



BISHOP  
GROSSETESTE  
UNIVERSITY

## BG Research Online

Malpass, A. (2023) *Civilian internment in the Raj: Central and family internment camps c.1939-43*. In: *British Internment and the Internment of Britons: Second World War Camps, History and Heritage*. Bloomsbury, London, pp. 221-238. ISBN 9781350266254

*This is an Accepted Manuscript published by Bloomsbury in its final form on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/british-internment-and-the-internment-of-britons-9781350266254/#:~:text=Description,within%20the%20wider%20British%20Empire.>*

This version may differ slightly from the final published version.

Copyright is retained by the author/s and/or other copyright holders.

End users generally may reproduce, display or distribute single copies of content held within BG Research Online, in any format or medium, for personal research & study or for educational or other not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- The full bibliographic details and a hyperlink to (or the URL of) the item's record in BG Research Online are clearly displayed;
- No part of the content or metadata is further copied, reproduced, distributed, displayed or published, in any format or medium;
- The content and/or metadata is not used for commercial purposes;
- The content is not altered or adapted without written permission from the rights owner/s, unless expressly permitted by licence.

For enquiries about BG Research Online email [bgro@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:bgro@bishopg.ac.uk).

## Civilian internment in the Raj: Central and family internment camps c.1939–43

Alan Malpass

September 1939 marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of civilian internment in the British Raj. During the Second World War, India reprised the role of 'gaol of Empire'. In addition to interning European enemy aliens present in 1939, thousands more were shipped from the Middle and Far East to camps across India. This chapter provides a survey of the development of the main internment camps where German, Italian and other European nationalities were detained before the opening of the Dehra Dun Central Internment Camp (CIC). It outlines pre-war preparations, the initial arrest of enemy aliens and transfer from local reception camps to the Ahmednagar CIC before their interim stay at Deolali cantonment in the Nashik district of the Bombay Province. The establishment of family camps at Purandhar and Satara, also in Bombay, after the re-internment of enemy aliens in 1940 is discussed, as well as the Deoli camp in Ajmer which briefly held European internees from the Far East.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the current status and legacy of these camps is considered.

### 'Like Clockwork' – arrest and detention on the outbreak of war

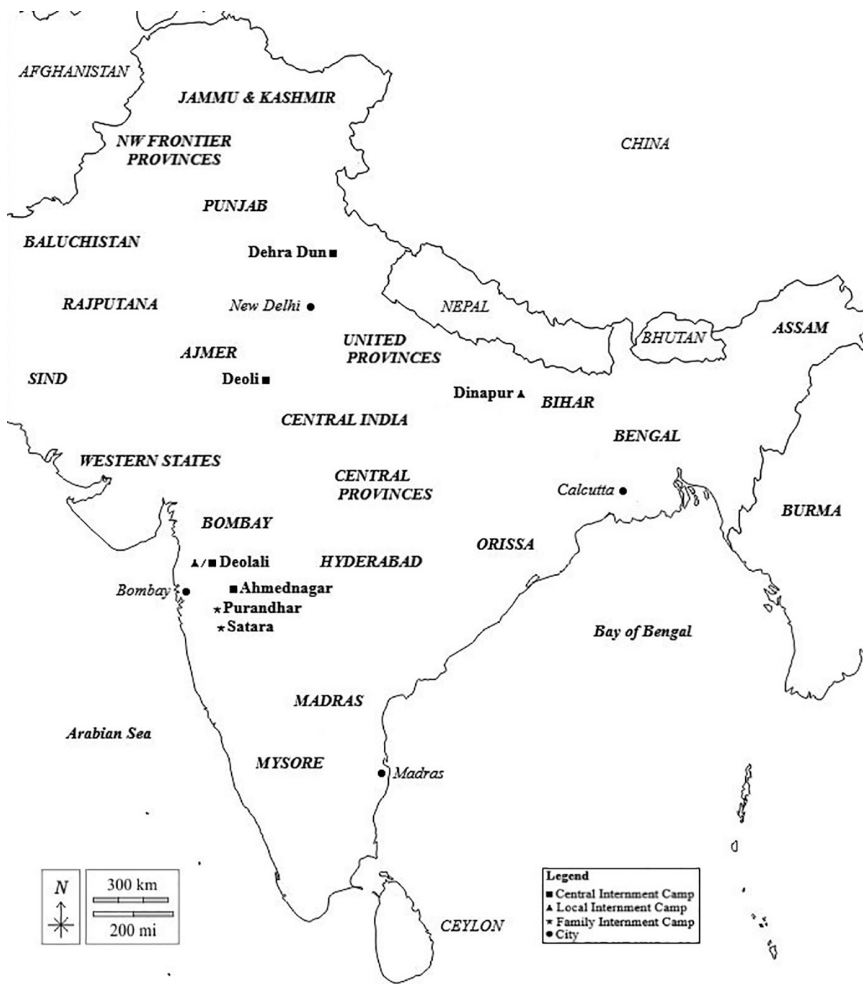
When the issue of dealing with enemy aliens was raised by the looming conflict with Germany in the late 1930s, the Government of India already possessed considerable experience of accommodating detainees during the Anglo-Boer and First World Wars. At the turn of the twentieth century, colonial governments and the War Office looked to India for 'practical precedent and protocol' on the issue of internment.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Matthew Stibbe contends, 'a kind of selective amnesia descended on the world in respect of civilian internment' after 1918.<sup>3</sup> Following the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938, a review of action to be taken toward enemy aliens highlighted that 'a great deal of confusion would have ensued' due to a lack of information on the number of foreigners in India and an absence of clear instructions regarding the arrest of enemy aliens and disposal of their property.<sup>4</sup> The first step taken to avoid the predicted bedlam was the Registration of Foreigners Act 1939, which required aliens to report their arrival, movements and departure, as well as produce identity documentation.<sup>5</sup>

— -1  
— 0  
— +1

Furthermore, managers of hotels, boarding-houses, sarai (inns) or similar premises, and those in charge of vessels and aircraft, were obliged to produce lists of foreigners residing in their establishment or using their services. Failure to comply could result in a one-year prison sentence or a fine of 1,000 rupees for foreigners and up to 500 for non-foreigners. Given the severity of the punishment, non-compliance was not to be taken lightly. The second step was taken in August 1939, when new instructions were issued to local police setting out the arrest and dispatch of all enemy aliens aged sixteen years or over to local internment camps upon the outbreak of war. These initial reception sites run by military authorities would temporarily hold internees while the CIC at Ahmednagar was constructed (for the location of the main camps, see Figure 13.1). Twenty-eight local internment camps were earmarked for establishment in 1939, five in Northern Command, eleven in Southern Command, ten in Eastern Command and two in the Western District. The instructions included a general design for a camp or single wing accommodating up to 500 internees. Acknowledging that local conditions varied, the instructions were intended to be flexible and the layout of camps depended upon whether pre-existing buildings were utilized or tents. All camps, however, had to provide living accommodation, ablution and washhouses, latrines and urinals, a cookhouse, guard room and a reception room or tent. At the CIC, internees were classified either as 'A' or 'B' – which corresponded to 'British Officers' and 'British other ranks'. Class A internees, described in the instructions as 'ordinary civilians of good social status', were to provide their own clothing, washing and toilet kit.<sup>6</sup> It was expected that non-interned enemy subjects would be repatriated.

When war was declared, the Defence of India Act 1939 bestowed Central Government with comprehensive legislative controls to maintain internal security. 'As a wartime state,' Yasmin Khan notes, 'policemen and civil servants acquired unprecedented power and the state began to use its security apparatus for internal defence.'<sup>7</sup> The Act permitted the arrest and incarceration of individuals 'reasonably suspected of being of hostile origin or of having acted, acting or being about to act, in a manner prejudicial to the public safety or interest or to the defence of British India.'<sup>8</sup> The movement of foreigners was restricted and tribunals to prosecute those who broke the law were arranged. Punishments ranged from imprisonment for several years, a fine or the seizure of property. In more serious cases, individuals could be penalized with transportation for life or execution. By the time the Act had passed, enemy aliens had already been arrested and conveyed to local internment camps. Heinrich Harrer, one of the German mountaineers who would later escape from Dehra Dun internment camp, wrote that 'everything went like clockwork.'<sup>9</sup> Soon after the declaration of war, Harrer and his friends were arrested at a local restaurant and driven to a local reception camp.

Around 850 of the 1,500 Germans who were in India were interned on the outbreak of war, including missionaries and Jewish refugees. In contrast to the United Kingdom, India interned all male enemy aliens aged sixteen years and over. This more stringent and indiscriminate approach was taken due to concerns over subversive Nazi organizations in India and enemy subjects returning to stir unrest after escaping to neighbouring countries.<sup>10</sup> For some, this was a second experience of internment within twenty-five years. In 1914, around 2,000 German subjects were interned or expelled



**Figure 13.1** Civilian Internment Camps in India c.1939–45

Source: Map adapted by the author from [https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num\\_car=285&lang=en](https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=285&lang=en).

from India.<sup>11</sup> *The Times of India* reported that 321 out of 387 German residents in Bombay were arrested in the morning of 3 September and were being transported to Deolali on a ‘heavily guarded’ train.<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere, fifteen Germans had been arrested in Delhi, six in Darjeeling, four at Ludhiana and Nagpur and two at Agra. Meanwhile forty who had been detained in Bihar, including fourteen residents of Jamshedpur, were being sent to Dinapur military camp.<sup>13</sup>

Cantonments such as Deolali and Dinapur acted as initial reception sites for arrested enemy aliens. Derived from the French ‘canton’, cantonments were established across India following the Battle of Plassey in 1757. These permanent military bases were unique institutions in India – cantonments were usually temporary

— -1  
— 0  
— +1

encampments – where formations of soldiers were quartered and kept separate from civil settlements. Cantonments were located near to towns and cities but were their own distinct townships. Under military control, they were not subject to municipal regulations and were governed by separate laws. Cantonments soaked up little of the character of the local area and remained considerably different to nearby towns. Neatly organized, with orderly streets and precisely spaced bungalows, British cantonments were similar in design and layout to each other. Larger cantonments held exclusively European military formations tasked with field operations and maintaining order during times of unrest. While boundaries between cantonments and nearby towns were clearly demarcated, these institutions were less isolated from Indian society than remote hill-stations where English officials retreated in order to escape the fierce heat of Indian summertime.

Terence Molloy, an officer in the Northamptonshire Regiment, recalls the arrival of internees to Dinapur. They were held in the isolation hospital within the historic cantonment, around which a barbed-wired fence had been ‘hastily erected’. The internees, Molloy tells us, were ‘completely inoffensive people’ who ‘rather objected to having been uprooted from their jobs and put into internment’.<sup>14</sup> Henry Smith, an NCO in the South Lancashire Regiment, assisted in the arrest of enemy aliens in Bombay and their removal to Deolali. Lists of foreign nationals had been made, including information on their dependents and families. ‘Somebody pressed a button’, Smith describes, ‘and out went the troops and the police, fanned out and just simply gathered these people in’.<sup>15</sup> Arrests in Bombay continued through the night of 3 September into the following morning. Taken to Deolali, the internees were accommodated in the barracks the escort troops previously occupied. Now surrounded by wire, they acted as an internment camp. Internees were thoroughly searched, made to bathe, given ‘in no uncertain terms’ a short back and sides and provided makeshift uniforms.<sup>16</sup> For those arrested, the experience could be disorientating, frustrating and painful as they were separated from their families, not least for the Jewish refugees who had travelled to India to escape persecution. Internees did not stay long at local internment camps and were quickly transferred to the CIC.

### Ahmednagar to Deolali

In 1939, a major internment camp was once again established at Ahmednagar, a city long associated with imprisonment. The fort was captured by Arthur Wellesley in 1803 during the Second Anglo-Maratha War and served as a prison throughout the era of the British Raj. Furthermore, 1,000 of the 9,000 Boer prisoners of war (POWs) sent to India between 1899 and 1902 were detained here.<sup>17</sup> During the First World War, German internees, including missionaries, merchant seamen and businessmen, were held at Ahmednagar, their number fluctuating between 1,100 and 1,700. The camp took on a ‘symbolic importance for those interned in India as that which Knockaloe held of the Germans interned in Great Britain’.<sup>18</sup> The 1939 camp was located around a mile from the one erected in 1914 and four miles outside Ahmednagar itself. Spanning an eight-acre area, the camp was surrounded by a nine-foot double fence of barbed

wire, with another line of wire dividing the camp into two wings, one for Nazis and the other for anti-Nazis.<sup>19</sup> In February 1940, 888 internees were held at Ahmednagar.<sup>20</sup> News coverage emphasized the comforts and privileges granted to internees:

There is plenty of room for sports and the facilities and amenities provided for the troops stationed there are also available to the internees. Situated on a plateau 2,000 feet above sea level, Ahmednagar has a mild climate throughout the year and includes some of the most beautiful natural scenery in the Deccan.<sup>21</sup>

It was described as a 'healthy camp' boasting a library, well stocked by the German Clubs of Bombay and Calcutta, a hospital and recreational facilities, including a swimming pool. Internees could receive thirty-minute visits from their wives. To prevent the communication of secret messages, 'personal contact' was forbidden. In the pages of the press, Ahmednagar was portrayed akin to a holiday resort or spa rather than an internment camp.<sup>22</sup> Only the barbed wire and sentries indicated the purpose of the site. The contrast between the experience of internment in India and the reports emanating about camps in Germany was underscored:

Here German nationals who were in India at the outbreak of war are taking a compulsory rest cure for the duration – and a rest cure their sojourn in camp very obviously is when compared with recently published pen pictures of life in concentration and internment camps in their own country.<sup>23</sup>

As the summer approached, in February 1940 it was reported that fans would be installed to combat the heat 'for the comfort of internees'.<sup>24</sup> According to the *Civil & Military Gazette*, there had been no formal complaints as yet received by the internees at Ahmednagar. The speed at which internees were collected and transferred to Ahmednagar, however, meant that conditions were bad and the camps were soon overcrowded and claustrophobic, with tents used initially. 'It was a bad time in the beginning', a former internee remarked:

because we were all put into tents, four each into one tent at Ahmednagar. There were terrible rains (monsoons), and it went through the tents. And we felt very uncomfortable. But the reason for that was that the barracks were not yet free. First the soldiers had to be removed and then we moved into the barracks; then it became quite a bearable life.<sup>25</sup>

While at Ahmednagar, Jewish internees and missionaries were examined by the Darling Committee. Formed in September 1939 and headed by Sir Malcom Darling, a long-serving member of the Indian Civil Service, the committee screened internees for release.<sup>26</sup> From November, in line with UK policy, India expanded the remit of the Darling Committee to include all internees, not just Jewish refugees. Furthermore, reluctantly, the compulsory repatriation of women and enemy aliens at liberty was abandoned. It was concluded that subversive activity organized by Germans in India was minimal and restrictions imposed on enemy aliens at liberty were relaxed.<sup>27</sup> When

— -1  
— 0  
— +1

policy towards enemy aliens in the event of war with Italy and other countries was reviewed, wholesale internment was abandoned and only suspect individuals were to be interned. The relaxation of regulations was short-lived, however. With the calamitous defeats suffered in Europe, the Government of India followed the UK lead in revising internment policy. On 19 May 1940, the Home Department informed the Provincial Governments of the 'recent manifestations of the subversive activities of German subjects and sympathisers in neutral countries and in the rear of the armies of the allies'.<sup>28</sup> Since the outbreak of war, 920 out of the 950 adult male German subjects in India had been arrested. Twenty-two had been released before internment at Ahmednagar, and 561 had been released following examination by the Darling Committee. Of those released, 330 were Jewish refugees, 123 missionaries or priests and 109 were Aryan Germans. Of the 600 male German subjects at liberty, some 370 were refugees and 230 Aryan Germans, including missionaries. Out of 770 women, 90 had left following the outbreak of war, 450 were nuns, 280 were dependent on refugees and others at liberty and 40 were the wives of internees. At this point, the Home Department decided to re-examine the cases of released internees and explained that the decision to allow them to continue at liberty was to be based not on a lack of evidence to intern them but on the local authorities' satisfaction that they posed no serious security threat.

While the CIC at Dehra Dun was constructed, internees at Ahmednagar, now including Italians, were transferred to an interim camp at Deolali. The setting of the 1970s BBC sitcom *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*, Deolali cantonment was located in the Western Ghats of India near Nashik.<sup>29</sup> Established by the British in 1861, the cantonment served as a transit camp for soldiers leaving or arriving in India during trooping season. Here, British soldiers would acclimatize themselves to the heat, an experience which became notorious. During her stay at the rest centre, former VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachments) nurse Barbara Chambers remembers that it 'could be an inhospitable place and a combination of extreme climates and hard soldiering took its toll'.<sup>30</sup> The term 'doolally' or 'doolali' – slang for an individual who is 'out of one's mind' – is partly derived from the name of the cantonment.<sup>31</sup> It had initially operated as a local camp for arrested enemy aliens from Bombay, and a number had passed through on their way to Ahmednagar already. Driven in a convoy of lorries, the internees arrived at Deolali in February 1941. There were permanent buildings, including barracks, hospitals for British and Indian troops, a chapel, cemetery, police station and stores as well as recreational facilities. Importantly, the Great Indian Peninsula Railway passed through Deolali. Internees were transported here from Ahmednagar so that they could be conveyed by train to the permanent CIC at Dehra Dun once it was completed. While they made no complaints regarding their treatment by the authorities, the internees brought to Deolali were offended by what they considered inhumane conditions:

They were completely new barracks, but they were, well, for a camp, let's say, when some soldiers have to pass through a space and have to stay for three or four days; then it was all right. But to imagine that one should stay in this camp for the whole duration of the war, absolutely it made us shudder. Aside from that fact, we were terribly limited for space. When you lay in bed, you could touch your neighbour

with the left hand and the other with the right had. You can imagine how close you were.<sup>32</sup>

The internees were critical of the unsanitary conditions and limited space. Difficulties were exacerbated by the hot and dry climate. The internees undertook a spontaneous hunger strike in protest over the inadequate conditions. After four and a half days, the camp authorities agreed to move the internees into improved accommodation within the cantonment, 'a proper camp with barracks – a military barracks camp'.<sup>33</sup> The barracks of the new camp were stone built and more spacious with facilities for various sports. Conditions at Deolali cantonment were infamous, but the difficulties were not only faced by internees. In 1946, objections were made in the House of Commons regarding the conditions faced by British troops and there were calls to conduct an official investigation.<sup>34</sup> The move of internees into better accommodation certainly made the experience slightly more bearable during their temporary stay. By October 1941, the internees were again transferred, this time to Dehra Dun CIC at the foot of the Himalayas, a three-day train journey via Delhi. Not all internees would travel to the new camp, however. The revised internment instructions issued in May 1940 introduced parole centres where non-interned enemy aliens and the wives of internees were concentrated.

### Finding a 'middle course' – re-internment and parole

Along with the re-internment of enemy aliens, wives of internees were forbidden from residing in ports or areas of strategic importance and were required to relocate to suitable townships. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that re-internment might not necessitate male enemy aliens being confined at Ahmednagar. Instead, a 'middle course' of restricting enemy subjects to 'parole settlements' in the provinces was introduced.<sup>35</sup> Initially, these centres were 'not envisaged as more than small towns to which non-interned enemy subjects in the more important ports and towns should be required to remove themselves'.<sup>36</sup> Parole centres were established at Sabathu, Naini Tal, Hazaribagh, Katapahar, Satara, Yercaud, Kodiakanal and Shillong. The necessity of imposing some restrictions on parolees, including censoring correspondence, 'very soon converted them into camps, where except that they were not fenced, the conditions were similar to those of a quasi-internment camp'.<sup>37</sup> All sites were cantonments or hill-stations and accommodation was provided by pre-existing bungalows and housing or military barracks. Where possible, married couples, single males and females were separated. 'Conditions of restriction and living in these settlements', the Home Department reported, 'are generally much easier than those in internment camps and approximate living conditions in hill stations'.<sup>38</sup> Initially, only non-interned enemy aliens and suspect foreigners were restricted to parole centres. Following the Allied defeats in Europe and resultant 'spy mania' in spring 1940, however, instructions were issued to restrict all Jewish refugees, now suspected of including spies and saboteurs, to parole centres along with non-interned enemy subjects. In order to supplement accommodation in provincial parole centres, a central parole centre was established

— -1  
— 0  
— +1



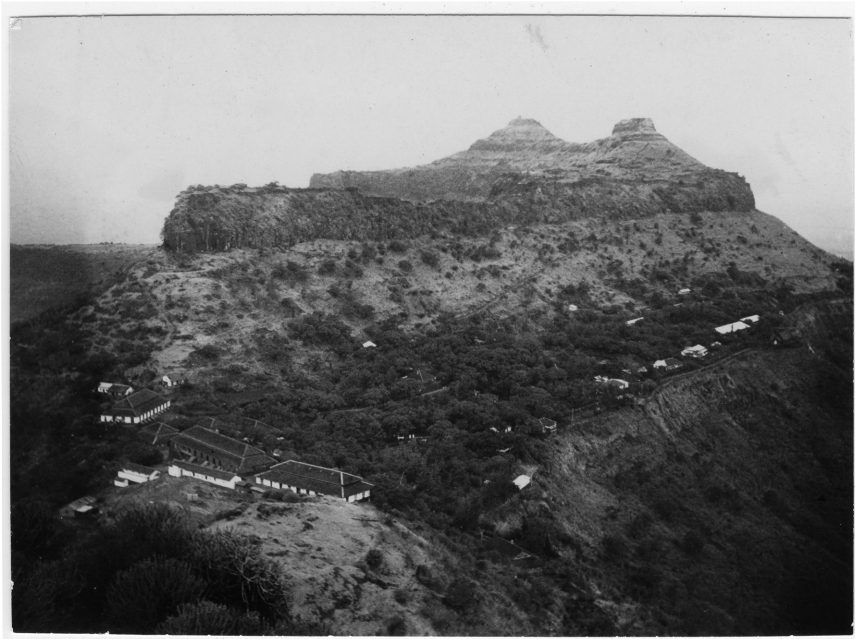
at Purandhar. With only limited space within the centres, a new committee was appointed to re-examine Jewish refugees and decide whether they should be released, restricted to parole centres or remain at liberty. Having completed the review, however, 'results were so anomalous' that the Home Department reviewed cases itself in March 1941. Focusing on security concerns alone, the majority of refugees were released or restricted to parole centres after re-examination.<sup>39</sup>

The re-internment of most non-Jewish enemy aliens, new restrictions on internee wives, combined with the internment of Italians following the entry of Italy into the war led to renewed calls for a family camp. Having visited Ahmednagar, the Consulate General of Switzerland in Bombay reported to the Home Department in May 1940 that uncertainty over the formation of a family camp was 'having a very detrimental effect on the morale of the internees'.<sup>40</sup> In November 1939, when the compulsory repatriation of enemy aliens was dropped, the disused military centre at Purandhar fort was earmarked for a family camp. The proposal was abandoned after the Darling Committee found only twenty of the thirty-nine married internees were suitable for release. Maintenance allowances were provided to their dependents instead. In March 1941, the Home Department again put forward proposals to establish a family camp at Purandhar, then operating as a central parole centre. Local police, however, dismissed the suitability of the site for an enclosed camp. Concerns were raised over the water supply, provision of a suitable police guard and lighting. There was no electrical supply on the hill and 'petromax' lamps would be useless during monsoon. It was suggested that an annex be built for families at Dehra Dun or an existing POW camp. The Superintendent of Purandhar emphasized to the Home Department that, with some modification, it was an ideal site for a family camp. He reported that the concerns raised were far from insurmountable and suspected the objections of the Poona District Superintendent of Police were based on his desire to avoid the 'nuisance' of an internment camp.<sup>41</sup> As a result of unfavourable reports, the Home Department surveyed several other sites, including Satara, Tilonia and Deoli. Before a family camp could be established, the influx of evacuees from the Balkans, Middle and Far East had to be dealt with. Following the fall of Singapore in December 1941, 600 Maltese, 1,000 Balkan evacuees and 11,000 Poles were accepted by the Government of India.<sup>42</sup> Several camps accommodated these groups and eventually they were transferred to Coimbatore and Kolhapur. With the transfer of evacuees, the Government of India was able to redistribute the population of parole centres and find sufficient accommodation at Purandhar and Satara to establish combined parole centres and family internment camps.

## Family camps

The British occupied Purandhar in 1818 and established a cantonment within the fort which dated back to the formation of the Bahmani Kingdom, the first independent Islamic Kingdom in South India. The fort still stands today on the summit of hills over 4,000 feet above sea level and 2,500 feet above Poona Plain. Described as an 'exceptionally healthy' site, the cantonment included a convalescence centre for soldiers from Ahmednagar and Pune, located on the lower level of the fort called *machi*.<sup>43</sup> Having spent over two

years discussing the opening of a family camp, the pressure of accommodating the influx of evacuees and additional internees forced the issue and plans reverted to locate it at Purandhar. Due to a shortage of wire, Purandhar Fort could not be enclosed. The Home Department concluded, however, that Purandhar was an 'isolated hill top from which escape would not be easy' (see Figure 13.2).<sup>44</sup> The threat of being transferred back to the CIC at Dehra Dun was considered a sufficient deterrent. Despite being unfenced, conditions at Purandhar were similar to Dehra Dun.<sup>45</sup> The Superintendent of the Purandhar Parole Centre agreed that, by adapting existing buildings and construction of a new barrack, accommodation could be found for a maximum of 260 adults and seventy children.<sup>46</sup> The existing accommodation needed altering and expanding. It was, the Superintendent noted, 'of a very mixed character' with 'a number of single cubicles with 7' to 8' high wooden partitions', although not 'good enough as a permanency'. Having consulted with the wives of internees, he reported that they were happy to improvise so long as they were reunited with their husbands. Accommodation was allocated based on family size, with the largest families allocated the superior housing.<sup>47</sup> Before the family camp was officially opened, released internees from Ahmednagar and Deolali were transferred here to be with their wives. Conditions at Purandhar became increasingly cramped as internees and parolees were transferred from other sites, including a consignment of German wives from Iran whose interned husbands



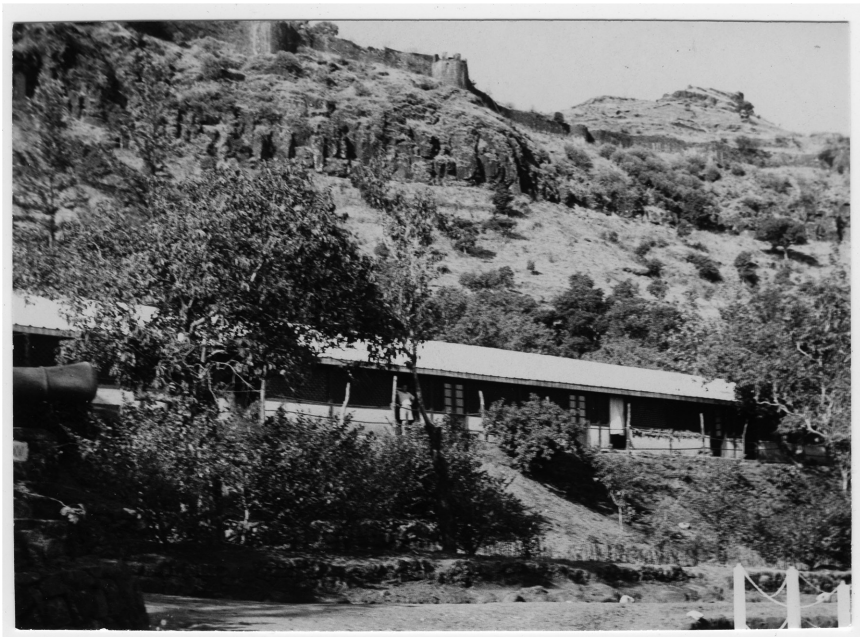
**Figure 13.2** ICRC Archives (ARR), 1942. Purandhar. Civilian Internees Camp. General view of the camp

Source: V-P-HIST-03480-19A.

— -1  
— 0  
— +1

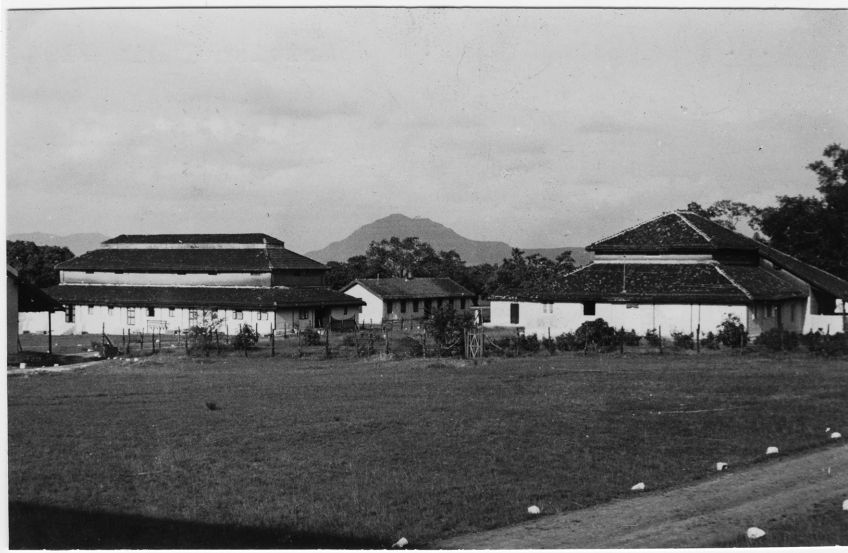
had been brought to India. Initially, new arrivals to Purandhar would select whatever rooms were available. Yet, with more arrivals, 'people became more possessive of their space in camp'.<sup>48</sup> In March 1942, there were twenty-eight married couples, eighteen single men, forty-eight single women, eighteen children and 11 infants at the parole centre and the Superintendent was optimistic that the conversion of Purandhar into a family camp would be favourable.<sup>49</sup> The construction of additional accommodation was hampered by the isolated location and short building season, but over the summer of 1942 new barracks were constructed. A former Purandhar resident commented that, 'with a garden, the wonderful climate and the altitude, it was a joy living up there' (Figure 13.3).<sup>50</sup> Within the hillside fort, it proved near impossible to separate married internees and parolees. The Home Department was satisfied that escapes would be unlikely and, therefore, apart from their status, there was little difference between the conditions to which the internees and parolees were subject.

A family internment camp was also opened at Satara, where the additional facilities constructed to accommodate British and European evacuees had doubled capacity of the site. Evacuees were accommodated at Satara as it was at a reasonable distance to Bombay and, therefore, contact with the various consuls responsible for their welfare. Around fifty miles south of Poona, Satara District was annexed by the British in 1848 and remained an important agricultural and business hub in Bombay State. In the beginning, the parole centre here was small and relatively quiet, with German women brought here from the



**Figure 13.3** ICRC Archives (ARR), 1942. Purandhar. Civilian Internees Camp. Barrack

Source: V-P-HIST-03480-23A.



**Figure 13.4** ICRC Archives (ARR). 1944. Satara, Parole Center. Civilian internees camp. Barracks of the German wing

Source: V-P-HIST-03478-01A.

centres at Yercaud and Kodikanal. When internees were being transferred to Dehra Dun, some were moved from Ahmednagar and Deolali to Satara to join their wives. There were four original military barracks, each divided into eight rooms. Within each there were two bathrooms, two bathtubs and four toilets. As a parole camp for women, each room accommodated a single woman and child or two women. In contrast to Purandhar, three separate camps were established at Satara, with the two family internment camps, one for Germans (see Figure 13.4) and one for Italians, enclosed by barbed wire, as well as a parole centre for non-interned enemy aliens. The new barracks that had been constructed were thought to be inadequate for families and caused tension and irritation between individuals. Those brought from Yercaud and Kodiakanal compared the barracks at Satara unfavourably to the bungalows of the parole centres.<sup>51</sup> By August, the conversion of Satara and Purandhar into combined parole centres and internment camps was complete, with internee families and additional parolees from provincial centres absorbed by them. Over the course of 1942, all married internees from Dehra Dun and other sites in India were transferred to either site.

## Deoli

Locating the family camps at Satara and Purandhar was necessary to allow facilities at Deoli (Ajmer) to be expanded. Deoli had been suggested as a site for the family

— -1  
— 0  
— +1

camp but it instead had to be used to accommodate the 2,400 German male internees and 1,250 Japanese internees the Government of India accepted from Sumatra in December 1941.<sup>52</sup> Deoli cantonment was established in 1852, with several battalions raised here in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1932, Deoli was used as a detention camp to house Bengali leaders of the Chittagong Armoury raid before closure in 1938. In 1940, the jail was reopened to confine security prisoners, including communists and revolutionaries. While facilities at Deoli were expanded, Japanese internees were held in a tented camp in Purana Qila. European internees from the Dutch East Indies were, meanwhile, held temporarily at Ramgarh POW camp while an appropriate site for a new camp was found. The Home Department had hoped that they could be sent to Dehra Dun, but the Commandant rejected proposals to expand the camp as insurmountable, particularly with regards to the water supply. Ramgarh camp was built in 1940 alongside the military cantonment and was similar in design and style to other civilian internee camps. The internee population at Ramgarh reached around 600 by April 1941; the camp also housed 2,000 Italian POWs in a separate compound. As a comfortable camp, high-ranking Italian officers had been sent to Ramgarh as part of an effort to form anti-fascist battalions. After further consideration, the Commandant at Dehra Dun believed that expansion of the camp was possible and European internees could be transferred to the CIC. Before the move could be completed, however, Ramgarh was required for use as a training site for 10,000 soldiers of the Chinese Expeditionary Force.<sup>53</sup> At this time, Deoli was the only viable camp and European internees from Ramgarh were moved here in July 1942, before being finally transferred to Dehra Dun the following April. The Japanese internees then took their place at Deoli.<sup>54</sup> With the move of the German internees from Deoli to Dehra Dun, there were now four primary internment camps as well as the parole centres dotted across India. In April 1943, the total internee population in India stood at 5,716. Dehra Dun, now the CIC after the closure of Ahmednagar, accommodated 2,477 European adult internees along with 83 merchant seamen. The combined internment and parole camp at Purandhar held 248 European adult and 50 child internees, while 372 European adult and 95 child internees were housed at Satara. Finally, Deoli, now 'a purely Asiatic internees' camp, held 2,216 Japanese adult and 175 child internees as well as 287 Javanese seamen.<sup>55</sup>

Faced with not only interning, and subsequently re-interning or restricting, enemy aliens already present in India, but also finding space for those brought from abroad as well as evacuees, the Home Department, working with the provincial governments, attempted to rationalise the distribution of the internee population of India. In general, individual male internees were detained at the CIC at Ahmednagar, Deolali and, finally, Dehra Dun. Married internees and families were concentrated at Purandhar and Satara. Screening, categorizing and separating Nazi and Fascist internees from Jewish and anti-Nazi internees proved difficult, especially at the latter camps, and tensions and complaints between these groups were not uncommon. While certain sites, such as Purandhar, Satara and Deoli, were utilized to detain enemy aliens throughout the war, the category of inhabitants and number of internees were mutable as the Government of India attempted to accommodate various European evacuees and refugees from the Middle and Far East. Conditions and facilities varied between camps, from the

dust-ridden and hot conditions at Deolali to the isolated slopes of Purandhar. All of the main internment camps operated until after the end of the war. The release and repatriation of European internees, some having spent six or seven years in captivity, or who had been originally detained in Iran, Ceylon, Burma, Sumatra or Malaya, would raise further issues for the Government of India, not least the question of who was liable for the substantial costs incurred in building additional camps.

## Memorialization and legacy

Regarding the current condition and status of these sites, their memorialization and legacy as places where European internees were held during the Second World War is nominal. Memorials were erected to the Boer POWs who died in India at Ahmednagar and other camps.<sup>56</sup> In the Christian cemetery at Ahmednagar, where the cenotaph to the Boers can be found, is a memorial to the German internees who died here during the 1914–18 conflict. With regards to the Second World War, however, there is no equivalent monument. In post-independence India, Ahmednagar and Deoli are naturally better remembered as places where members of the Indian National Congress were detained rather than the European internees. Furthermore, as many of the sites used for camps were military cantonments, their names are better associated with the different military schools of the Indian forces that currently reside in them. Since 1947, the Armoured Corp of the Indian Army has been located in Ahmednagar. The history of the fort, which is administered by the Corps, is readily associated with the confinement of members of the Congress Working Committee between 1942 and 1945. During his detention at Ahmednagar, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, began writing his *Discovery of India*.<sup>57</sup> Tourists can visit his preserved jail cell, now a museum, the entrance to which has a sign indicating his time interned here. The role Ahmednagar played as the location of the initial CIC in 1939 is marginalized by the fort, which not only dominates the landscape but also memories of civilian internment. Purandhar fort, meanwhile, remains a popular tourist attraction. The church where services were held by interned German missionaries still stands and is a highlight along with a Statute of Murarbaji Deshpande, the Maratha general who defended the fort against the Mughals. In 2017, the *Hindustan Times* reported that the military units of the National Cadet Corp Academy stationed at Purandhar were imposing restrictions on the tourists who hike to the fort to take in the spectacular views. Cameras and mobile phones were prohibited and a strict curfew enforced. The article briefly mentioned that it had once acted as an internment camp for Germans, including the art historian Dr H Goetz.<sup>58</sup>

The Deoli camp would once again receive detainees around twenty years after it had been converted from the Detention Centre into a camp for internees. With the outbreak of the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the result of a long-standing border dispute, Prime Minister Nehru ordered the internment of Chinese-Indians. Prior to Indian independence, The Foreigners Act of 1946 granted the Interim Government of India power to detain aliens and punish those who assisted internees or parolees in escape.<sup>59</sup> On 13 November 1962, India amended the Foreigners Act 1946 so that the

— -1  
— 0  
— +1

government was allowed to detain individuals of 'non-Indian' origin. It was under this Act that some 3,000 Chinese-Indians were interned. Although the Sino-Indian War was short (a ceasefire was declared on 20 November), it marked the beginning of a long internment of Chinese nationals, some remaining detained for five years.<sup>60</sup> Yin Marsh, who was interned with her family in 1962, notes the irony of being taken to Deoli where Nehru, who authorized the internment of Chinese-Indians, had once been held himself.<sup>61</sup>

Historians have emphasized the role India played in the global internment practices of the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much less has been written on how certain sites were repurposed during the Second World War when European enemy aliens were again interned. The British sought to control foreign and enemy populations in India as they had done in the Anglo-Boer War and First World War. The experience gained and practices honed during these conflicts were applied during the violent processes of decolonization after 1945. Historians of First World War civilian internment have sought to map the routes between the British concentration camps in South Africa and those of the Second World War. As the re-establishment of a camp at Deoli in 1962 suggests, we also need to look beyond 1945 when sites that detained European enemy aliens during the conflict were utilized in the post-colonial world. Memorials and memories of the internment of Europeans in India during the Second World War are certainly marginal, the history of sites at internee camps being subsumed by the longer military histories of the cantonments or the detention of figures associated with the fight for independence, but it is clear that post-war India not only inherited the frameworks and architecture of internment introduced during the British Raj but reclaimed and developed them.

## Notes

- All references starting with India Office Records (IOR) are held by the British Library, all starting with Home Department are held by the National Archive of India, Delhi.
1. Following the Independence and Partition of India in 1947, the provinces of the British Raj were replaced by states and unions with new boundaries. Certain cities and districts have been renamed since. This chapter uses the place and region names as they appear in contemporary documents during the imperial period.
  2. Matthew W. Kennedy, 'The Imperialism of Internment: Boer Prisoners of War in India and Civil Reconstruction in Southern Africa, 1899–1905', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 44 (2016), 425.
  3. Matthew Stibbe, *Civilian Internment during the First World War: A European and Global History, 1914–1920* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 294.
  4. IOR L/PJ/8/30B, Home Department, *Civil Internment Manual 1943* (Simla: Government of India, 1943), 1.
  5. The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939. *A Collection of The Acts of The Indian Legislature And of the Governor General for the Year 1939* (Delhi: Manager of Publication, 1939).
  6. IOR L/PJ/8/30A, Defence Department, *Military Instructions for the Internment of Enemy Aliens in the event of War, 1939* (Simla: Government of India, 1939).

7. Yasmin Khan, *The Raj At War* (London: Vintage, 2016), 11–12.
8. The Defence of India Act, 1939. *A Collection of the Acts of the Indian Legislature and of the Governor General for the Year 1939* (Delhi: Manager of Publication, 1939).
9. Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972), 1.
10. CAB 68/1/32, 'Memorandum: India', 2 October 1939, The National Archives, Kew.
11. On the presence of Germans in India before the Second World War see Panikos Panayi, *The Germans in India: Elite European Migrants in the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).
12. 'Germans In India Rounded Up', *The Times of India*, 5 September 1939, 8.
13. Ibid.
14. IWM 19817, Molley, Terence Rupert (Oral History) REEL 1, (1990), Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80018704> (accessed 18 January 2023).
15. IWM 836, Smith, John Henry (Oral History) REEL 5, (1976), Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80000830> (accessed 18 January 18, 2023).
16. Ibid.
17. Kennedy, 'Imperialism of Internment', 429.
18. Stefan Manz and Panikos Panayi, *Enemies in the Empire: Civilian Internment in the British Empire during the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2020), 276.
19. 'The Ahmednagar Camp', *The Times of India*, 8 April 1940, 6.
20. 'Camp Under Military Supervision', *Civil and Military Gazette*, 9 February 1940, 8.
21. 'Life in the CIC', *Civil and Military Gazette*, 19 March 1940, 12.
22. 'Interned for the Duration Germans' Life At Ahmednagar Camp', *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 7 April 1940, 20.
23. Ibid.
24. 'Facilities Granted to Enemy Internees', *Civil and Military Gazette*, 8 February 1940, 6.
25. Paul Von Tucher, *Nationalism: Case and Crisis in Missions. German Missions in British India, 1937–1946* (self-published, 1980), 74.
26. 'Release of Enemy Internees', *Civil and Military Gazette*, 24 September 1939, 10.
27. IOR L/PJ/8/30B, Home Department, *Civil Internment Manual 1943* (Simla: Government of India, 1943), 4.
28. Home Department (Political), F/66/3, 'Enemy foreigners at liberty', 19 May 1940.
29. *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* (1974–1981), [TV Programme] BBC1.
30. A2730791, 'Going Deolali 1939–41' (2004), BBC WW2 People's War Archive, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/91/a2730791.shtml> (accessed 18 January 2023).
31. NA Martin, 'The Madness at Deolali', *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corp*, 152 (2006), 94.
32. Tucher, *Nationalism*, 317.
33. Ibid., 324.
34. Hansard, 25 Feb. 1945, vol. 419, cols. 1568.
35. IOR L/PJ/8/30B, Home Department, *Civil Internment Manual 1943* (Simla: Government of India, 1943), 4.
36. Ibid., 5.
37. Ibid., 7.
38. IOR L/PJ/8/30A, 'Government of India (Home Department) to Secretary of State for India', 14 September 1940.

— -1  
 — 0  
 — +1



39. IOR/L/PJ/8/30B, Home Department, *Civil Internment Manual 1943* (Simla: Government of India, 1943), 5–6.
40. Home Department (Political) F/34/61, 'Consulate General of Switzerland (Bombay) to Frampton (Home Department)', 5 May 1940.
41. Home Department (Political) F/154/40, 'Note on the suitability of Purandhar as a site for a family internment camp', 8 November 1941.
42. Dominions Office (DO) 133/107, 'Memorandum of important and useful information concerning European evacuees in India' (1947), The National Archives, Kew.
43. Sidney Toy, *The Fortified Cities of India* (London: Heinemann, 1965), 40.
44. Home Department F/154/40. 'Memorandum: Family Internment Camp', 9 January 1942.
45. Home Department F/154/40. Home Department to Superintendent, Parole Centre (Purandhar), 17 January 1942.
46. Home Department F/154/40. 'Purandhar: Conversion into a Family Internment Camp', 3 February 1942.
47. Home Department F/154/40. Superintendent, Parole Centre (Purandhar) to Home Department, 2 March 1942.
48. Tucher, *Nationalism*, 380.
49. Home Department F/154/40. Superintendent, Parole Centre (Purandhar) to Home Department, 3 March 1942.
50. Tucher, *Nationalism*, 385.
51. *Ibid.*, 415–16.
52. Home Department F/154/40, 'Memorandum: Family Internment Camp', 9 January 1942.
53. Yin Cao, (2020). 'Establishing the Ramgarh Training Center: The Burman Campaign, the Colonial Internment Camp, and the Wartime Sino-British Relations', *Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 9/1, 5.
54. Christine de Matos and Rowena Ward, 'Forgotten Forced Migrants of War: Civilian Internment of Japanese in British India, 1941–6', *Journal of Contemporary History* 56/4 (2021): 1102–125, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009421997913> (accessed 18 January 2023).
55. IOR L/PJ/8/30B, 'Administration of Internment Camps in India: General', 3 August 1943.
56. Isabel Hofmeyr, 'South Africa's Indian Ocean: Boer Prisoners of War in India', *Social Dynamics*, 38/3 (2012), 363–80.
57. Khan, *The Raj at War*, 281.
58. Ashish Phadnis, 'No Cameras, no Mobiles on Purandar Fort in Pune', *Hindustan Times*, 26 October 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/pune-news/no-came-ras-no-mobiles-on-purandar-fort-in-pune/story-VC5HpnSYObemxjTsiLT7qI.html> (accessed 18 January 2023).
59. The Foreigners Act 1946. *A Collection of the Acts of the Central Legislature and Ordinances of the Governor Generals for the Year 1946* (Simla: Government of India, 1947).
60. Joy Ma and Dilip D'Souza, *The Deoliwallahs: The True Story of the 1962 Chinese-Indian Internment* (London: Macmillian, 2020).
61. Yin Marsh, *Doing Time with Nehru: The Story of an Indian-Chinese Family* (Chicago: UCP, 2016).

## Bibliography

- Cao, Yin. 'Establishing the Ramgarh Training Center: The Burman Campaign, the Colonial Internment Camp, and the Wartime Sino-British Relations'. *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 9, no. 1 (2020): 1–10.
- Harrer, Heinrich. *Seven Years in Tibet*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972.
- Hofmeyr, Isabel. 'South Africa's Indian Ocean: Boer Prisoners of War in India'. *Social Dynamics* 38, no. 3 (2012): 363–80.
- Kennedy, Matthew W. 'The Imperialism of Internment: Boer Prisoners of War in India and Civil Reconstruction in Southern Africa, 1899–1905'. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 44, no. 3 (2016): 423–47.
- Khan, Yasmin. *The Raj At War*. London: Vintage, 2016.
- Ma, Joy, and Dilip D'Souza. *The Deoliwallahs: The True Story of the 1962 Chinese-Indian Internment*. London: Macmillan, 2020.
- Manz, Stefan, and Panikos Panayi. *Enemies in the Empire: Civilian Internment in the British Empire during the First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Marsh, Yin. *Doing Time with Nehru: The Story of an Indian-Chinese Family*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Martin, NA 'The Madness at Deolali'. *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corp* 152 (2006): 94–5.
- de Matos, Christine, and Rowena Ward. 'Forgotten Forced Migrants of War: Civilian Internment of Japanese in British India, 1941–6'. *Journal of Contemporary History* 56, no. 4 (2021): 1102–125.
- Panayi, Panikos. *The Germans in India: Elite European Migrants in the British Empire*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Sidney, Toy. *The Fortified Cities of India*. London: Heinemann, 1965.
- Stibbe, Matthew. *Civilian Internment during the First World War: A European and Global History, 1914–1920*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Tucher, Paul Von. *Nationalism: Case and Crisis in Missions. German Missions in British India, 1937–1946*. self-published, 1980.

