

Jens Thiel

‘Slave Raids’ During the First World War?

Deportation and Forced Labor in Occupied Belgium

Your Excellency Ambassadeur Mr. Cuntz,

Dear Rector, Dear Dean,

Dear grand-children and great-grandchildren of former Deportees,

Dear students, dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentleman,

At first I want to thank you for your kind invitation, the warm response, the friendly introduction and – of course – the introductory address of the German Ambassador, Mr. Eckart Cuntz, who remembered again, how deep the German-Belgian relations are connected with the dark chapters of German atrocities in World War One and the memory in the aftermath. He also reveals the importance of remembering and dialogue, historical dialogue, especially with view of the centenary of World War One. That’s why such an inspiring event like the “Historikerdialog” takes place. I am really glad that I can held a lecture like this. I would like thank you especially to the Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, the CEGESOMA and the team of the Historikerdialog – in

place of all Geneviève Warland, Emmanuel Debruyne and Nico Wouters – for the excellent preparation of this evening.

Let me begin with a short contemporaneous report.

“In autumn 1916 [...] the forced labor of enemy civilians was centrally organized in Prussian fashion when Ludendorff ordered the establishment of so-called 'civilian labor battalions'. One day, the Etappe command in Ghent received the order to immediately deploy the 'civilian labor battalion no. 4'. [...] Initially, it was to include only 1,000 men, recruited from unemployed and underprivileged Ghent proletarians who would by military order be forced to work as slaves behind German lines on the western front. [...] The poor people, who already knew all too well the cruelty of Prussian militarism, followed this order [...] with heavy hearts.

The few who resisted their abduction into slavery were dragged out of their beds at night by military policemen and field gendarms, beaten with rifle butts and taken to Count de Hemptinne's big factory at Plezantvest, where all the unfortunate souls, who had nothing but their labor for the Prussians to “requisition”, were locked up together. [...] Horrible processions filed down the streets of Ghent in the autumn days of 1916. Hundreds of proletarians between the ages of 15 and 45, often so weakened by hunger and deprivation that they could barely carry their pitiful bundles, were driven across the corn marketplace

to Plezantevest by field gendarms on horseback. These slave transports were flanked by marching military policemen carrying revolvers and loaded rifles.

The unfortunate ones who couldn't move fast enough were pushed forward with wild curses, threats, kicked and beaten with rifle butts. [...]

Even more terrible scenes occurred later at the Rabot train station. The modern slaves were loaded onto freight trains that would bring them to some unknown destination behind the German Western front.ⁱ

This horrifying report about deportations in Ghent in late 1916 is quoted from Heinrich Wandt's book about the Ghent Etappe (back area), first published in 1921. Wandt, a committed socialist and pacifist, was sentenced by the Leipzig Reichsgericht (Imperial Court) to six years imprisonment for high treason because of his reports from Belgium. The book caused considerable controversy in both Germany and Belgium.

Heinrich Wandt describes the deportations in Ghent on several occasions as a modern form of slavery and the Belgian forced laborers as slaves. He makes use of terms that were very common at the time and played a central role in anti-German propaganda. References to “slave raids” in Belgium, the enslavement of the Belgian people or using “slaves” when speaking about Belgian workers displaced by the Germans were very common in Belgian and international protests. “The German Slave Raids“ was the title of the English version of Belgian ambassador to the Holy See Jules Van den Heuvel's protest brochure against the deportations.ⁱⁱ; “Les citoyens belges réduit en esclavage“ (Belgian

citizens reduced to slavery) was a 1917 pamphlet by August Bruynseels, a confidante of Cardinal Mercierⁱⁱⁱ. Another brochure entitled “The Enslavement of Belgians“ documented a large protest rally at Carnegie Hall in New York, December 1916.^{iv} These are just a few of countless examples from that time. Last but not least you can see another example for this feature in front of the invitation to the lecture tonight. It comes from a little leaflet from the League of neutral countries in the Netherlands from 1917.

Topoi related to slavery do not only occur in journalistic and propaganda texts of the time, but continue to be used in various accounts of the 1916/17 deportations to this day. From a historiographical perspective this is rather problematic. Naturally the usage of this term evokes specific connotations. In the context of compulsory measures against Belgian unemployed and laborers, speaking of slavery and slave raids blurs important categorical differences. Slavery as an extreme form of forced labor designates a property relationship. A slave is the property or possession of a private person, a ”corporate entity” or a state. However, the deportations did not entail that the forced laborers became property. This doesn't say anything yet about the brutal treatment of Belgian forced laborers, which I will discuss later on. Historically speaking, the working and living conditions of slaves varied, as recent research about slaves in antiquity has clearly shown.

“Slave raids” did not occur during the First World War. Nevertheless, the deportations and forced labor in Belgium belong to the darkest chapters in the

history of the German occupation of Belgium between 1914 and 1918. Even the German side found the compulsory measures in Belgium problematic; quite a few even considered them in violation of international law. From a moral and ethical perspective the deportations undoubtedly marked the nadir of the otherwise already violent history of the German occupation regime. Forced labor deportations were controversial in World War I Europe, if only for the reason that this mode of conflict was considered long outdated among “civilized” nations. The fact that forced labor and deportations were standard operating procedures of colonial powers in their respective colonies shall not be neglected and at least mentioned here in passing.

Prior to 1914, binding agreements of international law concerning forced labor and deportation remained vague. Nevertheless they were more or less binding conceptions and conventions delineating what was permitted and what was not. The Hague Convention 1899/1907, the binding document for conduct according to international law during World War I, did not explicitly prohibit forced labor. Forced labor or official duty were even permissible under certain circumstances. Expressly prohibited was only the recruitment of civilians in occupied territories for military and auxiliary service or for tasks that directly served the occupiers' military interests. It was also prohibited for the occupying power to purposefully cause unemployment. By contrast, forced labor by prisoners of war was permissible and undisputed according to international law. Every state involved in the war frequently practiced this. Within strict boundaries, civilians could also

be ordered to fulfill so-called “public relief works” that directly serve the common good.^v

When I refer to forced labor, I base this upon an understanding that has prevailed since the late 1920's which also reflects the experiences of the First World War: forced labor is thus defined as “all work or service [...] which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.”^{vi}

My lecture about deportations for forced labor in occupied Belgium is divided into three sections.

1. First I will delineate the basic principles of German occupational and labor market policy.
2. Secondly I will discuss the deportations in autumn and winter 1916/17 in the Government-General before
3. [third] focusing on forced labor under military jurisdiction in front area and staging area close behind the front in Belgium and Northern France.

I will end the lecture with a short outlook.

1. Basic Principles of German Occupational and Labor Market Policy During World War I

After the occupation of Belgium in 1914 and the failure of the Schlieffen plan, the German Reich rather quickly set up administrative structures to govern the occupied territory. On September 2, the Government-General of Belgium was proclaimed, with Brussels as its capital. The Government-General, headed by a German Governor-General, didn't encompass all of Belgium. East and West Flanders and other smaller regions on the direct border of the western front comprised the "Operations- und Etappengebiet", the front area and staging area close behind the front. Whereas the Governor-General was solely in charge of the military and civilian administration in the Government-General, the German supreme military command ("Oberste Heeresleitung"), the responsible army high commands and their subsidiary authorities governed the front and staging area behind the front. They were in charge of administration and responsible for economic and socio-political issues in their jurisdiction, including labor issues.

With the occupation of Belgium, the German war economy gained access to that country's full economic resources for the entire duration of the war. Economic and social policy were marked by competing concepts. Until autumn 1916, an economic policy based upon rational exigencies prevailed, based upon "economic penetration" of Belgium with German capital and indirect influence.

Starting in autumn 1916, there was a shift in Government-General economic policy towards an increasingly merciless exploitation all available resources in the country. In the context of the unreasonable demands of the so-called “Hindenburg Program”, the bar was lowered and gradually last traces of respectful treatment of Belgium and its civilian population disappeared. Until the end of the war in 1918, the already decapitated Belgian economy suffered further crisis. With the exception of mining, many industrial sectors came to a complete standstill. Factories and machines were either systematically destroyed or disassembled and brought to Germany.

One of the most important resources that, in the Germans' view, had not yet or not yet fully been put in the “service” of German interests were Belgian laborers. Immediately following the wartime occupation of the country, 500,000 Belgians had become unemployed. The plight of the civilian population had become very severe. Belgian, Dutch and U.S. aid organizations, whose work was tolerated by the German administration because it was deemed useful, at least provided basic services for the civilian population. Germans considered the Belgian unemployed a constant threat to the internal security of the occupied country and to the safety of the German army stationed in the hinterland. The German administration felt it was a serious problem that these unemployed, considering the labor shortage in German wartime industrial production, were “fallow” and not put in the “service” of German interests. Recruitment campaigns, as organized since late 1914 by the “Deutsche Industrie-Büro”

(German Industry Office) in Belgium, did not achieve the expected results. By autumn 1916, only 20,000 Belgians signed on to work in Germany for a limited period.

While the German civilian administration and German government generally pursued moderate labor policies, the military leadership (Prussian Ministry of War and Supreme Army Command) as well as several German industrialists increasingly demanded throughout 1916 that more workers be recruited from Belgium. Governor-General Moritz von Bissing already proclaimed measures against those allegedly “unwilling to work” in 1915 which ordained compulsory measures when employment was refused. These decrees were applied within a limited framework. When Hindenburg and Ludendorff assumed the Supreme Command, this led to a totalization of the war effort and correspondingly to more radical measures in the Belgian labor question. After lengthy negotiations a decision was made in September 1916. In autumn 1916, the military command and influential industrialists such as Hugo Stinnes, Carl Duisberg, Alfred Hugenberg and Walther Rathenau prevailed with their demands to solve the acute labor shortage in Germany by deporting approximately 500,000 Belgians for forced labor. Chemical magnate Carl Duisberg, CEO of Bayer AG Leverkusen, forcefully demanded before the Prussian ministry of War in September: “Open the big human reservoir in Belgium!” [“Öffnen Sie das große Menschenbassin Belgien!”] The hardliners pushed their policy towards occupied

Belgium and its inhabitants through, against every objection and warning of the Reich government and the German civilian administration.

2. Deportations in the Government-General

On October 26 and 27, 1916 deportations of forced laborers began in the Government-General of Belgium. The organization and execution of these compulsory measures was the responsibility of the local commands. These local military authorities proceeded often arbitrarily, which led to many incidences of grievous abuse during the selection and transport of the deportees. Persons designated for deportation were selected in control assemblies, held under military surveillance and transported by train – meaning unheated cattle cars – to the territory of the German Reich. Left behind family members, completely inadequate food and clothing supplies for the deportees, the seasonal bad weather – all contributed to a situation of misery and desperation. Even German eyewitnesses reported about the ruthlessness with which the deportations were carried out. Between October 26, 1916 and February 10, 1917, approximately 60,000 Belgians were deported to Germany for forced labor.

After the arduous transport by train, the deportees were quartered in transit camps which were part of already existing prisoner of war camps. The transit camps for the Belgians were officially called “*distribution points*” or “*living quarters for industrial workers*.” This was to dispel the impression that these camps were “concentration camps” – especially the Foreign Office feared this might further fuel already anticipated international protest.

The camps designated for Belgian deportees had to prepare for their arrival in a very short time, thus the situation was chaotic. The military officials at first believed that the Belgians would stay in the camps for only a few days. They were supposed to be brought as quickly as possible to their places of employment where accommodations would be provided. However, that was not the case. Many of the Belgian deportees remained in camps for the entire duration of their involuntary stay in Germany. Here they suffered from hunger, sickness and poor sanitary and hygienic conditions. As a result the mortality rate was high. The number of Belgian workers who died in German camps for forced laborers lay at, according to German estimates, 1,250^{vii} and more than 1,300^{viii} according to Belgian. The extremely bad living conditions in the camps were not only the result of insufficient preparations and the generally poor supply situation during the autumn and winter of 1916/17. They also were intentional. The *Basic Principles* of the Prussian Ministry of War from December 1916 for the treatment of Belgian deportees stated:

“Every person in the distribution point should be convinced during their stay to sign a work contract. [...] Through strict discipline and by recruiting them for necessary internal tasks at the distribution point, preconditions must be created that Belgians would welcome any well-paid labor outside of the distribution point as desirable and an improvement of their current situation.” This didn't work out as planned. On the contrary, the strict and even brutal treatment of the deportees created a climate of hate and bitterness.^{ix} Privileges and small

“amenities”, such as library access, concerts or games, which were granted to prisoners of war, were expressly refused to the deportees.^x Violence, however, was tolerated and even recommended to increase the deportees' performance. For example, the Prussian Kriegsamt (war office) encouraged the guards of Belgian deportees in agricultural work commandos to, if necessary, “get rough without hesitation or fear of consequences.”^{xi}

Regulations passed by the Prussian Ministry of War and subsidiary military commands ordered Belgian laborers to wear an armband on their upper arms, often in the Belgian national colors. Sometimes an insignia, usually the Brabant Lion as Belgium's coat of arms, was sewn onto work clothing. This identification of Belgian laborers, which also similarly applied to Polish laborers in Germany and forced laborers of the civilian labor battalion in the front area or in the staging area close behind the front, had first and foremost practical reasons. It served to more easily identify laborers and prevented leaving the workplace or flight. At the same time the mandatory identification stigmatized laborers along national lines.^{xii}

The official phrasing revealed considerable uncertainty about the deportees' legal status and the status and legality of the forced labor operation.

That's also why the Prussian War Ministry tried to get the deportees in the camps to sign work contracts. Until then they were erroneously considered “civilian prisoners”, although in their case there was neither a criminal charge nor a which would justify this status.^{xiii} As soon as the deported Belgian forced

laborers signed a contract, they became “voluntary civilian laborers”.^{xiv} That meant [that] the special “Grundsätze über die Heranziehung arbeitsscheuer Belgier“ (Guidelines for the Recruitment of 'Work-Shy' Belgians) no longer applied to them, but instead the general registration and surveillance regulations for “hostile foreigners” which were more lenient in terms of mobility and freedom of movement.

The Belgian deportees' willingness under these circumstances to “voluntarily” work in the German war economy was rather low, despite the miserable working and living conditions in the camps, the overt pressure and prospect of privileges. Barely more than 13,000 Belgians, less than one quarter of the deportees, decided to sign a work contract.^{xv} The other deportees, until their return to Belgium, remained in the “distribution points” and subsidiary camps where they were assigned to labor commandos and forced to fulfill various tasks inside or outside the camps.^{xvi} Especially notorious were the so-called “transition work” [“Übergangsarbeiten”] in places far from the deportees' main camp. In these outside camps the working and living conditions were even worse than in the main camps: famine, disease, and particularly poor sanitary and hygienic conditions.

The miserable working and living conditions of Belgian workers in a labor command in East Prussia have been reported in detail by a Flemish forced laborer in February 1917. The Belgian worker who was assigned to levelling a building tells about inadequate food supplies, clothing and heating during the

extreme cold that led to the freezing of hands and feet as well as rheumatism and frequently mortal cases of dysentery during the deportations. Furthermore, workers were treated badly, beaten by soldiers. Catholic workers deported to Protestant East Prussia desperately missed spiritual council by clergy of their faith.^{xvii} Overcrowded barracks, lack of food, heating and hygiene, the rough treatment by guards, the catastrophic situation in sick bays and hospitals, hard physical labor alternating with long periods of inactivity – all these circumstances bred embitterment and hate in the camps.^{xviii} But it also not infrequently led to the passive resistance of Belgian workers. Active resistance or escape attempts, however, were more rare. The latter could in some cases end in the deaths of deportees. The subsequent investigations under martial law generally concluded that the guards' use of weapons was justified and in full compliance with regulations^{xix}.

By January 1917 at the latest, only about three months after deportations had begun, everyone responsible realized that the compulsory measures had not achieved their goal. The acute labor shortage in the German war economy could not be alleviated with Belgian forced laborers.

The German Reich also found itself confronted with a broad wave of international protest, just as it had been at the beginning of the war with the invasion of Belgium. The deportations caused often massive protests not only in Belgium itself and the Allied countries, but also in neutral states, especially the USA. Here the deportations often were called “Slave raids” as we learnt at the

beginning. After the German civilian administration in the General Governorate, the Reichskanzler (Imperial Chancellor), the responsible civilian Reichsämter (authorities), church representatives and some members of the Reichstag parliament all repeatedly pleaded for ending the deportations. The Prussian War Ministry and Supreme Army Command signaled in early 1917 that cessation of deportations was conceivable. An arduously negotiated compromise finally ended deportations from the General-Gouvernement on March 14, 1917 by imperial decree. However, forced labor for Belgians already in Germany continued until May 1917. Finally, the 20,000 – 25,000 Belgian forced laborers still held in camps could return home.

3. Forced Labor Under Military Jurisdiction

In addition to the approximately 60,000 Belgians who were deported from the Government-General of Belgium to Germany as forced laborers, the German military authority deported another 60,000 Belgians and Northern French to the front area or the staging area close behind the front. These territories were not ruled by the Governor-General and his civilian administration, but directly by the military command. Here the deportations began already in early October 1917, almost one month earlier than in the Government-General.

The laborers who were involuntarily recruited in and from the the “Etappen- und Operationsgebiet” were grouped into so-called civilian labor battalions or Zivil-Arbeiter-Bataillonen (ZAB)^{xx}. In the front area the ZAB was under the jurisdiction of the army command in charge there; in the stage area close behind the front, the ZAB was the responsibility of the back area inspection^{xxi}. The ZABs were organized according to military structures. They were divided into four companies of 500 forced laborers each. One “Landsturm” company was assigned to guard each ZAB, whose laborers were treated liked civilian prisoners. Like their comrades in suffering in Germany, the members of the ZAB were required to wear identification armbands^{xxii}.

The back area inspection – “Etappen-Inspektion” – was in charge of the deportations were expressly ordered to not restrict their “compulsory conscriptions” to “the idle, drunkards” and the unemployed, although that was

specified in the regulations. Rather, the inspections should use force to recruit forced laborers “with disregard to the person's standing.” Out of fear of escape and possible unrest within the population, the troops were encouraged to form “strong capture commands”. The workers shouldn't be transported by train to the customs post of the civilian labor battalion, but rather by truck^{xxiii}.

Between October 1916 and spring 1918, a total of 25 ZABs were established in occupied territories in Belgium and Northern France. The first five ZABs were set up in October 1916 for the military rail transport authority, by November, 19 civilian labor battalions existed. An additional five were set up to support the expansion of the crucial “Siegfried” and “Michael” lines^{xxiv}. By New Year 1916/17 over 41,000 Belgians and Northern French were forced laborers in ZABs^{xxv}. The working and living conditions were nearly as bad as they were for forced laborers in Germany. Especially during the first few months in the hard winter 1916/17, miserable living quarters, lack of warm clothing, and insufficient hygiene and health category determined the ZAB forced laborers' daily lives and working conditions.^{xxvi} The severity of the ZAB laborers' living and working conditions was illustrated by a report presented by a delegation of the Flemish Council [Raad van Vlaanderen]. In October 1917, a delegation of the Flemish Council, which was under German supervision, visited some forced laborers in Northern France. The Flemish, who cooperated with the Germans, couldn't fail to notice that conditions there were everything but satisfactory. This

particularly applied to the entirely insufficient food, the poor housing quality, and workers regularly coerced into working longer than the agreed hours. Furthermore, the German soldiers treated the workers brutally. The situation also had adverse effects on mental health. The forced labor and feeling of imprisonment created an oppressive camp mentality. The Flemish delegates were particularly alarmed by the workers' physical health. They reported a mortality rate in the camps of 5%^{xxvii}. Even after the war, it was impossible to determine the exact number of Belgian laborers who died in civilian labor battalions. The Reichsentschädigungskommission (Reich Reparations Committee) issued in 1921 a figure of 1,056 Belgian workers who died in ZABs; a Belgian investigative report set the number at almost 1,300^{xxviii}. More recent, highly reputable research, initiated by relatives of deportees or regional studies, indicate that the mortality number could be higher.

I am very glad that some of the grandchilds and great-grandchilds of former Belgian Deportees today are among us. In place of all I want to name only Mr. Daan Vanderhulst and Mr. Donald Buyze.

Forced labor in the front area and the staging area close behind the front continued, despite Belgian, international and even individual German protests until the end of the war.^{xxix} The civilian labor battalions were supposed to be dissolved in the spring of 1918. However, that was not actually the case. Some battalions remained in existence until the end of the war.^{xxx} The forced recruitment of civilians for military infrastructure tasks, declared as “public

relief works”, also continued. The situation even escalated during the last months of the war. The German retreat actually increased the Supreme Army Command's demand for workers to fulfill all the necessary infrastructure and transport-related tasks. Not just workers, but also other groups, even the bourgeois middle and upper classes, were openly coerced into forced labor, especially for military railways and along army lines^{xxxii}. In consideration of foreign policy issues, but also to prevent possible popular unrest, at least forced civilian labor at least for military purposes was restricted in September 1918 and entirely prohibited in early November of that year.^{xxxii}

Outlook

Deportation and forced labor in the General Governorate of Belgium in winter 1916/17 resulted in a sharp increase in more or less voluntary labor recruits by the German Industry Office starting in autumn 1916. In mid-1918, approximately 130,00 recruited Belgian civilian workers - *who were not forced laborers per definition* - were still in Germany.

An important, but not the only reason for the increase of volunteers in comparison to the low recruitment figures before autumn 1916 was the fear of new deportations. But also the systematic impediment and targeted dismantling of large sectors of Belgian industrial production forced many laborers to volunteer. Benefits for volunteering Belgian workers and their suffering families were also a significant factor in the increase of recruited laborers. Workers received bonuses and cash for recruiting other workers; their families in Belgium received material support: fuel, financial aid, free health care. The employment of of recruited Belgian laborers ceased immediately when the war ended in 1918. The remaining civilian labor battalions in the theater of operations and back area in Belgium and Northern France were permanently dissolved; Belgian forced laborers could already return home in November 1918.

Deportation and forced labor during the First World War would continue to be an issue for Belgians and Germans alike for a long time. During the postwar period the issue was a sore spot in Belgian-German relations. Belgian demands for extradition of those responsible, the prosecution in the occupied Ruhr Region, disputes about reparations payments for deportees and forced laborers, the installation of parliamentary investigative committees in both countries and not least the discussion about deportation and forced labor in journalistic and academic publications determined relations between the countries for many years. Then the new German occupation in 1940 marked another rupture. Unlike in Germany, where the war crimes of World War I are nearly forgotten today, the deportations and forced labor during World War I played and continue to play an important role in the national culture of remembrance about that war in Belgium.

Translated by Natalie Gravenor

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- ⁱ Heinrich Wandt: Etappe Gent. Erweiterte Ausgabe, Wien/Berlin 1926, S. 165 ff.
- ⁱⁱ Jules Van Den Heuvel: The German Slave Raids in Belgium. Facts about the Deportations, London 1917.
- ⁱⁱⁱ August Bruynseels (Hg.): Les citoyens belges réduit en esclavage, Leyden [1917].
- ^{iv} The enslavement of Belgians. A Protest. Mass Meeting, New York 1916.
- ^v Die entsprechenden Bestimmungen waren in den Artikeln 42, 49, 51 und 52 der Haager Landkriegsordnung festgelegt. Vgl. Abkommen, betreffend die Gesetze und Gebräuche des Landkriegs, 18. Dezember 1907, in: RGBL., 1910, S. 107-151. Siehe dazu auch Kohler, Grundlagen des Völkerrechts, S. 85-90 und Henckaerts, Deportation, S. 478-480.
- ^{vi} Siehe etwa Oltmer, Zwangsmigration, S. 135. Eine ausführliche rechtshistorische und völkerrechtliche Untersuchung bei Spangenberg. Konstitutiv für die „Zwangsarbeit“ ist vor allem der administrative Zwang, der den Betroffenen keine Wahlmöglichkeit hinsichtlich der Dauer oder der Ausgestaltung ihrer Arbeitseinsatzes lässt. Hinzu kommen in der Regel weitere Zwangselemente wie etwa das Verbot des Arbeitsplatzwechsels und ein von direktem Zwang oder Zwangsandrohung bestimmtes Arbeitsregime sowie ein dem Arbeitsaufwand nicht adäquater Arbeitslohn. Diese Zwangsarbeits-Definition wurde 1930 von der Internationalen Arbeits-Organisation im Übereinkommen Nr. 29 über Zwangs- und Pflichtarbeit verabschiedet. Vgl. dazu Bülck, Zwangsarbeit, S. 893f.; Verdross/Simma, Völkerrecht, S. 612f. und Simma/Fastenrath, Menschenrechte, S. 122f. Zur Problematik eines expliziten völkerrechtlichen Verbots von Zwangsarbeit bis zur Gegenwart siehe Ryle, Zwangsarbeit und mit Blick auf die Entschädigungen für die Zwangsarbeiter des Zweiten Weltkriegs Majer, Entschädigung (hier auch kurz zur Debatte um die Zwangsarbeit im und nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg, S. 5-7).
- ^{vii} Völkerecht im Weltkrieg, S. 375. Die Reichsentschädigungskommission ging von einer Zahl von 1235 Toten aus. Diese Angabe beruht auf dem statistischen Material der Abteilung für Handel und Gewerbe und der Auswertung der Totenlisten der Verteilungsstellen und ihrer Nebenlager. Deren Zahlen waren allerdings nicht ganz vollständig und endeten bereits am 1. April 1917. In den Zahlen sind zudem nicht die auf dem Rücktransport nach Belgien und die nach der Rückkehr an den Folgen von Krankheiten und Mangel verstorbenen ehemaligen Deportierten berücksichtigt. Vgl. Dokumentation der Reichsentschädigungskommission des Reichsministeriums für Wiederaufbau, Kriegsschäden Belgien, Teil V: Verwendung der Bevölkerung zu Arbeitszwecken, 1921, S. 34. BAB, R 3301 (alt R 38), 266, Bl. 38.
- ^{viii} Passelecq, Déportation et travail forcé, S. 398f.
- ^{ix} Vgl. dazu u.a. den Bericht des Referenten der Kriegsamtstelle Nürnberg, Bieber, über seinen Besuch in der Verteilungsstelle Kassel am 31. Januar 1917, stellv. Generalkommando III, Kriegsamtstelle Nürnberg (Bieber) an das bayerische Kriegsministerium/Kriegsamt München, Nr. 3698, 2.2.1917, BayHStA München München, IV, M Kr, KASt Würzburg, II. AK, Bd. 28, unfoliiert. Die Kriegsamtstelle Nürnberg teilte dem bayerischen Kriegsministerium aufgrund dieses Berichtes mit, unter diesen Umständen ganz darauf verzichten zu wollen, belgische Arbeiter aus den Internierungslagern anzufordern. Aufgrund des anhaltenden Arbeitskräftemangels in der bayerischen Kriegswirtschaft ließ sich dieser Standpunkt jedoch nicht aufrechterhalten.
- ^x Erlaß des XVII. Armeekorps, stellv. Generalkommando, Frankfurt am Main, Abt. IV, Nr. 10637, geheim, 24.11.1916 (Zusätze zu den Grundsätzen Nr. 893.10.16 A.Z.S), HStA Stuttgart, M77/1, 866, unfoliiert.

^{xi} Erlaß des preußischen Kriegsministeriums/Kriegsamt, Nr. 354/1.17 A.Z.(S.), 3 a, 1.2.1917 (Bereitstellung von Kriegsgefangenen und belgischen Abschüblingen für Landwirtschaft zur Frühjahrsbestellung), HStA Stuttgart, M 77/1, 866, Bl. 50.

^{xii} Herbert, Fremdarbeiter, S. 96. Die Praxis der unterschiedlichen Kennzeichnung ausländischer Arbeiter war auch im Zweiten Weltkrieg äußeres Kennzeichen eine nationalen Differenzierung und entsprechenden Ungleichbehandlungsstrategie. Siehe dazu ausführlich ebd., bes. Kap. V und VI.

^{xiii} Ein Beispiel dafür sind die teilweise unter dieser Bezeichnung vorgenommenen Einträge für behandelte belgische Deportierte in den Krankenbüchern des Reservelazarettes 101 in Guben. Siehe dazu Peter, „Russenlager“ Guben, S. 18.

^{xiv} Nachtrag zu dem vom stellvertretenden Generalkommando IV. A.K.II b Gef./II b Fabrikabt. Nr. 89/XI unter dem 28. Dezember 1916 herausgegebenen Richtlinien über die Heranziehung belgischer Zivilarbeiter zu Arbeiten in Deutschland, 18.1.1917, LA Merseburg, Rep. C 50, LRA Bitterfeld II, Nr. 161 d, Bl. 341.

^{xv} Ebd., Bl. 317.

^{xvi} Das Kriegsamt gab die Zahl der zu „Übergangsarbeiten“ eingesetzten Deportierten mit 8379 an (Stand vom 20. Januar 1917). Vgl. ebd., Bl. 317.

^{xvii} Brief eines flämischen Arbeiters vom 15.2.1917 (in einer Zusammenstellung des Reichsamtes des Innern zu Fragen der flämischen Bewegung und der belgischen Arbeiter), 6.3.1917, BAB, R 1501, 119389, Bl.69ff.

^{xviii} Vgl. Tätigkeitsbericht des Marinepfarrers Seiler über seine Tätigkeit vom 15.12.1916 bis zum 22.3.1917, 26.3.1917, BAB, R 85, 42025 unfoliiert. Weitere Abschriften in BAB, R 1501, 119389, Bl. 88-92 und HistArch Erzbistum Köln, C R I 25.14.12, unfoliiert. Zur Fürsorgetätigkeit Seilers und Oors siehe auch die weitere Korrespondenz mit Kardinal Hartmann, ebd.

^{xix} Da die Angaben in den Totenlisten der Lager zum Teil ungenau sind oder Angaben über die Todesursache fehlen, läßt sich die Zahl der eines gewaltsamen Todes gestorbenen belgischen Arbeiter nicht genau bestimmen. Nachweisbar sind lediglich vier belgische Deportierte, die an den Folgen von Schuß- oder Stichverletzungen in den Lagern, Außenlagern oder Arbeitskommandos verstorben sind (zwei im Lager Kassel und je einer im im Lager Wittenberg und im Außenlager Preußisch Holland). Vgl. Totenlisten der Verteilungsstellen, Dokumentation der Reichsentschädigungskommission des Reichsministeriums für Wiederaufbau, Kriegsschäden Belgien, Teil V: Verwendung der Bevölkerung zu Arbeitszwecken, Anlage 18, 1921, BAB, R 3301 (alt R 38), 266, Bl. 84-133, bes. Bl. 88f., Bl. 97, Bl. 125, Bl. 129 und Bl. 133.

^{xx} Schreiben Sauberzweigs an das Auswärtige Amt, 7.10.1916, mit beigelegter Dienstanweisung zu den Zivil-Arbeiter-Bataillonen, BAB, R 85, 4022, unfoliiert.

^{xxi} Erlaß des Generalquartiermeisters, Gen.Qu. II c Nr. 40463/16, 3.1.1917, abgedruckt in: Verordnungen und Erlasse (Verwawest), Nr. 491, S. 596, BAB, R 3301, 862, unfoliiert.

^{xxii} Vgl. Erlaß des Generalquartiermeisters, Gen.Q. II c Nr. 30070, 3.10.1916, BAB, R 3001, 7764, Bl. 17f. sowie Erlaß des Generalquartiermeisters, Gen.Qu.II c Nr. 30070/16, 3.10.1917, Anlage 2 (Dienstanweisung für die Verwendung von Zivil-Arbeiter-Bataillonen), ebd., Nr. 490, S. 589-595.

^{xxiii} Etappenkommandantur Tournai an Etappen-Inspektion 6, Tournai, Nr. 105 geh., 14.10.1916 (Abschrift), BAB, R 3003, ORA, 72, Bl. 3. Bis Dezember 1916 wurden allein aus dem Kreis Tournai etwa 2000 belgische Arbeiter für die ZAB 22, 26 und 33 ausgehoben. Vgl. Etappen-Inspektion 6 an AOK 6, I b, Nr. 45239, 19.10.1916 (Bericht über die Aufbringung der Arbeiter für das Z.A.B. 22 im belgischen Etappengebiet); Mobile Etappen-Kommandantur 5 des I. B.A.K., Etappen-Inspektion 6 an Etappen-Inspektion (I b) Tournai, 22.1.1917 und Hopffer an Reichswehrministerium, Heeresfriedenskommission München, 18.5.1920 (Bericht

über die Abschiebungen der Etappen-Kommandantur 109, Tournai), BAB, R 3003, ORA, 72, Bl. 7-15.

^{xxiv} In seiner 1921 erschienenen Rechtfertigungsschrift „Politik und Kriegsführung“ erweckte Ludendorff den Eindruck, dass die Arbeiten an den Stellungen „Siegfried“ und „Michel“ lediglich von Armierungsbataillonen und „von der Heimat“ angeforderten Arbeitern ausgeführt worden wären. Den zwangsweisen Einsatz belgischer Arbeiter bei diesen Unternehmen verschwie er. Vgl. Ludendorff, Kriegsführung und Politik, S. 225ff.

^{xxv} Siehe Commission d'Enquête, Rapports et documents 2, S. 24f. und Passelecq, Déportation et travail forcé, S. 398.

^{xxvi} Ebd., Anlage 18, Bl. 49ff.

^{xxvii} Bericht des Rates von Flandern über die Reise in die Lager der Deportierten vom 4. bis 6. Oktober 1916, abgedruckt in: Ligue National, Archives du Conseil du Flandre, S. 330-332. Kaum den tatsächlichen Gegebenheiten in den Lagern dürfte der Bericht eines Schweizer Generalstaboffiziers, Oberstleutnant Frey, entsprechen, der mit Genehmigung der OHL im Juli 1917 einige ZAB-Lager besuchen durfte. Er konstatierte, dass die Bedingungen in den Lagern allen entsprechenden Anforderungen bezüglich Unterbringung, Verpflegung, Arbeitszeit, Ordnung und Sauberkeit genügen würden. In den Unterlagen der Reichsentschädigungskommission wird dieser Bericht zudem nur in knappen Zusammenfassungen referiert. Vgl. Dokumentation der Reichsentschädigungskommission des Reichsministeriums für Wiederaufbau, Kriegsschäden Belgien, Teil V: Verwendung der Bevölkerung zu Arbeitszwecken, Anlage 18, 1921, BAB, R 3301 (alt R 38), 266, Bl. 50.

^{xxviii} Ebd., S. 50, Bl. 54 und Passelecq, Déportation et travail forcé, S. 398f.

^{xxix} So wandten sich der Rat von Flandern, der Papst, aber auch die SPD, Matthias Erzberger und Vertreter der deutschen Zivilverwaltung in Brüssel immer wieder gegen die Zwangsarbeit im Operations- und Etappengebiet. Echo und Erfolg dieser Interventionen blieben jedoch vergleichsweise gering. Der Leiter der Politischen Abteilung, von der Lancken, bemühte sich wiederholt, den Zwangseinsatz belgischer Arbeiter in dem nicht zum Generalgouvernement gehörenden Operations- und Etappengebiet wenigstens einzugrenzen. Dabei spielten in erster Linie innen- und außenpolitische Rücksichten eine Rolle. Von der Lancken wies zum Beispiel anlässlich neuer Aushebungen für Zivil-Arbeiter-Bataillone im Sommer 1917 darauf hin, dass die Verwendung dieser Arbeiter außerhalb Belgiens eine „sehr unerwünschte politische Wirkung“ hätte. Gegenüber der OHL verwies er auf die Anfragen des Papstes und den gefährdeten Erfolg der Flamenpolitik. Er sprach sich dafür aus, die freiwillige Anwerbung noch stärker zu fördern, um die Zwangseinstellungen „auf ein Minimum“ zu reduzieren. Außerdem sollten die ZAB nicht außerhalb Belgiens zum Einsatz kommen. Vgl. von der Lancken an Lersner vom 17.7.1917, PA AA, R 22151, Bl. 288ff. Ludendorff antwortete, dass er „wegen dringender Not“ in der gegenwärtigen Situation dazu gezwungen sei, von dem Grundsatz, belgische Arbeiter in ZAB nicht außerhalb der Landesgrenzen einzusetzen, abzuweichen. Dabei blieb es auch in den folgenden Monaten. Vgl. ebd., Bl. 292. Zu den Protesten gegen Zwangsarbeit und Deportation in Belgien siehe ausführlich die Kapitel 6 und 7 der vorliegenden Arbeit.

^{xxx} Dokumentation der Reichsentschädigungskommission des Reichsministeriums für Wiederaufbau, Kriegsschäden Belgien, Teil V: Verwendung der Bevölkerung zu Arbeitszwecken, 1921, S. 47f., BAB, R 3301 (alt R 38), 266, Bl. 51f. sowie Generalquartiermeister an das Reichsamt des Innern, 20.11.1918, ebd. und R 1501, 119580, unfoliiert (mit Hinweisen auf die endgültige Auflösung der ZAB Anfang November 1918). Im militärisch verwalteten Gebiet Ober Ost in Litauen und Kurland wurden die gleichfalls seit Oktober 1916 bestehenden ZAB offiziell am 20. September 1917 aufgelöst. Einige der Formationen blieben aber auch hier offenbar, so Liulevicius, bestehen. Vgl. Liulevicius, Kriegsland, S. 103f.

