

Captivity in War: A Global Perspective

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In their opening remarks, TAMARA BRAUN (Zurich) and MARCEL BERNI (Zurich) outlined some of the current approaches to the study of captives in war. They highlighted the importance of looking beyond western theatres of war to lesser-known wars and the difficulties of the term „Prisoners of War“ (POW), as it is limited to a specific type of prisoner and frequently used in a legalistic manner. Therefore, they argued in favour of the broader term of „captives“ as it includes non-military personnel as well as being better suited to acknowledge the variety of definitions over time and in different places.

In his keynote, ARNOLD KRAMMER (College Station) spoke about the American POW camps for German and Austrian captives of the Second World War and their everyday life. These captives benefited from various leisure activities but also from educational programs (i.e. political and geographic education, etc.) and were offered jobs, for which they received certificates they could take home after the war. Krammer emphasized the laidback guarding and the many liberties of the captives, although they remained prisoners. After their release and repatriation, they could make use of their knowledge of English and the fact they were seemingly not involved in the Holocaust, which often provided them with an initial advantage in post-war Germany.

The first panel explored the relationship between captivity, law and supranational institutions. In a case study of a conflict over the ransoming of captured Europeans between the Kingdom of Asante and the British Empire in 1869, ROY DORON (Winston-Salem) explored the impact of the changed European attitude towards slavery and ransoming on African societies. Slaves were not traded anymore, but now forced to work on plantations as the export of coconuts and palm oil in-

creased. Although the Europeans still worked with slaveholders, their moral attitude and laws towards slavery now served as a legitimation for intervention and domination in Africa.

In his comprehensive survey of the evolution of the legal protection of captives between 1880-1951, DANIEL MARC SEGESSER (Bern) described the long road to legal protection of non-military captives. Although important steps were taken after World War I (i.e. Nansen passport), it was not until 1951 that the Refugee Convention took into account the individual rights of refugees and captives. Segesser pointed out that the reflection of the past played a major role in the development of protective laws, not the imagination of future wars.

An older custom in war formed the topic of the presentation of JASPER HEINZEN (York): the parole d'honneur. This parole-system was still in existence during WWI, although it posed specific challenges to the European armies involved. It challenged the assumption of early 20th century's armies to fight to the last man for one's own country and highlighted conflicts among classes as the exclusiveness of parole to officers was challenged by the model of a citizen soldier. Nevertheless, the parole d'honneur remained a useful humanitarian practice during WWI.

CEREN AYGÜL (Mainz) analyzed the Ottoman Red Crescent Society as the first humanitarian organization of a Muslim country, which represented a local form of increasing universalistic values. The Red Crescent undertook the recruiting of medical staff, the preparation and supervision of transportations of prisoners, medical care as well as correspondence of POWs with their families. On the other hand, it was not only a humanitarian organization but also connected to the government and 'nation building'.

The second panel explored confinement conditions and camp life. ANNA MCKAY (Leicester) studied the living conditions on British prison ships from 1793 to 1815. Her analysis presented these ships as social spaces with a high level of social interaction. Although the sanitary situation was horrible and food often scarce, corruption of guards and civilians allowed for relief or even es-

capes. These ships represented a unique space of confinement among the prisoners, but also in relation with their captors.

DANIEL STEINBACH (Exeter) examined German internment camps in German East Africa during WWI. Due to racial solidarity, shared 'whiteness' and a fear of 'native' uprisings, the Germans were reluctant to arrest British 'enemy aliens' at the outbreak of war. Nevertheless, new distinctions along national lines were drawn. However, racial distinctions remained, as British captives were imprisoned with their families to protect them from Africans, while African and Indian POWs were all treated as ranks and subjected to forced labour.

MATTHIAS REISS (Exeter) turned his attention to the same-sex desire of German POWs in U.S.-camps from 1942 to 1946. He contradicted the common notion of same-sex desire as an act of compensation, as the German POWs were able to get into contact with women. He explained same-sex desire with a certain kind of comradeship and soldierly masculinity. Because U.S. authorities treated homosexuality as a mental disease and put the accused in hospitals, the accusation of homosexuality was used by pro-Nazi prisoners to get rid of political enemies in the camps.

MERON MEDZINI (Jerusalem) addressed the treatment of the 15,000 Jews in Shanghai during the Japanese occupation. Although German authorities demanded the Jews be similarly treated to their European counterparts, the Japanese merely gathered them in a designated area of Hongkew where they could move freely and maintain their schools and newspapers. The Japanese abstained from further harassment and let international organizations send money to the designated area.

The third panel of the conference was dedicated to labour and interactions with locals. FLAVIO EICHMANN (Bern) analysed the connection between POWs, slavery, race, and labour in the Eastern Caribbean during the Revolutionary Wars from 1794 to 1810. Confronted with a lack of workers after the abolition of slavery, the French used British POWs as 'white slaves' on their plantations and thereby transgressed racial differentiation between blacks and whites. The British, on the other hand, re-enslaved freed black sol-

diers, if they were not shot on the spot. The death toll of POWs in the Caribbean was high, as they were often concentrated in crowded camps or old ships, and regularly neglected. Eichmann also shed light on the importance of local societies, as the situation for each group of captives was different on each island.

Turning to internment camps for enemy aliens in the British Empire during WWI, TAMARA BRAUN (Zurich) discussed the lack of clear-cut rules regarding labour in these camps. Internees were treated according to local preferences, with sometimes blurred lines between exploitation and voluntary work. Captives themselves often asked for work, as they were confronted with monotony and boredom in the camps. Still, class and gender remained important categories, as women and members of higher classes were often prohibited or exempted from work.

In the lesser-known case of the Chaco War, ROBERT NIEBUHR (Tempe) pointed out the importance of captured and later repatriated Bolivian soldiers for the formation of a civil society in post-war Bolivia. The experience of captivity formed bonds between diverse social groups, and this new awareness played an important role in the veteran-backed reform movement in Bolivia.

The importance of groups of former captives was also the key topic of BASTIAN MATTEO SCIANNA's (Potsdam) presentation on former Italian POWs in Soviet captivity. After the retreat in early 1943, the narrative of the Italians as victims of the Germans and of fascist leaders was predominant, but in the after-war period it shifted towards a narrative focussing on the crimes committed by Italian soldiers. However, a pronounced left-right-polarised discourse remained after the war, with communists being labelled 'traitors' and returning POW 'fascist perpetrators'. This debate had great influence on Italian Cold War politics and shaped the Italian political landscape profoundly.

In the second keynote, RÜDIGER OVERMANS (Freiburg i. B.) addressed the organization and development of Nazi Germany's POW system and the differences in the treatment of various groups of POW. He criti-

cized the common explanation of race hierarchy and the need for workers as the determinant factor for the German treatment of POWs. It was rather the German experience of WWI that formed the main reason for differentiating between nations, as allies of the German Reich and neutrals during WWI were either not transferred to POW camps or released. The racial factor mainly applied to the treatment of Jews / Bolsheviks, as even in the case of Russian POWs the main influence in their treatment has to be found in stereotypes and feelings of superiority originating from WWI. Based on his archival research, Overmans called into question the existence of the „hunger plan“. There are no archival records which serve as proof for this plan, and it contradicts German camp-infrastructure organization as well as the need for a workforce.

The fourth panel took a closer look at violence in captivity. PANAGIOTIS DELIS (Burnaby) examined how Balkan states utilized imported European stereotypes of the Balkans in order to mobilize their respective societies during the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. The use of these stereotypes to motivate and mobilize one's own society resulted in atrocities on each side, stiffened resistance against surrender and ultimately caused the ill-treatment of POWs.

REINHARD NACHTIGAL (Freiburg i. B.) looked at POWs in Russian captivity during WWI. The Tsarist Empire classified POWs alongside their perceived ethnic affiliation, keeping Slavic prisoners in the European parts while deporting German and Austrian prisoners to the more remote areas of the empire. During the war, more and more POWs, especially Germans and Austrians, were put to work and perished in great numbers due to insufficient infrastructure, supplies and widespread diseases. On the other hand, Slavic and Muslim prisoners were often treated well, as they were seen as potential allies.

In her presentation, LILACH ROSENBERG-FRIEDMANN (Tel Aviv) addressed female Israeli POW taken captive during the War of Independence. While captivity was especially traumatic for Holocaust survivors, all female captives shared the fear of rape. Although there is no evidence

of sexual assaults by the captors, captivity and the associated discourse 'stripped' the women of their role as soldiers and reduced them to their gender identity, linking female captivity to rape and the national dignity impersonated in the women's body.

The different treatment of regular and irregular POWs during the Vietnam War was the focus of MARCEL BERNI's (Zurich) presentation, unravelling the variations in their procedures. The U.S.-troops regularly turned their POWs over to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). While regular North Vietnamese soldiers were held in special camps, civil captives were kept in civilian prisons where they were interrogated and often tortured. Suspected Vietcong frequently did not survive their capture. Neither the U.S. nor the South Vietnamese government were prepared for large numbers of POWs, and their legal status often remained unclear. Berni pointed out that, according to some sources, 80 percent of the torture of prisoners was conducted by South Vietnamese forces, contradicting the common perception of predominantly U.S.-responsibility for ill-treatment.

The final panel was devoted to the release, reintegration, and remembrance of captives. BRIAN K. FELTMAN (Savannah) looked at the campaign on the German home front to repatriate German POWs after WWI. German women started to press for the release of their men, organized themselves and interacted with international organisations such as the Red Cross. They presented their concerns in traditional roles as mothers and wives to gain moral support for their cause. While the USA and Great Britain started to release their POWs soon after the signing of the Peace Treaty, France held POWs in captivity until 1919.

As OLGA ZASLAVSKAYA (Budapest) stated, for many Eastern European POWs, the First World War was not 'their' war, as they did not fight for their own nation and instead often even against their fellow compatriots. Austro-Hungarian POWs in Russian captivity were subjected to propaganda in the camps and frequently joined the communists or entered internationalist detachments in Soviet Russia. Their activities and interconnections as migrants between home and host countries

are not yet properly researched.

FRANCESCA PIANA (Pully) analysed the case of the repatriation camp in Narva, where the Red Cross organized the return of hundreds of thousands former Russian and German / Austro-Hungarian POWs. The International Red Cross (ICRS) became the key player in managing this camp, from everyday life to the collection of money. The experiences the ICRS-agents made at this camp trained them for other operations helping other groups of displaced populations in the post-war period.

AMIT DAS GUPTA (Munich) pointed out the role of Pakistani POWs as bargaining chip for Bangladesh in the aftermath of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971. As Bangladesh could not guarantee the safety of the Pakistani POWs, they were transferred to India, involving the latter in the negotiations about the international recognition of Bangladesh. In this situation and now under international pressure itself, Delhi eventually managed to negotiate a compromise between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The conference was concluded with an end of conference discussion. During this discussion, several issues arose: firstly, the research on captivity is suffering from minimal theoretical and methodical conceptualization. Theories of military migration, gender and race still await their proper implementation in this field. Secondly, for a long time the focus had been put on regular POWs and their legal treatment. Other categories of captives, mainly irregulars and civilians, were neglected. As the proportion of regular POWs to irregular and civilian captives has been changing in favour of the latter, this research desideratum increasingly becomes more important. Thirdly, the issue of states and nations taking captives from within their own population remains widely an underresearched topic. This is of great consequence, as states have often applied experiences and lessons from such practices when it comes to their handling of captives from outside their own territory.

Conference Overview:

Keynote:

Arnold Krammer (College Station): Ger-

man and Austrian War Prisoners in America, 1942–1946

First Panel: Captivity, Law and Supranational Institutions

Roy Doron (Winston-Salem): Ransoming and the Scramble for Africa in the Short 19th Century in West Africa

Daniel Marc Segesser (Bern): Imagining or Reflecting War? The Development of International Law Protecting Civilian and Military Captives as well as Refugees from and in Captivity in the Age of Two World Wars, 1899–1951

Jasper Heinzen (York): Fighting for Respect and Dignity in the Darkest of Times: the Role of Honour-Based Practices in POW Regimes during the First World War

Ceren Aygül (Mainz): Captivity in Ottoman Lands: Humanitarian Aid of Ottoman Red Crescent Society during First World War

Second Panel: Confinement Conditions and Camp Life

Anna McKay (Leicester): Spaces of Confinement, Spaces of Resistance: Prisoners of War in Britain 1793–1815

Daniel Steinbach (Exeter): Conflicting Orders: Class, Race and Rank as Categories of Internment in German East Africa, 1914–1919

Matthias Reiss (Exeter): Same-Sex Desire in Captivity: German POWs in the United States, 1942–1946

Meron Medzini (Jerusalem): The Internment of 15,000 Jews in the Hongkew Designated Area of Shanghai from 1943–1945

Third Panel: Labour and Interactions with Locals

Flavio Eichmann (Bern): Prisoners of War, Labour and Race in the Eastern Caribbean during the Revolutionary Wars: 1794–1810

Tamara Braun (Zurich): „Monotony, due to want of employment, is their greatest enemy“: Boredom and Labour in British Colonial Internment Camps during the First World War

Robert Niebuhr (Tempe): Prisoners of the Chaco: Bolivians Laboring in Captivity for a

Better Future

Bastian Matteo Scianna (Potsdam): Of Traitors and Perpetrators: Italian POWs in Soviet Captivity and their Political Significance during the Cold War

Keynote:

Rüdiger Overmans (Freiburg i.B.): The Organization and Development of the Wehrmacht's Prisoner of War System and the Treatment of different Prisoner of War Groups

Forth Panel: Violence in Captivity

Panagiotis Delis (Burnaby): The Treatment of War Prisoners in Greece during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13

Reinhard Nachtigal (Freiburg i.B.): POWs on the Eastern Front during Two World Wars: Application, Violation and „Novelties“ of the International Humanitarian Law during War

Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman (Tel Aviv): Captivity and Gender: Women Prisoners of Israel's War of Independence as a Case Study

Marcel Berni (Zurich): In Harm's Way: Communist Captives in the Vietnam War (1965-1973)

Fifth Panel: Release, Reintegration and Remembrance

Brian K. Feltman (Savannah): „Heraus mit unseren Gefangenen!“ The German Homefront & Prisoner of War Repatriation, 1918-1919

Olga Zaslavskaya (Budapest): The East European „Lost Generation“ Between War and Revolution: Release and Reintegration of Austro-Hungarian POWs

Francesca Piana (Pully): Everyday Humanitarianism. The ICRC and the Exchange of Former POWs in the Camp of Narva (1920-1922)

Amit Das Gupta (Munich): 100.000 POWs as Bargaining Chip: 1971-1974

End of Conference Discussion

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