Defensive Humanitarianism: Swiss Internment Camps in WWI

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Abstract

During World War I, the Swiss state interned nearly 30,000 foreign soldiers who had previously been held in POW camps in Germany, France, Britain, Belgium, Austria, and Russia. The internment camp system that Switzerland implemented arose from a Swiss diplomatic platform that this thesis describes as defensive humanitarianism. By offering good offices to the belligerent states of WWI, the Swiss state utilized humanitarian law both to secure Swiss neutrality and to alleviate, to a degree, the immense human suffering of the war. This thesis fills a gap in the historiographical literature as one of the few papers in English on the topic, as well as one of the only to holistically consider the internment camp system as a panacea for the crises that the Swiss state faced during WWI. By mixing domestic concerns with international diplomacy and humanitarianism, a domestic policy platform taken to the international diplomatic level succeeded in building enough trust between the signatory states to create an internment system that reconceptualized the treatment of foreign soldiers from the holding of prisoners to the healing of men.

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Introduction

On July 27, 1916, William McGilvray, a sergeant in the London Scottish Regiment, found himself riding in a passenger train travelling south through Germany, surveying the landscape of the Rhine River valley. It was quiet, the sounds of the sloshing mud and whizzing bullets of trench warfare far off to the west. He had started that day in Friedrichsfeld, one of the many prisoner of war camps in Germany that detained Allied soldiers. He would arrive that evening in Darmstadt to connect with another train brimming with other British prisoners of war. His journey would bring him to Konstanz, Germany, for examination before internment in Switzerland; Konstanz was for many internees the last stop before entry into Switzerland.[1] McGilvray, along with 305 of his compatriots, comprised the first British POWs imprisoned in Germany to be evaluated for internment in Switzerland, which offered better conditions than those in Friedrichsfeld. Crowds of Swiss citizens at the train stations of Zurich, Lausanne, Montreux, and finally Chateaux D'Oex would soon greet him. Speeches by Swiss and British military, government, and Red Cross officials would welcome him and the other soldiers throughout their journey, as well as music, gifts, and warm meals. His experiences and perceptions have been echoed by many soldiers who were interned during World War I in Switzerland, including those from France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, and Russia.[2]

Three distinct legal factors that shaped and allowed for the creation of the internment camp system emerged over the course of the previous centuries. First, a body of international law developed in Europe beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in the form of the Geneva Convention of 1864 and The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907. Both specifically evaluate and offer guidance on the rules of war and the treatment of soldiers, POWs, internees, and civilians during war. These assemblies dictated, to an extent, the treatment of soldiers and civilians, captive or not, in times of war. A second factor that emerged was Switzerland's neutrality, created in 1848 with the foundation of Swiss federal state. Third, humanitarianism began to truly explode onto the European scene with the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross by Henry Dunant in Geneva, Switzerland in 1863. International law, and Swiss neutrality, humanitarianism emerged and expanded around the same time and in the same intellectual spaces in Europe. In response to the political, social, and economic crises of World War I, Swiss diplomats and statesmen utilized the tools at hand to merge international law, Switzerland's neutrality politics, and the ideology of humanitarianism into a cohesive diplomatic platform to protect Swiss sovereignty, while at the same time asserting Switzerland's commitment to the ideology of humanitarianism. This strategy necessitated the Swiss state to

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

[2] "Letter from Sergeant William McGilvray," *The London Scottish Regimental Gazette*, July 1916, 136.

cooperate with international NGOs and other humanitarian and charitable bodies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross, and the Vatican. Of these relationships, this thesis focuses the most on the relationship between the ICRC and Swiss state.

The close relationship between the ICRC and Swiss state existed long before WWI, but during this period many overlaps existed between the two. Most important of these was Gustave Ador. Ador, born to the elite of Geneva in 1845, acted as president of the ICRC from 1910 to 1928. As ICRC president during the conflict, he pushed in 1914 for the creation of the International Prisoners of War Agency. He also frequently communicated with and called on Arthur Hoffman, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Swiss government, to intervene on the behalf of sick and injured POWs in captor states.[3] After Hoffmann's resignation, Ador replaced him on the Federal Council.[4] Many historians see Ador's appointment within the Federal Council to Minister of Foreign Affairs was a symbolic act on the part of the largely German-speaking government to prove Switzerland's commitment to neutrality and international humanitarianism.[5] The connections between the ICRC and the Swiss state will only be explored in this thesis in regards to their impact on defensive humanitarianism and the internment camp system, both theoretically and practically. Both the ICRC and the Swiss state have historically needed the cooperation and collaboration of the other to further their humanitarian ventures. This this relationship deepened through the actions of actors like Gustave Ador during WWI.

The internment camp system in Switzerland during World War I represented the institutional intersection among international law, Swiss neutrality politics, and humanitarianism. This intersection formed a new policy referred to in this thesis as defensive humanitarianism.[6] Due to its successes in WWI, this policy platform would later come to define Swiss international relations and the Swiss image internationally in the decades that followed. WWI acted as the culminating moment during which the combination of international law, neutrality politics, and humanitarianism forged modern Swiss diplomacy and international relations.

The topic of internment camps in Switzerland during World War I and their impact on humanitarianism, Swiss politics, and European history is understudied. These areas rarely overlap with each other in the literature, as historians generally treat them separately. In the twentieth century, these individual themes dominate the larger historical narrative of Switzerland during WWI. Looking at the situation from the perspective of international diplomacy, the role of Swiss good offices, or the offering by a third party state to facilitate peaceful mediation between two opposing states, in the formation of international treaties was especially popular as historians began to look back

[3] Irène Herrmann, "Ador, Gustave," International Encyclopedia of the First War, accessed April 12, 2018, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/ador_gustave.

[4] The Federal Council has 7 members and acts as the executive body of the Swiss government.

[5] Herrmann, "Ador, Gustav."

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

on the legacies of WWI.[7] Swiss good offices greatly informed the idea of defensive humanitarianism in this paper, as the Swiss state operated with more authority than the ICRC or Vatican in international diplomacy during WWI; this idea will be discussed in section two.

Historians do not dispute that the international laws, treaties, and agreements surrounding POWs, internees, and civilians in WWI expanded in scope during the conflict. However, many scholars have greatly understated the role of the Swiss state and the Swiss internment camp system in their conclusions.[8] These historians minimize the importance of small-player states in their explanatory framework, which views this evolution as an effort on the part of major-player states, specifically Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and France to lessen the suffering of soldiers and civilians in a war of attrition.[9] These authors undervalue the actions of small-state players, such as Switzerland, as their role in WWI transpired primarily in the unseen diplomatic realm through their role in offering good offices. The actions of the belligerent and larger states capture more attention, as their actions functioned centrally to the progression of the military conflict. Other authors briefly mention the Swiss internment camp system in their discussion of WWI diplomacy, but only as a small-scale humanitarian project that did not significantly impact the war, arguing instead that it merely created enough proof of good intentions to allow for the larger belligerent states to collaborate on later bilateral agreements.[10] In an atmosphere that focused on the actions and diplomatic platforms of belligerent, major-player states, the historiography of this period failed to look at the other smaller, but still influential, actors. This paper seeks to amend the shortcomings of this historiography by acknowledging the central role of international diplomacy in WWI as facilitated through the good offices of smaller actors, specifically highlighting the Swiss case and its unique contributions to the legacy of international law. This acknowledgment requires a fundamental reframing of WWI from a focus on the traditional major-players to a more nuanced look at the facilitators of productive international diplomatic discourse.

Those historians, Swiss or otherwise, who focus on Swiss internment camps specifically have traditionally approached it from the position of a history of neutrality and international relations. In the historiography of Switzerland during WWI, some historians maintain that the Swiss government acted as a main actor on the international diplomatic and humanitarian scenes, and the ICRC worked as a secondary collaborator.[11]

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[7] Raymond R. Probst, *"Good Offices" in the Light of Swiss International Practice and Experience* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1989).

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

[9] Small-player states, as used in this thesis, refers to neutral or less-discussed states in WWI that are generally not considered to be among the large and powerful Western actors, namely: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia.

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

[11] Georges André Chevallaz, *The Challenge of Neutrality: Diplomacy and the Defense of*

This ignores the collaboration of the ICRC with the Swiss government and military on the internment camp system, as well as the ICRC's larger international role as the progenitor of national Red Cross societies. The relationship between the ICRC and Swiss state will be explored in the section of this thesis, in order to clarify its collaborative and mutually beneficial qualities during WWI. Others have approached the history of the internment camp system as only part of the history of humanitarianism and the ICRC, ignoring the role played by diplomacy. This strain of the historiography looks at the Swiss state only as a practical facilitator, possessing the bureaucratic framework and institutional resources to physically construct and manage the camps, not on its role as sovereign power and negotiator.[12] This thesis argues that domestic Swiss neutrality politics and the international humanitarian ideology of the ICRC intersected in the diplomatic platform of the Swiss state, leading to the formation of the internment camp system, in which both the Swiss state and the ICRC played different but complementary roles.

There are exceptions to the historiographical oversight of Swiss internment camps and their unique characteristics. Some recent scholarship gives a general overview of life in the Swiss internment camps, its economic benefits in the area of Swiss tourism, and the role of women in Switzerland during WWI.[13] The focus on the benefits of the internment camp system for the Swiss economy and the roles of women in the internment system represents a new area of exploration. However, historians of this subject have failed to recognize the unique blend of the domestic imperative of neutrality and the international movement of goods and people for the Swiss economy with the ideas and institutions of international humanitarianism. This thesis builds on this economic approach to the internment camp system by contextualizing its place in the debate in tandem with the international diplomacy and humanitarianism pieces.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century historians of Switzerland have studied Swiss history through a combination of political, diplomatic, economic, or social lenses, however, these methods have failed to offer a rounded look at the complementary factors that influenced the Swiss state during WWI. According to recent works of history on Switzerland, neutrality was the dominant Swiss interest in Swiss international relations during WWI. However, scholars have also increasingly portrayed the influence of neutrality politics on areas such as the Swiss economy and Swiss identity inside and outside of Switzerland.[14] Some of the newest scholarship focuses on the situation of specific internee groups within

*Switzerland (*Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001).

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

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

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

Switzerland; though their work exists outside the purview of this thesis.[15]

Most notable among emerging scholars of the Swiss WWI internment camps is Cédric Cotter, whose work focuses on the connection between neutrality and humanitarianism in Switzerland, and its meaning for Swiss diplomacy and identity.[16] Cotter offers many important insights into the political situation of the Swiss state during WWI, arguing that the issue of neutrality functioned as the central concern for the Swiss Bundesrat in its decision to pursue the internment camp system.[17] Many of Cotter's works look at the relationship between the Swiss state and humanitarianism; however, this thesis broadens the scope of this debate by observing the evolution of international humanitarianism through bi- or multilateral treaties. The major difference between Cotter's work and the conclusions of this thesis arise from the use of defensive humanitarianism as a unifying concept that explains the merging of the different issues the Swiss state faced into a coherent policy platform implemented by the Swiss state during WWI. By examining the internment camp system as a microcosm of the political, humanitarian, and economic developments and crises of WWI, this thesis offers new insights into the domestic and international impacts of the camps on Switzerland and Europe during and after WWI.

These insights are drawn from the large body of primary source literature from the ICRC, Swiss government, and Swiss military that draw out the interconnected nature of international law, neutrality politics, and international humanitarianism. The Swiss army in particular took meticulous care in preserving its correspondence with outside governments, as well as their internal briefs, notices, and telegrams, and these can be found in the Swiss Federal Archives in Bern. These French and German language sources form the primary basis of this thesis. In addition, Major Édouard Favre, Surgeon General and head of the internment system within the Swiss army, published three reports between 1917 and 1919 on the workings of the camps and his reflections on them.[18] These reports synthesize many of the documents found in the Federal Archives, and this study employs them more frequently than the original papers. They offer the factual information of the originals, but include his commentary as a main actor in the camps. His insights begin with the formation of the internment camps in 1915 and continue through to the post-war repatriation of the internees beginning in 1918. These notes are useful as their intended audience were members of the Swiss military, who managed the operation of the internment camps, and therefore

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

[16] Cotter, *(s')Aider Pour Survivre: Action Humanitaire et Neutralité Suisse pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale* (Geneva: University of Geneva, 2016).

[17] The Swiss Bundesrat is the Swiss Parliament. Switzerland is the only direct democracy in the world.

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

lacked the propagandistic tendencies of other government sources.

In addition, British Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Philip Picot published his memoirs of his time as a British diplomatic administrator involved with the camps, including the reception of British internees in 1916.[19] His memoir, *The British interned in Switzerland*, relays many anecdotes on the reception of interned soldiers in Switzerland, however, it presents the limitation of the British populace acting as its primary audience. It must be examined with extra scrutiny due to Picot's tendency towards embellishment, and the propagandistic role of his writings.

While Favre, as a ranking official of the military, had a bias towards the importance of Swiss neutrality politics, Picot tended towards international law and diplomacy as a British diplomat. The reports by Favre and Picot allow this thesis to draw conclusions on how actors within each separate area of influence conceived of the roles of international, domestic, and humanitarian issues. They reveal the relationships among these areas, as well as their overlapping roles within the context of the internment camp system. The methodology used here differs from the methodologies of other historians of Swiss diplomacy and Swiss history by examining these documents as part of the larger idea of defensive humanitarianism.

The format of this thesis is both thematic and chronological and utilizes a telescoped structure. Each section examines defensive humanitarianism and the internment camp system from temporally and thematically focused perspectives. The narrowing in sequential sections from the broad, international developments to the individuals impacted by the internment camp system allows this thesis to connect the areas of international law, neutrality politics, and humanitarianism at increasingly focused levels in order to explain how they merge to form the policy platform of defensive humanitarianism.

The first section focuses on international laws and treaties and the history of internment camps before WWI in order to contextualize these areas at the European level. In addition, this section analyzes the creation and implementation of the first iteration of internment camps in Switzerland during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 for three purposes: to trace the foundations of defensive humanitarianism in Swiss history, to explore the international aspect of the Swiss internment camp system, and to draw conclusions on the strengths of defensive humanitarianism. This thesis posits that the overlapping evolutions of international law, neutrality politics and humanitarianism merged into defensive humanitarianism in Switzerland during WWI. This synthesis of different domestic and international components created a policy platform with distinctly collaborative mechanisms. The international character of defensive humanitarianism, therefore, arose from its basis in international diplomacy and international humanitarian advocacy and played a role in the favorable linking of the Swiss state with international humanitarianism.

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

Section two then looks at the context of Swiss neutrality politics in treaty negotiations during WWI before the full implementation of the internment camp system in 1916, narrowing the focus thematically to defensive humanitarianism in practice and chronologically to 1914-1916. It closely examines defensive humanitarianism as a policy and diplomatic platform of the Swiss government by analyzing the motivations of the involved states and organization during treaty negotiations. The focus of this section also extends to the specific language of the treaty in order to evaluate the how each of the three pillars of defensive humanitarianism influenced the deliberations. By understanding how the internment camp system created by these treaties represents the Swiss policy platform of defensive humanitarianism, this thesis illustrates how this platform succeeded domestically and internationally during this period.

Finally, the conclusion of this thesis focuses on the international response to the Swiss internment camps and their effects on later Swiss diplomacy, as well as their impact on the evolution of humanitarianism. The conclusion seeks to offer explanations for the role of neutrality and humanitarianism in Switzerland, as well as to offer insights into the unique Swiss position in global politics and diplomacy. With the current centennial commemoration of WWI, the parallels between international law, neutrality, and humanitarian issues in WWI versus the present make the subject of defensive humanitarianism relevant today. In a globalized world that is increasingly seeing the largest states isolating themselves from international trade, politics, and humanitarianism, the smaller players may well again rise to meet the current crises as Switzerland did during WWI. Historiographically, this thesis pioneers a new methodology for understanding not only the Swiss internment camp system during WWI, but also the larger debates around humanitarianism, diplomacy, and WWI in Switzerland and Europe currently absent in the historical literature through the idea of defensive humanitarianism.

Humanitarian Developments before the Great War

A body of international law, international humanitarian ideas, and an early form of internment camps, already existed in Switzerland long before William McGilvray's internment in Chateaux d'Oex in 1916. The history of interned prisoners of war in Switzerland traces its roots to the creation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863, the Geneva Convention of 1864, and The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907. This section investigates these international treaties for their role in legitimating the Swiss internment camps during World War I. It then examines the internment of the French Army of the East under general Charles-Denis Bourbaki, better known as the Bourbaki Army, in Switzerland during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. This preliminary form of internment camps in Switzerland helped to prove the feasibility of internment camp systems in Switzerland and set Switzerland up for implementing defensive humanitarianism. Finally, the section closes with the investigation of the pressure that WWI put on Switzerland and the specific crises it exacerbated. This section argues that defensive humanitarianism can first be seen in the Bourbaki internment and that

the legitimacy of defensive humanitarianism arises from its international character.

The evolution of Geneva, Switzerland as an international hub for humanitarian organizations finds its origins in the nineteenth century. In 1864, Geneva came to be the home of both the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Convention for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Wounded in Armies in the Field, or, as it would be later known, the Geneva Convention. Henri Dunant, a native of Geneva and active philanthropist, travelled to Italy in 1859 and witnessed the Battle of Solferino between June 24 and 28, a pivotal moment in the Second Italian War of Independence. In his account of the battle, he claimed,

> "The personnel of military field hospitals is always inadequate, and would still be inadequate if the number of aids were two or three times as many, and this will always be the case. The only possible way is to turn to the public … The imploring appeal must therefore be made to all men of all countries and of all classes, to the mighty ones of this world, and to the poorest workman."[20]

Dunant's experiences with philanthropic organizations in Geneva, coupled with his observations in Solferino, led him to publish his account, *A Memory of Solferino,* in 1862. His account not only detailed the battle, but also called for a volunteer society that could mobilize in times of crisis to care for the casualties of war. The recognition of the humanitarian concerns expressed in the book by many elites in Geneva led Henri Dunant and a group with four other French Swiss aristocratic philanthropists from Geneva to create ICRC. The ICRC acted as the touchstone for the later creation of individual, nation-based Red Cross organizations. The motivations of this group came from their Calvinist convictions, the strong tradition of philanthropy in Geneva, and the unassailable tenets of humanitarianism.[21] This group represents the first iteration of Swiss citizens actively engaging with humanitarianism as a public platform. The Swiss Red Cross would eventually enter as the first national chapter.

The following year the ICRC continued grow in importance in Switzerland and abroad through the Geneva Convention. The successful completion of the Geneva Convention firmly solidified international acceptance of the neutral, volunteer, and humanitarian roles of the neutral humanitarian actors in military conflicts. The ICRC presented itself as an impartial, non-governmental proponent of all things humanitarian through its mission statement, and the organization today still credits itself as the initiators of the 1864 convention.[22] The Geneva Convention elevated the international acceptance of

[20] Henri Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino* (Geneva: American Red Cross, 1959), 57.

[21] Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), 15.

[22] The ICRC's mission statement is as follows: "the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance." See "The ICRC's Mandate and Mission," The International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed March 15, 2018, https://www.icrc.org/en/mandate-and-mission.

the ICRC through its recommendations on the treatment of civilian and military victims of war. In an era of state power and exclusionary nationalism, the rise of an internationally recognized NGO with an international humanitarian mission was significant. While the ICRC could not compete on the global diplomatic stage, it could engage in international humanitarian campaigns that the governments of nation states at this time could not. The Geneva Conference allowed for this opportunity in the 57 states that signed, ratified, or made reservations, accessions, or declarations on the final document before WWI.[23]

This conference also secured the neutrality of ambulances and hospitals, as well as medical personnel and chaplains. It set guidelines for the safe return of medical staffers along with all of their possessions and equipment to their respective units. It provided for their immunity from capture and destruction, for the treatment of wounded and sick soldiers and their personnel, and for their impartial reception and treatment by foreign states. It also stipulated for the protection of civilians providing aid, and the recognition of the Red Cross symbol as a means of identifying persons and equipment covered by the agreement.[24] The Geneva Convention offered distinctly humanitarian guidelines for the conduct of war not just for generals in the boardrooms, but for officers and soldiers in the field. It succeeded in normalizing the presence of neutral actors in conflicts, specifically medical personnel and humanitarian observers. The internment camp system could not have existed without these neutral actors on the ground, as their absence would have precluded the evaluation of POWs for internment in Switzerland. This topic will be further discussed in the next section. These article points represent only the major suggestions; smaller wording within the articles themselves would lead to opportunities for humanitarian internment as a viable system.

Articles 5 and 6 of the convention played the most determining roles in the future of the internment of prisoners of war in Switzerland. In Article 5 the clause, "inhabitants of the country who bring help to the wounded shall be respected and shall remain free … the presence of any wounded combatant receiving shelter and care in a house shall ensure its protection," allowed for the further protection of Swiss neutrality by means of housing sick or injured prisoners of war.[25] The dispersal of interned soldiers throughout all regions of Switzerland during World War I assisted in the

[23] Signatory states participate in treaty deliberations and added their signatures at the time of completion. There is a set period of time that states can sign to join the treaties, after which other states may only accede or succeed to join them. Finally, states sometimes choose to produce reservations or declarations when acceding to treaties, meaning these states make unilateral statements that seek to modify or exclude the legal effects of specific areas of the treaty. For more information, see "Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 22 August 1964," International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed March 25, 2017, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/States.xsp?xp_viewStates=XPages_NORMStatesParties&xp_treatySelected=120.

[24] "Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 22 August 1864." The International Committee of the Red Cross. Accessed March 25, 2017, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/ART/120-40005?OpenDocument.

[25] Ibid.

conceptualizations of Switzerland as a sanctuary. The Red Cross volunteers, as well as local individuals that assisted in the internment camp system, whether in hospitals or as employers, could not be targeted for reprisals by belligerent states. Article 5 effectively allowed for the protection of Swiss territories, if the Swiss government and military interred soldiers throughout the country on humanitarian grounds.

The convention also explicitly discussed opportunities for wounded or injured soldiers during wartime utilizing language that would later link humanitarian internment with the Swiss government's neutrality and sovereignty concerns in 1914. Article 6, which states that, "those who, after their recovery, are recognized as being unfit for further service, shall be repatriated. The others may likewise be sent back, on condition that they shall not again, for the duration of hostilities, take up arms,"[26] set up the possibility of transferring prisoners of war from belligerent states, which adopted the treaty, to Switzerland. There, POWs could receive medical care outside of the warzone. The soldiers' transfer to Switzerland solidified Swiss neutrality. This allowed all belligerents to believe that their wounded and sick soldiers would be truly kept away from the battlefield, a belief that kept all sides honest and greatly reduced the chance for reprisals. The importance of trust in international diplomacy is paramount to successful diplomacy, as largely customary law practices had the consequence of reprisal acts for perceived non-compliance.[27] The honesty that the internment camp system engendered had a direct impact on the success of defensive humanitarianism in Switzerland.

The application of humanitarian principles of the Geneva Convention to protect Swiss neutrality intermingled with Swiss neutrality politics and international diplomacy to form the wider policy platform of the Swiss government in their diplomatic endeavors leading up to and during World War I: defensive humanitarianism. The Geneva Convention codified the humanitarian goals of the ICRC and granted legal protection to their international activities. As the ICRC gained international prestige, their collaboration with the Swiss state after 1864 also increased.[28] The internment camp system benefited from this history of collaboration, for when it came time to theoretically and practically construct the internment camp system of defensive humanitarianism, the partnership was natural. A second wave of international humanitarian legal work followed these events that further bolster these newly codified humanitarian norms and relationships. The history of defensive humanitarianism's practical application, as well as the working relationship between the ICRC and Swiss state, first occurred in 1870 with the experimental internment of the Bourbaki Army.

The internment of the Bourbaki Army during the Franco-Prussian War acted as a practical trial for the Swiss internment camp system during WWI. The French and Prussian governments signed an armistice agreement to end the conflict on January 27, 1871, however, the agreement did not extend to the Army of the East. To avoid further losses, the

[26] Ibid.
[27] Speed, 38.
[28] Moorehead, 20.

French Army of the East sought refuge in Switzerland, initiating deliberations between the French and Swiss Armies. On February 1, the Swiss General Hans Herzog and French General Justin Clinchant signed an internment agreement which promised medical attention, lodging, and protection within Switzerland for all 87,847 troops of the French Army of the East, as long as the French troops handed over their weapons to the Swiss military.[29] The Prussians did not attend these talks. The Swiss Army managed the internment of the French soldiers in coordination with the Swiss Red Cross, dispersing the soldiers throughout the country.

Although the internment of the French Army of the East lasted only six weeks, this occurrence opened the door for future iterations of Swiss internment camps. The Prussian army did not follow the French troops into Switzerland, nor did they demand that they be ejected from Switzerland. Rather than invading Switzerland to pursue the troops, the Prussian army respected the humanitarian undertones of the internment of the Bourbaki soldiers as well as the international agreements behind it.[30] This point must not be overlooked, as respect for international treaties formed the basis for defensive humanitarianism. Without international trust in diplomatic endeavors, the Swiss state could not use neutrality politics to protect itself. The French soldiers' internment in Switzerland acted as the model for the Swiss later when World War I broke out in 1914, and also appeared as the first iteration of defensive humanitarianism in Swiss foreign policy leading up to World War I. However, the Geneva Convention and the internment of the French Army of the East represent only the first two parts of the foundation of defensive humanitarianism.

The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 further added to the international legal basis of Swiss internment camps. One of the first multilateral sets of international laws on war, the conventions attempted to set standards for states' conduct during times of war and disarmament. This included proscribing military practices under the new category of war crimes, and defining the terms of treatment for prisoners of war, internees, and civilians.[31] The language of The Hague Conventions, in terms of its effects on Swiss internment, changed significantly between the two conventions. While the 1899 convention elaborated on the terms of internment during wartime, the 1907 convention changed its approach to this topic by deferring to the Geneva Convention. The 1899 document referenced the Geneva Convention three times, each time citing the articles located therein as the governing language on the issue.[32] The

[29] "Die Internierung der französischen Bourbaki-Armee in der Schweiz," Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz, accessed April 15, 2016. https://geschichte.redcross.ch/ereignisse/ereignis/die-internierung-der-franzoesischen-bourbaki-armee-in-der-schweiz.html.

[30] Hervé de Weck, "Bourbakiarmee," Historisches Lexicon der Schweiz, accessed March 25, 20017, http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D26892.php.

[31] Department of the Army, *Treaties Governing Land Warfare* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1956).

[32] "Convention (II) with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Lands and its Annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague, 29 July 1899," International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed April 21, 2017, https://ihl-

1907 document referenced the Geneva Convention only twice, but with broader allowances to the authority of the Geneva Convention on the subject matter of internment and prisoners of war. The section on prisoners of war states that, "prisoners of war may be interned in a town, fortress, camp, or other place, and bound not to go beyond certain fixed limits … the obligations of belligerents with regard to the sick and wounded are governed by the Geneva Convention."[33] This conferment of authority, specifically on the subject of the sick and wounded, onto the Geneva Convention added to the legal basis for the internment of soldiers in Switzerland. The Geneva Convention secured the protection of interned soldiers through Swiss neutrality politics and humanitarian aid, which The Hague Conventions reiterated and elaborated upon these protections. These protections, however, represented only normative codes for behavior.

These conventions, ratified or acceded to by the states involved, lacked concrete enforcement mechanisms and relied on the collective international community's honesty and trust in diplomacy.[34] Defensive humanitarianism cannot function without a certain level of honesty and trust in international treaties that neutral third parties participating in negotiations and implementation engender. While the Geneva Convention and The Hague Conventions codified the international consensus on war and the treatment of soldiers and civilians, the internment of the French Army of the East provided a practical test for internment camps in Switzerland. As WWI unfolded, these moments of international diplomatic history resurfaced in the minds of military and government personnel in Switzerland.

Switzerland faced distinct political, economic, and social challenges both internationally and domestically during WWI. The Swiss government wanted to protect Swiss sovereignty from foreign invaders through its neutrality and feared a possible invasion of its borders. This fear rose to the level of an existential threat with Germany's violation of Belgium's neutrality on August 4, with the Swiss government reiterating its neutrality to the international community the same day.[35] Newspapers in Switzerland distributed this news and the announcement of the Swiss government to mobilize Swiss troops on August 6.[36] At

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databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/150?OpenDocument.

[33] "Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague IV); October 18, 1907," Yale Law School the Avalon Project. Accessed April 21, 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague04.asp.

[34] This continues to be an issue in international diplomacy that plagues states of the present. With no supranational enforcement mechanisms, compliance remains a tedious issue. Reservations and declarations also minimize the enforceability of treaties by effecting removing whatever teeth they do possess. For more information on this topic, see Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes, *The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), Samuel B. Crandall, *Treaties: Their Making and Enforcement*, (Clark, New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange, 2005), and Srini Sitaraman, *State Participation in International Treaty Regimes*, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[35] Federal Council, "Procès-verbal de la séance du 4 août 1914," Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland 1848-1975, accessed April 3, 2018. http://dodis.ch/43291.

[36] "Der Krieg der Großmächte," *Berner Intelligenzblatt*, (Bern, Switzerland), Aug. 6, 1914, http://intelligenzblatt.unibe.ch/Default/Skins/BernA/Client.asp?Skin=BernA&AW=1522082165408&AppName=2.

the same time, Switzerland attempted to continue economic relations with states on both sides of the war, as its economy quickly stagnated with the decline in tourism.[37] In addition, the conscription of young men into the Swiss army also depleted labor forces throughout the country. The labor shortage represents only the beginning of the domestic issues that Switzerland faced.

At home, the Swiss state faced staunch internal cultural-linguistic nationalism that divided its populace. The Franco-Swiss in the French speaking cantons largely supported France and the Allies, while the Swiss-Germans in the German speaking cantons favored Germany and the Central Powers.[38] In an age of intense cultural nationalism, the Swiss government sought to unite its populace behind the idea of Swiss civic nationalism instead of cultural-linguistic loyalties.[39] The government searched for a policy platform that could solve these issues as WWI showed signs of turning into a protracted conflict.

In response to the crises mentioned above, the Swiss state, as well as the Swiss Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross, initially searched for solutions individually. The ICRC created the International Prisoners of War Agency two months in to the war, which would later serve as the ICRC's main office for internment camp matters.[40] This creation came in part as a response to the new injuries and illnesses that emerged on the continent, including trench foot and neurasthenia, also known as "barbed wire disease," or PTSD today.[41] The ICRC, however, found itself unable to influence states at the level of international diplomacy required to create new codes around the treatment of POWs through lobbying alone. As the war progressed, the ICRC, Swiss Red Cross, and Swiss government later worked together to organize and facilitate treaty deliberations between the belligerent states to allow for a new solution. This solution came in the form of the transfer of prisoners of war from POW camps in warring states to Switzerland for treatment and internment for the duration of the war. The Swiss government could co-opt the good international reputation of the ICRC and Swiss Red Cross by supporting their humanitarian efforts through material assistance and good offices in order to further legitimate their neutrality.[42] In defensive humanitarianism and the internment camp system, the Swiss government found its panacea.

[37] Susan Barton, *"Dropped from 'ell into 'eaven: Interned POWS in Switzerland 1916-1918*," accessed February 16, 2018, http://www.ruralhistory2015.org/doc/papers/Panel_12_Barton.pdf.
[38] Cotter, "Un pays divisé?," 291-296.
[39] Ibid.
[40] The main function of the International Prisoners of War agency was on reconnecting POWs with their families through information collecting. See: Daniel Palmieri, "The International Committee of the Red Cross in the First World War," The International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed March 26, 2017, https://www.icrc.org/en/document/international-committee-red-cross-first-world-war-0.
[41] John Yarnall, *Barbed Wire Disease: British & German Prisoners of War, 1914-1919* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2011), 163.
[42] Cédric Cotter and Irène Hermann, "Hilfe zum Selbstschutz: Die Schweiz und ihre humanitären Werke," in *14/18: Die Schweiz und der Grosse Krieg* (Zürich: Hier und Jetzt, 2014), 241.

The body of international law assembled before the creation of the internment camps was not created with such camps in mind, and individual treaties between belligerent states would have to be created to deal with the minutia of internment. As early as four months into WWI, the Geneva Convention norms on internment in neutral states began to appear as a viable blueprint for creating a solution to the physical devastation soldiers met on the battlefield. The language of the Geneva and The Hague Conventions provided Switzerland with a basis to act as the neutral state to safeguard these POWs. For a policy of defensive humanitarianism to function, international consensus needed to exist. This explicitly international characteristic of defensive humanitarianism both allowed for and legitimated its existence. As will be explored in section 2, Switzerland instituted these bases for defensive humanitarianism through their offering of good offices in the treaty formations that led to the birth of the WWI Swiss internment camps.

The Swiss Diplomatic Mission

Despite the long history of neutrality in Switzerland, the military and government nonetheless feared that belligerent states would violate their borders and sovereignty when World War I broke out in August of 1914. Germany had breached the eastern Belgian border on August 4, 1914, just seven days after the beginning of the war, despite more than 80 years of Belgian neutrality. In addition to the external threat to Swiss neutrality, an internal rift also existed between the western and eastern regions of the country. Since the creation of the German Reich in 1871, the western region, Romandie, inhabited primarily by French speakers supported France, while the eastern region with a German-speaking majority supported Germany.[43] This schism, created by linguistic and cultural loyalties in an era of intense cultural nationalism, threatened Swiss neutrality from within by destabilizing popular support for Swiss neutrality and giving the appearance of popular support for either the Central Powers or the Allied Forces. The Swiss government and military, therefore, searched for a solution that could solve both the external and internal issues simultaneously. Small states often have to pursue different strategies in times of conflict than larger states, as they lack the territory and manpower to compete with larger, more populous states on the global stage. By maintaining absolute international neutrality with a policy platform of defensive humanitarianism, the Swiss state hoped to defuse competing cultural nationalisms at home and preserve their territorial sovereignty through neutral international diplomacy and politics abroad.

The initial rumblings of a future internment plan started in 1914 at the ground level in two places: Geneva and Rome. The Vatican began making suggestions for prisoner exchanges for those soldiers incapable of further combat starting in late 1914 on humanitarian grounds.[44] The International Committee of the Red Cross first proposed the plan for the internment of mildly injured prisoners of war in Switzerland in 1914. With the permission of the Swiss government, the ICRC began treaty talks with France and Germany.

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[43] Carlo Moos, "Domestic Politics and Neutrality (Switzerland)," International Encyclopedia of the First World War, published January 24, 2017.
[44] Yarnall, 155.

In addition to the urgings of the ICRC, the Holy See, through their representative Charles Santucci, also campaigned for the broadening of ailments and ranks meriting internment. They saw the prospect of internment too important an opportunity for POWs to restrict to only tuberculosis patients.[45] On March 6, 1915, after securing a loose agreement of the terms of internment, the president of the ICRC, Gustav Ador, wrote to the president of Switzerland, Giuseppe Motta, asking for the Swiss government to take over treaty negotiations:

> Our Committee is continuing with the realization of the project, which I have spoken to you of interning in Switzerland the wounded officers whom they would not wish to return to their country of origin. I take the liberty of asking you again to support this proposal with your high influence. There are so many families of officers in Germany, France, and England, who wait with anguish for the realization of this project, that if it were not to succeed, it would be a cruel disappointment. Do you not think that it would be a very good thing for the Federal Council to officially submit this proposal to the governments concerned? I know that you agree with this idea and I am quite sure that no government would oppose a refusal to a firm proposal made by the Federal Council.[46]

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

On May 1, 1915, the Swiss government reinitiated and finalized the negotiations between France and Germany. The Swiss delegation's offering of good offices played no small part in bringing the two powers to the table.[47] In addition, assurances that Swiss military order would prevent soldiers from escaping, as well as the belligerent states agreeing to return caught escapees, led to the signing of an agreement on January 26, 1916.[48] The Swiss government and military readily seized the opportunity presented by the ICRC and Holy See to press the agreement talks between France and Germany to a conclusion, in order to both transform internal pressures into interest for the soon-to-arrive soldiers and to secure external respect for Swiss neutrality. The Swiss defensive humanitarianism platform combined the internal and external threats to the Swiss state into one holistic solution. The signing of the treaty on January 26, however, did not immediately initiate the transfer of prisoners of war into Switzerland.

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[45] Picot, 36.

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

[47] Probst, 20.

[48] François Olier, "Suisse (1914-1918): L'Internement des Prisonniers de Guerre Allies, Malades et Blesses," accessed March 5, 2017, http://hopitauxmilitairesguerre1418.overblog.com/2014/01/la-suisse-et-l-internement-des-prisonniers-de-guerre-allies-malades-et-blesses-1914-1918.html.

For the following three weeks, negotiation on the terms and criteria of internment continued. The issues most intensely discussed included the definition of internment, methods for surveillance of prisoner of war camps in belligerent states, selection criteria, and the conditions on repatriating soldiers after the conflict ceased. Many of the issues of contention focused on which diseases and injuries warranted internment in Switzerland, and which did not. To settle this issue, the Surgeon-General of Switzerland created the Bureau of Internment within the medical branch of the Swiss military, which conducted a temporary internment period with 100 French and 100 German prisoners of war suffering from tuberculosis in the towns of Davos, Montana, and Leysin.[49] This temporary internment functioned as a barometer for the trust of the belligerent signatories. As the test showed early success, France and Germany warmed to the idea of accepting the Swiss internment camp system on a full scale.

After France, Germany, and Switzerland reached an agreement on the terms, definition, and requirements of internment, they also debated the evaluation of soldiers for internment. This represented a critical point in the discussions, as it would ultimately decide the number of prisoners of war able to be interned in Switzerland. At the beginning of deliberations, Germany called for an equal quota system in which only an equal number of soldiers from each state could be interned, as they worried about the possibility of French soldiers benefiting more from the system than the German soldiers. However, after many requests from the Holy See, who sought to have the largest number of POWs ameliorated of their conditions and ailments, to the German Kaiser Wilhelm II, Germany eventually acquiesced and agreed to a case-by-case inspection, as long as neutral teams of medical personnel conducted the examinations.[50] This system entailed "ten Sanitary Commissions for each country, composed of two Swiss doctors reinforced by a third, an officer of the captor States, who should have the place of President, with power to examine and designate prisoners for dispatch to Lyons or Constance, as the case might be, for a final inspection by a Board of Control."[51] The structure of the Sanitary Commission represents the culmination of both humanitarian and diplomatic concerns surrounding the selection process.

The platform of defensive humanitarian arose as a domestic policy platform, however, its implementation at the international level only succeeded due to these trust-assuring mechanisms. The Swiss doctors, as neutral actors, formed the majority of the group and assured fair examinations of POWs, regardless of nationality. The third member, from the captor state, ensured for their home states that the Swiss would not go outside the reach of the treaty. This double-checking system solidified trust among the treaty's signatories.

The Sanitary Commission then sent their selections of POWs for further

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

[50] Picot, 37.

[51] Favre, *Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War*, 9.

evaluation in Konstanz if held in Germany or Austria, and Lyon if held in France, Britain, or Belgium before their final trip into Switzerland. These major cities, closest to the Swiss border for each country and equipped with the railway infrastructure necessary for the transportation of the internees, represented logical choices for the main examination centers. Through the legal protections created by the Geneva Conventions and The Hague Conventions, the inspection teams could travel through war zones with reduced fear of assault, capture, or deterrence. The small group sizes also allowed greater efficiency and mobility. The ICRC, Swiss Red Cross, and military medical units of France and Germany, with their Red Cross armbands in place, quickly situated the sanitary commissions. On February 14, France, Germany, and Switzerland came to a final agreement on the terms of internment.

The final terms of Swiss internment camps during WWI differed from previous iterations. The previous understanding of internment, as suggested in the Geneva Convention, had entailed the safe movement of prisoners of war, incapable of fighting in the future, through a neutral state back to their homeland, as well as internment within neutral states. The agreement between France and Germany defined internment as the removal of prisoners of war from these states to Switzerland for medical care in Swiss facilities, and as well as their surveillance for the duration of the conflict. The treaty also included clauses promising the return of interned soldiers to Switzerland if they escaped to their home country.[52] The codification of Swiss defensive humanitarianism into this international treaty benefited not only the Swiss state, but the belligerent states and the internees as well. Defensive humanitarianism during this period represented a unique form of diplomatic policy, as it benefited all states involved.

This new definition of internment allowed for the opportunity of extended healing in Switzerland for prisoners of war who had been excluded by the previous understanding of internment. Belligerent states and neutral states alike did not want injured soldiers returning to the front lines, where their chance of survival plummeted. Deliberation on what ailments would now qualify under the new definition, however, took another three weeks after the original, tentative agreement. The debate focused on short-term or easily treatable ailments that could not be manageably treated in prisoner of war camps.

New soldiers began entering Switzerland on February 21, 1916, with an estimated maximum of 30,000 interned by January 1917.[53] The arrival of these initial internees created a spark of celebration for the Swiss populace. Those healthy enough to walk went first with canes and flowers, the latter given to them by members of the crowd. Soldiers too sick to walk continued behind in cars. The Swiss populace came out in droves in celebration of their national project. Promoted as not only the saving plan for the Swiss economic and political situation, many in the government promoted the plan as the duty of the Swiss. This rhetoric set out to dispel the linguistic tensions of the country and promote Swiss nationalism and identity. [54] The Swiss government did not miss the

[52] Picot, 37.

[53] Favre, *Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War,* 46.
[54] Cotter und Hermann, 242.

chance to promote the evolution of international law and Switzerland's role through the internment camp system.

By July 1916, the French, German, and Swiss governments expanded the treaty to signify 18 diseases in total that merited internment in Switzerland. These included: chronic diseases of the blood, respiratory, circulatory, central and peripheral nervous systems, digestive organs, urinary and sexual organs, organs of the senses, the skin, rheumatism, as well as blindness and deafness. The majority of the internees fell under the criteria of suffering from: tuberculosis, any tumors, severe debility, severe syphilis, loss of limb, long-term paralysis, maladies that would preclude military service for one year, and cases deemed severe enough on a case-by-case basis.[55] Tuberculosis represented an especially critical point to the concerned parties, as it had been previously disqualified during talks in 1914 before internment became on option, due to the chance for soldiers to recover and reenter the war.[56] At the time, these diseases needed heavy medical attention in hospitals to increase the chance of survival. The change from POW camp to internment camp addressed the medical needs of these particularly vulnerable soldiers, as it changed their environment from one based on detaining them to one focused on healing them. The ideology of humanitarianism was foundational in this shift in the conceptualization of the internment camp system.

Not all major conditions from which POWs suffered, however, made the cut. Mental health afflictions, alcoholism, and sexually transmitted diseases that could still be further transmitted at the time of inspection were also excluded.[57] The agreement excluded soldiers with mental health issues, as they referred these cases to special institutions and not general hospitals in Switzerland, as well as soldiers with sexually transmitted diseases or infections, for fear of infecting citizens of the Swiss populace or family members of the soldiers.[58] This list of ailments illustrated the level of strictness the countries involved desired for the agreement, as the belligerent governments, not the Swiss government, paid for the costs of interning their soldiers in Switzerland. This agreement expanded the number of soldiers removed from prisoner of war camps in belligerent states, as well as increased the chances of survival for wounded prisoners of war.

While the Swiss internment camp system did increase the chances of survival for internees, the locations of camps in Switzerland did not always benefit them. Montana was one of the first towns open to internees and housed primarily French and Belgian citizens, as its populace predominately spoke French, and many of the tourists to the area had been predominately French. However, this consideration on the familiarity of the locals with French nationals failed to take

[55] Swiss Government, "Vorbereitung für die kriegsrechtliche Internierung, u.a. Konventionsentwurf, 1914-1915," Dossier, E27#1000/721#13951* (Bern, Switzerland: Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv).
[56] Yarnall, 156.
[57] "Vorbereitung für die kriegsrechtliche Internierung, u.a. Konventionsentwurf, 1914-1915."
[58] Parliament, "Correspondence with the United States Ambassador Respecting the Transfer to Switzerland of British and German Wounded and Sick Combatant Prisoners of War," (London: Harrison & Sons, 1916).

into account the mountainous terrain of the area, which was hard for wounded internees to traverse.[59] This failure in the practical planning of the internment camp system arose from how it came about: the hierarchical aspects of the camp, as well as the general rules, came out of the higher level treaty negotiations, while practical issues like mobility on mountainous terrain or division of internees from different states devolved to local officials.[60] While the issue of which ailments merited internment had come to a conclusion, there still existed the topic of how to select prisoners of war for internment.

In 1916 alone, the itinerant commission undertook twenty trips into Germany, reviewed 82,439 French soldiers and designated 20,677 for internment, while eighteen visits into France allowed for the examination of 46,339 German POWs, with 6,411 selected.[61] By having members of the selection committees from different states, this system allowed the belligerent states to trust that the other group would not receive preferential treatment. As defensive humanitarianism requires collective trust to ensure its goals, clauses similar to the Sanitary Commission needed to exist. However, with only German and French soldiers under consideration, many other POWs of other nationalities in Western Europe continued to suffer in the same POW camps that the Sanitary Commissions visited. As news of the successes of Swiss internment camps spread, the pressure by the citizens of these non-party states for their governments to enter into similar treaties grew.

While the deliberations between France and Germany lasted over a year to reach agreement on the treaty terms, similar arrangements between Germany and Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and Belgium followed almost immediately thereafter. The relative speed with which Great Britain and Germany reached an agreement on internment of British and German prisoners of war in Switzerland occurred due to the fact that the United States, still a neutral power in 1916, handled the majority of the communication for Great Britain. As the United States would not enter the conflict until one year later in 1917, they maintained their diplomatic channels with Germany. Great Britain requested that the United States' ambassador in London communicate with his counterpart in Berlin to appeal on Great Britain's behalf for an agreement on internment in Switzerland, similar to the one created between Germany and France. The communications lasted from March 25 to May 13, 1916, with nine messages in total exchanged between Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Britain, and W.H. Page, United States ambassador to Great Britain. That six of the nine messages came from Sir Grey illustrates the urgency felt by the British government to secure an agreement for the internment of British soldiers held as

[59] Yarnall, 158.
[60] The internment camps were divided by type of care needed and ability, not necessarily only by linguistic familiarity. This is part of the reason different nationalities of internees existed in the same regions, or even towns. Favre, *Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States*.
[61] Speed, 35-36.

prisoners of war in Germany.[62] On April 9, the urgency of Sir Grey's telegrams reached their climax, with him writing, "it is not possible to make an official request to the Swiss Government to inaugurate the necessary arrangements pending the receipt of the reply of the German Government, and much unnecessary hardship is being caused by the failure of the German Government to send a reply."[63] The response on May 1 to this message contained the German acceptance of the internment agreement with the same terms as the French agreement. Almost immediately, on May 14, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Philip Picot arrived from London in Switzerland as commanding officer of the British prisoners of war interned in Switzerland. He then began formalizing their accommodations across the country. The first 304 British soldiers arrived on May 28, 1916.[64]

The urgency of the British government originated in part from international reports of the arrival of the German and French soldiers in Switzerland and the level of care that they received. As the international agreements fell into place, the Swiss military planned out the locations, regulations, and accommodations of the incoming prisoners of war. These initial stages in the formation of Swiss internment camps and Swiss defensive humanitarian policy rested on both the history of internment during the Bourbaki event and on the foreign policy initiatives of the Swiss government, ICRC, and Holy See in the first few years of World War I.

Changes to the original treaties that created the internment camps eventually came in 1917, when an Anglo-German conference was held in The Hague to further discuss POWs, extend internment and exchange agreements, and fix issues with the previous treaty. Many of these changes directly affected the Swiss internment camps, as the diplomats in attendance added new categories to the list of internment conditions. First, those who had been in captivity for at least 18 months and were suffering from "barbed wire disease" could now be interned in Switzerland, as well as any officer, commissioned or not, in captivity for 18 months.[65] This treaty also created the opportunity for the internment of 16,000 POWs in the Netherlands, though this treaty only extended to German and British soldiers.[66] The challenge of interning thousands of sick and wounded POWs, however, was a logistical challenge that the Swiss state and military could not meet, due to resource restrictions caused by the war. The assistance of the Swiss Red Cross, ICRC, and other charitable NGOs made the internment system possible by supporting the system with non-governmental resources.

Switzerland also relied on the assistance of non-governmental international agencies to increase the legitimacy of the humanitarian portion of humanitarianism. The internment camp system needed the investment and trust of other belligerent and neutral states, such as the United States and the Holy See.

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[62] Parliament, *Correspondence with the United States Ambassador Respecting the Transfer to Switzerland of British and German Wounded and Sick Combatant Prisoners of War,* 15.

[63] Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz, "Die Internierung der französischen Bourbaki-Armee in der Schweiz."

[64] Mittler, 17.

[65] Speed, 36-37.

[66] Yarnall, 159.

With ICRC and Holy See support of internment in Switzerland on the grounds of humanitarian aid, violating Swiss neutrality changed from an issue of national sovereignty to an issue of international image and respect for the lofty ideals of humanitarianism. This denotes an especially significant point when one considers the case of Belgium's neutrality in World War I.[67] Switzerland's ability to offer good offices and house POWs in internment camps came from its commitment to neutrality and humanitarianism. This allowed for enough trust between the belligerents to create a treaty that both sides could support and fulfill. Had Swiss neutrality been violated, or the ICRC and Vatican backing not existed, the Swiss defensive humanitarianism platform could not have succeeded. Defensive humanitarianism functioned on an explicitly domestic level despite being a form of national foreign policy. It required international acceptance for its legitimacy for its implementation at the ground level. This international acceptance began forming with the first newspaper stories in countries throughout Europe after internment began.

Defensive humanitarianism benefited the Swiss, the internees, and the belligerent nations through its international reputation. Governments with or without interned soldiers took an interest in the project due to its novel aim of alleviating the suffering of POWs through the reconceptualization of internment camps. The main successes of the internment camp system arose from the benefits it provided to all parties involved. A plethora of reports exist in English from both British government officials and the British internees in Switzerland that attest to this point. One report, from Heron Charles Goodhart, a member of the British legation in Switzerland, states that, "fruit, cigarettes, chocolate and postcards, besides flowers in profusion, were the principal gifts brought by private individuals, many of whom were Swiss. The British Colony were [sic] in full force."[68] While the level of enthusiasm of the Swiss populace recorded by many British officials illustrated more the international use of internment in Switzerland as a form of morale building for their local populations, the vast majority of accounts captured the truly positive feelings of the Swiss welcoming of interned soldiers. The initial reports on the arrival of interned soldiers in Switzerland came from the governments involved and the vast majority contained very positive sentiments. Many accounts, especially from British officials, contain descriptions of the levels of enthusiasm of the Swiss populace at the arrival of newly interned soldiers. Reports conflict as to whether soldiers arrived on third-class cars that had been transformed into medical cars, or if officers rode in first class and enlisted men in second, but this is truly minor in the grand scheme of the internment camp system.[69] Almost all reports contain accounts of the types of gifts received by soldiers at stations and restaurants as they travelled through

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

[68] Ibid., 7.

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

Switzerland to their assigned internment location, where they also received attention and gifts from individual Swiss citizens. These citizens had many reasons to celebrate their country's humanitarian project.

In addition to the protection of Swiss neutrality and international prominence for the humanitarian goals of internment, the financial benefits to the tourism sector of the Swiss economy through the housing of interned soldiers in hotels and hostels likely explain the overwhelmingly positive Swiss reception of interned soldiers. The Swiss government, with the input of NGOs and other states, created defensive humanitarianism and the internment camp system primarily to protect Swiss sovereignty by deterring outside attacks, but also to allow for humanitarian ideals to shine and create better health outcomes for prisoners of war. Both sides of the coin, defense and humanitarianism, defined the internment camp system.

In addition to benefiting the POWs, his internment camp system united the Swiss populace behind the Swiss humanitarian effort. The excitement of the Swiss populace at their national humanitarian project drove crowds of thousands to train stations to meet arriving internees. The Swiss citizens had good reason to rejoice; the internment camp system represented the best possible option for the Swiss government and populace politically, economically, and socially. The agreements preserved Swiss neutrality, since all areas of Switzerland housed recovering soldiers from each belligerent state party to the agreement. It supported the declining Swiss wartime economy by bringing in payments for the housing and care of internees from their home government, and by providing labor where shortages existed from the removal of young Swiss men for military service. Finally, it allowed for the solidification of the Swiss image, internationally and domestically, as inextricably linked to humanitarianism.[70] This process, originally started with the internment of the Bourbaki Army discussed in section one, continued through the internment camp system during this war. The image of charitable Switzerland, state and populace alike, increasingly began to appear in postcards and political cartoons during this time period.[71]

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

[70] Some postcards of Switzerland during this time even show Switzerland as an island with a lighthouse in the middle, the ray of light symbolizing the Swiss' shining of humanitarianism on the dark warfare of the continent, see Georg Kreis, *Schweizer Postkarten aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Zürich: Hier und Jetzt, 2013). For an extensive study of Swiss nationalism during this period, see: Cédric Cotter, "L'Humanitaire comme Exutoire?," *(s')Aider pour Survivre: Action Humanitaire et Neutralité Suisse pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale* (Geneva: University of Geneva, 2016), 253-342.

[71] For example of Swiss postcards from this period, see: Georg Kreis, *Schweizer Postkarten aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Zürich: Hier und Jetzt, 2013).

system. Solidifying the practicality of defensive humanitarianism to the Swiss populace and the international community at large, the treaty negotiations of 1915-1916 marked a huge turning point in the prestige of Swiss good offices. With the initial internees beginning their journeys into Switzerland, the next phase of defensive humanitarianism began, in which the Swiss government would have to make good on the humanitarian half of its policy platform.

Conclusion

The Swiss internment system evolved in response to the new challenges presented by WWI .The emergence of internment camps could not have transpired without the existing international legal framework of the Geneva and The Hague Conventions, as well as international humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross. One of the main ideas historians have about WWI is that it represents a definitive rupture between what Eric Hobsbawn called the generally peaceful "long nineteenth century" of 1789-1914 and the chaotic, ideological struggles of the "short twentieth century" of 1914-1991.[72] However, the emergence of defensive humanitarianism embodied developments from both eras. The continuities it shared with earlier Swiss policy, the development of international law, and the treatment of POWs illustrate the salience of these "long nineteenth century" developments. On the other hand, the utilization of international humanitarian ideology by the Swiss state to protect its sovereignty also signifies this small state's own ideological entrenchment vis-à-vis its belligerent neighbors. The outbreak of the war exacerbated old problems and created new crises to which Swiss state had to respond. They chose to transform the developments of the past 125 years into a new solution that took into account the destruction of the status quo. This allowed the Swiss state to navigate this new era, while at the same time continuing its dedication to humanitarian causes.

The move to incorporate international humanitarianism into its policy platform was not only a self-interested move on the part of the Swiss government. Defensive humanitarianism expanded the understanding of internment. By reevaluating the costs of total war and revolutionizing the care of its casualties, the incorporation of humanitarian ideas into the internment camp's theoretical goals and practical structure shifted the focus of the institution from detention to long-term health. The Swiss government chose to move forward with internment not exclusively out of humanitarian ideals, but also out of financial and political considerations. The reconfiguration of norms around POW treatment remains an important example of how modern nation states may incorporate humanitarian ideology into their domestic and foreign policies. While these policies are inherently self-interested, self-preservation and humanitarianism can be

[72] Hobsbawn elaborated on these two terms in several books. He wrote three books on the "long twentieth century," including: *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1962), *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), and *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1987). His book *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) covers the "short twentieth century.

pursued and advanced simultaneously. While the defensive half of defensive humanitarianism employs the use of humanitarian ideology and the internment camp system as a *Realpolitik* method to ensure Swiss sovereignty and territorial integrity, the humanitarian portion saved soldiers' lives through the goal of improving their health not only during their internment, but after internment as well.

The concept of defensive humanitarianism is useful for understanding the policy platform implemented by the Swiss state to assuage the crises of WWI. The Swiss applied their unique policy platform through international agreements and humanitarian law, which presents a unique approach that small states may use to maintain their sovereignty. This episode in history shaped not only domestic Swiss politics and society, but also influenced the histories of WWI, international diplomacy, and humanitarianism as well. Switzerland, often overlooked in the historiographies of these three larger areas due to the state's small player status during the twentieth century. The unique strategy of the Swiss state still offers innovative, but often overlooked, methods for the treatment of foreign soldiers by captor governments today. Understanding Swiss domestic and foreign policy through the mechanism of defensive humanitarianism enables historians to understand the Swiss reaction to the myriad of issues that the state faced during WWI. This analysis adds another layer to the understanding of international diplomacy through its reevaluation of Swiss methods for internment. Historians have not recognized the unique blend of domestic needs for neutrality, a stable economy, and peaceful sociocultural relations with the ideas and institutions of international humanitarianism in the policy platform of the Swiss government during WWI. It is the hope of this study that the benefits of incorporating humanitarian ideas into the policy platforms of nation states receive more attention.

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