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**THE INTERNATIONAL
MIGRATION OF
GERMAN GREAT
WAR VETERANS**

Emotion, Transnational
Identity, and Loyalty to the
Nation, 1914-1942

Erika Kuhlman



The International Migration of German Great War Veterans

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Introduction

Abstract This chapter presents the significance of international migration after the First World War, as demobilized soldiers, colonial units, and displaced persons were sent home. German Great War veterans returned to a defeated nation, a defeat that had a specifically negative impact on those men who had been sent off to war with great expectations of a swift victory and glorified heroism. The humiliated nation-state attempted to retain control of its population by minimizing, if not reversing, the notion of defeat. As veterans grew disillusioned with overreaching Germany bureaucracies, many of them wanted to leave the country. The German government, again demonstrating its desire to control its people, took steps to prevent them from emigrating.

The end of the First World War in November 1918 marked a watershed moment in the international migration of human beings. Soldiers demobilized and returned home, colonial soldiers were dispatched back to their native lands, and the redrawing of the world map by the treaty-makers at Versailles sparked a shift among people who did not care for the new boundary lines. Nation-states, emboldened by their strengthened wartime authority, began controlling the movement of their citizens in unheard of ways. Restrictive immigration laws meant that people were no longer welcome where they once had been, and could less often choose where they wanted to live. People's racial and ethnic identities more often