

## The “New Labour Policy” in Nazi Colonial Planning for Africa\*

KARSTEN LINNE

---

**SUMMARY:** The National Socialist planning for a recolonization of Africa was based on a new social and labour policy and focused chiefly on the “labour question”. In designing their schemes, planners strove to mobilize wage labour and circumvent the much-feared “proletarianization” of the workers. The key problem in exploiting the African colonies had two main aspects: a shortage of manpower and migrant labour. Therefore, planners designed complex systems of organized, state-controlled labour recruitment, and formulated rules for labour contracts and compensation. An expanded labour administration was to ensure that the “deployment of labour” ran smoothly and that workers were registered, evaluated, and supervised. Furthermore, “white labour guardians” were to be assigned the responsibility of overseeing the social wellbeing of the African workers. As was evident not only in Germany but in the colonial powers, France and Great Britain, as well, these concepts all fit into the general trend of the times, a trend characterized by the application of scientific methods in solving social issues, by the increased emphasis on state intervention, and by the introduction of socio-political measures. Nazi planning was based on Germany’s prewar politics but also reflected the changes occurring in German work life after 1933.

---

The loss of the German colonies following the defeat in World War I was one that large sectors of the German population never truly accepted. Many people, especially among political forces on the right, dreamed of winning back the former colonies and attaining new areas so as to create a colonial empire in central Africa. After the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, such aspirations were reflected in a massive propaganda campaign. By 1936–1937 at the latest, there existed secret plans with detailed proposals in all areas relevant for shaping colonial policy, and organizational preparation was underway on such a large scale that critical observers also definitely noticed it. After the German victory over France, which presented – at least potentially – the possibility of acquiring French

\* This essay is based on my published Bremen Ph.D. dissertation, “*Weisse Arbeitsführer*” im “*Kolonialen Ergänzungsraum*”. *Afrika als Ziel sozial- und wirtschaftspolitischer Planungen in der NS-Zeit* (Münster, 2002).



Figure 1. Propaganda poster published by the Reichskolonialbund: an example of the German colonial revisionism of the mid-1930s and the desire for colonies.

Source: *Heinz Wilhelm Bauer, Kolonien im Dritten Reich, vol. 1 (Cologne, 1936), p. 215.*

colonies, such planning was intensified and became an integral element of German aspirations for world domination. The chances to realize these plans began to wane during the course of the war, at the latest by the time the tide finally turned against Germany at the end of 1942.

The National Socialist plans to recolonize Africa focused on social and

labour policy, which was developed to the point of becoming the “foundation for contemporary overseas colonization”.<sup>1</sup> Responsible for this area was the Arbeitswissenschaftliche Institut (AwI – Labour Sciences Institute)<sup>2</sup> of the German Labour Front. By borrowing directly from the assertion originating from Colonial Under-Secretary, Bernhard Dernburg, that Africans made up the “largest economic asset” of a tropical colony, the majority of Nazi colonial planners concentrated first and foremost on the “labour question” in developing a prospective colonial social policy.<sup>3</sup> According to widespread opinion, African workers were to become the main source of manual labour as such, although they first needed to be trained to work with intensive capitalist labour methods.<sup>4</sup> The central problem was to find a way to mobilize the African population to work as wage labourers.<sup>5</sup>

Although AwI members propagated the idea of increasing the number of Africans employed in wage labour in large European-owned factories, they saw the feasibility of their plans endangered by “indigenous farming” and the self-sufficiency linked to it. To solve this dilemma, it was proposed that African wage labourers should be able to continue farming in order to keep themselves self-sufficient, a step that AwI planners felt would counteract any further “uprooting” of workers, in other words their so-called proletarianization.<sup>6</sup> Married wage labourers were therefore to be assigned a piece of land to cultivate in the immediate vicinity of their houses.<sup>7</sup>

How new was this form of labour policy really? To what degree did it

1. AwI, “Arbeits- und Sozialpolitik – die Grundlage der neuzeitlichen Überseekolonisation”, *AwI-Jahrbuch*, 1940/1941; quotation taken from *Sozialstrategien der Deutschen Arbeitsfront*, Hamburger Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts (ed.), Pt A, vol. 5 (Munich [etc.], 1986), pp. 677–705.

2. On the AwI, see Karl Heinz Roth, *Intelligenz und Sozialpolitik im “Dritten Reich”*. Eine methodisch-historische Studie am Beispiel des Arbeitswissenschaftlichen Instituts der Deutschen Arbeitsfront (Munich [etc.], 1993).

3. Reinhold Schober, *Kamerun. Neuzeitliche Verwaltungsprobleme einer tropischen Kolonie* (Berlin, 1937), pp. 33ff; quotation, p. 34.

4. Albert von Mühlenfels, “Wirtschaftspolitik im tropischen Afrika”, *Afrika-Rundschau* [hereafter AR], 3:7 (1937/38), pp. 207–209.

5. August Marcus, “Betriebswirtschaftliche Fragen aus der Landwirtschaft des tropischen Afrika”, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, 7/8 (1940), pp. 253–264.

6. AwI, *Die koloniale Sozialpolitik Afrikas in ihrer Problematik – Ein Aufriß bestehender Notstände und vordringlicher Aufgaben*, n.d. (1942), Bundesarchiv Berlin [hereafter, BAB], NS 5 VI, no. 17909, fo. 9f.

7. AwI, *Richtlinien für die Schaffung einer amtlichen Arbeitsvermittlung und für die arbeits- und sozialrechtliche Gestaltung eines Arbeitsvertrages für die eingeborenen Lohnempfänger im afrikanischen Kolonialraum*, *ibid.*, no. 17926, fo. 3f. These proposals had already been raised in a resolution by the Reich Budgetary Commission and accepted by the Reichstag in February 1914. See *Verhandlungen des Reichstages, XIII. Legislaturperiode*, Session 1, vol. 204, *Anlagen zu den Stenographischen Berichten*, no. 1398 to 1546 (Berlin, 1914), pp. 2917 ff.

continue that which Wilhelmine colonial policy had started, reflect the experiences of the interwar period and social changes in Africa, and incorporate National Socialist racism? Are we dealing here with the concepts of a “secondary colonialism” (Russell A. Berman), which simply imitated the British model? What is the connection between the policy planned for the African colonies and the labour policy in Germany and the occupied territories? One thing is certain in this regard: the actual history of German colonialism ended in 1918 – but the history of fantasizing and projecting about it did not. Starting in 1940 at the latest, this latter history received enormous impetus, as many Germans interested in a colonial empire projected their hopes and desires upon Africa more than they ever had done before. It is in this context that the planning of labour policy must be examined.

#### LABOUR SHORTAGE AS THE KEY PROBLEM

The Nazi colonial planners felt the key problem of all future economic and sociopolitical measures lay in the shortage of manpower. A labour force of wage-earners in the classical sense simply did not exist; most potential workers had means of subsistence available to them. Therefore, already in the prewar period, initial efforts were made to establish a purposive “labour policy” in the German colonies.<sup>8</sup>

For the economists working on colonial planning, the central problems lay in low population density, a high rate of infant mortality, and malnutrition. Therefore, they deliberately fixed their sights on “human reservoirs,” such as Ruanda-Urundi, which explains the importance of this area in the framework of German colonial planning.<sup>9</sup> According to the views of German experts, the shortage of wage labourers was being further exacerbated by efforts to step up African market-oriented agriculture in many colonies.<sup>10</sup> The colonial planners felt reserves of labour could be made available by restricting unproductive forms of work, such as carrier services, and particularly by realizing the potential for rationalization in agriculture, mining, and industry.<sup>11</sup>

The Reichsarbeitsministerium (RAM, Reich Labour Ministry) considered the idea of resettling Africans from elsewhere in the areas where

8. Karin Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika. Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun vor 1914* (Hamburg, 1974), pp. 274ff.

9. Heinz-Dietrich Ortlieb, “Ruanda-Urundi. Arbeiterfragen – Nahrungsmittelvorsorgung – Entwicklung der Binnenwirtschaft – Drei kolonialwirtschaftliche Grundprobleme”, *AR*, 4:11 (1938/39), pp. 276–278.

10. Peter Mühlens, *Bericht über eine Studienreise nach Westafrika, Fernando Poo und Kamerun* (March–April 1938), *BAB*, R 73, no. 13257.

11. Hans Joachim Luther, “Zur Frage des Arbeitermangels in Afrika”, *AR*, 4:8 (1938–39), pp. 204–206.

manpower was short. However, ministry officials were aware of the social and climatic problems linked to such resettlement projects. In their opinion, the significant reason for the shortage of labour was to be found with the planters themselves, since the room, board, and wages they provided for their African workers did not even measure up to subsistence level.<sup>12</sup> The leading exponent at the RAM on such issues was Oskar Karstedt, who argued, above all, that a great increase in the population was necessary to combat the labour shortage.<sup>13</sup>

At the AwI, the confirmed shortage of manpower was seen as the central problem of a future colonial social policy as well. The AwI planners considered the cause of the lack of labour to lie primarily in a ruthless and aimless exploitation of the workers. At the same time, they were convinced that there still existed a large reservoir of able-bodied Africans as yet not employed in wage labour, who could be recruited in the future if the proper measures were taken.<sup>14</sup>

#### MIGRANT LABOUR

During this period, Africa was the part of the world experiencing the greatest population shifts and migrations. The migrations were primarily characterized by three factors: the great distances covered, their immense scope, and the concentration of migrant labourers in a few industrial centres. For example, the number of migrant workers in Kenya rose from 5,000 to 120,000 between the years 1903 and 1923. Since most workers only worked half-time, the actual number may have hovered at 240,000. In some districts, the percentage of migrants among the male population equalled nearly 60 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

The radical social changes connected with migrant labour took on drastic forms in Africa.<sup>16</sup> For this reason, the International Labour Office

12. Graf zu Trauttmansdorff, *Denkschrift über Arbeits- und Sozialrecht, Arbeits-Einsatz- und Lohnfragen im französischen Mandatsgebiet Kamerun und Vorschläge für die Neugestaltung* (1942), BAB, R 1001, no. 3233, fos 114–145, here fo. 122ff.

13. Oskar Karstedt, “Die Arbeiterfrage – das Kernproblem der Kolonialwirtschaft”, *Rundschau Technischer Arbeit*, 48 (28 November 1940), quoted from BAB, NS 5 VI, no. 20408, fo. 20; Oskar Karstedt, memorandum “Grundsätzliches zur Regelung der eingeborenen Arbeiterfrage in den afrikanischen Kolonien” (3 January 1941), BAB, R 1001, no. 6287, fos 97–107, here fo. 100.

14. AwI, *Die Besteuerung der afrikanischen Eingeborenen und ihre sozialen Auswirkungen* (February 1941) by Haenisch, BAB, NS 5 VI, no. 39650, fo. 1; AwI, *Die Gestaltung der eingeborenen Lohnarbeit im afrikanischen Kolonialraum* (n.d.), BAB, no. 39682, fo. 7; Wilhelm Rothhaupt, “Die Arbeitskraft der Eingeborenen und die kolonialwirtschaftlichen Leistungen”, *Koloniales Jahrbuch 1942* (Berlin, 1942), pp. 61–66, quoted from *Sozialstrategien*, Abt. B/2, fiche 18, fos 1621–1628, here fo. 1624.

15. Sharon Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and African Response, 1895–1975* (London, 1982), p. 30.

16. Bill Freund, *The African Worker* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 15f.

in Geneva (ILO) studied this phenomenon. The ILO concluded that the great demand for labour was responsible for the permanent migration movements.<sup>17</sup> A similar conclusion was reached by the German ethnologist, Diedrich Westermann.<sup>18</sup> He claimed that migrant labour had a serious influence on African societies, especially in relaxing the rules and traditions of established societal life. He argued that the workers returning home brought with them new views, new needs, and a yearning for greater personal freedom which was incompatible with the existing social structures.<sup>19</sup> More recent studies have confirmed this evaluation: migrant labour undermined societal life in the communities without offering any type of transition to prepare people for new social formations. The wages earned by migrant labourers were far too meagre to cover the corresponding reproduction costs of labour, so that village communities continued to supply a portion of the necessary cost in securing the renewed supply of workers.<sup>20</sup>

According to the AwI, the loss in time and manpower that was linked to migration was to be minimized as much as possible, and, in addition, short-term labour contracts were to be offered in order to use the labour of Africans in both indigenous economies and wage employment. The AwI argued that the main tasks were to reduce long-distance migration by improving transportation in both the immediate vicinity and nearby surrounding areas of large industrial centres and plantations, and to manage the labour force deliberately for the purpose of fulfilling economic priorities.<sup>21</sup>

Among colonial planners, consensus was widespread about which countermeasures should be attempted: the settling of workers near their workplace and the maintenance of small-farming subsistence in each respective tribal territory.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the Gruppe Deutscher Kolonial-

17. Wilfrid Benson, "Afrikanische Arbeiterfragen", *Internationale Rundschau der Arbeit*, 17 (1939), pp. 504–515. Even later, migrant labour was still viewed from this side as a serious problem for African societies, for their age and gender structure, their living standard, etc. See Margaret Read, "Migrant Labour in Africa and its Effects on Tribal Life", *International Labour Review*, 45 (1942), pp. 605–631.

18. The missionary, Diedrich Hermann Westermann (1875–1956), is seen as one of the founders of modern African linguistics. He became the first chair for African Studies in Germany at the Friedrich Wilhelm University (now Humboldt University) in Berlin in 1925.

19. Diedrich Westermann, "Die Stellung der Naturvölker in Afrika", in *idem* (ed.), *Die heutigen Naturvölker im Ausgleich mit der neuen Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1940), pp. 1–125, 35.

20. Waltraud Schmidt, "Wege zur Herausbildung kapitalistischer Lohnarbeit in heutigen Entwicklungsländern Asiens und Afrikas", *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, T4 (1978), pp. 57–71, esp. pp. 66f.

21. AwI, "Die Arbeiterwanderung in Afrika", *Wirtschafts- und Sozialberichte*, 15 December 1940, quoted from *Sozialstrategien*, Abt. B/1, fiche 5/06, fos 512–514, here fo. 512.

22. Undated memorandum "Nationalsozialistische Eingeborenenlenkung in den Reichskolonien", AO of the NSDAP, BAB, NS 9, no. 80, fos 1–126, here fo. 115.

wirtschaftlicher Unternehmungen (Deko Group, Group of German Colonial Business Enterprises), the economic-interest organization of companies involved in colonial trade, went a step further by not excluding the possibility of a “controlled resettlement” of entire tribes or parts of tribes from districts with evident surpluses of workers into regions with labour shortages.<sup>23</sup>

#### RECRUITMENT OF WORKERS

The related subjects of labour recruitment and labour contracts not only interested National Socialist colonial planners, but were also part of the ILO agenda in Geneva. The guidelines established there in May 1934 on labour recruitment called for a greater degree of state regulation. Civil servants, tribal chiefs, and personnel recruiters were no longer to be permitted to recruit workers in the future; the permission to do so would be subject to rigorous stipulations and only issued for a limited period of time. Recruited workers were to be presented to a government official and examined by a physician before starting employment, and travel expenses were to be paid by the recruiters or the employer.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the ILO guidelines were not very different from those proposed by German planners. What was controversial among German planners was the question of who should receive the right to recruit labour. Some of the planners were of the opinion that the government should use the tribal chiefs in recruiting workers – specifically, that it should order them to supply a certain number of workers. Should the respective tribal chief be unwilling to comply with this form of cooperation, he was to be replaced with another.<sup>25</sup> Workers were primarily to be recruited from the nearby vicinity, and preference was to be given to “unmarried young fellows”, to whom a trip home was to be granted on a regular basis for the purpose of “sexual activity or marriage”. Colonial planners wanted to avoid hiring female labourers if at all possible, but if necessary, then only older women.<sup>26</sup> For a social anthropologist like Richard Thurnwald, who preferred governmental over private recruitment, even though he did indeed recognize the inherent danger of abuse (violent round-ups,

23. Baron Monteton to Geheimrat Gunzert, 4 October 1940 (attached memorandum “Arbeitseinsatz der Eingeborenen”), BAB, R 1001, no. 6287, fos 75–80, here fo. 78.

24. Internationale Arbeitskonferenz, *Die Anwerbung von Arbeitern in den Kolonien und in anderen Gebieten mit ähnlichen Arbeitsbedingungen. Bericht IV, Erste Beratung* (Geneva, 1935), pp. 292ff.

25. Paper by Hugo Adolf Bernatzik, “Die Völkerkunde als Grundlage der modernen Kolonisation”, *Kolonial-Informationsdienst*, special edn (14 February 1939), quoted from BAB, NSD 20, no. 5.

26. Hugo Adolf Bernatzik (ed.), *Die Große Völkerkunde. Sitten, Gebräuche und Wesen fremder Völker*, vol. 1, *Europa – Afrika* (Leipzig, 1939), p. 41 (quotation, *ibid.*).

arbitrary distribution of workers), the recruiters became the most important link between the separate “black” and “white spheres”, which Thurnwald himself demanded.<sup>27</sup>

The Auslandsorganisation (AO, Organization Abroad) of the NSDAP developed a complex programme for labour recruitment in which the state was to manage the entire deployment of labour in the colonies through planning. This system was to supply African manpower through a “volunteer labour service” that would be coordinated by a “native commissioner”. Should the supply of volunteer labour be insufficient, the AO proposed to resort to the introduction of “labour duty”. A Central Office for the Deployment of Labour (Zentralstelle für den Arbeitseinsatz) was to be set up at the governor’s headquarters and was to assign the densely populated districts of the colony as recruitment regions to professional organizations, which were to establish their permanent recruiting centres there. Private business was obliged to satisfy its labour needs first and foremost from the supply of volunteer labour, whereas the state would more likely resort to “conscripted native labourers” for its tasks. Specifically, the labour contract was to be signed in the presence of the “native commissioner” following a medical examination of the recruited worker. The “native commissioner” was then to place his stamp in the “labour passport” to be issued to each worker. The employer was responsible for free round-trip transportation of workers as well as for the provision of blankets and work clothing. When the worker first arrived at his workplace, the employer was to hand him a “work card” valid for thirty days, which the worker was to work off without interruption, unless otherwise authorized.<sup>28</sup>

A similar line of policy was pursued by the Deko Group, the lobby for companies that would, after all, be directly affected by the measures. It wanted labour recruitment in the future to be handled by professional organizations and not by individual plants and factories. However, for the state’s needs, it also proposed the establishment of a Central Office for the Deployment of Labour. This central office would assign recruiting areas to the professional organizations, which would maintain labour recruiting offices there. Should the supply of volunteer labour not meet the needs of the recruiting office, the senior district officer could exert pressure on the respective tribal chiefs. The recruiting offices were to be active in the recruitment areas if the supply of volunteer labour proved inadequate.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast, the Kolonialpolitische Amt (KPA, Colonial Policy Office) of the NSDAP – the nucleus of the colonial ministry planned for the

27. Richard Thurnwald, *Koloniale Gestaltung. Methoden und Probleme überseeischer Ausdehnung* (Hamburg, 1939), pp. 459f. Thurnwald (1869–1954), a social anthropologist, became famous for his comparative studies of social institutions.

28. Memorandum “Nationalsozialistische Eingeborenenlenkung”, fos 115ff.

29. Monteton to Gunzert.



future – adhered to its plans to recruit labour on a private basis through licensed recruiters who were to be supervised by the state. Each recruited worker was required to undergo a fitness examination by a government physician. The number of recruits from a tribal or village community located more than 150 kilometres away was not allowed to exceed 10 per cent; for those less distant, an additional 10 per cent were allowed to be recruited.<sup>30</sup>

RAM officials emphasized that the recruitment of workers by professional businesses was a necessary “evil” needed only at the beginning. Recruitment was to take place exclusively through private recruiters who were licensed by the government and were under the supervision of the responsible authorities. The authorities were to define the recruitment areas and to set the percentage rate of recruitment.<sup>31</sup>

At the AwI, planners worked on guidelines for establishing an official job-placement system and the type of labour contracts to be introduced in the future. Government job-placement offices were to replace private recruiters. Specifically, AwI planners intended to have the district offices assume the task of job placement. They were to assign a job to a worker only the first time he was recruited. Those workers who resided in the close vicinity of a business enterprise were no longer to be hired as wage labourers by free, direct agreement, but were also to be assigned a workplace by government job offices. According to the AwI proposals, the wage labourer to be placed under contractual obligation would receive his labour book in the recruitment camps of the district office, where he would also undergo a medical examination. His labour book would contain his photograph, first and last names, place of birth and residence, tribal membership, and other dates and notations, such as change of residence, previous workplaces, health status, and “labour status” (“young” or “full worker”). Employers were not allowed to employ anyone who did not have a labour book. By introducing the labour book, the AwI sought primarily to step up the registration of the labour force, but also to be able to catch workers who had broken their contracts and, what is more, to introduce an effective health control system.

The AwI concept stipulated that the job-placement office was to open an account for each recruited wage labourer under the number of his labour book. That portion of the recruitment fee that previously had been paid by companies to the private recruiters was to be paid into this account, a sum equalling roughly two months-worth of wages. The first deposit, the “capital contribution”, was supposed to be used by the worker to return home for the purpose of starting a family and setting up a home.

30. Draft version of “Verordnung über den Arbeitseinsatz Eingeborener und gleichgestellter Fremder in den Kolonien”, from the KPA (25 June 1941), BAB, R 8119 F, no. P 24533, fos 8–10.  
31. Karstedt, memorandum “Grundsätzliches”, fos 97ff. and 106f.

A labour contract with the employer was to be drawn up in the respective native language and signed by the recruited worker at the job-placement office of the administrative district. This contract was to contain the personal data of the employer, the labour-book information of the employee, and the type of work, length of contract, rate of pay, date of pay, and perhaps the guaranteed provisions. Each contract was to become legally binding the moment the worker started his job at the respective business, and it was to be the job of the responsible labour guardian to ensure that the contractual obligations were upheld. Upon arrival at his workplace, the worker would be obligated to undergo a medical examination by the plant physician. Each month the worker was to receive a work card which confirmed the number of days he had worked; if he had only worked a part of the days required, the card listed the actual number of hours he had worked. Not until the contractual obligations had all been filled did the worker have the right to a free trip back to his home.<sup>32</sup>

The example of Kenya shows how labour recruitment worked in many British colonies. In the 1920s and 1930s, the job market was dominated by persuasion and coercion on the part of the government. The pressure exerted by “chieftains” continued, as did the private recruitment of workers. British attempts to get Kenyans to volunteer for wage labour had little effect on bureaucratic practice in the villages and districts.<sup>33</sup>

#### LABOUR LAW AND LABOUR CONTRACTS

Most colonial planners placed great importance on the legal regulation of labour relations between African workers and European companies.<sup>34</sup> In planning the revision of labour law, one “aspect of racial policy” became particularly important: “It is necessary to compel coloured employees to act very disciplined toward their white employers.”<sup>35</sup>

At the 24th ILO conference in 1938, the organization adopted two preliminary drafts of an agreement “on the regulation of written labour contracts”, and “on the penalty stipulations in labour contracts”. According to these, a written contract was prescribed if the length of

32. AwI, *Richtlinien*, fos 1ff. and 5ff.; AwI, “Die arbeits- und sozialrechtliche Gestaltung der Lohnarbeit in Afrika”, *AwI-Jahrbuch 1940/41*, I, quoted from *Sozialstrategien*, Abt. A, vol. 5, pp. 707–734, here pp. 713ff.

33. Stichter, *Migrant Labour*, p. 80.

34. For example, see the paper by Oberregierungsrat Dr. Schrader, Hamburg, “Leitsätze für den Aufbau der Gerichtsbarkeit für Eingeborene”, for the ADR, May 1939, BAB, R 22, no. 2365, fos 9–29, here fo. 12.

35. Heinrich Krieger, *Das Rassenrecht in Südwestafrika. Vergleichende Darstellung des deutschen Rechts und des Rechts der Mandatszeit, zugleich Entwurf und Anwendung einer neuen Systematik des Kolonialrechts* (Berlin, 1940), pp. 89ff. (quotation, p. 91).

employment was to exceed six months. The contract was required to have the names of the employer and the employee, the work location, the type and duration of work, the rate of pay and the type of payment, and would only become legally binding once the responsible government official had signed the contract.<sup>36</sup> The Germans accused the ILO of generalizing and schematizing Africans as a whole, thereby glossing over the differences among the peoples.<sup>37</sup>

The AwI also developed its own ideas for stipulations governing labour contracts with African wage labourers because it was at odds with the drafts proposed by the ILO. The AwI planners criticized these draft proposals primarily for failing “to tread new paths”, and to have supposedly given in on those points “where capitalist interests” appeared to be threatened. Overall, the drafts were considered to be so vague – and the AwI placed a different emphasis on this point – that any colonial bureaucracy bound to this Geneva accord could proceed at will, and that a uniform social policy was not at all guaranteed. Furthermore, the AwI planners criticized the ILO drafts for accepting other forms of payment besides cash wages. They protested against the stipulation requiring written labour contracts only for jobs lasting six months or more, and demanded that formal written contracts also be required for shorter-term labour contracts, the type of contract preferred by the AwI.<sup>38</sup> In the view of the AwI, contractual agreements within a colony were not to exceed a limit of six months for new recruitments anyway, although the AwI had nothing against awarding two-year labour contracts to married workers – if they had already had a six-month contract previously. However, the contract was then to include an unconditional provision ensuring the worker sufficient opportunity to settle.

In general, the AwI disfavoured the migration of workers between countries. Therefore, the institute condemned the ILO’s proposal to give unmarried workers labour contracts exceeding a year when recruitment was taking place between two countries.<sup>39</sup> In Africa, “labour flight” was a permanent phenomenon and its causes sufficiently known. The AwI saw

36. *Internationale Arbeitskonferenz, Regelung der Arbeitsverträge der eingeborenen Arbeitnehmer. Bericht II* (Geneva, 1939), pp. 25ff.

37. Oskar Karstedt and Peter von Werder, *Die afrikanische Arbeiterfrage* (Berlin, 1941), pp. 5f.; Oskar Karstedt, “Einige Randbemerkungen zur New Yorker Tagung der Internationalen Arbeitsorganisation”, *Afrika-Nachrichten*, 23 (1942), pp. 5–6.

38. AwI, *Eine kritische Stellungnahme zu dem auf der 25. Arbeitskonferenz des “Internationalen Arbeitsamtes in Genf” am 24. Juli 1939 herausgegebenen Bericht über “Regelung der Arbeitsverträge der eingeborenen Arbeitnehmer”*, (n.d.) by Rothhaupt, BAB, NS 5 VI, no. 39683, fos 1ff. (quotation, fo. 2); AwI, “Arbeitsverträge der eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte. Eine kritische Stellungnahme zu dem auf der 25. Arbeitskonferenz des Internationalen Arbeitsamtes in Genf am 24 Juli 1939 herausgegebenen Bericht”, *Neue Internationale Rundschau der Arbeit*, 1 (1941), quoted from *Sozialstrategien*, Abt. B/1, fiche 4/01, fos 67–86, here fos 68f.

39. AwI, *Stellungnahme*, fos 15ff. (quotation, fos 16f.).

the main cause, particularly among first-time recruited labourers, as being “homesickness”, which appeared especially when the living conditions did not correspond with the habits of the workers, and when the employer treated them poorly and broke up the communities they had formed at the plant. The AwI sought, first, to eliminate what it identified as the main causes of flight and, second, to reform the penalty catalogue.<sup>40</sup>

The AwI also planned the standardization of working hours: The work-week was not to exceed forty-eight hours, with exceptions made only for livestock operations and coffee and cotton harvest. The work-day was to begin sufficiently early that workers would be on their way to work by daybreak. The idea of starting the work-day at sunrise held the promise of having a beneficial psychological effect. Workers were to be given a thirty-minute break at noon, in addition to two shorter breaks during the day. Any necessary overtime required governmental approval as did the introduction of piecework. This was also to be true for night shifts, which labour officials were to approve just in special cases; only emergency work important for the plant was to be granted an exception. No-one was to work on Saturday afternoons or Sundays.<sup>41</sup>

#### COMPENSATION

Two issues dominated the question of compensation for African workers: the relationship of wage payments in cash to those in kind and the establishment of wage and occupational groups. The AO of the NSDAP proposed that cash wages should not be calculated on an hourly basis, but on a monthly one based on thirty work-days. Pay scales were considered unnecessary by the AO; instead, each person’s individual achievement was to become the yardstick used to calculate the appropriate wage. In this connection, the AO wanted to classify workers and, at least for full workers, to determine each worker’s wage group based on his own abilities and his occupational group according to the type of work. The state was to set the boundaries of this differentiated system by fixing minimum and maximum wage levels. Minimum wages were seen as a protective measure for the employees, while maximum wage ceilings were meant to prevent competition between employers over wages. The workers were to have half of such set wages withheld; this money would be awarded to them later in the form of a “saving earmarked for the homeland” when they were ready to return to the “reservation”.<sup>42</sup> The demand to introduce minimum

40. *Ibid.*, fos 25f.; AwI, *Die koloniale Sozialpolitik Englands und Frankreichs* (July 1940), quoted from *Sozialstrategien*, Abt. B/2, fiches 126–128, fos 301–303, here fiche 128, fos 498f.

41. AwI, *Richtlinien*, fos 20f.; AwI, “Die arbeits- und sozialrechtliche Gestaltung”, pp. 720ff.

42. Memorandum “Nationalsozialistische Eingeborenenlenkung”, fos 123f.

wages was not new. It had already been proposed in February 1914 by the Reich Budgetary Commission.<sup>43</sup>

The Deko Group also supported the idea of fixed maximum and minimum wage levels. Wage levels were to be set by the officials, although in cooperation with economic groups, and part of the wage was to be paid in kind. For work on plantations, the Deko Group worked out its own system of “quota work”, in which the workers had to complete a certain amount of work before they were paid their daily wage, after which they were free from all obligations.<sup>44</sup>

At the RAM, Karstedt emphasized that African workers should be awarded cash compensations in addition to the provision of goods and produce. Where it was difficult for workers to acquire food themselves, it was said to be the task of the plant to ensure that the necessary markets or similar establishments were set up.<sup>45</sup> Karstedt’s representative in the KPA, Graf zu Trauttmansdorff, returned from a trip to Cameroon with the proposal to retain in future the system already existing at German plantations there, in which a portion of a worker’s wage was paid out in coupons. With these coupons, which equalled roughly one-third of the wage, workers could shop in the stores of their respective plantations. In addition, the practice had been established there to pay the daily wages on the first of the following month in order to prevent workers from “running away”.<sup>46</sup> The Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Auslands- und Kolonialtechnik (Study Group for Foreign and Colonial Technology) in the Verein Deutscher Ingenieure (Association of German Engineers) suggested that a type of piecework system be introduced in which an account would be set up for every African worker, who would be classified according to his abilities. According to the plans of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft, the worker would only receive a portion of his wage at first, while the rest remained on account and would be paid out to him after he had again earned more than the minimum balance.<sup>47</sup>

On the issue of the future forms of wage payment, the AwI planners voted against paying out a portion of the wage in provisions. This was to be approved only in certain exceptional cases and for limited periods of time by the responsible labour authorities. The AwI considered it to be

43. *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*.

44. Monteton to Gunzert, fo. 79; Ernst Fickendey, *Eingeborenenkultur und Plantage* (Berlin, 1941), pp. 72f.

45. Karstedt, Memorandum “Grundsätzliches”, fos 98 and 106.

46. Graf zu Trauttmansdorff, “Denkschrift über Arbeits- und Sozialrecht, Arbeits-Einsatz- und Lohnfragen im britischen Mandatsgebiet Kamerun und Vorschläge für die Neugestaltung”, (30 January 1942), BAB, R 1001, no. 3233, fos 85–113, here fo. 100.

47. *Merkblatt über Kolonialtechnik* (Akotech Hamburg), no. 5, January 1942, Archiv des Seminars für Afrikanische Sprachen der Universität Hamburg, file J (Koloniale Angelegenheiten).

more advantageous for workers if women were to shop at well-stocked markets and to prepare meals for them. This required, however, that the families of the recruited wage labourers accompany them – something AwI planners pushed strongly in cases where labour contracts exceeded a year. However, under no circumstances were unmarried workers to be expected to provide for themselves; they were to be fed by canteens. The AwI wanted to set minimum wages at a level that reflected the food situation in the respective country. Additional wages were to be awarded on the basis of aptitude and achievement.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the AwI propagated the establishment of certain wage groups as an effective advertising means to recruit labour. To support this, the institute also proposed introducing occupational groups. The worker would receive his wage in weekly partial payments that corresponded to the amount of work time actually put in.<sup>49</sup>

#### FORCED LABOUR AND MANDATORY LABOUR

For a long time it was considered proven fact – not only in the Marxist camp – that the essential element on which developing capitalism was based was the “doubly-free wage labourer”. Most scholars agreed that unfree labour, forced or slave labour, could appear in some exceptional cases but could not become a permanent phenomenon in a capitalist system. However, there were a few voices which contradicted this interpretation rather early. In 1932, for example, the bourgeois economist, Alfred Müller-Armack, pointed out the compatibility between a capitalist economy and unfree labour.<sup>50</sup> Yet not until the work of Immanuel Wallerstein on the history of “peripheral capitalism” was the groundbreaking discovery made that, historically speaking, unfree labour had always been an integral part of capitalism in many areas.<sup>51</sup> The current debate on the topic of unfree labour and capitalism is making an exerted effort to find actual historical examples to use in argumentation.<sup>52</sup> As such,

48. AwI, *Die Gestaltung der eingeborenen Lohnarbeit*, fos 6f.; AwI, “Die arbeits- und sozialrechtliche Gestaltung”, pp. 723ff.; AwI, *Richtlinien*, fos 4f.

49. *Ibid.*, fos 6ff. and 27.

50. Alfred Müller-Armack, *Entwicklungsgesetze des Kapitalismus. Ökonomische, geschichtstheoretische und soziologische Studien zur modernen Wirtschaftsverfassung* (Berlin, 1932), pp. 28f.

51. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Das moderne Weltsystem. Die Anfänge kapitalistische Landwirtschaft und die europäische Weltökonomie im 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M., 1986), p. 151.

52. For example, see Tom Brass, Marcel van der Linden, and Jan Lucassen, *Free and Unfree Labour* (Amsterdam, 1993); Tom Brass, “Some Observations on Unfree Labour, Capitalist Restructuring and Deproletarianization”, *International Review of Social History*, 39 (1994), pp. 255–275.

the permeation of unfree labour relations during National Socialism is an extreme case considered to be of exemplary significance.<sup>53</sup>

All African colonies experienced unfree labour relations at certain times. Particularly famous was the French system of *prestation*,<sup>54</sup> and *deuxième portion*,<sup>55</sup> as well as the gruesome situation in the Belgian Congo. In Cameroon, for example, where forced labour was officially banned in 1946, one could still find the forced recruitment of plantation workers occurring until the 1960s.<sup>56</sup> Forms of forced labour could also be found in the German colonies prior to World War I, particularly throughout Southwest Africa.<sup>57</sup>

This “African example” only represents a radicalized form of the labour policy that continued in Germany from the Imperial era, throughout World War I,<sup>58</sup> and culminated in the “slave hunts” of the commissioner-general responsible for labour deployment during World War II. Particularly illuminating is the model closest in time to the Nazi colonial planning, namely the forced recruitment of manpower in occupied territories, particularly in the Soviet Union. The Soviets had to make the bitter discovery that the Germans had come as “colonial masters” who treated them – in the vernacular of the times – as the “white Negroes of the Germans”.<sup>59</sup>

Since 1927, the ILO had been dealing with the topic of forced labour in Africa. It was here that the first, very vaguely worded, principles for regulating forced labour were worked out and that forced labour was

53. Karl Heinz Roth, “Unfreie Arbeit im deutschen Herrschaftsbereich 1940–1945. Historische Grundlagen und Methodenfragen”, in Werner Röhr and Brigitte Berlekamp (eds), *Neuordnung Europas. Vorträge vor der Berliner Gesellschaft für Faschismus- und Weltkriegsforschung 1992–1996* (Berlin, 1996), pp. 199–217, here p. 217.

54. Dennis D. Cordell and Joel W. Gregory, “Labour Reservoirs and Population: French Colonial Strategies in Koudougou, Upper Volta, 1914 to 1939”, *Journal of African History*, 23 (1982), pp. 205–224.

55. Myron Echenberg and Jean Filipovich, “African Military Labour and the Building of the Office du Niger Installations, 1925–1950”, *Journal of African History*, 27 (1986), pp. 533–551.

56. Juliane Kippenberg, “Protest und Verweigerung von Plantagenarbeitern in Kamerun”, 1999. *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 11:3 (1996), pp. 10–29.

57. Helmut Bley, *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894–1914* (Hamburg, 1968), pp. 211f.; Rudolf von Albertini, *Europäische Kolonialherrschaft 1880–1940* (Zurich, 1976), p. 215.

58. Lothar Elsner, “Sicherung der Ausbeutung ausländischer Arbeitskräfte. Ein Kriegsziel des deutschen Imperialismus im ersten Weltkrieg”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 24 (1976), pp. 530–546; Lothar Elsner, “Belgische Zwangsarbeiter in Deutschland während des ersten Weltkriegs”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 24 (1976), pp. 1256–1267.

59. Rolf-Dieter Müller, “Die Zwangsrekrutierung von ‘Ostarbeitern’ 1941–1944”, in Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Der Zweite Weltkrieg. Analysen – Grundzüge – Forschungsbilanz* (Munich, 1989), pp. 772–783, here p. 781 (quotation, *ibid.*); Rolf-Dieter Müller, “Menschenjagd. Die Rekrutierung von Zwangsarbeitern in der besetzten Sowjetunion”, in Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (eds), *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941–1944* (Hamburg, 1995), pp. 92–103.

regulated in a labour convention.<sup>60</sup> Afterwards, the problem continued to be debated without resulting in any effective agreements. Recent studies show that the ILO treaty on forced labour had little impact on the politics of the British labour administration in Africa, where the influence of the pressure groups remained too strong.<sup>61</sup>

From the intensive study that German planners devoted to the topic of forced labour relations in other colonies, it can be derived that they too considered instituting forced labour.<sup>62</sup> Conspicuous was the effort among the ranks of the SS to establish a regime of forced labourers, albeit a very special kind. Certain high-ranking members of the SS dreamed of making concentration-camp prisoners from Europe work in the mines of South-west Africa and on road construction projects, while African workers were to be forced to labour on government plantations.<sup>63</sup>

The Deko Group also included the introduction of a “labour duty” as the primary principle on which its plans for organizing African labour were based. According to these plans, every able-bodied male African would work, fully paid, for a certain amount of time in addition to his own form of livelihood.<sup>64</sup> Ernst Fickendey, scientific consultant of the Group, endorsed these plans. He felt it absolutely imperative “to impose [on Africans] obligations that [were] self-evident and common in Europe”.<sup>65</sup> In light of these ideas, it is no wonder that a US journalist who conducted several interviews with the head of the Deko Group came to the conclusion that the Africans would have to work hard, under the severest discipline, and for a pittance: “Africa would be one great German slave plantation operated on scientific lines and thriving on low-cost production of tropic staples for export.”<sup>66</sup>

The KPA also called for mandatory labour for the African population. According to its plan, every male African could be obliged to work for pay for a period lasting one to three months, should the sources of voluntary labour prove inadequate. Under certain circumstances, the colonial administration would also have the authority to force Africans to do

60. Internationale Arbeitskonferenz, *Zwangsarbeit*, Geneva, n.d. (1930), pp. 5ff.

61. Andrew Roberts, “The Imperial Mind”, in *idem* (ed.), *The Colonial Moment in Africa: Essays of Minds and Materials, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 24–76, here pp. 69f.

62. Paper by Martin, “Die rechtliche Verhältnisse der Eingeborenen in Angola”, delivered to the seventh meeting of the Ausschuss für Kolonialrecht (Committee on Colonial Law) of the Akademie für Deutsches Recht (German Legal Academy) on 2 June 1939, BAB, R 61, no. 208, fos 1–21, here fos 13ff.

63. Hennicke to Wolff, dated 2 July 1940, BAB, NS 19, no. 755, fos 11f. Albert Speer points out correctly that these ideas were not merely “figments of imagination” dancing in the head of SS Group Leader Hennicke, but that such plans were indeed discussed seriously. See Albert Speer, *Der Sklavenstaat. Meine Auseinandersetzung mit der SS* (Frankfurt/M. [etc.], 1984), p. 270.

64. Monteton to Gunzert, fo. 77.

65. Fickendey, *Eingeborenenkultur*, p. 70 (quotation, *ibid.*)

66. Douglas Miller, *You Can't Do Business With Hitler* (Boston, MA, 1941), p. 49.



unpaid labour in addition to this paid mandatory service. For workers who had repeatedly refused to work or had several times left their workplace for good without the necessary approval, penalties were planned that included up to six months of forced labour.<sup>67</sup>

In AwI memoranda, the topic of forced labour is rarely mentioned explicitly. Still, the institute favourably noted the form of forced labour practised in the Belgian Congo.<sup>68</sup> That the AwI planners did not wish to forego the use of mandatory labour is demonstrated clearly by the plans to create “homeland duty units” (*Heimatsdienst-Einheiten*), which were to supply a contingent of labour, the size of which was to be determined by the authorities. This was no more than a poorly veiled form of forced labour. For the future colonial policy, the AwI planned an open mandatory labour service for those African workers who could no longer be integrated into an “orderly work process”, the so-called “asocial elements”. As part of their mandatory labour service in public construction projects, they were to undergo “special education”.<sup>69</sup>

#### LABOUR ADMINISTRATION AND THE REGISTRATION OF WORKERS

In the German colonies, the origins of state regulation in labour relations went back rather far in time.<sup>70</sup> National Socialist colonial planners oriented themselves on historical examples. According to the RAM, a “labour commissioner’s office”, established directly under each respective governor, was to head the labour administration. Subordinated to the commissioner’s office were district labour commissioners, who were the ones responsible for getting tasks done.<sup>71</sup>

The KPA developed similar ideas. According to plans drawn up there, each governor of a colony was to head the entire labour deployment operation within that colony. To help him in this, a referent for labour issues and manpower allocation – other KPA papers referred to a “referent for native affairs and labour policy” – was to be assigned to the governor. The labour commissioners, who were to be responsible for certain areas, were directly subordinated to the labour deployment administration. They

67. KPA, draft of a “Verordnung über den Arbeitseinsatz Eingeborener und gleichgestellter Fremder in den Kolonien”, (25 June 1941), BAB, R 8119 F, no. P 24533, fos 8–10.

68. AwI, *Die Kongo-Kolonie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der arbeitspolitischen Probleme* (November 1940), quoted from *Sozialstrategien*, Abt. B/2, fiche 129, fos 574–633, here fo. 596.

69. AwI, *Richtlinien*, fo. 2.

70. Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, p. 284; Detlef Bald, *Deutsch-Ostafrika 1900–1914. Eine Studie über Verwaltung, Interessengruppen und wirtschaftliche Erschließung* (Munich, 1970), pp. 182ff.

71. Karstedt, memorandum “Grundsätzliches”, fo. 99.

were assigned with the job of supervising the social and economic needs of the workers, labour contracts, and wage agreements.<sup>72</sup>

The central purpose of these efforts was the registration and the supervision of workers. Here too, planners were able to borrow from the preliminary plans and experiences of the German colonial administration from the prewar period. For example, the colonial government in German Southwest Africa installed a system of legal controls and supervisory measures that included an obligatory service book and a passport for Africans.<sup>73</sup> The AO of the NSDAP considered the registration of all male workers to be the prerequisite of an “orderly deployment of labour” in the colonies. A labour passport or labour book was to serve as registration identification – much as was proposed in the AwI plans described above – and was to include the person’s name, the name of his father, his approximate age, place and date of issuance, a thumb print, information on his state of health, etc. The worker would be required to carry his labour passport on him at all times in a metal case and was also to be outfitted with a metal dog tag imprinted with the current number of his labour passport. An employer was to enter into this labour passport his name, the date when employment was to begin, the duration of employment, type of work, wage, and the date when the contract ended. District administrations were to check labour passes once a year in order to determine whether every registered worker had fulfilled his minimum of mandatory service.<sup>74</sup>

In 1941, the KPA worked out a detailed “Verordnung über das Arbeitsbuch der Eingeborenen und gleichgestellten Fremden in den Kolonien” (Ordinance on the Labour Books of the Indigenous Population and Foreigners of Equal Standing in the Colonies) and the implementation ordinances to accompany it, which contained detailed regulations borrowed in good measure from the concepts of the AO of the NSDAP and the Deko Group outlined above. These labour books were to be issued by the district offices and were mandatory for all male workers sixteen years and older. They consisted of three parts: labour, tax, and health certificates. The intention behind this was presented openly in the comments accompanying the ordinance, in which it was stated that the purpose of the labour book was to register all African workers and thereby aid the distribution of manpower as planned. The threefold division of the

72. KPA, draft of a “Verordnung über den Arbeitseinsatz”; KPA, memorandum “Der Behördenaufbau der deutschen Kolonie” (6 June 1941), BAB, R 2, no. 4990a, fos 18–28, here fo. 19f.

73. Horst Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, 2d edn (Paderborn [etc.], 1991), p. 122; Helga Melber and Ludwig Melber, *Mythos Deutsch-Südwest. Namibia und die Deutschen* (Weinheim [etc.], 1983), pp. 171f.

74. Memorandum “Nationalsozialistische Eingeborenenlenkung”, fos 113f. and 119.

labour book served first and foremost to support the financial authorities in collecting taxes.<sup>75</sup>

The planned labour book shared obvious parallels with the Kenyan Kipande System, which was established nationwide in 1920 with the purpose of supplying plantations directly with the manpower they needed. It registered centrally all male workers over the age of sixteen by name, age, tribal origin, clan membership, residence, and by the prints of all ten fingers. Africans were required to carry the registration card (called in Swahili: *kipande*) on them at all times, and to show it to police on demand at any time. The card also served as labour identification because it contained information on the initial date and duration of employment, as well the amount of compensation the Kipande-card carrier received.<sup>76</sup>

#### “WHITE LABOUR GUARDIANS” AND “HOMELAND DUTY UNITS”

In the planning papers put together at the AwI, a new institution began to become highly important in the area of labour policy, namely the “white labour guardians”, who were to be responsible, among other things, for recruiting labour and fulfilling assigned tasks dealing with labour economics and social issues. They were to make contact directly to potential workers in the villages. As part of this organization of labour, the village clans were to be grouped into cells, the so-called “homeland duty units”, that created the basis for all labour-organizational and social measures. Labour guardians were to monitor and counsel the “homeland duty units”. They were to be included everywhere wage labourers were to be found and to assume the job fulfilled in Germany by the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF, German Labour Front) and the Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People’s Welfare).<sup>77</sup> Some of their responsibilities were to receive the registrations of the men prepared to enter wage labour, to teach them during a preparatory schooling about the

75. Trauttmansdorff to Burmeister, dated 6 September 1941 (with attached draft of a “Verordnung über das Arbeitsbuch der Eingeborenen und gleichgestellten Fremden in den Kolonien”, in addition to the decree on implementation and commentary, BAB, R 2, no. 4982, fos 2–17. On this point, see Alexandre Kum’a N’dumbe III, *Was wollte Hitler in Afrika? NS-Planungen für eine faschistische Neugestaltung Afrikas* (Frankfurt/M., 1993), pp. 79f.; Wolfe W. Schmokel, *Dream of Empire: German Colonialism, 1919–1945* (New Haven, CT [etc.], 1964), pp. 178f.

76. Annemarie Hafner and Jürgen Herzog, *Sklave – Kuli – Lohnarbeiter. Formierung und Kampf der Arbeiterklasse in Kolonien und national befreiten Ländern* (Berlin [GDR], 1988), p. 115.

77. AwI, “Die arbeits- und sozialrechtliche Gestaltung”, p. 716. The head of the KPA, Franz Xaver Ritter von Epp, supported the establishment of the labour guardians in principle but wanted to reach an agreement with the AwI; notations by Rothhaupt, dated 27 January 1942, BAB, NS 5 VI, no. 39830, fos 54–56, here fo. 55.

rights and obligations included in a labour contract, about the use of European machines, and about the dangers and protective measures at the workplace. Following this, they were to turn the Africans over to the responsible job placement office, which hired them out.

During their stint in wage labour, the African workers were to be placed in the care of a labour guardian, their “ever-available counsellor and helper”. Moreover, this guardian was to counsel the family members of a worker and ensure that the worker’s wages were being used to feed them sufficiently. He was also to counsel the factories and plantations on issues of lodging, provisioning, and health care for the workers.<sup>78</sup> Labour guardians were to work closely with all other colonial bureaucracies and were directly subordinate to the DAF. Each guardian was assigned a designated area, which was to be determined by the size of the population and the number of plants located there. Since it would be possible to stay only a relatively short time at each place, the guardian was to be given trained African helpers, dispersed throughout the various localities, to help him. Their job would be to relieve the labour guardian of some of his work and inform him of developments in their area.<sup>79</sup>

According to the AwI plans, a labour guardian was to be responsible for the social counselling of 1,000 workers,<sup>80</sup> whereas in the plants the ratio was to be 1.5 caretakers to 200 workers. Still, the AwI did not consider even this ratio to be adequate for plants with a high degree of machine work. Given the estimation that there would be 4.4 million wage labourers and a labour force of 20 million, a total of 33,750 people would be needed to fill managerial positions in plants and factories, and 20,000 labour guardians would be required in the rural areas. The introduction of labour guardians was also perceived as a way to continue the social counselling that had been provided up to that point by missionaries, whose numbers were to be reduced in the future.<sup>81</sup> Special schools were to train the future labour guardians. The AwI felt the most suitable way to organize these schools was to make them boarding schools. Instruction was to be based on what was considered the current state of knowledge and technology among Africans and to avoid “incomprehensible ballast” from Europe.

In the AwI concept, the “homeland duty units” were responsible for supplying the necessary manpower. They were to be the foundation of the entire regional labour organization, to gather together all able-bodied men

78. AwI, *Richtlinien*, fos 11c–11d; AwI, *Die Gestaltung der eingeborenen Lohnarbeit*, fo. 1f.

79. AwI, *Der soziale Organisationsplan Deutsch-Ostafrikas. Richtlinien für die praktische Durchführung*, n.d., by Menzel, BAB, NS 5 VI, no. 39652, fos 4ff.

80. *Ibid.*, fo. 11. The figures differed; in another memorandum, for example, it was estimated that one labour guardian was supposed to look out after 2,500 able-bodied male Africans and their dependents for a total of about 10,000 people.

81. AwI, *Arbeits- und Sozialpolitik*, pp. 696ff.

living in a community, and to report the names and number of job-seekers – which was to represent a certain relation to the total figure – to the official job-placement office. The units were to be headed by an appointed “labour elder” who, among other things, was responsible for ensuring that the units arrived on time at the labour recruitment camps of the district. The village elder himself became the labour elder, aided by his scribe. Since it was believed that Africans had a strong sense of community, the AwI planners considered it unnecessary to exert any pressure on them to become integrated into the homeland duty.<sup>82</sup>

#### “LABOUR EDUCATION”

One important component in labour policy was to be the “labour education” of the African people, who were often denounced as being “lazy”.<sup>83</sup> In developing this programme, colonial planners borrowed from prewar models, such as that of “educating the Negro to work” propagated by Dernburg. However, this did not pertain to work *per se*, but to wage labour in the European sense and in the German interest.<sup>84</sup> The AwI, however, objected to the above-mentioned opinion of Africans. The contention that Africans were lazy, argued the AwI, had become a fixed idea that was erroneous and was caused by European exploitation and greed. For centuries, the Africans had been forced to toil; therefore it was only natural that they avoided being compelled where possible. For a future colonial economic and social policy, the AwI thus placed a great deal of value on the internal attitude of Africans toward work. The institute considered the greatest aim to be the conveyance of the “joy in working”.<sup>85</sup>

In its “labour education” of Africans, the AwI attributed a great deal of importance to the mentor role to be played by the German “labour leaders”. They were to make contact to the African workers as simple and direct as possible, and to impose discipline through their own authoritative

82. AwI, *Organisationsplan*, fo. 9; AwI, *Die Aufgabengebiete der DAF im Rahmen einer nationalsozialistischen Kolonialpolitik*, (7 June 1940), quoted from *Sozialstrategien*, Abt. B/2, fiche 37, fos 3337–3345, here fos 3340f.; AwI, *Richtlinien*, fos 4f.

83. On this, Reimer Gronemeyer (ed.), *Der faule Neger. Vom weißen Kreuzzug gegen den schwarzen Müßiggang* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1991).

84. Renate Nestvogel, “Die Erziehung des ‘Negers’ zum deutschen Untertan”, in Eva-Maria Bruchhaus and Leonhard Harding (eds), *Hundert Jahre Einnischung in Afrika 1884–1984* (Hamburg, 1986), pp. 215–255, here pp. 229ff. On the history of labour education in the former German colonies, see Anton Markmiller, “Die Erziehung des Negers zur Arbeit.” *Wie die koloniale Pädagogik afrikanische Gesellschaften in die Abhängigkeit führte* (Berlin, 1995).

85. AwI, *Europäische Sozialpolitik im afrikanischen Kolonialraum* (n.d.), BAB, NS 5 VI, no. 17907, fos 1ff.

behavior.<sup>86</sup> Thus, in the eyes of the AwI planners, the issue of labour policy ultimately culminated in the issue of education and training. According to them, the job of labour management was to guide Africans by way of a practical object-lesson toward adopting modern methods and attitudes toward work.<sup>87</sup>

One particular problem in this context was the alleged fact that Africans were not accustomed to regular work. If Africans were not to be allowed to interrupt their work at will, their efficiency would slacken. Pressure and coercion would only lead to passive resistance against which not much could be done.<sup>88</sup> According to the AwI, the African workers had little “understanding and appreciation for the economic and cultural importance” of their work. They comprehended the connection only by associating work in a roundabout way with improved living conditions and social recognition.<sup>89</sup> On the topic of education, the ethnologist Westermann followed a paternalist line of argument: The central focus should be placed on agriculture and artistic handicrafts. For him it was essential to convey to school pupils a sense of “indigenous ethnicity” (*heimischen Volkstum*) and to African workers a feeling of being firmly rooted in their native homeland.<sup>90</sup> Westermann interpreted the supposed “weaknesses” of Africans – to perform work imposed upon them listlessly, and to want to shirk from doing it – not as an expression of “maliciousness or incorrigible laziness, but as a peculiarity” that one could find in all other humans and that could be corrected through education.<sup>91</sup>

The colonial pedagogue, Herbert Theodor Becker, also emphasized how essential it would be in “labour education” to have Africans learn the “habits of working regular hours, of working diligently without interruption”, of completing work as instructed and on time, of being conscientious and reliable – in other words, the typical secondary virtues internalized by European workers only by being subjected to a long phase of disciplining factory work.<sup>92</sup>

86. AwI, *Koloniale Sozialpolitik Afrikas*, fo. 26.

87. AwI, *Probleme der Arbeiterwanderung in Afrika. Ein Querschnitt durch Ursachen und Wirkungen, Juni 1939 bis Mai 1940*, BAB, NS 5 VI, Nr. 17925, pt D, p. 4. See in general, Pascal Grosse, “Psychologische Menschenführung und die deutsche Kolonialpolitik 1900–1940”, in Paul Mecheril and Thomas Teo (eds), *Psychologie und Rassismus* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1997), pp. 19–41.

88. AwI, *Die Eingeborenenarbeitsführung im kolonialen Afrika – Ein Erziehungsproblem* (November 1941), by Weitzenberg, BAB, NS 5 VI, no. 17928, pp. 26f.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

90. Dietrich Westermann, “Eingeborenenpolitik”, in *idem* (ed.), *Beiträge zur deutschen Kolonialfrage* (Essen, 1937), pp. 91–110, here pp. 109f.

91. *Idem*, *Der Afrikaner heute und morgen* (Essen [etc.], 1937), pp. 52f. (quotation, p. 53).

92. On the internalization of industrial concepts of time and work discipline among European workers during the Industrial Revolution see the classic essay by Edward P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism”, *Past and Present*, 38 (1967), pp. 56–97.

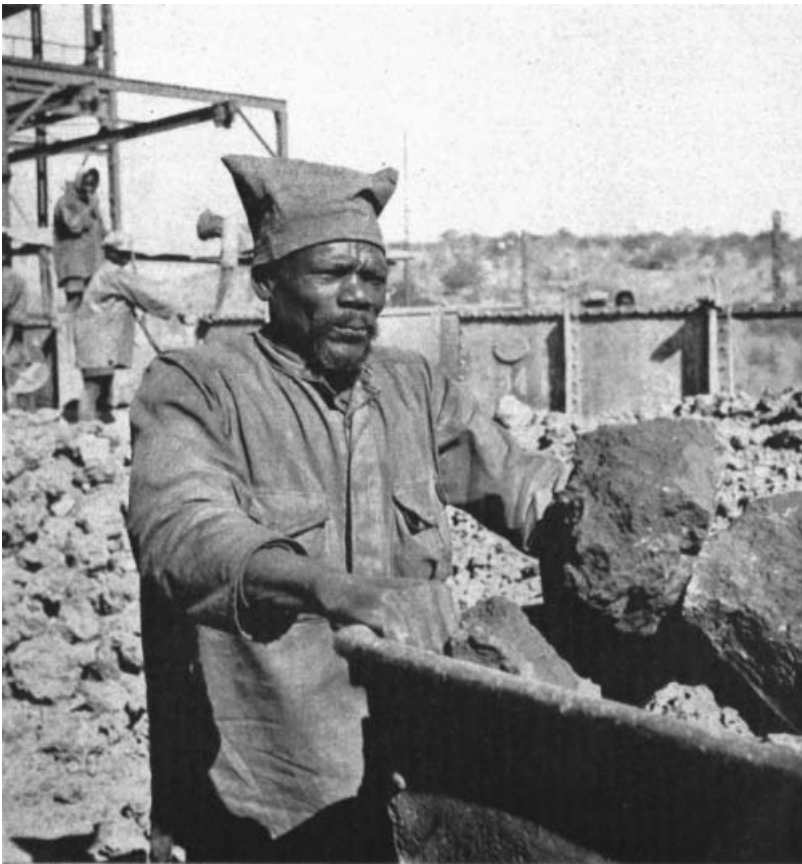


Figure 2. An African mine worker, probably in the German-owned Otavi mines in Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia), published as illustration to an article about the exploitation of mineral resources in the former German colonies from 1938.

Source: Friedrich Schumacher, "Auswertung der mineralischen Rohstoffe der deutschen Kolonien", *Deutsche Kolonial-Zeitung*, 50:12 (1938), pp. 390–393, 393.

#### WORKER SETTLEMENTS AND RESERVATIONS

The debate on how to organize new worker settlements resulted from criticism of existing conditions in Africa. Colonial planners found particular fault with the "worker compounds", settlements where recruited workers lived without their wives. Such compounds were found particularly in the industrialized areas and mining regions of Africa.<sup>93</sup>

93. On the mining regions of Katanga, see Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800* (London, 1984), p. 119.

As an alternative, many experts recommended the recruitment of entire families, their settlement in their own workers' villages, and above all, the allocation of arable land to them. Although such measures were at first glance cost-intensive, in the long run they would pay off for the companies, which would benefit from the advantages of having a permanent workforce.<sup>94</sup> Especially those planners who were primarily involved in the agricultural sector favoured this form of worker settlement, which was more tailored to plantations than to mining and industrial plants. The Deko Group wanted to build the villages to match as closely as possible the style and type of those from which the workers originated.<sup>95</sup>

The AwI thought it would be necessary to establish new settlements in suitable areas, first and foremost to resettle subgroups of a social community in a new area. This would be undertaken in such a way to make the transition as socially tolerable as possible. The settlers were to take a piece of "home" with them, the family, the type of housing, and the customs of the respective peoples.<sup>96</sup> Housing in the workers' villages was to reflect the style of each of the tribal cultures and to separate spatially the different ethnic groups from one another. Not only each house, but also entire villages were to comply with modern concepts of hygiene. This was also considered the duty of the colonial production plant, which was responsible for building these villages.<sup>97</sup>

Many colonial planners wanted to herd the African population into reservations at some point in the future. In their planning, they were able to refer to relevant debates that had taken place in the prewar period. Even back then, several authors had proposed setting up reservations in Southwest Africa, in which they wanted to concentrate the Hereros in settlements of 100 outdoor "fireplaces", each along the railroad lines. They also considered deporting several population groups, in this case the so-called Hottentots, who were allegedly unsuitable for hard work and were therefore to be "completely eliminated".<sup>98</sup> The 1914 resolution of the

94. Georg Braun, "Die Bedeutung der Landpolitik in Tropisch-Afrika", *AR*, 5 (1939/40) 4, pp. 85f.; "Bericht über die Organisierung der Eingeborenen-Arbeit in Ostafrika und ihre Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten auf nationalsozialistischer Grundlage", report delivered by Prof. Thurnwald at the second meeting of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Eingeborene (Workgroup Natives) of the Ausschusses für Kolonialrecht (Committee on Colonial Law) at the Akademie für Deutsches Recht (German Legal Academy) on 11 July 1938, BAB, R 1001, no. 125, fos 54–77, here fo. 76.

95. Fickendey, *Eingeborenenkultur*, p. 71.

96. AwI, *Koloniale Sozialpolitik Afrikas*, fos 14f.

97. AwI, *Die Gestaltung der eingeborenen Lohnarbeit*, fos 1f.

98. Rittmeister a. D. von Simon, "Wie wird sich die Zukunft der Eingeborenen in S.-W.-Afrika gestalten müssen?", *Zeitschrift für Kolonialpolitik, Kolonialrecht und Kolonialwirtschaft*, 8 (1906), pp. 854–857 (quotation, p. 855).



Reich Budgetary Commission also called for the “creation of [a] sufficient [number of] native reservations”.<sup>99</sup>

Nazi theoreticians, who already dreamed of combining the “tribal splinter groups and ethnic groups on African soil”,<sup>100</sup> borrowed such ideas to promote “ethnic reallocation and consolidation”. For them, reservations were inevitable for the African population. Thurnwald compared this concept with the extinction of the American Indian, the similar process in Australia, and the forced resettlements in the Soviet Union. With a certain measure of cynicism, he called his proposals “more humane” in comparison.<sup>101</sup> The Kolonial-Wirtschaftliche Komitee (KWK, Colonial-Economic Committee) described exactly how the reservations were to be established. With regard to the highlands inhabitable by Europeans, the selection of reservation locations was to be made by considering first and foremost the needs of the Europeans, for whom a suitable amount of land was to be reserved. The KWK wanted to have the Africans living in this region resettled elsewhere. Although the committee felt that any forced resettlement of entire ethnic groups could only be carried out as a “penalizing measure” if need be, it also viewed the “consolidation of dispersedly scattered smaller villages and huts” to be an acceptable practice.<sup>102</sup>

The members of the KWK were fully aware of the discrepancy between two aims being pursued by their planning: On the one hand, they strove to separate the races by consolidating Africans in compact reservations; yet on the other, they wanted to place the manpower necessary for the plantation economy in close proximity to such plantations. One compromise that they envisioned was to designate a parcel of land on each plantation, land located “as far away from the homes of the white people and naturally not the best soil”, for the Africans to inhabit and cultivate.<sup>103</sup> The AwI was sceptical of reservations because it viewed the measures implemented by the South African Union in the former colony of German Southwest Africa to be primarily a negative example of such a policy. It was argued that this policy led to a shortage of manpower on the job market in rainy years when the reservations had enough grassy meadows available for cattle to graze on, whereas in years of drought, a

99. *Verhandlungen* (quotation, p. 2918).

100. Hermann Röckel, “Die europäische Neuordnung und der afrikanische Mensch”, *Geographischer Anzeiger*, 43:11/12 (1942), pp. 217–222 (quotation, p. 222).

101. Richard C. Thurnwald, “Die Kolonialfrage”, *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 145 (1937), pp. 66–86, esp. pp. 80ff.

102. Letter from KWK, Geo A. Schmidt, to the Reichswirtschaftsministerium (Reich Ministry of Economics), dated 30 November 1938, BAB, R113, no. 1585.

103. File memo of the Reichsstelle für Raumordnung (Reich Office for Regional Development Planning), dated 16 September 1938, about a meeting with Geheimrat Schmidt, KWK, on 7 September 1938, about the “question of colonial regional planning, particularly of transportation planning for Cameroon”, *ibid.* (quotation, *ibid.*).

surplus of manpower existed. Furthermore, it was said that reservations would not offer a sufficient basis of living for all, considering the extensive way in which Africans raised cattle.<sup>104</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The “new labour policy”, which was one of the central components of Nazi plans for the recolonization of Africa, was imbued with an all-encompassing ideology on the merits and feasibility of planning – for which the colonies, as “laboratories of modernity”, appeared to be suitable testing grounds – as well as a strong faith in technical and scientific feasibility. In this way, this new policy is at the same time an example of the increasing application of scientific theory and methods (*Verwissenschaftlichung*) to all realms of social life and the presence of sociological experts in bureaucracies, parties, and other institutions. These experts wanted to contribute to the solution of social issues with a medically and biologically oriented form of social engineering.<sup>105</sup> Great Britain witnessed a similar development: Lord Hailey’s book, *An African Survey*, from 1938 is an excellent example of this, as is the establishment that same year of a department for social services and the hiring of a permanent advisor for labour issues by the Colonial Office.

Nazi planning fitted into the trends of the times. By the 1930s at the latest, most European colonial powers were attempting to advance social and economic development in their colonies. The British Colonial Development Act of 1929, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, and the Colonial Office’s ten-year plans of 1944 were indications of such trends and of an enhanced influence of the state, which also shaped National Socialist planning. Not only in Great Britain had it been recognized that different means were called for to react to social changes evidenced by strikes and uprisings. In France, this trend commenced somewhat earlier than elsewhere with the *mise en valeur*, because the French colonies – as a source for manpower and raw materials – played a different role than the British colonies did. This was expressed most clearly in the investment programme of the French colonial minister, Albert Serrau.<sup>106</sup> As has already been pointed out several times above, the ILO strove to achieve international sociopolitical regulations for the African

104. AwI, *Der eingeborene Lohnarbeiter in Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Eine arbeits- und sozialpolitische Betrachtung* (July 1941) by Haenisch, BAB, NS 5 VI, no. 39673, fos 13ff.

105. Lutz Raphael, “Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 22 (1996), pp. 165–193.

106. John Kent, *The Internalization of Colonialism: Britain, France, and Black Africa, 1939–1956* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 1ff.; Leonhard Harding, *Geschichte Afrikas im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1999), pp. 47ff.

colonies and to set minimum standards. World War II gave these efforts new impetus and encouraged colonial powers to adopt “development policy” thinking.

In Germany, Nazi planners drafted social policy along the lines of the “colonial paternalism” characteristic of German prewar policy, modified only a few specific points of this earlier policy – thus their plans were not so very “new” – and incorporated other ideas, such as the tribalistic “natives policy” of the Belgian Congo. Planners took into consideration social changes within Africa that were conveyed, for example, by the work of the ethnologists Thurnwald and Westermann, and adjusted their policy to adapt to the increase of capitalist wage labour as well as the intensified struggle of African workers for social improvements.

Nazi plans for Africa did not differ too significantly from the policies of the Western colonial powers at the time. A comparable situation led to similar methods – even though the German situation remained merely imaginary and the methods strictly theoretical.<sup>107</sup> Overall, it must be pointed out that even the differences between British and French colonial policy were more of a theoretical nature than a practical one. The colonial context created more commonalities than differences, especially since practical policy was influenced to a greater degree by the “men on the spot” than by the instructions issued from the respective European capitals. The two overriding aspects characteristic of Nazi plans were the racism permeating them, which appeared significantly more systematically than it had in Wilhelmine colonial policy, and a far-reaching fixation on the state. These plans were a reaction to the rapid change of work life in Germany itself, which was subjected to greater control after 1933 (an end to the freedom to change jobs, introduction of the labour book, labour service, etc.), and oscillated between “enticement and coercion”.<sup>108</sup> Policies concerning the “dangerous classes” (Louis Chevalier) in Germany and the measures planned for Africa were very similar. Clear parallels also existed in the racist hierarchization of foreign, forced, and concentration-camp labourers. Labour policy in the countries occupied by Germany also offered important background experience. Here the spectrum ranged from volunteer recruitment to the “slave hunts” in the Soviet Union.<sup>109</sup>

107. Even though important contributions exist, a systematical, comparative history of the various different colonialisms in the twentieth century had not been developed sufficiently. However, see e.g. Rudolf von Albertini, *Dekolonisation. Die Diskussion über Verwaltung und Zukunft der Kolonien, 1919–1960* (Cologne [etc.], 1966), or V.G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind* (Harmondsworth [etc.], 1972). An analytically interesting book is Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, NJ, 1997).

108. Andreas Kranig, *Lockung und Zwang. Zur Arbeitsverfassung im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart, 1983); Timothy W. Mason, *Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft. Dokumente und Materialien zur deutschen Arbeiterpolitik 1936–1939* (Opladen, 1975).

109. Karl Heinz Roth, “Die Sozialpolitik des europäischen ‘Großraums’ im Spannungsfeld von Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938–1945). Bisherige Forschungen – Quellenprobleme – erste

The German colonial planners wanted to combat labour shortages primarily by reanimating the African “feeling of community” and at the same time to prevent a “proletarianization” of workers by getting them attached to their “own patch of ground”. On the whole, the “new labour policy” oscillated between the poles of paternalism and forced labour. However, the type of forced labour that was planned was not conceived as “work to the point of annihilation”. This is what clearly distinguished colonial policy from the genocidal concepts applied in the occupied territories of Eastern Europe. The main reason for this difference is found in the diverging goals: mass settlement by Germans was to take place in Eastern Europe, making the people living there “superfluous”; while in Africa, the only Germans who were to settle there were those few who would fill leadership and managerial positions. The main bulk of the work was to be done by the African workers, on whom one therefore relied and of whom there was a shortage.

Ergebnisse”, in Werner Röhr (ed.), *Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938–1945). Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis der Kollaboration in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik* (Berlin [etc.], 1994), pp. 461–565; Roth, “Unfreie Arbeit”.