

**Ringo Müller, »Feindliche Ausländer« im
Deutschen Reich während des Ersten Weltkrieges,
Göttingen (V&R) 2021, 770 S., 3 Abb., 15 Tab., ISBN
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Panikos Panayi, Leicester

This book will become the starting point for anybody interested in the experience of enemy aliens in Germany during the First World War. While other scholars may have previously tackled aspects of this history, especially the issue of internment, this volume details all aspects of this group of people who found themselves in the country at the outbreak of the conflict, as well as those forcibly transferred here as the war developed.

In terms of the populations it tackles, the volume includes all nationalities categorised as enemy aliens, whether those designated as such when the conflict broke out, above all the British, French and Russians, or those who would have acquired this status because their country took up arms against Germany as the war progressed, such as Italians, while Müller also tackles the consequences of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918 and the establishment of the Kingdom of Poland in 1916 for Russians and Poles respectively.

The coverage also proves all-encompassing regarding the different types of enemy aliens who found themselves in Germany at the outbreak of war. As other scholars have previously demonstrated, these could include tourists, businessmen, students, and foreign workers employed in a variety of occupations throughout Germany. In addition, Müller also deals with those who were transported to Germany during the course of the conflict from Belgium, France and Poland/Russia.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the level of coverage of this volume lies in the fact that it tackles all aspects of the way in which the enemy faced marginalization, i.e. in the way in which Müller details the various measures taken by the authorities against the enemy populations living in Germany during the Great War as well as investigating public opinion. The areas scrutinised, all in great detail, therefore include: the legal exclusion of enemy aliens; their control as a result of legislation; their expulsion, covered in more than one chapter; confiscation of goods, money and property; and a long chapter on internment, which appears to cover every aspect of this policy for all minorities. Importantly, the book also includes a long chapter on the support which enemy aliens received from a variety of German and international organisations.

As Müller demonstrates, the evolution of enemy alien policy had to deal with two conflicting needs of the German state during the War. First, the desire for security, which dictated the persecution



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which citizens of the allied states endured during the conflict through the measures introduced and which, in the case of Great Britain, proved the only consideration when dealing with the smaller numbers of enemy aliens within the country. However, in the German case, this need for security conflicted with economic necessity because of a level of dependence on foreign workers, especially those with Russian nationality, which had developed before the war broke out and which became more serious as a result of the employment shortages caused by mobilization and which meant some limit on the deprivations of liberty in some cases.

As Müller demonstrates in his introduction, writing a history of the enemy alien in Germany during the Great War proves problematic because of the range of different agencies involved in the development of the policies which controlled these populations not just in terms of the conflict between economics and security but also because, while a general desire to control enemy aliens throughout the Reich existed and while policies in the different German states within this entity mirrored each other, regional and local variations, whether at the state level or the city level, also played a role.

Although Müller used a variety of sources, including newspapers from all over Germany, and autobiographies, especially those written in English, German archival material controls the narrative. As he explains in his introduction, he needed to consult information in repositories all over Germany because of the variations in policy which developed, although he did not venture abroad, but did utilize digitised material from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, and the United States National Archives. A trip to the UK National Archives to utilize FO383 would have enriched the narrative further.

However, the author has really used too much archival material rather than too little, although FO383 does contain additional and different information. The archival files control the narrative which Müller has constructed, not only in the sense that the information within them has determined the structure of the book, but also because they decide the breakdown and themes within the individual chapters in the sense that the author picks up individual episodes he finds within state papers which he uses to determine sections and subsections within the chapters. Early on, to give just one example, he devotes 12 pages (p. 171–83) to the experience of Russian tourists who found themselves in Bad Kissingen when the war broke using material in the State Archives in Munich. Here, as elsewhere, Müller has not digested the information which he has found, appearing to quote virtually every word in the files which he has utilised including the views of what seem all the bureaucrats involved in making decisions. While archival material can provide individual stories, supplemented by the memoirs and, to some extent, newspaper material which Müller utilised, his narrative constitutes an example of history from above rather than history from below. The book therefore proves difficult to read. A more



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liberal use of photographs could have made it more user friendly: Müller has provided just three and one could ask, why bother? We could also have had some maps and more tables, especially in the chapter on internment.

In many ways the great strength of this book also proves to be its greatest weakness: the level of detail. It is almost encyclopaedic in terms of the amount of information it provides. However, much of it proves superfluous: we do not need to know the opinion of every bureaucrat in every decision-making process which impacted on individual lives, and neither do we need to know the date of birth of every person mentioned in the text, again mostly bureaucrats and politicians, admirable though the effort to establish these might be. This level of detail has resulted in a long book with long chapters, almost 200 pages in the case of the one dealing with internment, with much repetition. Despite, or perhaps because of this, Müller's book will become the starting point for anybody investigating enemy aliens in First World War Germany.

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