

# Eduard von Liebert on the Goals of German Colonial Policy (1912)

## Abstract

---

Eduard von Liebert was a Prussian officer, a former governor of German East Africa (during 1896–1900, when he notoriously tried to enforce a “hut tax”) and an outspoken supporter of German colonial expansion after his return to Germany in 1900.

In this article published in 1912 in the right-wing conservative daily newspaper *Die Post*, Liebert argues forcefully that Germany should carve a larger colonial empire out of “middle Africa” by annexing colonial territories that had been nominally under the control of the Portuguese. But he regrets that, at the top levels of German government, the political will seems to be lacking.

## Source

---

The program outlined in *Die Post* is to be welcomed with joy, most importantly, it teaches us to pursue a great goal. The disease of German politics since the fateful March 20, 1890, has been its aimlessness, the constant change of projects, the constant failure to carry out an idea. The great successes of the other nations in the last twenty years, the complete distribution of the world among the others, and the sad role of Cinderella for Germany have created a profound ill-feeling among our people. It sees its own progress in every direction and, besides, its repression and coldness without the slightest consideration in the distribution of gifts. At present, it has to be satisfied with the allocation of land areas of Inner Africa without coast. The resentment stored up for so long will burst out all by itself.

The new program is therefore: Central Africa must become German. It is to be approved because

1. nothing else in the world is available to us;
2. the German territories on the east and west coasts already strongly enclose the interior;
3. we have claims to make on the present Portuguese colonial possessions.

[...]

Unfortunately, we have to reckon with the fact that little or nothing can be expected from the government and from diplomacy in terms of political initiative.

[...]

Under such circumstances the nation must cooperate in order to realize that program for the future. Following famous patterns, the Germans must “peacefully penetrate” the areas which we are discussing as Germany’s future territory. We must equip research voyages there, establish economic ventures, plantations there, found trade factories, mission stations, build railroads, proceed just as the Americans do in Mexico and elsewhere where they plan to rule in the future. The other nations will then come to know and appreciate our drive for expansion, and at the same time they will understand our economic strength. The German government will feel compelled to intervene because of the difficulties that arise in individual cases.

---

Source: *Die Post*, Nr. 7, January 5, 1912. Re-printed in Horst Gründer, “... *da und dort ein junges Deutschland gründen.*” *Rassismus, Kolonien und kolonialer Gedanke vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert.* Munich, 1999, pp. 197-198.

Translation: Insa Kummer

Recommended Citation: Eduard von Liebert on the Goals of German Colonial Policy (1912), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:document-5477>> [September 26, 2025].