West Africa. Although most of the German civilian population in South-West Africa were not interned during the conflict, the colony was affected by the hardships of war. Initial plans to transfer German civilians from German East Africa to South-West African farmsteads were abandoned due to protests from the farmers about lack of funds. The loss of links to Germany in the postwar era exacerbated some of these hardships. After the Versailles Treaty negotiations and the establishment of the South African Mandate over South-West Africa, the South African government felt it had the opportunity to deport the remaining German civil servants who under the terms of the surrender treaty had been able to remain in the country as well as ‘characters of whom the government desires to be rid, such as undesirable women, agitators and elements generally hostile to the Union Government’.\footnote{TNA, FO 383/539, 5018, protest against repatriation from German South-West Africa, 10 May 1919. Harry Lambert’s comments, 9 May 1919.}

Similar attitudes were also visible in other parts of the empire when the war ended. Anti-German sentiment did not disappear in Australia with
the end of the conflict, as the treatment of internees, shows. Although the Fijian government protested, Germans from Fiji were eventually allowed to return to their prewar homes. Fiji was a crown colony and not a prewar German possession. German colonial internees in Australia, the bulk of whom made up the population of Holdsworthy camp were repatriated to Germany.  

In comparison with Samoa and New Zealand, the commercial links between New Guinea and Australia were weaker and there were few Germans from New Guinea who had claims to Australian naturalisation. With the takeover of New Guinea by Australia and new legislation (although complicated by New Guinea’s Mandate status), it was difficult for Germans to return to their plantations and even to the South Pacific at all.

Like New Zealand, the Australians brought in legislation to restrict the admission of aliens after the war. The Aliens Committee, composed of representatives of the departments of Defence, Home, and Territory, Trade and Customs and the attorney-general, was entrusted with formulating cabinet policy. It dealt with four different areas: repatriation of aliens, possible restrictions on the admission of aliens after the war, changes in naturalisation laws, and policy to be adopted concerning alien property. The committee consulted closely with Britain, as it stated a desire to achieve conformity so that its actions would best coincide with any similar policies that Britain was planning to enact domestically.

It was not until 1931 that anti-German prejudice began to abate in Australia and New Zealand. In an editorial that year in the Sydney Morning Herald, Tom Inglis Moore, an Australian professor at the University of the Philippines, was encouraged by the dissolution of anti-German prejudice, which he argued was a main factor preventing efficient administration of New Guinea. The terms of the Mandate he argued had harmed the White Australia policy. To make up for the lack of immigrants from Germany and Austria, Australia had to rely on importing nonwhite workers such as the Chinese. German civilians were once again interned in the Second World War in Australia and New Zealand, but as Andrew Francis argues, anti-German sentiment was never as intense as it was during the First World War.

The establishment of enemy alien legislation in Britain and the Dominions was designed to prevent Germans from resettling and claiming property in the British Empire, although it was complicated by the

90 Fischer, Enemy Aliens, p. 301.
91 Ibid., p. 285.
92 BA, R8023/666, Sydney Morning Herald, 15 April 1931.
93 Francis, To Be Truly British, pp. 251–261.
Mandate systems that were put in place at Versailles. However, the British Foreign Office was confident that by the time Germany became eligible to join the League of Nations, Britain would have consolidated its hold over the Mandates making a potential handover of control to the German government impossible. Conversely, the German government supported the Mandate system, in the short term at least, as a means to facilitate its return to colonial activity that would be prevented by any attempt by the Allies to enact a de jure annexation of mandated territory.  

The return to Germany was often a difficult one for the former prisoners of war and internees. Ludwig Deppe on his return from German East Africa in 1919 noted, ‘We found our Heimat in a terrible state, much more terrible than our worst fears’. Achilles noted a telling example of how the situation in Germany had changed since the outbreak of war when a representative from the Auswärtiges Amt requested that the returning prisoners hand over the jackets they had received from the British or pay for them. Their reply was to laugh in the representative’s face highlighting both the poverty of postwar Germany and the lack of respect the returning prisoners had for the new German authorities.  

German colonial settlers had maintained strong links with Germany before the war and even in their long years of internment they overwhelmingly remained loyal to their nation. This did not mean, however, that they relished the thought of being sent back to Germany. The most noted example is that of German prisoners who were interned in Japan during the war. On their return to Germany in 1920 many of them found that the Germany of their memories did not correspond to the reality. Some of these former prisoners were discouraged from returning to Germany and sought employment elsewhere, such as Capitan Maurer at Bando who was encouraged by his contacts in Germany to move to Java rather than return home. A large number found a way to remain in Japan after the war and others after a few years returned to the land of their captors and became successful businessmen. This was not an option for prisoners captured in other German colonies, and

96 Achilles, *Erinnerungen aus meiner Kriegsgefangenschaft*, p. 94.  
the transition to life in Weimar Germany was often difficult. Indeed, it must be noted that it was not just former colonial German settlers who found it difficult to adapt to the postwar world. The 1920s in Europe, as Bruno Cabanes has shown, were marked by the disruption of collective identities, new borders resulting from the breakup of empires and revolutions, and the transition of society from war to peace. Ludwig Deppe on his return from East Africa, for example, was horrified at the prospect of suffrage for women.

The German government immediately protested the loss of the German colonies at the peace conference but with the Allies in control of and established in all Germany’s overseas territories there was no question of Germany regaining its colonies. Calls for a return of the German colonies after the war did not begin in earnest until the mid-1920s and Germany’s entry into the League of Nations. During Germany’s years of membership, it would defend its colonial claims and record; support German participation in cultural and scientific efforts in the colonial arena; and take advantage of ‘open door’ requirements while battling any moves on part of the mandatory powers to bind the Mandates more closely to their colonial empires. This period also saw a rise of irredentist colonial organisations such as the DKG, which grew to 250 branches and 30,000 members. The memory of the wartime experience and the reality of Weimar Germany led many former German colonial settlers to reshape their idea of Deutschtum and realign their patriotic allegiances. In Germany, the Dolchstoßlegende (stab in the back myth) took hold, and blame for Germany’s failure to win the war was placed on internal enemies. Among the former settlers, however, a core felt that the whole of Germany was to blame. In East Africa, Germany had not been defeated, merely let down by the failures of the metropole. This led to a reformation of what German identity meant in the colonial context. The only place where many colonial Germans could find a pure Deutschtum, unsullied by the war, was in their memories.

99 ‘Aus dem Chaos der sich überstürzenden Nachrichten wirkte eine grotesk auf mich: Das Frauenstimmenrecht ist in Deutschland eingeführt’. Deppe, Um Ostafrika Erinnerungen, p. 149.
In the *Soester Anzeiger* of 15 December 1925, the writer Hubert Hennoch-Breslau noted that at the Paris Peace Conference, ‘the colonial question had been on everyone’s lips. In the intervening years, however, there had been a great deal more to think about than the 25,000 Germans who returned to Germany from the colonies’. He asked why, if German colonial rule had been so bad, did the Cameroonian chiefs follow Ebermaier to Spain or the Askari fight so loyally for Lettow-Vorbeck? Of course, the colonial question had never taken the main stage in German political discussions before the war and domestic issues in the 1920s meant that there was even less chance of the colonies becoming a prominent issue then. While the loss of the colonies fitted into the unfair Versailles Treaty and reparations narrative, it took a backseat to the financial and social turmoil inflicted upon Germany by its defeat in the war.

**Returning to Germany**

The former colonial settlers found the postwar years very difficult. In 1926 Adolf Nauer, who, although he had been interned in Samoa from 1915 to 1919 and had lost his plantation, remained on the island, wrote to the DKG for assistance in bringing one of his daughters back to Samoa. In 1913, like many colonial Germans before him, he had sent his daughters to Germany to receive their education. The only difference was that his daughters were half-Samoan, as Nauer had married a Samoan woman. He did not mention how he was able to remain in Samoa after being interned, but he was now destitute and could not afford the price of a ticket for his daughter. In the interests of promoting the *Deutschtum* abroad he felt the Auswärtiges Amt would pay for her return to Samoa. However, by 1926, the Auswärtiges Amt was not interested in taking up the case and neither the DKG nor its associated Frauenbund could spare the funds for her return. His was not the only case of families being separated in the colonies. Grete Nouvack, the daughter of German missionary in German South-West Africa, again of mixed race, had moved to Germany before the war and had apparently become a National Socialist supporter. In 1933, she requested financial help in getting back home, or in lieu of that she enquired whether it would be possible for the DKG to hire her in some capacity, as due to her racial background she was having difficulty getting work in Germany.

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106 BA, R8023/666, Grete Nouvack to Schnee, 18 August 1933.
The takeover of the colonies and property belonging to German planters and farmers caused many cases of destitution among the former colonial settlers and there were few sympathetic ears willing to aid them in their time of need. One letter to the DKG concerned a former German South-West African requesting if anything could be done to help the widow of a Mr. Richard Göltz. Göltz had passed himself off during the war as an American and was not interned; he was, however, repatriated to Germany in 1918. Göltz had survived in German South-West Africa through the war due to the aid of the Red Cross and food contributions from the local Windhoek community. Due to his war experience, the shock of returning to Germany, and to alleviate the pain caused by tuberculosis, he became addicted to opiates and died shortly after. His wife was left destitute as a result and the letter inquired if anything could be done help her. Seitz’s short reply was that as Göltz had never been in the Schutztruppe, his widow did not qualify for a pension.\(^\text{107}\) In Germany a narrative developed of the colonial German settlers as victims of the war against the British, and the Treaty of Versailles had wrongly accused them of bring criminals. This gained widespread attention through its discussion in ‘Afrikabücher’\(^\text{108}\)

However, by the mid-1920s cracks began to show in Britain’s policy of keeping Germans out of their former colonies. In 1924, the British offered to allow Germans to recover their land in the British-controlled Cameroon at an auction. This was mainly because the British government had failed to attract enough British settlers to the British section of the Cameroon Mandate. The British had unsuccessfully attempted to sell former German property in their section of the Mandate in 1922, in an auction restricted to British nationals. In 1924, they again put the plantations up for sale but this time ‘without reserve and irrespective of the nationality of the owners’.\(^\text{109}\) The new settlers would, however, be part of an immigrant community in the British Empire and not part of the German Reich. The French, in their sphere, maintained their restrictions on German immigration and were not pleased about Britain’s decision to allow Germans to return.

A letter to the liberal *Vossische Zeitung* in October 1925 explained the situation in the former German colonies and the chances of political control of them being returned to Germany. Written by Dr. W. H. Edwards,

\(^{107}\) BA, R8023/1072, Maria Luise Schlusse to the DKG Frauenbund, 14 September 1926, Seitz reply 29 November 1926.

\(^{108}\) This was linked to British accusations that Germany was not fit to run colonies, especially in the light of its conduct during the Herero and Maji-Maji wars. Schilling, *Postcolonial Germany*, p. 34.

it noted that while ‘throughout the non-German world there passes today a strong current of anti-Imperialism’, the imperial powers were not about to give up on their costly colonial experiments by handing them over to Germany. South Africa, while perhaps the most German-friendly of the Mandate holders, would not simply hand South-West Africa back, as the mineral deposits there were vital for the economy and it would not tolerate ‘two different native policies’ in the region. Britain too was strengthening rather than weakening its grip on East Africa and its rich cotton and coffee crops. The construction of costly engineering projects such as railways highlighted that Britain had no intention of letting East Africa go.\textsuperscript{110}

In 1933 with the accession of the Nazis to power, Adolf Hitler integrated the return of the German colonies into his \textit{Grossdeutschland} programme, and colonial revision became part of official Nazi policy to deconstruct the Versailles Treaty.\textsuperscript{111} Films about the colonies were popular in the 1930s and helped add to calls for a return to Germany’s place in the sun. Perhaps enthused by these films, the DKG received many letters from former colonial settlers inquiring about a potential return to Africa, or offering plans and advice on how to win the colonies back. In 1934 one such scheme was proposed by Franz Antoni, who, inspired by his reading of \textit{Mein Kampf}, suggested that Heinrich Schnee now in charge of the DKG, should hire twelve to twenty-four German ‘Lawrence of Arabias’ to infiltrate the former German colonies and initiate their reclamation. Schnee, sensibly, politely refused to publish Antoni’s plan in official DKG organs.\textsuperscript{112} Propaganda pushing for a return of Germany’s colonies had an impact not only in Germany but also on the League of Nations and the colonial officials in France and Britain.\textsuperscript{113} As part of Britain’s attempts at appeasement of Germany’s expansionist desires, Neville Chamberlain contemplated the return of Togo, Cameroon, and Tanganyika to Germany.\textsuperscript{114} However, the reality was that Germany was now looking firmly at Europe for its Lebensraum policies and even with the influential \textit{Reichskolonialbund} (RKB) (the successor organisation to the DKG and with two million members by 1940), the return of Germany’s colonies was not a primary foreign policy objective.\textsuperscript{115} Indeed, Andrew Crozier shows that the RKB’s main task was merely to push overseas demands

\textsuperscript{110} BA, R8023/864, \textit{Vössische Zeitung} no. 262, letter from Dr. W. H. Edwards, 30 October 1925.


\textsuperscript{112} BA, R8023/666, Schnee to Antoni, 16 March 1934.

\textsuperscript{113} Joseph, ‘The German Question in French Cameroun’, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{114} Andrew Crozier, \textit{Appeasement and Germany’s Last Bid for Colonies} (Palgrave MacMillan, London, 1988), p. 133.

\textsuperscript{115} Conrad, \textit{German Colonialism}, p. 192.
to make the British more amenable to granting Germany concessions in Europe. This is not to say that Germany under Hitler was indifferent to colonial revival, more that for the Nazis the primary goal was hegemony in Europe: Africa could wait. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the colonial question was no longer a matter for negotiation, but a problem to be settled on the battlefield.

Conclusion

The repatriation of German prisoners from the extra-European theatre of the First World War was a complex and constantly developing process. The obvious difference between prisoners who were interned in Britain and those in India, Egypt, the Dominions, and elsewhere overseas was the distance from Germany and the logistical complications of getting them back there. There was also the issue of who was going to finance the repatriation. In some cases, prisoners who could afford to pay their own passage were allowed to return to Germany, although this was in no way the norm. Eventually prisoners were repatriated on British-chartered ships with Germany expected to foot the bill. German consular officials expected their own repatriation to occur through reciprocal agreements on the exchange of diplomats. However, this did not always happen, as the cases of former governors Erich Schultz and Theodor Seitz demonstrate.

The basic military aim of Britain in the takeover of the German colonies was the removal of any possible future military threat. This combined with the economic objectives of Dominion governments and private businesses, such as the takeover of Nauru for its phosphates. In contrast to the situation on the Western Front, it was often argued in the British Foreign Office that German prisoners from the colonies would do less harm if they were allowed back to Germany than if they were to remain interned in their colonial locations. The development of the war affected this strategy and, with the tightening of the blockade, unrestricted submarine warfare, and shipping shortages, simply sending Germans back was no longer an option.

Once the Paris Treaty was signed and the Mandate issue settled, Britain and the Dominions, except for South Africa, could again concentrate on the objective of removing all Germans from their territory.

118 Hiery, Neglected War, pp. 125–126.
South Africa (which was to be granted control over German South-West Africa) did not evacuate many of the German population there during its wartime occupation and allowed those present in 1919 to remain. This was due to two factors: the relationship of the Boer population with the German settlers and the perceived need to maintain a white settler colony. In New Guinea the final removal of the German population made room for ex-servicemen to take over their plantations. It also, as Gerhard Fischer and Andrew Francis argue, left a long-lasting legacy for immigration policy in Australia and New Zealand. Before 1914, apart from a few restrictions on immigrants who wished to work in mines, there had been no immigration barriers for Europeans emigrating to the Pacific Dominions. During the war this changed and, based on existing Australian legislation designed to limit the number of Chinese immigrants, German and Austro-Hungarian nationals (enemy aliens) were restricted in their movements. While anti-German sentiment was weaker in the Second World War (being overshadowed by anti-Japanese propaganda and the direct threat from the Japanese Empire), the German community in Australia and New Zealand, and by extension New Guinea and Samoa, never recovered its numbers and its self-image was transformed radically. Stibbe’s argument for Central Eastern Europe can be applied to Australia and New Zealand where through enemy alien legislation, wartime ‘expulsion fantasies’, and demands for ethnic (white British) homogeneity were brought closer to reality.

While Albert Achilles remembered triumphant songs being played on the arrival of their ship in Hamburg in 1920, the reality of conditions in the turmoil Germany was going through did not take long to register. Although restrictions on the return of Germans to the colonies were slackened in the mid-1920s, it was clear that political control of the colonies was not going to be handed over to Germany. Being cut off from the metropole during wartime may have strengthened German settlers’ fondness for their colonial Heimat. However, the return of the colonies to Germany would never become a reality and the only comfort former colonial settlers, like Ludwig Deppe, could take was to close their eyes on sunny days and dream of Africa.

119 Nasson, Springboks on the Somme, p. 81.
120 In the United States, Germans perhaps more easily reverted to their prewar position in society, although the war did have a huge impact on the German community there. Carl Wittke, The German Language Press in America (The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 1957), p. 281.
122 Schilling, Postcolonial Germany, p. 35.
123 Deppe, Um Ostafrika Erinnerungen, p. 153.