



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS
AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Journal article

Why Germany's guestworkers were largely Europeans: the selective principles of post-war labour recruitment policy

Karen Schonwälder  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7458-6927>

Persistent identifier of original publication

[10.1080/0141987042000177324](https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000177324)

Original publication date

2004

Published in

Ethnic and Racial Studies

Suggested citation

Schönwälder, K. (2004). Why Germany's guestworkers were largely Europeans: the selective principles of post-war labour recruitment policy. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27(2), 248–265.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000177324>

Document version

Accepted version

Creative Commons licence

[Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 \(CC BY-NC 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Why Germany's guestworkers were largely Europeans: The selective principles of post-war labour recruitment policy

Karen Schönwälder

Abstract: The article demonstrates that West Germany in the 1950s to 1970s not only recruited millions of foreign workers but also systematically excluded potential migrants of African and Asian origins. Like many other countries in the post-war decades, West Germany practised a migration policy that entailed exclusion on the basis of national origins. But unlike other countries, it never officially lifted these restrictions, and there was never a wide-ranging public debate about the principles of an at least partly racially motivated selection underlying West Germany's guestworker policy.

Keywords: African migrants; Asian migrants; Germany; guestworkers; labour migration; racism

Germany's immigrant and ethnic minority population today is composed of people from an array of different nationalities. Labour recruitment, the

liberalization of movement in Europe, as well as refugee movements, have contributed to the development of a large and diverse minority population. Yet, when looked at more closely, it is striking how 'European' this population is. Of 7.3 million foreign nationals in Germany at the end of the year 2000, 5.86 million were Europeans (including Turks). Only 300,000 held the citizenship of an African, 842,000 that of an Asian state (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Ausländerfragen 2002).¹ As this article will make clear, the peculiar national composition of Germany's immigrant population is to a considerable extent the result of a deliberate policy pursued by the West German governments of the 1950s to 1970s. Migration policy in the recruitment phase was not, as claimed by some authors, just shaped by a 'Europeans principle' intended to favour allied states and to further European integration (see e.g. Lohrmann 1974, p. 122). Rather, this euphemism tends to obscure that the real purpose behind the selection of recruitment countries was not a preference for 'Europeans' but the exclusion of individuals who, in internal parlance, were frequently referred to as 'Afro-Asians'. Like many other countries in the post-war decades, West Germany practised a migration policy that entailed exclusion on the basis of national origins. But unlike other countries, it never officially lifted these

restrictions, and there was never a wide-ranging public debate about the principles of an at least partly racially motivated selection underlying West Germany's guestworker policy.²

The exclusionist principle and its motives

The origins of a coordinated policy of exclusion go back to the year 1962. Exclusion based on racial stereotypes had been practised before, but now officials sought to ensure a uniform and more effective practice of a number of federal agencies and the regional states. On 22 May 1962 representatives of six federal ministries and the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesanstalt für Arbeit*) met to discuss the government's response to a range of inquiries by countries like Bolivia, Taiwan, India, Iran, Togo, the West Indies and the Central African Federation, who had offered to send workers to Germany. As the Federal Republic had recently concluded recruitment treaties with Greece, Spain (1960), and Turkey (1961), its rapidly growing demand for labour attracted increasing attention all over the world. Between July 1959 and September 1961 the number of foreign workers in West Germany rose from 167,000 to 549,000. By 1964, one million foreigners worked in the Federal Republic. Within the federal administration, some civil servants were

worried that the economy's hunger for workers and some politicians' eagerness to liberalize movement in the free Western world would strip the state of major instruments of control.³ There was disagreement as to how the wish for state control of foreigners and the economic and political pressures for liberalization of labour migration should be balanced. In this situation the federal ministries agreed that at least one firm barrier should be set up or, more precisely, be stabilized: no unskilled workers from non-European countries should be recruited (with the exception of the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Israel). In the same vein, it was agreed that the stay of trainees and students from non-European countries be strictly limited, and settlement should be prevented. Thus, it was decided not only to refrain from concluding recruitment treaties with non-European countries but actively to prevent employers from recruiting workers from Asian and African countries and to make sure that such individuals would not become settled in West Germany.⁴ In 1965, the federal and regional ministers of the interior reconfirmed and strengthened the principles of selection by incorporating the intended exclusion of non-Europeans in their 'Principles of Aliens Policy' (*Grundsätze der Ausländerpolitik*).⁵

The no-non-Europeans policy was motivated by a number of reasons: By limiting the number of countries from which labour migrants came to West Germany, the government hoped to make the control of migratory movements easier. Distance (in a geographical and political sense) was a factor as in particular the interior ministries at the federal and state levels were eager to ensure that any migrant could easily return (or be returned) home. Non-Europeans in particular were seen as potential permanent immigrants. But it is also hardly deniable that ideas about the mentalities, character, life style, attitude to work etc. of Asians and Africans in general played a part in such reasoning and that their assumed characteristics were seen as incompatible with German values and patterns of life. The common term 'Afro-Asians' itself illustrates how people of rather different origins were merged in one category which was then ascribed particular characteristics.⁶ At the above-mentioned 1962 meeting of officials Ms Dahm of the Agriculture Ministry argued that the employment of non-Europeans was extremely problematic because in agriculture it was common to invite the farm workers into the family circle.⁷ Obviously she could imagine a Pole or Italian sitting at the farmer's table but not a Moroccan or an Indian.

The influence of racism was equally obvious when, in 1965, problems with regard to recruitment from

Portugal were debated. As the Federal Employment Agency reported, Portugal (with whom a recruitment treaty had been signed in 1964) had presented candidates for employment in Germany who came from the colonies and were of 'African or Indian skin colour'. The members of an inter-ministerial working party on foreign employment agreed that it was unacceptable to recruit dark-skinned Portuguese for work in Germany. As they could not openly be excluded, it was decided to inform the Portuguese authorities that German employers were not interested in dark-skinned workers. Should the Portuguese be uncooperative, German employers would find workers from other countries.⁸ Selection according to skin-colour was thus made the Portuguese's task.

Those meant to be excluded were not necessarily dark-skinned. Chinese migrants caused hysterical reactions even as their number was estimated at about 1,500.⁹ Considerable attention was paid to the Algerians, who before independence enjoyed the rights of French citizens, and to Moroccans. In Weimar Germany, French soldiers from North Africa had been the target of a furious racist campaign against an alleged black threat. The Nazis had revived this image of the foe, and its long-term influence can be traced to the West German government machinery of the 1960s.¹⁰ Turks, on the

other hand, were admitted in their thousands. When the German-Turkish agreement on labour recruitment was negotiated in 1961, objections based on assumed characteristics of the Turks had briefly been raised but had not really played a part. At the time, Turkey was usually regarded as a part of Europe (Grothusen 1985, pp. 92-3; for more details on the German-Turkish agreement see Schönwälder 2001, pp. 251-57).

Objections and justifications

Explicit public references to 'Rasse' (race) or to differing 'racial' characteristics of humans were a taboo in post-Nazi Germany. In the 1950s, officials had among themselves spoken about the dangers linked to a possible immigration of 'workers of alien race' (*fremdrassige Arbeitnehmer*). But it seemed inconceivable that a German delegation would bring up the 'race question' at an international conference.¹¹ Later the Foreign Office urged government agencies not to use the term '*Afro-Asiaten*' because this might cause offence.¹² Government officials were conscious that the exclusion of non-Europeans might provoke the accusation of racism. Even from within the government objections were raised. Thus, in July 1962, the Foreign Office enquired at the Home Office as to why a German engineering firm had not been given permission to employ Egyptians. The Aliens

Office in Krefeld had informed the firm that 'members of Afro-Asian states' were not to be granted a residence permit.¹³ This was an obvious violation of fundamental constitutional principles,¹⁴ the head of the law department at the Foreign Office protested, and a practice that contravened the foreign policy interests of the Federal Republic. He demanded that the granting of residence permits should not be made dependent on the nationality or origin of the applicant. Acting otherwise would be tantamount to 'discrimination against individuals of Afro-Asian descent'.¹⁵ This of course was the intention, and von Haeften had to learn that the Foreign Office had supported an inter-ministerial agreement on the issue.¹⁶

Although the West German government was extremely sensitive to any accusation of racism, the policy of exclusion of, officially, non-Europeans was not kept strictly secret. In a covert way, the government wanted to make it known to employers that they should refrain from recruiting workers outside Europe's (and Turkey's) borders.¹⁷ The fact that labour and residence permits were granted to Turks but not to Egyptians could not be hidden. In parliament, the government had to answer questions by MPs who, for instance, wanted to know why, in spite of the serious staff shortages, hospitals were not

allowed to recruit nurses from Taiwan or the Philippines (BT 69/5, 28 Oct. 1966, pp. 3233-5; BT 141/4, 23 Oct. 1964, pp. 7054-5). The government did not deny the existence of a policy of excluding non-Europeans. The principle itself, in particular as it referred to Europeans and non-Europeans and not to particular nationalities or 'races', was thought to be defensible.¹⁸

However, questions put by MPs indicate that the policy of exclusion was not universally accepted. As early as 1958, Social Democrat Georg Dewald brought up the accommodation problems with which 'coloured' students were confronted and suggested that the government assist them (BT 47/3, 29 Oct. 1958, p. 2618). In 1966, Georg Kahn-Ackermann criticized the fact that 'coloured' employees had been targeted in police controls (BT 43/4, 25 May 1966, p. 1989). In 1968, Christian Democrat Ingeborg Geisendorfer demanded assurances that by applying the British Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 (the infamous Kenya Asians Act) 'no direct or indirect discrimination of any group of individuals is intended or will be effected', a discrimination which, as she reminded the government, was illegal according to the Basic Law (BT 202/5, 5 Dec. 1968, pp. 10916-17).¹⁹

In 1972, Christian Democrat Rudolf Werner inquired whether only Europeans could be recruited as

guestworkers, who the government deemed European, and how it categorized Tunisians and Moroccans who, by then, were allowed to work in West Germany (BT 180/6, 12 April 1972, p. 10514). Such critical inquiries demonstrate that at least some politicians were aware of the exclusionist policy and opposed it. But the issue was never pursued or taken up by leading figures. The government was allowed to get away with evasive answers and justifications of its policy which were full of dubious claims and rather obvious stereotypes. Official reasoning represented a mixture of serious considerations and (partly clumsy) window dressing. In order to justify the exclusion of non-Europeans, officials and ministers referred to particular language problems, to the great distance between Germany and countries of origin which would make the migrants' return more difficult, to the wish to limit the number of nationalities present in Germany (as this would make it easier to ensure accommodation and social services for them), the lack of bilateral agreements on social benefits. They also referred to 'the differing ideas of non-European peoples on questions of life and politics' which stood in the way of their smooth adjustment to conditions in Germany.²⁰ Sometimes differing environmental conditions, the unfamiliar intensity of work, and public order, were quoted. Even the usually English-speaking and Christian

Caribbeans were denied work in Germany, allegedly because of language problems and differing religious customs.²¹ In the Federal Parliament, Labour Minister Blank explained 'that the employment of nationals from non-European states causes particular difficulties in adapting and settling down because of their utterly different mentality and the frequently extremely different customs and ways of life' (BT 189/4, 15 June 1965, p. 9499). It is remarkable that, in spite of wishing to avoid accusations of racism, a member of government thought it acceptable to argue that non-Europeans had one uniform and radically different mentality and life-style. Yet, he was not challenged for making such dubious statements.

The effects of exclusion and discrimination

How did the new policy affect the lives of migrants of non-European citizenship? Obviously, access to West Germany and its labour market became more difficult. Before the mid-1970s, few non-Europeans entered West Germany as refugees. Between 1968 and 1972, 146 Nigerians applied for asylum in West Germany, as did 218 Iraqis, 284 Egyptians, 245 Lebanese and 2,139 from Syria and Jordan (UNHCR 2001, pp. 172, 177)²² - the latter probably mostly Palestinians. It is unknown whether German authorities denied potential asylum seekers access to German territory and to the asylum

procedures or whether refugees simply did not make it to Europe at the time.²³ As long as workers were sought after, some de facto refugees, such as many Palestinians, simply got a job and a regular residence permit. Often they had entered the country illegally or as tourists. But it was these gaps that the government was more determined to close from 1962 onwards. A number of attempts were made to expel groups of illegals, in particular from Morocco. Aliens offices were instructed not to issue residence permits to people who had entered the country without the necessary visa. The Interior Ministry of Baden-Württemberg in December 1962 ordered the authorities not to issue any residence permits for the purpose of employment to non- Europeans.²⁴ Further regional governments issued regulations stating that students or trainees from 'Afro-Asian developing countries' should not be granted a residence permit after they had completed their studies or training (see e.g. an *Erlaß* of 3 March 1961 for the regional state of Hessen: Minister for the Interior in Hessen 1970). Residence permits (each time valid for a maximum of one year) were frequently not renewed. Thus in Bonn for instance, a decorating firm was advised to sack a Moroccan employee because the authorities had not renewed his residence permit.²⁵ In another case, the state of Rheinland-Pfalz expelled a number of Chinese traders

before they could complete a five-year stay in Germany, which would have entitled them to apply for a more secure residence permit (*Aufenthaltsberechtigung*) (BT 92/5, 3 Fehr. 1967, p. 4223). During the 1966-7 economic crisis, non-Europeans were discriminated against when the Federal Employment Agency initially denied them new work permits and refused to pay unemployment benefits although they had paid contributions.²⁶ And while there is no research on this problem, it is most likely that family reunion was made extremely difficult or even impossible for citizens of African and Asian countries.²⁷ Unlike the recruitment treaties with, e.g., Italy and Greece, the agreements with Morocco and Tunisia did not contain provisions on the immigration of family members of the recruited workers. Clearly, for individuals of, say, Chinese or Moroccan descent or citizenship who had managed to enter the Federal Republic of Germany life was more difficult than for other non-German citizens.

It may come as a relief that government policy, in particular in non-dictatorial regimes, does not always achieve its full objectives. As it turned out, getting rid of unwanted workers was not easy: for instance, Moroccan authorities denied landing rights to planes chartered for this purpose.²⁸ Furthermore, Germany's Foreign Office became increasingly worried about the

damage to the country's image in the world as complaints from embassies piled up. Employers protested when their workers were forced to leave the country.²⁹ Government ministers themselves undermined the policy of exclusion when Morocco and Tunisia were granted the recruitment of a limited number of workers and when it was decided to recruit miners and nurses from Korea. In the case of Morocco, Labour Minister Blank had, on the occasion of a state visit made promises that the government then felt obliged to honour.³⁰

Like Blank, President Heinrich Lübke was probably trying to demonstrate his personal power and generosity when, without having consulted the responsible ministry, he promised King Hussein of Jordan a recruitment agreement.³¹ While an agreement with Jordan was never realized, Tunisia's president Bourgiba in 1965 successfully reminded the West German government of his country's support in the Middle East crisis.³² Typically for West Germany in the 1960s, foreign policy interests overruled other considerations when Tunisia was granted a recruitment quota, albeit limited in its scope.³³ Both cases demonstrate that the responsible civil servants may have taken the exclusionist policy more seriously than some politicians. West German civil servants frequently regarded themselves as defenders of the

state's interests and actively sought to shape policy. Furthermore, the decisions may indicate that a categorization of North Africans as 'blacks' was not universally accepted. Gender played a role when in some cases the recruitment of groups of Asian nurses was permitted. Women were regarded as less dangerous than men as they were supposed to adjust to the dominating culture (and gender).³⁴

Although government agencies had, in 1962, decided that the presence of non-Europeans should be limited and, if possible, reduced, in the course of the 1960s the number of African and Asian citizens in the Federal Republic trebled.³⁵ The authorities did however manage to reduce their share of the foreign workforce from 3.45 (1963) to 2.78 (1966) per cent. Until the 1973 recruitment stop, figures increased further, but in a period of a seemingly insatiable hunger for labour only 72,946 African and Asian citizens (representing 3.11 per cent of the foreign workforce) were gainfully employed in West Germany.³⁶

Family unity and citizenship

The government's policy towards migrants from 'developing countries' - as they were now increasingly called - became an issue in the late 1960s, in the context of discussions about the situation of foreign

spouses of German women. According to standard practice, mixed couples were not automatically granted the right to live in West Germany; rather, German women were told to accompany their husbands abroad. Administrative practice was particularly harsh when the male partner was a citizen of a developing country.

While foreign women who married Germans were not seen as a major threat, the authorities were determined to enforce the return home of male foreigners; naturalization was denied to Africans and Asians.³⁷ Again, a policy of discrimination on grounds of nationality (or, in fact, 'race') was practised although it was now usually justified with reference to the needs of less developed countries who should not be deprived of their skilled workers. While the brain drain is of course a serious problem, here reference to it at least partly served to hide discriminatory intentions. In 1968, the responsible officials of *Bund* and *Länder* had agreed that every effort should be made to prevent African and Asian nationals from reaching the ten-year-stay in Germany which was a precondition for naturalization.³⁸

In 1969 interior ministries and the Development Ministry reconfirmed that a naturalization of nationals of developing countries should be avoided.³⁹ In doing so, they tried to circumvent a law the Federal

Parliament had passed in June 1969, which facilitated the naturalization of the spouses of German citizens (Weideler and Hemberger 1986; Schönwälder 2001, pp. 516--26). Originally motivated by a UN agreement on the nationality of married women, this reform expressed an initial unease among parliamentarians regarding West Germany's nationality law. From 1970, a number of MPs including Annemarie Renger, Hugo Brandt and Jürgen Schmude began to demand a secure stay for those foreigners who were married to German women. The constitutionally guaranteed protection of marriage and family was to be given preference over (alleged and real) concerns of development policy. Citizens of developing countries should have the opportunity to apply for German citizenship (BT 61/6, 19 June 1970, pp. 3406-08; BT 61/6, 19 June 1970, pp. 3410-11 and 3413-14). In February 1971, State Secretary Freyh informed MP Schmude that 'the concerns of development policy made a return of foreigners from developing countries who received training in the Federal Republic an urgent necessity' (BT 100/6, 10 Febr. 1971, p. 5689).

However, in May 1972 the regulations on the implementation of the aliens act (*Verwaltungsvorschrift zum Ausländergesetz*) were revised, the constitutionally guaranteed protection of marriage and family was now

to be given preference over other concerns, residence permits were to be issued and expulsions were to be avoided (Bundesrat 1972). It remains to be investigated how the authorities in practice dealt with such cases. And of course revised regulations did not affect the treatment of those citizens of 'developing countries' who were not married to German women. The regulations on naturalizations (*Einbürgerungsrichtlinien*) as of 1 July 1977 still stated that foreigners from developing countries who had received training in the Federal Republic should in general be denied naturalization (Gemeinsames Ministerialblatt 1978).

As the above-mentioned example shows, government policy towards non-Europeans was, under Liberal Interior Minister Genscher, cautiously liberalized. Willy Brandt's and Helmut Schmidt's social democratic governments allowed the numbers of Africans and Asians to rise. In spite of the 1973 recruitment stop, the number of gainfully employed Asians rose from 1974 to 1978, probably due to recruitment of hospital staff.⁴⁰ In the late 1970s, Helmut Schmidt's SPD/FDP-government refrained from expelling Korean nurses whose contracts had expired.⁴¹ Statistics for 1978 list 79,543 African and 147,813 Asian citizens in the Federal Republic, which means that since 1970 figures had

doubled. Of course this was not entirely a result of new immigration but also of fertility; in 1978 35,600 African and Asian citizens were less than 19 years old.⁴² More non-Europeans now arrived as refugees as well; in 1977 and 1978 alone, 24,700 Asians applied for asylum in West Germany (UNHCR 2001, p. 184).⁴³ And yet, the principle of excluding citizens of African and Asian countries from the West German labour market and, to some extent, from permanent settlement in the country was never officially lifted. It seems that at least until the mid-1970s, the 1965 'Principles of Aliens Policy' which laid down the policy of exclusion were still in force.⁴⁴ And while, from November 1973, the general recruitment stop made a specific exclusion of some nationalities superfluous, these regulations in all probability continued to influence administrative practice on the renewal of residence and work permits and thus the opportunities for individuals to become settled in Germany.

Public portrayals of labour migration

So why did this policy never become a major public issue? First, it is worth noting that the presence of some darker-skinned or in other ways unfamiliar-looking people did not cause a major public uproar. Government officials did refer to resistance in the

population in order to justify the exclusion of North Africans.⁴⁵ But so far we have no evidence of such resistance, and they may well have conjured up this threat in order to back up their own position. The government's policy of selective exclusion did not emerge as a response to public concern.

Generally, while foreign immigration was certainly not popular with Germans, resistance remained muted. In the 1960s in particular, politicians and the media made considerable efforts to convince the population of the benefits the country derived from labour migration. The employment of foreigners was presented as an economic necessity and, given that the economic miracle formed a cornerstone of German self-confidence, this was a very powerful argument. Secondly, migration was related to the European vision of which freedom of movement and the encounter of peoples formed a part. Germans were thus invited to accept migration as a side effect of the desired European integration and West Germany's acceptance into a Western community of peoples. And thirdly, labour migration provided an opportunity to boost German confidence. A one-page feature in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for instance, emphasized the civilizationary mission of the Germans: '[U]niform, sober West German society' had forced the 'softer Southerners to adjust in order to

prevail.(...) It seems that it is indeed possible to achieve a lasting transformation of the more vegetatively existing Mediterranean type into a determined working personality' (Lojewski 1964). Germans were thus invited to interpret the recruitment of thousands of foreign workers as evidence of their economic superiority, of their role as a leading civilizing force in Europe and as a step towards a unified Europe. But they were also reminded that Nazism and past racism represented a burden and that they had to 'learn to tolerate differences'. And as the president of the Federation of Employers' Associations further emphasized: 'The overall judgement in the world of German hospitality and the German attitude to other countries depends not least on whether and to what extent we manage to solve this problem' (Balke 1966, p. 9). The newspapers were altogether willing to contribute to the image of a tolerant Germany. Although they were full of stories about quarrels involving foreigners, the overall attitude to the labour migrants was not openly hostile but rather paternalistic. Only occasionally were some foreigners explicitly described as 'Coloured'. Their portrayal was usually negative, e.g. when newspapers mentioned that 'coloured' American soldiers had been arrested for rape.⁴⁶ But overall, the papers were not interested in distinguishing between different

nationalities whose constituent members were lumped together as 'Südländer' (Southerners).

Thus, while so far we know very little about everyday encounters and conflicts between Germans and foreigners in the 1960s and early 1970s, we do know that there was no revolt or major political mobilization against the presence of several million foreigners, or of Africans and Asians in particular.⁴⁷ But there is also very little evidence of protest against racial discrimination. This is a feature which distinguishes West Germany from countries such as Great Britain, which of course also practised a racially discriminatory immigration policy. For the *Wirtschaftswunder*-years under Chancellors Adenauer and Erhard this may not come as a surprise. Although recent research has emphasized that critical reflections of the state of West German society and, in particular, its *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) became more influential from about 1958, we should not underestimate the extent of nationalism and racism still prevalent in German society. But the absence of more widespread protest against the racist discrimination of Africans and Asians is more remarkable for the early 1970s when the '*Zeitgeist*' and the public discussion of the immigration issue changed.

'Europe's Niggers': changing perspectives in the 1970s

In many ways, West Germany under Willy Brandt's social democratic-liberal coalition was a transformed country. The emphasis now placed on the development of a more democratic and more humanitarian-minded society did not leave the issue of labour migration unaffected. In the 1960s, the media had offered an idyllic, paternalistic, self-congratulatory description of the lives of the 'Southerners' who were portrayed as being generously allowed to participate in the wealth German diligence had achieved. Conversely, in 1970-71, indignation at the migrants' poverty and exploitation occupied prime place. Nearly every newspaper and magazine printed illustrated stories about dingy basement bed-sits and overcrowded factory hostels (*Augsburger Allgemeine* 1971; *Stern* 1971). 'Europe's Niggers' - '*Die Neger Europas*' - became a standard line to describe and scandalize the situation of the migrant labourers in West Germany. 'The guestworker question is our race problem', a proclamation on the occasion of the first 'Day of the Foreign Co-citizens' (in December 1970) stated (*Die Neger Europas?* 1971, p. 6). Christian Democrat Norbert Blüm (1971) as well as Northrhine Westfalia's Labour Minister Figgen (SPD) warned that the development of a US-style race problem had to be

avoided (*Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 1972). Now the West German *Gastarbeiter* were placed in the context of the exploitation of the Third World and of the civil rights struggle and racism in the US. This clearly demonstrates how the 'framing' of the immigration issue is influenced by the 'spirit of the times'.

Still, all the talk about 'Europe's Negroes' seems not to have directed attention towards people from Africa or Asia. The argument that poor countries should not be deprived of their well-educated struck a chord with a public which had become more sensitive to Third World issues. On the Left, labour migration was sometimes altogether rejected as an element of the exploitation of the Third World, and whoever held this view was unlikely to demand easier access for potential migrants.⁴⁸ Rather than attacking the general exclusion of African and Asian nationals, left-liberals for instance sharply criticized the recruitment of nurses from South Korea because Korea itself suffered from a shortage of medical personnel (see e.g. *Asiatische Krankenschwestern in der BRD* 1972; *Die Zeit* 1973; Shim 1974). Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the students' umbrella organization VDS had, in 1969, protested against the restrictive policy towards foreigners, and at some universities protest was voiced against the harsh treatment of students from Africa or Asia (*Ausländergesetz* '65

1970; Elchlepp 1971). A lobby organization of women married to foreigners (IAF) began to campaign against expulsions. In 1972 and 1973 a couple of critical reports appeared in national newspapers on the situation of Africans and non-Europeans in general in Germany (Die Zeit 1972a and b). But overall, the question of their specific discrimination and its racist motives remained a side issue.

It may be tempting to attribute this fact to a general atmosphere of nationalism or even racism. But contrary to widespread assumptions in the secondary literature, German migration policy was publicly debated during the mid-1960s and the early 1970s (Schönwälder, von Oswald and Sonnenberger 2003). Often the inconsistencies of government policy were attacked, and the need to recognize permanent immigration was, in 1972-3, a common theme. As shown above, in the 1970s criticism of the miserable living conditions of many labour migrants and their families occupied prime place in the media. And yet, little attention was paid to the specific discrimination against Africans and Asians whom the authorities tried to keep out of the country⁴⁹ and who - if they had managed to gain access - were under greater pressure to return home, who were denied naturalization and even a life together with their families. To explain this, a number of factors can be

listed: they include the absence of an anti-colonial movement sensitive to issues of racial discrimination, the strong emphasis on social welfare issues (rather than rights) typical for Germany, and the complicated entanglement of the issue with concerns of Third World development. The number of Africans and Asians remained small and it seems that, in the 1960s and 1970s, they did not manage to organize and fight for their interests in an effective way. Their governments were not very influential or maybe did not even try to defend their citizens' rights. Thus, while for instance in Britain the question of racially discriminatory intentions and effects of migration policy is a constant issue in public debates, in Germany it was and remains of lesser importance.

In studies of post-war labour migration to West Germany, little attention has so far been paid to how German governments tried to shape the national composition of the migrant workforce. This text aimed to demonstrate how official policy in the period of massive labour recruitment was shaped by hostile attitudes to (potential) migrants from Africa and Asia and how the lives of such individuals were made more difficult on account of this policy. As confirmed above, governments trying to control and shape migratory movements rarely fully succeed. But surely Germany would today be a much more plural society

had mainly economic considerations determined immigration patterns.

Acknowledgements

This paper was first presented to a conference at the University of Southampton in September 2002. Apart from the participants there and the anonymous referees, I wish to thank Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos for many very helpful suggestions.

Notes

1. Rounded figures. The available figures refer to foreign nationals. There are no estimates for the minority population including those who acquired German citizenship. In 2000 alone, e.g. 14,410 Iranians became German citizens.
2. Of course it has frequently been pointed out that the treatment of migrant workers, refugees and others is in many ways discriminatory, and often led by racist motives. It is, however, not the intention of this article to discuss the overall occurrence of racism in Germany. Rather, I want to focus on the specific aspect of who was allowed and who was denied access to the German labour market and why this was the case.
3. 'Kurzprotokoll über die Ressortbesprechung am 22. Mai 1962 im Bundesministerium für Arbeit', in: Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter: BA Ko) B 149/6225.

For a detailed examination of West German migration policy see Schönwälder 2001. See *ibid*, pp. 257-77 on the exclusion of non-Europeans.

4. The Labour Minister himself signed a document outlining the agreed principles, see 'Vermerk über grundsätzliche Fragen einer Hereinnahme von Arbeitskräften aus außereuropäischen Ländern (von Herrn Bundesminister Blank gebilligt)', 12 June 1962, in: BA Ko B 149/6225.

5. The *Grundsätze der Ausländerpolitik* were passed in June 1965 by the Conference of the Ministers of the Interior. The first principle stated that citizens of non-European states, with the exception of North Americans, Australians, those from New Zealand and Israelis should not be granted residence permits. The full text remained confidential; Schönwälder; 2001, pp. 323-30.

6. I prefer to use the terms 'race' and 'racism' cautiously - partly because in German both terms carry an even harsher meaning. But even in a narrow sense, a generalized association of origins, real or assumed physical features and social behaviour should be called racist. The central feature of the processes referred to as racism is 'that the qualities of social groups are fixed, made natural'; Solomos and Back 1996, pp. 18-9.

7. 'Kurzprotokoll über die Ressortbesprechung am 22.

Mai 1962 im BMA', in: BA KoB 149/6225.

8. Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung (here after BA) to Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung (here after BMA), 9 March 1965, in: BA Ko B 149/22404; Minutes of a meeting of the 'Arbeitskreis für Fragen der Beschäftigung ausländischer Arbeitnehmer' on 12 May 1965, pp. 22-3, in: BA Ko B 149/6225.

9. See the documents in BA Ko B 106/39992.

10. The *Bundesministerium des Innern* (here after BMI) justified its opposition against recruitment from Morocco with reference to the behaviour of the North Africans during the occupation after both world wars; BMI to Auswärtiges Amt (here after AA), BMA and Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft (here after BMWi), 21 Dec. 1962, BA Ko B 136/8841. About the background see e.g. Lebzelter 1985.

11. See the documents in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PA AA) B 15/279 and: BMA to BMI and AA, 7 August 1956, confidential, 'Betr.: Vermittlung algerische; Arbeitskräfte nach der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', in: PA AA V 6/684. See also Schönwälder 2001, pp. 266--67.

12. Internal AA memo, Dr. Schmiedt to Referate 1B 3/4/5, 5. Nov. 1963, in: PA AA, B 36/28.

13. Dr.-Ing. Paproth & Co, Tiefbauunternehmen, Krefeld und Berlin, to Deutsche Botschaft Cairo, 22

June 1962, in: BA Ko B 106/47428.

14. Article 3(3) of the Basic Law. to which the letter referred, states that 'Nobody shall be prejudiced or favoured because of their sex, birth, race, language, national or social origin, faith, religion or political opinions.'

15. AA to BMI. 24 July 1962, in: BA Ko B 106/47428.

16. BMI to AA, 26 Sept. 1962, in: BA Ko B 106/47428. The BMI official however advised that letters should refer to a limited demand for workers.

17. On 29 June 1962, the BMWi wrote to the *Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände* asking them to show restraint with regard to the recruitment of non-European workers, in: BA Ko B 149/6225. Notes on this policy appeared for instance in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 6 July 1962.

18. The no-non-Europeans principle itself was seen as a measure which made it more difficult for individual states to complain about discrimination against their citizens, see 'BMI an die Innenminister der Länder, 25 Nov.1964 (VS-Nur für den Dienstgebrauch)', in: PA AA V 6/1403.

19. *Staatssekretär* Koppler denied any discriminatory intentions. The German government was worried that British passport-holders from e.g. Kenya who were now denied access to Britain would turn up

at German borders and demand visa-free entry. Border guards were advised to apply the principles of the British Commonwealth Immigrants Act and not to admit those Britain rejected; see the documents in BA Ko B 106/60297.

20. For the quote and a typical set of arguments see the *Rundertap* 'Zwischenstaatliche Arbeitsvermittlung' issued by the AA on 8 November 1962, in: BA Ko B 136/8841.

21. BMA (Dr. Claussen) to AA, 6 Sept. 1960, 'betr. Arbeitnehmer aus Britisch-Westindien', in: PA AA V6/1314.

22. Details are not given for every year, hence the selection of the period from 1968 to 1972.

23. In 1967, officials agreed that Chinese refugees from Indonesia should not be admitted although they were in all likelihood entitled to asylum, see 'Niederschrift über die Besprechung der Ausländerreferenten des Bundes und der Länder am 27./28. September 1967 in Massen', in: BA Ko 106/39992.

24. Interior Ministry of Baden-Württemberg (Filbinger) to the Regierungsprasidien, 14 Dec.1962, in: BA Ko B 106/60291.

25. Landkreis Bonn, Der Oberkreisdirektor, Ordnungsamt, to Malermeister Hans Weber, Bad Godesberg, 2 April 1963, in: BA Ko B 149/22433. The employer was informed that according to new

guidelines it was no longer allowed to issue residence permits to 'Afro-Asian citizens'. The available evidence suggests that the practice of the federal states differed with regard to a renewal of residence permits.

26. As a result, they probably had to leave the country. There was a lengthy controversy about this policy between the *Bundesanstalt* and the federal ministries, during which the ministries opposed a restrictive and discriminatory policy because they were confident that Germany's economy would soon need those workers and because of its negative impact on foreign relations. Discrimination was practised until May 1967. Because of existing agreements Moroccans and Tunisians were exempted a few months earlier.

27. In the case of the Chinese, the authorities were determined to allow only (for example) unmarried cooks into the country and at least some *Länder* stated that family reunion was generally denied. 'Niederschrift über die Besprechung der Ausländerreferenten des Bundes und der Länder am 19./20. April 1967 in Goslar', in: BA Ko B 106/39992; BMI to AA. 1 July 1963, in: BA Ko B 149/6225.

28. Minutes of a meeting of the 'Arbeitskreis für Fragen der Beschäftigung ausländischer Arbeitnehmer' on 24 April 1963, in: BA Ko B 106/47431.

29. AA to BMA, BMI and BMWi, 8 April 1963, with copies of letters of the Bundesvereinigung der

Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände, the Zentralverband des Deutschen Baugewerbes and the AG Selbständiger Unternehmer e. V., in: BA Ko B 149/22433.

30. Note of the Staatssekretar for the head of department II in the BMA, 15 Oct. 1962 in: BA Ko B 149/22433. 'Vorlage für einen Kabinettsbeschluss betreffend eine deutsch marokkanische Vereinbarung über die Beschäftigung marokkanischer Arbeitnehmer in der Bundesrepublik, übersandt vom BMA an den Staatssekretär des Bundeskanzleramts' 25 Jan. 1963, in: *ibid.* Because of angry protests from the Interior Ministry in particular, the Cabinet took a decision, which was unusual. The agreement of 21 May 1963 was initially restricted to miners but was soon extended. There was a quota, which, in 1970, was increased from 8000 to 14,000 workers. See also Henker 1971.

31. AA, Referat I B 4 to Referat V 6, 21 January 1965, in: PAAA V 6/1318.

32. Other Arab states had broken off diplomatic relations with West Germany and improved their relations with socialist East Germany after West German weapons deliveries to Israel.

33. Karl Carstens, Staatssekretär in the AA, to Dr. Wilhelm Claussen, Staatssekretär in the BMA, 28 May 1965; Staatssekretär Dr. Langer, BMWi, to Staatssekretär Karl Carstens., AA, 21 June 1965, in: BA Ko B 149/22442;

see also files in: BA Ko B 136/8841. Again, the issue was controversial and the Cabinet took a decision. Recruitment was limited to 3,000 Tunisians but in fact in June 1967 only 763 Tunisians worked in the FRG. Later numbers rose quickly from 1,556 in June 1969 to 10,921 in June 1971.

34. In June 1970, 4,185 nurses, trainee nurses and unskilled staff from Asia, and 4,930 non-Europeans altogether worked in West German hospitals. See *Hauptergebnisse 1971* p. 65. Often the recruited women were Christians.'

35. The 1961 census had given their number as 28,000, see *Ausländer 1964*, pp. 645-50. In September 1968, 86,000 African and Asian nationals were registered with the authorities. Figures include students, business people etc., see *Ausländer 1969*, pp. 360-61,378*.

36. January 1973, among them were 15,261 Moroccans, 11,124 Tunisians and (1972 figures) 4,962 Koreans. In September 1973, 2,227 Africans and 4,014 Asians (i.e. people from the Middle East, South Asia and the Far East) were registered as '*Fach- und Führungskräfte aus Entwicklungsländern*', i.e. people who had residence permits for the purpose of training. Only a very small proportion of the Africans (2735) and about one third of the Asians were female. Between 1963 and 1966 (a crisis year when numbers declined)

the number of gainfully employed African and Asian citizens had increased from 28,018 to 36,652.

37. See the statement of Referat V II 5, BMI, 26 Sept. 1967: BA Ko B 106/39992. Although Germany's citizenship law was of course generally restrictive, naturalization of foreigners was possible. Thus for instance in 1974, 12,309 foreigners were granted German citizenship of whom 2,743 had married a German (Statistisches Bundesamt 1974b).

38. 'Niederschrift über die Besprechung der Ausländerreferenten des Bundes und der Länder vom 13.-15. Februar 1968 in Bonn', BA Ko B 106/39992.

39. See principles suggested by the Development Ministry: BMI to interior ministries of the Länder, 25 April 1969; 'Auszug aus der Niederschrift über die Sitzung der Ständigen Konferenz der Innenminister der Länder am 7./8. Mai 1969 in Würzburg', both in BA Ko B 106/60299.

40. Figures for Asians were 41,548 in 1974 (30 June) and 51,900 in 1978. The arrival of refugees may have contributed. For Africans they were 38,389 (1974) and 34,835 (1978). Figures include everybody incorporated in the compulsory insurance schemes, i.e. not the self-employed (Statistisches Bundesamt 1979, p. 69).

41. With regard to nurses from Korea (in 1978 about 5,600 women), the federal ministries agreed in 1969 that their permits should be extended beyond the initially fixed period of three years. In 1978 the government

explained that it had advised the Lander to treat this group generously (Deutscher Bundestag 1978).

42. Statistisches Bundesamt 1978. Large groups came from Iran, Pakistan, India, Korea and Jordan. Among the Africans, the Moroccans and Tunisians were by far the largest groups. For 1970, figures are 39,800 (African citizens) and 74,100 (Asians): Statistisches Bundesamt 1974a. The figures for all foreign citizens were 2.977 million in 1970 and 3.981 million in 1978.

43. UNHCR figures additionally include Turkey in figures for Asia.

44. In 1973 the *Frankfurter Rundschau* reported that because of the *Grundsätze* it was impossible for non-Europeans to get a work permit.

45. In 1962, the BMI opposed the signing of a recruitment agreement with Morocco arguing that tensions would occur. Memories of their behaviour in the post-war period were still alive. BMI to AA, BMA and BMWi, 21 Dec. 1962, BA Ko B 136/8841.

46. So far, we know very little about the lives of dark-skinned people in West Germany in the 1950s to 1970s. See Hohn 2001 for a study on American GIs.

47. In the second half of the 1960s the far-right NPD achieved a number of electoral successes but hostility to immigration was not the major issue.

48. Marios Nikolinakos even used the term 'Verniggerung' (Niggerization) to describe the process

through which capitalist states reached out into increasingly distant peripheries (1973, pp. 142-44).

49. With the exception of e.g. students, short-term trainees and business people as well as the groups mentioned above.

References

'ASIATISCHE KRANKENSCHWESTERN IN DER BRD'

1972, *Blätter des iz3w*, no.15, March, pp. 16-18

AUGSBURGER ALLGEMEINE 1971 'Sind ausländische Arbeitnehmer Menschen zweiter Klasse? Ein neues Sozialproblem', 20 January

AUSLÄNDER 1964 'Die Ausländer im Bundesgebiet', *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, 1964, no. 11, pp. 645-50

AUSLÄNDER 1969 'Ausländer im Bundesgebiet', *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, 1969, no 7, pp.360-61,378*

AUSLÄNDERGESETZ '65 1970 *Ausländergesetz '65. Alternativentwurf '70. Kritik und Reform*, ed. by the Forschungsinstitut der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, = studentische politik, no.1

BALKE, SIEGFRIED 1966 'Begrüßung und Eröffnung', in *Magnet Bundesrepublik. Probleme der Ausländerbeschäftigung. Informationstagung der Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände am 30. und 31. März 1966 in Bad Godesberg*, Ki:iln: Koellen, pp. 7-10

BLOM, NORBERT 1971 'Die Nigger unserer

Gesellschaft', in: *Soziale Ordnung*, no. 10, 27 Sept., p. 3

BT: *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, various sessions, 3rd to 6th electoral period

BUNDESARCHIV KOBLENZ (BA Ko), B 106: Bundesministerium des Innern; B 136: Bundeskanzleramt; B 149: Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung; various documents

BUNDESRAT 1972, *Drucksache* 210/72, 6 April

DEUTSCHER BUNDESTAG 1978, *Drucksache* 8/1783

DIE BEAUFTRAGTE DER BUNDESREGIERUNG FÜR AUSLÄNDERFRAGEN (ed.) 2002 *Daten und Fakten zur Ausländersituation*, 20th edn, Bonn

DIE NEGER EUROPAS? 1971 'Die Neger Europas? Einführung in den Stand der Diskussion über den Status der ausländischen Arbeitnehmer', in *Konsequenzen*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp.6-14

DIE ZEIT 1972a 'Achmed schaufelt Schutt', 14 July

-- 1972b 'Von den Weißen gehaßt. Auch Hamburg ist negerfeindlich', 14 July

--1973 'Der einen Not - der anderen Nutzen', 12 January

ELCHLEPP, DIETRICH 1971 'Heia-Safari oder „Schicken Sie mir keine Schwarzen!“. Überlegungen zur Situation ausländischer Studenten in der Bundesrepublik', *Tribüne*, vol. 10, pp. 4372-80

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG 1962, 6 July

FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU 1973 'Im Gewirr von

Paragrafen. Probleme außereuropäischer Arbeitnehmer in der BRD', 9 June

GEMEINSAMES MINISTERIALBLATT des Bundesministers des Innern etc., 1978, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 16-21

GROTHUSEN, KLAUS-DETLEV 1985 'Außenpolitik', in *Südosteuropa-Handbuch* ed. by Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, vol. 4: Türkei, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht: pp. 89-168

HAUPTERGEBNISSE 1971 *Hauptergebnisse der Arbeits- und Sozialstatistik 1970*, Bonn

HENKER, FRITZ 1971 'Marokkanische Arbeiter in der Bundesrepublik', *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*, vol. 21, pp. 222-24

HOHN, MARIA 2001 'Heimat in Turmoil. African-American GIs in 1950s West Germany', in Hanna Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years. A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 145-63

LEBZELTER, GISELA 1985 'Die „Schwarze Schmach“. Vorurteile - Propaganda - Mythos', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, vol. 11, pp. 37-58

LOHRMANN, REINHARD 1974 'Politische Auswirkungen der Arbeitskräftewanderung auf die Bundesrepublik Deutschland', in Reinhard Lohrmann and Klaus Manfrass (eds), *Ausländerbeschäftigung und internationale Politik. Zur Analyse transnationaler Sozialprozesse*,

München/Wien: Oldenbourg, pp. 103-40

LOJEWSKI, GUNTHER VON 1964 'Die
Völkerwanderung zum Arbeitsmarkt', *Frankfurter
Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 May

MINISTER FOR THE INTERIOR IN HESSEN 1970 'Erlaß
of 3 March 1961', *Staats-Anzeiger für das Land Hessen*,
p. 1096

NIKOLINAKOS, MARIOS 1973 *Politische Ökonomie der
Gastarbeiterfrage. Migration und Kapitalismus*, Reinbek:
Rowohlt

POLITISCHES ARCHIV DES AUSWÄRTIGEN AMTS (PA
AA), Bonn [now Berlin], B 15: Sekretariat für Fragen
des Schuman-Plans; B 36: Politische Abteilung; v 6:
Rechtsabteilung; various documents

SCHÖNWÄLDER, KAREN 2001 *Einwanderung und
ethnische Pluralität. Politische Entscheidungen und
öffentliche Debatten in Großbritannien und der
Bundesrepublik von den 1950er bis zu den 1970er
Jahren*, Essen: Klartext

SCHÖNWÄLDER, KAREN. VON OSWALD, ANNE
and SONNENBERGER, BARBARA 2003
'Einwanderungsland Deutschland: a New Look at its
Post-war History': in Rainer Obliger, Karen
Schönwälder and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos (eds),
*European Encounters. Migrants, Migration and European
Societies since 1945*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 19-37

SHIM, YUNCHONG 1974 *Aspekte der sozio-kulturellen*

Einordnung koreanischer Krankenpflegekräfte in Deutschland, Frankfurt on Main: P. Lang

SOLOMOS, JOHN and BACK, LES 1996 *Racism and Society*, Basingstoke: Macmillan

STATISTISCHES BUNDESAMT 1974a *Ausländer 30.9.1974*, Bevölkerung und Kultur Reihe 1 Gebiet und Bevölkerung, VI, Wiesbaden: Kohlhammer

– 1974b *Staatsangehörigkeit*, Fachserie A Bevölkerung und Kultur, Reihe 1 V, Wiesbaden: Kohlhammer

– 1978 *Ausländer 30.9.1978*, Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit, Fachserie 1, Reihe 14 Wiesbaden: Kohlhammer

– 1979 *Ausgewählte Strukturdaten für Ausländer 1978*. Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit, Fachserie 1, Reihe 1.S.2, Wiesbaden: Kohlhammer

STERN 1971 "So leben nicht einmal die Schweine", 21 November

UNHCR 2001 *Asylum Applications in Industrialized Countries: 1980-1999*, Geneva, November

WEIDELNER, HELMUT and HEMBERGER, FRITZ 1986 *Deutsches Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht. Vorschriftenammlung mit erläuternder Einführung*, 2nd edn, München: Kommunalschriften-Verlag

WESTDEUTSCHE ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG 1972 'Figger: Gastarbeiter dürfen nicht unsere „Neger" werden', 17 November

KAREN SCHÖNWÄLDER is head of the Programme on Intercultural Conflicts and Societal Integration at the Social Science Research Center Berlin [WZB] and Privatdozentin at Giessen University, Germany.

ADDRESS: WZB, Reichpieterschufer 50, D-10785 Berlin, Germany. E mail: <schoenwaelder@wz-berlin.de>