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# The Professors' Africa: Economists, the Elections of 1907, and the Legitimation of German Imperialism\*

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Near the end of Hans Grimm's notorious political novel, *Volk ohne Raum* (1926), Cornelius Freibott, the longsuffering hero and a returned African settler, gives a speech to the feckless locals of his home town of Jürgenshagen on the Weser, a place whose limited horizons and opportunities he had fled before the war. Freibott fervently believes that Germany's culture of subordination and dependence is a product of centuries of princely tutelage and the failure to expand German territory abroad. He concludes that Germany's current problems spring from the recent loss of colonial territory and the now restricted opportunity for healthy national development:

It was from the yearning for independence and property and freedom that social turmoil emerged in Germany, the futile yearning of those who achieved enough to deserve property and independence and freedom. Wherever Germans were, as a rule, able to attain property and independence and freedom through their own abilities, such as in our stolen German Southwest Africa, there was no such social turmoil!<sup>1</sup>

Grimm's novel, a bestseller throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, was part of a wave of colonial nostalgia produced by the recent loss of overseas territories and their common association with happier times, fantasies unshattered by the practical demands of colonial rule. His book tapped into a deep

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Grimm, *Volk ohne Raum*, vol. 2 (Munich, 1931 [1926]), p. 651. 'Aus der Sehnsucht nach Selbständigkeit und Besitz und Freiheit ist bei uns in Deutschland der soziale Unfriede entstanden, aus der vergeblichen Sehnsucht derjenigen, die genug leisteten, um Besitz und Selbständigkeit und Freiheit zu verdienen. Wo Deutsche bei eigener Leistung zu Besitz und Selbständigkeit und Freiheit in der Regel kommen konnten, etwa in unserem geraubten Deutsch-Südwestafrika, gab es den sozialen Unfrieden nicht!'

reservoir of popular resentment and anxiety that successive Weimar governments could not ignore and that the Nazis later cynically exploited.<sup>2</sup> But the popular resonance of the novel suggests more, something that has often been overlooked: a public familiar and comfortable with the German colonies as a fulfillment of liberal and democratic freedoms and thus as both a pillar of national identity and the culmination of a national destiny.<sup>3</sup> The durability of the liberal nationalist content of German imperialism and its wide popular resonance are worth bearing in mind because they have often been played down or ignored in the influential historical literature on German imperialism and radical nationalism produced since the 1960s.<sup>4</sup>

Recent scholarship has begun to probe the fascinating intersection of liberal-democratic ideals and German imperialism. Lora Wildenthal has revealed how colonialist middle-class women employed radical German nationalism, notions of race, and ideas of gender both to assert their freedom as women and to ensure German dominance in the colonial periphery. She demonstrates how left-liberal feminist aspirations and radical nationalist colonial ambitions could coexist and how colonial hierarchies based on race could be used by women as tools of democratic mobilization.<sup>5</sup> Helmut Walser Smith has underscored this point, demonstrating that members of the left-liberal milieu—those who could be counted among the most progressive, modern and forward-looking in Germany—were uncompromising imperialists because of the way their

<sup>2</sup> See here Wolfe W. Schmokel, *Dream of Empire: German Colonialism, 1919–1945* (New Haven, 1964); Klaus Hildebrand, *Vom Reich zum Weltreich: Hitler, NSDAP und koloniale Frage 1919–1945* (Munich, 1969); Woodruff D. Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (New York and Oxford, 1986); and Andrew J. Crozier, *Appeasement and Germany's Last Bid for Colonies* (Basingstoke, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> This fusion of nationhood, notions of freedom, and colonial empire was based on German perceptions of the favourable opportunities afforded by the British Empire to English political and economic developments, whose nascent forms can be traced back to German liberal-nationalist opinion during the 1848 Revolution. See here Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill, 1978), pp. 3–5.

<sup>4</sup> Fritz Fischer, *Griff Nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914–18* (Düsseldorf, 1961); Fritz Fischer, *Krieg der Illusionen: Die deutsche Politik von 1911 bis 1914* (Düsseldorf, 1969); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* (Cologne and Berlin, 1969); Pauline Relyea Anderson, *The Background of Anti-English Feeling in Germany, 1890–1902* (New York, 1969); Volker R. Berghahn, *Der Tirpitz Plan: Genesis und Verfall einer innenpolitischen Krisenstrategie unter Wilhelm II* (Düsseldorf, 1971); Klaus J. Bade, *Friedrich Fabry und der Imperialismus der Bismarckzeit: Revolution, Depression, Expansion* (Freiburg i. Br. and Zurich, 1975); Eckart Kehr, *Battleship Building and Party Politics in Germany, 1894–1901*, trans. Pauline R. Anderson and Eugene N. Anderson (Chicago and London, 1973); Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'Domestic Factors in German Foreign Policy before 1914', in James J. Sheehan (ed.), *Imperial Germany* (New York, 1976), pp. 222–68; Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven and London, 1980); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism 1860–1914* (London, 1980); Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886–1914* (Boston, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* (Durham and London, 2001); Wildenthal, "'She is the Victor': Bourgeois Women, Nationalist Identities, and the Ideal of the Independent Woman Farmer in German Southwest Africa', in Geoff Eley (ed.), *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870–1930* (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 371–95.

imperialism was fused with a civilizing mission, and perhaps not surprisingly, were also some of the most prominent advocates of violent and near genocidal treatment of native populations in German Southwest Africa.<sup>6</sup> In a similar vein, Oded Heilbrunner has revealed the persistence of a popular-radical liberal milieu in Germany and its accommodation with right-wing nationalism and National Socialism.<sup>7</sup> Together these contributions support the conclusion that radical nationalism and liberalism, far from having gone separate ways, remained closely tied, and that German imperialism acted, if anything, to reinforce that tie.

Other research has highlighted the liberal and modernizing content of aggressive imperialism by perceptively analysing the close links between British liberal and French republican thought and a blinkered, orientaling imperialism unable to consider the claims and culture of the colonized 'other'.<sup>8</sup> Matti Bunzl and H. Glenn Penny's volume on German anthropology reinforces this argument by making the point that German anthropology in the nineteenth century was a self-consciously cosmopolitan, pluralist and humanistic discipline oriented toward *Bildung*. This was in striking contrast to its more 'liberal' counterparts in France and Britain which, through civilizing as well as evolutionary teleologies, served in the first instance as objectifying tools of imperial conquest and domination.<sup>9</sup> It was not until Germany gained a colonial project and, as importantly, a democratized visual culture with a predilection for imperialistic show, that the turn toward race and nation was made within the discipline.<sup>10</sup> Others see the turn toward anti-humanistic physical anthropology as the outcome of the modernist critique of humanism that accompanied the rise of the natural sciences, the development of an urban mass culture and, most importantly, the specific needs of imperialism.<sup>11</sup> In either case, it cannot be said that this shift

<sup>6</sup> Helmut Walser Smith, 'The Talk of Genocide, the Rhetoric of Miscegenation: Notes on Debates in the German Reichstag Concerning Southwest Africa, 1904–14', in Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop (eds), *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (Ann Arbor, 1998), pp. 107–23; Smith, 'The Logic of Colonial Violence: Germany in Southwest Africa (1904–1907); The United States in the Philippines (1899–1902)', in Hartmut Lehmann and Hermann Wellenreuther (eds), *German and American Nationalism: A Comparative Perspective* (Oxford and New York, 1999), pp. 205–31.

<sup>7</sup> Oded Heilbrunner, "'Long Live Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Dynamite": The German Bourgeoisie and the Constructing of Popular Liberal and National-Socialist Subcultures in Marginal Germany', *Journal of Social History*, 39 (2005), 181–220.

<sup>8</sup> Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, Calif., 1997); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago and London, 1999); Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl (eds), *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor, 2003), pp. 2, 9–11.

<sup>10</sup> H. Glenn Penny, 'Bastian's Museum: On the Limits of Empiricism and the Transformation of German Ethnology', in Penny and Bunzl, *Worldly Provincialism*, pp. 86–126.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago and London, 2001); Zimmermann, 'Adventures in the Skin Trade: German Anthropology and Colonial Corporeality', in Penny and Bunzl, *Worldly Provincialism*, pp. 156–78.

in anthropology represented any straightforward move away from a liberal to a less liberal science. Indeed, those who have analysed German colonial discourse have detected a greater pluralism, cosmopolitanism and receptiveness to alterity than in the British and French cases.<sup>12</sup> Rather than merely an outgrowth of an entrenched anti-modernism, the German colonial project had unmistakably modern features, with science and technology assuming very prominent roles in the articulation of German colonial aims.<sup>13</sup>

A related and equally important point is that the historiography on German imperialism has until recently focused inordinately on the influence of the German metropole on the colonies, with little attention paid to the role of the colonies in shaping German society. As far back as 1978, Wolfgang Reinhard noted that the Kehrite social imperialism thesis, by asserting a primacy of domestic policy, tended to ignore the impact of African rebellions on German politics, notably in precipitating the colonial crisis of 1906.<sup>14</sup> More recent scholarship analysing the reception in Germany of travel literature and scientific tracts from the non-European periphery has shown that this forged powerful tropes of ‘otherness’. These played a decisive role in German identity formation before any extra-European colonial territory was acquired by the Reich.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the colonial experience, whether imagined or real, shaped German nationalism and Germany’s political and literary culture in significant but until recently overlooked ways.<sup>16</sup> Other research has sought to bring the German case into broader European comparison by highlighting not only the differences but also the many common themes that united the bourgeois milieu of Britain, France and Germany in encounters with non-European peoples.<sup>17</sup>

Taken together, these new perspectives suggest that German radical nationalism and aggressive imperialism were in many respects mutually reinforcing and radicalizing processes that drew from and extended German liberal nationalism, and it is precisely this complex that helps account for the wide appeal and longevity of *Weltpolitik* within the German *Bürgertum*. Put another

<sup>12</sup> Russell A. Berman, *Enlightenment or Empire: German Colonial Discourse* (Lincoln and London, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Birthe Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten: Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2003), pp. 286–87.

<sup>14</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard, ‘“Sozialimperialismus” oder “Entkolonialisierung der Historie”? Kolonialkrise und “Hottentottenwahlen” 1904–1907’, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 97–98 (1978), 384–417.

<sup>15</sup> Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> See Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop (eds), *Imperialist Imagination*.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997); and Ulrich van der Heyden and Holger Stoecker (eds), *Mission und Macht im Wandel politischer Orientierungen: Europäische Missionsgesellschaften in politischen Spannungsfeldern in Afrika und Asien zwischen 1800 und 1945* (Stuttgart, 2005).

way, it was the persistence and permutation of liberal nationalism, and not its decline, that accounts for the vitality, dynamism, aggressiveness, and durability of German imperialism. In this respect, German imperialist ideology was more like its counterparts in Britain and France than historians have heretofore been willing to concede.

A promising avenue suggested by this newer research is to seriously interrogate the content of German imperialist ideology as it was articulated by the educated middle classes who worked out the substance of Germany's imperial mission, especially those such as anthropologists, geographers, geophysicists, and other scientists with an intellectual stake in the German imperial project.<sup>18</sup> German economists, financial experts and administrative authorities broadly within the umbrella discipline of German *Staatwissenschaften* (sciences of state, including economics, statistics, and law) are an ideal such group to investigate. Their stake in *Weltpolitik* would grow noticeably in the Dernburg era (1906–1910), a time that witnessed a shift to 'scientific' imperialism and the development of a distinct *Kolonialwissenschaft* (colonial science) as a new branch of *Staatwissenschaften* relevant to colonial administration and economic development. While the role of economists and other social scientists in German politics has been studied, the imperialist side of their activity has not been taken very seriously or adequately analysed, and the colonial dimension is largely absent from this literature.<sup>19</sup>

German economists wielded some of the most important investigative modalities of German colonial rule as it became more systematic, and they could fuse a very powerful complex of liberal-nationalist tropes to their reasoned colonialism to forge an imperialist ideology that was deftly disseminated and resonated widely.<sup>20</sup> While the febrile din on the popular extreme

<sup>18</sup> Lewis Pyenson, *Cultural Imperialism and Exact Sciences: German Overseas Expansion 1900–1930* (Studies in History and Culture, 1, New York, Berne and Frankfurt/Main, 1985); see also Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and Oxford, 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Abraham Ascher, 'Professors as Propagandists: The Politics of the Kathedersozialisten', *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 23 (October 1963), 282–302; James J. Sheehan, *The Career of Lujo Brentano: A Study of Liberalism and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Chicago and London, 1966); Dieter Lindenlaub, 'Richtungskämpfe im Verein für Sozialpolitik: Wissenschaft und Sozialpolitik im Kaiserreich vornehmlich vom Beginn des "Neuen Kurses" bis zum Ausbruch des ersten Weltkrieges (1890–1914)', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Beiheft 52 (1967); Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: the German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969); Rüdiger vom Bruch, *Wissenschaft, Politik und öffentliche Meinung: Gelehrtenpolitik im Wilhelminischen Deutschland (1890–1914)* (Husum, 1980); Dieter Krüger, *Nationalökonomie im wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Göttingen, 1983); Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890–1920*, trans. Michael S. Steinberg (Chicago and London, 1984); David F. Lindenfeld, *The Practical Imagination: the German Sciences of State in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> I am borrowing here from Bernard S. Cohen, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, 1996), pp. 3–15.

right—what the economist Lujo Brentano called ‘*das anspruchsvolle Delirium*’ (fussy delirium) of the Pan-Germans<sup>21</sup>—was a force to be reckoned with, it was the comparatively calm and collected voices of these ‘moderate’ and respected imperialist professors that helped win over the broader public and youth to the credibility and practicability of the German imperial mission. Some of the most prominent and influential of these was the group of economists around Gustav Schmoller at the University of Berlin who would organize the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité* (Colonial-Political Action Committee) in 1906.

The tasks of this essay are fourfold. First, to analyse Gustav Schmoller’s pro-colonial imperialist thought; second, to reconstruct the organization and activity of the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité*; third, to scrutinize the ideological content and lines of influence of its publications; and fourth, to demonstrate the part played by economists active in this body in the development of *Kolonialwissenschaft*. It will argue that Schmoller and his colleagues had a felicity at rendering *Weltpolitik* in terms that appeared reasonable, in keeping with the normal and healthy ambitions of a great power. According to these men, colonial empire was economically and politically indispensable and its burdens were financially bearable. Widely esteemed and enjoying the glow of academic *Überparteilichkeit* (super-partisanship), these professors were granted privileged access to the German press and the government of Bernhard von Bülow. They showed a formidable capacity to organize themselves, gain publicity, and disseminate their message in a way that was independent of industrial and agrarian interests or existing nationalist organizations. Straddling a position between the economic imperialism of many German liberals and the settler imperialism prevalent in conservative and radical nationalist circles, the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité* helped clear a middle ground that provided the basis for the Bülow bloc and the ideas for the colonial reform policies of the Dernburg era. Through lecturing, the mass dissemination of relatively high quality literature, and the scholarly demarcation of *Kolonialwissenschaft*, they articulated an imperialist mission to which broader German opinion could gravitate in the last decade before the First World War. As a result, an empire of ambitions was forged that proved sufficiently durable to endure defeat and the loss of overseas empire.

### I. Patterns of Professorial *Weltpolitik*

Gustav Schmoller’s colonial advocacy was driven by genuine convictions and followed patterns of thinking, organization and dissemination that had long since been established in other areas of his political activity. His entry onto

<sup>21</sup> Lujo Brentano, *Mein Leben im Kampf um die soziale Entwicklung Deutschlands* (Jena, 1930), p. 209.



the German imperialist stage can be dated with relative precision to the first navy bill in 1897. It is well known that Schmoller and other academics were directly involved in the German public debate over an expanded German navy.<sup>22</sup> Less well known, although treated elsewhere, is the fact that Schmoller's activity supporting a larger fleet was informed by years of scholarship on the evolution of the modern economy and driven by clear ambitions for Germany to secure its place among the other great world powers.<sup>23</sup> The expanded navy was consistently presented by Schmoller as an indispensable tool for securing Germany's economic and political interests abroad in a way that was pointedly anti-British, not as a diversionary device for pacifying restless domestic political forces or defusing demographic time bombs.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, links between the fleet and social or political reforms are largely absent, and far from being manipulated by von Tirpitz, the Imperial Navy Office, or the Navy League, Schmoller's activity supporting the second navy bill in 1899 was born of strong convictions and showed a remarkable penchant for independence.<sup>25</sup> He and other academics refused to join the Navy League on the grounds of what they perceived as the predominance of conservative industrialist interests. Instead, his fleet advocacy was organized independently in the *Freie Vereinigung für Flottenvorträge*, a loose association of prominent Wilhelmine academics and artists who gave pro-fleet lectures throughout Germany. The success of that independent activity ultimately imposed major changes on the Navy League itself, notably broadening the base of the League in a way that gave much greater prominence to liberals and radical nationalists.<sup>26</sup> This pattern of independent professorial organization outside the confines of the university and independent of state coordination may be traced in Schmoller's case back to the founding of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* in 1873.<sup>27</sup>

Particularly relevant to this discussion is the fact that Schmoller's hopes for the fleet were from the outset linked closely to ambitions for an expanded colonial empire, ones not without Pan-German accents. According to Schmoller, Germany was being squeezed by the inexorable expansion of three 'conquering and colonizing empires': the United States, Russia and especially, Great

<sup>22</sup> See here Wolfgang Marienfeld, 'Wissenschaft und Schlachtflottenbau in Deutschland 1897–1906', *Marine Rundschau*, Beiheft 2 (April 1957); Wilhelm Deist, *Flottenpolitik und Flottenpropaganda: Das Nachrichtenbureau des Reichsmarineamtes 1897–1914* (Stuttgart, 1976), pp. 102–103; Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, pp. 85–88; Ascher, 'Professors as Propagandists', pp. 291–94; vom Bruch, *Wissenschaft*, pp. 66–69.

<sup>23</sup> Erik Grimmer-Solem, 'Imperialist Socialism of the Chair: Gustav Schmoller and German Weltpolitik, 1897–1905', in Geoff Eley and James Retallack (eds), *Wilhelmism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890–1930* (New York and Oxford, 2003), pp. 106–22.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111–12.

<sup>27</sup> Erik Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany, 1864–1894* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 67–71, 171–86.



Britain.<sup>28</sup> If the Germans intended to be part of this imperial premier league, they had to participate in the European expansion overseas to secure their material interests as a great industrial exporter and importer of food and raw materials, and they needed settler colonies to retain the twenty million German emigrants projected for the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> Germany had become too large and powerful and too dependent on trade to be able to dispense with a high seas fleet.<sup>30</sup> In addition to consolidating and expanding existing German colonies in Africa and the Pacific, as well as holding open the East Asian and South American markets, such an expansion could entail a German territory in Brazil and bringing Holland's colonies under the Reich's protection as part of a German-dominated *Mitteleuropa*.<sup>31</sup> As he noted in conclusion:

[Germany] no longer wishes to be the nursery and schoolroom of the rest of the world, a land that sends out millions of its sons abroad so that they cease being Germans in the next generation. Its state, its energy, its scholarship and its technology, its trade and its reputation in the world are so great ... [and] its moral und intellectual qualities, its affective life, its fine arts, its diligence, its institutions stand so high that it can demand in the interest of the *Kultur* of humanity to assert, on the basis of its own law, own colonies, own stations, its own influence of power, its place in the world economy next to and following the great three world empires ...<sup>32</sup>

While Schmoller was only one of perhaps sixty active *Flottenprofessoren*, there is no doubt that he was one of the most influential and that he and this group had a substantial impact shaping public opinion in a way that weakened opposition to the fleet and led to the passage of the navy bills.<sup>33</sup>

Beyond the fleet itself, Schmoller also articulated a number of ideas for colonial reform. At the first German Colonial Congress of 1902 he had criticized colonial plantation farming because it reduced the natives to the status of proletarianized wage labourers, leading to short-term profits but in the long run to the economic ruin of the colonies.<sup>34</sup> Instead he supported 'native farming' (*Eingeborenenkulturen*) and fostering the technical improvement of 'native small businesses' (*Eingeborenenkleinbetrieb*), which he saw as working toward the intellectual and 'economic upbringing' (*wirtschaftliche Erziehung*) and for the future of the 'subdued lower races' (*unterworfenen niedrigen*

<sup>28</sup> Gustav Schmoller, 'Die wirtschaftliche Zukunft Deutschlands und die Flottenvorlage' [1900], in Lucie Schmoller (ed.), *Zwanzig Jahre Deutscher Politik (1897–1917): Aufsätze und Vorträge von Gustav Schmoller* (Munich and Leipzig, 1920), pp. 1–19, here p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> On the last of these points, see vom Bruch, *Wissenschaft*, p. 91.

<sup>34</sup> Deutscher Kolonialkongress, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Kolonialkongresses 1902 zu Berlin am 10. und 11. Oktober 1902* (Berlin, 1903), p. 515; see also Franz-Josef Schulte-Althoff, 'Koloniale Krise und Reformprojekte. Zur Diskussion über eine Kurskorrektur in der deutschen Kolonialpolitik nach der Jahrhundertwende', in Heinz Dollinger, Horst Gründer, and Alwin Hanschmidt (eds), *Weltpolitik, Europagedanke, Regionalismus: Festschrift für Heinz Gollwitzer zum 65. Geburtstag am 30. Januar 1982* (Münster, 1982), pp. 407–25, here pp. 412–13.

*Rassen*).<sup>35</sup> What is remarkable about these ideas is that they mesh almost seamlessly with the kinds of policies that Schmoller had been advocating in Germany since the late 1860s, notably securing, modernizing and integrating the *Mittelstand* trades into an industrial economy and fostering land reform in Prussian East Elbia, in the case of the latter, to break up large estates into family farms and foster a move to modern intensive farming.<sup>36</sup> Despite the racial hierarchies evoked by references to ‘lower races’, transferring German developmental strategies to the colonial subjects made the rather liberal assumption that the ‘natives’ were receptive to incentives and could be integrated into an evolving modern capitalist economy without resort to compulsions (as some continued to advocate), and that technical improvements could pave the way to better material conditions for the native population and longer-term prosperity. In making these points, Schmoller could note the success of the Dutch in fostering native agriculture in Java, referring to an article by one of his former students, Professor Gustav Anton of Jena University.<sup>37</sup> The key to the elevation of both African *Kultur* and economic development was, just as it had been in Germany, technological progress, and as will be demonstrated below, African railroads would figure centrally in the propagandistic activities of Schmoller and his *Aktionskomité*. The key point to be made here is that Schmoller’s soaring ambitions were couched in language that was moderate and through arguments that were reasoned, balanced, and tied to a clear civilizing mission that could resonate with German liberals and moderate conservatives alike.

## II: The Elections of 1907 and the Creation of the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité*

The next major opportunity for professorial *Weltpolitik* presented itself in the wake of the colonial scandals inaugurated by the trial of Carl Peters in 1895 and sustained by repeated revelations of cruelty, maladministration, and misappropriation. This was then brought to a head between 1904 and 1906 by the

<sup>35</sup> Deutscher Kolonialkongress, *Verhandlungen*, p. 515.

<sup>36</sup> Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics*, pp. 144–49, 223–45; cf. Gustav Schmoller, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Kleingewerbe im 19. Jahrhundert: Statistische und Nationalökonomische Untersuchungen* (Halle, 1870); Gustav Schmoller, ‘Korreferat über inner Kolonisation mit Rücksicht auf die Erhaltung und Vermehrung des mittleren und kleineren ländlichen Grundbesitzes’, *Schriften des Vereins für Socialpolitik*, 33 (1886), 90–101. On some of the parallels between agricultural labour policy in the German metropole and colonies, see Sebastian Conrad, ‘“Eingeborenepolitik” in Kolonie und Metropole: “Erziehung zur Arbeit” in Ostafrika und Ostwestfalen’, in Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds), *Das Kaiserreich transnational: Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914* (Göttingen, 2004), pp. 107–28.

<sup>37</sup> G. K. Anton, ‘Über die neuere Agrarpolitik der Holländer in Java’, *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im Deutschen Reiche*, 23 (1899), 1337–62; Deutscher Kolonialkongress, *Verhandlungen*, p. 516.

Herero and Nama wars in German Southwest Africa and the Maji-Maji uprising in German East Africa. In Southwest Africa a notoriously brutal campaign had been fought against the Hereros, which sparked a heated debate and brought German politics to an impasse.<sup>38</sup> The refusal of the Centre Party and Social Democrats to agree to supplemental appropriations for what turned out to be very expensive military operations gave Bernhard von Bülow an opportunity to dissolve the Reichstag on 13 December 1906 and call fresh elections.<sup>39</sup> The so-called ‘Hottentot elections’ of January 1907 would become nothing less than a national referendum on the entire German colonial endeavour.

Throughout the colonial crisis and during the election campaign, Chancellor Bülow could draw on Schmoller’s voluntary and enthusiastic support for the German colonial project. Although this is not mentioned in Katharine Lerman’s biography,<sup>40</sup> Bülow was himself an early admirer and then a friend of the Swabian economist, and Bülow’s own memoirs, Schmoller’s writings, and the voluminous correspondences between these two men leave little to speculation about their close relationship. In his memoirs Bülow wrote glowingly of Schmoller, whose writings he admired and whose views on economic and social policy he seems to have genuinely shared.<sup>41</sup> Bülow would later count Schmoller among the greatest Germans of the Second Reich, a friend whose judgment and discernment he acknowledged and credited frequently, and in whom he often confided.<sup>42</sup> Schmoller himself considered Bülow the German chancellor with

<sup>38</sup> See here Horst Drechsler, *‘Let Us Die Fighting’: The Struggle of the Herero and Nama Against German Imperialism (1884–1915)*, trans. Bernd Zöllner (London, 1980); Drechsler, *Aufstände in Südwestafrika: Der Kampf der Herero und Nama 1904 bis 1907 gegen die deutsche Kolonialherrschaft* (Berlin, 1984); Jon M. Bridgman, *The Revolt of the Hereros* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1981); Karl-Martin Seeberg, *Der Maji-Maji-Krieg Gegen die deutsche Kolonialherrschaft* (Berlin, 1989); Tilman Dederich, ‘“A Certain Rigorous Treatment of All Parts of the Nation”: The Annihilation of the Herero in German South West Africa, 1904’, in Mark Levine and Penny Roberts (eds), *Massacre in History* (New York and Oxford, 1999), pp. 205–22; Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller (eds), *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwest Afrika: Der Kolonialkrieg (1904–1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen* (Berlin, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> On the colonial crisis, the elections, and the formation of the Bülow bloc, see Mary Evelyn Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany’s Colonial Empire 1884–1918* (New York, 1966), pp. 225–43; George Dunlap Crothers, *The German Elections of 1907* (New York and London, 1941); Beverly Heckart, *From Bassermann to Bebel: The Grand Bloc’s Quest for Reform in the Kaiserreich, 1900–1914* (New Haven and London, 1974); Winfried Becker, ‘Kulturkampf als Vorwand: Die Kolonialwahlen von 1907 und das Problem der Parlamentarisierung des Reiches’, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 106 (1986), 59–84; Katharine Anne Lerman, *The Chancellor As Courtier: Bernhard von Bülow and the Governance of Germany, 1900–1909* (Cambridge and New York, 1990), pp. 164–74.

<sup>40</sup> Lerman, *The Chancellor As Courtier*.

<sup>41</sup> Bernhard Fürst von Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1931), pp. 285–86; *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 119–20; cf. Bülow to Schmoller, 18 Aug. 1903: GStA PK (Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz), VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 116, Bl. 1–2.

<sup>42</sup> von Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, p. 487; vol. 3, pp. 22, 41, 115, 349; Bülow to Schmoller, 25 Feb. 1905: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 197a, Bl. 39; Bülow to Schmoller, 10 Jun. 1905: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 197a, Bl. 1–2; Bülow to Schmoller, 12 Feb. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 199a, Bl. 70; Bülow to Schmoller, 9 Feb. 1912: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 204a, Bl. 4–13.

the most sensitivity for the spirit of the people and public mood, a man who combined liberalism and a moderate conservatism in a way that allowed for bold national tasks that had the support of the great majority of Germans.<sup>43</sup> Bülow's tenure afforded university professors, and Schmoller in particular, unprecedented formal and informal access to the very top of government.<sup>44</sup>

Just as during the debate over the second navy bill in 1899–1900, Schmoller and the other like-minded professors did not participate in the debate over the colonies within the political parties or existing colonialist and pro-fleet organizations (although, like Schmoller, many were members of both of the *Kolonialgesellschaft* and the *Flottenverein*). Instead, a new committee of independent academics, artists, writers, and members of the liberal professions was created. The stated aim was to 'enlighten' public opinion about the colonies using the tools of *Wissenschaft* to achieve *Kolonialreform*. There is no question that the intention was to avoid being identified with partisan politics and specific interests by donning the aegis of independent scholarship. The increasing discredit of the *Kolonialgesellschaft* and *Flottenverein* as elitist, one-sided, and out of touch probably also played a role. The close links of Schmoller to Bülow and the new Kolonialdirektor Bernhard Dernburg must have been an impulse, too, for creating an 'independent' pro-colonial organization. As documents reveal, this new body was in fact the brainchild of both Schmoller and the economist Gottfried Zoepfl, a *Privatdozent* (lecturer) at the University of Berlin.<sup>45</sup> Zoepfl had established himself as specialist on *Weltwirtschaft* (world economics), having published on trade policy and gained experience as a trade attaché in South America between 1903 and 1906, and as an assistant in the Foreign Office in 1906.<sup>46</sup>

On 27 December 1906 a provisional committee headed by Schmoller published an invitation to a 'counter-action' (*Gegenaktion*) planned for 8 January 1907 against those who would seek to restrict Germany to internal politics, play down the value of its colonies, and 'suffocate the only just developing sense of responsibility of the German people for its position of world power'.<sup>47</sup> The

<sup>43</sup> Gustav Schmoller, 'Der Deutsche Reichskanzler (Die Innere Lage des Reiches)' [1911], in L. Schmoller (ed.), *Zwanzig Jahre*, pp. 81–90, here pp. 84–85; Schmoller quoted in Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 3, p. 349.

<sup>44</sup> Lindenlaub, 'Richtungskämpfe', 149–52; vom Bruch, *Wissenschaft*, pp. 100–101, 238–39.

<sup>45</sup> Zöpfl to Schmoller, 29 Dec. 1906: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr.13 I, Bl. 248–49. His name is spelled Zöpfl, Zoepfl, and sometimes Zoepfel in the manuscript sources.

<sup>46</sup> See for example Gottfried Zoepfl, *Fränkische Handelspolitik im Zeitalter der Aufklärung: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Staats- und wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Erlangen, 1894); Zoepfl, *Der Wettbewerb des russischen und amerikanischen Petroleums: Eine weltwirtschaftliche Studie* (Berlin, 1899).

<sup>47</sup> Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité (ed.), *Schmoller, Dernburg, Delbrück, Schäfer, Sering, Schillings, Brunner, Jastrow, Penck, Kahl über Reichstagsauflösung und Kolonialpolitik: Offizieller stenographischer Bericht über die Versammlung in der Berliner Hochschule für Musik am 8. Januar 1907* (Berlin, 1907), invitation in frontispiece.

German people, it asserted, 'who are just now growing into this position are to be enlightened about the fact that abandonment of their position of world power [*Weltmachtstellung*], and the colonies in particular, is not an option if they do not seek to betray themselves'.<sup>48</sup> Despite representing different partisan positions, the signatories of the invitation declared that 'a strong and determined majority for the execution of colonial policy is indispensable for the future of the German people'.<sup>49</sup> The intention of the 'counter-action' was to determine what steps could be taken to influence public opinion for these ideas. Berlin professors made up the majority of the forty-two signatories, which included, among others, the painters Max Liebermann and Anton von Werner, and the composer Richard Strauss.<sup>50</sup> This was to a considerable degree a similar group of people to those who had formed the Free Union for Naval Lectures in 1899. Several thousand copies of this invitation were sent out, and according to a report later drafted by Dr. Emil Struve, business manager to the *Aktionskomité*, it was successful beyond expectation.<sup>51</sup>

If there was any doubt about the purpose of the 'counter-action', its actual convention on 8 January 1907 in the Royal Academy for Music made it abundantly clear that it existed to agitate and propagandize during the upcoming election.<sup>52</sup> The interest in the meeting was much greater than expected, with the meeting hall having to be closed off because it was overfilled.<sup>53</sup> Schmoller gave a welcoming address and was elected chairman. This was followed by a speech by Kolonialdirektor Bernhard Dernburg, which was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm.<sup>54</sup> Dernburg shared the belief that the colonial crisis was a test of Germany's character. He defined the challenge as putting the colony's soil, its natural resources, plants, animals, and native inhabitants to the benefit of the mother country's economy. The most important of these resources was the native population.<sup>55</sup> The challenge, he noted, was making the 'negro' productive and

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* The signatories also included von Bergmann, Bode, Heinrich Brunner, Hans Delbrück, Heinrich Dernburg, Oswald Flamm, Ernst Francke, Otto Gierke, Grantz, Adolf Harnack, Jastrow, Joseph Joachim, Julius Kaftan, Wilhelm Kahl, Arthur Kampf, Heinrich Kayser, E. Lampe, Lenz, Alfred Messel, Walther Nernst, R. Olshausen, Albrecht Penck, Ludwig Pietsch, Preuss, Alois Riehl, Max Sering, F. Schaper, Dietrich Schäfer, Theodor Schiemann, Erich Schmidt, Gustav Schmoller, Adolph Wagner, Ulrich v. Wiliamowitz-Möllendorff, Ernst v. Wildenbruch, Wilhelm Waldeyer, Julius Wolff, Franz Schwechten, Ludwig Mauzel and Felix Schmidt.

<sup>51</sup> Geschäftsbericht des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitee's [*sic*], n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 283–84. Struve was Professor of Gesetzeskunde und Handelswissenschaft at the Versuchs- und Lehranstalt für Brauerei in Berlin.

<sup>52</sup> Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité, *Schmoller, Dernburg*, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> Geschäftsbericht des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitee's, n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 284.

<sup>54</sup> See Werner Schiefel, *Bernhard Dernburg 1865–1937: Kolonialpolitiker und Bankier im Wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Zurich, 1974), pp. 56–62; Smith, *The German Colonial Empire*, pp. 183–209.

<sup>55</sup> Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité, *Schmoller, Dernburg*, p. 6.

thereby civilized. Some natives would no doubt be destroyed by this process just as some wild animals were with the advent of civilization—the greatest of all colonization enterprises, the United States, illustrated that point. By comparison, the German colonial territories could today be colonized with modern ‘conservation techniques’.<sup>56</sup> As Schmoller had done in his ruminations at the German Colonial Congress of 1902, Dernburg placed much emphasis on the task of preserving the native populations and making them more productive, but in doing so distinguished between aiding the recovery of the valuable Herero pastoralists and breaking the vagrant and dangerous habits of the ‘Hottentotten [Nama]’.<sup>57</sup> Pandering a bit to his academic audience, he made much of the fact that the ‘land of poets and thinkers’ was endowed with the finest scholars in the *Geisteswissenschaften* and applied sciences, a fact that would greatly aid a new form of rational, scientific colonization. He emphasized the important role played in this new form of colonialism by science and technology, by hydrology, and electrical technology, by geologists, chemists, geographers, botanists, zoologists, and land economists, and not least, by ethnologists, anthropologists, legal scholars, economists, historians, and statisticians.<sup>58</sup>

Dernburg was particularly animated by the developmental and civilizing possibilities afforded by railways, which he prized as ‘the most important tool of colonization’.<sup>59</sup> These had the capacity to link the production of the colonies to a larger colonial and international network of commerce, and in the process would produce incomes for millions of natives and turn them into consumers. The railway thus acted to train the indigenous population to work and elevate them to a higher level of civilization. Drawing on the example of the Uganda Railway, he mentioned that the railway employed many natives, encouraged agricultural habits, and suppressed raiding.<sup>60</sup> Emphasized along with his optimistic prognostications for colonial railways was the relatively light and sustainable overall burden the colonies posed, and this was done with the felicity of an experienced banker.<sup>61</sup> Pains were also taken to demonstrate how all classes of German society benefited from the colonies, notably industry and industrial workers.<sup>62</sup>

The speeches that followed repeated and reinforced a number of Dernburg’s arguments. The Pan-German historian Dietrich Schäfer brought German colonialism into historical perspective, pointing to the massive growth of the Russian, French and British Empires since the 1860s, America’s recent imperialist expansion, and the utter backwardness of anyone suggesting that Germany was in any

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–8.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 8, 9–10.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.



position to give up its few colonies in such an aggressive international environment.<sup>63</sup> Schmoller's former student and colleague at Berlin University, the economist Max Sering, reiterated the notion that railways would create colonial consumers and an industrious class of native small farmers. The colonies also potentially afforded Germany protection from international commodity monopolies.<sup>64</sup> The naturalist and photographer Carl Georg Schillings, drawing on extensive experience in East Africa, recommended thoroughgoing reforms of German colonial administration and training so as to allow its officials to gain a detailed knowledge of the languages, character, and political conditions of the indigenous population in order to build trust and better rule them.<sup>65</sup>

The meeting concluded with a vote on a resolution that noted the belated creation of the German Empire and the consequently underdeveloped sense of 'world political duty' (*weltpolitische Pflicht*), and the threat posed by a Reichstag majority refusing needed appropriations for Southwest Africa. It proposed the creation of a committee charged with the task of raising awareness for these matters within the electorate.<sup>66</sup> The target of this agitation, as Schmoller had already outlined in his welcoming address, was the passive electorate, the three million German voters who had not bothered to vote in the last election.<sup>67</sup> As the historian Hans Delbrück made clear in conclusion, preparations had already been undertaken for the proposed propaganda activities; what was missing were the financial means. The assembled men were thus asked to make contributions on their way out of the meeting.<sup>68</sup> This resolution was accepted unanimously, and a small organizing board was elected to coordinate these activities. This included the economists Max Sering and Gottfried Zoepfl, with Schmoller acting as chairman.<sup>69</sup>

Money contributions to the new *Aktionskomité* were very generous, and it is notable that the first name on the list of contributors was the Heidelberg economist Karl Rathgen, who had been a student of Schmoller and would be appointed to the first chair in economics at the new German Colonial Institute in Hamburg in 1908.<sup>70</sup> Taken together some 2347 Marks were donated that evening, with the lion's share from the ranks of professors, artists and writers living in Berlin.<sup>71</sup> The stenographic report of the 8 January meeting (see Figure 25.1) went out to

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20–22.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27, 31.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 19.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47. The other members of the committee were Delbrück, Brunner, Schäfer, Lampe, Hentig, Jastrow and Kahl.

<sup>70</sup> Zeichnungen für das Kolonialpolitische Aktionskomitee [*sic*], n.d. [8 Jan. 1907]: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 12–15.

<sup>71</sup> Geschäftsbericht des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitee's, n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 284.



**Schmoller Dernburg Delbrück**

**Schäfer Sering Schillings**

**Brunner Jastrow Penck Kahl**

über

**Reichstagsauflösung und Kolonialpolitik**

Offizieller stenographischer Bericht  
über die Versammlung in der Berliner Hochschule für Musik  
am 8. Januar 1907

Herausgegeben vom Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomité



Berlin 1907  
Verlag Dr. Wedekind & Co. G. m. b. H.

**Figure 25.1:** The stenographic report of the 8 January meeting in the Royal Academy for Music.

all corners of Germany and was reported on in the major newspapers, which made a point of printing extensive excerpts of Dernburg's speech.<sup>72</sup> As a result, the *Aktionskomité* quickly gained a national profile. An indicator of the range of interest generated by this meeting is given by the fact that Minna Cauer, founder of the Women's Welfare Association Berlin, a bourgeois feminist organization, sent a signed declaration of protest jointly from her organization and the Berlin members of Federation for Women's Suffrage against the exclusion of women from the meeting, writing 'we condemn the shortsightedness of leading men who want to win the wide masses of the people for questions of world power politics, and go about it by excluding the striving elements of working and thinking women from working for the political future of their

<sup>72</sup> For example, 'Die Versammlung des "Kolonialen Aktionskomités"', *Berliner Tageblatt* (9 Jan. 1907).

people. This manner of proceeding directly contradicts the wish recently expressed by Deputy Colonial Director Dernburg that women emigrate to the colonies'.<sup>73</sup> There was also much interest from German students. A leader of the Association of German Students wrote the *Aktionskomité* requesting a 'practical *Kolonialpolitiker* with a prominent name but no party figure' to address a 'great national, colonial rally' on behalf of the student corporations and associations of the universities in Munich.<sup>74</sup>

### III: The Banquet of Baskerville

Doubtless buoyed by the national resonance of their activities, at the first business meeting of the organizing board under Schmoller three days after the successful 'counter-action' it was agreed to have the stenographic report printed as a separate volume and distributed widely. What is more, an additional pro-colonial publication, a 'Colonial-Political Guide' (*Kolonialpolitischer Führer*), was commissioned from one of Schmoller's *Privatdozenten* at the University of Berlin, Dr. Gustav Roloff, and intended as a short general primer on the basic facts and significance of Germany's colonial possessions. Like the stenographic report, this too was intended for mass circulation.<sup>75</sup> The board also nominated a larger number of members from all over Germany to extend the organization beyond Berlin. There were eventually some 138 non-Berlin members, including such leading economists and statisticians as Karl Bücher, Gustav Cohn, Johannes Conrad, Heinrich Dietzel, Eberhard Gothein, G.F. Knapp, Wilhelm Lexis, Georg von Mayr, Sartorius von Waltershausen, Georg Schanz and Wilhelm Stieda.<sup>76</sup> Among the more prominent non-economists were Ernst Haeckel, Wilhelm Roentgen, and the painters Hans Thoma and Fritz von Uhde.<sup>77</sup> More significantly, a meeting of these new members was planned for 19 January, to be followed by a gala dinner in the Berlin Palast-Hotel, to which Chancellor Bülow and Kolonialdirektor Dernburg were invited as guests of honour.<sup>78</sup> A further organizational meeting was held on 16 January to nominate additional

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire*, p. 132; cf. statement of protest, Verein Frauenwohl Berlin and the Berlin members of the Deutscher Verband für Frauenstimmrecht: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 197; Cauer to Schmoller, 10 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 232. On the participation of women's groups in German imperialism, see Birthe Kundrus, 'Weiblicher Kulturimperialismus: Die imperialistischen Frauenverbände des Kaiserreichs', in Conrad and Osterhammel, *Das Kaiserreich transnational*, pp. 211–35.

<sup>74</sup> E. Kayser, Verein deutscher Studenten, to Schmoller, 15 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 174.

<sup>75</sup> Geschäftsbericht des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitee's, n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 284.

<sup>76</sup> Verzeichnis der ausserhalb Berlins wohnenden Mitglieder des K.-P.-A.K., n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 105–113.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Schmoller to all members of the Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité not present at the 12 Jan. meeting, 14 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 203.

members, among them Privy Councilor Wilhelm von Siemens, Count von Götzen (governor of German East Africa), and Otto von Hentig (co-founder of the Shantung Railway and Mining companies). This meeting also determined the means of distributing the published stenographic report: along with other agencies, the German Navy League would be entrusted with this task.<sup>79</sup>

Both Bülow and Dernburg accepted invitations to the dinner in writing, suggesting that the initiative came from Schmoller and the *Aktionskomité* rather than the chancellor's office.<sup>80</sup> In any case, the dinner rapidly became an important political event, at which occasion Bülow decided to give a major election speech. The oddity of this arrangement was added to by two factors: members of the press were not invited to the dinner (and were declined invitations when they solicited them) and Bülow refused to have his speech printed and distributed to the press prior to the dinner, fearing 'Zwischenfälle' (incidents).<sup>81</sup> The dinner was much akin to political dinners then commonly held in Britain and the United States to launch political campaigns, but it was at that time a novelty in Germany, and the press complained about it.<sup>82</sup> It is important to point out that at the formal constituting meeting of the *Aktionskomité* that preceded the dinner, the assembled members voted to continue the activities of their new organization beyond the election.<sup>83</sup>

Schmoller's address at the dinner preceding Bülow's election speech emphasized anew the aims of the *Aktionskomité* as enlightening and influencing public opinion and the political parties about the need to preserve the colonies 'for the power and honour of Germany' and to facilitate the creation of a Reichstag majority that could work with the chancellor to achieve these goals.<sup>84</sup> Bülow's speech played heavily on the evils of German particularism, confessional divisions, and factional bickering as dangerous remnants of Germany's historical development that manifested themselves in endemic petty partisanship, willing to sacrifice national welfare for narrow, philistine interests and party doctrines. This was a development elements of the foreign press hostile

<sup>79</sup> Minutes of meeting, 16 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Bülow to Schmoller, 13 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 202; Dernburg to Schmoller, 16 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 187.

<sup>81</sup> E. Fr. [Ernst Franke] to Schmoller, 17 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI. Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 180–81: 'Ich habe die Rede Bülows gesehen. Sie ist etwa 250–300 Druckbogen lang, dauert also rund 1/2 Stunde. Leider ist Bülow absolut nicht zu bewegen, seine Rede vorher Drucken u. an die Presse vertheilen zu lassen—er fürchtet Zwischenfälle. Meine Besorgnis aber ist daß darunter die Verbreitung u. Mündigung leiden wird, denn schon am Montag Abend spricht Dernburg in München.'

<sup>82</sup> *Die Post* [Berlin] (16 Jan. 1907, Abend-Ausgabe).

<sup>83</sup> Minutes of the constituting meeting, 19 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 7–8; see also Verzeichnis der Anwesenden, Sitzung des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitees, 19 Jan. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 9.

<sup>84</sup> Stenographic report, *Wolff's Telegraphisches Bureau*, 58, no. 301 (20 Jan. 1907): GStA PK, VI. HA NI. Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 163–64.

to Germany pinned their hopes upon, despite the fact that these countries themselves had fought great colonial wars with stoicism and sacrifice. Bülow claimed that the notion that the budgetary rights of the Reichstag had been injured was a red herring for what was nothing more than a partisan power struggle of the Centre Party in unlikely cahoots with the Social Democrats, normally their sworn enemy. The aim now, he said, was to unite 'all national elements from the conservative right to the progressive left, without considerations of religion' for 'national duties and obligations'.<sup>85</sup> Bülow also took the opportunity to praise Dernburg for restoring the shattered trust in the value of the colonies, which were a touchstone for German vigour and a way of unifying the splintered political tendencies of the Reich. Likewise the organizers of the dinner, scholars, scientists and artists, were best called on to work against partisanship and to banish the idea that Germany was becoming 'again only a nation of thinkers, poets, and dreamers and not also a great, peacefully striving and, in difficult times, unified and courageous nation'.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the attempt by Schmoller and the *Aktionskomité* to appear as a 'super-partisan', enlightening organization, the direct association with Bülow's campaign and the exclusion of the press from the dinner was criticized, as was the general political tendency of these activities. *Die Standarte* dubbed the dinner 'the banquet of Baskerville' and complained bitterly about those who would dare exclude the press, noting that it was not Chancellor Bülow—who was deemed far too civilized to do such a thing—but out-of-touch 'poets and thinkers' who were to blame.<sup>87</sup> The perception of partisanship worsened when it was later discovered that two crass political pamphlets had been included in the same shipments of literature sent out to primary school teachers for the *Aktionskomité* by the Navy League.<sup>88</sup> Again, the *Aktionskomité*, and Schmoller in particular, found themselves under attack for partisan politicking, particularly by papers and magazines with a Centre Party and Social Democratic readership.<sup>89</sup> Declarations had to be published in order formally to distance the *Aktionskomité* from these pamphlets and the electoral activities of the Navy

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> 'Das Bankett von Baskerville,' *Die Standarte* [Berlin] (24 Jan. 1907).

<sup>88</sup> 'Die koloniale Lügenfabrik (Erzberger, Stadthagen & Co)' and 'Warum ist der Reichstag am 13. Dezember aufgelöst' (both from Verlag Paul Köhler, n.d.). These were a response to M. Erzberger, *Warum ist der Reichstag aufgelöst worden: Ein Wort an die Wählerschaft* (Berlin, 1907).

<sup>89</sup> *Kölnische Volkszeitung* (12 Feb. 1907); *Vorwärts* (14 Feb. 1907); 'Schmoller und kein Ende,' *Hammer. Blätter für deutschen Sinn*, no. 112 (Feb. 1907), 119–20: 'Es ist ihm gewiß wieder besonders schwer geworden, von seiner wissenschaftlichen Ueberzeugung abzuweichen, wonach es nicht Sache des Gelehrten ist, auf die Ereignisse des Tages ein zu wirken. Aber er tut es—wie seine Ansprache an den Reichskanzler verraten hat ...' 'Die Freiheit der Wissenschaft im Schmoller'schen Sinne bedeutet die Auslieferung der deutschen Universitäten an die deutsche und nametlich Schmoller'sche Gelehrten-Zunft. Sie bedeutet die Besetzung der deutschen Professuren in jener Art, die das Verbrechen gegen Friedrich List und Semmelweis auf dem Gewissen hat.'

League, an association that was vehemently denied by Schmoller and the committee.<sup>90</sup> Troubles also began to brew with the German Colonial Society, which viewed the creation of the *Aktionskomité*, now as a permanent body, as an unfriendly act and trespass on the turf of its own Colonial-Economic Committee, which was charged with disseminating ‘enlightening’ economic literature on the necessity of the German colonies.<sup>91</sup>

Money troubles began to plague the *Aktionskomité* too. Both the unexpected public resonance of their first meeting and the equally unexpected popularity of their publications meant publication and distribution of pamphlets took on unforeseen dimensions and quickly consumed the relatively generous contributions that had been made before the elections. Gustav Roloff had completed the *Kolonialpolitischer Führer* (see Figure 25.2) commissioned by the *Aktionskomité* just in time for the election, and this and the stenographic report of the first meeting in the Academy of Music were produced in massive numbers and distributed free of charge throughout the Reich. Some 114,000 alone were sent to German primary school teachers, and 300 copies each were sent to no fewer than 250 chambers of commerce, agriculture and trade.<sup>92</sup> Tens of thousands more were sent to party offices, various voter associations, and newspapers.<sup>93</sup> In all, nearly 700,000 copies of the stenographic report and the *Kolonialpolitischer Führer* were distributed, at a cost to the committee of over 27,000 Marks, and by June 1907 it was running a deficit of 1627 Marks.<sup>94</sup> As a consequence, more contributions had to be solicited from members, and

<sup>90</sup> Declaration of the Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité to the editors of newspapers, 11 Feb. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 5. Cf. Präsidial-Geschäftsstelle des Flotten-Vereins to Sering, 4 Feb. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 23; Geschäftsbericht des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitee’s, n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 288.

<sup>91</sup> von Keller, Deutsche Kolonial-Gesellschaft, Abteilung München to the Deutsche Kolonial-Gesellschaft, 30 Jan. 1907: BArch, R 8023/511, Bl. 4: ‘[S]o erfreulich jede Beteiligung kolonialen Interesses zu begrüßen ist—so scheint mir doch das Komite [sic], nachdem es sich zu einem fort-dauernden umgestaltet hat, gewissermassen jenen Teil der Tätigkeit der D.K.G. an sich ziehen zu wollen, welcher der wichtigste geblieben ist, nachdem es—zum Mißbehagen Vieler—die D.K.G. die wirtschaftl. Seite ihrer Aufgaben zum größten Teil aus ihren Händen u. in jene des K.W. Komitees hatte gleiten lassen.’ Kolonialgesellschaft to von Keller, 1 Feb 1907: BArch, R 8023/511, Bl. 5: ‘Das Kolonialpolitische Aktions-Komitee [sic] hat, wie Euere Exzellenz sehr zutreffend betonen, eigentlich gar keine anderen Ziele als unsere Gesellschaft selbst. Seine Gründung ist daher zweifellos eine gewisse Unfreundlichkeit gegen unsere Gesellschaft und auch von hier aus als solche empfunden worden.’

<sup>92</sup> Geschäftsbericht des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitee’s, n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 286.

<sup>93</sup> Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité, Bestellung auf 1000 und mehr Exemplare von Berichten und Führern: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 87–88.

<sup>94</sup> Geschäftsbericht des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitee’s, n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 202, 286–87; Schmoller to members of the Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomité, 22 March 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 2; Einnahmen und Ausgaben des Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitees [sic] bis 15. Juni 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 276.

# **Kolonialpolitischer Führer**

Herausgegeben

vom

**Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomité**



Berlin 1907

Verlag Dr. Wedekind & Co. G. m. b. H.

**Figure 25.2:** The *Kolonialpolitischer Führer* commissioned by the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité*.

steps were also taken to secure subventions from the Colonial Section of the Foreign Office.<sup>95</sup> Eventually sufficient funds were collected from these various sources to continue the publication activities of the *Aktionskomité* well beyond the election.

<sup>95</sup> Francke to Schmoller, 25 Feb. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 253–54: ‘Hammann hat nicht selbst über den Fonds zu verfügen, sondern er hat s. Zt. nach Rücksprache mit Hentig die Kolonialabtlg. benachrichtigt, daß dem Kolonial-pol. Aktionskomité 4000 M auszuführen seien. Die ..., das dies geschehen soll, hat dann Hammann durch den Geh. Rat. v.d. Gröben erhalten. Leider ist aber die Sache verbummelt worden. Auf meiner Veranlassung hat Hammann heute sofort einen Beamten zu v.d. Gröben geschickt, energisch moniert und versprochen, die Zahlung des Geldes zu urgieren. Ich habe den mir persönlich gut bekannten Beamten, Konsul Heilbron, gebeten, möglichst zu drängen. So läuft hoffentlich das Geld in diesen Tagen bei der Bank ein.’ On the sources of funding for the 1907 election campaign, see Dieter Fricke, ‘Der deutsche Imperialismus und die Reichstagswahlen von 1907’, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 9 (1961), 538–76, here 557–66.

#### IV. The *Colonial-Political Guide* and *The Railways of Africa*

Given the vast scale of its distribution during the election and after, some words must be said about the content and impact of the *Kolonialpolitischer Führer*. It was notable for the way it conveyed its message with the aid of historical and economic arguments—not surprising given that its author, Gustav Roloff, was a lecturer specializing in the history of colonial policy at the University of Berlin.<sup>96</sup> This tract situates the origin of Germany's colonial empire in an overall expansion of the German economy with the advent of industrialization in the 1850s and the resulting growth of German merchant interests abroad. The economic logic of the colonies as a potential source of both raw materials and markets thus emerges out of a historical narrative of commercial expansion and *future* needs, considering the competitive environment in which European imperialism was situated.<sup>97</sup> While taking a very generous view of the economic potential of the colonies—and for that reason taking clear jabs at the Centre Party and Social Democrats—this tract is generally free of hyperbole or gratuitous nationalist rhetoric. Much like the arguments presented at the meeting of 8 January, it emphasizes the relatively light burden imposed by the colonies and invests much hope in the railways as a precondition for development and civilizing force.<sup>98</sup> The mistreatment of the native population is likewise played down by emphasizing the tremendous overall benefit of European civilization and Germany's relatively good record compared with its rivals.<sup>99</sup> The leap from reasoned, moderate argument to righteous endeavour is made in the context of growing neo-mercantilist threats to world markets posed by the other great world empires (Britain, France, USA, Russia). It was in Germany's interest to keep these open. Germany would be

the natural protector and leader of numerous smaller states, which, isolated, do not form a closed-off economic area, but which in community can produce all modern necessities as well as any of the giant empires. At the top of a union to which Holland, Belgium, Scandinavia, Austria, perhaps also Italy and a few extra-European states such as Mexico and Chile could belong, Germany would have nothing to fear from the four others, and this coalition of territory would have the enormous cultural advantage over the giant empires in that not one nation, not one language dominates, but instead that almost all nations that have created modern *Kultur* would be represented and protected from decline.<sup>100</sup>

Apart from its clear and compelling articulation of an imperialist mission, the *Kolonialpolitischer Führer* is also notable for including an appendix with brief historical surveys of the difficult colonial experiences of rival powers, emphasizing, for example, the very slow development of the Cape Colony

<sup>96</sup> For example, Gustav Roloff, *Kolonialpolitik Napoleons I.* (Munich and Leipzig, 1899).

<sup>97</sup> Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité (ed.), *Kolonialpolitischer Führer* (Berlin, 1907), pp. 3–12.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16–19, 23–24.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.



# Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas

Grundlagen und Gesichtspunkte  
für eine koloniale Eisenbahnpolitik in Afrika

Nach der gleichnamigen amtlichen Denkschrift

herausgegeben

von

Kolonialpolitischen Aktionskomitee

---

BERLIN 1907

Verlag von Wilhelm Süsserott

Holbuchhändler Sr. Königl. Hoheit des Großherzogs von Mecklenburg-Schwerin

**Figure 25.3:** The cover page of *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas*, based on an official memorandum of 1907 on the railways of Africa.

and the scandals and suffering in colonial Virginia, where white settlers had viciously massacred the native population and coerced vast land concessions.<sup>101</sup> The primary purpose of these historical digressions was self-exculpatory, meant as they were to justify recent brutality in Southwest Africa and to show that setbacks had accompanied even the most valuable colonial projects of Germany's rivals.

Late in 1907 the *Aktionskomité* would bring out what would be its last publication. This was a slightly shortened and updated version of an extensive official memorandum of 1907 on the railways of Africa titled *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas*, for which the *Aktionskomité* had been given special permission for publication from the Reichstag and the new Colonial Office (see Figure 25.3).<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32–34, 42–43.

<sup>102</sup> Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité (ed.), *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas: Grundlagen und Gesichtspunkte für eine koloniale Eisenbahnpolitik in Afrika nach der gleichnamigen amtlichen Denkschrift* (Berlin, 1907); anon., *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas: Grundlagen und Gesichtspunkte für eine koloniale Eisenbahnpolitik in Afrika* (Berlin, 1907).

It was a very thorough survey of the railways of all of the colonial powers in Africa, broken down geographically and featuring extensive maps. It included a study of the development of the African railways, their construction and management, the various forms of railway enterprise, as well as their profitability, economic impact, and strategic-political significance. There are strong indications that Schmoller hoped that proceeds from this publication would help finance the other activities of the *Aktionskomité*.<sup>103</sup> A circular announcing this publication was sent out to chambers of commerce and other associations, large banks and export firms, universities, technological institutes, statistical bureaux, provincial school boards, seminars, associations for the academically trained, and primary school teachers.<sup>104</sup> Schmoller himself believed that this publication had a relevance well beyond railway policy as a valuable contribution to the knowledge of the geography of Africa.<sup>105</sup>

It should not come as too much of a surprise that colonial policy during Dernburg's years in the Colonial Office was possessed of something of a railway mania. As is known, in early 1907 the newly-elected Reichstag accepted the pending railway bills. Around the same time the 'Cocoa Railway' Lome–Agome–Palime was opened. By October of the same year the extension of the Pugu–Morogoro line of the German East African Railway was completed. In March 1908 the branch railway Otavi–Grootfontein in German Southwest Africa was finished. Later in June the Seeheim–Kalkfontein stretch of the Lüderitz Railway was begun, with diamonds found on the sixteenth kilometre of the same railway shortly thereafter. The railway project that had helped precipitate the colonial crisis in December 1906, the Keepmanshoop extension of the Lüderitz Railway, was completed on 21 June 1908. One year later, the branch railway Seeheim–Kalkfontein, the Mombo–Buiko extension of the Usambara Railway, and the Bonaberi–Njombe stretch of the Cameroon Northern Railway were all opened. Dernburg later joked that more colonial railways were built in the four years of his administration than the biggest American railway speculator was able to achieve in those same years.<sup>106</sup> As telling as Dernburg's railway policy was the new orientation toward indigenous peasant agriculture away from plantations and forced labour, and the restrictions imposed on German settlers. While Dernburg was influenced in

<sup>103</sup> Anlage A. Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomitee [*sic*], 28 Jan. 1908: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 168.

<sup>104</sup> Struve to Schmoller with enclosures Anlage A (Bl. 168) and B (Bl. 164–7), 30 Jan. 1908: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 163.

<sup>105</sup> Anlage A. Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomitee, 28 Jan. 1908: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 168.

<sup>106</sup> Schiefel, *Bernhard Dernburg*, p. 96. On German railways in Africa, see Helmut Schroeter and Roel Ramaer, *Die Eisenbahnen in den einst deutschen Schutzgebieten Ostafrika, Kamerun, Togo und die Schantung-Eisenbahn; damals und heute/German Colonial Railways East Africa, Southwest Africa, Cameroon, Togo and the Shantung Railway; Then and Now* (Krefeld, 1993).

this direction by colleagues in industry such as Walter Rathenau, and by far-sighted civil servants such as Albrecht Rechenberg, evidence also suggests that important elements of his colonial reform policy drew from German *Mittelstandspolitik* as articulated by Gustav Schmoller and other economists in the *Aktionskomité*, which were implemented with varying degrees of success.<sup>107</sup>

In summary, the speeches and publications of Schmoller and the *Aktionskomité* saw the novel permutation of interconnected liberal-nationalist and imperialist themes that were consistently repeated and developed further. In the first instance, the colonial crisis was presented as a test of Germany's will as a belated and divided nation and colonizer, the success of which hinged on a broad 'national' union of pro-colonial parties and interests (liberals and conservatives) against the Reich's colonial detractors. This was itself the core idea of Bülow's political campaign and freely adopted by the liberal and conservative parties, nationalist and imperialist associations, and interest groups during the election. Indeed, some of the most potent imagery of Protestant liberal nationalism, drawing on the notion of *Reichsfeinde* forged during the *Kulturkampf* and years of socialist proscription, were shamelessly exploited. The Catholic Centre and the SPD were caricatured as sacrificing Germany's national prestige on the altar of humanitarian scruple, budgetary rules, and parliamentary principle, preventing it from properly shouldering its colonial burdens and fulfilling its imperial destiny. Great 'national' colonial tasks, it was claimed, were only achievable by broadening the horizon beyond narrow principles and partisan politics. Regrettable though they were, massacres accompanied nearly every great colonial project. They were the price of spreading civilization.

There was likewise much trafficking in a vague but potent term that had entered public consciousness in the 1870s and had since assumed the status of a national trope: reform. Re-christened *Kolonialreform* and loaded with much of the content and expectations of German social reform—including, as was suggested above, elements of *Mittelstandspolitik*—it was presented as a panacea for the colonial crisis and the *Kolonialmüdigkeit* (colonial fatigue) that seemed to grip the German public. At the same time Germany's self-image as the most scientifically and technologically advanced European country was presented as an especially fitting advantage to the special challenges of its

<sup>107</sup> See R. V. Pierard, 'The Dernburg Reform Policy and German East Africa', *Tanzania Notes and Records*, 67 (1967), 31–38; Bradley D. Naranch, "'Colonized Body", "Oriental Machine": Debating Race, Railroads and the Politics of Reconstruction in Germany and East Africa, 1906–10', *Central European History*, 33 (2000), 299–338. The railways had many unintended long-term consequences, especially in German East Africa, where household structure changed dramatically as a consequence of the labour recruitment policies that were part of railway construction, a process that undermined peasant agriculture. The very reason for railways—to bring peasant crop surpluses into a wider colonial and international division of labour—disappeared. See here Thaddeus Sunseri, 'Dispersing the Fields: Railway Labour and Rural Change in Early Colonial Tanzania', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 32 (1998), 558–83; Sunseri, 'The Baumwollfrage: Cotton Colonialism in German East Africa', *Central European History*, 34 (2001), 31–51.

colonies and complimentary to their anticipated mineral bounty. It was not surprising that a technology with particularly potent associations with German national unity was employed to make that point: railways. Since Friedrich List, railways had been celebrated as a German unifier, the network that created a national division of labour, facilitated rapid industrialization, and enabled political unification. Likewise, massive hopes were invested in the developmental and civilizing force of expanded African railways. Lastly and more broadly, Germany's imperial mission was conceived as resisting the encroachments of the homogenizing great world empires and preserving the integrity and cultural peculiarity of smaller states and peoples by confederation. Together, this complex of themes formed a powerful liberal imperialist ideology that could find broad acceptance and that deserves to be taken seriously.

The main point to be made is not that these extensive publication activities helped sway the elections to support Bülow and forge a bloc of liberal and conservative parties, or even that the ideas articulated by the *Aktionskomité* would have an impact on colonial reform policy under Dernburg, but rather that the publications themselves were very widely distributed and that they effectively conveyed a powerful complex of coherent imperialist themes to the German electorate. And this message was particularly effective because it was not delivered with nationalist hyperbole but in a reasoned and moderate tone with the authority of *Wissenschaft*. Indeed, by the standards of election literature, the stenographic report, *Kolonialpolitischer Führer* and especially *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas* were high quality publications notable for straightforward arguments conveyed in clear unpolemical language with a shelf life well beyond the elections.

The resonance of these publications had much to do with their ambiguous status as at once election literature with a political tendency and yet at the same time as the pronouncements of leading scholars and thus as authoritative material relevant beyond politics. While much more research is needed on the reception of this literature and the spread of the imperialist ideology it contained, one way that this probably occurred is suggested by a few letters from schoolteachers addressed to Schmoller as chairman of the *Aktionskomité*. One from Upper Bavaria praised the work of the *Aktionskomité*, which was now known in the 'most distant corners of the fatherland'. It requested that a publication be written directed at the peasants: 'Surely the colonies are also of significance to the peasant estate. Even they need products from the tropics; cotton, coffee, sugar, rice. Cycling is spreading to ever wider peasant circles and so rubber could be considered too'.<sup>108</sup> Cotton, coffee and rubber and other *Kolonialwaren* such as tea, bananas, and tropical oils became vivid fixtures of a colonized German imagination, and in this process organizations

<sup>108</sup> Rutz to Schmoller, 3 Feb. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 10–11.

like the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité* clearly played a role facilitating this through their publications.

The ambiguity of the *Aktionskomité*'s literature is illustrated nicely by another letter from a schoolmaster in Langendreer near Bochum, which thanks Schmoller for the publications that had been sent:

Every student of our school is required to have read the one or the other pamphlet before he goes out into the world. That way he gets a different notion [*anderen Begriff*] of our foreign possessions and at least no longer confronts the statements of the press with completely closed ideas. Such pamphlets are thus a necessity for our student library.<sup>109</sup>

It is also not hard to imagine what those eyes might have seen once they were open. Publications like the *Kolonialpolitischer Führer* and *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas* provided a very vivid technological bridge—and a highly modern and industrial one at that—for the imagination between Germany and Africa: railways. The elaborate fold-out colour map in *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas*, which shows Germany connected directly to the Dark Continent through numerous steamship lines, navigable rivers, and completed and projected railway lines is a vivid example of how that link was visualized at the time. This is a representation of a smaller, connected world in which Africa appears like a vast, promising appendage to Germany and Europe (see Figure 25.4).<sup>110</sup>

Such curricular deployment of pro-colonial literature was hardly unusual at the time. It was representative of what was going on in many German schools, which had since 1900 become an arena of intense activity for the German Colonial Society's effort to spread the colonial message among the German youth through pro-colonial geographical instruction and '*staatsbürgerliche Erziehung*' (civic instruction).<sup>111</sup> An enhanced pro-colonial school curriculum had also been a major topic of discussion at the German Colonial Congress of 1902 and the subject of one of its first resolutions.<sup>112</sup> What is more, university lecturing in colonial subjects had increased appreciably throughout the states of the Reich, and the examination regimen for future school teachers had been enhanced to test knowledge of Germany's world trade and its colonies.<sup>113</sup> The generous dissemination of the *Aktionskomité*'s unique literature—at once political in tendency yet written with the authority of *Wissenschaft*—through the receptive conduit of school and university instruction was a very effective way of conveying a coherent and compelling imperialist ideology that fused economic imperialism with settler colonialism,

<sup>109</sup> Schoolmaster of Langendreer to Schmoller, 9 Feb. 1907: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 I, Bl. 16–17.

<sup>110</sup> Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité, *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas*, p. 157.

<sup>111</sup> Kenneth Holston, '“A Measure of the Nation”: Politics, Colonial Enthusiasm and Education in Germany, 1896–1933' (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996), pp. 43–138.

<sup>112</sup> Deutscher Kolonialkongress, *Verhandlungen*, p. 828.

<sup>113</sup> Holston, '“A Measure of the Nation”', pp. 57–58, 86–90.

emphasized the civilizing and unifying role of modern technology, and was anchored in familiar liberal-nationalist ambitions. This may help explain the formation of a generation of youth more heavily invested in the German colonies than any other before it and the remarkable popular resonance of the lost colonial empire throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.

### V. *Staatswissenschaft* Goes Native

In parallel to the mass dissemination of pro-colonial literature to German schoolteachers and their students, Schmoller and his colleagues in the *Aktionskomité* worked diligently to give German *Kolonialpolitik* a more professional base. These activities brought about the birth of a new subdiscipline of *Staatswissenschaft* known as *Kolonialwissenschaft* (colonial science), which lent the colonial project even further legitimacy. As mentioned earlier, the first impulses in this direction had already been given by the growth in lecturing on topics relating to *Weltpolitik* in German universities. Moreover, the speeches and literature of the *Aktionskomité* had repeatedly expressed the need to create a colonial administration specially trained and qualified to meet the unique challenges of the German colonies. Bernhard Dernburg had likewise been planning to create a colonial training institute as part of his reform of German colonial administration as early as 1906.<sup>114</sup>

This finally came to fruition in January 1908, when the citizens and senate of Hamburg, with the agreement and support of Dernburg, the Imperial Colonial Office, and the Imperial Navy Office, funded the creation of the Hamburg Colonial Institute. The Institute was founded explicitly to train professional colonial administrators as well as businessmen, industrialists, and planters who intended to work in the colonies. It was also to act as a central clearing-house in which all scientific and economic efforts relating to the colonies could be concentrated.<sup>115</sup> The range of subjects under its purview spanned the arts and sciences and included history, economics, public law, philosophy, East Asian culture, languages and history, African languages, ethnography, zoology, botany, geology and mineralogy, geography and tropical medicine.<sup>116</sup>

Arguably the leading light of the Colonial Institute was Karl Rathgen, who had completed his *Habilitation* under Schmoller at Berlin University in 1892

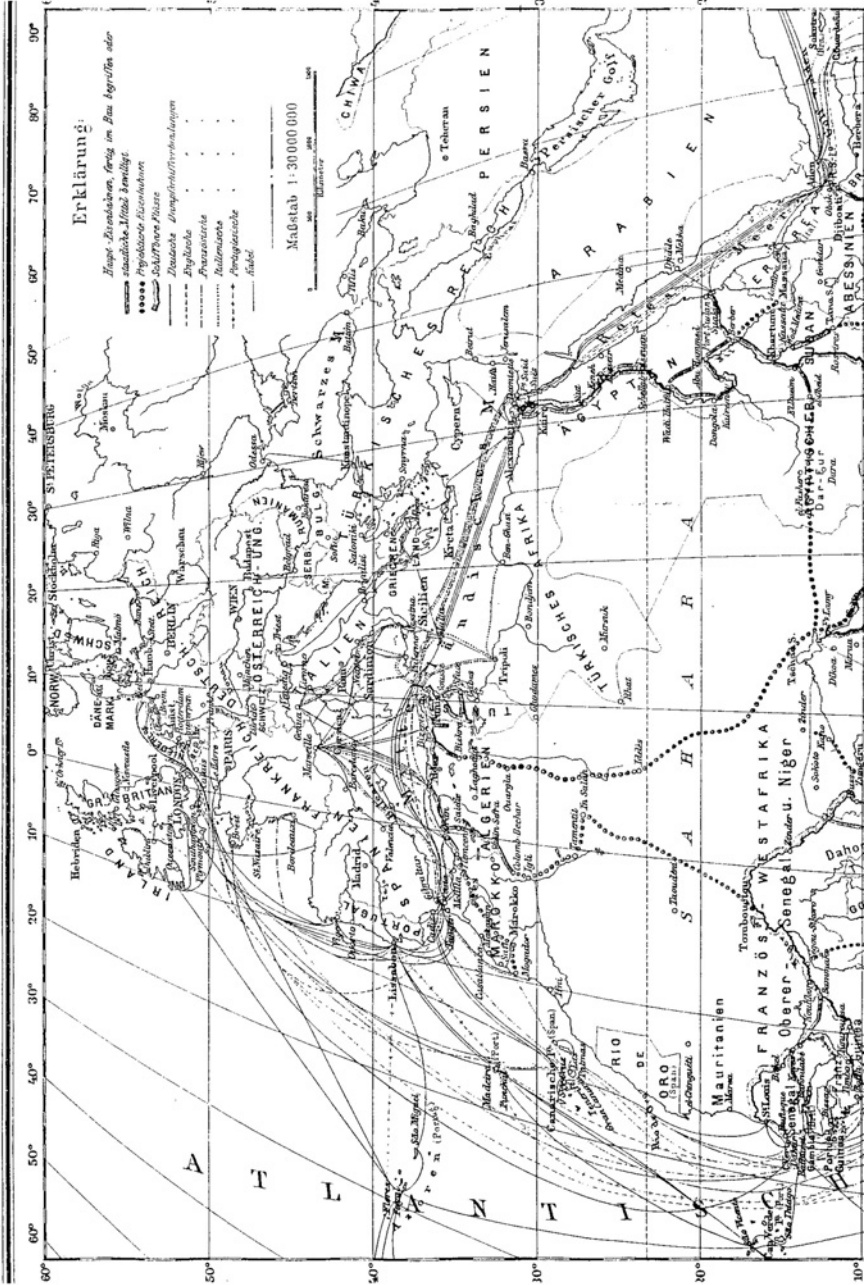
<sup>114</sup> Schiefel, *Bernhard Dernburg*, p. 83. On the relationship between Prussian bureaucratic order and colonial practice, see Nils Ole Oermann, 'The Law and the Colonial State', in Eley and Retallack, *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies*, pp. 171–84; and Andreas Eckert and Michael Pesek, 'Bürokratische Ordnung und koloniale Praxis: Herrschaft und Verwaltung in Preußen und Afrika', in Conrad and Osterhammel, *Das Kaiserreich transnational*, pp. 87–106.

<sup>115</sup> Senator von Melle in Karl Rathgen, *Beamtenum und Kolonialunterricht: Rede, gehalten bei der Eröffnungsfeier des Hamburgischen Kolonialinstituts am 20. Oktober 1908, nebst den weiteren bei der Eröffnungsfeier des Kolonialinstituts gehaltenen Ansprachen* (Hamburg, 1908), p. 8.

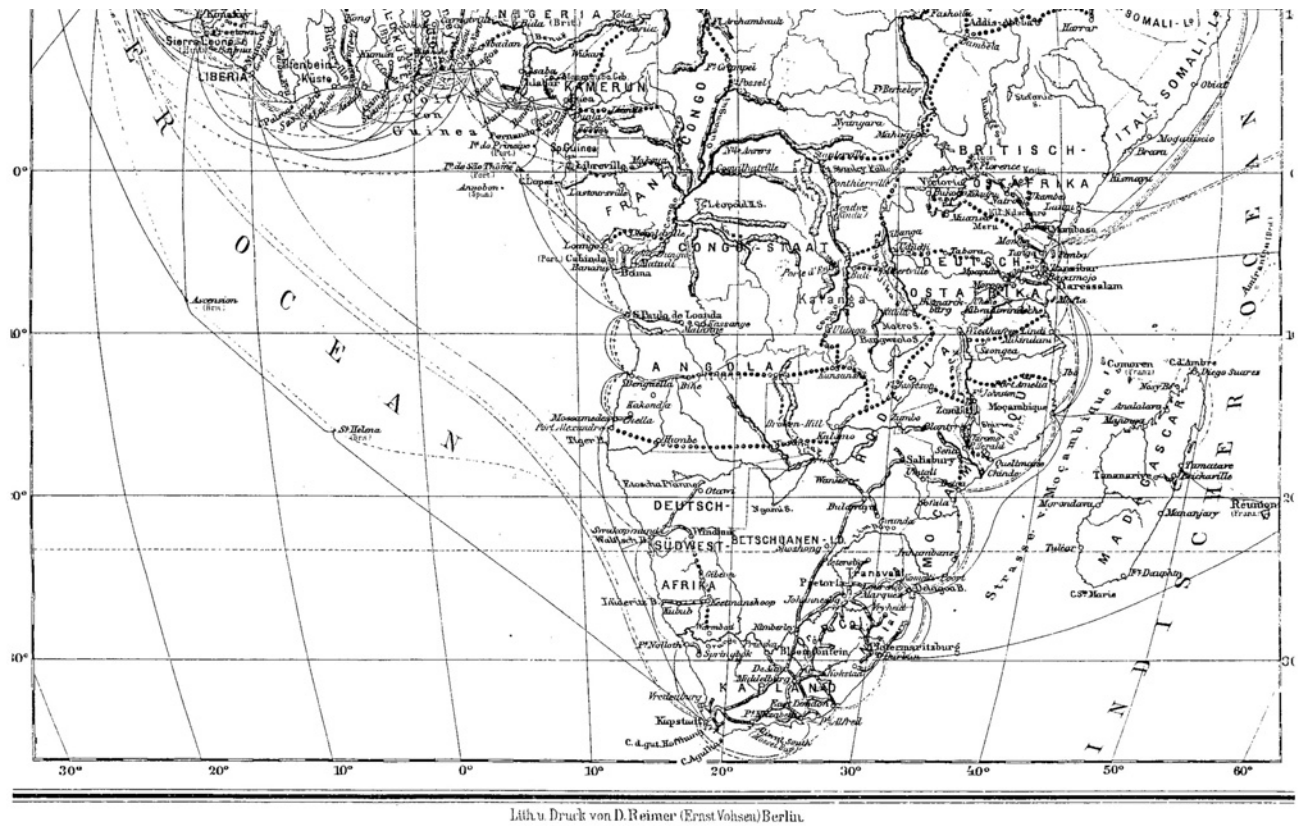
<sup>116</sup> Heinrich Schnee (ed.), *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1920), p. 12. The other subjects included philosophy, German, English, Romance languages, physics, and astronomy.



Anlage zu der Denkschrift „DIE EISENBAHNEN AFRIKAS“







**Figure 25.4:** Map of African railways and steamship lines in *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas*.  
 Source: Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité (ed.), *Die Eisenbahnen Afrikas: Grundlagen und Gesichtspunkte für eine koloniale Eisenbahnpolitik in Afrika* (Berlin, 1907), appendix.

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and, as mentioned earlier, had been an active member and financial contributor to the *Aktionskomité*. Before taking up a professorship in Heidelberg, Rathgen had spent eight years in Japan (1882–1890) as an advisor to the Japanese government on monetary and financial policies and professor of economics at the Imperial University of Tokyo. There he did much to introduce German social science to a young generation of Japanese economists, many of whom subsequently took higher degrees in *Staatswissenschaften* in German universities before the First World War.<sup>117</sup> Rathgen was undoubtedly the leading authority on the economy of Japan and East Asia in Germany at the time and thus an ideal addition to the new Institute.<sup>118</sup> He was in fact deemed to be of such high academic stature that he was asked to give the keynote speech at the Institute's opening celebration in October 1908.<sup>119</sup> Rathgen would teach colonial economics and policy at the Institute and would eventually be chairman of its professorial council (that is to say, rector) in 1910–1912.

Rathgen's ideas for the pedagogy of *Kolonialwissenschaft* at the Colonial Institute were expressed in his 1908 speech and are worth considering in some detail because they go well beyond the uniform training of colonial officials, planters and businessmen and extend into the disciplinary demarcation of *Kolonialwissenschaft* as a new area of scholarly inquiry. In the speech Rathgen made the point that his comparative analysis of the higher education of colonial officials in Holland, Belgium, France, and England had not led to the discovery of any one viable model for the Hamburg Colonial Institute.<sup>120</sup> What was clear, he noted, was that any pedagogy up to the modern challenges of colonial administration, with their broad scope, more extensive demands, and increasing focus on economic development, would have to part ways with old habits of patronage and amateurism and instead select competent officials with systematic training.<sup>121</sup> The first foundation of a new colonial pedagogy was 'scholarly investigation of colonial-political problems ... [in which] the necessity of teaching leads to scholarly work and depth'.<sup>122</sup> That is to say, in order to develop a

<sup>117</sup> Barthold Witte, 'Kultur, Wirtschaft und Politik: Pfeiler des Friedens: Zum Andenken an Karl Rathgen (1856–1921), Professor der Volkswirtschaftslehre an der Kaiserlichen Universität Tokio 1882–1890', *Indo Asia*, 4 (1984), 65–76; Willy Kraus, 'Karl Rathgen in Tokyo', *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung*, 13 (1989), 233–57; Wolfgang Schwentker, 'Fremde Gelehrte: Japanische Nationalökonomien und Sozialreformer im Kaiserreich', in Gangolf Hübinger and Wolfgang J. Mommsen (eds), *Intellektuelle im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt/Main, 1993), pp. 172–97; Erik Grimmer-Solem, 'German Social Science, Meiji Conservatism, and the Peculiarities of Japanese History', *Journal of World History*, 16 (2005), 187–222, here 206–207.

<sup>118</sup> See for example Karl Rathgen, *Die Japaner und ihre Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung*, Aus Natur und Geisteswelt: Sammlung wissenschaftlich-gemeinverständlicher Darstellungen (Leipzig, 1905); Rathgen, 'Entwicklungstendenzen im Außenhandel Chinas und Japans', *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im Deutschen Reiche*, 30 (1906), 1079–94.

<sup>119</sup> Rathgen, *Beamtentum und Kolonialunterricht*.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 41.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45–48.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

vibrant *Kolonialunterricht* (colonial education) one had to engage in *Kolonialwissenschaft*. The realization was dawning, he noted, that a merely practical training for colonial officials would not do; it had to be combined with a formal theoretical education.<sup>123</sup> He emphasized that particular strengths in this respect could be drawn from the German tradition of university scholarship and professional officialdom, which could unify the necessary scientific training and practical instruction.<sup>124</sup> The aim was to create a uniform colonial officialdom that combined the esprit de corps of the Anglo-Indian Civil Service, the firm loyalty to the state and duty to defend the general interest of German officialdom, and the scientific *Bildung* of the German university system.<sup>125</sup>

As is clear from Rathgen's speech, the intellectual links between the new *Kolonialwissenschaft* and the older *Staatswissenschaft* remained strong, particularly in its cameralist administrative dimension. The affinities of Rathgen's vision for colonial administration and the 'practical imagination' David Lindenfeld has analysed within German *Staatswissenschaften* should be underscored. Indeed, the plans for the reform of colonial administration showed a striking similarity to a conception of bureaucratic reform that had grown out of German humanism and enlightened absolutism.<sup>126</sup> The focus was to be on administration in the general interest, implemented by a competent and impartial bureaucracy. Students would combine formal training in a range of relevant subjects and technologies with deep practical knowledge of their implementation.

*Kolonialwissenschaft* as defined by Rathgen was given a tremendous boost when it was taken up for the first time by the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, the pre-eminent social scientific research body in Germany. The large coordinated survey that it launched, 'The Settlement of Europeans in the Tropics', was proposed in May of 1910 and then spearheaded by the Berlin economist Max Sering, who had, like Rathgen, been an active member of the *Aktionskomité*, in his case, serving on the organizing board.<sup>127</sup> The purpose of the survey was to study 'the economic activity and the social life of the whites in the tropical regions ... with special consideration of the question whether continuous settlement had taken place and generations had survived'. Further, 'the facts,

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83–86. Rathgen's thoughts on the proper training of colonial administrators have strong affinities to ideas articulated by C. G. Schillings at the first meeting of the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité* in January 1907. See here *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité*, *Schmoller, Dernburg*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>126</sup> Lindenfeld, *The Practical Imagination*, pp. 3–4, 11–88.

<sup>127</sup> Franz Boese, 'Geschichte des Vereins für Sozialpolitik 1872–1939', *Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik*, 188 (1939), 139; Ständiger Ausschuss des Vereins für Sozialpolitik (StA) (ed.), 'Deutsch-Ostafrika als Siedlungsgebiet für Europäer unter Berücksichtigung Britisch-Ostafrikas und Nyassalands', *Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik*, 147, pt. 1 (1912), v.

conditions, and successes of European colonization and work in the hot zones should be scientifically investigated.’<sup>128</sup>

It was quite striking—although not surprising—to what extent members of the *Aktionskomité* were elected by the *Verein* to coordinate this research project.<sup>129</sup> Sering’s portion of the survey was to cover the German colonies in tropical Africa, the southern states of the Union, and Mexico. Karl Rathgen himself was charged with the part covering the west coast of tropical Africa, the East Indies, and Central America, while another *Aktionskomité* member, Gustav Anton of Jena University, led the survey of the Dutch Indies.<sup>130</sup> Further studies were commissioned for South America from Gottfried Zoepfl (as mentioned, co-founder of the *Aktionskomité*), and Christian Eckert of the Commercial Academy of Cologne, a specialist on shipping and likewise an active member of the *Aktionskomité*, was charged with organizing the study of Uganda and north-eastern Africa.<sup>131</sup>

As was the practice in all of the *Verein*’s investigations, an elaborate questionnaire was developed to guide the survey. This included, first, questions for general orientation (including the natural economic conditions, racial composition, statistics on occupations, and distribution and cultivation of land); second, questions on agriculture (with questions about plantations, recruitment of labour, farming, and the prospects of small-scale farming since the abolition of forced plantation labour); third, questions on trade and commerce (querying the condition of small trades, large industry, crafts, skilled and unskilled workers, and opinions about dignity and character of work); fourth, questions on the health conditions of the white population (requesting statistics on births, deaths, illnesses, the prevalence of infectious diseases, doctors’ memoranda on the influence of climate, the impact of work, the differences of the races, the scope for improving the white population, and the origins and class composition of the colonists); and finally, a concluding judgment about the white settlers’ own view of their prospects for colonization and reproduction.<sup>132</sup>

While the survey that was eventually published between 1912 and 1915 was somewhat smaller in scope than was originally envisaged—only five of

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Verzeichnis der ausserhalb Berlins wohnenden Mitglieder des K.-P-A.K., n.d.: GStA PK, VI. HA NI Schmoller, Nr. 13 II, Bl. 105.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, Bl. 107. For example, Christian Eckert, *Die Seeinteressen Rheinland-Westfalens* (Leipzig, 1906). Other studies commissioned by this survey included South Africa, Southwest Africa, Rhodesia, Mozambique, North Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific, and New Guinea. StA, ed., ‘Deutsch-Ostafrika,’ v.

<sup>132</sup> StA, ed., ‘Deutsch-Ostafrika,’ vi–vii. On these racial and eugenic preoccupations as well as the ‘acclimatization question’, see Pascal Grosse, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1850–1918* (Frankfurt/Main and New York, 2000); and Grosse, ‘Turning Native? Anthropology, German Colonialism, and the Paradoxes of the “Acclimatization Question”, 1885–1914’, in Penny and Bunzl, *Worldly Provincialism*, pp. 179–97.

the eight commissioned parts were ever completed<sup>133</sup>—the significance of launching, researching, and publishing a major survey on the subject of European colonial settlement within the premier social scientific research association in Germany should not be overlooked. The *Verein's* publication, the *Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik*, enjoyed a reputation as a highly respected social scientific serial, purchased through subscription by every major university in Germany, not to mention those in western Europe, the British Empire, the United States, and Japan. Its significance also lay in the fact that the *Verein's* coordinated, systematic empirical analysis of various social questions had since the early 1870s helped identify social problems amenable to deliberate policy. This brought about the discovery of whole new sub-disciplines of specialized *Staatswissenschaften*, such as business administration, economic history, sociology, industrial relations, public finance, public health, social service administration, and social work.<sup>134</sup> 'The Settlement of Europeans in the Tropics' represents not only an effort systematically to identify problems amenable to colonial policy but also one of the first steps in empirically delineating the dimensions of *Kolonialwissenschaft* as a new field of scholarly inquiry. By generating the specialized knowledge and publications that provided the raw material for *Kolonialwissenschaft*, it also accelerated the process of disciplinary professionalization.

The impact of economists active in the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité* in the gradual emergence of *Kolonialwissenschaft* was significant. Both the founding of the German Colonial Institute in Hamburg and the execution of a major survey on settler colonialism within the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* represent important milestones in this process. This scholarly habilitation of colonialism was a decisive step in the transition of German colonial policy from an amateurish, scandal-prone, and cranky partisan cause governed by patronage, to a professional, scientific, and national endeavour driven by merit. While more research is needed to establish this fully, one consequence was undoubtedly that colonial empire gained academic legitimacy and thus a far more prominent and authoritative public profile in the years shortly before the First World War.

<sup>133</sup> The completed parts were: (1) Deutsch-Ostafrika (including Britisch-Ostafrika and Nyassaland) (1912); (2) Mittelamerika, Klein Antillen, Niederländisch-West und Ostindien (1912); (3) Natal, Rhodesien, Britisch-Ostafrika (1913); (4) Britisch-Kaffraria und seinen deutschen Siedlungen (1914); and (5) Die deutschen Kolonisten im brasilianischen Staate Espirito Santo (1915). *Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik*, 147 (1912–1915).

<sup>134</sup> Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics*, pp. 67–71, 282; see also Anthony Oberschall, *Empirical Social Research in Germany 1848–1914* (Paris and The Hague, 1965); Lindenlaub, 'Richtungskämpfe'; Ulla G. Schäfer, *Historische Nationalökonomie und Sozialstatistik als Gesellschaftswissenschaften* (Cologne and Vienna, 1971); Irmela Gorges, *Sozialforschung in Deutschland 1872–1914: Gesellschaftliche Einflüsse auf Themen und Methodenwahl des Vereins für Sozialpolitik*, 2nd ed., *Hochschulschriften/Sozialwissenschaften*, no. 22 (Frankfurt/Main, 1986); Lindenfeld, *The Practical Imagination*, pp. 296–304.



## VI. Conclusion

A close analysis of the pro-colonial thought and activity of Gustav Schmoller and other members of the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité* demonstrates how reasonable and moderate scholarship with a liberal inclination could easily coexist with, and accelerate, aggressive imperialist demands tied to a supposed German civilizing mission. It also demonstrates how these economics professors could be especially effective in legitimating the self-perceived necessity and righteousness of German colonial activity. Their colonial *Weltpolitik* was made credible and attractive because it was built on an edifice of anxieties, ambitions, and expectation anchored in familiar and powerful liberal-nationalist tropes. Schmoller's *Aktionskomité*, both through its election activities and its mass dissemination of literature, addressed these German anxieties and ambitions by articulating an imperial mission that in effect extended the reach of liberal nationalism to the colonial periphery. This was to make it much easier for the German public and its youth to become intellectually, emotionally, and materially invested in their colonial empire. Members of the *Aktionskomité* further legitimated these colonial ambitions by lending their authority and energy to the demarcation of disciplinary boundaries around a new *Kolonialwissenschaft*, thereby helping to create a new scholarly field with its own subjects and objects of study. This contributed to the shift away from a partisan and amateurish *Kolonialpolitik* to a national and professional *Kolonialwissenschaft*. From then on the colonies could be seen more easily and credibly as an indispensable and legitimate terrain for national fulfillment, a landscape of ambition and destiny that, with the aid of technology and science, could be an extension of the European Reich.

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### Abstract

German economists led by Gustav Schmoller created the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité* (colonial-political action committee) during the so-called 'colonial crisis' of 1906–1907 to promote the German colonial empire at a time when it was suffering much scandal and criticism. Widely esteemed and enjoying the appearance of non-partisanship, they worked closely with the government of Bernhard von Bülow during the elections of 1907, arguing that colonial empire was economically and politically indispensable and that its financial burdens were bearable. Straddling a position between the economic imperialism of many German liberals and the settler colonialism prevalent in conservative and radical nationalist circles, they helped secure a middle ground that enabled the Bülow bloc and developed many ideas for colonial reform that came into currency during the Dernburg era (1906–1910). Through lecturing, the mass dissemination of relatively

high-quality literature, and the demarcation of the new academic sub-discipline known as *Kolonialwissenschaft* (colonial science), a potent complex of liberal-nationalist ambitions was fused with a new 'scientific' colonialism that helped redefine and legitimate a German civilizing mission in Africa and forge an imperialist ideology that gained a national audience.

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**Keywords:** Bernhard von Bülow, colonial empire, Imperialism, Liberal nationalism, economics, Gustav von Schmoller