Revolutionary Russia

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/frvr20

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To cite this article: Peter Whitewood (2023): Failing to Create Revolutionaries: Polish POWs in Soviet Captivity, 1920–21, Revolutionary Russia, DOI: 10.1080/09546545.2023.2167686

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09546545.2023.2167686

Published online: 24 Jan 2023.

Revolutionary Russia, 2023
https://doi.org/10.1080/09546545.2023.2167686

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

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FAILING TO CREATE REVOLUTIONARIES: POLISH POWS IN SOVIET CAPTIVITY, 1920–21

This article examines the Bolshevik Party's efforts to radicalize tens of thousands of Polish prisoners of war (POWs) held in makeshift prison camps across Soviet Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet-Polish War of 1919–20. The end goal was to create a new cadre of Polish revolutionaries to agitate for revolutionary change on repatriation. These propaganda efforts were almost entirely undermined by a series of everyday problems from rudimentary camp living conditions and violence against prisoners to disease and ineffective leadership by Soviet institutions. This article will show, however, that as part of these efforts, the Bolsheviks committed to safeguarding POW welfare, mirroring international standards set by the Hague conventions, even if this was primarily designed to better cultivate revolutionaries and was rarely met in practice. In a comparative sense, therefore, the everyday lives of Polish POWs and their management by Soviet authorities did not markedly differ from the POW experience across Europe, where other governments likewise made claims about safeguarding welfare and often failed to deliver. Contrary to existing interpretations of early Soviet POW camps, which present these as unique stepping-stones to the future Stalinist GULAG, this article shows stronger continuities with past practices.

After losing the Soviet-Polish war in summer 1920, Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks not only suffered a shattering military defeat but failed to export revolution to Western Europe. Until mid-August, the Red Army had made rapid progress across the western front, but a dramatical reversal in fortune outside Warsaw brought the war to a quick end, and with it, Lenin's hopes of forging a Soviet Poland and sparking revolution in neighbouring Germany. This stunning defeat, though, did not mean that the Bolsheviks abandoned efforts to push Europe into revolution. It is well-known that during the later and dramatic Ruhr crisis of 1923, they again sought to exploit unrest in Germany to ignite revolution. Yet before this point, during the tense year following the Soviet-Polish war, and when protracted negotiations were underway to agree a lasting peace treaty, the Bolsheviks attempted to radicalize Polish prisoners of war (POWs) to serve as revolutionaries when repatriated. Other captured Polish civilians and

refugees were also targeted, but military-trained POWs assumed a high priority. This revolutionary project, however, also ended in failure. Not only were efforts to radicalize Polish POWs to repeat the same mistake committed in summer 1920 when Lenin expected large numbers of Polish citizens to willingly join the Bolshevik cause, but as this article shows, appalling conditions in makeshift camps and the chaotic management of prisoners made effective propaganda almost impossible.

Although both sides captured large numbers of POWs in the Soviet-Polish war, the fates and experiences of Red Army captives have attracted greater scholarly attention. What has been published in dedicated works on Polish POWs, moreover, tends to concentrate on establishing their numbers and detailing everyday camp experiences.[1] By contrast, as well as examining how sub-standard camp conditions fatally undermined Bolshevik propaganda, this article places the Soviet POW camps in a wider comparative context. It shows how the Bolsheviks' treatment of Polish POWs in 1920–21 reveals their informal accommodation with 'bourgeois' international legal frameworks at the same time as they were seeking to destabilize the international order. Furthermore, some scholars, writing when academic interest in POWs of the First World War era began to gather momentum, presented Soviet POW camps as a radical departure from previous norms and as a stepping-stone towards the future GULAG – or in one case, suggested that earlier Russian POW camps from 1914–18 should be seen in this light. These arguments fall down, however, in recognition of how the Bolsheviks disbanded POW camps in Western Russia soon after 1917, with new Soviet camps constructed only later during the civil war. But speculative continuity with the Stalin era is not only difficult to sustain for this reason. As this article demonstrates, Soviet management and operation of camps for Polish POWs in the early 1920s had stronger continuities with the past and other contemporaneous powers than with the Stalinist future.[2] This, in turn, adds more weight against the tendency to draw tight connections between the wider Soviet prison camp network of the civil war and the later GULAG.[3]

Counting prisoners and 'cultural-enlightenment'

After the armistice of 18 October 1920 ended the fighting in the Soviet-Polish war, according to the Polish Section of the Political Administration of the Red Army (PUR), at least 22,778 Polish POWs were confined in twenty-seven camps across Soviet territory. This was smaller than the huge numbers of POWs previously imprisoned across the Eastern Front during the First World War, but it was a significant logistical problem for the Bolsheviks, made worse by the true numbers being consistently unclear. Since its creation in August 1920, on the initiative of the Bolshevik Party's Polish Bureau, the Polish Section of PUR sought accurate information about the exact whereabouts of Polish POWs. However, before a final peace treaty, the Treaty of Riga, was signed in March 1921, the Red Army captured more POWs following sporadic low-level fighting. Poor communications with camps in Siberia and chaos in South Russia and Ukraine, where fighting was ongoing in autumn 1920 against Petr Vrangel's White army and the forces of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), created further gaps in the numbers.[4] The Polish Section of PUR had no information whatsoever about Polish POWs in several areas and sometimes Soviet officials seeking to confirm reports of prisoners discovered none at all.[5] After drawing together

numerous sources, one historian estimates that the real number of Polish POWs in Soviet Russia in the months after the war was nearer 44,000.[6] Materials from the Polish Section of PUR from the end of 1920 also refer to over sixty camps containing varied numbers of Polish prisoners, from several thousand in some to just a handful in others.[7]

It was vital for Soviet officials to establish accurate numbers and camp locations because, with the war now over, Polish POWs would eventually be exchanged for Red Army POWs held in Poland. But the stakes were higher for the Bolshevik leadership because they had sought for several months to radicalize Polish POWs before their eventual return home. Other governments, including in Poland, likewise carried out propaganda among POWs in these years, but creating revolutionaries was an ambition on another level.[8] And for this to have any chance of success, POWs needed to be, at the least, well-treated. The Bolsheviks already, and officially, recognized the 'exceptional importance' of POWs in a government decree published on 30 May 1918, but this ideal was rarely reflected on the civil war battlefield where violence against prisoners was common to all sides.[9] For this reason, War Commissar, Lev Trotsky, made it clear to the Red Army in May 1920 that Soviet forces should show 'magnanimity towards a captured and wounded enemy … We shall enlighten his mind and make of him our best friend and co-thinker'. In a speech from the same month, he remarked that 'the Polish workers and peasants, whom we take prisoner, must not fear cruelty and execution – no, we must bring them the light of Communism'. This was apparently to repeat the Bolshevik radicalization of German POWs in 1918, who Trotsky claimed had been 'transformed into revolutionaries'.[10] Other senior Bolsheviks, such as head of the Cheka, Feliks Dzerzhinskii, also pressed for more propaganda among POWs to ensure that Poles returning home 'would be ours' (Dzerzhinskii also suggested allowing 'propagandized' POWs opportunities to escape, seemingly to ensure smoother infiltration back into Poland).[11]

The central agency coordinating propaganda among Polish POWs – so-called 'cultural-enlightenment work' – was initially the Bolshevik Polish Bureau, and then after its creation in August 1920, the Polish Section of PUR. This military body took over from the summer because it possessed greater means than the Moscow-based Polish Bureau to carry out agitation among a rising number of Polish POWs.[12] And in line with class prejudices, political propaganda was targeted solely at rank-and-file Polish POWs. Officers, regarded as unredeemable, were typically separated out on capture or immediately arrested as counter-revolutionaries.[13] As one Bolshevik political instructor put it in late 1920, most Polish rank-and-file prisoners were an 'unconscious mass' deceived by the bourgeoisie.[14] Polish officers, moreover, were blamed for spreading rumours about the mistreatment of prisoners in Soviet captivity.[15] Trotsky revealed similar thoughts when he called on Red Army soldiers to 'receive Polish soldier prisoners as our deluded or deceived brothers', as 'helpless victims of the Anglo-French bourgeoisies'.[16]

In the makeshift prison camps, then, Bolshevik political instructors undertook efforts to convert rank-and-file Polish POWs to the revolutionary cause. With success varying widely among camps, literacy schools, libraries, reading groups, clubs, and discussion circles were established. Some camps managed to form communist cells; others had rarer creations, such as brass bands. Camp lectures provide a snapshot of the political education on offer, with topics ranging from 'communist and

capitalist government', 'the politics of the Entente and Soviet power', 'land reform in Poland', 'the church and socialism', 'war and peace', among other revolutionary subjects.[17] Soviet newspapers and Polish-language socialist newspapers were to be regularly supplied, although this was not consistently the case. While some camps were able to put on a wide array of propaganda activities, others could only manage the most basic forms of political agitation in discussion circles. More significantly, camp life was quickly overwhelmed by numerous everyday problems and shortages in expertise, themselves products of the deep stresses and strains of civil war, but which culminated to a point that in many locations 'cultural-enlightenment work' simply became impossible.

Problems in the camps

Practical everyday problems in carrying out propaganda among Polish POWs became clear from the early months of the Soviet-Polish war. In June 1920, the Smolensk Polish Bureau, for instance, reported to the centre about inadequate conditions in the local POW camp, complaining about a lack of general oversight, violence against prisoners, and insufficient food. All of this would 'create enemies for us instead of friends and allies'. Unsuitable personnel, moreover, were often leading propaganda 'without knowledge of Polish relations and the psyche of the Polish worker and peasant'.[18] Soon enough these problems attracted the attention of Bolsheviks higher up the party hierarchy. One of the party's experts in Polish affairs, Iulian Markhlevskii, and member of the Polish Bureau, Edvard Prukhniak, reported directly to Lenin in June to criticize the absence of 'any kind of defined norms' in the treatment of Polish POWs and described a negative impact on the propaganda offensive. Among a litany of problems, the two highlighted variable imprisonment of rank-and-file Polish POWs, with some housed with White and Polish officers. This absence of order was apparently giving rise to counter-revolutionary moods. Camp security was inadequate, especially in Siberia where many Polish POWs were said to be escaping under the guise of Austrian or German POWs, whose repatriation had been delayed in the chaos of the civil war. The circumstances of Polish POWs were typically uneven and Markhlevskii and Prukhniak noted that while some camps were treating POWs fairly, elsewhere prisoners complained about theft and violence. Food provision was 'extremely bad' and some POWs were reported to be starving. Markhlevskii and Prukhniak pushed for changes to be made. Polish soldiers, they argued, were deeply interested in the conditions of Soviet prison camps and 'if they receive information from their POW comrades that their human dignity has not been trampled, this will be one of the best arguments for them to cross over to our side'. Pressure to do something about the poor circumstances of Polish POWs came from other quarters at the height of the war. Dzerzhinskii wrote similarly to the Central Directorate for Population Evacuation (Tsentroevak) at the end of July, urging that conditions in the camps be improved to avoid 'embittering' the POWs.[19]

In recommendations to Lenin, Markhlevskii and Prukhniak suggested that Polish soldiers be separated from officers and improvements be made to food supply and general camp conditions. As we shall see, such measures would be suggested time and time again without notable results. Another recommendation

concerned the wider management of POWs. A likely cause of their uneven treatment was that responsibility for housing and welfare, rather than coming under one single institution, was dispersed across the military, the Cheka's special departments, the Main Administration of Forced Labour (GUPR), and Tsentroevak. Markhlevskii and Prukhniak called for overall responsibility transferred to the military and local military commissariats, seeing as the latter were typically the first organs to have contact with Polish POWs on capture. Other recommendations included employing POWs in labour according to skill (POWs were routinely used as labourers) and allowing them outside camps to work in factories, if appropriate. Local Polish bureaus should carry out propaganda or be formed where none existed. As a baseline, Markhlevskii and Prukhniak pointed out that communists with Polish language skills should carry out such work.[20]

The party leadership evidently took up some of these recommendations (though overall responsibility for POWs was not passed to the military). At the end of June, the Central Executive Committee ordered GUPR to work towards the isolation of rank-and-file Polish POWs and it released three million rubles in support of propaganda.[21] This was then cascaded down when head of GUPR, Zinovii Zangvil', made clear in internal guidance that Polish officers and soldiers should be separated and he called for 'serious attention' turned to agitation and 'cultural-enlightenment work'.[22] At the end of the month, Zangvil' participated in a meeting about Polish POW affairs with other institutional heads, reiterating these points, with general camp conditions and rations singled out for improvement to cultivate sympathy towards Soviet power. But these aspirations were undermined by the same stubborn problems. Zangvil' pointed out, for instance, how weak connections to corresponding organs of GUPR in Siberia and Ukraine meant that the total number of Polish POWs in Soviet territory still remained unclear. Because of inadequate information about the reliability of individual POWs, there was almost no use of POW labour according to skill. Moreover, a kneejerk reaction following a fire at the Khoroshevskii artillery depot on 9 May, blamed on Polish saboteurs, had seen all Polish POWs who worked outside camps once again confined. Reporting for the Polish Bureau at this same meeting, P. Rupevich, described supposedly 'systematic' propaganda taking place among the POWs, involving an array of meetings, discussion circles and the distribution of newspapers. Logistical problems, however, such as the frequent transfer of prisoners, were interrupting this apparently steady work. Rupevich, in all, was not confident that the mood among the POWs was changing and he characterized this as generally hostile towards Soviet Russia. Nevertheless, the Polish Bureau ambitiously anticipated carrying out 'careful agitation' to prepare Polish POWs for potential future civil war in Poland. In support of these efforts, the Cheka's special departments were to work more extensively in the camps to weed out unreliable prisoners.[23]

In some cities, like Kyiv, only recently retaken in a Soviet counter-offensive against the Polish Army, propaganda was understandably in a bad state and rising numbers of Polish POWs from the summer further piled on the pressure. New influxes of around two hundred POWs arrived each day meant political meetings were only possible at outlying staging posts (fixing the problems in Kyiv was a priority as the city was a common transit point for Polish POWs travelling to central Russia).[24] Kharkiv was experiencing similar problems, which had built since July following the breakthrough of the Red Army and Semen Budennyi's cavalry on the southwestern front. One

political instructor on the ground, a certain Charnetskii, reported in late August on the absence of suitable personnel to carry out agitation among POWs. Soviet officials were struggling to house, feed and clothe an influx of five thousand POWs.[25] This was 'an unbearable burden' for just Charnetskii and one other political worker. 'I am unable to carry out the smallest part of what should be done', he complained.[26] There were some moments of enthusiasm amid these difficulties, such as in September when a group of militant Polish POWs in Kharkiv apparently called to be sent to fight Vrangel's White army, but the situation generally went from bad to worse.[27] At the end of 1920, the new head of the Polish Section of PUR, S. Piliavskii, called for all POWs to be removed from Soviet Ukraine because of extremely poor conditions and the 'enormous' numbers of deaths from disease, though this was not followed through.[28]

Despite commitments from the top to improve camp conditions and propaganda, change was at best incremental. In an August 1920 report, the Polish Section of PUR noted that in the previous eleven days, ten new political instructors had been selected from Polish communists mobilized by the Central Committee. Nine were sent to POW camps to carry out agitational and sanitary support, with clubs, literacy schools and libraries to be established, and more political literature distributed. The possibly of starting up camp theatres was even mooted, holding out the possibility of future drama, sport or musical events.[29] Nine political instructors, however, was a fraction of the number necessary, especially for such an ambitious range of activities. In September, the Polish Section of PUR recorded that there were dedicated political instructors in just sixteen POW camps, with efforts to mobilize more taking place elsewhere. Yet by the end of the 1920, one instructor per five hundred POWs was typically the norm and some camps remained entirely without such officials. In their absence, literate POWs taught in camp literacy schools. These were conditions for only the most low-level propaganda. Furthermore, it was impossible to enact systematic improvements to camps when it was still unclear how many prisoners were in captivity. The Polish Section of PUR recorded thirty-five camps in existence, but the precise numbers of POWs for only twenty.[30] Poor communications and logistics also continued to pose problems. In late August 1920, eight hundred Polish POWs were sent from the western front to Cheliabinsk with no forewarning. There were no places to house them when they arrived.[31]

Efforts to establish a Polish Red Army, an eye-catching initiative with high propaganda value, also ran into difficulties. Based on an order promulgated by the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic (RVSR) on 15 August, this new military force was to be a revolutionary centre for a future armed uprising in Poland and followed in the footsteps of previous recruitment drives as established by the All-Russian Congress of Prisoners of War in April 1918.[32] In the end, the new army reached approximately one thousand soldiers, with small numbers of POWs entering command courses. This paled in comparison with previous efforts, such as the recruitment of thirty thousand South Slavs as Red Army soldiers, and the even larger numbers of Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians joining so-called 'international units'. This underlined the challenges of radicalizing POWs in an ongoing war as opposed to at a war's end (stronger recruitment from the German and Austro-Hungarian armies must also be set in the context of far larger numbers of First World War POWs).[33] Furthermore, some Polish recruits in 1920 were not even POWs, but Soviet soldiers of Polish nationality or Russians who could speak Polish. Enthusiasm among genuine Polish POWs was not

high and, in any case, when the armistice was agreed in October 1920, the Polish Red Army was quickly disbanded.[34]

In early September, as Markhlevskii and Prukhniak had done months earlier, Polish Bureau secretary, S. Borskii, bemoaned the ongoing absence of 'systematic leadership of political work among prisoners of war', without which POWs would not become 'guides of consciousness and revolutionism' on return to Poland. Living conditions had to be improved, the working day capped at six hours and provisions supplied at the same levels as given to Red Army soldiers.[35] The Polish Section of PUR highlighted similar issues: rations were not delivered consistently and POWs did not have proper clothing. Some were still housed with White officers (which continued to occur into 1921 in some areas). Many camps were in appalling conditions, described by the Polish Section of PUR as 'inhumane'. Prisoners sometimes had no access to baths, soap, disinfectants, or mattresses (camps often provided straw on planks of wood, while some did not even provide the straw). POWs were frequently working too long hours (up to 12 hours a day in forestry work, and in the Neia and Iaroslavl' camps, the working day could reach 18 hours). All major powers made use of POW labour, not always judged as damaging to propaganda and persuasion, but the hours that some Polish POWs worked in Soviet Russia left them with no time for anything else. Critical of the 'prison regime' in operation and with no structures in place for political instructors to discuss the POWs' needs, in October the Polish Section of PUR once again called for significant changes.[36]

Improving the situation of Polish POWs was climbing up the Bolshevik leadership's agenda as the Soviet-Polish war reached its end. In September 1920, the RSVR noted that propaganda among POWs would now assume higher priority and it delivered a stark warning that this was 'doomed to failure' without improvements in camp living conditions.[37] But a more significant intervention arrived on 15 September when the Council of Labour and Defence (STO), headed by Lenin, attempted to establish clearer lines of authority for the management of Polish POWs. GUPR was separately reorganized in the same month as the Main Directorate of Public Works and Duties (GUOPR), and the STO made this new body responsible for housing Polish POWs and organizing labour squads, with pay renumerated at the levels of Soviet military personnel (POWs completed various types of work, including logging, mining, factory work, farming, and street cleaning). This decision went against the mood in the Polish Section of PUR, previously critical of GUPR's handling of Polish POWs and its inability 'to cope in economic and administrative terms with the tasks assigned to it'. An interdepartmental commission on Polish affairs, formed in the summer, similarly suggested giving overall responsibility instead to the military.[38] In the end, however, as the STO stipulated, GUOPR would be given the task, supported by the People's Commissariat for Food and the Central Supply Directorate of the Red Army, to coordinate rations and clothing, provided at military standards. The military would assist with transportation and the Polish Section of PUR would remain primarily responsible for propaganda.[39]

The September STO order became the benchmark reference point for the management of Polish POWs until their later repatriation during 1921-22. But this was not its sole significance. The STO provisions, in several respects, mirrored international standards for safeguarding POW welfare as enshrined in the Hague conventions, signed by several major powers, including Russia, at peace conferences in 1899 and 1907, to

establish a mutual legal framework for the conduct of war.[40] Notably, alongside mandating adequate and sanitary living facilities, the STO called for food and clothing be provided to POWs at military standards, and labour renumerated also at military levels for equivalent work. This aligned with some of the central, if admittedly broad, provisions in the Hague conventions relating to POW welfare to ensure their 'humane' treatment even if, in practice, the Soviet government, like other powers, failed to live up to these standards.[41]

Wage levels for POW labour had already prompted disagreement among Soviet officials before the STO order appeared. GUPR had been paying Polish POWs 25% of their wages, a rate common for ordinary prisoners, with the deduction made to meet the costs of confinement and in line with pre-revolutionary practices (Article 6 of the Hague convention also provided for wage deductions to meet maintenance costs).[42] The head of Tsentroevak, Aleksandr Eiduk, however, in a message to Dzerzhinskii in September, pushed for POW wages to be paid at full Red Army levels rather than apply deductions typical for ordinary criminals. He stressed that because Polish POWs were prisoners in a foreign war, they should not be unduly punished. There was clear 'political and propaganda' importance to this, and Eiduk argued for Polish POWs to be treated the same as Russian workers. Eiduk's suggestion to eliminate deductions went beyond baseline international conventions for rank-and-file POWs. The interdepartmental commission on Polish POW affairs also resisted deductions and on 12 January 1921 called on GUOPR to remove withholdings and for wages to be equated to labour army rates or those of ordinary workers.[43] This would certainly take time to put into practice as some POW camps were reportedly making 100% wage deductions. Zangvil', for his part, argued that paying labour army rates for POWs could not be enforced and he convinced the interdepartmental commission on Polish affairs in January 1921 to ask the STO to reconsider the matter. Zangvil's' position was hardly unusual. Britain, France and Germany all undercut the Hague convention standards for POW pay in the First World War. However, on 2 February 1921, the 'Little Sovnarkom' announced that Polish POWs working in heavy industry and factories should receive full salaries without deductions. Seemingly a compromise position (and the types of work specified here reflected Bolshevik priorities), but this still exceeded baseline international standards for rank-and-file POWs.[44]

The Bolsheviks' alignment with international standards for POW welfare contradicted their open repudiation of international treaties signed by previous Russian governments and also their general hostility towards 'bourgeois' international law. POW affairs, however, was an early issue requiring them to engage and negotiate with other powers and reach reciprocal agreements, firstly due a loss of leverage after the 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, and then following the end of the First World War more broadly.[45] This can be seen as the beginnings of Lenin's policy of 'peaceful co-existence' under the later New Economic Policy. For similar reasons, the Russian Red Cross was permitted to operate in Soviet territory after 1918, although reorganized on a socialist basis and suspected of being an espionage front.[46] In that same year, moreover, the Bolsheviks recognized, although did not ratify, the 1906 Geneva convention, chiefly due to concern about the fate of Russian soldiers still in Germany. But it was not until 1925 that the Soviet government, after receiving diplomatic recognition from other powers, more formally adhered to the Hague conventions with an amended statue on military crimes published in 1927, effectively

implementing its regulations for POWs (full recognition did not come until 1954).[47] In this sense, although the Bolsheviks resisted openly tying themselves to 'bourgeois international law' and were averse to using its language in bilateral negotiations, they nevertheless informally put key principles into practice in the years after 1917 and operated in line with established conventions of reciprocity.[48] In another example from December 1918, Iosif Unshlikht, head of the Central Collegium for POWs and Refugees, made clear that recognition of the Geneva convention meant that the principles of the Hague conventions relating to POW welfare effectively remained in force. The Central Collegium for POWs and Refugees was 'pursuing goals and objectives of an international character' in ensuring the humane treatment of POWs, tasks 'equally inherent for states in international relations with each other'. Unshlikht, moreover, pointed out that even if the Hague conventions did not apply to domestic civil war in Soviet Russia, because of foreign interventions and the 'intolerance and cruelty' likely to manifest from the fighting, the Soviet government should 'take measures to alleviate the plight of prisoners'.[49] Two years later in 1920, similar discussions took place within the People's Commissariat for Justice about awarding soldiers from the White armies, the chief force of the counter-revolution, similar protections as foreign POWs.[50] While Lenin did not go this far, Soviet officials' views about the management of POWs and their welfare was evolving in a nuanced direction and clearly engaging with established humanitarian norms. Lenin's intervention through the STO in September 1920 came before the Soviet and Polish governments agreed mutual safeguards for POWs as part of the October armistice and preliminary peace treaty. Here both parties committed to repatriating hostages, internees, civilian and military POWs, exiles, refugees, and emigrants as quickly as possible. POWs were to be given sufficient support, accommodation and pay for labour, and treated equally, in accordance with international law.[51]

Alongside some recognition of international humanitarian principles, as was true in 1918, self-interest and concerns about Soviet prisoners overseas, this time in Poland in 1920, encouraged the Bolshevik leadership to move towards accepted standards for POW welfare when dealing with Polish captives. The Bolsheviks were certainly mindful of the value of POWs as a commodity in prisoner exchanges.[52] But as we have seen, they were fully aware that propaganda among Polish POWs and the creation of future revolutionaries would fail without adequate welfare provisions. This was a strong incentive encouraging the leadership to make sure that conditions in Soviet POW camps aligned with – and in some cases exceeded – international standards. The revolutionary objective of radicalizing POWs to undermine the 'bourgeois' international order could only be achieved by accommodating the latter.

In other ways, the Bolsheviks undoubtedly deviated from the Hague conventions, in terms of the frequently appalling camp conditions and irregular food supply, but this was true of all major powers – and previous Russian governments – who infringed the Hague conventions in practice even though they officially abided by them.[53] Under the Bolsheviks, however, a marked difference was the way in which the long-standing and hierarchical preferential treatment of officers was upended. Polish officers, seen as dangerous agents of the bourgeoisie, faced the worst conditions, increased risk of death and deployment in forced labour.[54]

Disease and violence

As much as the September 1920 STO order signalled the party leadership's renewed push to safeguard Polish POWs at the tail end of the Soviet-Polish war, little changed in the following months, especially with the added pressure of seasonal disease. The Polish Section of PUR noted in November that hardly anything had been done to increase supplies of clothing and footwear, without which POWs could not engage in labour and illness more easily took hold. Due to cold weather, the overwhelming majority of Polish POWs were unable to work because of insufficient clothing. One political instructor, a certain M. Portus', wrote to the Polish Section of PUR in October, after visiting the Podsolnechnaia railway station in Moscow oblast', and reported that 90% of the 114 assembled Polish POWs were inadequately clothed for winter. Many were ill and had not received medical assistance. The prisoners reported to Portus' that they had received no rations during their two-month railway journey and had been forced to exchange clothing for bread and potatoes (this was not an uncommon fact of life for repatriates from Soviet Russia).[55] It is hardly a surprise that no 'political work' was taking place.[56] Similarly in November, another political instructor from the Kostroma camp reported that material conditions were worsening each day as more POWs arrived, bringing diseases such as scabies with them. Fifty cases were recorded by the middle of the month and lack of space in the camp was the source of the problem. Propaganda here was also impossible.[57] While some camps reported successful hygiene measures reducing disease, the problem was significant and widespread elsewhere.[58] Typhus was detected in seven camps, with Tver', Orlov and camps in the Moscow oblast', suffering with 'raging' and 'rampant' epidemics.[59]

During this difficult winter, already challenging circumstances for Polish POWs in Soviet Ukraine degraded quickly. The interdepartmental commission on Polish POW affairs highlighted a 'terrible situation' and urged the dispatch of supplies.[60] Conditions for Polish POWs working along the Murmansk railway, and especially in the north, appear even worse (according to one report, POWs were heard remarking 'that death is better than the north').[61] Bolshevik officials were not ignorant of the hardships on the Murmansk railway, where thousands of POWs had previously lost lives during the First World War. This was not a site at all suitable for 'political work' and indicative once more of a contradictory approach towards Polish POWs, shaped by the competing imperatives of propaganda and labour. Even so, the interdepartmental commission subsequently made renewed efforts to get the September STO order put into practice in camps in Ukraine and Murmansk, and criticized the indifference of local officials.[62] Such intransigence and misbehaviour on the ground regularly featured in camp reports.[63] To take one example from November 1920, the head of the Polish Section of PUR relayed to Zangvil' the testimony of a Polish POW who had complained about the commandant of the Zvenigorod camp. The latter had withheld access to Polish literature and newspapers, and halted political meetings on account of not being able to speak Polish. The commandant's mistrust apparently extended to the camp's political instructor. Like in other camps, material conditions and food were substandard. POWs were barefooted in the snow (and problems with the sewerage system meant that the camp lavatory was placed in an open courtyard). 'Under such conditions it will be impossible to change the mood towards Soviet power among the POWs'.[64]

There were some signs of apparent progress elsewhere, however. Around this time, the Polish Section of PUR reported on supposedly rising levels of class consciousness among some POWs, increasing numbers of camp communist cells and steady recruitment to the Red Army.[65] But whatever progress might be detected in some camps was dwarfed by disorder and suffering in others. Such were the problems of putting the welfare provisions for Polish POWs from the September STO order into practice that the central commission of the RSVR called in December for the Revolutionary Tribunal of the Republic to investigate both the Red Army's Central Supply Administration and the Extraordinary Supreme Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defence for supplying the Red Army.[66]

A final serious problem inside the Polish POW camps was violence. In one hardly unique example from October 1920, Polish POW, 21-year-old Wacław Sowiński, described how the assistant commandant beat prisoners, and specifically Poles, in the Kostroma camp. In one case, and after accidently lining up in a group of five rather than four, the assistant commandant beat the POWs around the face, with so much force that one individual 'fell to their knees'. Another was hit with the butt of a rifle across the shoulders and back when he could no longer carry heavy logs. According to this witness, there were no consequences from the POWs' complaints. Sowiński eventually fled the camp.[67]

Repatriation

Once the armistice and preliminary peace were signed in October 1920, the Polish government pushed for a swift beginning to the repatriation of prisoners and there were earlier efforts to build upon. In the previous year, before secret Soviet-Polish negotiations at Mikaszewicze broke down in December 1919, the Bolsheviks and Poles had reached agreements on repatriation, and the immediate return of POWs, civilian prisoners and other hostages.[68] But difficult negotiations followed in 1920-21, stymied, among other issues, by a dispute over the amount of Imperial Russian gold reserves owed to Poland and the Bolsheviks' demands for an extension to the fourteen day armistice denunciation notice period (to remove the risk that repatriated Polish POWs might simply be recycled into a renewed war).[69] Yet by the end of February 1921, with a resolution of the Russian gold owed to Poland emerging, its government accepted an extension to the armistice denunciation period and the way was clear for a repatriation agreement, signed on 24 February. This called for the immediate return of prisoners, hostages and refugees to be carried out on a voluntary basis.[70] Two mixed commissions were created, one Soviet and one Polish, to handle repatriation. Prisoners were to be paid due wages and punishments rescinded. The agreement called for the first group of prisoners to be repatriated within ten days, although there was a slight delay in practice. The first transport of Polish POWs arrived at the Baranowicze transit point on 20 March, and like all those eventually repatriated, faced immediate interrogation about their captivity and Soviet propaganda.[71]

With repatriation looming in early 1920, senior Bolsheviks in the Central Committee pushed again for stronger propaganda among Polish POWs.[72] In mid-January, Polish Bureau secretary, S. Gel'tman, wrote to the Politburo stressing the importance of propaganda in the time available. He drew attention to the September 1920 STO

decree and the persistent failure to make improvements to camp conditions. Furthermore, with the Polish Section of PUR itself soon to be liquidated, Gel'tman called for the position of commissioner for Polish POW affairs to be created.[73] The STO approved in early February and head of the Polish Section of PUR, Piliavskii, was appointed. But more than anything, another reorganization revealed how the Bolsheviks were failing to get to grips with the management of POWs and effective propaganda. In any case, with Piliavskii now in control, he was quick to call for renewed attention to the 'political and cultural enlightenment' of prisoners.[74]

The STO adopted Gel'tman's other suggestions in advance of repatriation: Polish POWs would be concentrated in larger groups, closer to urban centres; those working on the Murmansk railway would be immediately replaced with demobilized Red Army soldiers. Aside from the usual calls for better supplies of food and clothing, improving health and the maintenance of hospitals and infirmaries for the wounded now assumed a greater priority. The STO, notably, also reaffirmed its resolution from September 1920 that Polish POWs working in heavy industry or other factories receive full wages without deductions.[75] In these last attempts to deepen sympathy towards Soviet power, in addition to standard propaganda tools, the Polish Section of the People's Commissariat of Education called for trainloads of prisoners to be greeted at transit points with revolutionary music and performances.[76] However, there were risks in using inflated revolutionary rhetoric at the transit points. In one incident in the summer, a member of the Polish repatriation commission overheard the Polish Bolshevik, Iulian Leshchinskii, deliver a fiery speech about future revolution to a group of POWs bound for home. As Georgii Chicherin acknowledged to Viacheslav Molotov, this was awkward and not only because Leshchinskii had been due to join the Soviet diplomatic mission in Poland. 'We are always telling the Poles that our official representatives do not carry out agitation and propaganda among the Polish POWs', he noted.[77]

Throughout the camps, familiar problems undermined these final attempts to cultivate revolutionary thinking. Among the many issues the Interdepartmental Commission on Polish affairs was firefighting in early 1921, for instance, the Vladikino and Rostov camps were suffering supply problems, while the commandant of the Kazan' camp had put POWs to work without adequate clothing. Polish officers were still housed with soldiers in Samara.[78] The movement of POWs into larger groups ready for transit, when combined with the return of Red Army soldiers from the western front, placed even more pressure on available space. In one case, a group of Polish POWs in Petrograd was moved from a former cartridge factory to the barracks of the former Izmailovskii regiment, already in use as a camp, to make way for Red Army units arriving from the western front. In all, 750 Poles were transferred into the barracks, doubling the numbers. The impact on facilities and space was immediate. There were not enough boilers to prepare meals, meaning that lunch was constantly served from noon to midnight using the one that could be spared. Lighting was poor and the temperature frequently plunged. Many prisoners did not have warm clothing or shoes.[79] Reports of equally poor camp conditions continued into late 1921.[80]

Criticisms about the management of POWs also became louder as time was running out to recruit Polish POWs to the Bolshevik cause. In February, the People's Commissariat of Education criticized the overwhelming focus on propaganda

while the teaching of basic literacy had been neglected.[81] Not all camps ever managed to set up literacy schools and the majority of Polish POWs were illiterate. There was a push to eliminate illiteracy among POWs from April 1921, but this measure was too late in the day.[82] The Central Committee likewise launched a volley of criticism in February at the substandard management of Polish POWs. Condemning unnamed officials in GUOPR, the camps and local party organizations, it pointed to a failure to understand basic facts about Polish POWs. These were predominately peasants, working people, who were to play the role of 'Bolshevik bacilli' on repatriation. It was therefore impermissible that they were still housed with other types of prisoners. Yet as much as the Central Committee underlined the importance of successful propaganda on the eve of repatriation, this was undermined by its very own decision to liquidate the Polish Section of PUR on 21 February and transfer its personnel to a new body responsible for Polish POW affairs within GUOPR. This was change in fortunes for both, considering the criticisms the former had levelled at the latter's competence just months before. But with PUR personnel now forced to take on new roles and responsibilities, a shortage of trained political instructors soon became apparent.[83]

As repatriation got underway in spring 1921, the Bolsheviks struggled to match the pace set by the Poles, chiefly because of the comparatively large number of Soviet camps, the dispersal of Polish POWs and an overloaded railway network. In contrast to the 24,000 Soviet POWs returned by mid-May (when transports from both sides temporarily ceased amid claim and counterclaim about infringements of the Treaty of Riga) just 13,000 Polish POWs had arrived in Poland.[84] Yet these delays, continuing into the summer and prompting further complaints from the Polish side, were another negative pressure on the welfare of the Polish POWs and, in some cases, led to camp hunger strikes. There were similar problems elsewhere, like in the Tula camp, where logistical problems left Polish POWs stranded in apparently 'desperate conditions'.[85] Such delays only worsened bottlenecks of POWs amassing at transit points and Soviet officials scrambled around for extra housing space and bedding.[86] Another problem, indicative of chaotic management on the Soviet side, was the lack of clarity on how many Polish POWs were actually passing through certain railway transit points on the Soviet-Polish border.[87] In some cases, Soviet officials completely lost track of prisoners as they moved from location to location.[88]

Repatriation created other problems common to combatants of the First World War and especially where local economies became dependent on POW labour. In war-torn Soviet Ukraine, Ukrainian party officials resisted repatriating valuable foreign workers.[89] This drew Moscow's criticism and Markhlevskii warned that hardliners in Poland should not be given an excuse to break the Treaty of Riga. The Ukrainian communists faced censure for not foreseeing what had been obvious for several months: Polish POWs would eventually leave and it was unlikely many would stay voluntarily considering the noticeable hostility among prisoners in areas like the Donbass.[90] By October 1921, with repatriation nearly complete, Polish officials recorded 26,440 Polish POWs returned from Soviet Russia, although more followed in 1922.[91] Perhaps just 3000 Polish POWs remained in Soviet Russia.[92] Only 123 became members of the Polish Communist Workers' Party.[93]

Conclusion

In June 1921, Edmund Zhebrovskii, a political instructor in Viatka, wrote to Piliavskii and detailed a wide array of failings in his POW camp. Zhebrovskii knew that his primary duty was to cultivate a socialist outlook among Polish POWs so 'when they reach the border of their homeland, they could become revolutionaries'. But he was failing to do so. It is questionable whether Bolshevik propaganda would have been successful even in better conditions, but as this article has shown, chaotic and unsanitary conditions in badly managed POW camps completely undermined the revolutionary project, itself launched during an ongoing war. Zhebrovskii relayed to Piliavskii a familiar picture. POWs slept without mattresses on bare planks of wood in cramped conditions. Food was poor in quality and rations were received so rarely that when they arrived the prisoners deemed it 'a happy accident'. The camp commandant abused his position and no action had been taken following complaints from the POWs. According to Zhebrovskii, so 'absolutely harmful' were circumstances for the POWs that all the efforts to prepare them as the 'cadres of the future revolution may come to naught'. He urged that they immediately be sent back to Poland.[94] Zhebrovskii's report, as we have seen, was not atypical. From the beginning of the Soviet-Polish war until the start of repatriation in 1921, the Bolsheviks never fixed the multitude of problems in their POW camps, and they failed to create a new cadre of Polish revolutionaries. It is true that Lenin and other senior figures in the party harboured unrealistic aspirations. They also underestimated the highly challenging local conditions in a country devastated by civil war and overestimated the attractiveness of Bolshevik propaganda to captured Polish rank-and-file soldiers. Although using POWs for labour was common elsewhere, in the desperate conditions of civil war Soviet Russia, this went against the grain of ensuring effective propaganda. Rival initiatives launched by other actors in the civil war faced the same problems and were likewise forced to grapple with diminishing and uneven resources, incompetent agitators, and illiterate populations who could easily misinterpret key messages.[95]

This article has also shown how comparison between the Soviet POW camps of the early 1920s and the future Stalinist GULAG is exaggerated. The Bolsheviks certainly upended established conventions by giving rank-and-file prisoners, rather than officers, relatively preferential treatment. Their efforts to cultivate revolutionaries also echoed practices seen in the later GULAG system, partly intended to 'refashion' prisoners into model Soviet citizens.[96] However, for the most part, POWs in Soviet Russia faced similar conditions to the large numbers of Austrian and German POWs held in Russia during the First World War. Challenging the view that strong connections can be seen between Russian POW camps of the First World War and those of the later Stalin era, one historian has suggested that the former were more reflective of 'nineteenth-century social thinking'. Here the officer class was privileged, camp conditions were poor, but not as life-threatening as in the later GULAG, and the Imperial Russian government, at least, signed international treaties designed to improve POW welfare. Conditions for forced labourers were not too dissimilar from those experienced by ordinary Russian workers.[97] This article suggests that much of this continuity with the past can be applied further forward in time to early Soviet POW camps, whose inhabitants faced many of the same challenges even if the Bolsheviks sought revolutionary outcomes and exhibited a very different and radical kind of 'social thinking'.

In terms of other continuities, this article has underlined how the Bolsheviks informally accommodated established 'bourgeois' international standards for POW welfare, enshrined in the Hague conventions, even if this was primarily designed to further a revolutionary agenda to bring down the Versailles order. In 1920, former foreign minister in the Russian Provisional government, Pavel Miliukov, attacked a total lack of 'clemency and humanity, not even such minima as are established by the Hague Conventions' as present under the Soviet government.[98] While it would be going too far to agree with the Soviet legal specialist, Evgenii Korovin, who later claimed in a 1924 programmatic work on Soviet international law that the Soviet Union was a 'champion of the Hague regulations', the reality was that the Bolsheviks sought to align themselves – and in some ways exceed – established mutual safeguards for POWs. They acted similarly in negotiations with other countries, mutually agreeing in May 1921, for instance, to provide protections for German POWs in accordance with 'traditional international law'.[99] In this way, the Bolsheviks' treatment of Polish POWs showed continuity with past Russian governments but also with other, far less revolutionary, powers of early twentieth century, which all struggled to guarantee the welfare of their captives; who exploited them unfairly; and who failed to live up to international standards. Rather than strike out in a radically new direction after 1917 in the management of POW camps, the Bolsheviks informally operated in an ambiguous middle ground: negotiating existing international conventions to advance an overriding revolutionary agenda. But their engagement with humanitarian conventions was also shaped by self-interest, reciprocity and a genuine sense of humanitarianism, at least from some quarters. This article therefore suggests a more complex pre-history to the better-known controversy over the Stalinist regime's failure to negotiate, sign or ratify the 1929 Third Geneva convention, and the later high-profile disputes it generated about violations of international humanitarian law during the Second World War.

Notes

1. For work on Red Army prisoners in Poland, see Karpus, *Jeńcy i internowani rosyjscy i ukraińscy*; Karpus, 'Jeńcy sowieccy'; Raiskii, *Pol'sko-sovetskaia voina*; Eliseeva, et al., eds. *Krasnoarmeitsy v pol'skom plenu*; Matveev, 'Eshche raz o chislennosti krasnoarmeitsev'. For work on Polish POWs in Soviet Russia, see Karpus, *Zwyciezcy za drutami*; Kostiushko, 'K voprosu o pol'skikh voennoplennykh'; Leinwand, 'Indoktrynacja jeńców polskich'; Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej'; and the document collection, Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*.
2. For the claim that Soviet camps represented a 'new radical tradition of captivity', see Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War*, 2. For a speculative connection made between Russia's POW camps of the First World War and the later GULAG, see Pastor, 'Introduction', 114–15. On POWs in Russia in the First World War, see also Nachtigal and Radauer, 'Prisoners of War (Russian Empire)'. Other varied continuities across the 1917 revolution have been recently addressed in Neumann and Willimott, *Rethinking the Russian Revolution as Historical Divide*.
3. For the clearest articulation of this linkage, see Pipes, 'Lenin's Gulag'.
4. Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej', 71–72.

5. In Gatchina, in Petrograd oblast, information about 6,000 POWs in October 1920 turned out to be incorrect; Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 115.
6. Rezmer estimates that around 35,500 Polish POWs were eventually repatriated while approximately 2,000 stayed in Soviet Russia. This leaves 6,500 unaccounted for, who most likely either escaped from the camps or died in captivity; Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej', 155–6.
7. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 215fn.1.
8. Polish officials, for instance, attempted to recruit Soviet POWs to Semen Petliura's volunteer formation, the Russian Third Army: Raiskii, *Pol'sko-sovetskaia voina*, 303–7; Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace*, 156.
9. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, tom II*, 355–7. Isaac Babel, travelling with Semen Budennyi's First Cavalry Army in 1920, documented frequent torture and massacre of Polish prisoners. See *1920 Diary*.
10. Order No. 217, 10 May 1920, available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1920/military/ch32.htm; 'The War with Poland', 5 May 1920, available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1920/military/ch24.htm [both accessed March 2021]. For earlier efforts to recruit German and Hungarian POWs, see Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War,* 120–1. Thousands of Austrian, Hungarian and German POWs went on to enlist in the Red Army's International units, but not all can be said to have been ideologically converted. The fact was, for most, this was the only way to escape suffering in the camps. On repatriation, some radicalized POWs, according to Krammer, went on to participate in revolutionary actions such as the 1918 Kiel naval mutiny. See Krammer, 'Soviet Propaganda', 248, 256.
11. Plekhanov and Plekhanov, *F. E. Dzerzhinskii*, 196–7.
12. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 374.
13. Leinwand, 'Indoktrynacja jeńców polskich', 98fn.18; Kostiushko, Chernykh, and Savchenko, *Pol'sko-sovetskaia voina*, ch. I, 194.
14. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 127.
15. Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii [hereafter AVPRF], f. 4, op. 32, p. 207, d. 52461, l. 17.
16. Order No. 231, 17 July 1920, available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1920/military/ch43.htm [accessed April 2021].
17. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [hereafter GARF], f. r-393, op. 89, d. 66, l. 68.
18. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 22–4.
19. Kostiushko, Chernykh, and Savchenko, *Pol'sko-sovetskaia voina*, ch. I, 123–6, 152.
20. Ibid., 123–6.
21. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 29.
22. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 57, l. 22.
23. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 57, ll. 8–10.
24. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 43.
25. Ibid., 38–9.
26. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii [hereafter RGASPI], f. 63, op. 1, d. 269, l. 6.
27. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 43, 54, 65, 71–2.
28. Ibid., 215fn.1.

29. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 109, d. 110, l. 5. The Polish Section of PUR was for a short time named the Polish Section of PUR for agitation and cultural enlightenment. On ambitions to create camp theatres, see Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 68.
30. Kostiushko, Chernykh, and Savchenko, *Pol'sko-sovetskaia voina*, ch. II, 30–3.
31. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 57, l. 2.
32. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv [hereafter RGVA], f. 33988, op. 3, d. 11, l. 8; Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 52–3.
33. Banac, 'South Slav Prisoners of War', 140; Krammer, 'Soviet Propaganda', 254.
34. Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej', 86–7.
35. RGASPI, f. 63, op. 1, d. 269, l. 6a.
36. GARF, f. r-393, op. 1A, d. 25, ll. 52–3; Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 61, 233.
37. Leinwand, 'Indoktrynacja jeńców polskich', 97–8.
38. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 63; GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 57, l. 6.
39. Bron'skii et al., *Dokumenty i materialy*, 392–3; Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej', 144; Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 71, 106.
40. Brown Scott, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations*.
41. See Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*.
42. On the practice of wage deductions for ordinary prisoners, see Jakobson, *Origins of the Gulag*, 35, 50.
43. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 56–7, 249.
44. Ibid., 251–2; GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 168, l. 114–15; *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti. t. XIII*, 314–16. For POW wages in the First World War, see Belfield, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War', 146–7. Outside industry and factory work, Soviet wage deductions were more severe than elsewhere. The French deducted no more than 50% of wages; Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War*, 91.
45. Nagornaja, 'United by Barbed Wire', 50.
46. Davis, 'National Red Cross Societies', 45–6. For Iosif Stalin's suspicions of European Red Cross organizations in 1920, see RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 1737, ll. 1–2.
47. Lowe, 'Humanitarianism and National Sovereignty', 664, 671–2; Ramundo, 'Soviet Criminal Legislation', 79–80
48. The Bolsheviks' aversion to the specific language of 'international law and customs' was clear in the Soviet-Polish peace negotiations at Riga in winter 1920; Narinskii and Mal'gin, *Sovetsko-pol'skie otnosheniia*, 304. See also Soviet-Finnish negotiations in 1920, where rather than refer specifically to customs of international law, Ian Berzin proposed to Georgii Chicherin complying with, but not acceding to, the 1907 Hague convention to secure a treaty; Zelenov and Lysenkov, *Rossia i Finliandiia*, 400–5.
49. Sevost'ianova and Khezlema, *Sovetsko-amerikanskie otnosheniia*, 70–1.
50. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 154, ll. 3–4.
51. Kumaniecki, *Odbudowa państwowości polskiej*, 489–93.
52. See Efraim Sklianskii's note on a proposed exchange of Polish civilian and military prisoners for Polish communists threatened with execution in Poland; RGASPI, f. 68, op. 1, d. 17, l. 4.
53. Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 6.
54. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 154, l. 18. Bolshevik attitudes towards Polish officers were profoundly negative. One member of the Polish Bureau suggested in September 1920 that officers be sent to the camps in Murmansk where conditions were particularly poor; Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 126.

55. Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace*, 242.
56. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 66, l. 17.
57. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 168, l. 1.
58. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 66, l .96; Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 162.
59. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 104, 120, 122, 190. Rezmer estimates that several thousand Polish POWs died of typhus over winter 1920-21; Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej', 147.
60. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 112.
61. Ibid., 158–9.
62. Ibid., 156, 160, 164.
63. See, for instance, GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 66, ll. 68–9.
64. Ibid., ll. 99–100.
65. Ibid., ll. 68–9, 91.
66. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 174.
67. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 66, l. 1. For other accounts of camp violence, see Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej', 145; and Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 172–3. Violence against POWs sometimes went unpunished, see p. 121.
68. Wandycz, 'Secret Soviet-Polish Peace Talks', 438.
69. Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace*, 162; Narinskii and Mal'gin, *Sovetsko-pol'skie otnosheniia*, 262, 366.
70. Narinskii and Mal'gin, *Sovetsko-pol'skie otnosheniia*, 216.
71. Bron'skii et al., *Dokumenty i materialy*, 502–14; Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace*, 239; Sula, *Powrot ludności polskiej*, 183.
72. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 163, 215, 256.
73. Ibid., 254; Kostiushko, 'K voprosu o pol'skikh voennoplennykh', 52.
74. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 249, l. 70.
75. Bron'skii et al., *Dokumenty i materialy*, 499–500.
76. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 271fn.1.
77. AVPRF, f. 4, op. 52, p. 341, d. 55273, l. 21.
78. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d 168, l. 113.
79. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 250, l. 2.
80. See the report from October 1921 on the Smolensk camp, GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 249, l. 392.
81. Leinwand, 'Indoktrynacja jeńców polskich', 100–1.
82. Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 11.
83. Ibid., 269–70, 287–8.
84. Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace*, 239.
85. AVPRF, f. 4, op. 32, p. 209, d. 52490, l. 3; Kostiushko, *Pol'skie voennoplennye*, 316. For Polish complaints about repatriation delays from summer 1921, see RGVA, f. 33988, op. 3, d. 32, l. 1; GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 249, l. 203.
86. GARF, r-393, op. 89, d. 249, l. 356.
87. Ibid., l. 335.
88. Ibid., l. 361.
89. Stadnik, 'The Repatriation of Polish Citizens', 126, 128. On the wider dependence on POW labour during the First World War, see Nachtigal, 'The Repatriation and Reception', 169–70.
90. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 210, l. 53.

91. Leinwand, 'Indoktrynacja jeńców polskich', 95; Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej', 138.
92. Rezmer, 'Jeńcy polscy w niewoli sowieckiej', 139. It should not be assumed that those who voluntarily stayed were successfully radicalized. Fear of punishment for desertion or a strong view that the Soviet government would soon fall, according to Rezmer, likely encouraged some Polish POWs to stay behind. See pp. 105–6.
93. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland*, 93fn.41.
94. GARF, f. r-393, op. 89, d. 251, l. 45.
95. For a discussion of Bolshevik and UNR propaganda in Ukraine, see Velychenko, 'Violence, Propaganda and Victory in Revolutionary Ukraine.'
96. Barnes, *Death and Redemption*.
97. Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 122–5.
98. Miliukov, *Bolshevism*, 31.
99. On Korovin, see Ginsburgs, 'Laws of War Crimes on the Russian Front', 255fn.7; for the agreement with Germany, see Snyder and Bracht, 'Coexistence and International Law', 55fn.1.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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