

## SECONDARY LABOUR FORCE OR PERMANENT STAFF?

### Foreign workers in the Aachen coal mines

*The paper gives an overview of the recruitment and professional status of workers in the coal mining district of Aachen from different origins, i.e. local miners, miners from other German coal districts, cross-border commuters from Dutch South-Limburg and labour migrants. Migration history generally assumes that foreign workers were primarily employed as temporary workers in workplaces abandoned by the local population. This article argues that the labour market situation of foreign commuters and labour immigrants has to be studied separately. Commuters were primarily skilled miners, who came to the mines on their own account. After the First World War, labour mobility between the Aachen region and South-Limburg was ephemeral and often resulted from sudden institutional changes. In general, long distance labour migrants were unskilled. They arrived in the mines in large groups hired directly by agents of the mines or mediated by the Federal Employment Office. The position of foreign immigrants underwent important changes. During the first recruitment drives of the Aachen mines between 1906 and 1912, immigrants were indeed considered as temporary workers; after the Second World War, the companies tried hard to make these workers stay beyond the minimal period of one year. Long-term labour contracts could lead to integration of immigrant workers into the permanent workforce, but also penalised workers who wished to leave prematurely.*

In the greater administrative region (*Regierungsbezirk*) of Aachen, black coal mining developed alongside multiple industries such as paper production, food processing, chemical manufacture, glass fabrication and machine construction. Until the end of the 1970s, mining companies employed between five and eight percent of the working population in this region – a ratio that sometimes reached 30 percent in the district (*Kreis*) of Aachen, where the mines were concentrated.<sup>1</sup> Unlike other labour intensive industries, mining

1. The region had a very heterogeneous industrial structure. Mining played a predominant role only in the *Kreise* Aachen, Düren, Geilenkirchen(-Heinsberg) and Erkelenz. In the city of Aachen itself, the last active mine was closed in 1927. The southern *Kreise* Monschau



Young foreign workers in the *Eschweiler Bergwerksverein* – Training centre (early 1960s)  
*Bergbauarchiv Bochum (BBA)*, 160/ 9219.

was controlled by only a handful of companies. The most important among these was the *Eschweiler Bergwerksverein* (EBV) which temporarily employed over 80 percent of the workforce and owned nine out of twelve pits.<sup>2</sup> The three others, *Carolus Magnus*, *Carl Alexander* and *Sophia Jacoba*, owned only one pit each.<sup>3</sup> All mining firms were closely linked to foreign coal clients; either to steel mills in the Sar-Lor-Lux region,<sup>4</sup> or, in the case of *Sophia Jacoba*,

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and Schleiden were almost exclusively agricultural. *Kreis Jülich* enclosed parts of the brown coal deposits of the Cologne basin.

2. *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Berg- und Hüttenmännischen Interessen im Aachener Bezirke* (1875-1934); *Statistik der Bezirksgruppe Aachen der Fachgruppe Steinkohlenbergbau* (1935-39).

3. There were three other companies which shall not be further discussed in this paper, because they ceased their activities in the beginning of the twentieth century. These companies were the 'Vereinigungsgesellschaft für Steinkohlenbergbau im Wurmrevier' which merged with the EBV in 1906 and the one-pit companies 'Nordstern' and 'Carl Friedrich' which both went into bankruptcy during the late 1920s.

4. The EBV was linked to the Luxembourg *Acéries réunies de Burbach Eich Dudelange* (ARBED); *Carolus Magnus* to the *SA des Acéries de Micheville*, Paris, the *Compagnie des Forges*

to a Dutch coal trading company.<sup>5</sup> Total employment peaked just before the coal crisis in 1958 with more than 31,000 people working in the mines. Even after having lost its predominant economic position in the regional industry and after the closure of the largest and oldest mine *Anna* in Alsdorf in 1983, the mining industry stayed the most important employer in the region. The age of coal mining ended with the shutdown of *Sophia Jacoba* in March 1997. At this time, there were still 1,500 people working there.

This article retraces the labour market policies of the mines between 1900 and 1970. For many years, the regional labour market was characterised by persistent labour shortages. The paper focuses on strategies of the mining companies to deal with these shortages. Special emphasis is placed on the interplay between the recruitment among the local population, the recruitment of miners from the nearby coal regions of South-Limburg and Liège, and that of international migrants. The position of these groups is to be discussed not only in the framework of the recruitment process, but also in that of industrial relations in general. Did foreign workers occupy specific jobs for which employers could not find personnel among the local workforce? Was it realistic for foreigners to strive for supervisory functions? Did differences exist in this respect between labour migrants and cross-border commuters from the Netherlands and Belgium?

This type of questions can be placed in a framework of sociological and economic theories developed since the late 1970s which describe the labour market as being split in two or more functional segments.<sup>6</sup> The conditions of work, remuneration and advancement differ greatly among these segments and workers hardly have the opportunity to pass from one into another (see the introduction of this special issue). The split is supposed to be in the interest of employers, the state or even the workers themselves. In Germany, foreigners were thought to have mainly occupied the lower echelons in the labour market throughout the twentieth century. For instance, the renowned migration historian Klaus Bade described Polish workers on East-German

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*et des Aciéries de la Marine et d'Homécourt*, Paris and the *SA des Hauts Fourneaux et Fonderies de Pont-à-Mousson*, Nancy; Carl Alexander to the *Aciéries de Longwy*, Mont-Saint-Martin and the Saar industrialist Carl Röchling.

5. The name of this company was *N.V. Nederlandsche Maatschappij tot Ontginning van Steenkolenvelden* (NEMOS).

6. See among others: M.J. Piore, *Birds of passage* (Cambridge 1979); W. Sengenberger (ed.), *Der gespaltene Arbeitsmarkt, Probleme der Arbeitsmarktsegmentation* (Frankfurt am Main u.a. 1978); C. Brinkmann (ed.), *Arbeitsmarktsegmentation. Theorie und Therapie im Lichte der empirischen Befunde* (IAB-Kontaktseminar 1978 an der Universität München); H. Homburg, 'Externer und interner Arbeitsmarkt. Zur Entstehung und Funktion des Siemens-Werkvereins 1906-1918', in: T. Pierenkemper and R. Tilly (eds.), *Historische Arbeitsmarktforschung*, 215-252; U. Kuschnerreit, *Migration und Arbeitsmarkt* (Berlin 2003).

farms at the beginning of the century as ‘foreign sub-proletariat’.<sup>7</sup> Even after the Second World War, the German Federal Bureau of Labour (*Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung*) assumed that German firms only hired foreigners to absorb cyclical shocks.<sup>8</sup>

### The Aachen coal district at the turn of the twentieth century

Geological conditions divided the Aachen district into the *Wurmrevier* north of the city of Aachen and the *Inderevier* which stretched to the south between the cities of Eschweiler and Stolberg (fig. 1). The local population in the *Inderevier* and the western part of the *Wurmrevier* had made a living from coal mining since the sixteenth century; labour turnover was low and self-selection among the miners’ families was important. After the middle of the nineteenth century, new shaft drilling methods – such as the freeze sinking process and the so-called ‘Honigmann-Verfahren’<sup>9</sup> – allowed for the expansion of the old *Wurmrevier* over the *Feldbiss*-fault. New mines were established in a rural and rather isolated environment. In order to build up an adequate workforce these mines had to resort, quite early, to recruiting non-local workers on a large scale. Thus, in 1907, the mayors’ chronicles of the main mining town of Alsdorf recorded a ‘great number of foreigners from Belgium, Croatia, Italy and France’. Between 1909 and 1911, the share of foreign inhabitants in Alsdorf rose from ten to almost twenty percent.<sup>10</sup> Compared to the older parts of the mining district, workers in the new parts were on average also younger and mining communities had a considerable surplus of male inhabitants.<sup>11</sup>

The differences between younger and older mines become apparent in the statistics of the social security for miners (‘Knappschaft’).<sup>12</sup> Until 1918, there were four *Knappschaften* in the area. Around 1900, the two largest, the

7. K.J. Bade, “‘Preußengänger’ und ‘Abwehrpolitik’”. *Ausländerbeschäftigung, Ausländerpolitik und Ausländerkontrolle auf dem Arbeitsmarkt in Preußen vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* (1984) 91-162, 132.

8. The national legislation concerning labour immigration was guided by the so-called ‘Rotationsprinzip’. This idea stipulated that foreigners were to be admitted only on short term labour contracts and that the residence permits were to be linked to the labour contract. It was only in the 1970s, that the Federal Labour Bureau judged the idea as obsolete. See Bundesarchiv (BA), B119/3880, Berichte zum SF-Paper, Erweiterung und Fortentwicklung der EWG, 1972.

9. The latter was invented by the Aachen mining entrepreneur Friedrich Honigmann. Due to these methods, drilling through sandy and water abundant bedrock became finally possible.

10. *Chronik der Bürgermeisterei Alsdorf, Kreis Aachen Land*, t. 2, 1900-1918.

11. *Chronik Alsdorf* (t. 2), 1907, 1909, 1911.

12. Knappschaftsstatistik in: *Zeitschrift für das Berg-, Hütten-, und Salinenwesen im Preussischen Staate* (ZBHS) [until 1920].

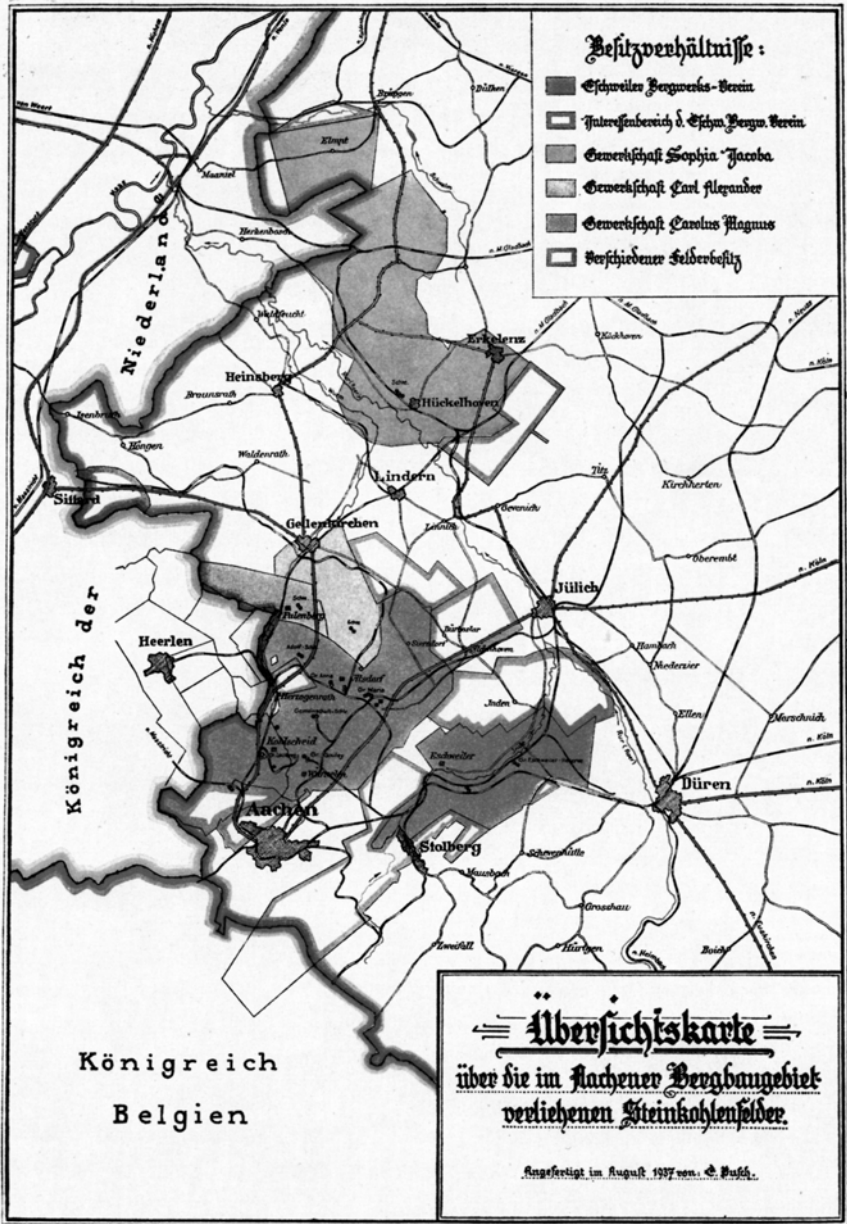


FIG. 1 The Aachen district

Wurmknappschaft and the Stolberger Knappschaft, counted respectively 7,500 and 4,000 members. Whereas the Wurmknappschaft insured mainly workers from the coal mines in the north, the Stolberger Knappschaft insured workers from coal and ore mines as well as steel mills in the south. Two remaining Knappschaften each covered the workers of only one mine. In 1908, 78

percent of the members in the *Wurmknappschaft* were in the most productive age span between 21 and 40 years versus 60 percent of the members of the *Stolberger Knappschaft*. The remaining members were more likely to be under 21 years old in the *Wurmknappschaft* and over 40 years in the *Stolberger Knappschaft*. The fluctuation in membership was greater in the *Wurmknappschaft* than in the *Stolberger Knappschaft* (in 1904, for instance, 26 percent versus 14 percent). Hence, the new pits in the north had a younger and more mobile workforce than those in the south. Until 1906, the social security system discriminated between permanent and non-permanent (*ständige* and *unständige*) members.<sup>13</sup> Depending on the *Knappschaft*, between 80 and 90 percent of the total turnover consisted of non-permanent members, who were either women or men under 16 or over 40 years of age, or who had been employed by the mines for less than two years.<sup>14</sup> The workforce was clearly separated into one extremely mobile group of workers and another which spent its professional life mainly in the same insurance district.

### Labour scarcity and recruitment campaigns in Eastern and Southern Europe

At the end of the nineteenth century, the German labour market experienced dramatic changes. Until then, the greater part of foreign workers had been either farm hands in the Eastern provinces of the German Empire or specialists in a very limited number of occupations. After the Great Depression (1875-1895), the demand for industrial workers rose quickly, enabling foreigners to gain a foothold in industrial employment in the west.<sup>15</sup> Beside quarries and construction works, mining companies became major employers of foreigners. As players in the labour market, these industries shared two characteristics: they employed huge quantities of 'raw labour', and their labour demand was subjected to important seasonal fluctuations.<sup>16</sup> In the region of

13. M.H. Geyer, 'The Miners' Insurance and the Development of the German Social State', in: *Sozialgeschichte des Bergbaus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 1048.

14. F.-J. Brüggemeier, *Leben vor Ort* (München 1983) 170.

15. M. Walz, *Region – Profession – Migration. Italienische Zinngießer in Rheinland-Westfalen 1700-1900* (Osnabrück 2002); P. Lourens and J. Lucassen, *Arbeitswanderung und berufliche Spezialisierung. Die lippischen Ziegler im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Osnabrück 1999); J. Nichtweiß, *Die ausländischen Saisonarbeiter in der Landwirtschaft der östlichen und mittleren Gebiete des Deutschen Reichs* (Berlin 1959); K.J. Bade, "'Preußengänger' und 'Abwehrpolitik'", 106; U. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880 bis 1980. Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter* (Berlin 1986) 47.

16. B. Gales, 'Goed betaald? Mijnwerkerslonen en arbeidsmarkt in het Nederlands-Duits-Belgische grensgebied in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw', to be published in: *Studies over de sociaal-economische geschiedenis van Limburg, Jaarboek van het Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg* LIII (2008).

Aachen, foreign workers from the neighbouring countries had played a role in industrialisation since the first half of the nineteenth century: since the 1830s, Belgians were hired as specialists in the steel works of Eschweiler and Stolberg, and since the outbreak of the agricultural crisis in Limburg in the mid-1870s, a large number of Dutch were employed in mining, brick and glass works, farms and domestic services of the region.<sup>17</sup>

The Prussian census of workplaces and occupations of 1907 provides approximate figures on the number of foreign workers, their origin and their occupational structure in the district.<sup>18</sup> The smallest geographical unit being the *Provinz*, all data about foreign workers refer to the *Rheinland* which also comprises parts of the Ruhr district and the industrial district at the Saar. While the data reflects general tendencies of foreign employment in this huge industrialised region, it obscures important differences between smaller sub-areas. Compared to the average in the German Empire, foreigners in the *Rheinland* were more likely to be employed in industry than in agriculture (on the national average, two foreign workers worked in industry versus one in agriculture, in the *Rheinland*, this ratio was rather five to one). According to the census, the four dominant nationalities in the region were Austrian-Hungarians (38 percent), Russians (21 percent), Italians (11 percent) and Dutch (7.5 percent). The 'Austrian-Hungarians' and 'Russians' were, in fact, mainly ethnic Poles from the Russian and Austrian parts of Poland. The status of these four groups differed greatly, as can be seen from the percentage of gainfully employed people among them: about 71 percent of the Austrians, 78 percent of the Russians and even 89 percent of the Italians were salaried versus only 45.5 percent of the indigenous population<sup>19</sup> and 58 percent of the Dutch. Furthermore, foreigners from Western Europe were more often employed as skilled workers. In mining, almost half of the Austrians were counted as 'skilled' compared to one-fourth of the Russians and Italians.<sup>20</sup>

To satisfy their demand for cheap and unskilled labour, mining companies from the Ruhr had started to hire large numbers of Poles and Masurians in the 1890s. In 1908, these two ethnic groups made up twenty percent of the

17. Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (HSTA D), Regierung Aachen, Präsidialbüro und Sondergruppen/ 909, Letter Landrat Kreis Aachen (18.3.1908).

18. *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, Bd. 211, ed. Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt (Berlin 1913). The numbers of people from Russia and Austria-Hungary are certainly underestimated since the date of the census was too early (12th June 1907) to catch the maxima of foreign employment. See: K.J. Bade, 'Arbeiterstatistik zur Ausländerkontrolle, Die "Nachweisungen" der preußischen Landräte über den "Zugang, Abgang und Bestand der ausländischen Arbeiter im preußischen Staate" 1906-1914', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* (1984) 163-283, 167.

19. Hohls, Kaelble, *Die regionale Erwerbsstruktur*, 72.

20. *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, 312, 180 annex.

workforce in the Ruhr district.<sup>21</sup> Poles with Russian or Austrian nationality, however, were subjected to an increasingly sophisticated system of controls by the Prussian state. First, they were only admitted in agriculture in the Eastern provinces; then, from 1891, they had to leave the country during wintertime, and, from 1908, they had to produce a valid labour contract before entering the country.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the majority of Polish miners in the Ruhr were Prussian citizens. Nevertheless, their presence worried the authorities. In July 1907, the Prussian Ministry of the Interior sent an inquiry to all regional governments in order to know the exact number of Polish workers in every region and to reassess the force of the Polish nationalist movement.<sup>23</sup> For the *Regierungsbezirk* Aachen, local officials reported only 347 Poles, mainly employed on farms around Düren. For *Kreis* Aachen, that comprised the mining district, only 54 Poles were counted, most of them in agriculture as well. Although it is possible that the local administration voluntarily misinterpreted the question, or that the mining companies re-labeled some of their Polish workers as 'Ruthenians' or 'Masurians', two ethnic groups less subjected to public alarm, it is clear that Polish miners played a minor role in the labour force of the regional mines.<sup>24</sup> This was equally true in the Saar-district, the second coal region on the West-German border.<sup>25</sup>

If it was not by recruiting Polish workers, then how did the mines in Aachen manage to double their workforce between 1880 and 1910?<sup>26</sup> In the beginning, the new mines in the region attracted large groups of miners from Silesia and Saxony.<sup>27</sup> The companies benefited from the wage difference between the East- and the West-German coal districts. The wages in Aachen, while being the lowest in the West, were still clearly higher than those around Chemnitz in Saxony.<sup>28</sup> The majority of men hired during these recruitment

21. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung*, 74.

22. Nichtweiß, *Die ausländischen Saisonarbeiter*, 43; HstAD, RP Aachen/ 4884, Verordnung des Preuß. MdI über die Inlandslegitimierung der über die östliche und südöstliche Grenze kommenden Ausländer, 21.12.1907.

23. HstAD, Regierung Aachen, Präsidialbüro und Sondergruppen/ 985: The survey was linked to deliberations in the *Reichstag* of a new law of association.

24. J. Oltmer, 'Begrenzung und Abwehr: De-Globalisierung und protektionistische Migrationspolitik nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg in Deutschland und Europa', in: H. Huget, C. Kambas and W. Klein (eds.), *Grenzüberschreitungen: Differenz und Identität im Europa der Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden 2005) 159.

25. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung*, 57: In the Elsass, 55 percent of the labour force was of Italian origin.

26. For the years 1850 until 1914: W. Fischer (ed.), *Statistik der Bergbauproduktion Deutschlands 1850-1914* (St. Katharinen 1989). For later years: id. (ed.), *Statistik der Montanproduktion Deutschlands 1915-1985* (St. Katharinen 1995).

27. Jaud, *Der Landkreis Aachen in der NS-Zeit*, 85.

28. Deutscher Bergarbeiterverband, 1889-1929: *40 Jahre Bergbau und Bergarbeiterverband. Zur Erinnerung an die Gründung des Deutschen Bergarbeiterverbandes* (Bochum 1929) 44-45.



campaigns were certainly trained miners. For them, the EBV erected the first large workers' colony *Streiffeld*, next to the older mining towns of Merkstein and Alsdorf.<sup>29</sup>

In the early years of the twentieth century, Dutch workers constituted the only considerable group of foreigners in the district. The census, however, does not reflect the importance of this group, as it omits cross-border commuters. The number of Dutch miners in the region can be better assessed via other sources. The local mining official Franz Büttgenbach stated, for example, that 1,500 Dutch miners commuted daily between South-Limburg and the Prussian border districts in 1896.<sup>30</sup> As to the years 1899 and 1912, the mayor of the Dutch border town Kerkrade counted 1,223 and 1,434 daily commuters from his town, although not all of them miners.<sup>31</sup> For the mining companies, the Dutch workers represented an almost ideal workforce: they were barely engaged in union activities, they were cheap, as the companies did not have to provide housing for them, and they were reliable, as long as the employment possibilities in Limburg remained limited. But with the take-off of the South-Limburg mining industry this was no longer the case – employment there multiplied by six between 1900 and 1910. As a consequence, the reports of the administration for mining safety expressed an ever-growing concern about labour supply for the Aachen mining industry.<sup>32</sup> After 1906, the EBV therefore tried to replace its Dutch workers by men recruited 'on the Balkans', according to a former employee of the company.<sup>33</sup>

The course of these recruitment drives can be retraced in some surviving workforce registers.<sup>34</sup> Two registers of the *Laurweg* mine cover in part the pre-war years: the first contains 467 entries of workers employed in the repair shop aboveground between 1870 and 1921, the second 3603 entries of

29. Jaud, *Landkreis Aachen*, 85.

30. F. Büttgenbach, 'Le bassin de la Worm et sa population ouvrière', in: Association des Ingénieurs Sortis de l'École de Liège, 232-235, *Revue universelle des mines, de la métallurgie, de la mécanique des travaux publics, des sciences et des arts appliqués à l'industrie* (1896) 234.

31. S. Langeweg, 'Trekwerkers en pendelaars. Grensarbeid in oostelijk Zuid-Limburg, 1875-1914', in: *Zestig jaar vorse in de geschiedenis. Jubileumboek Het Land van Herle 1945-2005* (Heerlen 2006) 295-308, 296-299.

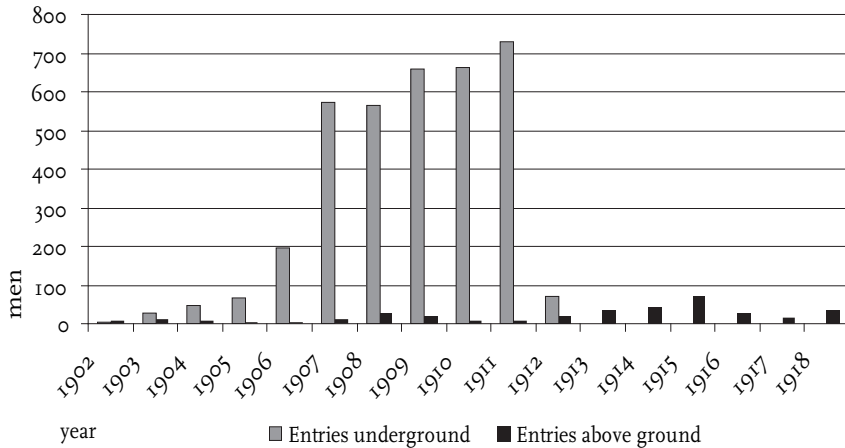
32. 'Die Bergwerksindustrie und Bergverwaltung Preußens im Jahre 1906', *ZBHS* (1907) 575-615, 578.

33. 'Rückblick durch einen Kassenschalter', *de Kull. Berichte vom Eschweiler Bergwerksverein* 4 (1954) II.

34. Bergbauarchiv Bochum (BBA), 160/ 191, 194, 195, 196, 202, 203; Personalarchiv Alsdorf (PA), Grube Anna I/II (1937-41), Grube Anna II (1942-45), Grube Adolf, (1915-19), Grube Adolf (1928-45), Grube Adolf OB (1943-54), Grube Adolf UB (1937-46): Almost all registries refer to EBV-pits. The majority covers the period between 1900 and 1950. Not all books note the same characteristics. The birthplaces or nationality appears only in about half of them but rarely together with data about qualification and, since we have mostly either entry or exit dates, it is impossible to calculate the duration of the contracts.

workers employed underground between 1902 and 1912 (graph 1).<sup>35</sup> Established during the sixteenth century, *Laurweg* was a small and rather old mining venture. In the early years of the twentieth century, it employed an average workforce of 700 men.<sup>36</sup> It was situated in Kohlscheid, only four kilometers from the Dutch border and, compared to the new mines between Alsdorf, Hoengen and Merkstein, it was in a bad shape until the First World War.<sup>37</sup> The *Vereinigungsgesellschaft für Steinkohlenbergbau im Wurmrevier* which owned *Laurweg* had to join the EBV in order to solve its long-term financial problems in 1906. Modernisation of the mine was only started by the EBV in 1912.<sup>38</sup>

**GRAPH 1** Total Entries on *Laurweg* 1902-1918



The second register contains explicit information on the workers' origins, whereas the first one does not. However, larger groups of foreign workers can be often recognised by implicit hints.<sup>39</sup> As these hints are completely missing in the first book, most workers aboveground can be counted as locals. Yet, for twenty out of almost 500 workers a residence in South-Limburg is recorded. They were probably Dutch.

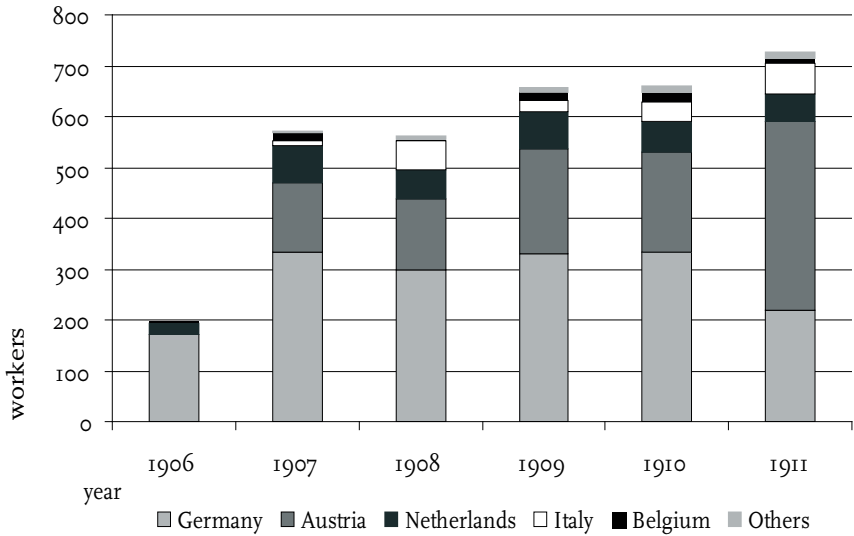
35. BBA, 160/202, 160/203: When they were started, the management apparently included everyone who was already present, and then entered chronologically those who arrived afterwards.

36. D. Salber, *Das Aachener Revier, 150 Jahre Steinkohle an Wurm und Inde* (Aachen 1987) 109.

37. E. Spickerhoff, *Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Aachener Steinkohlenbergbaus während der letzten beiden Jahrzehnte* (Jena 1935) 18.

38. Schunder, *Geschichte des Aachener Steinkohlenbergbaus*, 206, 238.

39. Hints could be: groups arriving the same day, people of whom only the year of birth but not the exact date was known or people living in a so called *Menage*, a dormitory for single men.

**GRAPH 2** *Foreign Workers in Laurweg*

Sources graph 1 and 2: BBA, EBV (160), 202 Belegschaftsbuch Laurweg (üF 2096); 194 Belegschaftsbuch Übertage Laurweg (üF 2088).

Among the workers in the second register, five large groups stand out by origin (graph 2). Besides local and Dutch miners, the book records large groups from the region of Cazin close to today's border between Croatia and Bosnia (535 entries), from the region of Brody in East-Galicia (249 entries) and from two tiny villages in Middle-Italy (77 entries). It is most likely, that the management started the registry by recording all men actually employed in *Laurweg* in 1907. Therefore, the influx figures for 1906 are certainly underestimated. It is, nevertheless, interesting to note the break in the workforce structures between 1906 and 1907: until 1906, most workers were born in the region or in Dutch Limburg. In 1907, the company began to recruit in Austria and, one year later, in Italy. Between 1910 and 1911, the local workforce started to shrink. Locals probably preferred mines which were in a better shape. The losses were mainly compensated by newly recruited Croatians. None of the foreign recruitment centers was situated near an industrial or a mining region. Thus, the EBV certainly looked for unskilled workers, not miners. Moreover, there existed a German community around Brody.<sup>40</sup> As the mining administration restricted underground work to men who understood

40. All geographical references in: *Andrees allgemeiner Handatlas* (Bielefeld and Leipzig 1930).

German, the *EBV* had a particular interest in foreigners with German language skills.<sup>41</sup>

The sources do not reveal the fate of the Austrian and Italian workers after 1912. It is likely that the majority of them left for military service with the outbreak of the First World War. Yet small groups of Austrian and Yugoslavian workers still appeared in the workforce registers of the 1920s and 1930s. Their professional position can be deciphered via the yearly reports of the Aachen mining school.<sup>42</sup> A training course there was the prerequisite for becoming a supervisor. If professional advancement beyond the hewer position was rare even for German miners, it was virtually impossible for migrants.<sup>43</sup> This is true also for foreigners in the Aachen region: it was only in 1935, that the first immigrant passed a course in the mining school. He had probably arrived as a child with his parents during the first recruitment campaigns of the *EBV*. The situation of the Dutch workers differs in this respect from the one of other foreigners. The first students from Limburg passed a mining school course in 1899 already and had therefore full access to supervisory positions.

### Free and compulsory labour in the mines during the First World War

Since September 1914, the war had generated acute labour shortages throughout all branches of the economy. Mining companies responded, on the one hand, by replacing adult miners by under aged and older men and, to a lesser extent, by women and, on the other hand, by deploying prisoners of war (POWs) and foreign civil workers in the mines.

While, at the beginning of the war, most foreigners left Germany for military service in their home countries, conscript workers from adverse countries were retained at their workplaces. This concerned mainly workers from the Russian parts of Poland. Whereas, during peacetime, foreign Poles had generally been admitted only in agricultural employment, after April 1915, the state extended work permissions to mining and steel mills.<sup>44</sup> Next to the Polish workers who had already resided in Germany before the war, a growing number of voluntary workers arrived after June 1915. For many of them, work in Germany was the only way to escape the miserable economic situation in

41. *Bergpolizeiverordnung betreffend die Beschäftigung fremdsprachiger Arbeiter beim Bergwerksbetriebe im Oberbergamtsbezirke Dortmund* (Gelsenkirchen 1899).

42. *Bergschule Aachen, Verzeichnis der Lehrer, Angestellten und Schüler der Bardenberg/Aachener Bergschule: von der Gründung der Bardenberger Bergschule 1868 bis zur Gegenwart* (Aachen 1930); *Bergschule Aachen, Bericht über das Schuljahr ... der Bergschule zu Aachen und der Bergberufsschulen des Aachener Steinkohlenbezirks, 1937-1986*.

43. H. Trischler, *Steiger im deutschen Bergbau. Zur Sozialgeschichte der technischen Angestellten 1815-1945* (München 1988) 91-95.

44. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung*, 88.

the occupied territories. Although they were usually recruited on the basis of free labour contracts, once arrived at their workplaces, they could neither change their employer nor go home. The second large group of foreign civil workers came from Belgium. German companies had tried to profit from widespread unemployment for recruiting voluntaries there since 1915. Yet, until autumn 1916, the recruitment attempts of the industry had had but a limited success. Therefore, the German authorities started to deport workers from the occupied Belgian territories.<sup>45</sup> This policy was abandoned after a couple of months due to the international pressure and the public outcry it provoked. But the threat persisted and led to an increase in the number of 'voluntary workers' afterwards.

In the district of Aachen, the workforce of the mines decreased by one-third during the first month of the war.<sup>46</sup> Like elsewhere, the mining companies had first enforced their grasp on the local labour market. Thus, the number of under aged workers had doubled between 1914 and 1916, while the number of women had increased from zero to almost 400. The number of older workers increased only in the new mines of the *Wurmrevier*, where the workforce had been particularly young before the war.<sup>47</sup> Finally, the mines could hope to replace their local workforce partly by the deployment of about 1,000 former Polish agricultural workers who had stayed in the region after the outbreak of the war.<sup>48</sup> But none of these measures prevented persisting manpower shortages throughout the war years.

The restructuring of the workforce can be partly retrieved in the labour force registry of the EBV-pit *Adolf* (graph 3).<sup>49</sup> This mine had developed production progressively from 1908 to 1913. To build up its workforce, the management had resorted to recruiting non-local miners. But in 1915, the pit employed only locals and a small number of Dutch commuters. In June 1917, about 200 Belgian workers arrived in the *Adolf* mine. They came mainly from the Walloon coal districts, but very few from the nearest district of Liège. Only two out of 200 men stayed beyond the armistice. Polish civil workers were not recorded in the *Adolf* registry, simply because they were deployed in a very limited set of workplaces. In June 1915, the EBV started to recruit workers from Poland through the labour office in Lodz. Most of them worked in the coking plants of Alsdorf and Nothberg. The number of Polish civil workers reached 650 at the end of the first year of recruitment and 1,300 at the end

45. Ibidem, 288f.

46. Knappschaftsstatistik for the respective years: Among the members of the regional miners' insurance system, between one third (1914) and almost the half (1915-1918) actively took part in the war.

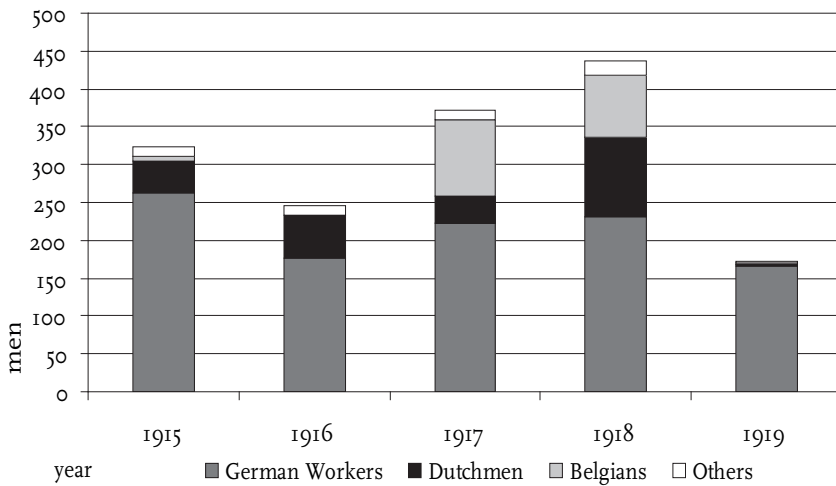
47. Knappschaftsstatistik 1908/ 1915.

48. HSTAD, Regierung Aachen, Präsidialbüro und Sondergruppen/ 1582.

49. PA, Grube Adolf Belegschaftsbuch, 1915-19.

of the war. They became the most important group of foreign workers in the district. The Poles at the EBV were not allowed to change workplaces, even inside the company, or to go home.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, the EBV was one of the first companies to obtain individual permissions for family reunification for Polish workers as early as in December 1915.<sup>51</sup> The German government was usually very reluctant to concede family reunification to Polish workers.<sup>52</sup> This probably explains why about 100 Polish workers stayed in the district after the end of the war.<sup>53</sup>

**GRAPH 3** *Civil workers and war prisoners (1915-1919)*



Graph based on PA, Grube Adolf Belegschaftsbuch, 1915-19.

### ‘Nationalisation’ of recruitment (1919-1945)

The new institutions of the Weimar Republic caused a profound change in the employers’ position on the labour market. This was true, particularly, in the field of labour recruitment. The *Arbeitsnachweisgesetz* (1922) introduced a

50. HSTAD, Regierung Aachen/ 4889, Letter of Samuel Zarski to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, 2 February 1918: The limits of freedom in the free working contracts are illustrated by the case of the Polish worker Abraham Zarski. He ended up in prison for running away from work after seven months in the coking plant of the EBV mine Anna.

51. HSTAD, Regierung Aachen/ 4886, 4887, 4888, 4889.

52. K. Rawe, ‘Working in the coal mine. Belgians in the German war industry of the Ruhr area during World War I’, in: S. Jaumain, a.o. (eds.), *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la Première Guerre Mondiale. Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique* (Brussel 2005) 221-233, 228.

53. Statistik der Bezirksgruppe Aachen der Fachgruppe Steinkohlenbergbau, 1935.

strong bureaucratic counterpart to the recruitment agents of the companies. It fixed quotas of work permits depending on unemployment figures and the country of origin of potential labour migrants.<sup>54</sup>

The Aachen mines temporarily lost all of their bargaining power on the labour market during the years of the German hyperinflation. The rapid currency devaluation between 1918 and 1923 turned around the traditional wage proportions between the district of Aachen and its European neighbours. As a consequence, it became most profitable for German miners to keep up their residence in the district of Aachen while working in the South-Limburg mines. Most Dutch workers left the Aachen mines for the same reason shortly after the end of the war. The EBV tried to pay them in guilders or in kind, but could not afford this for a long time.<sup>55</sup> The migration of workers to Dutch, Belgian or French mining districts was not limited to the region of Aachen. The Ruhr mines also claimed state protection against the activities of Dutch agents who allegedly tried to 'steal their best workers'.<sup>56</sup> Yet, in Aachen not just the 'best workers' left, but one-third of the entire workforce. Over 5,000 Aachen miners were working in Dutch-Limburg in 1922; almost 2,500 of them maintained their residence in Germany.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the companies could supply accommodation to workers recruited outside the district. Attempts to evict the miners' families from their homes in the district brought only little success, as the Weimar Republic had decreed a quite effective law of tenants' protection in 1919.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, many mayors were not particularly keen on cooperating with the pits.<sup>59</sup>

As the region was under foreign occupation until 1929, the German government had neither the power nor the will to intervene.<sup>60</sup> Between 1920 and 1922, the EBV therefore tried to convince the *Vereeniging tot Behartiging van de Belangen der Limburgsche Mijnindustrie*, the representative of the Dutch private mines, to lay off their German workers or, at least, ask them to move to Limburg. Whereas, the Dutch private mines agreed in summer of 1921,<sup>61</sup> this was not the case for the Dutch State Mines. Labour movements between Aachen and South-Limburg finally stopped, when the economic situation in

54. K.J. Bade, 'Transnationale Migration und Arbeitsmarkt im Kaiserreich: Von Agrarstaat mit starker Industrie zum Industriestaat mit starker agrarischer Basis', in: Pierenkemper and Tilly (eds.), *Historische Arbeitsmarktforschung*, 182-211, 202.

55. BA, R 3901/ 33139/ No. 735, 15, 28 January 1920; SHCL, GSL, 468: Letter EBV, 20 May 1921.

56. BA, R 1501/ 118369/ 24, 42.

57. SHCL, GSL, 512, Overzicht van het totaal aantal arbeiders, werkzaam bij the Nederlandse mijnen op October 1922.

58. BA, R 3901/ 33139, 735, 38: Mieterschutzverordnung, 26 September 1919.

59. BA, R 1501/ 118369, 301.

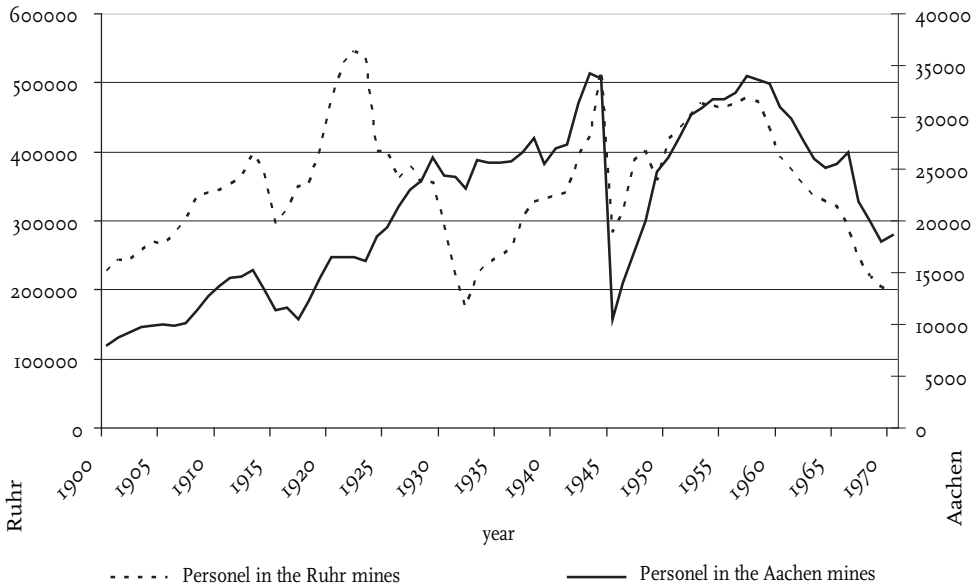
60. BA, R 3901/ 33139, 735, 1 February 1920.

61. SHCL, GSL/ 512, 468, Vereeniging tot behartiging van de belangen, Letter 18 July 1921.

the Netherlands started to decline and the employment of foreigners was increasingly criticised in parliament and by public opinion.<sup>62</sup>

Compared to the pre-war years, the number of foreign workers in the district of Aachen had dropped by approximately 90 percent. Most immigrants had left the district after the outbreak of the war and did not come back after its end. The slump was partially due to a statistical effect: the former Prussian Poles had to choose between the German and the Polish nationalities after 1918. In general, those who opted for Poland left the country; those who opted for Germany were not counted as foreign workers anymore.

**GRAPH 4** *Labour force in the Ruhr and in the district of Aachen (1900-1970)*



Graph based on the *Zeitschrift für das Berg-, Hütten- und Salinenwesen im preußischen Staate* for the respective years and W. Fischer (1989/ 1995).

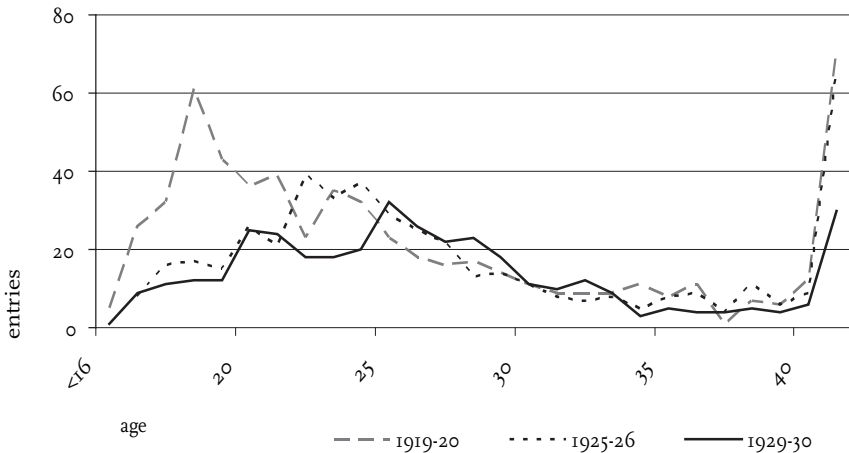
While the numbers of workers in the district of Aachen were constantly decreasing until 1924, the Ruhr mines managed to enlarge their workforce by integrating young miners and by recruiting adult workers from other branches (graph 4). Because of lowering costs during the inflation years, many Ruhr mines could invest in mechanising and reorganising their underground departments. The end of the inflation marked the end of the mechanisation boom in the Ruhr. In 1924, the industry laid off about one-fourth of its labour force, or all in all 140,000 especially old and poorly qualified

62. SHCL, GSL/ 512; BA, R 3901/ 33139, 735, 69, 2 November 1922.



workers.<sup>63</sup> Yet, the situation in Aachen was completely different. The mines here had such a high backlog demand for workers that they enlarged their labour force despite the costs. Due to the massive lay-offs at the Ruhr and the Saar, the mines in Aachen could finally attract again people from these other German districts.

**GRAPH 5** *Distribution of age per entry group, Voccart/Laurweg, 1919-193*



Graph based on BBA, EBV (160), 191 Belegschaftsbuch Voccart (ÜF 2085).

The shift in the workforce structures can be retrieved in the labour registers of the mine *Voccart/Laurweg*<sup>64</sup> in 1912, the EBV had merged *Voccart*, *Laurweg* and *Kämpchen* into one modern and highly efficient mining venture called *Laurweg*. After the Great War, the mine was run by a workforce of about 1,500 men.<sup>65</sup> Graph 5 represents three cross-sections through the age structure of incoming miners, the first during the years 1919-1920, the second during 1925-1926 and the last during 1929-1930. For the first group of entries, the median age is 23 years, for the second it is 25 years and for the third 26 years. In the first cross-section, the low median is primarily caused by the large number of under aged workers and the almost entire absence of workers between 20 and 40, who had left in part to the Netherlands. In normal times, the latter group can be supposed to constitute the major part of the workforce

63. M. Zimmermann, 'Die Rationalisierung des Ruhrbergbaus in den zwanziger Jahre: Das Beispiel der Harpener Bergbau AG', in: K. Tenfelde (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte des Bergbaus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Beiträge des Internationalen Kongresses zur Bergbaugeschichte Bochum* (München 1992) 432-444, 432-437.

64. BBA, EBV (160), 191 Belegschaftsbuch Voccart (ÜF 2085).

65. *Statistische Mitteilungen über die im Verein für die Berg- und Hüttenmännischen Interessen im Aachener Bezirk vertretenen Industriezweige* for the respective years.

for reasons of efficiency. But during the inflation years, the pit passed through a kind of extended wartime economy. In 1919-1920, the mine employed also many workers who would have been considered 'invalid' for underground work under normal conditions. The inflow of adult miners from the Ruhr and the Saar following the monetary reform in 1924 becomes visible in the second cross-section. The graph still peaks at '+40 years', as the Ruhr mines had released especially older workers. Meanwhile, the mine management had stopped all recruitment of men under the age of 18. The importance of the newly arriving labour force from other German regions is illustrated by the massive housing programme initiated during these years. The major part of the mining colonies ever built in the region was started between 1924 and 1930.<sup>66</sup> The third cross-section foreshadows a problem of the late 1930s: the structure of entries looks normal again with the major part consisting of workers between 20 and 40 years of age. Yet, hardly any young miner entered the mine during these years. In the course of the 1930s, the companies started to worry seriously about loss of appeal of mining work among the young generation.<sup>67</sup>

It has already been noted that few foreign workers stayed in the district of Aachen in the period of the Weimar Republic. Detailed data are only available for the 1930s (graph 6). In most industries and regions in Germany, the depression of the 1930s caused a major downturn in employment. Probably as a result of its solid ties to the French and Luxemburg iron and steel industry, in the district of Aachen workforce figures remained stable against the general trend. Foreign workers represented merely between two and three percent in this workforce. Yet, between October 1938 and spring 1939, the number of foreign miners rose suddenly by 50 percent. This increase was entirely due to the recruitment of 635 miners from Limburg.<sup>68</sup> As the 1930s were marked by high unemployment in the Netherlands too, Dutch labour offices could, since 1937, resort to forcing people to take up work abroad by means of withholding unemployment benefits.<sup>69</sup>

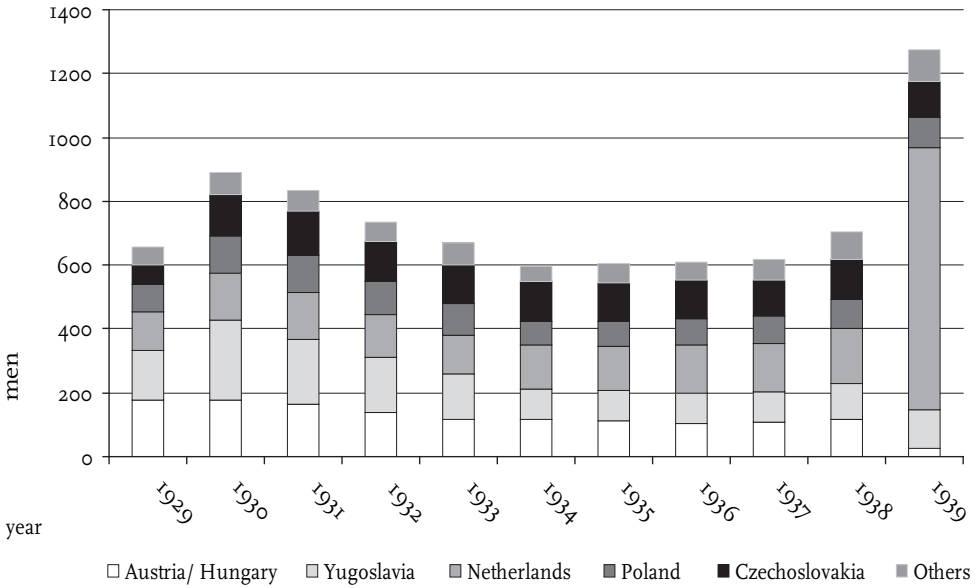
66. Fehl, *Werkssiedlungen im Aachener Revier*, 58-158; J. Neubert, *Die Nachwuchsfragen im deutschen Steinkohlenbergbau: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Lösung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Berufsausbildung* (Diss. Freiberg Sa. 1933) 23.

67. Jaud, *Landkreis Aachen*, 462; Krauss, *Aachener Steinkohlebergbau*, 198.

68. *Statistik der Bezirksgruppe Steinkohlenbergbau* (Aachen 1939) 34; T. Müller, 'Vom Grenzgängerwesen zur Zwangsarbeit. Der Ausländereinsatz im Aachener Bergbau während des Zweiten Weltkriegs', in: K. Tenfelde, H.-C. Seidel (eds.), *Zwangsarbeit im Bergwerk*, t. 1, 161-192, 168.

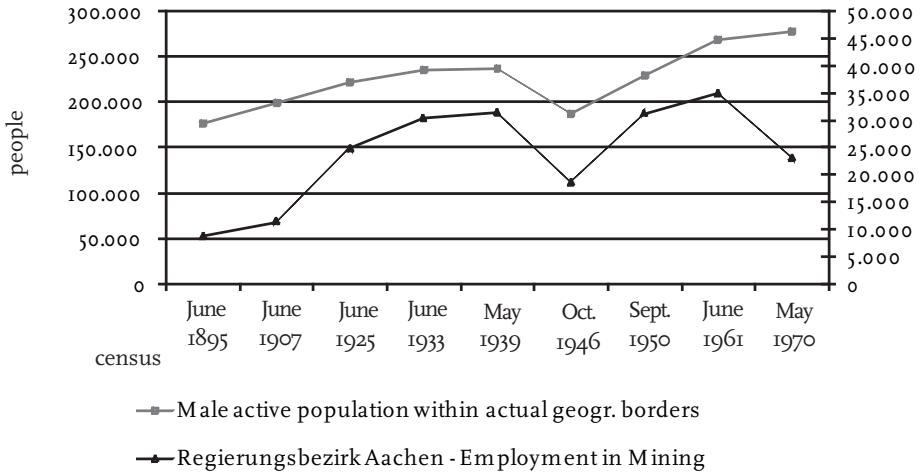
69. H. Lademacher, *Geschichte der Niederlande: Politik – Verfassung – Wirtschaft* (Darmstadt 1983) 348.

**GRAPH 6** *Foreigners in the district (1929-39)*



Graph based on Bezirksgruppe Steinkohlenbergbau Aachen, Statistik der Bezirksgruppe Steinkohlenbergbau Aachen der Wirtschaftsgruppe Bergbau, 1939.

**GRAPH 7** *Male active population and employment in mining*



Graph based on Hohls, Kaelble (eds.), *Die regionale Erwerbsstruktur* (1989).

## Foreigners in the pits during the Second World War

The system of forced labour during the Second World War took inspiration from two sources: the system of coercion initiated during the First World War as well as the general policy of Prussian and, later on, German bureaucracy to confer a different legal status to groups of foreign workers based on nationality or ethnicity. Basically, there were four status groups in the mines: German workers, civil workers from allied or neutral states (such as Italy before 1943 or Croatia), civil workers from occupied states and prisoners of war (POWs).<sup>70</sup> Within the third group, especially, ethnic differences caused a clear difference in treatment. For German miners, who had not been drafted into the army, the introduction of this hierarchy increased the chances of social mobility. Thus, the director of the Anna mines, Günther Venn, reported that the number of German supervisors was doubled as they each had to train and monitor between four and seven foreign workers underground.<sup>71</sup>

Aachen quickly became one of the centers of assignment of West-European POWs and civil workers, because a secret ordinance prohibited the deployment of Polish and other East European workers in the region.<sup>72</sup> During the first war years, the ratio of foreign workers was around four percent, most of them Dutch civil workers. Only the arrival of Russian POWs and Ukrainian 'civil workers' during the first months of 1942 let the number of employed foreigners increase by about seventeen percent.<sup>73</sup> The peak of employment in the regional mines was reached around the turn of 1943/44. At this time, about 2,200 *Ostarbeiter*, 5,600 POWs, 3,500 Italian detainees, plus 2,500 to 3,000 civil workers of different nationalities were working in the regional mining industry.<sup>74</sup> Foreign workers made up almost 50 percent of the workforce. In autumn 1944, 8,000 out of 10,000 remaining men in the mines were forced labourers or POWs.<sup>75</sup> Only now, the mines adjusted payment and working conditions of the foreigners to their German colleagues hoping to raise the overall output.<sup>76</sup> Shortly before the American Forces entered the region in Septem-

70. H.-C. Seidel, "Ein buntes Völkergemisch hat eine Wandering durch unsere Gruben gemacht." *Ausländereinsatz und Zwangsarbeit im Ruhrbergbau 1940 bis 1945* in: Tenfelde and Seidel, *Zwangsarbeit im Bergwerk*, 84.

71. G. Venn, '21 Jahre Alsdorf', *Jahresblätter des Alsdorfer Geschichtsvereins* (1984) 55.

72. *Grenzzonenverordnung*, 2 September 1939.

73. BA, R 156/ 800, Krankenstand der Revierfremden, 11 March 1942.

74. P.H. Oidtmann, *Die technische und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Aachener Steinkohlenbergbaus* (Aachen 1955) 128 and 26 annex: *Ostarbeiter* was the term for forced labourers who were in their majority ethnic Russians, White Russians or Ukrainians. It is possible that Poles were also counted under this definition.

75. Venn, '21 Jahre Alsdorf', 55.

76. HstAD, Regierung Aachen/ 14428, Lagebericht der Bezirksgruppe Steinkohlenbergbau Aachen, 4 September 1944.

ber 1944, forced labourers and POWs were sent away to the inner parts of the Reich and the population received the order to evacuate the border region.<sup>77</sup>

### Restructuring of the labour force (1945-1955)

Economic life in the region suffered severe repercussions of the evacuation and the battle of Aachen in September/ October 1944. Even though air raids had spared the mining district, the miners' homes and the aboveground equipment were almost entirely destroyed in heavy ground fighting.<sup>78</sup> Figure 7 shows that the labour force shortages during this period were mainly due to population losses caused by evacuation. Overall the *Regierungsbezirk* Aachen had lost thirteen percent of its inhabitants, which was the highest rate in North Rhineland-Westphalia.<sup>79</sup> Only 1,300 miners out of 25,000 before the war had stayed in the region after the evacuation to guard the pits and keep the pumps working.<sup>80</sup> The foreign population had also decreased significantly, even compared to the 1920s and 1930s. While all Weimar censuses counted about 15,000 foreign inhabitants in the region, only 6,000 of them appeared to have stayed when a new census was held in 1946. Two-thirds lived in the industrialised parts of the region. The dominant groups were Belgians and Dutch, who made up one-half, and Poles and Czechs who, together, made up one-fourth of the foreign population.<sup>81</sup> The latter were certainly Displaced Persons (DPS), former forced labourers who did not want to go back to their native country. Meanwhile, over 47,000 refugees from the former German parts of Poland lived in the region in 1950, most of them in the vicinity of the mines.<sup>82</sup> This meant that the reconstruction of the workforce required the companies to recruit adult men who were not accustomed to the work in the pits. In 1955, the in-house magazine of *Sophia Jacoba* stated that the majority of the workforce had arrived after the war. In the case of the EBV, this applied to 75 percent of the workforce.<sup>83</sup>

77. BBA, 15/ 253.

78. Eschweiler Bergwerksverein, Kohlscheid, *Geschäftsbericht über die Zeit vom 1.7.1945 bis 20.6. 1948* (Aachen 1951) 8.

79. U. Kleinert, *Flüchtlinge und Wirtschaft in Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1945-61. Arbeitsmarkt – Gewerbe – Staat* (Düsseldorf 1988) 19.

80. BBA, 15/ 253.

81. Hohls, Kaelble (eds.), *Die regionale Erwerbsstruktur*, 3: We cite this census despite methodical problems, because it is not before 1961 that foreigners are counted again.

82. Landesamt für Datenverarbeitung und Statistik NRW, *Gemeindestatistik des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*. (Düsseldorf 1952) [Sonderreihe Volkszählung 1950 15] 84f.

83. *Sophia-Jacoba*, 10, Jg. 5, Jan-März 1955, 3; *de Kull. Berichte vom Eschweiler Bergwerksverein*, 3 (1954), 10; 'Wie hat der Eschweiler Bergwerksverein den letzten Weltkrieg überstanden?', *Berichte vom Eschweiler Bergwerksverein* 1 (1952) 26-30.

Manpower was the key to the recovery of the national coal production. Since 1946, the *Deutsche Kohlenbergbauleitung* (which coordinated the interests of the mining industry), the labour administration, the unions and the allied forces had, therefore, created specialised placement structures aiming to bring a maximum of able-bodied young men into the mines.<sup>84</sup> However, the lack of housing limited recruitment. For several years, the deployment of non-local workers into the West German mining regions was, hence, reserved to unmarried men or married men without children.<sup>85</sup> The housing shortage proved particularly persistent in the surroundings of Aachen. Especially family housing was lacking even after the (re)-construction of almost 10,000 apartments in the region.<sup>86</sup> In 1954, the management of *Sophia Jacoba* still tried to attract young men by promising family accommodation after six months of work. Meanwhile, ten percent of the *EBV*-workers were still living in dormitories.<sup>87</sup> The build-up of the workforce of the youngest mine in the district, *Emil Mayrisch* in Siersdorf, was also aggravating the labour shortages. Its workforce increased from 380 in 1951 to 3,500 in 1958.<sup>88</sup>

The labour costs for the companies increased significantly with the German monetary reform in 1948. As a result, the Ruhr mines laid off so many workers, that workforce figures there dropped by 40,000 between the end of 1948 and the end of 1949. This is remarkable, especially by taking into account the 80,000 new arrivals during this period. The actual turnover was astonishingly high with 120,000 workers entering and leaving the mines.<sup>89</sup> As the major reparations and reorganisations were done, the Ruhr mines could tighten their selection criteria again. Despite the costs, workforce figures in Aachen grew by one-third during the same period and continued to grow until the outbreak of the mining crisis in 1957/8 (see figure 4). It took until 1952 to remodel the underground departments of the mines in this district.<sup>90</sup> The restructuring is also perceptible in workforce structures. The ratio of coal-face workers doubled from about 20 percent to about 45 percent between 1952 and 1953. The unusual low share of 'productive miners' until the early 1950s was

84. HStAD, BR 1180/ 1363, *6 Jahre Aussenstelle Bergbau des Landesamtes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 80.

85. *6 Jahre Aussenstelle Bergbau*, 7, 42.

86. Oidtmann, *Die technische und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Aachener Steinkohlebergbaus*, 27 annex.

87. 'Anlegungen für den Untertagebetrieb', in: *Sophia Jacoba*, 9. Jg., 6, März 1954, 22. 'Die große Wende. Ein Interview mit dem Arbeitsdirektor', *de Kull* 1 (1954), 26.

88. See for workforce statistics: *Jahrbuch des deutschen Bergbaus. Ein Führer durch die bergbaulichen Unternehmen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* for the respective years.

89. See for workforce statistics: W. Fischer, *Statistik der Montanproduktion Deutschlands 1915-1985*, 36; 'Übersicht über Zuweisungen und Einstellungen im Ruhrbergbau durch die Außenstelle Bergbau (1.6.1946-31.5.1952)' in: *6 Jahre Außenstelle Bergbau*, appendix.

90. Eschweiler Bergwerksverein, Kohlscheid, *Geschäftsbericht 1952*, 14f.

partly caused by the particular age structure of the workforce after the war. In 1951, the share of young miners (between 14 and 25 years of age) had doubled compared to 1936 (from 17 to 33 percent). The share of old workers (over 46 years of age) had increased by 10 percent (from 13 to 24 percent).<sup>91</sup> Both groups were subjected to specific restrictions concerning underground work.

During the following years, labour scarcity led to a high turnover in the district. In 1954, for instance, the turnover in the Aachen mines added up to 60 percent of the total workforce, compared to 34 percent in the Ruhr.<sup>92</sup> The high turnover boosted recruitment and training costs and disrupted the working routine in the pits. It was not fortuitous that *Emil Mayrisch* with a particularly high share of new, non-local miners had the reputation of having a very rough working atmosphere.<sup>93</sup> Turnover figures were directly linked to the reconstruction process. Since the 1950s, the regional industry gave ample opportunities for alternatives to mining work. The regional labour market was, furthermore, exposed to the competition of the Ruhr mines and other nearby European coal districts. In 1954, for example, the Liège SA *Charbonnages de Gosson* commissioned a bus company from Herzogenrath to drive 31 workers to the pits in Tilleur (near Seraing). According to the bus company, the workers had been either unemployed or judged unfit for further employment in the local mines before taking up work in Belgium. The shuttle service was interrupted after a couple of months, because the authorities feared a massive outflow of workers to Belgium, as a considerable wage gap existed between the district of Aachen and the Liège district.<sup>94</sup>

### **Commuters, 'guest workers' and self-organised recruitment. Inner regional differences**

The workforce policy after the war primarily aimed at hiring workers who wanted to build up an existence in mining, as EBV labour director Jakob Triem stressed it in 1959.<sup>95</sup> As coal mining had lost much of its attractiveness during the years of the *Wirtschaftswunder* in Germany, the employment of foreign workers soon became a necessity. The first foreigners in the Aachen mines

91. Eschweiler Bergwerksverein, Kohlscheid, *Geschäftsbericht 1951*, 16.

92. Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Verkehr Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Jahresbericht der Bergverwaltung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen für das Jahr 1957*, 56.

93. Bergbaumuseum Grube Anna 2 (BGA2)/ Interviews 1994, Johannes Klute, 6; Dieter Ruhm, 9.

94. Statistisches Amt der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, *Statistisches Bulletin. Kohle und Stahl, Vierteljährliche Ausgabe* 9. Jg., 3 (1961), 62: A miner working underground could receive about twenty percent more in Liège than in Aachen.

95. HSTAD, Arbeitsamt Aachen 2, Bericht über den Besuch bei der Hauptverwaltung des EBV am 27. November 1959.

were 50 workers from North-Limburg who took up work in *Sophia Jacoba* between March and June 1951.<sup>96</sup> The mine was situated ten kilometers north to the centre of the district in Hückelhoven. For the population of the Dutch city of Roermond the *Sophia Jacoba* was much closer than the other Aachen mines and even the mines in the Dutch *Oostelijke* or *Westelijke Mijnstreek*. Since 1946, the EBV mine *Gouley* employed also sporadically Limburgers.<sup>97</sup> The sources give some information on working conditions: over 90 percent of the Limburgers in *Sophia Jacoba* were working underground, almost 70 percent at the coal-face compared to 47 percent of native workers. Only one of the Limburgers was a supervisor.<sup>98</sup> These differences reflect the different age structure and professional background of the two groups. While the Limburgers were mostly skilled hewers, the local workforce still comprised many old, unskilled and semi-skilled miners. Although the employment of Limburgers was highly attractive for the Aachen mines, it had but a limited impact on the local labour market due to strict passport and currency exchange rules as well as the small wage gap between Aachen and Limburg.<sup>99</sup>

The start of 'guest worker'-employment by means of bilateral contracts between the Federal Republic and a number of countries from Southern Europe facilitated long distance recruitment. But even before the ratification of the first of these contracts with Italy (1956), the German mining industry recruited workers abroad. The conditions were fixed separately in negotiations between mining companies, lobby organisations,<sup>100</sup> the Labour Bureaus and the Federal Ministries of Labour, Economy and the Interior. Unlike the three other companies in the district, the EBV actively participated in these early recruitment campaigns. The first one conducted a group of Transylvanian refugees from an Austrian camp to the mining districts of Aachen and the Ruhr. The main argument for recruiting these refugees was the German origin of this group.<sup>101</sup> For the EBV, it was certainly more interesting, that the Transylvanians clearly wanted to build up a new life in the district: in exchange to settlement opportunities, they signed for staying in mining for the next 20 years.<sup>102</sup> After the uprising in Hungary in 1956, the lobby group of the Ruhr mines proposed the companies to recruit Hungarian refugees.

96. HSTAD, LAA NRW/ 314 II, 527: Arbeitsamt Erkelenz Halbjahresbericht über die Entwicklung der Beschäftigung vom 1.4.1955-30.9.1955.

97. BBA, I60/ 203.

98. HSTAD, BR 1323/ 103; BR 1323/ 277: Beschäftigtenmeldungen *Sophia-Jacoba*, Hückelhoven.

99. HSTAD, BR 1058/ 15.

100. Until 1953 this was the Deutsche Kohlenbergbauleitung (DKBL), afterwards the Unternehmensverband Ruhrbergbau.

101. BA, B 119/ 2974, 24: The Federal Labour Bureau spoke of 'particularly precious people' that should not be left to the recruitment agents of other European mining industries.

102. BBA, 12 (Deutsche Kohlenbergbau-Leitung), 406, Wohnungsbau der AG Scholven.



The social structure of this group made it particularly attractive for the industry: it consisted exclusively of young men, native in part from the Hungarian mining region of Tatabánya.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the companies could even expect to hire a certain number of skilled workers. Equally in 1956, the EBV recruited 200 Croatians and Serbs in an Italian refugee camp on its' own initiative. For political reasons, the Federal Republic did not sign a formal 'guest worker'-agreement with Yugoslavia until 1968, but another 2,000 Yugoslavian refugees were hired after separate negotiations between the industry and a number of public agencies in 1962. During these negotiations, the EBV stressed the positive experience with its' Yugoslavian workers.<sup>104</sup>

Until the agreement between the Federal Republic and Spain, the other mines in the district did not actively strive towards recruitment of foreign miners. In *Sophia Jacoba*, Dutch miners stayed the dominant group until 1961. At the same time, foreign workers made up between only one and two percent of the workforce in *Carl Alexander*.<sup>105</sup> Both mines expanded their foreign workforce very rapidly in the following years, mainly by recruiting untrained workers over the German commissions of the Federal Labour Bureau. There were in fact three different ways to gain access to potential workers abroad. The first was through the German commissions in the respective countries. The pits could either request anonymous workers or hand in name lists of individuals they were interested in. The second way consisted in concluding labour contracts with workers in their native country and letting them obtain a work visa via the German embassies. The third way consisted, theoretically, in hiring workers who had entered the Federal Republic with a tourist visa and demanding their regularisation afterwards. Yet, the German Labour Bureaus very much restricted this possibility. Workers who had arrived in the first way received a labour contract and a residence permit for one year maximum. As mining had lost much of its appeal even among foreign workers, the industry increasingly became a stepping stone into other branches of the German economy.

The German wage subsidy of the *Bergmannsprämie* (from 1956) was certainly one reason why *Sophia Jacoba* and *Carl Alexander* rather lately developed an interest in foreign workers. Due to this subsidy, underground wages rose by ten percent.<sup>106</sup> Within six months following its introduction in 1956, the number of Dutch miners in the district of Aachen increased by 800

103. HSTAD, BR 1309 (Bergamt Aachen I)/ 71; BBA, 160/ 681; 'Bei uns endete ihre Flucht. Ungarische Bergleute beim EBV – Neue Hoffnung für Menschen ohne Heimat', *de Kull*, 5. Jg., 10 (1956); BA, B 119/ 3036; B 119/ 3037.

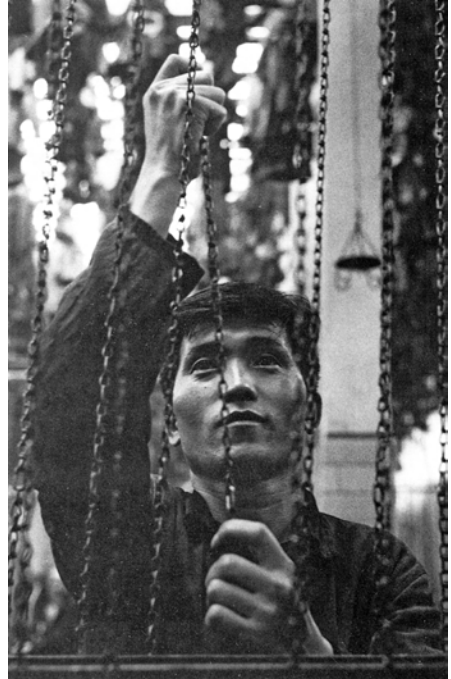
104. 'Schulstunden im Bergmannsheim' *de Kull*, 6. Jg., 3 (1957), 6f; BA, B 119/ 3047 I.

105. BBA, 160/681. The sources do not contain information about 'Carolus Magnus'.

106. BGBl. I 927. See to the wage differences between German and Dutch mines: *Statistisches Bulletin. Kohle und Stahl*, 9. Jg., 3 (1961), 62.

men.<sup>107</sup> Because of this additional labour supply, the companies had no difficulties meeting their labour demand locally. It was only during the period of recovery after the coal crisis of 1957/8 that these mines experienced labour scarcity for the first time. In 1960, *Carl Alexander* hired about 300 Spanish workers, followed by a large group of Turks, after the bilateral agreement with Turkey in 1963.<sup>108</sup> In 1964, the ratio of foreigners in this mine attained twelve percent; the ratio underground attained even nineteen percent. *Sophia Jacoba* recruited about 450 Spaniards in 1961, followed by 300 Greeks in 1963 and 100 Turks in 1964. The share of foreigners in the workforce of this mine increased from four to almost sixteen percent within five years.<sup>109</sup> All foreigners had to pass an intensive training period before going underground. In January 1965, for instance, only 70 percent of the Spaniards and 40 percent of the Greeks in *Sophia Jacoba* were occupied at the coal-face, where they were most needed.<sup>110</sup>

The EBV had hired unqualified workers abroad at a very early stage. In the period of 'guest worker'-recruitment, the company also recruited workers via the German commissions abroad. It is, however, interesting to note that, at the same time, it tried to gain access to populations who stood outside the official recruitment channels. Between 1960 and 1965, for instance, the EBV hired large groups of workers in Morocco and Korea. The Moroccans were recruited between 1962 and 1965 with the consent of the Moroccan government but, at least at the beginning, without the consent of the German Labour Bureau.<sup>111</sup> The Labour Administration started a test run for recruitment in Morocco only in 1964.<sup>112</sup> Presumably, the EBV be-



Korean miner in the Emil Mayrisch, 1960s.  
From: Hans Jakob Schaetzke, *Vor Ort – Eschweiler Bergwerksverein. Geschichte und Geschichten eines Bergbauunternehmens im Aachener Revier* (Aachen 1992) 167.

107. BA, B 119/ 3004, 133.

108. BBA, 160/ 681. The contract was ratified in 1961.

109. *Sophia Jacoba*, 11. Jg., 58 (1963), 7, 26; *Sophia Jacoba*, 12. Jg., 63 (1964), 5; BA, B 149/ 22355.

110. *Sophia Jacoba*, 13. Jg., 68 (1965), 5.

111. BA, B 119/3081.

112. *Beschäftigung, Anwerbung und Vermittlung Ausländischer Arbeitnehmer. Erfahrungsbericht 1964* (Nürnberg 1965) 16.

came acquainted with Moroccan workers, after massive lay-offs of foreigners in the coal district of Liège in 1962. Due to their professional experience in the French or Belgian mining industry, most Moroccans were skilled miners.<sup>113</sup> Korean workers arrived in the framework of a development aid agreement between the Federal Republic and South Korea.<sup>114</sup> In theory, the Koreans were supposed to have at least one year experience of work in the Korean mining industry, after which they were to pass three years in Germany for qualification. The EBV was one of the few companies to take part in the experiment. Unlike most other foreign miners in Germany at this period, the Koreans had to stay with the same employer during their entire period of stay.<sup>115</sup> During the early 1960s, Turks, Spaniards, Yugoslavians and Moroccans were the largest groups of foreign workers in the EBV comprising each between 400 and 700 individuals.<sup>116</sup> Between 90 and 100 percent of these workers, including the Koreans, were employed underground. In comparison, only 70 percent of the German workers and 80 percent of Austrian and Dutch workers were employed underground. These differences are in line with those observed in *Sophia Jacoba* some years before. The figures prove, moreover, that the EBV managed to deploy its foreign workers where they were most needed quite quickly.

The sub-regional differences in the composition of the foreign workforce seem to result primarily from the early recruitment experience of the EBV compared to the other companies. Building up the workforce for the *Emil Mayrisch* mine from scratch and in a difficult labour market situation was much more complicated than managing an even high fluctuation. In the first case, it was vital to attract workers seeking long-term employment as well as workers with specific skills. In the second, it was possible to catch up on qualifications of fairly large groups later on.

## Conclusion

The article has analysed the position of workers from different origins within the labour force in the Aachen mining region. From perspective of the companies, there existed apparently a preferential order between the different

113. T. Cranssen, 'Marokkaanse mijnwerkers in Limburg, 1963-1975', *Studies over de sociaal-economische geschiedenis van Limburg, Jaarboek van het Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg*, XLVIII (2003) 121-148, 125f.

114. Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der Republik Korea und der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland über technische Zusammenarbeit, signed at Seoul on 28 September 1966.

115. C. Nestler-Tremel and U. Tremel, *Im Schatten des Lebens: Südkoreaner im Steinkohlenbergbau Nordrhein-Westfalens. Eine Untersuchung zur Rotationspolitik mit ausländischen Arbeitnehmern* (Heidelberg 1985) 54.

116. BGA2, Belegschaft: Stand am 4. letzten Arbeitstag (June 1964).

groups of workers. If mining employers had the choice, they preferred to recruit first local workers, then border commuters, then miners from other German mining districts and finally long-distance labour migrants. Yet they had only rarely the choice in the course of the twentieth century. The availability of each group depended on different inherent dynamics.

The local population had been reluctant to take up work in the mines since the early 1930s. The demographic loss due to the evacuation of the area and the after-effects of the fighting at the end of the Second World War had aggravated the situation. As mining was long time regarded as unskilled and dangerous, the mines concentrated on the set-up of vocational programmes for young workers. During the first ten years after the war, they were quite successful, as there was only little competition by other branches. But the number of young miners and, therefore, the share of locals in the labour force was shrinking inexorably since the reconstruction of the local economy.

As long as the economic situation in South-Limburg was precarious, this province provided a stable group of workers who spoke the local dialect, had the right qualifications and spared the mines investment costs for housing. The Dutch were, around the turn of the twentieth century, integrated in the local labour force to the extent that they even managed to attend courses in the mining school (*Bergschule*) in Aachen, an institution reserved, in general, to local miners. With the rise of the mining industry in South-Limburg, the group of border commuters who were working in Aachen became very small. Commuting streams in years to follow were mainly caused by short-term political developments and stopped as suddenly as they had started. By recruiting border commuters, the mines took the risk of losing important sections of their qualified workforce overnight.

Miners from other German mining regions could also be assumed to have the right qualifications. But as wages in Aachen were the lowest in West Germany until the Second World War, German miners had not many reasons to prefer the Aachen to the Ruhr mines. The wage gap was however a disincentive only during boom periods. During nation-wide cyclical shocks, when unemployment was high in the Ruhr, Aachen became a destination on which non-local German workers could fall back on. Due to its solid ties to steel mills in France and Luxembourg, employment in the district usually resisted better to cyclical downturns than, for instance, in the Ruhr (see graph 4), as is clear from developments in the 1920s. Even in the period of mine closures in the 1970s and 1980s, workers and managers shared a conviction that the ties with the ARBED would save Aachen from the fate of the Ruhr.<sup>117</sup>

Long distance labour migrants came mainly as untrained workers. The difficulty for the mines consisted less in the recruitment itself than in voca-

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117. Bergbaumuseum Grube Anna 2 (BGA2)/ Interviews 1994, Benning, 7; Schmidt, 5.

tional training and the often high turnover. After the Second World War, two different strategies can be observed in the district. *Sophia Jacoba* had, for a long time, found a sufficient workforce by recruiting commuters from Limburg. When the mine started the employment of Spanish and Turkish guest workers, fluctuation was extremely high during the first years of their stay. These workers could be deployed efficiently only after a rather long training period. Vocational training costs were high, at least in the beginning. The *EBV* had, since the early 1950s, tried to attract people who had strong reasons to stay. Because of legal restrictions (Moroccans, Koreans and Yugoslavians), the absence of alternatives (Transylvanian refugees) but also incentives, like an elaborated housing programme,<sup>118</sup> turnover among these specific foreign workers proved to be comparatively low.

### About the author

Kristin Klank (1975) studied Modern and Contemporary History, Political Economy, and French at the University of Leipzig. As a PhD at the Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule (RWTH) Aachen (Lehr- und Forschungsgebiet Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte) she is working on a dissertation on labour markets in the mining district of Aachen.

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118. See J. Triem, *Kommen und Gehen im Bergbau. Ein Beitrag zum Kongress des internationalen katholischen Instituts zur Sozialforschung* (Luxemburg 1956).