

**A forgotten minority: the return of the Auslandsdeutsche to Germany in 1919-20**

STIBBE, Matthew <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7269-8183>>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<http://shura.shu.ac.uk/25986/>

---

This document is the author deposited version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

**Published version**

STIBBE, Matthew (2020). A forgotten minority: the return of the Auslandsdeutsche to Germany in 1919-20. *Studies on National Movements*, 5, 144-183.

---

**Copyright and re-use policy**

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

# **A Forgotten Minority: The Return of the *Auslandsdeutsche* to Germany in 1919-20**

---

**MATTHEW STIBBE**

*Sheffield Hallam University*

This article examines the expulsion of Germans abroad (*Auslandsdeutsche*) from Allied countries and colonial empires in the aftermath of the First World War, and their somewhat negative reception in Weimar Germany in 1919-20. It does so against the background of what it identifies as a re-territorialisation of German national identity, beginning during the war itself and leading to an abrupt reversal of previous trends towards the inclusion of Germans abroad within broader transnational notions of Germanness (*Deutschtum*), rights to citizenship and aspirations to world power status. Re-territorialisation was not born out of the logic of de-territorialisation and *Weltpolitik* in any dialectical sense, however. Rather, its causes were largely circumstantial: the outbreak of global war in 1914, the worldwide economic and naval blockade of Imperial Germany, and its final defeat in 1918. Nonetheless, its implications were substantial, particularly for the way in which minority German groups living beyond Germany's new borders were constructed in official and non-official discourses in the period after 1919-20.

**Keywords:** *Auslandsdeutsche*, citizenship, de-territorialisation, Germans abroad, re-territorialisation

## Introduction

'Coming home' was a common experience for combatants and civilians from all belligerent nations at the end of the First World War. It was also a process fraught with conflicting emotions, political tensions and unresolved traumas, not least in those countries on the losing side.<sup>1</sup> In Germany, the chairman of the newly-created Council of People's Commissars and Reich President in waiting, Friedrich Ebert, famously welcomed back the 'undefeated' troops from the battlefields of the western front in a speech in Berlin on 10 December 1918.<sup>2</sup> Various narratives connecting patriotic (male) sacrifice and national identity were constructed and communicated, leading to a 'fragmented' war memory and a failure to demobilise completely, at least in the cultural and political sense.<sup>3</sup> As Benjamin Ziemann has shown, in the 1920s a plethora of republican as well as right-wing veterans groups competed with each other to define the war experience and give it meaning in an ever-changing, post-war, but hardly peace-like present.<sup>4</sup>

In nationalist discourse and ritualised forms of protest, much was also heard in the 1920s and beyond about the *Rückwanderer* or ethnic German returnees from the East, and about the German-speaking minorities who remained in interwar Poland.<sup>5</sup> These were the post-war successors to the tens of thousands of Russian Germans who had already begun 'returning' to the Reich from the 1880s onwards.<sup>6</sup> However, instead of escaping late Tsarist Russification policies, they were now fleeing the violence of the Russian civil war and the repressiveness of the Bolshevik and White regimes. The ethnic German refugees from the East were subject to intensive reintegration efforts, while the Germans who stayed put in Poland or in other successor states of the Habsburg monarchy after 1919-20 not only had strong support from the Reich, but received certain formal legal protections under the post-war Minority Treaties, including 'political, linguistic [and] religious rights'.<sup>7</sup> So too, at

least in theory, did the colonial settlers (*Kolonialdeutsche*) in Germany's largest pre-war colonial territory, German South West Africa, now administered by South Africa under a League of Nations mandate.<sup>8</sup> While Germany lost all of its overseas colonies under the Treaty of Versailles, the continued presence of German colonial settlers in South West Africa, alongside efforts by the German Colonial Society and other pressure groups, allowed for the retention of an association between 'whiteness' and 'Germanness' into the 1920s and beyond.<sup>9</sup> So too did the many myths and legends that were built up around the 'heroic' exploits of General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, who commanded German forces in East Africa during the war, successfully evading much larger British, French, Belgian and Portuguese colonial armies and refusing to surrender until 25 November 1918. When he and his troops finally returned to Berlin on 2 March 1919, they were permitted a 'victory parade' through the Brandenburg Gate and were fêted by officials of the new republican government.<sup>10</sup>

However, one group of 'home-comers' who have so far received little scholarly attention were the *Auslandsdeutsche*, the 'Germans living abroad' who were expelled from western Allied countries and non-German colonial territories all over the world in the period 1919-20. This was a distinct but very diverse body of people, representing all those who had continued to hold German nationality and citizenship in spite of their, or their parents' or grandparents', emigration to foreign countries. Their legal status, which offered them certain consular protections before 1914, also ensured that they automatically became 'enemy aliens' once their 'host' countries had entered into formal hostilities with the Central Powers. During and immediately after the First World War, most of these overseas ex-patriate communities faced a mixture of internment, expropriation, commercial boycotts and, finally, forced migration. In 1919-20, many of the tens of thousands of Germans still living, or held captive in, Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal or Allied

territories outside Europe had little choice but to ‘come home’, even if some of them had been born abroad and had never seen the ‘fatherland’.<sup>11</sup> The war had destroyed their lives and businesses and left them facing profoundly uncertain futures. In spite of this, they were not recognised, either in international or German domestic law, as a minority with specific claims or interests, or even as a disadvantaged group in need of long-term state support (or tax concessions). Unlike the ethnic Germans of Russian nationality, or the *Kolonialdeutsche*, they were soon forgotten, with successive Weimar governments showing little interest in their fate.

This article will treat the *Auslandsdeutsche* not as one homogenous group, but as a heterogeneous body of people in early Weimar Germany who were collectively labelled as a special interest group by various support organisations that had been set up to help them, even if they were not treated as such by German officialdom. As far as the Reich and the individual German states were concerned, such persons were German citizens in a legal sense. Indeed, the Reich citizenship law of 1913, a revision of the 1870 law, contained clauses designed to enable them to retain their legal ties and civic obligations to Germany, even if they had taken on a second nationality, that of their new ‘host’ country.<sup>12</sup> However, they were not regarded as ‘war victims’. If anything, they were branded as outsiders whose life stories and experiences might disrupt conventional republican *and* anti-republican narratives of the war. This official attitude was met at first with incomprehension and then with outrage on the part of the *Auslandsdeutsche* whose expectations of ‘home-coming’ were markedly different to the actual reception that they received. As they were forced to recognise, the end of the war had brought with it not only a redrawing of borders in Europe and the loss of formal German colonies overseas, but a ‘larger global shift’ in Germany’s power position as the world in general pivoted awkwardly between a still colonial present and a post-colonial future.<sup>13</sup>

One way of conceptualising this phenomenon is to see it as a moment of re-territorialisation and de-transnationalisation of German national identity. The term ‘re-territorialisation’ is *not* understood here in the same way as the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who seek to destabilise the very concept of ‘territoriality’ by deploying the dialectical argument that an ‘organism that is deterritorialized in relation to the exterior *necessarily* reterritorializes on its internal milieus.’<sup>14</sup> Rather, it is used to denote a more contingent, open-ended process whereby the pre-1914 tendency in Imperial Germany to give ‘greater weight to descent at the expense of territory as a constitutive principle of citizenship’ (Rogers Brubaker) was put into sudden, unexpected reverse.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, in a significant revision of Brubaker’s thesis, I will argue that the original intentions behind the 1913 Reich citizenship law were very quickly overtaken by events. From 1914, the existence, status and future expectations of the *Auslandsdeutsche* were shaped not by ideas of ‘common descent’ but by the new national and imperial borders in and beyond Europe, and by the reconceptualisation of ethnic and cultural ‘difference’ which accompanied the global upheaval of war. Those returning from overseas in 1919 via Rotterdam, Hamburg, Switzerland or Alsace were often detained, for varying lengths of time, in special reception camps or *Heimkehrlager*.<sup>16</sup> Especially if they had spent long periods of time abroad, their loyalty to the Reich, their attachment to Germany as a (now ‘dismembered’) territorial entity, and their ability to (re-) integrate were subject to doubt. Various advocate groups, based in Düsseldorf and Berlin, sought to help them find employment, to secure compensation from public funds for loss of confiscated property overseas, and/or to prepare them for re-emigration as and when new post-war opportunities might arise. However, such hopes were dashed by the peace settlement and its global as well as domestic economic consequences. By the end of 1919 relations between the *Auslandsdeutsche* and the new German state had become very poor,

with the former blaming the latter for failing to address their needs as an uprooted minority requiring special help and protection.

In what follows, we will first look at the position of the *Auslandsdeutsche* in the German Empire before 1914, and their treatment at the hands of the enemy during the First World War. This will be followed by an overview of the expulsion measures enacted in Allied countries in 1919-20, and the policies developed by the German authorities at Reich and state level to accommodate the 'home-comers' (*Heimkehrer*) while denying them any privileged position vis-à-vis domestic war victims and returning veterans from the war in Europe. A third section will examine the response of advocate groups and the gradual breakdown of relations with German officialdom. Finally, the conclusion will offer some broader reflections on the link between (imagined) non-European spaces, the 're-territorialisation' of nationalism and the political/cultural construction of 'minorities' in Europe in the immediate post-war years.

## **The *Auslandsdeutsche* before 1914 and their experiences during the First World War**

Outward migration from German-speaking Central and East-Central Europe was already a fact of life prior to the nineteenth century. Beginning with the dawn of the early modern period, or rather the first Age of Discovery from the late fifteenth century, David Blackbourn mentions the numerous, albeit often anonymous 'German travellers, sojourners, merchants, missionaries, priests, scholars, mining engineers [and] settlers' who 'moved... within empires marked out by others – the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch [and] British.'<sup>17</sup> The example of the German farmers attracted by Catherine the Great to colonise the Volga region of Tsarist Russia in the mid-1760s also springs to mind,<sup>18</sup> as does the case of the German trading houses that settled in many of the leading

European ports, such as London, Amsterdam, Bordeaux and Cádiz, from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>19</sup> However, it was only really in the decades after the Napoleonic wars, and more particularly from the 1850s, that the notion of ‘Germans abroad’ (*Auslandsdeutsche*) as a distinct, transnational category of Germans began to take shape.<sup>20</sup> A number of ‘pull’ factors aided this process, including cheaper travel made possible by improvements in maritime transport and the coming of the telegraph and the railways, as did various ‘push factors’, such as economic down-turns, famines and/or political unrest at home.<sup>21</sup>

Between 1816 and 1914 some 5.5 million Germans left their homelands in Central Europe for the United States. Others put down roots all over the world, with sizeable German communities in Britain, Belgium and France and throughout the British, French, Belgian, Portuguese and former Spanish Empires. The peak periods for emigration came in the years 1846 to 1857 and again from 1864 to 1873, accounting for one million each. Between 1880 and 1893 a further 1.8 million Germans left the territory of the Kaiserreich for pastures new,<sup>22</sup> but thereafter the emigration figures fell dramatically as the German economy grew stronger in the wake of rapid industrialisation. In fact, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and the first decade of the twentieth, there was a much bigger *internal* migration of Germans from the countryside to the cities, as well as immigration of foreign seasonal workers, particularly from (Russian) Poland, Italy, Habsburg Austria and the Netherlands.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the number of cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants in Germany increased from twenty-six in 1890 to thirty-three in 1900 and forty-eight by 1910, while the overall population rose from forty million in 1872 to fifty-six million in 1900 and sixty-seven million in 1913.<sup>24</sup>

Before 1914, many cultural pessimists in Germany saw the new industrial cities as cesspools of crime and degeneracy, as incubators of the ‘poison of commerce and materialism’ and even as a foreign or ‘alien’ presence on German soil.<sup>25</sup> Leading figures in the establishment and

among the imperial ruling class were also concerned about the continuing rise in support for the Social Democrats (SPD), combining this with a horror of strikes and a broader ‘fear of a recrudescence of the revolutionary events of the year 1848.’<sup>26</sup> In marked contrast, as Stefan Manz has noted, the hundreds of thousands of *Auslandsdeutsche* living in Africa, Asia, North and South America, and Australasia were regarded in Berlin, positively if a little optimistically, as ‘outposts of “Germanness” abroad’. Between them they were held to enjoy a variety of ‘persisting bonds’ to the Kaiserreich – cultural, economic, religious – which ‘had to be preserved for their own and the fatherland’s benefits.’<sup>27</sup> In other words – and contrary to the claims of Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger – ‘political-territorial questions’ were not especially important as a driver of official interest in the question of the *Auslandsdeutsche* after 1880.<sup>28</sup> Instead, the perceived threat posed by ‘national indifference’ among some German overseas emigrants, and even worse, of socialist or anarchist predilections among others, generated growing calls for sustained, government-backed, transnational activism. In order for this activism to succeed, it was believed, it had to sell a particular version of patriotic, conservative, Protestant *Deutschtum* while also taking into account the diversity of emigrant experiences, and the varied degrees of integration with native cultures and host societies to be found in different parts of the world. This in turn implied a certain, albeit hardly uncontested, ‘de-territorialisation’ of German identity. ‘Germanness’ was no longer confined to a particular territory (or territories, if one includes German overseas colonies acquired in the 1880s and 1890s). Rather it was also constructed and maintained via extra-territorial, global networks of like-minded patriots mobilised in support of German *Weltpolitik*.<sup>29</sup>

Communities of German migrants living overseas were thus styled, nationally and transnationally, as ‘cultural markers’ of the new German Empire and its aspirations to imperial greatness on a par with Britain

and the United States.<sup>30</sup> This was certainly the aim of the General German School Association (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein*), founded in 1881 and renamed the Association for Germans Abroad (*Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland*, VDA) in 1908.<sup>31</sup> On the one hand, overseas Germans were now claimed for overtly racist and imperialist agendas, with ‘Germanness’ clearly associated with ‘whiteness’ and European ‘civilising missions’ in the colonial context. Yet it also signified that such agendas would themselves have to become more diverse and worldly, and more open to understanding and engaging with global and transnational processes.<sup>32</sup> As Bradley D. Naranch has shown, the concept of ‘overseas Germans’ first emerged in the 1850s and 1860s as a way of keeping the ‘liberal “spirit of 1848”’ alive, a spirit which combined hopes for German unity with respect for regional diversity and religious and political pluralism.<sup>33</sup> Even as liberalism began to fade at home in the wake of Bismarck’s ‘unification from above’ from the 1870s onwards, big business saw patriotic ‘German emigrants... [as] potential consumers of Germany’s industrial products’, and argued for closer ties with them, both now and in an imagined future when Germany had become a more dominant player in world commerce and trade.<sup>34</sup>

Far from being merely the passive product of ‘armchair metropolitan fantasy’ among nationalists at home, the more committed *Auslandsdeutsche* were also active participants in the construction of their own transnational diasporic communities in the years 1871 to 1914 – whether as language teachers, Christian missionaries or members of navy leagues and other nationalist associations.<sup>35</sup> Some of the most vociferous exponents of *Deutschtum* abroad were in fact naturalised citizens of the ‘host’ society, but this did not necessarily prevent them from trying to forge or maintain links with their home country, including the cultivation of proud memories of wartime (1864-71) or peacetime (1871-1914) military service in the German army.<sup>36</sup> After the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Berlin made sustained

efforts to call patriotic *Auslandsdeutsche* back home to serve the fatherland in its current hour of need. Quite a few reservists did try to make the journey to Germany; some were captured by the British *en route* and interned, a cause of much controversy, especially when they were taken from neutral ships docked in British ports or intercepted on the high seas. But others completed the journey successfully and either joined the German armed forces fighting on the western or eastern fronts or enlisted in the Imperial Navy.<sup>37</sup>

For information on the well-being of those left behind in enemy countries, the Imperial Government relied on the help of the *Zentral-Auskunftsstelle für Auswanderer*, a body originally set up by the German Colonial Society around the turn of the century but in 1902 brought under the direct administrative and political control of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin and used to support Germans living in places beyond German colonies too.<sup>38</sup> In response to an enquiry from the German Red Cross's Central Information Bureau in early November 1914, the *Zentral-Auskunftsstelle* set out what it understood to be its new role in wartime while making clear that it still reported directly to the office of the Reich Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg:

...[our organisation] is responsible for making official enquiries about the fate of all Germans who are not serving in the army or navy but who are currently stranded in enemy countries, or who can reasonably be assumed to find themselves trapped there. This means Great Britain, France, Russia, Serbia, Montenegro and Japan, as well as Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and [other] British and French colonies. On the other hand, we cannot make official enquiries concerning Reich citizens in neutral countries.<sup>39</sup>

As other countries joined the Allied side, beginning with Italy in 1915 and Portugal in 1916, and ending with Siam, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras in 1918, the *Zentral-Auskunftsstelle* expanded the

geographical reach of its activities.<sup>40</sup> This came on top of the work done firstly by different branches of the German Red Cross, and through them, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, in respect of Germans (and their families) who were actually interned as civilian or military prisoners of war in enemy states;<sup>41</sup> and secondly by a body set up by the Reich Office of Interior in September 1914 to monitor alleged abuses against German civilians, the *Reichskommission zur Erörterung von Gewalttätigkeiten gegen deutsche Zivilpersonen in Feindesland* (Reich Commission for the discussion of acts of violence committed against German civilians on enemy territory).<sup>42</sup>

But in reality there was very little that the German government could do for *Auslandsdeutsche* after the autumn of 1914. This was partly a matter of the vagaries of geography. German nationals and ethnic Germans fleeing those areas of Eastern Europe over-run by Russian Tsarist troops could be supported by organisations such as the *Beratungsstelle für Deutsche Flüchtlinge* (Advice Bureau for German Refugees).<sup>43</sup> However, with the imposition of the Allied naval blockade and the cutting of Germany's transatlantic telegraph cables, much of the rest of the world was beyond Germany's reach. With the exception of German East Africa, most German overseas colonies were occupied by enemy countries – Britain, France, Belgium and Japan – in 1914-15.<sup>44</sup> From August 1914 onwards, ever larger numbers of German men of military age were interned in metropolitan France and Britain, and in their extra-European territories and dominions. This was accompanied by expropriation and expulsion measures, as well as sporadic mob violence. Anti-German riots became a global phenomenon following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, with attacks on German communities throughout the UK as well as in Moscow, Johannesburg, Durban, Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> Following the sinking of one of its ships by a German U-boat, there were even anti-German riots in Brazil in April 1917.<sup>46</sup> Several other South American countries, including Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Peru,

came under pressure to intern the crews of German merchant ships stuck in their ports.<sup>47</sup> In the US after 1917, anti-foreigner violence was more typically of the vigilante kind, and was directed against individuals rather than whole communities, but went as far as the public lynching on 5 April 1918 of one German immigrant from Dresden, Robert Prager, who was a coal miner working in Collinsville, Illinois, and was thought to hold socialist beliefs.<sup>48</sup>

However, although the chief causes of the wartime persecution of German minorities are to be found on the home fronts of the Allied powers,<sup>49</sup> the somewhat reserved response of the German government in Berlin cannot be explained merely by reference to unfavourable geopolitical factors and the changing fortunes of war. Rather, it also reflected a shift in mentality away from the transnational to the national when it came to visions of German war aims, and a corresponding 're-territorialisation' of notions of 'Germanness' and 'state interest'. For instance, Reich Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg's famous 9 September 1914 war aims memorandum, which was brought to light in the early 1960s by the Hamburg historian Fritz Fischer, envisaged an immediate territorial settlement in which France would be 'so weakened as to make her revival as a great power impossible for all time' and Russia 'thrust back as far as possible from Germany's frontier.' Bethmann mentioned 'the creation of a continuous [German-ruled] Central African colonial empire', but this was of secondary importance and anyway was to be 'considered later', as were the more specific territorial aims 'to be realised vis-à-vis Russia.'<sup>50</sup>

Scholars have interpreted Bethmann Hollweg's September war aims programme differently, with Fischer arguing that it represented a clear-cut intention to 'permanently change the face of Europe' as a step towards the attainment of world power,<sup>51</sup> and critics, such as Egmont Zechlin, casting it merely as a temporary, tactical plan to enable Germany to continue to hold its own against Britain and the British Empire, in the

expectation that France and possibly also Russia would soon concede defeat and sue for a separate peace.<sup>52</sup> For our purposes, however, the interesting thing to note is the wording used in the preamble to the programme. Here Bethmann boldly stated what he thought the ‘general aim of the war’ was, namely to achieve ‘security for the German Reich in west and east for all imaginable time.’<sup>53</sup> As the finer details of the programme then go on to suggest, economic and military ‘security’ were conceived solely in territorial terms. There was no mention in this document of *Auslandsdeutsche* in the sense of extra-territorial networks of German emigrants or how they might contribute to securing the preservation of the Kaiserreich after the war, whether in the immediate future or ‘for all imaginable time’. In other words, the *Auslandsdeutsche* were no longer being thought of, as they had been in certain circles before 1914, as crucial to Germany’s position as a world power.

This ‘re-territorialisation’ of the political imaginary in Germany, in other words of the Kaiserreich’s global power relations and conceptions of its own ‘state interest’, was most visible at the level of ‘grand strategy’ (*Große Politik*). However, it can also be seen at other, more banal levels of German wartime administration. When it came to the approval or rejection of wartime applications for naturalisation, for instance, the Reich pursued a line which differed from virtually all other belligerent states. Whereas the latter were keen to reduce the number of naturalisations permitted, and even to reverse some that had been granted to persons of enemy heritage before 1914, German wartime policy at Reich and state level was to loosen restrictions, including in respect to resident aliens of Russian, British and non-Christian backgrounds. As Eli Nathans notes:

The result, in Prussia, was an increase of some three thousand naturalizations each year over the 1914 figure, at least in 1915 and 1916. This benevolence even extended to foreign Jews. Several hundred of the petitions granted in 1915 were from Jewish men

enlisting in the army, a figure for Jewish naturalizations far higher than those recorded before the war. The strictures on the naturalization of Social Democrats were also relaxed. The Social Democrats had voted for war credits, after all.<sup>54</sup>

Compared to the pre-war trend, then, this marked a somewhat abrupt shift back towards territorial residency (*Ansässigkeit*) and economic performance (*Leistung*), as opposed to 'Germanness' in a cultural, religious or transnational sense, as a key criteria for acquiring or retaining German citizenship. The cause was largely the manpower shortages on the German home front, but this too was linked to issues of 'security', whether defined in military or economic terms or both.

Meanwhile, when it came to maintaining enthusiasm for the war, emphasis switched to the hundreds and thousands of young German men whose remains lay in the fields of Flanders and northern France, or in the hostile landscapes of the East, and who would never come home again. The best of the country's youth was said to have died in the war in Europe; it was their masculine heroism and self-sacrifice that would 'inspire a new and stronger Germany.'<sup>55</sup> True, propagandists writing for the Imperial government's War Press Office (*Kriegspresseamt*) continued to emphasise the 'necessity' of extra-European colonies, but this too was now couched in territorial and racial terms only. (White) German blood had been spilled in defence of these colonies, while Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal had all deliberately reneged on pre-war agreements to maintain established racial hierarchies in Africa in the event of war in Europe. It was on these grounds, rather than as a contribution to expanding global networks, that demands for an enlarged German empire in the centre of that continent (*Mittelafrika*) were now legitimised.<sup>56</sup>

The reverse side of this was that persons of German nationality abroad were looked on with increasing suspicion, especially those who had not

tried to return 'home' in 1914 to support the fatherland. In particular, the small number of German nationals who were repatriated to the Reich from enemy countries under exchange agreements reached during the war - mainly women, children and older men, as well as internees who were released from captivity on medical grounds - were met with a lukewarm, and at times even downright hostile, attitude from German officialdom. Certainly their loyalty and patriotism were not taken for granted. The acting commander of the Seventh Army Corps, headquartered in Münster and responsible for military security in some of the most strategically significant areas of western Germany, including part of the border with the neutral Netherlands, was particularly concerned. On 30 July 1918 he wrote to the provincial governors in Prussian Westphalia and to representatives of the state governments in the principalities of Lippe and Schaumburg-Lippe to highlight his fears:

The dangers to state security posed by [German] civilian persons returning home from countries overseas are fundamentally the same as the threat posed by returning members of the armed forces: political subversion, spying or carrying out acts of sabotage on behalf of enemy powers, infiltration of undesirable elements, and so on.<sup>57</sup>

Similar views were held by German diplomats serving overseas. On 19 March 1918, for example, the German consul-general in The Hague, Friedrich Rosen, wrote to the Prussian War Ministry to notify officials there that the 600 German civilian internees so far released from Britain and sent to Holland under the July 1917 exchange agreement were not ideal candidates for repatriation as they were suffering from 'all the heinous effects of long-term captivity', including 'complete nervous exhaustion and barbed-wire disease.'<sup>58</sup> On 26 April he followed this up with a letter to the German Chancellor Georg von Hertling, in which he warned that

there are many inferior elements [*minderwertige Elemente*] among the German civilian prisoners currently interned in the Netherlands... The great majority of them... were resident in England before the war; many of these have become very anglicised and, in spite of their obligation to register for military service [in Germany], have never given a thought to serving the Fatherland in uniform. Only a handful of them belong to that group of Germans who were seized on board neutral ships while trying to reach home from distant lands at the start of the war... in order to serve the Fatherland in its hour of danger.<sup>59</sup>

Rosen's concerns demonstrate that, despite all the propaganda accusing the Allies of abuses against German civilians, official suspicion of *Auslandsdeutsche* had already begun during the war itself. Disappointment at the US entry into the war as an associate power of the Allies in April 1917, and the evident failure of German Americans to do more to undermine or sabotage American mobilisation measures thereafter, may have contributed to this.<sup>60</sup> However, it was in the war's immediate aftermath that these concerns grew to impact more directly on policy at Reich and state level, as we shall now see.

## **The Expulsion of the *Auslandsdeutsche* in 1919-20 and their reception in post-war Germany**

Some 'overseas Germans' had already been expelled from enemy countries during the war or had been exchanged as a result of bilateral agreements mediated by neutral countries. However, much larger numbers found themselves forcibly repatriated to Germany in the years 1919-20. For reasons of space we will leave to one side the hundreds of thousands of Russian-subject Germans who fled from the former Tsarist Empire as a result of the Bolshevik revolution, the civil war of 1918-20

and the famine of 1921-2. We will also exclude from consideration the 470,000 or so residents of Weimar Germany who (according to the 1925 census) had lived in Posen and Pomerelia before the war but had 'voluntarily' quit their homelands as a result of the border changes in 1919 which had left them living under Polish rule.<sup>61</sup> These groups in many ways shared a similar fate to the *Auslandsdeutsche*, including being seen in a poor light by officialdom and being temporarily housed in *Heimkehrlager*. However, in the political language of the time, and in order not to confuse them with their post-Second World War counterparts, the German *Heimatvertriebene* of 1944-47, they are better described as *Rückwanderer* ('returnees'), *deutschstämmige Zuwanderer* ('immigrants of German descent') or *Flüchtlinge* ('refugees') rather than as *Auslandsdeutsche*.<sup>62</sup>

The term *Auslandsdeutsche* in the context of the immediate post-First World War era referred more narrowly to those 'overseas Germans' who were forcibly removed from the following countries in the years 1919-20: Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal, together with their overseas colonies and dominions; the United States and its overseas colonies; Brazil and various Central American countries which broke off diplomatic relations with Germany in the years 1917-18; and China. Also included here are the more than 200,000 German victims of the French *épuration* ('purification') measures in Alsace-Lorraine in 1918-20.<sup>63</sup> Siam had already expelled its 274-strong German community to British India in February 1918, while 450 Germans from Palestine were removed to British Egypt in late 1917.<sup>64</sup> Earlier in the war, German civilians had been evacuated from West Africa in 1914/15 and from East Africa in 1916, the former finally arriving in metropolitan France (via French North Africa) or ending up in neutral Spanish internment in 1916; and the latter being sent to various destinations (India, Egypt, South Africa, the Azores and metropolitan Portugal).<sup>65</sup>

In Britain, Belgium, France and Portugal, as well as in most of their overseas possessions, the default assumption, at least from the beginning of 1918, was that *all* Germans would be expelled as soon as possible, except those individuals granted exemptions. Britain and South Africa eventually awarded a relatively large number of certificates granting leave to remain, especially to Germans of long-term residency or to British-born women who had acquired German nationality through marriage. On the other hand, France, Belgium and Portugal allowed very few exemptions, as did Australia, New Zealand, India and China.<sup>66</sup> Countries in the New World, including the United States and Brazil, as well as the British Dominion of Canada, adopted the reverse position, assuming by and large that most immigrants of German descent would not be expelled, except for individuals identified as ‘undesirable’ or a threat to national security. In the context of the post-war ‘Red Scare’, this typically meant those ‘overseas Germans’ and other aliens identified as having left-wing views or suspected of being strike leaders.<sup>67</sup>

Expellees from France usually entered Germany via Switzerland or directly across the new border from Alsace-Lorraine. The remainder came back home on Allied, usually British ships, sometimes via stop-off points including Singapore, Bombay, Egypt, Malta, Gibraltar and the Isle of Man. Already on 10 January 1919 the Home Office in London assured the Secretary of the Prisoners of War Department, Lord Newton, that ‘civilian enemy subjects’ would be repatriated from all parts of the Empire ‘as rapidly as shipping can be obtained.’<sup>68</sup> Given the ongoing Allied naval blockade of Germany, Rotterdam in the Netherlands was still used as a principal port of entry for those coming from overseas, at least in the initial period after the war.<sup>69</sup> More than 11,807 Germans arrived here from outside Europe between 7 April and 1 August 1919 alone, 3,014 of them without papers.<sup>70</sup> Rotterdam was seemingly only replaced by Hamburg in early 1920, after the lifting of the blockade.<sup>71</sup>

The reception that the expellees received upon crossing the border into Germany in 1919 or 1920 was often cold and bureaucratic. Certainly it was very different to the ‘heroes’ welcome’ offered by Ebert to the returning troops in Berlin in December 1918. Regarding those *Auslandsdeutsche* who were coming ‘home’ after living abroad for many years, the main concern of the authorities was where they would live and who would house them. Already in April 1918, with the Treaty of Brest Litovsk with Russia and the Treaty of Bucharest with Romania about to be signed, the civil authorities in Prussia had agreed to take over responsibility for the care of ‘returnees’ from the East from the German Red Cross, provided that the persons concerned were ‘Reich Germans with a claim to Prussian or, in some cases, non-Prussian citizenship who have fled or been expelled from enemy countries.’<sup>72</sup> It was further agreed ‘that over time every province [of Prussia] will take the same per capita allocation of destitute refugees relative to the size of its overall population.’<sup>73</sup> As the war in the west came to an end later that year, further plans had to be made. In October 1918, for instance, the civilian authorities in Düsseldorf were pressed upon by the German military to receive 150 members of the pro-German Flemish separatist movement and their families (350 people in total) who were being evacuated from occupied Belgium for their own safety and were – according to instructions issued by the acting commander of the Seventh Army Corps – to be treated as ‘political refugees’.<sup>74</sup> Two hundred German families were likewise evacuated from Belgium via the border post at Liège on 1 November 1918 and were again sent to an emergency reception centre (*Übernahmestelle*) in Düsseldorf.<sup>75</sup>

On 3 January 1919 a new government body, the *Reichszentralstelle für Kriegs- und Zivilgefangene*, met for the first time in Berlin, but it was powerless to prevent post-war expulsions of Germans and in reality spent most of its energy defending the war record of the German Foreign Office and Reich Colonial Office when it came to looking after German

civilian interests overseas.<sup>76</sup> The question of military prisoners of war was easier to manage politically in the sense that they largely wanted to come home once the war was over, and the Allies could be condemned for continuing to hold them after the end of hostilities while hypocritically claiming to have fought the Central Powers in order to 'strengthen and rebuild international law.'<sup>77</sup> Civilian prisoners, however, had diverse interests and a more complicated legal status, which meant that repatriation was often involuntary and combined with loss of property, family separation and destitution. In Britain, for instance, the number of residents of German heritage fell from 57,500 in 1914 to 22,254 in 1919, largely as a result of internment, denaturalisations, 'voluntary' repatriation and expulsions, the latter mostly carried out between January and April 1919.<sup>78</sup> From April 1919 it was the turn of German expellees from overseas British colonies and dominions, and from countries allied to Britain such as Portugal, Brazil and China. Most experienced long and arduous journeys, accompanied by violence and abuse, on their way back to western Germany via Rotterdam. For instance, Germans expelled from China in March 1919 on board three British ships complained about the 'heavy-handed and humiliating treatment... that was meted out to them by the British authorities at the time of embarkation in Shanghai and during the journey', even though women, children and older men had been among the passengers:

The steamers were completely over-filled and utterly unsuitable for carrying a large number of Europeans on a week-long voyage through tropical climates. The behaviour of the British authorities in Singapore, where the ships were moored for a further week in the glaring sun while goods were loaded, was grossly inhumane. Even the severely sick were refused permission to go on land in search of healthier accommodation. There were a number of deaths in consequence.<sup>79</sup>

The more than 1,000 Germans forced to leave South Africa in May 1919 included a group who departed on the H.M.T. *Imgona* from Durban in Natal province. When they arrived in Rotterdam it became apparent that some of their luggage had not been loaded because 'insufficient space had been left in the holds' for it.<sup>80</sup> Expulsions also took place from Egypt, Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, East Africa and various British Caribbean and Atlantic Islands (Barbados, Trinidad and Bermuda) after April 1919.<sup>81</sup> These measures were given retrospective sanction by the Treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June. Under article 220, Germany was obliged to 'admit to its territory without distinction all persons liable to repatriation', a move designed by the Allies to avoid a situation in which they might be forced to take back expellees who were refused entry on arrival 'home'.<sup>82</sup>

From early 1919 the German press had reported on the supposed 'unworthy treatment' of German expellees at the hands of British soldiers during the sea-crossing from England to the Netherlands.<sup>83</sup> Women's groups were set up to demand a more proactive stance from the German government in respect to repatriation of German prisoners abroad, and a mass protest was staged in Berlin in April.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, on orders of the Reich Ministry of Interior, special camps or *Heimkehrlager* were set up to house the incoming returnees, often in former holding centres for POWs such as the one near Regensburg in Bavaria, which was handed over to the Bavarian Ministry of Interior in 1919.<sup>85</sup> Other big camps were established at Essen in the Ruhr and Münster in Westphalia, coming under the control of the Prussian provincial authorities. In Austria too, civilian *Heimkehrlager* were established at the behest of the Ministry of Interior in Vienna.<sup>86</sup> In 1919-20 the typical stay in one of the camps for *Auslandsdeutsche* entering Germany from the west was between one and two months – an admittedly much shorter time than the average six months for those ethnic German 'returnees' coming from the East.<sup>87</sup> Most of the *Heimkehrlager* in western Germany had indeed

been shut down by the end of 1920, while the ones in the East lasted at least until 1923, and some until 1925. Jochen Oltmer argues that, from the authorities' point of view, the *Heimkehrlager* had a largely integrative function, being concerned with assisting returning *Auslandsdeutsche* with finding accommodation and jobs. But apart from the miners and former Imperial officials from Alsace-Lorraine, there was no special treatment for them, or protected status when it came to tax breaks or the allocation of employment opportunities.<sup>88</sup>

In the meantime, for *Auslandsdeutsche* coming from further afield than Alsace-Lorraine, the camps made a clear statement about citizenship and loyalty, namely that those who had lived abroad and had therefore been absent from German soil for some time would not have their status as members of the putative *Kriegsgemeinschaft* taken for granted, irrespective of their German heritage. Furthermore, their past instrumentalisation as transnational supporters of German *Flottenpolitik* and *Weltpolitik* could not override the feeling that in national terms, they now symbolised the shame of Germany's defeat and its helplessness in face of Allied demands. Reich Germans migrating from, or choosing to stay in, Poland could be cast in national and international terms as an 'embattled minority'; it was in the interests of successive Weimar governments to draw attention to their plight, both domestically and for foreign policy reasons.<sup>89</sup> However, the 'new political and territorial realities' established at Versailles in June 1919 meant that the *Auslandsdeutsche* coming from western Europe and the wider world could not fulfil the same symbolic function. Rather, to cite Marcia Klotz, both the loss of German colonies in 1919 and the return of the non-European *Auslandsdeutsche* served as a 'reminder of the new global order and Germany's diminutive status within it.'<sup>90</sup> In this sense, the establishment of *Heimkehrlager* in western Germany in 1919-20 was not just about economic reintegration or housing, but came to symbolise a

broader 'de-transnationalisation of [German] national identity' which prefigured that of the post-1945 era.<sup>91</sup>

## Support groups for *Auslandsdeutsche*

This recasting of national identity to downgrade or remove entirely the importance of transnational forms of *Deutschtum* or Germanness was of course not without its domestic critics. Already in August 1918 the chairman of the *Reichsstelle für deutsche Rückwanderung und Auswanderung* (Reich Bureau for German Remigration and Emigration), a new pressure group based in Berlin-Charlottenburg, began writing to various state representatives in order to pass on concerns that had been relayed to him by the VDA and other groups about the supposed mistreatment of *Auslandsdeutsche* returning from western Allied countries. The gist of the complaints was

that the returnees have not been received in friendly fashion, especially by lower level police and government officials, and that their feelings of attachment to the homeland, which had come to life again at the beginning of the war, have been negatively impacted [by this]. The returnees have been viewed in a number of quarters as an unwelcome burden on local welfare resources. A recurrent story is that officials have the same negative attitude towards the returnees as they do towards emigrants in general, treating both groups as 'undesirable' members of the population.<sup>92</sup>

Such treatment, the letter continued, endangered 'important demographic, economic and military goals.' More particularly, it was a duty of the state 'to promote and strengthen patriotic attitudes and ties of belonging to the motherland among the *Auslandsdeutsche*, because they alone constitute the right human material needed to rebuild the

[extra-territorial] links destroyed during the war.<sup>93</sup> Whether this letter did any good seems unlikely. Indeed, on 26 October, as the war was coming to an end, the Prussian War Ministry wrote to all state governments reiterating its earlier warnings that the return of ‘suspect elements’ among the *Auslandsdeutsche* might ‘offer new opportunities to our enemies... [to promote] espionage, sabotage or subversive propaganda.’ Border and welfare officials, it continued, should be particularly on the lookout for ‘fraudulent persons who have infiltrated returnee groups, and persons who are genuine returnees but have been recruited by our enemies for hostile purposes.’<sup>94</sup>

Things would only get worse after the 11 November armistice, especially as it became ever clearer that a large proportion of the *Auslandsdeutsche* living in western Allied countries and colonies would now be expelled. By spring 1919 – i.e. before the terms of the peace settlement were known – a number of support groups had been set up to draw attention to the plight of the *Auslandsdeutsche* and to support their attempts to re-establish themselves at home or abroad. Among them was the *Hilfsbund für Auslandsdeutsche*, founded in Düsseldorf in May 1919 as a joint venture by the local branches of the *Auslandsbund Deutscher Frauen*, the *Baltischer Vertrauensrat*, the *Frauenbund der deutschen Kolonial-Gesellschaft*, the *Ostmarkverein*, the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland*, the *Vereinigung deutscher Flüchtlinge aus Belgien* and the *Westdeutsche Vereinigung ehemaliger Zivilinternierter*.<sup>95</sup> There was also a separate *Schutzbund der im Feindesland durch Kriegshandlung geschädigten Zivilpersonen*, which represented expellees from former enemy countries looking for new employment opportunities in commerce and the tourist trade. In a round robin letter sent to several leading Düsseldorf firms in July 1919, the *Schutzbund* declared:

Among our members are salesmen, exporters and importers, engineers, chemists, technicians of various kinds, mechanics, craftsmen and hotel workers. Most of them have several years’

experience of working abroad, making them well-travelled and highly skilled in business and languages.<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile, another body claiming to represent the interests of *Auslandsdeutsche* at national level was the *Volksbund zum Schutze der deutschen Kriegs- und Zivilgefangenen*, founded in Berlin on 20 December 1918 and initially calling itself the *Reichsbund* before changing its name to the more populist-sounding *Volksbund* in early 1919.<sup>97</sup> From the middle of 1919 this organisation campaigned for proper compensation for Germans who had lost property or businesses when they were expelled from enemy countries. However, at a meeting with representatives of the Reich Ministry for Economics and various German companies on 13 August 1919, it became obvious to *Volksbund* representatives that the *Auslandsdeutsche*, even if they were to receive a settlement, would be heavily disadvantaged by the wartime and post-war inflation. Re-establishing businesses overseas would be made all the more difficult if what little compensation they received was paid in devalued Reich marks rather than foreign currency, and if they were also expected to pay high rates of taxation. But the Reich Ministry and the leading industrialists would not budge on this issue, insisting that it would be wrong to privilege *Auslandsdeutsche* over *Inlandsdeutsche* when it came to compensation decisions. For the *Volksbund*, this failure to recognise the particular economic needs of the *Auslandsdeutsche* was grossly unfair. Domestic German industries that had lost property abroad during the war had still been able to keep their domestic operations going after 1914, and in some cases, had made handsome profits via government contracts. Some still had foreign currency reserves dating back to before the war.

On the other hand, the *Auslandsdeutsche* have suffered enormous losses as a result of the liquidation of their property held abroad; in many cases they have lost their entire [means of] existence.<sup>98</sup>

When the Federal Council (Reichsrat), representing the individual German states, endorsed the Reich government's decision in this regard on 27 November 1920, this caused further outrage. A joint letter from the local branches of the *Bund der Auslandsdeutschen* in the unoccupied part of the Rhineland and the province of Westphalia to the head of the Rhineland regional administration in Düsseldorf estimated that its members would get at best one fifth of the true value of their liquidated property back, and called this a 'betrayal' by the fatherland:

The pioneers of *Deutschtum* abroad, who once built German associations, schools and churches throughout the world, who fostered German art and life and who provided a market for German products across the entire Earth, have today been reduced by the German government to Reich citizens of the fourth class.<sup>99</sup>

'We are no less German than the *Inlandsdeutsche* and the over-privileged Alsace-Lorrainers', the letter continued, a reference to the notion that expellees from the former *Reichsland* on Germany's western border with France had been given preferential treatment when it came to allocation of jobs, especially those who had been civil servants in the post-1871 Imperial bureaucracy. 'We demand from the government equal treatment as citizens with equal rights.'<sup>100</sup>

How many of the *Auslandsdeutsche* were able to re-establish themselves in the new republican Germany, with only minimum compensation and limited job opportunities, and how many decided to re-emigrate, if they could, is difficult to establish with any confidence, but seeking answers to these questions would certainly make a worthwhile future research project. One starting point would be the first postwar census in the UK, undertaken on 19 June 1921 and due to be published online by the family history website Findmypast, in association with the UK Office for National Statistics, in January 2022.<sup>101</sup> Cross-referencing this with the 1911 census, and with lists of German civilians released from British

internment camps and expelled to Germany in 1919, would reveal how many had been able to slip back into Britain from the beginning of 1920 onwards. Although trying to guess in advance what the census records for 1921 will reveal is a potentially hazardous enterprise, it seems likely that quite a few *Auslandsdeutsche* would have sought to depart from Germany again as soon as possible, in particular those who had left behind families when they were expelled from their host countries.

## Conclusion

By the time the Reichsrat made its decision in November 1920 to back the Reich government's policy of making no special concessions to the *Auslandsdeutsche*, the state governments' attention had already shifted to the much larger group of *deutschstämmige Zuwanderer* (migrants of ethnic German background) coming from the East. This group was officially assisted not only by the *Reichszentrale für Kriegs- und Zivilgefangene*, whose director, the Social Democrat Daniel Stücklen, was appointed *Reichskommissar für Zivilgefangene und Flüchtlinge* on 30 August 1920, but also by the German Red Cross. Most of these ethnic German migrants from the East were non-propertied farm labourers and forestry workers who came either on their own steam, or later on, through the assistance of philanthropic groups.<sup>102</sup> Like their counterparts who 'returned' to Germany to escape Tsarist Russification measures between the 1880s and 1914, they were typically illiterate and lacked knowledge of (Reich) German culture and law.<sup>103</sup> The number of camps established in Germany's eastern borderlands to cater for these migrants was increased from six to nine by the end of 1920, and reached a total of twenty-two, with a maximum population of 36,899, by the end of 1922. Between autumn 1920 and April 1923, according to Stücklen, around 200,000 *Deutschstämmige* passed through these camps; thereafter the numbers tailed off, with the last camp dissolved in May

1925.<sup>104</sup> In the first years after the war, the Prussian and other state governments preferred to hold German migrants from Poland in camps for relatively long periods, not only because it was difficult to find jobs and accommodation for them, but because they could then be instrumentalised as ‘powerful symbols of German suffering’ or – on the nationalist, anti-Versailles right – as the basis for revisionist claims to lost territories in the East.<sup>105</sup> Other German-speakers were encouraged to stay in Poland for the same reasons.<sup>106</sup> The advocates of territorial revision in the East in the early 1920s usually did not go as far as the geographers and historians of the period 1925-35 who, through their supposedly ‘scientific’ *Ostforschung*, laid ‘claim to areas of German settlement that had never been part of any German state in Eastern Europe.’ But they were nonetheless a stepping-stone towards the radicalised *völkisch*-racist forms of national identity established under the Nazis.<sup>107</sup>

Where does this leave the *Auslandsdeutsche*, whose existence largely disappeared from public view after 1920? They were certainly not constructed as a minority in the same way as the Germans from Poland were. This was not just for reasons of formal foreign policy, but, as I have argued in this article, also reflected a more general cultural shift towards the re-territorialisation of notions of Germanness. The ‘burning’ or ‘bleeding borders’ in the East were something tangible; they provided an emotional identification with the nation and its suffering, or, as Elizabeth Harvey puts it, they were plainly well-suited to provide the ‘imagery of a national body, violated and mutilated.’<sup>108</sup> The same applied, albeit to a lesser extent, to the confiscated German colonial territories in Africa and the Pacific.<sup>109</sup> But the emotional response to the loss of extra-territorial networks and transnational relationships represented by the *Auslandsdeutsche* – whether of the religious, associational, linguistic or commercial kind – was far more muted, reflecting Weimar Germany’s uncomfortable and ambiguous position as a ‘postcolonial nation in a still-

colonial world.<sup>110</sup> Certainly the sense of injustice felt by or on behalf of the *Auslandsdeutsche* could not sustain anything like the level of nationalist/quasi-religious 'fervour' and 'cultural remobilization for other wars' that territorial issues like the 'Polish question' in the 1920s and 30s could.<sup>111</sup> Newly-established pan-German networks after 1918, as well as older bodies seeking to revive their political fortunes in the post-war era, chose as their 'sites of memory' places closer to home, such as Danzig, Upper Silesia, the Sudetenland, Saxon Transylvania, South Tyrol or Vojvodina. Although they sometimes used phrases like *Grenz- und Auslandsdeutsche*, the intention was rarely to draw attention to Germans once living, or continuing to live, in such faraway places as Britain, France, Portugal, India, China, South Africa, Australasia or the Americas.<sup>112</sup> Rather, the latter were now, more often than not, cast as that part of the *Volk* living 'on foreign soil'.<sup>113</sup> For Hitler, foreign soil was something that had to be conquered, regardless of who lived there: in the world, as he saw it, races had to colonise or be colonised. There was no mid-way position based on informal spheres of influence or global, extra-territorial networks creating an interconnected but diverse and 'liberal' German world as an outward expression of the 'ideas of 1848'.<sup>114</sup>

This finding also has broader implications for the way we look at the question of national movements and border populations in post-First World War Europe. In particular, it is an illustration of how significant historical entanglements with, and ways of (re-) imagining, non-European spaces could be in shaping the fate of European minorities.<sup>115</sup> Eric Hobsbawm has characterised the years 1918-50 as the 'apogee of nationalism', with spaces for national heterogeneity and diversity – although perhaps not for international activism – correspondingly rendered precarious and suspect.<sup>116</sup> Much of this was connected with a re-territorialisation of nation-states which had already begun in 1914, or perhaps even during the Balkan wars of 1912-13. From this point of view, the *Auslandsdeutsche* belonged to a different age, one in which the

borders of national belonging had been more open, both geographically and in terms of a willingness to include far-flung transnational communities of citizens within economic and cultural ways of imagining nationhood. With the reframing of ideas about diversity through the Minority Treaties of the early 1920s, and with Germany, as a wounded, 'postcolonial nation', powerless to influence events except through actions – which it did not always fully control – on its own territory,<sup>17</sup> the *Auslandsdeutsche* had quite simply become an anachronism.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> W. Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery*, trans. by Jefferson Chase (New York, 2003) [2001]; G. Krumeich, *Die unbewältigte Niederlage: Das Trauma des Ersten Weltkriegs und die Weimarer Republik* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> R. Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford, 1993), 263.

<sup>3</sup> G. L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the Two World Wars* (Oxford, 1990). On 'cultural demobilisation', see also J. Horne, 'Kulturelle Demobilisierung 1919-1939: Ein sinnvoller historischer Begriff?', in: Wolfgang Hardtwig (ed.), *Politische Kulturgeschichte der Zwischenkriegszeit 1918-1939* (Göttingen, 2005), 129-50.

<sup>4</sup> B. Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Oxford, 2013). See also B. Ulrich & B. Ziemann (eds.), *Krieg im Frieden: Die umkämpfte Erinnerung an den Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, W. Chu, *The German Minority in Inter-War Poland* (Cambridge, 2012); E. Harvey, 'Pilgrimages to the "Bleeding Border": Gender and the Rituals of Nationalist Protest in Germany, 1919-1939', in: *Women's History Review* 9/2 (2000), 201-29.

<sup>6</sup> E. Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship in Germany: Ethnicity, Citizenship and Nationalism* (Oxford, 2004), 158.

<sup>7</sup> See C. R. von Frenzt, *A Lesson Forgotten: Minority Protection under the League of Nations. The Case of the German Minority in Poland, 1920-1934* (Münster, 1999), 56; D. Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2016), 150.

<sup>8</sup> M. Eberhardt, *Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Apartheid: Die deutsche Bevölkerungsgruppe Südwesafrikas 1915–1965* (Berlin, 2007), esp. 99-116.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, L. Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham, NC and London, 2001), 172-200.

<sup>10</sup> H. Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford, 2004), 93.

<sup>11</sup> See the various contributions to P. Panayi (ed.), *Germans as Minorities during the First World War: A Global Comparative Perspective* (Farnham, 2014). For measures against German settlers in the former European overseas colonies, see also M. Murphy, *Colonial Captivity during the First World War: Internment and the Fall of the German Empire, 1914-1919* (Cambridge, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 114-15. See also Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 48-9; Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship*, 178.

<sup>13</sup> M. Klotz, 'The Weimar Republic: A Postcolonial State in a Still-Colonial World', in: E. Ames, M. Klotz, L. Wildenthal (eds.), *Germany's Colonial Pasts* (Lincoln, NA, 2005), 135.

<sup>14</sup> G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London and New York, 1987) [1980], 60. Emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood*, 115.

<sup>16</sup> J. Oltmer, 'Heimkehrlager in der frühen Weimarer Republik: Instrumente zur Steuerung migratorischer Kriegsfolgen', in: C. Jahr & J. Thiel (eds.), *Lager vor Auschwitz: Gewalt und Integration im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2013), 197-214.

<sup>17</sup> D. Blackbourn, 'Germans Abroad and *Auslandsdeutsche*: Places, Networks and Experiences from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century', in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 41 (2015), 324-34, 346.

<sup>18</sup> D. Brandes, 'Deutsche Siedler in Rußland seit dem 18. Jahrhundert', in: K. J. Bade, P. C. Emmer, L. Lucassen, J. Oltmer (eds.), *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa: Vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 2007), 514-21.

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, R. Esser, 'Germans in Early Modern Britain', in: P. Panayi (ed.), *Germans in Britain since 1500* (London, 1996) 17-27; E. Kuijpers, 'Deutsche Bäcker Gesellen in Amsterdam im 17. Jahrhundert', in: Bade et al (eds.), *Enzyklopädie Migration*, 463-5; K. Weber, 'Deutsche Kaufleute im Atlantikhandel in Cádiz und Bordeaux vom späten 17. bis zum späten 19. Jahrhundert', in: Bade et al (eds.), *Enzyklopädie Migration*, 491-4.

<sup>20</sup> Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 321-2.

<sup>21</sup> See K. J. Bade, *Europa in Bewegung: Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2000), esp. 129-46.

<sup>22</sup> All the above figures taken from K. J. Bade and J. Oltmer, 'Deutschland', in: Bade et al (eds.), *Enzyklopädie Migration*, 147.

<sup>23</sup> U. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880 bis 1980: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter* (Bonn, 1986), here esp. 100.

<sup>24</sup> F.-L. Kroll, *Geburt der Moderne: Politik, Gesellschaft und Kultur vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2013) 69; and V. Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871-1918: Economics, Society, Culture and Politics* (New York, 2005), 38.

<sup>25</sup> F. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, CA, 1961), here esp. 130.

<sup>26</sup> F. Fischer, *From Kaiserreich to Third Reich: Elements of Continuity in German History, 1871-1945*, trans. by Roger Fletcher (London, 1986) [1979], 45-6.

<sup>27</sup> S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The 'Greater German Empire', 1871-1914* (London, 2014), 3, 261.

<sup>28</sup> R. Münz & R. Ohliger, 'Auslandsdeutsche', in: E. François & H. Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte I* (Munich, 2001), 371.

<sup>29</sup> S. Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany*, trans. by Sorcha O'Hagan (Cambridge, 2010) [2006], here esp. 389-95.

<sup>30</sup> Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora*, 261.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 230. See also G. Weidenfeller, *VDA. Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland/Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein (1881-1918): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus und Imperialismus im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1976).

<sup>32</sup> See also D. Blackbourn, 'Das Kaiserreich transnational: Eine Skizze', in: S. Conrad & J. Osterhammel (eds.), *Das Kaiserreich transnational: Deutschland in der Welt, 1871-1914* (Göttingen, 2006), 302-24.

<sup>33</sup> B. D. Naranch, 'Inventing the *Auslandsdeutsche*: Emigration, Colonial Fantasy, and German National Identity, 1848-71', in: Ames, Klotz, Wildenthal (eds.), *Germany's Colonial Pasts*, here esp. 27.

<sup>34</sup> Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship*, 173.

<sup>35</sup> Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora*, 262.

<sup>36</sup> Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship*, 178.

<sup>37</sup> S. Manz and P. Panayi, 'The Internment of Civilian "Enemy Aliens" in the British Empire', in: S. Manz, P. Panayi, M. Stibbe (eds.), *Internment during the First World War: A Mass Global Phenomenon* (London, 2019), 22-3.

<sup>38</sup> See German Foreign Office to State Ministry of Lippe (and others), 31 August 1914, in Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen (henceforth LNRW), Abt. Ostwestfalen-Lippe, Detmold, Staatsministerium Lippe, L 75, XIII No. 21, Bl. 440. Also J. Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850-1939* (Vancouver, 2006), 147.

<sup>39</sup> Zentral-Auskunftsstelle für Auswanderer to the Zentral-Nachweise-Bureau of the German Red Cross, 4 November 1914, in Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (henceforth BArch), R 1505/20, Bl. 326.

<sup>40</sup> See the evidence in *ibid.*, R 1505/21 - R1505/30.

<sup>41</sup> M. Stibbe, 'The Internment of Civilians by Belligerent States During the First World War and the Response of the International Committee of the Red Cross', in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 41/1 (2006), 5-19.

<sup>42</sup> See Secretary of State in the Reich Office of Interior to the Prussian Minister of Interior, 2 October 1914, in LNRW, Abt. Rheinland, Duisburg, Oberpräsidium Düsseldorf, No. 14986, Bl. 59.

<sup>43</sup> See the appeal issued by this organisation in April 1915, in LNRW, Abt. Ostwestfalen-Lippe, Detmold, Staatsministerium Lippe, L 75, XIII No. 21, Bl. 473.

<sup>44</sup> Murphy, *Colonial Captivity*, 36 and ff.

<sup>45</sup> See, among others, E. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign Against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 31-54; T. Dederling, "'Avenge the Lusitania': The Anti-German Riots in South Africa in 1915", in: *Immigrants and Minorities* 31/3 (2013), 256-88.

<sup>46</sup> F. C. Luebke, *Germans in Brazil: A Comparative History of Cultural Conflict during World War I* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1987), 119-46.

<sup>47</sup> See, for instance, German Foreign Office to the Zentralauskunftsstelle für Auswanderer, 19 July 1918, in BArch, R 1505/21, Bl. 257. Also M. Stibbe, 'Radicalização e Internacionalização: Rumo a uma história global de cativo militar e civil durante a primeira guerra mundial', in: P.A. Oliveira (ed.), *Prisioneiros de Guerras: Experiências de cativo no século XX* (Lisbon, 2019), 65.

<sup>48</sup> J. Nagler, *Nationale Minoritäten im Krieg: 'Feindliche Ausländer' und die amerikanische Heimatfront während des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Hamburg, 2000), 384-403.

<sup>49</sup> For further examples, see G. Fischer, *Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Homefront Experience in Australia, 1914-1920* (St. Lucia, Queensland, 1989); P. Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (Oxford, 1991); A. Francis, *'To Be Truly British We Must Be Anti-German': New Zealand, Enemy Aliens and the Great War Experience, 1914-1919* (Oxford, 2012); B. S. Kordan, *No Free Man: Canada, the Great War, and the Enemy Alien Experience* (Montreal, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> F. Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, trans. by James Joll (London, 1967) [1961], 103-6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>52</sup> E. Zechlin, 'Deutschland zwischen Kabinettskrieg und Wirtschaftskrieg: Politik und Kriegführung in den ersten Monaten des Weltkriegs 1914', in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 199 (1964), 347-458.

<sup>53</sup> Fischer, *Germany's Aims*, 103.

<sup>54</sup> Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship*, 185.

<sup>55</sup> Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 72.

<sup>56</sup> Kriegspresseamt, *Deutsche Kolonien: Eine Lebensnotwendigkeit* (Berlin, 1918).

<sup>57</sup> Acting commander of the Seventh Army Corps to the State Ministry of Lippe (and others), 30 July 1918, in Stadtarchiv Detmold, Weltkrieg: Kriegswirtschaft 1914-1928, No. 439.

<sup>58</sup> Rosen to Unterkunftsdepartement of the Prussian Ministry of War, 19 March 1918, in BArch, R 901/83978.

<sup>59</sup> Rosen to Hertling, 26 April 1918, in *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Even during the neutrality period before 1917, as Michael Kazin has recently written, 'most [American] wage-earners born in Germany and Austria-Hungary were glad to benefit from the manufacturing boom' which resulted from weapons exports to Britain. Furthermore, as early as November 1914 'Bethlehem Steel Magnate Charles M. Schwab (whose grandparents on both sides had emigrated from Germany) signed a contract to deliver \$50 million in arms to the Allies'. See M. Kazin, *War against War: The American Fight for Peace 1914-1918* (New York, 2018), 25-6; Nagler, *Nationale Minoritäten*, 113, also identifies the Lusitania sinking in May 1915 as a key turning point, when many German-Americans switched from (largely passive) support for the Kaiserreich to public protestations of loyalty to the United States.

<sup>61</sup> Chu, *The German Minority*, 54.

<sup>62</sup> See J. Oltmer, 'Deutsche "Rückwanderer" aus Rußland in Deutschland von der 1890er Jahren bis in die Zwischenkriegszeit', in: Bade et al (eds.), *Enzyklopädie Migration*, 505-8; Oltmer, 'Heimkehrlager', 198; and A. H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922* (Ithaca, NY, 2010), 106, 109 and 122.

<sup>63</sup> L. Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials in the 'Mythic Provinces': Recasting French Identities in Alsace and Lorraine, 1918-1920', in: *French Historical Studies* 23/1 (2000), 141; G. Aly, *Europa gegen die Juden, 1880-1945* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 2017), 133-40.

<sup>64</sup> P. Panayi, *The Germans in India: Elite European Migrants in the British Empire* (Manchester, 2017), 51; Manz and Panayi, 'The Internment of Civilian "Enemy Aliens"', 23; E. F. v. Rabenau, 'Die Lage der Palästina-Deutschen', in: *Der Tag* 162 (24 July 1920). Copy in BArch, R 8034/II, No. 7667, Bl. 72-4.

<sup>65</sup> Murphy, *Colonial Captivity*, 152-68; Stibbe, 'Radicalização e Internacionalização', 67.

<sup>66</sup> M. Stibbe, *Civilian Internment during the First World War: A European and Global History, 1914-1920* (London, 2019), 239-89.

<sup>67</sup> See A. Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York, 2007), esp. 420-2 and 429. Also Nagler, *Nationale Minoritäten*, 496-509; and Kordan, *No Free Man*, 264-7.

<sup>68</sup> Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, to Secretary of Prisoners of War Department, 10 January 1919, in The National Archives, Kew, London (henceforth TNA), FO 383/478.

<sup>69</sup> See the relevant documents in BArch, R 901/83958 and TNA, FO 383/501-2. Also Murphy, *Colonial Captivity*, 196.

<sup>70</sup> German consulate in Rotterdam to AA, 6 August 1919, in BArch, R 901/83960. This was on top of several thousand sent from Britain between January and April 1919 – see German consulate in Rotterdam to AA, 23 April 1919, in BArch, R 901/83959.

<sup>71</sup> Panayi, *The Germans in India*, 218.

<sup>72</sup> Prussian Ministry of Interior to the Oberpräsidenten of the Prussian provinces, 9 April 1918, in LNRW, Abteilung Rheinland, Duisburg, Oberpräsidium Düsseldorf, No. 14986, Bl. 359-60.

<sup>73</sup> Prussian Ministry of Interior, Leitsätze über die Übernahme der Auslandsflüchtlinge auf die Provinzverbände, n.d. [1918], in *ibid.*, Bl. 361-4.

<sup>74</sup> Acting commander of the Seventh Army Corps to governor of the district of Düsseldorf, 18 October 1918, passing on request from the Governor-General of Occupied Belgium, 17 October 1918, in *ibid.*, Bl. 284.

<sup>75</sup> President of the civil administration in Liège to governor of the district of Düsseldorf, 1 November 1918, in *ibid.*, Bl. 278-9.

<sup>76</sup> See, for instance, Verhandlungsbericht über die am 3. Januar 1919 stattgehabte Sitzung der Reichszentralstelle für Kriegs- und Zivilgefangene; and Protokoll der Sitzung am 23. Januar 1919, both in BArch, R 901/86451.

<sup>77</sup> On the western Allies' decision to hold German military prisoners until 1919-20, and the German response, see H. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914-1920* (Cambridge, 2011), 296-307 (quote on 306).

<sup>78</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 97. See also German consulate in Rotterdam to AA, 23 April 1919, in BArch, R 901/83959, and Under-Secretary of State, Home Office to Secretary of Prisoners of War Department, 8 April 1919, in TNA, FO 383/501.

<sup>79</sup> Swiss envoy in Berlin to the AA, 13 June 1919, in Swiss Federal Archives, Bern, E2020-1000-130, Bd. 63, DE 96 004.

<sup>80</sup> See Foreign Office minute, 10 June 1919, in TNA, FO 383/502.

<sup>81</sup> War Office to Secretary, Prisoners of War Department, 17 June 1919, in TNA, FO 383/478.

<sup>82</sup> Treaty of Versailles, article 220, at <https://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versailles.html>.

<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, 'Unwürdige Behandlung deutscher Zivilinternierter', in: *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, 64 (4 February 1919). Copy in BArch, R 8034/II, no. 7664, Bl. 61.

<sup>84</sup> See, for instance, 'Ein Massenprotest deutscher Frauen', in: *Berliner Tageblatt*, 184 (25 April 1919). Copy in *ibid.*, Bl. 154. Also Reichsausschuß deutscher Frauen zur Befreiung unserer Gefangenen, Berlin-Wilmersdorf, 28 April 1919, in Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 060-53, Bl. 12.

<sup>85</sup> Ministry for Military Affairs, Operations Department, to the General Commander of the second Bavarian Army Corps and the Bavarian Ministry of Interior, 23 July 1919, in Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Munich, Abt. II: Neuere Bestände, Minn 66273.

<sup>86</sup> M. Stibbe, 'The Internment of Enemy Aliens in the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918', in Manz, Panayi, Stibbe (eds.), *Internment during the First World War*, 74-5.

<sup>87</sup> See Oltmer, 'Heimkehrlager', 198-200.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>89</sup> Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*, 98-9; Chu, *The German Minority*, 12.

<sup>90</sup> Klotz, 'The Weimar Republic', 141.

<sup>91</sup> Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora*, 264-5.

<sup>92</sup> Reichsstelle für deutsche Rückwanderung und Auswanderung to the State Ministry of Lippe (and others), 24 August 1918, in LNRW, Abteilung Ostwestfalen-Lippe, Detmold, Staatsministerium Lippe, L 75, XIII No. 21, Bl. 544.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Prussian War Ministry to the State Ministry of Lippe (and others), 26 October 1918, in *ibid.*, Bl. 547.

<sup>95</sup> Protokoll über die Sitzung zur Gründung des Hilfsbundes für Auslandsdeutsche, 13 May 1919, in LNRW, Abteilung Rheinland, Duisburg, Oberpräsidium Düsseldorf, No. 14986, Bl. 342.

<sup>96</sup> Schutzbund der im Feindesland durch Kriegshandlung geschädigten Zivilpersonen, letter sent to various Düsseldorf firms and to governor of district of Düsseldorf, 24 July 1919, in *ibid.*, Bl. 330.

<sup>97</sup> B. Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender: German Prisoners, British Captors, and Manhood in the Great War and Beyond* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015), 149-51.

<sup>98</sup> 'Die Entschädigung der Auslandsdeutschen', in: *Mitteilung des Volksbundes zum Schutze der deutschen Kriegs- und Zivilgefangenen*, 32/22 (August 1919), 3-4. Copy in BArch, R 901/86449.

<sup>99</sup> Die vereinigte Ortsgruppe des Bundes der Auslandsdeutschen im unbesetzten Rheinland und Westfalen to the Regierungspräsident in Düsseldorf, n.d. [December 1920], in LNRW, Abteilung Rheinland, Duisburg, Oberpräsidium Düsseldorf, No. 14986, Bl. 380-1.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> See <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/contract-awarded-to-publish-the-1921-census-online/>.

<sup>102</sup> Oltmer, 'Heimkehrlager', 198-201.

<sup>103</sup> Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship*, 158.

<sup>104</sup> All the above figures taken from Oltmer, 'Heimkehrlager', 203-6.

<sup>105</sup> Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*, 99.

<sup>106</sup> Blackbourn, 'Germans Abroad and *Auslandsdeutsche*', 344; Chu, *The German Minority*, 54-6.

<sup>107</sup> Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*, 100. On the 'transformation' of Ostforschung in the years 1925-35, see also M. Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1988), 26-33.

<sup>108</sup> E. Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven, CT, 2003), 32-3.

<sup>109</sup> Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire*, 186-96.

<sup>110</sup> Klotz, 'The Weimar Republic', 141.

<sup>111</sup> A. Becker, 'Faith, Ideologies, and the "Cultures of War"', in J. Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War I* (Oxford, 2010), 243.

<sup>112</sup> Münz and Ohliger, 'Auslandsdeutsche', 376.

<sup>113</sup> E. Maxis, *Volk auf fremder Erde: Das Schicksalsbuch der Auslandsdeutschen* (Breslau, 1933).

<sup>114</sup> Klotz, 'The Weimar Republic', 144.

<sup>115</sup> Here I have been influenced in particular by J. Leonhard, 'Comparison, Transfer and Entanglement or: How to Write Modern European History today?', in: *Journal of Modern European History* 14/2 (2016), 149-63.

<sup>116</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, 1992) [1990], 131-62.

<sup>117</sup> Blackbourn, 'Germans Abroad and *Auslandsdeutsche*', 343-4.