


## ARTICLE

# A Foot in the Door: The Colonial Section of the German Foreign Office and the Settlement of Germans in Interwar Tanganyika

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After 1925, German settlers began to return to the former German East Africa, lost through the Treaty of Versailles and transformed into the British Mandate of Tanganyika. The German Foreign Office's Colonial Section took on a proactive role to facilitate these Germans' settlement in their former colony, including working with German ministries to release funding and navigating the British administration and settlers on the ground in Tanganyika. While Germany had lost its overseas colonies, these officials, many of whom had served in the pre-war empire, did not view their activity in colonial spaces like Tanganyika as belonging to the past. Officials in the Colonial Section navigated the appearance of political neutrality while also promoting their 'colonial-political' goals, hoping to create footholds of Germanness in Tanganyika that would keep open the possibility of future empire.

In March 1926, the Association of East Africans in Berlin forwarded a letter to the Colonial Section of the *Auswärtiges Amt* (German Foreign Office) from a German settler near Iringa, in the southwest of Tanganyika. Known as German East Africa before the First World War (and today as Tanzania), Tanganyika had become a League of Nations Mandate administered by the British. This settler, however, described the potential for Germans' return to this former colony. While the war had left its mark on East Africa, he remarked that in the southwest of Tanganyika, 'the land makes an impression on me of being untouched, I'd like to say, it is almost just as we left it. The land sleeps and waits to be revived again through hard work and an enterprising spirit.'<sup>1</sup> The Association of East Africans expected the Colonial Section of the *Auswärtiges Amt* to take up this charge and to find a way to this renewed activity in East Africa.

Germany's short-lived formal overseas empire, lasting thirty-five years, is often described as unique in the manner and timing of its end. Through the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was stripped of its overseas colonies not by indigenous independence movements but by those it saw as its colonising peers, and the timing of this decolonisation coincided with Germany's defeat and the feelings of victimisation that swept through the country after the First World War. The Weimar Republic, in Marcia Klotz's words, was 'a post-colonial state in a still-colonial world'.<sup>2</sup> For many, however, Germany's post-colonial status did not result in a decolonisation of the mind.<sup>3</sup> Colonial boosters and former colonial officials, for example, immediately responded to the loss of this empire with propaganda campaigns arguing for the necessity of reclaiming these territories that continued throughout the Weimar

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Major A.D. Aumann, Iringa District, to the Ostafrikaner-Verband, 4 Mar. 1926, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BArch) R 1001/40, Bl. 4. (Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.)

<sup>2</sup> Marcia Klotz, 'Weimar Republic: A Postcolonial State in a Still-Colonial World', in *Germany's Colonial Pasts*, eds. Eric Ames, Marcia Klotz, and Lora Wildenthal (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 135–47.

<sup>3</sup> Joachim Zeller, 'Decolonization of Public Space? (Post)Colonial Culture of Remembrance in Germany', in *Hybrid Cultures – Nervous States: Britain and Germany in a (Post)Colonial World*, eds. Ulrike Lindner, Maren Möhring, Mark Stein, and Silke Stroh (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 65–88.

Republic and the Third Reich.<sup>4</sup> The end of German overseas colonialism, according to these advocates, should not be permanent, and they did not give up the dream of empire.

Efforts to continue German colonial activity in the interwar period extended to the former colonial territories themselves. This article traces the role of officials in the *Auswärtiges Amt* – in the Colonial Section in Berlin and in the German Consulate in Kenya – in German settlement in Tanganyika. How did these officials continue their work in this former German territory that was now under British control and without the apparatus of the Reich Colonial Office? The end of formal empire had reformulated their goals and the creation of the mandate in East Africa offered changed opportunities, both for these officials and for German imperial ambitions. On the one hand, we see a continuity of actors in the officials now located in the *Auswärtiges Amt* and in the colonial companies with which these officials worked, as well as among a number of settlers. This indicates a continuity of presence and administration despite the dissolution of the Reich Colonial Office. On the other hand, the transition from German to British Mandate control changed the context in which these actors operated. *Auswärtiges Amt* officials, for example, showed a greater consistency in support for settlers in Tanganyika than had been the case in the Reich Colonial Office before 1914, in part because these settlers could help stake a German claim on the ground.<sup>5</sup> These officials also had to navigate their roles vis-à-vis British officials and settlers. In interwar Tanganyika, settlers and officials – both German and British – formed nodes in a network of colonising relationships, at times intersecting, at times in conflict, and at times running parallel.

This article argues that these *Auswärtiges Amt* officials created roles for themselves in the interwar period that projected into a revived colonial future but also navigated the mandate present, never foreclosing one in favour of the other. The decisions about if and how Germany's colonies would be reclaimed were above the pay grade of the officials in the Colonial Section. Their efforts, therefore, did not pursue a particular form of control over Tanganyika, colonial or otherwise. Instead, they directed their energies towards keeping a foot in the door, that is, maintaining a German presence in Tanganyika to keep their options open for possible colonisation in the future and access to perceived benefits of a presence in Tanganyika in the present. Given the diplomatic sensitivity of claims on the former overseas empire in the 1920s and 1930s, these officials formulated goals that were circumspect in the short term but potentially ambitious in the long term.

Scholarship on the legacies of colonialism in Germany in the interwar period has focused on cultural products such as literature and film, on propaganda efforts, and, under the Nazi regime, on planning for a future empire.<sup>6</sup> These studies demonstrate the continuing colonial fantasies at play in a post-colonial Germany. While much of this scholarship focuses on the activities of individuals and groups outside of

<sup>4</sup> Willeke Sandler, *Empire in the Heimat: Colonialism and Public Culture in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Philippa Söldenwagner, *Spaces of Negotiation: European Settlement and Settlers in German East Africa, 1900–1914* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2006), 21–52, 147.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Volker Langbehn, ed., *German Colonialism, Visual Culture, and Modern Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Florian Krobb and Elaine Martin, eds., *Weimar Colonialism: Discourses and Legacies of Post-Imperialism in Germany after 1918* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2014); Robert Gordon and Dennis Mahoney, 'Marching in Step: German Youth and Colonial Cinema', in *Germany's Colonial Pasts*, eds. Eric Ames, Marcia Klotz, and Lora Wildenthal (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 189–202; Alain Patrice Nganang, 'Der koloniale Sehnsuchtsfilm. Von lieben "Afrikaner" deutscher Filme in der NS-Zeit', in *AfrikaBilder: Studien zu Rassismus in Deutschland*, ed. Susan Arndt (Münster: UNRAST-Verlag, 2000), 232–52; Britta Schilling, *Postcolonial Germany: Memories of Empire in a Decolonized Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Joachim Nöhre, *Das Selbstverständnis der Weimarer Kolonialbewegung im Spiegel ihrer Zeitschriftenliteratur* (Münster: UNI Press, 1998); Alexandre Kum'a N'dumbe III, *Was wollte Hitler in Afrika? NS-Planungen für eine faschistische Neugestaltung Afrika* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 1993); Karsten Linne, *Deutschland jenseits des Äquators?: Die NS-Kolonialplanungen für Afrika* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2008); Klaus Hildebrand, *Vom Reich zum Weltreich: Hitler, NSDAP, und koloniale Frage 1919–1945* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1969).

the German government, such as the German Colonial Society, official representatives of the German government also played a role in this continued colonial activity, as shown in this article.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the realm of propaganda and fantasies, Germans took up active, contemporary roles in the colonial territories reconfigured as mandates. Several scholars have highlighted the opportunities of Germany's new international position in the interwar period. Birthe Kundrus, for example, notes that the coexistence of continued imperialism after 1919 and Germans' 'simultaneity of being "not afflicted with the stain" of a colonial power, but economically assertive' opened what she calls 'room to manoeuvre' for German settlers, officials, and colonial companies.<sup>8</sup> Sean Wempe has also observed that the mandate system was 'a far more effective tool for erstwhile and wishful imperialists' to achieve the benefits of empire.<sup>9</sup> As Caroline Authaler has argued in the case of the British Mandate of Cameroon, the dynamic of the system, and what she sees as its 'structural weakness', meant that 'actors excluded from formal positions within the mandate system also played a significant role in the actual administration of the mandated territories.'<sup>10</sup> Former imperialists, therefore, could find renewed and sometimes revitalised activity in the afterlife of empire.<sup>11</sup>

This was also the case in Tanganyika in the mid-1920s, as Germany rejoined the international community. The British allowed the 1922 Ex-Enemy Restriction Ordinance – which required special permission from the Governor for Germans to enter Tanganyika – to lapse in June 1925 amid the negotiations surrounding the Anglo-German Commercial Treaty and the Locarno Treaties.<sup>12</sup> Germany joined the League of Nations the next year and held a seat on the Permanent Mandates Commission.<sup>13</sup> In November 1925, legislation ended the restrictions on landholding for Germans in Tanganyika.<sup>14</sup> Many of the Germans who moved to Tanganyika after 1925 had lived in German East Africa or had served in the German colonial forces during the First World War. The settlement of a number of these individuals was facilitated by officials in the Colonial Section of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, established in 1924.

The presence of these German settlers in Tanganyika could never be neutral or just like any other German community abroad. This is seen in the intensity of the Colonial Section's engagement with these settlers and, in fact, in the existence of the Colonial Section at all. Even if the German settlers or their *Auswärtiges Amt* supporters were not acting in an explicitly irredentist manner, as often personal and economic ambitions came to the fore, their actions were often read by British settlers and officials through this historical and political context. Tanganyika was a territory that had been under German

<sup>7</sup> See also, for example, Paulette Reed-Anderson, 'Die Förderung des "kolonialen Gedankens" durch kulturelle Akteure. Die deutsche Behörde für koloniale Angelegenheiten in Berlin während der Weimarer Republik (1919–1931)' (PhD diss., Humboldt Universität, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Birthe Kundrus, 'Nach Versailles. Postkoloniale Phantasien und neokoloniale Realitäten', in *Weimar in die Welt: Globale Verflechtungen der ersten deutschen Republik*, eds. Christoph Cornelißen and Dirk van Laak (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag, 2020), 105.

<sup>9</sup> Sean Wempe, 'A League to Preserve Empires: Understanding the Mandates System and Avenues for Further Scholarly Inquiry', *American Historical Review* 124, no. 5 (Dec. 2019): 1725.

<sup>10</sup> Caroline Authaler, 'Negotiating "Social Progress": German Planters, African Workers, and Mandate Administrators in the British Cameroons (1925–1939)', in *League of Nations' Work on Social Issues: Visions, Endeavours and Experiments*, eds. Magaly Rodríguez García, Davide Rodogno and Liat Kozma (Geneva: United Nations, 2016), 55–6. See also Caroline Authaler, *Deutsche Plantagen in Britisch-Kamerun. Internationale Normen und Lokale Realitäten, 1925–1940* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Additionally, tropical medicine scientists and African studies scholars in Germany continued to assert the importance of their expertise within international networks in the interwar period. See, for example, Deborah Neill, *Networks in Tropical Medicine: Internationalism, Colonialism, and the Rise of a Medical Specialty, 1890–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 182–204; Holger Stoecker, *Afrikawissenschaften in Berlin von 1919 bis 1945: Zur Geschichte und Topographie eines wissenschaftlichen Netzwerkes* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 147–215.

<sup>12</sup> 'Mandated Territory: Tanganyika', *International Labor Review* 7, nos. 2–3 (Feb.–Mar. 1923): 353; Andrew J. Crozier, 'The Colonial Question in Stresemann's Locarno Policy', *The International History Review* 4, no. 1 (Feb. 1982): 44–5.

<sup>13</sup> Sean Andrew Wempe, 'From Unfit Imperialists to Fellow Civilizers: German Colonial Officials as Imperial Experts in the League of Nations, 1919–1933', *German History* 34, no. 1 (Mar. 2016): 21–48.

<sup>14</sup> 'Germans in Tanganyika', *The Times* (2 Nov. 1925): 13.

control and that was now under British control, and in which both Germans and British lived as European settlers. The Tanganyika into which these Germans settled was consequently a contested space.

Officials in the Colonial Section in Berlin and the German Consulate in Kenya therefore displayed pragmatism in service of larger goals. They worked to keep their foot in the door, even when it was not clear (or within the power of these officials to determine) where that door would lead, whether to control of a colony, or a mandate, or to economic involvement without a mandate.<sup>15</sup> While the shape of Germany's future in Tanganyika was amorphous, this future relied, according to these officials, on recreating and maintaining the presence of Germans on the ground in the present. Especially in the early period of establishing settlements from the mid-1920s to the early 1930s explored in this article, their work to support German settlement was always done with an eye on the British and with an awareness of the opportunities and restraints imposed by the mandate.

German officials supported and attempted to shape this settlement in three directions that insisted on the need for a continued German presence in Tanganyika and for the importance of maintaining good relations, if not cooperation, with the British in order to do so. Beginning with an overview of the Colonial Section and its responsibilities, this article then examines the arguments made to convince the German Finance Ministry to release funds for these endeavours. It then turns to the *Auswärtiges Amt's* efforts at cooperation and keeping pace with British settlers, and finally explores the simultaneous effort to maintain an appearance of political neutrality and discretion surrounding the *Auswärtiges Amt's* involvement. The activity of *Auswärtiges Amt* officials involved in supporting this settlement represented a balancing act between a colonial past, a mandate present, and the open-ended question of a colonial future.

### Colonial Work within the *Auswärtiges Amt*

Within the *Auswärtiges Amt*, the former overseas territories fell under the purview of *Abteilung* or Division III, which dealt with Britain and the British Empire, the Americas, the Middle East, and 'Colonial Affairs'. On the one hand, this relocation from the pre-war Reich Colonial Office (created out of the *Auswärtiges Amt* in 1907 and dissolved in 1920) to the *Auswärtiges Amt* marked a break from the colonial period and a subordination of colonialism to greater foreign policy concerns. This shift reflected the reality of the post-war settlement. On the other hand, a vestige of the Colonial Office continued, in part to deal with the implementation of this post-war settlement. Within this remnant, former colonial officials found new roles and forged new, if circumscribed, paths forward for colonial activity.

After the dissolution of the Reich Colonial Office in 1920, issues related to the former colonies were transferred to the Reich Ministry for Reconstruction, before being relocated back into the *Auswärtiges Amt* with the founding of the Colonial Section in 1924.<sup>16</sup> A potential anachronism in a post-colonial Germany, this office was known as *Unterabteilung IIIa* until April 1927, when it became *IIIk/Kolonialangelegenheiten*.<sup>17</sup> A January 1924 statement explaining the rationale for creating this bureau pointed out that the *Auswärtiges Amt* needed to avoid 'a thwarting [*Durchkreuzung*] of our general policy' should colonial policy be executed by another ministry or left in the hands of the colonialist organisations.<sup>18</sup> However, establishing a specific colonial department in the *Auswärtiges Amt* could

<sup>15</sup> See a similar range in the responses to the 1927 survey in 'Soll Deutschland Kolonialpolitik treiben? Eine Umfrage', *Europäische Gespräche* 5, no. 12 (Dec. 1927): 609–76.

<sup>16</sup> Harald Simmel, 'Die Kolonialabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes und das Reichskolonialamt', in *Kolonialmetropole Berlin: eine Spurensuche*, eds. Ulrich van der Heyden and Joachim Zeller (Berlin: Berlin Edition, 2002), 32; Paulette Reed-Anderson, 'Chronologie zur Deutschen Kolonialgeschichte', *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung*, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/afrikanische-diaspora/59376/chronologie-zur-deutschen-kolonialgeschichte/> (accessed 8 June 2022).

<sup>17</sup> In 1936, the Foreign Office was reorganised from a regional system, in place since 1920, back to the topically organised system used in Imperial Germany. In this new structure, the work of the Colonial Section fell mostly under the Political Department. Eckert Conze, *Das Auswärtige Amt: Vom Kaiserreich bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2013), 89–90.

<sup>18</sup> 'Stellungnahme des Auswärtigen Amtes vom 30 Jan. 1924', reproduced in Reed-Anderson, 'Die Förderung des "kolonialen Gedankes" durch kulturelle Akteure', 117–18.

attract international attention to 'our colonial interests and goals', which would be 'the surest way to foil all prospects of acquiring a mandate in the near future'.<sup>19</sup> Instead, the *Auswärtiges Amt* proposed 'only a section, as limited as possible' in the 'English-American department'.<sup>20</sup>

To staff the Colonial Section, the *Auswärtiges Amt* looked to those with colonial experience. The Colonial Section was led by Edmund Brückner, former Governor of Togo, who had also served in Cameroon and German Southwest Africa. It included Paul Eltester, who had served in the colonial administration in Cameroon before the war and would later work in the German Consulate in Kenya from 1932 to 1936, as well as Theodor Gunzert, who had served as a district officer in German East Africa.<sup>21</sup> Eltester was responsible for Togo, Cameroon, non-German West African colonies, and colonial societies, while Gunzert's purview was East and Southwest Africa, Kiaochoh (China), 'colonial science' (*Kolonialwissenschaft*) and the progress of the mandate system.<sup>22</sup> The fourth member of the staff, Anton Heilingbrunner, also had colonial experience in Southwest Africa and was responsible for former colonial officials' personnel matters.<sup>23</sup> The Colonial Section of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, therefore, provided new professional opportunities for former colonial officials.

The Colonial Section, as envisioned in April 1924, functioned as a kind of caretaker for the remnants of the German colonial empire. Its tasks included, for example, care for German colonial graves and processing the personnel files of the former Colonial Office and protectorates.<sup>24</sup> Tasks which could conceivably stretch to the Mandatory present and a possible eye to the future included the 'preservation of Germanness' in Southwest Africa and 'observation and collection of news material from the former German protectorates'.<sup>25</sup> As will be seen, as the 1920s progressed, some of this section's activity expanded beyond this more passive purview.

Within a few months, in fact, Brückner, the Colonial Section head, laid out an agenda that took these tasks and framed them as future-oriented goals. Brückner asserted in a November 1924 memo that Germany needed 'tropical territories to deliver raw materials' for its economy and 'settlement land that can accommodate part of our excess population and in which the German character is preserved'.<sup>26</sup> Here Brückner echoed the talking points of the colonialist lobbying organisations in the interwar period.<sup>27</sup>

However, his assessment of the potential for immediate colonial revisionism was pragmatic. Restitution of most of the former colonies seemed unlikely, but Brückner saw 'not unfavourable pre-conditions for a possible retransfer [back to Germany]' in the cases of Togo, Cameroon, and Tanganyika.<sup>28</sup> To achieve the 'colonial goal' of accessing raw materials, Brückner laid out a scenario that was 'modest' in the present so as not to 'prejudice our claims for the return of further tropical territories'. This scenario, however, did imagine the return of these territories to German control in the future. 'Once we become members of the League of Nations', he explained,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Johannes Hürter, Martin Kröger, Rolf Messerschmidt, and Christiane Scheidemann, eds., *Biographisches Handbuch des deutschen Auswärtigen Dienstes, 1871–1945*, vol. 1, A–F (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000), 301–2, 504; Gerhard Keipert and Martin Kröger, eds., *Biographisches Handbuch des deutschen Auswärtigen Dienstes, 1871–1945*, vol. 2, G–K (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2005), 138.

<sup>22</sup> 'Anhang III. Geschäftsverteilungsplan des Auswärtigen Amtes (Stand vom Nov. 1925)', in *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, 1918–1945*, Serie B: 1925–1933, Band I, 1 Dezember 1925 bis Juli 1926 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 758.

<sup>23</sup> Keipert and Kröger, *Biographisches Handbuch*, vol. 2, G–K, 234.

<sup>24</sup> Reed-Anderson, 'Die Förderung des "kolonialen Gedankens" durch kulturelle Akteure', 119–20, fn. 701.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> 'Aufzeichnung des Geheimen Oberregierungsrats Brückner' (10 Nov. 1924), *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, 1918–1945*, Serie A: 1918–1925, Band XI, 5 Aug. bis 31 Dez. 1924 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 374–5.

<sup>27</sup> Sandler, *Empire in the Heimat*, 27–28.

<sup>28</sup> 'Aufzeichnung des Geheimen Oberregierungsrats Brückner' (10 Nov. 1924), *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, 1918–1945*, Serie A: 1918–1925, Band XI, 5 Aug. bis 31 Dez. 1924 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 374.

we will not only literally have equal economic rights in the Mandate territories, but also, through our participation in the League of Nations, be able to actually enforce these equal rights. The possibility will then arise that in not too long we will so economically penetrate the former German *Schutzgebiete* that a later . . . transfer of the Mandate to Germany is not out of the question.<sup>29</sup>

A few months earlier, in a July 1924 memo to Reich Finance Minister Hans Luther, the *Auswärtiges Amt* had similarly argued for a short-term approach that would keep options open long-term. ‘The end goal of the Reich government in colonial matters’, the memo explained,

must continue to be to reacquire the German colonies or a part of them in any form (*irgendeiner Form*), for example through the League of Nations granting a Mandate over them. As long as this goal is not immediately attainable, and at the present one cannot tell when this moment will come, the German government must at the very least make efforts to prepare for this goal.<sup>30</sup>

One mechanism to do so was through enabling German businessmen and planters to re-enter their ‘former field of activity’. While this memo saw Cameroon as the only available option, Brückner’s memo a few months later saw possibilities in Tanganyika as well. These memos indicate a slippage between the concepts of colony and mandate and a flexibility in the end goal, while emphasising the importance of an ‘on the ground’ presence in the short term.

Brückner’s memo and others like it circulated in the *Auswärtiges Amt* and formed the basis of a four-part imperial strategy. German officials would defend the country’s colonial claims; they would resist the mandatory powers’ efforts to incorporate these territories; they would support Germans’ involvement as experts in international scientific, technical, and public health endeavours in colonial territories; and they would take advantage of the League of Nations’ ‘open door’ policies for trade and economic development in the mandates.<sup>31</sup> Support for German settlement in Tanganyika, while not making any immediate claims, would create a foothold and eventually a community of Germans on the ground that ultimately would be impossible to ignore in any future plans for the territory.

For these endeavours in East Africa, Theodor Gunzert emerged as a central figure who was involved in many aspects of the resettlement project. Born in 1874, Gunzert’s colonial career began after he joined the *Auswärtiges Amt* in 1901. He served as a judge in German East Africa from 1902 to 1904, before becoming District Officer in Pangani in the northeast of the territory from 1904 to 1905 and then in Mwanza in the northwest after 1905.<sup>32</sup> In 1916, following an illness during his retreat south during the First World War, he became a British prisoner of war.<sup>33</sup> After several years of internment, Gunzert returned to Germany in 1919 and joined the Reich Ministry for Reconstruction in 1920.<sup>34</sup> In 1924, Gunzert joined the Colonial Section of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, where he remained until his retirement in the late 1930s.<sup>35</sup>

As was the case for many Germans, the rapid end of empire, followed by revolution at home and the establishment of Germany’s first republic, unsettled Gunzert’s professional life. In an extract from his unpublished post-war memoir (undated but written before his death in 1964), Gunzert described his time in East Africa as the ‘high point of [his] life’, the memories of which were ‘inextinguishable’.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Das Auswärtige Amt an den Reichsminister der Finanzen Luther’ (17 July 1924), *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, 1918–1945*, Serie A: 1918–1925, Band X, 7 Apr. bis 4 Aug. 1924 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 530.

<sup>31</sup> Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 197–8.

<sup>32</sup> Keipert and Kröger, *Biographisches Handbuch*, vol. 2, G-K, 137–8.

<sup>33</sup> Theodor Gunzert papers, 1902–1933 (inclusive), Yale University Library [microfilm], 47.

<sup>34</sup> Keipert and Kröger, *Biographisches Handbuch*, vol. 2, G-K, 138.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Theodor Gunzert papers, 1902–1933 (inclusive), Yale University Library [microfilm], 49.

The opportunity to return to this colonial work must have been welcome, even under changed political circumstances. Gunzert was not a proactive supporter of the new democratic republic, describing himself as a ‘monarchist and admirer of Prussia [*Preussenverehrer*]’.<sup>37</sup> Despite the fact that the republic was supported by the ‘opposition parties’, like the socialists, Gunzert noted that it was also assisted by ‘realistically thinking non-republicans, and the civil service placed itself at [the republic’s] disposal – which naturally also had material grounds. We colonial officials became Reich officials and filled the numerous new offices that carried out the Treaty of Versailles.’<sup>38</sup> While the familiar frameworks of the colonial empire and the *Kaiserreich* were gone, Gunzert, like other officials, sought to adapt to maintain a professional path.

The *Auswärtiges Amt* did in fact see great continuity in personnel from Imperial Germany into the Weimar Republic. While some reforms were made in the early 1920s that allowed more ‘outsiders’ access to positions, the traditional civil service, especially at the level below the highest-ranking positions, could, according to Eckert Conze, ‘maintain the upper hand’.<sup>39</sup> While outside forces inevitably constrained their activities, the presence of Brückner, Eltester, and Gunzert in the Colonial Section meant not only a continuity of expertise, but also a continuity in their personal investment in an arena in which they had built their careers over decades. Their previous experience as ‘men on the spot’ was now brought into the Berlin headquarters of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, just as other former colonial governors, like Theodor Seitz and Heinrich Schnee, found new roles leading the German Colonial Society, the main colonial lobbying organisation.<sup>40</sup>

In East Africa, Gunzert worked closely with Hermann Speiser, who served as German Consul in Kenya from 1925 to 1930. The consulate was located in Mombasa until 1929, when it relocated to Nairobi. Speiser, born in 1889, joined the Foreign Office in 1908 and served in various European consulates before moving to Cape Town, South Africa, in 1913 and then Durban in 1914.<sup>41</sup> Speiser’s views on imperialism or his possible involvement in the colonialist movement are unclear, but, once in Kenya, he actively supported the re-establishment of a robust German presence in Tanganyika. Assessing the settlement possibilities in the newly opened southern highlands in 1926, for example, Speiser wrote to the *Auswärtiges Amt* that the goal of the settlement would be to support ‘people who will create their second *Heimat* [homeland] here and transplant a piece of *Deutschtum* [Germanness] in this land’.<sup>42</sup> In Speiser, Gunzert found an active partner for his German settlement efforts.

The work of the Colonial Section bridged the colonial past and the mandate and interwar present. Such an office need not have existed, because Germany no longer had colonies. And yet it did. Its mission, in part, was to maintain information related to Germany’s former colonies and to prevent their permanent loss through absorption into the empires of the mandatory powers. Through the work of its officials like Theodor Gunzert, this office was an anachronism that gave itself current and continuing purpose.

### ‘Colonial Political’ and Economic Arguments for Settlement

With the opening of the southern highlands (a more temperate region in the southwest of the territory) to limited European settlement in 1926/7, the Colonial Section in the *Auswärtiges Amt* saw the opportunity to further its goals by expanding the number of German settlers and enterprises in Tanganyika. To do so, the Colonial Section looked to former colonists (farmers, civil servants, and colonial soldiers) as one option. Many of these colonists had been interned during the war and

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. This view is confirmed in Conze, *Das Auswärtige Amt*, 44–5.

<sup>39</sup> Conze, *Das Auswärtige Amt*, 55.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Katharina Abermeth, *Heinrich Schnee: Karrierewege und Erfahrungswelten eines deutschen Kolonialbeamten* (Kiel: Solivagus Praetorium, 2017), 460–78; Reed-Anderson, ‘Die Förderung des “kolonialen Gedankens” durch kulturelle Akteure’, 192–3.

<sup>41</sup> Bernd Ispording, Gerhard Keiper, and Martin Kröger, eds., *Biographisches Handbuch des deutschen Auswärtigen Dienstes, 1871–1945*, vol. 4, S (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 305–6.

<sup>42</sup> Report from Speiser, German Consul in Mombasa to the A.A. re: Ansiedlungsmöglichkeiten im Bezirk Iringa, 15 Sept. 1926, BArch R 1001/40, Bl. 43–44.

expelled from Tanganyika at the beginning of the mandate, with their properties confiscated and sold or administered through the Custodian of Enemy Properties.<sup>43</sup> Re-establishing these former colonists – some of whom had difficulty settling in an early Weimar Republic fraught with economic crises – would continue both a German presence in Tanganyika and German colonial expertise.<sup>44</sup> To do so, *Auswärtiges Amt* officials would need to make arguments for the release of funds that carried weight in 1920s Germany. These arguments emphasised both the economic and the ‘colonial-political’ importance of such settlers, and the benefits to be gained in the present as well as the future.

Turning to the former colonists was a logical first step for the Colonial Section, as they already had a claim on the German government. According to the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was obliged to pay compensation to German individuals and companies who had suffered financially through the loss of territories.<sup>45</sup> In 1921, the Reichstag passed a ‘Law on Compensation for War Damages in the Former German Protectorates (Colonial Compensation Law)’.<sup>46</sup> The sections of this law laid out the conditions for compensation. While it aimed to compensate those who had lost their property and livelihoods in the former colonies, it also alluded to a future renewal of such livelihoods. Section Five referred to additional funding set aside ‘from which those injured parties in whose economic activity outside of Europe the Reich has a considerable interest (*ein erhebliches Interesse des Reiches besteht*) may be granted corresponding funds for the resumption of such activity’.<sup>47</sup> In a 1922 elaboration on the law, Anton Wirz noted the importance of foreign trade to Germany’s reconstruction.<sup>48</sup> As such, those who had renewed their lives outside of Europe were to be prioritised. As Wirz explained, ‘the Reich has an interest in directing the activity of those who suffered losses in the protectorates to the territories in which they can best utilise their knowledge, experience, and connections, i.e. in the overseas countries’.<sup>49</sup> This push may have been part of an effort to reduce the burden of former colonists on Germany’s domestic welfare state, but it also acknowledged the restoration of a German presence in these overseas territories as a possible path forward.<sup>50</sup>

The process of awarding this compensation was extremely slow, and after the re-entry of Germans to Tanganyika in 1925, took the form for some of advances against the expected compensation.<sup>51</sup> As these advances were granted to injured parties expecting compensation of more than 200,000 Reichsmarks (RM), most were larger colonial companies rather than individuals.<sup>52</sup> Between 1925 and 1926, for example, the Reich Finance Ministry and the Reich Compensation Office (*Reichsentschädigungsamt*) allocated 7.75 million RM to the *Auswärtiges Amt* for the reestablishment of German companies in Tanganyika.<sup>53</sup> Based on a 1928 list of recipients of financial aid, scholar Wolfgang Hinnenberg estimates that the *Auswärtiges Amt* granted 9.5 million RM in loans, divided between 3.4 million to ‘natural people, that is former farmers and planters dispossessed after the war’, and 6.1 million to ‘legal entities’ (*juristische Personen*).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Peter A. Dumbuya, *Tanganyika Under International Mandate, 1919–1946* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), 103–4; ‘Mandated Territory: Tanganyika’.

<sup>44</sup> Sean Andrew Wempe, *Revenants of the German Empire: Colonial Germans, Imperialism, & the League of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 68–95.

<sup>45</sup> Article 297 (i) (Economic Clauses), Treaty of Versailles, <https://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/versa9.html> (accessed 24 July 2023).

<sup>46</sup> Anton Wirz, *Kriegsschädengesetze. Das Verdrängungsschädengesetz, das Kolonialschädengesetz, und das Auslandsschädengesetz* (Freiberg im Breisgau: Verlag von Julius Boltze, [1922]).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 56, fn. 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–7, fn. 2.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, John Hiden, ‘The Weimar Republic and the Problem of the Auslandsdeutsche’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 12 (1977): 280.

<sup>51</sup> Wolfgang Hinnenberg, ‘Die deutschen Bestrebungen zur wirtschaftlichen Durchdringung Tanganyikas 1925 bis 1933’ (PhD diss., Universität Hamburg, 1973), 51.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.



The opening of the southern highlands offered an opportunity to fund a new, expanded group of settlers beyond the German farmers who had lost property in East Africa.<sup>55</sup> This group was to settle in the southern highlands as *Kleinsiedler*, establishing subsistence family farms. Before the First World War, German public and official debate was split on whether German East Africa should be a territory for settlers at all. ‘Emigrationist’ and ‘economic’ perspectives ebbed and flowed between the 1880s and 1914, with neither view becoming dominant.<sup>56</sup> The strategic and political role of these settlers changed in the interwar period. Their presence could offset the presence of British settlers, as described below. Supporting their return to Tanganyika would also fulfil the goals of the Colonial Compensation Law to use their colonial experience and to direct their economic energies back to overseas territories.

To make these plans for Tanganyika a reality, the *Auswärtiges Amt* needed funds. As indicated by the correspondence between the *Auswärtiges Amt* and the Finance Ministry, the latter required some convincing. According to Hinnenberg, the Finance Ministry provided funds when it thought the German economy would benefit. The Colonial Section, on the other hand, saw ‘colonial-political’ goals as its priority, and ‘economic “penetration” [“*Durchdringung*”] as the only possible means at the moment to come closer to their political goals, whereby the question of economic productivity [*Rentabilität*] played a secondary role’.<sup>57</sup> Of course, both sides spoke the language of the other tactically, seeing both components (‘economic’ and ‘colonial-political’) as supporting German interests.

This toggling between economic and ‘colonial-political’ arguments is evident in a series of letters sent from the *Auswärtiges Amt* to the Finance Ministry in late 1926. On 6 November 1926, the *Auswärtiges Amt* explained the need to fund a number of the ‘aggrieved East Africans [*Ostafrika-Geschädigten*] who are suitable and who have the desire to settle’ in the Iringa region through ‘rebuilding loans from within the bounds of [the First World War] compensation’.<sup>58</sup> These potential settlers would include, in particular, ‘non-commissioned officers and other members of the former *Schutztruppe* for East Africa and . . . the former lower level civil servants [*niederen Beamtenklassen*], who for example in Southwest Africa represent the most suitable type of settlers and farmers’.<sup>59</sup> Because of the political necessity of this settlement, the *Auswärtiges Amt* requested the Finance Ministry’s help in supporting this ‘group of settlers through the granting of a special fund, which will not come from compensation funds – as the general reconstruction funds have been’. The *Auswärtiges Amt* estimated that it would need 750,000 RM for about sixty settlers.<sup>60</sup> As context and comparison, in May 1926, Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann estimated that ‘12–13 million Goldmarks’ were necessary for a rebuilding program in Tanganyika and, also in 1926, Stresemann circulated a ‘Memorandum concerning the availability of 30 million RM for granting credit to settled German groups abroad in Europe’.<sup>61</sup> The initial amount requested for the Tanganyika settlement, therefore, was not exorbitant, coming out at 12,500 RM per settler, the amount estimated as necessary to establish settlers.<sup>62</sup>

The *Auswärtiges Amt*’s November 1926 letter to the Finance Ministry was followed by another mis- sive on 30 December 1926, from Walter de Haas, head of the *Auswärtiges Amt*’s Division III (in which the Colonial Section was housed), drawing greater attention to the ‘colonial-political’ importance of the plan.<sup>63</sup> De Haas again asked for the 750,000 RM credit, emphasising the increasing number of

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 90, 118.

<sup>56</sup> Söldenwagner, *Spaces of Negotiation*, 21–2.

<sup>57</sup> Hinnenberg, ‘Die deutschen Bestrebungen zur wirtschaftlichen Durchdringung Tanganyikas 1925 bis 1933’, 59.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from the A.A. to the Finance Ministry, 6 Nov. 1926, BArch R 1001/40, Bl. 69RS.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 69RS-70.

<sup>61</sup> ‘211. Der Reichsminister des Auswärtigen Stresemann an den Reichsminister der Finanzen Reinhold (Abschrift)’, 6 May 1926, *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, 1918–1945*, Serie B, Band I, 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 499; Hiden, ‘The Weimar Republic and the Problem of the Auslandsdeutsche’, 277, 280.

<sup>62</sup> Rundschreiben, BArch R 1001/36, Bl. 45.

<sup>63</sup> De Haas had worked for several export firms in China, the Philippines, India, and Australia. After 1903, he worked in the German Consulate in Sydney, Australia, until his internment in 1915. In 1920, he began work in the Foreign Office in Berlin and, in 1924, assumed the leadership of Division III. Keipert and Kröger, *Biographisches Handbuch*, vol. 2, G-K, 149–50.

British settlers in the Iringa region and outlining the role of British settlers from Kenya in this process. De Haas warned that, if no German action was taken, 'the long-term predominance will fall to the British', which would support British efforts to absorb Tanganyika into its empire. But, he emphasised, it was not yet too late, and 'with relatively simple means something significant can be achieved'.<sup>64</sup> Amplifying the urgency of his perspective, de Haas included a long quotation from a recent communication with German Consul Hermann Speiser in which Speiser called 'promotion of small settlements [*Kleinbesiedlung*] by Germans' one of 'our most important colonial duties'.<sup>65</sup> The value of these small settlements, insignificant economically compared with large plantations, was in embedding these German settlers in the territory longer term.

At the same time, de Haas also noted the economic importance of supporting this settlement, taking a different tack to emphasise the more immediate benefits to Germany of this continued presence. He asked rhetorically, 'aren't German settlers everywhere the best champions [*Vorkämpfer*] of German exports?', and claimed that the return of Germans to Tanganyika since 1925 had increased Germany's share in imports to the territory from 6 to 12 per cent.<sup>66</sup> As a final argument for the necessity of supporting settlement, de Haas pointed to 'the maintenance of tropical agricultural knowledge and experience' that such settlement would ensure. These arguments emphasised the economic expertise that could benefit Germany regardless of the form of political control over Tanganyika.

Such arguments proved successful. In February 1927, Dr Lothholz in the Finance Ministry responded, explaining that

a budget credit of 750,000 RM from Chapter XX, 4 Title 17 Section IV of the continuous expenditures of the ordinary budget for burdens of war – 1926 – [was] hereby made available to the *Auswärtiges Amt* for the loan action in aid of German smallholders in the highlands, which are suitable for whites, in the former German East Africa, especially on the Iringa Plateau.<sup>67</sup>

These funds were therefore specifically allocated for these small-scale settlers who would settle in the southern highlands and who would resume their economic activity abroad.

Given the success of this two-part argument, de Haas returned to it when requesting additional funds from the Finance Ministry in April 1927. Again, de Haas emphasised both the present economic value for Germany of returning settlers to Tanganyika and the future that could be built on their experience and presence. De Haas described the 'invasion' of German settlers in the year and a half since they had been allowed back in the territory, predicting an increased impact on 'Germany's trade and exports' that would only grow as the Germans who currently worked as assistants on other farms acquired their own land.<sup>68</sup> 'Precisely this element', he explained, 'has proven itself to be a particularly valuable supporter of the building of East Africa, they are the most reliable representatives of *Deutschtum* and, through their number, secure for the Reich an outstandingly experienced line of tropical planters who train their own next generation [*Nachwuchs*] themselves.'<sup>69</sup> As such, de Haas requested 1.5 million RM as settlement loans to these Germans (as well as an additional 1.5 million RM for the purchase of plantations).<sup>70</sup> This appeal continued to resonate as, in response, in May 1927 the Finance Ministry provided one million RM to the *Auswärtiges Amt* to support loans for settlers in the southern highlands.<sup>71</sup> By September 1927, sixty-five settlers has been sent out, half of

<sup>64</sup> Letter from de Haas, A.A. to Finance Ministry, 30 Dec. 1926, BArch R 1001/36, Bl. 97.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Dr Lothholz, Finance Ministry to the A.A., 23 Feb. 1927, BArch R 1001/40, Bl. 213.

<sup>68</sup> Memo from de Haas, Foreign Office, to Finance Ministry, 23 Apr. 1927, BArch R 1001/41, Bl. 144-5.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., Bl. 146-7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., Bl. 147.

<sup>71</sup> 'aus Erlass I 9632 vom 7. Mai 1927 aus Kapitel XX 4 Tit. 17/1926 1,000,000 RM.' 'durch Kabinettsbeschluss vom 2. März 1932 1 750 000 RM, davon für südwestafrikanische Farmer abgezweigt 150 000 RM.' 'Zu AA 4303-1 I C. Vermerk', BArch R 2/11639, n.p.

whom had previously lived in German East Africa (and another 20 per cent of whom had lived in the former German colonies of German Southwest Africa or Cameroon).<sup>72</sup>

The arguments made to fund this settlement were both based on the past and the future. Former colonists had been robbed of their homes and livelihoods through the creation of the mandate, the argument went, and so the support that the *Auswärtiges Amt* proposed was only that due to them. Such support, however, could also maintain the colonial expertise of these former colonists for future generations – that is, for future involvement in overseas colonies – as well as benefit the German economy in the present and the future. While these arguments did not make explicit irridentist claims, they imagined a need for continued German activity in Tanganyika.

### German-British Cooperation

As seen in de Haas's letters, British settlers served as a constant shadow in these officials' calculations for German settlement, as a marker against which the success or failure of these plans was measured, and (as will be seen) at times as potential strategic allies on the ground. German officials' pragmatism came to the fore as they assessed how best to navigate the actions and attitudes of British officials and settlers, two groups at times at odds themselves. While the Colonial Section could make convincing 'colonial-political' arguments to the Finance Ministry, on the ground they faced the reality of the mandate and the British presence in the territory. Good relations with British settlers were necessary to further their settlement goals.

The conditions for European settlement in interwar Tanganyika both restricted and created space for these German settlers. Despite allowing German and other non-African immigration, Tanganyika was understood to be and to remain, in the words of one British official in 1921, a 'black man's country', meaning that white settlement would not be prioritised.<sup>73</sup> Over the interwar period, about 400,000 hectares of land were alienated, that is, appropriated for colonial purposes and, in the case of Tanganyika, allotted for 'rights of occupancy' for up to ninety-nine years for settlers.<sup>74</sup> By 1937 a total of 1,157,246 hectares of land (or 1.31 per cent of the territory) had been alienated.<sup>75</sup> Mandate policies did not prevent the alienation of land in Tanganyika for European settlers, but they did prevent a massive influx of such settlers. The European population in Tanganyika in 1938 was just over 9,000, compared with over 20,000 in Kenya.<sup>76</sup>

While British mandate officials did not actively encourage European immigration, the mandate itself provided some advantages to German settlers. Tanganyika's status as a mandated territory rather than a colony gave the citizens of all League of Nations member-states in the territory rights equal to those of British citizens in terms of entry, residence, acquisition of property, and 'complete economic, commercial, and industrial equality'.<sup>77</sup> These terms applied to Germans after Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926, and also restricted the advantage the British Colonial Office could give British settlers. After 1925, several hundred Germans settled in Tanganyika every year, making them the second largest European community. By 1939, German settlers made up a third of around 9,000 Europeans in the territory, with the British making up 46 per cent, and other nations comprising 20 per cent (together with around 30,000 Indians and over five million

<sup>72</sup> Hinnenberg, 'Die deutschen Bestrebungen zur wirtschaftlichen Durchdringung Tanganyikas 1925 bis 1933', 129–30.

<sup>73</sup> John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 262.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 303; Roland E. Richter, 'Land Law in Tanganyika since the British Military Occupation and under the British Mandate of the League of Nations, 1916–1946', in *Land Law and Land Ownership in Africa: Case Studies from Colonial and Contemporary Cameroon and Tanzania*, eds. Robert Debusmann and Stefan Arnold (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, Bayreuth University, 1996), 57–62.

<sup>75</sup> Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, 303.

<sup>76</sup> Werner Biermann, *The Tanzanian Economy, 1920–1985: Colonial Valorisation, Reconstruction, and Crisis* (Münster: Lit, 1998), 26, 53; Ernst Weigt, *Europäer in Ostafrika: Klimabedingungen und Wirtschaftsgrundlagen* (Cologne: Geographisches Institut der Universität Köln, 1955), 48.

<sup>77</sup> 'Appendix B: Text of the Mandate for the Tanganyika Territory', Michael D. Callahan, *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914–1931* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 195.

Africans).<sup>78</sup> Forty-two per cent of these Germans were engaged in agriculture.<sup>79</sup> The high proportion of German settlers to British settlers reflected not only their historical connection to the territory, but also the fact that, in historian John Iliffe's words, 'Tanganyika was at the bottom of the [British] imperial pecking order'.<sup>80</sup> Due in part to the lack of British investment prompted by the uncertainty of Tanganyika's political future as well as other commercial treaties, Germans were allowed to continue immigrating into Tanganyika even after Germany announced its departure from the League of Nations in 1933.<sup>81</sup> German settlers, therefore, could carve out both physical and economic spaces for themselves within the mandate.

Within these settlement dynamics, British and German settlers could be competitors on the ground as well as possible allies for shared settler causes. With the opening of the southern highlands to European settlement, for example, a number of British settlers in Kenya hoped to expand their holdings into this territory. Lord Delamere, a leading figure in the British community in Kenya, established a settlement agency called Colonists Ltd. in Iringa in 1925 'with the idea of helping white settlement forward in the Southern Highlands in every possible way'.<sup>82</sup> In a 1926 interview with the *East African Standard*, Frank Billinge, the general manager of Colonists Ltd., noted the presence of several German settlers in the region, who 'as distinct from the German official, [were] very good farmer[s]'. But, Billinge warned, the German population could increase rapidly if the British did not do more to settle in Tanganyika, because German settlers tended to bring out their relatives as well.<sup>83</sup>

Just as Billinge warned of the threat of increased German settlement, German officials kept a close eye on the influx of Billinge and his co-nationalists into the southern highlands. Both sides attempted to keep pace with the other to achieve or maintain dominance through numbers. In a December 1926 letter to the Finance Ministry, the *Auswärtiges Amt* referred to the 'imminent mass immigration' from Kenya supported by Colonists Ltd. The *Auswärtiges Amt* lamented that '[t]he Germans unfortunately cannot keep pace with these efforts', and that an 'organization equivalent to that of the British . . . cannot be created because of the continuing uncertainty about whether the necessary funds will eventually be made available'.<sup>84</sup> Strategic cooperation with these British settlers seemed one way to overcome this deficiency.

Despite British-German imperial competition and conflict in the First World War, such cooperation would not have been novel. German migrants had for centuries lived and worked within the British Empire and could find areas of overlap in their goals.<sup>85</sup> As neighbouring colonial powers in Africa, the British Empire often served as a reference point for German colonisers, as Ulrike Lindner has shown.<sup>86</sup> Given this history, and the realities of British control over the mandate, British-German cooperation had pragmatic value for those seeking to settle Germans in Tanganyika.

At the same time, however, such cooperation could also reshape the dynamic within Tanganyika in Germans' favour. In 1925, Hermann Speiser had emphasised the importance of increasing the German population in Tanganyika quickly. When Germans made up the majority of the European

<sup>78</sup> Weigt, *Europäer in Ostafrika*, 55, 81; Hinnenberg, 'Die deutschen Bestrebungen zur wirtschaftlichen Durchdringung Tanganyikas 1925 bis 1933', 245.

<sup>79</sup> Weigt, *Europäer in Ostafrika*, 76.

<sup>80</sup> Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, 302.

<sup>81</sup> Michael Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa, 1929-1946* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 114; Copy of excerpt of minute by G.G. Fitzmaurice, 8 Nov. 1934, attached to letter from J.V. Perowne to G. F. Seel, 8 Dec. 1934, The National Archives Kew (hereafter TNA) CO 691/136/12, 43-7.

<sup>82</sup> *Southern Highlands of Tanganyika, Iringa Province* (Colonists, Ltd., Iringa, Tanganyika Territory: 1925), 10, BArch R 1001/40.

<sup>83</sup> 'White Settlement in the Tanganyika Highlands', *East African Standard* (6 Oct. 1926), BArch R 1001/40, Bl. 76-7.

<sup>84</sup> Letter from the A.A. to the Finance Ministry, 30 Dec. 1926, BArch R 1001/40, Bl. 114-114RS.

<sup>85</sup> John R. Davis, Stefan Manz, and Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, eds., *Transnational Networks: German Migrants in the British Empire, 1670-1914* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 9.

<sup>86</sup> Ulrike Lindner, 'German Colonialism and the British Neighbor in Africa Before 1914', in *German Colonialism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany*, eds. Mohammad Salama and Volker Langbehn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 255. See also Ulrike Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen: Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika, 1880-1914* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011).

population, he explained, 'I think it would be pretty impossible for the political fate of Tanganyika to be decided above the heads of this majority'.<sup>87</sup> Speiser felt that any funding invested in prospective settlers would 'pay off politically and economically many times over'. Settlement could therefore stymie British hopes for long-term control.

As the settlement got under way in 1927, Speiser and Gunzert considered the political and economic advantages of cooperation with British settlers. Because of the mandate administration's reticence about European settlement, British settlers who advocated for more settler rights and settler-friendly policies could serve as crucial allies. Delamere and his colleagues, Speiser explained to Gunzert in April 1927, were not only idealists,

but rather in true English fashion also know how to combine [these goals] with profit, it must be plausible to them that the flow [*Herzustoemen*] of German settlers promotes the development of the land, raises the value of the land, legitimates the building of railroads and streets, etc., in short that the settlement by Germans brings about what these gentlemen want.<sup>88</sup>

It was therefore crucial, Speiser emphasised, to maintain discretion so as to dispel British settler concerns about the political goals of this settlement which, if confirmed, would prompt resistance.

Gunzert responded to Speiser that August with an agenda for the German settlers that included cooperation with British settlers to push for new railroads, to open more land to European settlement, for labour policies that benefited settlers, and for more settler self-administration.<sup>89</sup> German settlers were also to remain neutral on the question of closer union, which was the call for federation between the three territories in East Africa under British control (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika). The quid pro quo expected from British settlers included supporting Germans' land claims, accreditation of German schools, and ensuring a proportionate German representation in any future institutions of self-administration.<sup>90</sup> Both Speiser and Gunzert saw shared goals with the British settlers that could simultaneously solidify the German presence in Tanganyika.

For German officials, therefore, British-German cooperation was necessary for the success of German settlement in Tanganyika. While at the beginning of this settlement Gunzert had feared competition between 'land-hungry' German and British settlers, by the end of 1927 the picture he painted of relations between the two groups was very different. German and British settlers 'communicate collegially, work together in farmers' associations and as a matter of principle do not outbid each other in the [land] auctions; the British press in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam has not to this point taken part in the anti-German agitation [*Deutschenhetze*] which is organized in the motherland'.<sup>91</sup> This cooperation would be to the benefit of all.

Through this emphasis on settler cooperation, Gunzert and the Colonial Section took the long view. The pragmatism behind British-German settler cooperation was necessary for the immediate need to acquire land in the territory, but it was also not blindly optimistic about the return of Tanganyika to Germany, at least in the short term. Cooperation with British settlers was necessary to create Gunzert's imagined scenario, in which German settlers, through their presence, numbers, and collegial relationships – rather than agitation – would gain influence and de facto control. Acknowledging the reality of British control and the restraints placed on the British by the mandate itself, Colonial Section officials chose the path of cooperation.

### Political Neutrality and Discretion

Cooperation, however, did not mean transparency. Colonial Section officials took pains to keep their direct involvement out of the view of British officials and settlers. Regardless of what the future would

<sup>87</sup> Memo from Speiser to A.A., 14 Nov. 1925, BArch R 1001/533, Bl. 110.

<sup>88</sup> Letter from Speiser to Gunzert, 2 Apr. 1927, BArch R 1001/41, Bl. 167.

<sup>89</sup> Letter from Gunzert to Speiser, 25 Aug. 1927, BArch R 1001/42, Bl. 77-77RS.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Gunzert, 'Aufzeichnung', 26 Nov. 1927, BArch R 1001/18, Bl. 169.

hold for Germans in Tanganyika, the *Auswärtiges Amt* could not engage in irredentism on the ground in the present. The concern here was that open involvement by the German government would (officially) politicise this settlement, potentially causing difficulties on the ground and in diplomatic circles.

Instead, the Colonial Section used a series of façade companies to provide financial support to the settlers in the form of loans, and then, as the foreign exchange crisis took hold in Germany after 1931, to provide goods such as tools and machinery in lieu of cash.<sup>92</sup> Like organisations used to funnel funds from the *Auswärtiges Amt* to Germans living in Poland in the interwar period, the Colonial Section used these companies and their representatives on the ground in Tanganyika as intermediaries to keep its involvement hidden.<sup>93</sup> In his post-war memoir, Gunzert remarked that ‘thanks to the nesting [*Verschachtelung*] of the companies and executive bodies, it was not entirely clear to either the British or the German borrowers who was really behind the whole work’.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, vast amounts of correspondence with, by, and through these companies appears in the Colonial Section’s files (now part of the Reich Colonial Office collection in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin), indicating this office’s active involvement in all of the companies.

These companies also represented a degree of continuity from the period of formal colonialism. They included the *Tanganyika Gesellschaft* (Tanganyika Company) and the *Ueberseeische Gesellschaft* (Overseas Company), both post-war subsidiaries of the *Deutsche Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft* (German East African Company), which was the colonial company that had launched German incursions into East Africa before turning over control of the territory to the German government in 1891.<sup>95</sup> The *Ueberseeische Gesellschaft* itself had two subsidiaries headquartered in Tanganyika: the General Investment and Development Company, founded in 1929, and the Uehe Trading Company, founded in 1934.<sup>96</sup> In the case of some settler crops, such as coffee, the Colonial Section facilitated advantageous trading terms for these companies to purchase German settlers’ crops and import them to Germany.<sup>97</sup> They also extended this support to Hansing & Co. and O’Swald & Co., trading companies that had renewed their pre-war activity in Tanganyika.<sup>98</sup> The Colonial Section’s involvement in supporting German settlers gave new life to these companies as well.

Even with their use of these façade companies, German officials remained eager to avoid any impression of irredentism on the ground. A *Tanganyika Gesellschaft* agent who travelled with the settlers to Tanganyika in 1927, for example, received instructions to deliver the materials that they had shared with the settlers onboard (‘prospectuses, literature, flyers about crops’) to the German Consulate in Mombasa upon arrival.<sup>99</sup> Settlers were notified that ‘under no circumstances’ were letters or telegrams to be addressed to the *Auswärtiges Amt* or officials in the *Auswärtiges Amt*.<sup>100</sup> Likewise, all correspondence with the *Auswärtiges Amt* or with the *Tanganyika Gesellschaft*, another agent was told, should be destroyed before landing in Dar es Salaam, and originals or copies of the loan agreements were on no account to be taken to Tanganyika.<sup>101</sup> Berlin officials and the agents, therefore, took measures to maintain a level of secrecy.

All of these endeavours did not in fact evade British suspicions about the involvement of the *Auswärtiges Amt*. In his February 1927 meeting with Governor Donald Cameron, for example, Speiser

<sup>92</sup> Hinzenberg, ‘Die deutschen Bestrebungen zur wirtschaftlichen Durchdringung Tanganyikas 1925 bis 1933’; BArch R 1001/45, BArch R 1001/46, BArch R 1001/47.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland 1918–1939* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1993), 146–61; Hiden, ‘The Weimar Republic and the Problem of the Auslandsdeutsche’, 274.

<sup>94</sup> Theodor Gunzert papers, 1902–1933 (inclusive), Yale University Library [microfilm], 54.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Notes on the Activities of German Companies in Tanganyika Territory’, 6 June 1934, TNA CO 691/139/7, 19–20.

<sup>96</sup> Notice, 10 July 1929, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amt (hereafter PA AA) RAV Nairobi, 18, S 20 Schriftwechsel mit General Investment and Development Company Ltd. in Daressalam. ‘Betrifft Rundschreiben No. 7 Nachkriegsfirmen. Bericht über Firma No. 4, Uehe Comp Ltd Iringa’, BArch NS 9/301.

<sup>97</sup> BArch R 1001/8002; BArch R 1001/8017; BArch R 1001/8018; BArch R 1001/8019.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, ‘Aufzeichnung betr. Kaffeekompensation Ostafrika 1936’, 12 Feb. 1936, BArch R 1001/8029, Bl. 67–8.

<sup>99</sup> Letter from Brückner to German Consulate, Mombasa, 17 Aug. 1927, BArch R 1001/41, Bl. 372–3.

<sup>100</sup> Letter to Herr Reutter, 15 Aug. 1927, BArch R 1001/42, Bl. 33/2.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

reported that Cameron had attempted to surreptitiously discover if the German government was organising the immigration of German settlers. He began by asking 'if we selected the people who come out here'.<sup>102</sup> 'He introduced this in itself harmless question', Speiser recounted, 'with the words "don't answer me if you don't want to"' [sic. Cameron quotation in English in Speiser's letter]. Speiser coyly replied that of course it would be best if the settlers were 'capable people', but that everyone was free to emigrate and that they had no means of preventing 'unsuitable elements' from doing so.<sup>103</sup> In this interaction, Cameron seemed aware of the reality of German government support, but the two diplomats circled the issue rather than confront it head on. Cameron's gentle probing on this issue was one of a number of British voices raising concerns.<sup>104</sup> While Cameron was more diplomatic about the question of German government support, other British voices were less sanguine, a trend that continued into the 1930s.<sup>105</sup> From Berlin, Gunzert observed to Speiser that German immigration to Tanganyika was a topic 'that moves all circles in London, and that moreover the alleged subsidies of the German government in particular play a large role [in these discussions]'.<sup>106</sup> Tanganyika's mandate status and the open question of Germany's colonial claims focused British attention on any possibility of irredentist manoeuvres.

Given this scrutiny, Gunzert and Speiser debated the advantage of greater transparency in the summer of 1927. For his part, Speiser appeared less concerned about British reactions to German settlement, though not about the need for discretion. The British know about the *Tanganyika Gesellschaft*, Speiser argued, so it was inevitable that they would guess at the connections to the *Auswärtiges Amt*, 'get wind of the political goals behind this company and link [these goals] with "secret funds" of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, which the settlers already often foolishly speak about'.<sup>107</sup> As such, '[t]he English wish for openness' would not change current conditions greatly. Gunzert disagreed, telling Speiser that 'in my opinion, we would make a big mistake if we would let the English government in on the activity of our *Tanganyika Gesellschaft* [*wenn wir die Tätigkeit unserer Tang. Ges. der engl. Regierung auf die Nase bänden*]'.<sup>108</sup> Gunzert's view was supported by Edmund Brückner, who in December 1927 explained the presence of 'unofficial' (*nicht-amtlich*) correspondence between himself and Speiser in the records on settlement in the Iringa region. This correspondence should have been done under the name of the *Tanganyika Gesellschaft*, but, as Brückner deemed it necessary to 'avoid [the use of] the name of this company as much as possible over there, in order not to awaken the British government's suspicions', this correspondence was done personally.<sup>109</sup> Despite Speiser's perhaps more realistic attitude from his perspective in Kenya, the Colonial Section continued its precautions.

Officials in the Colonial Section took a broader diplomatic view of their support for the German settlers. Their support was not necessarily illegal, but it could not appear as irredentism, which would have had diplomatic consequences. Therefore, the façade companies continued to play an important role, precautions were taken to cloak the *Auswärtiges Amt's* involvement, and discretion remained the order of the day. The goals of *Auswärtiges Amt* officials were more strategic and long-term than the propaganda of the domestic colonialist movement, which demanded immediate reclamation of the former colonies.<sup>110</sup> Instead, these officials sought to maintain an appearance of political neutrality. Settlers needed their support as individuals and for the economic benefits to Germany through trade, but explicit or implicit political claims would have endangered these efforts and scuttled relations with British settlers and officials.

<sup>102</sup> Letter from Speiser to A.A., 19 Feb. 1927, BArch R 1001/41, Bl. 73.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from William Ormsby-Core to Captain A. Evans, M.P., 8 Nov. 1927, TNA CO 691/91/11, 7; TNA CO 691/91/11, 22; 'German Settlers in Tanganyika', *The Times* (12 Apr. 1927): 7.

<sup>105</sup> Callahan, *A Sacred Trust*, 67–8, 116, 121–2.

<sup>106</sup> Letter from Gunzert to Speiser, 21 July 1927, BArch R 1001/41, Bl. 278.

<sup>107</sup> Letter from Speiser to A.A., 29 Aug. 1927, BArch R 1001/42, Bl. 169.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> 'Aufzeichnung', 12 Dec. 1927, BArch R 1001/43, Bl. 29–30.

<sup>110</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 197–8.

## Conclusion

In 1926, the German settlers near Iringa had called on Germans to revive their activity in East Africa. The officials in the Colonial Section heeded this call. By 1929, 127 German settlers had received support through the *Tanganyika Gesellschaft*.<sup>111</sup> Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, Gunzert and the Colonial Section of the Foreign Office continued to assist German settlers who congregated in enclaves in Iringa and Mufindi in the southwest, in Arusha and Oldeani in the north, or elsewhere throughout Tanganyika. They engaged in direct correspondence with some of the settlers, or through their façade companies. When the Great Depression hit Tanganyika, this engagement became more essential to efforts to keep the settlers afloat. These officials' involvement continued into the Third Reich and was taken up by other German consuls after Speiser's departure.

In his post-war memoir, Theodor Gunzert ends his reflections on the interwar period by recapping the success of his and his office's endeavours in resettling Germans in Tanganyika. These Germans, he claimed, 'were leading again in agriculture and plantations, and numerically with over 3500 heads. The British still predominate only in the civil service, banking, and mining.'<sup>112</sup> Economic and demographic sway were presented here as ultimately more influential than political power over the territory, echoing Brückner's 1924 memo. Such conditions held out the promise of a smooth return of the territory to German control. 'Had the political relations in the *Heimat* developed differently', Gunzert concludes, 'a change of mandate [to German control] would not have brought too great of an economic and administrative break.'<sup>113</sup> It was the Second World War that prevented this possibility from becoming reality.

While the Treaty of Versailles and the mandate system had intended to remove Germany from the colonising powers, for some individual Germans, the reality was different. The Colonial Section of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, an interwar reincarnation of the Reich Colonial Office, maintained the German government's interest in its former overseas territories. Through this office, former colonial officials, as well as colonial companies and settlers, took up roles in East Africa that were perhaps not entirely new but renewed. Germans were out, but still in, navigating the end of empire with relative ease.

For the officials in the Colonial Section, the question of time or the temporality of empire was both important *and* not important for the (re)settlement of Tanganyika. They may have hoped to reclaim Tanganyika in the future, and this hope justified the investment of money and time and the ink spilled in the voluminous correspondence between the *Auswärtiges Amt* and the Finance Ministry in Berlin, the German Consulate in Kenya, and German settlers. But these officials' priority was the present: establishing German settlements, sustaining the settlers in the face of financial hardship exacerbated by the Great Depression, and maintaining good relations with their British neighbours, all to preserve their presence and to keep one path to a future colonial empire open. For these German officials, the end of empire need not be the end, as long as they could keep a foot in the door.

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<sup>111</sup> Hinnenberg, 'Die deutschen Bestrebungen zur wirtschaftlichen Durchdringung Tanganyikas 1925 bis 1933', 141, Appendix 4, 271–3.

<sup>112</sup> Theodor Gunzert papers, 1902–1933 (inclusive), Yale University Library [microfilm], 55.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*