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“HEAPS OF SAND.” GENOCIDE IN GERMAN SOUTHWEST AFRICA AND PRESS

SILENCE IN 1904

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“Little Heaps of Sand.” Genocide in German Southwest Africa and Press Silence in 1904

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The colonial war that occurred in German Southwest Africa between 1904 and 1908 against the indigenous Herero and Nama is widely acknowledged as the first genocide of the twentieth century. Evidence based on statistics, eyewitness accounts, and government documents confirm the genocidal nature of the war. Few historians have examined German and British press reactions to the colonial war. Most scholarship about the Herero and Nama genocide focuses on the history of the genocide on the ground. This thesis focuses on German and British press reactions by studying three vital months in the first year of the war. By looking at the months of January, August, and October 1904, in conservative and liberal publications from both Germany and Great Britain, it is clear that the press in both countries were unaware of the genocide in 1904.

Preface

The Herero and Nama genocide took the lives of close to one hundred thousand indigenous peoples in German Southwest Africa between 1904 and 1908. The international community was relatively silent about the genocide in the years that it was perpetrated. The horrors of the genocide officially came to light after the British Empire published the Blue Book in 1918, which detailed the atrocities that began when Germany acquired the colony in 1884. As a result of the First World War and genocide, Germany lost all of her colonies in Africa and Asia. German Southwest Africa was transferred to the British Empire and came under the jurisdiction of South Africa. The Blue Book was removed from publication and colonial offices throughout the British Empire in 1926 to facilitate trust and reconciliation between the white South African community and white German community in German Southwest Africa. The Blue Book's removal from publication buried the memory of the genocide for decades. Coupled with the British and German newspapers, the reprinted and annotated Blue Book released by Jan-Bart Gewald and Jeremy Silvester in 2003 helps to reconstruct the narrative of the genocide and how the press in Germany and Great Britain covered the conflict in 1904.

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Great General of the German Soldiers, address this letter to the Herero people. The Herero are no longer considered German subjects. They have murdered, stolen, cut off ears, noses, and other parts from wounded soldiers ... I have this to say to them ... The Herero people will have to leave the country. Otherwise, I shall force them to do so by means of guns. Within the boundaries, every Herero, whether found armed or unarmed, with or without cattle, will be shot. I shall not accept any more women and children. I shall drive them back to their people – otherwise I shall order shots to be fired at them. These are my words to the Herero people.¹

Lothar von Trotha, the military commander of German Southwest Africa, released the above message to the Herero people on October 2, 1904, after almost a year of a long and bloody colonial war.² Historians point to this message, also known as the *Vernichtungsbefehl* (Extermination Order), as proof of Germany's guilt in the genocide of the Herero and Nama people between 1904 and 1908. This genocide was the first of the twentieth century and is considered by a number of historians to be indicative of the atrocities committed during the Holocaust.

Before looking at German colonialism in German Southwest Africa, it is important to briefly examine the European imperial powers at the turn of the nineteenth century and the German Empire's standing on the international scene. During the nineteenth century, Europe became home to some of the most powerful empires in the world. Through quick economic expansion, aided by the Industrial Revolution, countries like Great Britain and France sought to expand overseas. Both nations, along with several others, expanded their territories through the colonization of Africa and Asia.

Colonization is the direct or indirect rule of noncontiguous territories by a metropole. The

¹ Horst Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting: The Struggle of the Herero and Nama against German Imperialism (1884-1915)*, trans. Bernd Zöllner (London: Zed Press, 1980), 156-7.

² *Ibid.*, 156.

government in the home nation controls the political and economic policies of the colony. The policies put in place by the colonial government usually impact the culture and society of the indigenous population. Great Britain and France held enormous power over their colonies, along with power and prestige in Europe. Countries like Spain, Portugal and Belgium also maintained substantial colonial empires. Following unification in 1870-1, Germany looked to establish colonies overseas. Although the country's chancellor at the time, Otto von Bismarck, did not want Germany to become a colonial power, he eventually conceded to popular support and pressure from prominent conservatives and nationalists. At the Berlin Conference in 1884-5, Germany acquired what are today, Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and Namibia.

It is Germany's colonization of Namibia, then known as German Southwest Africa that we now turn our attention to. Although Germany only controlled German Southwest Africa (GSWA) from 1884 until 1915, the country left an indelible and dark mark on Namibian history. Between 1904 and 1908, colonial officials, German soldiers, and settlers waged a war against the two largest ethnic groups, the Herero and the Nama. By the end of 1908, the Germans had claimed the lives of almost 80 percent of the Herero population and 50 percent of the Nama.³ The Herero and Nama wars were the culmination of years of abuse at the hands of the Germans. Subjected to rape, corporal punishment, racism, and theft, the Herero and Nama had long resented the German presence in their homeland. Following years of tension, which included German theft of indigenous cattle and farmland, the Herero and Nama rebelled against the Germans in 1904 and 1905, respectively.

³ Jeremy Silvester and Jan Bart-Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 62.

Today, the massacres of the Herero and Nama are widely considered genocide. The United Nations defined genocide in Articles 2 and 3 of the Genocide Convention in 1948.⁴ For atrocities to be considered genocide, the acts must include mental and physical motivations. Mental genocide includes the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.”⁵ There are five parts to the physical element of genocide, which include, “killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”⁶ The *Vernichtungsbefehl* alone implicates the German government in genocide, as it singles out the Herero tribe specifically, threatens bodily harm and destruction, and orders the Herero out of German Southwest Africa. By ordering the Herero to leave GSWA, Lothar von Trotha knew the indigenous group would have to escape through the desert, ultimately resulting in their deaths. Following the Nama revolt in October 1904, Lothar von Trotha released a similar statement to the Nama.

Press Silence in 1904

This thesis automatically addresses that the atrocities were genocide and labels the conflict as a race war. More importantly, however, this thesis attempts to explain why German and British press largely ignored the genocide in 1904. I examine German and British press reactions during the crucial months of the war in 1904; January, August, and

⁴ “The Legal Definition of Genocide,” Prevent Genocide International, accessed September 27, 2012, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/genocide/officialtext-printerfriendly.htm>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

October. January 1904 marks the beginning of the war; the Battle of Waterberg took place in mid-August, and is considered by many historians to be a watershed moment in the genocide; and October 1904 marks two crucial events – the release of Lothar von Trotha's *Vernichtungsbefehl* and the entrance of the Nama into the war.

Most historians of the Herero and Nama genocide have studied the conflict on the ground by accessing colonial archives and colonial newspapers. None of the secondary sources used in this thesis examine European newspapers to assess whether or not ordinary European citizens were unaware of the genocide. The study of German and British newspapers is important to the discourse surrounding the genocide because it helps show what Europeans knew and what they didn't know.

My study of British press includes the conservative newspaper, *The London Times*, and the liberal newspaper, *The Manchester Guardian*. By looking at *The London Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*, I seek to understand British press reactions to the war between the Germans and the Herero and Nama. Based on my study of the two newspapers during the months of January, August, and October 1904, it is clear that the British people and government did not consider the colonial war to be of vital importance towards their own national interests. Although British possessed commercial interests in German Southwest Africa, along with colonies in present-day South Africa and Botswana, the small sample of articles taken from *The London Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* indicate that the British were actually supportive of the German war effort in 1904. Evidence from 1905, however, indicates that the British government and press were aware of German atrocities in Southwest Africa. While the British knew of the genocide after 1905, the government never condemned the genocide. British

silence on the genocide is curious; before 1904, the British were at the forefront of the movement condemning King Leopold II of Belgium for the atrocities in the Congo Free State – if the British condemned the atrocities in the Congo, why did the government not lead the charge against the Germans as well? This question will be further pursued and answered later on.

In addition to analyzing British newspapers, my thesis extensively examines German newspapers: the conservative *Neue Preußische Zeitung* and the socialist *Vorwärts*. Both newspapers offer larger samples of newspaper articles than *The Times* and *The Guardian*. Studies of *Neue Preußische Zeitung* and *Vorwärts* provided further analysis of press coverage of the war in German Southwest Africa. Did the German public know what was going on in the colony in 1904? How factual was the information the newspapers offered? And how did the German press portray the Herero and Nama to their audiences? These questions are vital to understanding how Germans back in Europe understood the war. Furthermore, both British newspapers that this study touches upon received their information from Germany. Thus, whatever the German press reported, the British press reiterated. This is important because if the German press was not reporting about the genocide, then the rest of Europe was also unlikely to know about it.

Controversy Surrounding the Blue Book

Another source that I used during my analysis of the genocide is the Blue Book, which is a study of the atrocities that the British government released in 1918 after the First World War. The invasion of German Southwest Africa in 1914 by British and South African troops led to the discovery of archival material in German Southwest Africa, along with unmarked, mass graveyards all over the colony that implicated the German

colony and government in the genocide of the Herero and Nama.⁷ In 1918, the British government published the Blue Book, accusing the German government, colonial administration, and settler community of committing atrocities against the indigenous Herero and Nama. The Blue Book not only outlines the events leading up to the genocide and the actual atrocities, but includes eye witness accounts from 47 people who experienced the war between 1904 and 1908.⁸ The witnesses range from German soldiers and allied indigenous soldiers to Herero and Nama survivors.

On October 21, 1915, German Southwest Africa officially became the British protectorate of South-West Africa.⁹ After the surrender of the German settlers in the colony, the commander of the British and South African forces, General Botha, ordered “the seizure and translation of all official German documents.”¹⁰ The discovery of archival material that implicated the Germans in the genocide of the Herero and Nama proved troublesome for the British. Although the British were ignorant to the genocide in 1904, David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen suggest that the government was aware after 1905.¹¹ Providing further proof to this claim is an article appearing in *The London Times* on August 16, 1905, with the text of Lothar von Trotha’s infamous *Vernichtungsbefehl*.¹² Thus, publishing information after 1905 that implicated the Germans in the genocide also implicated the British in their silence.¹³ Condemnation in 1918 was too little too late. And

⁷ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot be Found*, 256-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁹ David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide and Colonial Roots of Nazism* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 258.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹² “The Rising in German South-west Africa – German Methods of Repression,” *The London Times*, August 16, 1905, 4.

¹³ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 261.

like many colonial powers, Britain was also guilty of violently suppressing indigenous uprisings in her colonies. If the British brought attention to the Herero and Nama genocide, the government opened itself up to accusations of hypocrisy.¹⁴

David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen claim that Britain's main motivation for publishing the Blue Book was self-interest. If the British could prove that the Germans had not treated the indigenous populations of the Southwest Africa well, this would allow the British to gain possession of German colonies, further expanding the British Empire.¹⁵ At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, German atrocities were dragged to the forefront of the debates against German colonization. Accordingly, "the South-West African genocides were as infamous in 1919 as they are forgotten today."¹⁶ Despite British reservations about publishing the Blue Book, international animosity towards Germany at the end of World War I proved an acceptable environment to release the information implicating the Germans in the genocide.

The international community greeted the Blue Book with skepticism, particularly Germans. When the book was published, Germans dismissed the report as "a bulky bit of propaganda," and claimed that, "no efforts are being spared in the attempt to lull the world into the belief that England is actuated not by selfish ends, but by lofty moral motives."¹⁷ In 1920, the former colony was transferred to South Africa. In 1921, all of the land that Kaiser Wilhelm II confiscated from the Herero and Nama was incorporated into the Crown Lands of South-West Africa.¹⁸ Although the establishment of apartheid lay in

¹⁴ Ibid., 260.

¹⁵ Ibid., 260-1.

¹⁶ Ibid., 274.

¹⁷ Silvester and Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found*, xxx.

¹⁸ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 347.

the future, government officials in the new British colony took steps to establish a strong, white, unified community. South African officials believed that reconciliation between the white-settler community of former German South West Africa and the white population in the former Cape Colony was of highest importance.¹⁹ In 1924, the new South African prime minister determined that the *Blue Book* was “a war pamphlet ... one among many that had gone into oblivion or soon would do so.”²⁰ In 1926, an English-speaking newspaper in the colony claimed that reconciliation and eliminating “racial hatred” between German immigrants and white-immigrants from South Africa was the best way for the former colonies to move forward.²¹

At an all-white assembly in 1926, one of the first topics of discussion was the destruction of the Blue Book. August Stauch argued that the Blue Book:

...only has the meaning of a war instrument and that the time has come, to put this instrument out of operation and to impound and destroy all copies of this Bluebook, which may be found in the official records and in public libraries of this Territory.²²

As a result, all copies of the Blue Book in libraries throughout Southwest Africa were removed and destroyed.²³ Copies of the Blue Book in the rest of the British Empire were transferred to the Foreign Office and were not to be observed without official permission.²⁴ August Stauch’s supported his argument by claiming the Blue Book’s existence impeded reconciliation between white settlers from Namibia and South Africa.

¹⁹ Silvester and Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found*, xxx.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, xxxii.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

As a result, the Herero and Nama genocide was hidden for years and the surviving indigenous communities in Southwest Africa were forced to forget and bury their history.

Other Sources

Although the main focus of my thesis is German and British press coverage in 1904, it is important to establish the historical background of the genocide to provide context to the newspaper articles. Without knowledge about German Southwest Africa, its establishment as a German colony, the relationship between the indigenous population and the settler population, and the actual genocide, it is very difficult to understand the sample of newspaper articles from January, August, and October in 1904. This historical background provides reference points and also helps to conclude whether the information offered in the newspapers is factual or false. Thus, the first two chapters of the thesis examine the historical background of the conflict.

Of the books that contributed to this thesis, *Nazi Empire*, by Shelley Baranowski, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, by David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen, and *Germany's Genocide* by Jeremy Sarkin, connect the Herero and Nama genocide to the Holocaust three decades later. Although my thesis does not seek to establish a connection between the Herero and Nama genocide and the Holocaust, Shelley Baranowski, Jeremy Sarkin, David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen all provide excellent information regarding the historical background of the conflict. David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen in particular proved to offer the most recent scholarship on the genocide. Additionally, the two scholars looked at colonial newspapers in German Southwest Africa and the Cape Colony, offering an insight to press representation of the conflict on the ground.²⁵ Shelley

²⁵ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 232-3.

Baranowski's book, *Nazi Empire*, examines the history of German empire from the Kaiserreich up to Nazi Germany. She does not spend a lot of time on the Herero and Nama genocide, but she does offer explanations about Germany's racial attitudes before World War I and how those attitudes may have impacted colonization in Africa.²⁶

I also relied heavily on Horst Drechsler's *Let Us Die Fighting*. Horst Drechsler was one of the first German historians to refer to the atrocities in German Southwest Africa as genocide, and his book, published in 1960, utilized colonial records that were held in former East Germany. Drechsler was able to access these records as they were only held in Potsdam, explaining why an East German was the first to publish on the genocide. Because Horst Drechsler was a socialist and an East German, many authors questioned the validity of *Let Us Die Fighting*; critics argued that Drechsler's book tried to tie German colonialism in Southwest Africa to the capitalist regime in West Germany. While there are indeed some biases in *Let Us Die Fighting*, the book is considered by most historians to be a credible source and is still considered a pioneering work in the study of the Herero and Nama genocide.²⁷ Jürgen Zimmerer claims that the book's biggest flaw is the lack of agency Drechsler assigns the Herero and Nama.²⁸ This is a valid claim, as Drechsler's prose often implied that German colonial officials held an enormous amount of power while the Herero and Nama were portrayed as unorganized and weak.²⁹

²⁶ Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire – German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 47-9.

²⁷ Jürgen Zimmerer, "Colonial Genocide: The Herero and Nama War (1904-8) in German South West Africa and its Significance," in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 334-5.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 132.

Furthermore, I looked at *Carrying the Sun on Our Backs*, by Effa Okupa, and *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, edited by Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller. Effa Okupa covers the revolt and the genocide extensively in *Carrying the Sun on our Backs*. Her analysis of the genocide is interesting because she is a Namibian woman, and her emotions about the atrocities, along with her biases against German colonialism, are difficult to hide in her prose. More than any other author, however, she focuses a lot of attention on Hendrik Witbooi, the leader of the Nama. Her analysis of Hendrik Witbooi is important because it shows what a powerful and influential man he was in the colony, not just among the indigenous peoples. She indicated that he commanded a lot of respect from settler and the colonial administration as well.³⁰ *Genocide in German Southwest Africa* is a collection of essays by several authors, including Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller. This book in particular is important because it offers a wealth of information about life for the Herero and Nama in the concentration camps.³¹ I also used *German Colonialism* by Richard A. Voeltz, a short history of German Southwest Africa and the South-west Africa Company, which was a British owned company that helped to facilitate trade in the German colony. Voeltz's analysis of the British owned company helps to explain why the British held interests in the colony's stability later on during the war between the Germans and Herero and Nama.³² Finally, I looked at Helmut Walser Smith's chapter about miscegenation laws in *The Imperialist Imagination*. Smith notes

³⁰ Effa Okupa, *Carrying the Sun on our Backs – Unfolding German Colonialism in Namibia from Caprivi to Kasikili* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 104-18.

³¹ Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller, *Genocide in German South-West Africa – The Colonial War (1904-1908) in Namibia and its Aftermath*, trans. Edward Neather (Monmouth, Wales: The Merlin Press Ltd., 2008), 41.

³² Richard A. Voeltz, *German Colonialism and the South West Africa Company, 1894-1914* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988), 1.

that the Reichstag in Berlin look upon miscegenation between white men and black women in Southwest Africa very negatively, which led to its banishment in all German colonies between 1905 and 1912. This article also gives insight into how the Reichstag debated the war and racial attitudes in early twentieth century Germany.³³

Government officials in Berlin knew what was happening in GSWA and did nothing to stop it. Conservatives and nationalists mocked liberals who voiced their opposition to the massacres. Several authors, including Jeremy Sarkin, David Olusoga, Casper Erichsen, Shelley Baranowski, Horst Drechsler, and Effa Okupa argue that the Germans waged a race war against the Herero and Nama, trying to rid GSWA of them. Because the Herero and Nama genocide was perpetrated by the Germans and committed only a few decades before the Holocaust, many historians link the two events together, arguing that there is a German tradition and culture of violence and racism. There is no doubt that German culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries possessed elements of racism, but this is also true of other European nations. All European colonial powers engaged in the brutal treatment of indigenous populations. In fact, at the turn of the twentieth century, it came to light that King Leopold of Belgium used the Congo Free State as his own personal piggy bank and supported the murders of millions of indigenous Congolese in his quest for natural resources. Thus, the genesis of nineteenth-century racial ideology is important to this study, as it will help to explain why the Germans treated the Herero and Nama the way they did, and why they resorted to genocidal acts.

³³ Helmut Walser Smith, "The Talk of Genocide, the Rhetoric of Miscegenation: Notes on Debates in the German Reichstag Concerning Southwest Africa, 1904-1914," in *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and its Legacy*, ed. Sara Friedrichsmeyer et al. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 107.

Nineteenth-Century Racial Ideology

The history of colonialism is indeed a bloody one, tainted with colonial wars, human rights abuses and virulent racism. The German Empire's actions against the Herero and Nama in what is today Namibia, however, are set apart due to their sheer brutality and horror. The outbreaks of the Herero rebellion in January 1904 and the Nama rebellion in October 1904 were sparked by years of abuse at the hands of German colonizers and officials. But why did colonizers take such a brutal stance against the Herero and Nama? The answer lies in nineteenth-century racial ideologies, present throughout Europe and applied within all colonial empires.

The publication of *The Origin of the Species* by Charles Darwin in 1859 changed Europe. Christian morality and ethics, established centuries earlier, were directly challenged. Darwin's introduction of natural selection was particularly influential, as it challenged the ethical framework of European society. Natural selection, when applied to the animal world, suggests that populations with the traits most favorable to survival will continue to thrive, while populations with less desirable traits would eventually become extinct.³⁴ Scientists like Herbert Spencer took this theory and applied it to the human race. In 1864 Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest." By applying this to the human race, European scientists and eugenicists lifted the white, European races onto a pedestal. Richard Weikart states that while racism predated Darwinism, it was "significantly transformed" by the publication of *The Origin of the Species*.³⁵ While the Enlightenment stressed equality among peoples, *The Origin of the Species* introduced a

³⁴ Charles Darwin, *Origin of the Species* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 68.

³⁵ Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 103.

new way of perceiving the human race.³⁶ Scientists like Francis Galton, who coined the term “eugenics”³⁷ and Ernst Haeckel became the leading figures in the study of racial biology. I will focus primarily on Ernst Haeckel, due to how popular his works were, particularly in Germany.

Ernst Haeckel was born in Potsdam in 1834.³⁸ As a young man, Haeckel was a staunch German nationalist and a fervent supporter of German unification before 1870. Haeckel’s views on different races and the mentally ill were extremely radical. When it came to racial ideologies, Haeckel claimed that each European nation had its own specific race, and racial hierarchy started with the Germans. Germans, Haeckel argued, had “a higher mental development” than other Europeans and were more highly evolved.³⁹ But Haeckel’s views on different races were perhaps the most jarring. Referring to Africans as “wooly-haired Negroes,” Haeckel argued that black people “were incapable of true inner culture and of a higher mental development.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, he argued that no “wooly-haired nation has ever had an important history.”⁴¹

Richard Weikart states that Charles Darwin also believed in the biological superiority of the European races. But Ernst Haeckel’s views on racial equality were much more radical. In his first book in 1866, Haeckel claimed that, “the differences between the highest and lowest humans is greater than that between the lowest human

³⁶ Ibid., 105.

³⁷ Michael Bulmer, *Francis Galton: Pioneer of Heredity and Biometry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 79.

³⁸ Daniel Gasman. *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1971), 1.

³⁹ Ibid., 41-2.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁴¹ Ibid.

and the highest animal.”⁴² One theme that runs consistently through Haeckel’s works is his comparison of Africans and Australian aborigines to apes. In *The Natural History of Creation* (1868), Haeckel included a picture comparing six human species to six “simian” species. The point of the presentation was to show that the white race was the farthest removed from apes, while every other race, was more closely related. The “lowest races” depicted were Africans and Australian Aborigines.⁴³ Ernst Haeckel also argued that not all life held the same value. In *The Wonders of Life* (1904), Haeckel argued that all life was not equal, and “the yardstick for determining the value of life was the level of cultural achievements.”⁴⁴ The development of culture, he argued, was based on a species’ biological, intellectual, and moral traits.⁴⁵ Thus, Haeckel placed a much higher value on European life.

With the knowledge that Ernst Haeckel’s ideologies were well known throughout Europe, coupled with the racist attitudes and abusive behavior towards indigenous populations under colonial governments, it is conceivable that Haeckel’s racial ideologies were highly pervasive in European society. By furthering analyzing the events leading up to the Herero-Nama War in 1904, German racial attitudes towards the indigenous population of GSWA will become clear. Racist ideologies influenced German treatment of the Herero and Nama, and ultimately led to the uprising and the genocide.

Imperial Germany in Africa

Contributing to Germany’s late arrival on the colonial scene was its unification in 1870, when many countries had already staked their claim in Africa. Also adding to

⁴² Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler*, 105-6.

⁴³ Ibid., 107.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 108-9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 109.

Germany's late entry was Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's lack of interest in a colonial empire. The Berlin Conference of 1884, however, solidified Germany's position as a colonial empire. Although the Conference divided regions between the European powers, the land still technically belonged to Africans. In order to acquire the land, Europeans had to sign "Protection and Friendship" treaties with indigenous leaders to gain access and control of the colonies.⁴⁶ The Berlin Conference in 1884 brought 14 million Africans under the control of the German Empire; Togo and Cameroon were intended to be trading posts, while German East Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi), and Southwest Africa were designed as settler colonies.⁴⁷

Public opinion in Germany towards colonialism was very strong. Prior to German colonization of Africa in 1884, the German Colonial Society (*Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft*) was established in 1882.⁴⁸ Proponents of German colonialism believed that the settlement of territories would not only add to the wealth of the German Empire, but provide ample land to settle on. Explorer Adolf Lüderitz first arrived in German Southwest Africa in the early 1880s with the intention of establishing a trading post free from British tariffs.⁴⁹ Southwest Africa had an abundance of guano and Lüderitz also suspected the region was rich in copper, diamonds, and gold.⁵⁰ The supply of guano, however, ran out quickly, and the copper mines that Lüderitz sought were sparse. Thus, German supporters of colonialism sought to establish German Southwest Africa as a settler colony. In Jeremy Sarkin's *Germany's Genocide of the Herero*, he further

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 41-2.

⁴⁸ Barankowski, *Nazi Empire*, 29.

⁴⁹ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 32.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 32.

elaborates on the economic situation in German Southwest Africa, confirming that the colony had little value to add to the Empire.⁵¹ The colony's sole purpose was to act as a trade partner and extra space, or living room (*Lebensraum*) for the rapidly expanding German population.⁵² Like many Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century, Germans were emigrating to North and South America. Worried about losing large percentages of its population, German organizations, including the German Colonial Society, began encouraging men and women to settle in GSWA.⁵³

German Southwest Africa was afforded a higher value by the German government than it really possessed in order to foster settlement. One of the reasons that female settlement was encouraged was to prevent miscegenation between German men and indigenous women. As indicated above, many Europeans did not put the same value on indigenous lives as they did on European lives. But because men were some of the first to settle GSWA, many turned to the indigenous women. While Helmut Walser Smith's article in *The Imperialist Imagination* implies that there were marriages between whites and blacks in GSWA, the reality is that many women were raped at the hands of German settlers.⁵⁴ Often times, however, the legal system in GSWA ruled against the rape victim.⁵⁵ The Reichstag back in Berlin feared that miscegenation between Germans and indigenous populations would lead to the creation of "inferior creole states,"⁵⁶ and thus pushed for a law outlawing miscegenation in the colonies. In 1905, the colonial

⁵¹ Jeremy Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide of the Herero: Kaiser Wilhelm II, His General, His Settlers, His Soldiers* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2010), 5.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁴ Smith, "The Talk of Genocide," 116.

⁵⁵ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 119.

⁵⁶ Smith, "The Talk of Genocide," 116.

government in Southwest Africa outlawed interracial marriages; German East Africa followed suit in 1906, and Samoa in 1912.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the German Colonial Society submitted to the popular fears of miscegenation and promoted the emigration of German women to Southwest Africa.

In *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen relay a short story about South African traders traveling between the Cape Colony and German Southwest Africa after 1908. During their travels, the traders came across “little heaps of sand,” which covered the shallow graves of the genocide victims, and bleached skeletons lying in the desert.⁵⁸ Like the vast deserts of Namibia that covered up the graves of the Herero and Nama, German and British press in 1904 failed to report on the genocide, further burying the truth. Sadly, the Herero and Nama genocide was covered up in 1926 by South Africa and the British Empire and was not formally acknowledged until 2004.⁵⁹ For too long, the genocide and the legacy of the victims and survivors have been forgotten. This study not only answers important questions regarding press representations by important international players during the genocide, but it also works to honor the memory of the victims and survivors of the atrocities.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁸ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 255-6.

⁵⁹ Zimmerer, “Colonial Genocide,” 323.

CHAPTER 1: GERMAN SOUTHWEST AFRICA 1884-1904

The Herero, the Nama, and the Germans

After the Berlin Conference in 1884, Germany gained control of German Southwest Africa. In an attempt to increase the colony's settler population, the German Colonial Society and the German government worked hard to try and convince citizens to emigrate to the colony, but instead, encountered a resistant population. German Southwest Africa was not only an unknown region and a perilous journey away, but conflicts among the indigenous people and settlers began almost immediately when Germany colonized the territory in 1894. As stated earlier, the two major ethnic groups in Southwest Africa at the time of colonization were the Herero and the Nama. The Blue Book provides a background to each ethnic group. The Herero were the largest group and largely practiced animistic religions, although a small minority was Christian. According to the Blue Book, the estimated number of Hereros in Southwest Africa between 1876 and 1877 was 121,000.⁶⁰ The Herero were a diverse ethnic group, however, which many historians, including Horst Drechsler, and the Blue Book confirm. There were several subdivisions within the Herero tribe. These subdivisions eventually worked against the Herero, as they proved to be a source of division that the Germans exploited. One of the key differences between the Herero and Germans was the way they viewed land. Horst Drechsler clearly defines these differences in *Let Us Die Fighting*.

In *Let Us Die Fighting*, Drechsler explains how the Herero were cattle herders who measured their wealth based on the number of cattle they owned. The Herero did not view land in the way that Europeans did – the Herero did not sell their land, for it was

⁶⁰ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot be Found*, 60.

communal. They merely allowed others to use it. The governor of the colony from 1893-1904, Theodor Leutwein, lamented the Herero customs:

There are two matters on which the Herero act in a way contrary to our colonial aspirations. For one thing, they do not wish to sell their land to whites, but are only prepared to allow them to live there, and for another, they do not want to make use of their cattle herds, but tend to build them up beyond all measure.⁶¹

The following passage helps to emphasize the areas of contention between the Herero and the Germans. Chief Samuel Maherero led the Herero from 1890 until 1904.⁶²

The Nama (also referred to as Witboois or with the use of the derogatory term, Hottentots) were originally a tribe from the Cape Colony who migrated to Southwest Africa in the early nineteenth century after years of conflict with the Boers.⁶³ For our purposes, the Nama were led by Hendrik Witbooi, a learned and literate Christian man who led his people until his death in 1905.⁶⁴ Although the Nama retained aspects of their original culture, the Blue Book indicates that the tribe began to include some European traditions, such as applying European governmental styles to tribal politics towards the turn of the century.⁶⁵ Olusoga and Erichsen state that the Nama were skilled on horseback and fierce warriors, which unfortunately led German settlers and officials to target them between 1904 and 1908.⁶⁶

German missionaries were present in Southwest Africa before 1894 when the Kaiserreich officially acquired the territory. Among the ethnic groups in Southwest Africa, the missionaries were most successful in converting the Nama. Missionaries

⁶¹ Horst Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 85.

⁶² Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 61.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶⁶ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 206.

pushed the Nama to abandon their traditional culture and accept a more European one. Olusoga and Erichsen include a quote from Namibian historian, Klaus Dierks, who claimed that, “the missionary campaign to Christianize Africa not only converted “heathens” into Christians but also tried to convert Africans into Europeans.”⁶⁷ Although the German missionaries wielded an enormous amount of influence over the cultural aspects of the Nama (and Herero), they did not impinge on indigenous territory and cattle like Germans colonists did at the turn of the century.⁶⁸

Events Leading to the Genocide

German Southwest Africa officially became a colony on 7 August 1884.⁶⁹ Colonial officials and settlers quickly encountered hostility from indigenous tribes and traders from the Cape Colony. As noted above, the British Cape Colony was in close proximity to Southwest Africa, where Cape traders had also long been active in the region.⁷⁰ Although the Berlin Conference designated Southwest Africa to be under German jurisdiction, the colonists soon learned that to achieve cooperation with the Cape Colony, they had to acknowledge British preeminence in the region.⁷¹

Under the terms of the Berlin Conference, colonists quickly went to work trying to establish “friendship and protection” treaties with indigenous tribes. In 1884-5, the Herero signed a Protection Treaty with the Germans. But like many treaties signed with indigenous groups throughout Africa, the treaty did not actually protect the Herero. While the Herero believed they were signing a treaty that would align them with the Germans

⁶⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Voeltz, *German Colonialism*, 1.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

and protect them from other indigenous groups in Southwest Africa, namely the Nama, the treaty only protected the region from outside European forces.⁷² It is important to clarify that not all of the Herero signed the Protection Treaty in 1884. Only the Okahandja Herero and Omaruru Herero signed the treaty. But in their ignorance, colonial officials assumed that all the Herero were subject to the treaty.⁷³ Under the rule of Chief Tjamuaha, the Herero rejected the Protection Treaty on 7 October 1888 after it came to light that the Germans had built over sacred Herero burial grounds.⁷⁴

In June 1889, Curt von François landed in Walvis Bay as the new governor of German Southwest Africa.⁷⁵ Upon his arrival, François was appalled that the indigenous population still possessed the majority of their land and cattle, while the settlers, or *Schutzgebiete*,⁷⁶ remained relatively marginalized.⁷⁷ In January 1890, the Herero signed a protection treaty with Germans, as they were currently at war with the Nama. The leader of the Herero, Tjamuaha believed that making peace with the Germans would bring a swifter end to the conflict with the Nama.⁷⁸ In October 1890, Tjamuaha died, paving the way for a succession struggle that the Germans took full advantage of.⁷⁹ Samuel Maherero ultimately became the chief of the Herero thanks to the meddling of the Germans.⁸⁰ Samuel Maherero was the ideal choice for the Germans, as he was a Christian and a known alcoholic. According to many sources, including the *Blue Book*, the

⁷² Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 37-8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁴ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 53.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁶ Effa Okupa, *Carrying the Sun Upon our Backs*, 82.

⁷⁷ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 57.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁸⁰ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 52.

Germans often supplied the chief with an ample supply of alcohol before the renewal of Protection Treaties.⁸¹ German meddling in Herero affairs led to even better news for the colonizers. The Herero did not practice primogeniture like Europeans, and many did not acknowledge Samuel Maherero as the true chief. This further created divisions among the Herero, making them easier to control and manipulate.⁸²

In addition to manipulating the succession issue, the German colonial officials and soldiers built a new fort in Windhoek, located in Hereroland and within close proximity to Namaland.⁸³ Due to the military presence in Windhoek, German settlers arrived in steady numbers, seeing Windhoek as a safe and secure location. By 1891, the white population increased to 139 in German Southwest Africa.⁸⁴ With the increasing number of settlers came a decrease in available farmland.⁸⁵ Jeremy Sarkin, David Olusoga, and Casper Erichsen all note that the settlers who arrived in GSWA came from military background,⁸⁶ or were peasants who could not afford land in Germany.⁸⁷ Sarkin implies that because some of the settlers came from military backgrounds, that they were predisposed to violence. This argument, however, is not easy to prove. A more likely explanation for the violence shown towards the indigenous population in GSWA comes from Olusoga and Erichsen, who explain the prevalence of the Pan-German League back on the continent at this time. The Pan-German League, they argued, was virulently nationalist and racist. Along with encouraging emigration, the Pan-German League also

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 61.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 62

⁸⁵ Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 62.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 89.

espoused racial hatred towards Africans. Thus, when settlers arrived in GSWA, they were likely to hold the same views.⁸⁸

As German settlers began settling around Windhoek after 1891, Hendrik Witbooi, who also read colonial newspapers, began to worry that the settlements were permanent. As the Herero and Nama were currently at war, Hendrik Witbooi knew that continued tensions would not be good for either group. By 1892, Hendrik Witbooi and Samuel Maherero were looking to establish peace between their tribes.⁸⁹ This did not bode well for German settlers, as they knew that divided Africans made their position in the colony more secure. In June 1892, Curt von François met with Hendrik Witbooi in Hoornkrans to establish a Protection Treaty that would align the Germans with the Nama against the Herero. Witbooi rejected the offer.⁹⁰ In the fall of 1892, the Herero and Nama signed a peace treaty.⁹¹ Knowing what African unity meant to the German community in GSWA, François ordered 250 troops sent to the colony to deal with the indigenous population.⁹²

The Massacre at Hoornkrans

The Massacre at Hoornkrans was a direct result of the peace between the Herero and Nama in 1892. After reinforcements arrived in the colony, Curt von François and a group of German soldiers attacked the Nama village of Hoornkrans on the night of 12 April 1893.⁹³ Olusoga and Erichsen claim that François told his men, “The object of this mission is to destroy the tribe of the Witboois.”⁹⁴ The German soldiers fired

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 64.

⁹¹ Ibid., 65.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 66.

indiscriminately at men, women and children.⁹⁵ The Blue Book, which also covers the massacre, confirms that while Hendrik Witbooi and his men were able to escape the bloodshed, the Germans killed women and children.⁹⁶ Olusoga and Erichsen explain that when the Nama realized they were being attacked, Hendrik Witbooi ordered his men to retreat into a riverbed, assuming the Germans would follow them and leave the village alone.⁹⁷ Following the aftermath of the massacre, eight old men, two young boys, and seventy-eight women and children were killed.⁹⁸ Additionally, German soldiers captured eighty women, transported them back to Windhoek and forced them to become house slaves.⁹⁹

The Massacre at Hoornkrans was, at the time, the most deadly attack on the indigenous population from the German colonizers. The massacre was so horrific that Chancellor Leo von Caprivi relieved Curt von François of his duties in Southwest Africa and replaced him with Major Theodor Gotthilf Leutwein.¹⁰⁰ The Blue Book also notes that the brutality with which the Germans treated the Nama spread throughout the indigenous tribes of Southwest Africa like “wildfire.”¹⁰¹ According to the writers, François “had given the natives an impression of the true German character and of the real worth of the German pretensions.”¹⁰² Along with the murder of men, women, and children and the capture of Nama provisions and weapons, the German soldiers also took

⁹⁵ Okupa, *Carrying the Sun Upon our Backs*, 108.

⁹⁶ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 46.

⁹⁷ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 67.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁰⁰ Okupa, *Carrying the Sun Upon our Backs*, 108.

¹⁰¹ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 48.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

possession of Hendrik Witbooi's journal.¹⁰³ As mentioned earlier, Hendrik Witbooi defied the European-based stereotypes of African chiefs. Not only did he read colonial newspapers, but he also spoke several languages. His diary, written in Cape Dutch, gives an insight into German relations with the indigenous populations in Southwest Africa before 1893 when the journal was confiscated.

The Hendrik Witbooi Papers is a collection of Hendrik Witbooi's letters and notes, both before and after the Massacre at Hoornkrans, which was published in Windhoek by the Namibian National Archives in 1990. Hendrik Witbooi's letters are the only archival documents "published that present an African perspective on the German colonial period."¹⁰⁴ The collection includes a particularly emotional letter from Hendrik Witbooi to Hermanus van Wyk, a Namaland leader who supported the German settlers and even supplied the soldiers arms:

18 April 1893: ...I have been attacked by the Germans ... Captain [von François] attacked us early in the morning while we were unsuspectingly asleep, and although I took my men out, we were unable to beat them back; and the Captain entered the camp and sacked it in so brutal a manner as I would never have thought a member of a White civilised nation capable of – a nation which knows the rules and ways of war. But this man robbed me, and killed little children at their mother's breast, and older children, and women, and men. Corpses of people who had been shot he burned inside our grass huts, burning their bodies to ash. Sadly and terrifyingly Captain [von François] went to work in a shameful operation.¹⁰⁵

This passage is important for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it displays the emotion and pain the massacre inflicted upon all of those affected. The brutality, which the Germans showed towards the Nama, was truly unexpected and unheard of. While

¹⁰³ Okupa, *Carrying the Sun Upon our Backs*, 108.

¹⁰⁴ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot be Found*, xiv.

¹⁰⁵ Hendrik Witbooi, *The Hendrik Witbooi Papers*, translated by Annemarie Heywood, et al. (Windhoek: National Archives of Namibia, 1990), 115.

Hendrik Witbooi knew that European colonizers treated indigenous populations cruelly, he did not expect them to kill women and children. It is also crucial to note that this passage is a part of a letter asking another indigenous leader to put aside his alliance with the Germans and join the others tribes in the region. This shows that the German strategy of dividing the indigenous tribes of Southwest Africa was effective, for the Nama were even divided. Finally, Hendrik Witbooi expressed disbelief that a “White civilised nation” could so flagrantly disregard the international rules of war and slaughter almost one hundred people. The use of the word “civilised” is particularly telling, as the German settlers and colonial administrators invested a lot of time and effort into dehumanizing and devaluing the lives of the indigenous tribes. While the Germans colonizers called the Herero and Nama uncivilized, Hendrik Witbooi uses the word against them to show that *they* were the true barbarians.

David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen correctly point out that the massacre at Hoornkrans was “unprecedented in the history of Southwest Africa ... But by the end of the nineteenth century the tactics employed by Curt von François had been used against innumerable peoples across the world.”¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, massacres against indigenous populations were common in the colonial era. Olusoga and Erichsen also discuss the effects of massacres such as the one at Hoornkrans on indigenous populations. Colonial wars, were in the grand scheme of things, small by European standards. But to indigenous populations, massacres like the one at Hoornkrans had the ability to severely

¹⁰⁶ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 70.

debilitate a community or even wipe one out.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, it is imperative to understand that the massacre was a cataclysmic event in the Nama community.

Thus, the Massacre at Hoornkrans marked a new beginning for the colony. Not only were almost one hundred people killed and eighty women taken captive, but the Germans succeeded in scaring and intimidating the entire indigenous population of the colony. And although Curt von François lost his position as governor, he was replaced by a man who was just as determined to subjugate and divide the indigenous people and establish Southwest Africa as a truly German colony.

Theodor Leutwein 1893-1904

In the secondary literature surrounding the Herero-Nama genocide, Theodor Leutwein is often displayed as a benevolent governor who tried hard to protect the indigenous population and treat them with dignity. Jeremy Sarkin's book, *Germany's Genocide of the Herero*, is particularly guilty of this. The truth is that Major Leutwein used divide and rule against the indigenous population in the same way that Curt von François had. He also permitted massacres to occur and was even given the nickname, "Bloody Leutwein."¹⁰⁸ The reason that Major Leutwein is often depicted in such an innocent manner is because Lothar von Trotha, who replaced him in June 1904, was the governor responsible for the Extermination Order against the Herero.

Nevertheless, Major Leutwein was very committed to creating a German colony *for* the Germans, with a predominantly German culture based around farming with indigenous help. When Theodor Leutwein replaced Curt von François in 1893, he also sought to bring all indigenous populations in Southwest Africa under German control

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Okupa, *Carrying the Sun Upon our Backs*, 114.

through the use of protection treaties.¹⁰⁹ Richard Voeltz states that German policy towards the Africans was based on, “sharp demarcation of . . . reserves from the rest of the territory, which was then declared Crown land available for white, preferably German, settlement.”¹¹⁰ Thus, Theodor Leutwein’s arrival in Southwest Africa marked the beginning of the theft of indigenous land and cattle.

According to David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen, Theodor Leutwein arrived in Southwest Africa unhampered by the stereotypes of Africans as uncivilized. On the contrary, Leutwein understood that the Herero and Nama were powerful groups. The best way to penetrate the colony and establish German preeminence was to use the strategy of “divide and rule.”¹¹¹ Richard Voeltz reiterates this in *German Colonialism*, where he not only states that Leutwein intended to conquer through divide and rule, but that the Governor also sought to disarm rebellious villages, implement firearm registration programs, and to construct railways across the colony.¹¹² By disarming villages and implementing firearm registration, German colonial officials and settlers could sleep soundly knowing that “the natives” did not possess firearms and were even restricted from doing so. The construction of railroads would help facilitate trade throughout the colony, along with other colonies, such as the Cape Colony or Bechuanaland (Botswana).

In the summer of 1894, Governor Leutwein approached Hendrik Witbooi in the hopes of establishing a protection treaty.¹¹³ Hendrik Witbooi, however, had a hard time forgetting what the Germans had done to his people less than a year earlier. In a series of

¹⁰⁹ Voeltz, *German Colonialism*, 45.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 79.

¹¹² Voeltz, *German Colonialism*, 52.

¹¹³ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 80.

letters, Leutwein and Witbooi corresponded with one another. In a letter from April 1894, Leutwein informed Hendrik Witbooi that Namaqualand was officially under the control of the Kaiser, and resistance to the German colonial forces would be met with war.¹¹⁴ On July 8, 1894, Leutwein again wrote Witbooi, warning the chief that, “From August 1 we will be at war.”¹¹⁵ In reply, Hendrik Witbooi informed the governor that he could not accept a protection treaty, but asked Leutwein to avoid violence against the Nama:

This is my answer on the Protection treaty which Your Honour seeks with me. I have thought seriously about this matter, but dear Excellency, I must give you the same answer: I cannot grasp this business of Protection which is to me difficult and downright impossible. So I cannot, and do not want to stand under you. I ask you, dear Friend, with all my heart, please let me retain my independence. For I want to remain the autonomous chief of my land and my people ... Finally, I can assure Your Honour that I will not be the cause of any bloodshed between us.¹¹⁶

On August 15, Hendrik Witbooi wrote Governor Leutwein once more, inquiring why the Germans had yet to attack the Nama, who were located in the Naukluft Mountains.¹¹⁷

Leutwein replied to the chief with another threat of war:

After all that has been said you must realize that your refusal is tantamount to a declaration of war ... In token of my goodwill, let me just add the following: the days of independent captains in Namaland are gone for ever. Those captains who recognized this and joined forces with the German Government were the wiser ones, for they gained by this and suffered no harm. I know you as a shrewd man, but in this matter your wits seems to have deserted you since personal ambition clouded your reason. To this day you misjudge the circumstances. Compared to the German Kaiser you are but a little captain: submission to him would be no disgrace, but on the contrary an honour.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 81.

¹¹⁵ Witbooi, *The Hendrik Witbooi Papers*, 135-6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 137.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 138.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 138-9.

Leutwein eventually laid siege on the Naukluft Mountains on August 27, 1894.¹¹⁹

Although the Germans forces defeated the Nama, they were not expecting them to be as skilled in battle. Later, Leutwein wrote that the Nama were “far superior to us when it came to marching, enduring deprivation, and knowledge of and ability to use the terrain ... it was only in weaponry, courage, perseverance, and discipline that the troops surpassed the enemy.”¹²⁰ Although the Nama put up a good fight, they were forced to surrender due to lack of provisions, inferior weaponry, and starvation. On September 9, 1894, the Nama surrendered, and on September 15, signed a protection treaty.¹²¹ Under the treaty, Hendrik Witbooi retained the title of chief and the Nama were allowed to continue living on their ancestral lands. Additionally, any white farmers living on Nama land were expected to adhere to traditional laws. The Nama were, however, forced to leave the Naukluft Mountains and relocate to Gibeon.¹²²

The treaty between the Germans and Nama was met with outrage both among Germans in the colony and back home. Horst Drechsler explains that many Germans felt that the treaty was too lenient based on the cost of the war. The war cost the German Empire around four million marks.¹²³ Leutwein was forced to answer to the Kaiser, who agreed with the majority of his countrymen. In a letter to the Kaiser, Leutwein explained that in colonial wars, it was the victor’s choice “of either destroying [the enemy] or coming to an understanding with him.”¹²⁴ If he had annihilated the Nama, Leutwein

¹¹⁹ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 82.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 82-3.

¹²² Ibid., 83.

¹²³ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 78.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

argued, he would have created enemies elsewhere in Southwest Africa. A prolonged war would also have cost the German Empire much more than four million marks.¹²⁵

Rinderpest and Disease

With all of the indigenous people of Southwest Africa under protection treaties, the rate of immigration to the colony skyrocketed. In 1896, the population in Windhoek alone was 780, six hundred of which were soldiers.¹²⁶ Secondary literature maintains that the period from 1896 to 1904 was relatively peaceful in Southwest Africa. But in 1897, rinderpest, a parasite that infects cattle, devastated the herds in Southwest Africa. In his autobiography, Theodor Leutwein noted that the rinderpest spread to Southwest Africa from the east.¹²⁷ The parasite, the governor stated, primarily affected Herero cattle as opposed to Nama cattle.¹²⁸ As such, the Herero were hit much harder, and as a result, suffered culturally and economically.

Rinderpest arrived in Africa in the 1880s and steadily spread through the African continent. The parasite was capable of killing entire cattle herds. There are no records detailing the number of cattle that died, but the German Commissioner for Settlement later estimated that about half, or 30,000 of the Herero cattle died in the first six months of the outbreak.¹²⁹ Jeremy Sarkin states that German colonial officials enforced culling and “implemented a programme of vaccination in which cattle were killed to produce the vaccine.”¹³⁰ Theodor Leutwein confirms this in his autobiography, where he detailed the

¹²⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹²⁶ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 102.

¹²⁷ Theodor Leutwein, *Elf Jahre Gouverneur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1907), 126.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 131.

¹²⁹ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 99.

¹³⁰ Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 69.

process in which veterinarians killed the cattle and created the vaccine.¹³¹ As colonial administrators killed more and more cattle, Herero resentment towards the Germans grew.¹³² Additionally, colonial officials primarily inoculated settler's cattle. As a result, the German communities were not as severely affected, while the Herero watched their wealth disappear in droves.¹³³ The death of the Hereros' cattle was devastating. As previously stated, the Herero measured their wealth in cattle and land. When they lost their cattle, they lost their wealth. Herero cattle allowed the tribe to remain independent from the Germans for as long as they did. Without cattle, many Herero sold their land and remaining cattle to German settlers. They started to work on German farms as laborers to earn money. Thus, the Herero became increasingly dependent on German capital. Additionally, the loss of their cattle also signaled the loss of their culture, which for generations had centered on the importance of their herds.¹³⁴

German settlers and colonial officials did not underestimate the importance of the rinderpest outbreak, and used the despair of the Herero to their advantage. Many used this as an opportunity to quicken the transfer of land and cattle between settlers and Herero.¹³⁵ By 1899, however, the effects of the rinderpest outbreak had subsided. Many Herero backed out of the land and cattle sales, infuriating German settlers and officials.¹³⁶ This further exacerbated the problems between the indigenous and settler populations. Nevertheless, the Germans were in a much more powerful position following the rinderpest outbreak than they had been in 1896. The white population increased and the

¹³¹ Leutwein, *Elf Jahre Gouverneur*, 127.

¹³² Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 69.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹³⁴ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 100.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 101-2.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

Herero were significantly weakened. Further weakening the Herero were the outbreaks of typhoid, malaria, and locust plagues. Jeremy Sarkin estimates that close to 10,000 Herero died from malaria between 1897 and 1899.¹³⁷ Sarkin, however, states that the outbreak of rinderpest was a bigger loss to the Herero than the deaths caused by disease. In the end, the Herero lost close to 90 percent of their cattle.¹³⁸ The rinderpest outbreak, more than the small colonial conflicts of the late 1880s and early 1890s, helped to permanently shift the balance of power in the colony from the indigenous populations to the settler population.

Racism and Abuse towards the Indigenous Populations

Land seizures and cattle appropriation were not the only ways that German settlers and colonial officials exploited the indigenous populations in Southwest Africa. Influenced by writers like Ernst Haeckel and the ideas of natural selection and “survival of the fittest,” German colonizers went about dehumanizing and devaluing the lives of the Herero and Nama. The Blue Book provides some of the most extensive testimony about the abuse the indigenous population suffered at the hands of the colonizers. Upon its publication in November 1918, the Blue Book was met with skepticism. Germans argued that the Blue Book only included testimony from Africans, who they asserted, could not be trusted because of their race. Germans further claimed that the British should have “recognized the plain fact that the natives were lying.”¹³⁹ While it is understandable that the Germans tried to discredit the Blue Book, Silvester and Gewalt argue that these

¹³⁷ Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide*, 69.

¹³⁸ Dominik J. Schaller, “Genocide in Colonial South-West Africa: The German War Against the Herero and Nama 1904-1907,” in *Genocide of Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Samuel Totten, et al. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 42.

¹³⁹ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, xx.

complaints ignored the fact that Major O'Reilly, a British officer who compiled the report, relied heavily on published German accounts and archival material.¹⁴⁰ In addition to archival material, Major O'Reilly discovered pictures of executions and the mutilated backs of men and women who endured "paternal chastisement."¹⁴¹ The argument that the report is biased holds little water, as much of the information came from the Germans themselves. Silvester and Gewalt argue that such claims of bias were attempts to silence the survivors of the genocide.¹⁴²

Nevertheless, the Germans were indeed guilty of abusing the indigenous populations of Southwest Africa. The general rule of thumb in the colony was "leniency towards the natives is cruelty towards the whites."¹⁴³ The indigenous populations were held to different standards than the white settlers. For example, if an indigenous person murdered a European settler, he or she received the death penalty. If a European murdered an indigenous person, however, the settler usually received a light jail sentence, which was rarely served.¹⁴⁴

Shortly before the Bondelswartz rebellion in 1902, the colonial administration in Southwest Africa passed a law determining how members of the Bondelswartz tribe were to be treated:

1. Every coloured person should regard a white man as a superior being
2. In court the evidence of one white man can only be outweighed by the statements of seven coloured persons.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., xvii.

¹⁴² Ibid., xiv.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 93.

¹⁴⁴ Leutwein, *Elf Jahre Gouverneur*, 431.

¹⁴⁵ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 57.

Thus, the lives of indigenous peoples in Southwest Africa were legally inferior than the lives of white settlers. The most common form of abuse by the colonists was beating. Often carried out with the use of sjamboks (a hippopotamus-skin whip, reminiscent of the chicotte used against the indigenous population in the Belgian Congo),¹⁴⁶ the beatings were often for the smallest of infractions or for disrespect towards a white person.¹⁴⁷ Rape was also rampant in Southwest Africa, but it was rare that a white man was ever convicted. More often than not, the courts ruled in favor of the defendant, and the accuser was jailed or publicly flogged for “bearing false testimony.”¹⁴⁸

The most well-known and perhaps gruesome offense committed by a German settler against the Herero happened in late 1903, and is what some historians credit as the catalyst for the war. A Herero couple, Louisa Kamana and Barmenius Zerua had recently given birth to a son and were travelling home from Otjimbingwe when a German settler named Dietrich joined them. Barmenius gave the following testimony, which is covered in the *Blue Book*:

I was awakened in my sleep by the report of a revolver. I jumped out of the tent of the wagon and saw Dietrich running away on the road to Omaruru ... I went back to the wagon [where] the baby was crying and I shook my wife to wake her. As I touched her I felt something wet. I struck a match and saw that she was covered with blood and quite dead ... I took up my baby and found that the bucket which killed my wife had gone through the fleshy part of its left leg just above the knee.¹⁴⁹

Barmenius Zerua also noted that the murder of his wife, the daughter of a prominent Herero chief, helped spark the Herero revolt.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 56.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 117.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 119.

¹⁴⁹ Silvester and Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 96.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

The start of the war, however, is ambiguous. Many authors, including Jeremy Sarkin, Effa Okupa, and Horst Drechsler begin their discussions of the war as if it spontaneously happened. *The Kaiser's Holocaust* goes into greater detail about the actual events that preceded the war, which help to explain how and why the revolt broke out. On Sunday 10 January 1904, a Boer trader, Alex Niet, was travelling to Okahandja when he passed a column of 300 Herero men on horseback. When he arrived to the town, Niet reported the incident to the local station commander, Lieutenant Ralph Zürn. Believing that the Herero were planning an uprising, Zürn ordered the settlers to evacuate their homes and take shelter in the fortress. On Tuesday, 12 January, a group of men left the fortress to investigate the deserted town. While travelling through Okahandja, the men encountered an old Herero man, who they reported, had an ambiguous “facial expression.”¹⁵¹ The two men then continued to walk towards the Herero settlement situated outside of town. There, they came across around one hundred men saddling their horses. Panicked, the two settlers rushed back to fortress and informed Zürn that the town was under attack.¹⁵² Olusoga and Erichsen imply that shortly after the two men arrived back at the fort, the German garrison began firing shots at the Herero settlement. Meanwhile, Zürn cabled Berlin to inform the Kaiser that the Herero were in open revolt.¹⁵³ Thus, the war began.

¹⁵¹ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 125.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2: THE HERERO AND NAMA GENOCIDE

When the war broke out in January 1904, there were 770 soldiers in German Southwest Africa, 280 of whom were on police duty.¹⁵⁴ A consensus in 1903 confirmed that 2,998 Germans lived in the colony, and the white population numbered 4,640.¹⁵⁵ In 1904, there were an estimated 80,000 Hereros in German Southwest Africa and 20,000 Namas.¹⁵⁶ By 1911, the Herero population dropped down to 15,130 and the Nama to 9,781.¹⁵⁷ Conversely, the white settler population bloomed to almost 15,000 by 1913. Additionally, there were 1,331 settler farms in the colony, compared to 480 before the Herero and Nama genocide.¹⁵⁸ This chapter will provide evidence that further substantiates the above numbers and explains how the settler population grew and expropriated Herero and Nama land.

Within the first few weeks of the uprising, the Herero killed 123 German settlers on their farms,¹⁵⁹ including four women and one child.¹⁶⁰ After months of fighting between the Herero and Germans, the war became a stalemate.¹⁶¹ Germans in the colony and back home in Europe began to question Governor Leutwein's ability to fight the war. Leutwein had already been criticized for being too lenient during the war between the Germans and Nama in 1894. As such, the Kaiserreich replaced Leutwein in the summer of 1904 with Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha.¹⁶² Theodor Leutwein remained

¹⁵⁴ Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide of the Herero*, 42.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁵⁶ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot be Found*, 62.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 235.

¹⁵⁹ Zimmerer, "Colonial Genocide," 326.

¹⁶⁰ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 129.

¹⁶¹ Zimmerer, "Colonial Genocide," 326.

¹⁶² Zimmerer and Zeller, *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 46.

governor, but Lothar von Trotha led the army in the colony and was “directly responsible to the Kaiser and received his orders via the Chief of the General Staff.”¹⁶³ This meant that if Leutwein disagreed with Trotha’s tactics, he could not order him to stop.

When he arrived in Southwest Africa, Trotha authorized his soldiers to “shoot dead without preceding legal process.”¹⁶⁴ Unlike Theodor Leutwein, Trotha arrived in Southwest Africa with a preconceived racial stereotype in his mind:

I know enough tribes in Africa. They all have the same mentality insofar as they only yield to force. It was and remains my policy to apply this force by unmitigated terrorism and even cruelty. I shall destroy the rebellious tribes by shedding rivers of blood and money.

This statement indicates that Trotha entered the war with the intention of annihilating or at least attempting to destroy the Herero and any other indigenous group that might revolt.

In early August, the Herero set up camp around the town of Waterberg, waiting for a peace treaty to be signed with the Germans. After June, battles between the colonists and Herero were fewer, and based on past experience with Governor Leutwein, the tribe expected a peace treaty.¹⁶⁵ On 11 August 1904, the colonial army attacked the Herero at Waterberg. The soldiers indiscriminately killed men, women, and children. Many of the Herero were able to escape the onslaught, but only managed to escape east, towards the Kalahari Desert and Bechuanaland.¹⁶⁶ The Battle of Waterberg is a watershed moment in the history of the conflict, as it marks the advent of the genocide. Horst Drechsler notes that the losses incurred at the Battle of Waterberg were not high, but it

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 47.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

began the campaign of annihilation against the Herero.¹⁶⁷ As the Herero escaped into the desert, German soldiers manned the water holes surrounding Hereroland, aware that many would try to return to their homeland. In October 1904, Trotha released his infamous *Vernichtungs Befehl*, ordering that *all* the Herero were to be shot on sight.¹⁶⁸

In contrast to the Germans, the Herero conducted the war based upon humane principles. At the beginning of the war, Samuel Maherero issued a statement to all the Herero involved in the uprising:

I am the Chief leader of the Hereros, Samuel Maherero. I have proclaimed a law and lawful order and it ordains for all my people that they shall not lay hands on the following: namely, Englishmen, Boers, Bastards, Berg-Damaras, Namas (i.e. Hottentots). We may not lay hands on any of these people. I have taken an oath that their property will not be regarded as enemy property, neither that of the missionaries.¹⁶⁹

Furthermore, Samuel Maherero proclaimed that no women or children were to be touched during the course of the war.¹⁷⁰ This included German women and children. Samuel Maherero's intentions and his proclamation clearly specify the goals of the Herero uprising. The Herero were waging war because of the way *German* settlers had treated them for two decades. The war was not to affect any other Europeans in the area. The goal of the war was to win back the rights the Herero lost under German suzerainty. The goals of the war under Lothar von Trotha, however, were racially motivated. This war was indeed a race war, as Trotha aimed to eliminate the Herero in the colony, and later, the Nama. It is important to remember that the Herero and Nama both possessed complex tribal hierarchies, and the tribes were subdivided into clans. Therefore, not every

¹⁶⁷ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 156.

¹⁶⁸ Zimmerer and Zeller eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 48.

¹⁶⁹ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot be Found*, 100.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

member of the Herero and Nama tribes opposed the Germans, and not all were involved in the war with them. Lothar von Trotha, however, still ordered that members from both ethnic groups be killed no matter what.¹⁷¹ This war was intended to kill off the Herero and Nama tribes, and therefore constituted genocide.

As many of the Herero escaped the Battle of Waterberg into the desert, the Germans rightly assumed that many would die while crossing the Kalahari. Those who survived were expected to stay in Bechuanaland. This did not work, however, as many Herero tried to cross the border back into Southwest Africa. German soldiers waited along the borders, shooting returning men, and shooting “over the heads” of women and children to drive them back to the desert.¹⁷² It could be argued that Trotha’s order to shoot “over the heads” of women and children does not imply the complete annihilation of the Herero and Nama. Many historians, however, indicate that Lothar von Trotha wanted to scare women and children back into the desert, where they would surely die. Trotha later wrote that he believed this specification would prevent soldiers from directly killing women and children.¹⁷³ Jürgen Zimmerer argues that the Extermination Order did not “initiate genocide ... but it lent further legitimacy to it.”¹⁷⁴ In addition to pushing the Herero into the desert, German soldiers poisoned the waterholes to prevent anyone from quenching their thirst.¹⁷⁵ The intent was not to send the returning Herero to Bechuanaland, but for them to perish in the desert. The Blue Book offers a particularly disturbing eye-witness account that displays how *Schutztruppe* soldiers treated children.

¹⁷¹ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 152-3.

¹⁷² Alfred T. Moleah, “Historical Background,” in *Namibia – The Struggle for Liberation* (Wilmington, DE: Disa Press, Inc., 1983), 15.

¹⁷³ Zimmerer, “Colonial Genocide,” 327.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 48-9.

The following is testimony from Jan Cloete, a member of the Bastard tribe who fought alongside the *Schutztruppe* during the war:

A German soldier found a little Herero baby boy about nine months old lying in the bush. The child was crying. He brought it into the camp where I was. The soldiers formed a ring and started throwing the child to one another and catching it as if it were a ball. The child was terrified and hurt and as crying very much. After a time they got tired of this and one of the soldiers fixed his bayonet on his rifle and said he would catch the baby. The child was tossed into the air towards him and as it fell he caught it and transfixed the body with the bayonet. The child died in a few minutes and the incident was greeted with roars of laughter by the Germans, who seemed to think it was a great joke. I felt quite ill and turned away in disgust because, although I knew they had orders to kill all, I thought they would have pity on the child.¹⁷⁶

According to Jan Cloete, the above incident occurred in 1904. Jan claims that the German soldiers had instructions to “kill all.” Based on the evidence, it can be determined that the following scene occurred between August 1904 and December 1904, when the extermination order was in effect.

As the German army brutally suppressed the uprising and murdered the Herero, German settlers and Germans back home began to question Lothar von Trotha’s leadership. Graf Schlieffen, Chief of the Army General Staff in Berlin, defended Trotha:

One may agree with Von Trotha that the whole nation must be destroyed or driven out of the country. After what has happened the co-existence of whites and blacks will be very difficult, unless the blacks are kept in a state of forced labour, indeed in a kind of slavery. Racial war, once it has broke out, can only be ended by the destruction of one of the parties.¹⁷⁷

This passage from Graf Schlieffen indicates that high-standing officials in Berlin were aware of what was happening in GSWA and that they supported it. Schlieffen’s referral to the war as a *racial war* is important, as it also shows that he, like Von Trotha, viewed the war as one of extermination. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) was one of the

¹⁷⁶ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 116.

¹⁷⁷ Moleah, “Historical Background,” 15.

political groups that opposed the extermination order. August Bebel, the leader of the SPD opposed the suppression of the rebellion and the extermination order on the grounds that the Herero, and later Nama, were fighting for national sovereignty and independence.¹⁷⁸ Bebel believed that the Herero and Nama constituted distinct nations and suppressing their revolts would deny them their universal rights.¹⁷⁹ However, Bebel was by no means a humanitarian. Like many of his colleagues in the Reichstag, Bebel believed in the superiority of the white race. He was often attacked by the right for defending the Herero, to which he responded, “I have not held a speech in favor of the Hereros; I have reportedly emphasized that they are a wild people, very low in culture.”¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Bebel did believe that the Herero and Nama deserved the same rights as other nations. The indigenous groups of GSWA may not have been up to Bebel’s cultural standard, but he still opposed the ferocity of the campaign against them.

The German chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow also opposed Von Trotha’s actions in Southwest Africa. Bülow argued, “the complete and systematic elimination of the Herero would be utterly disproportionate to the tasks of restoring peace and punishing the offenders.”¹⁸¹ Germany’s international image in 1904 was not good. Not only had the Germans brutally suppressed rebellions in East Africa and the Boxer Rebellion in 1901, but also under Kaiser Wilhelm II, Germany was largely viewed as the antagonist and bully of Europe.¹⁸² On top of that, the Belgian King Leopold II was under fire for the

¹⁷⁸ Smith, “The Talk of Genocide,” 110.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 111.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 107.

¹⁸¹ Moleah, “Historical Background,” 15

¹⁸² Ibid.

atrocities that occurred in the Congo Free State under his watch.¹⁸³ Although Kaiser Wilhelm II supported Lothar von Trotha and his extermination order, he ordered the lieutenant to rescind the order in December 1904, but only after being convinced by Chancellor Bülow.¹⁸⁴ In lieu of the extermination order being cancelled, concentration camps, or *konzentrationslager* were set up in Southwest Africa. The concentration camps were designed to keep the Herero submissive and to provide a free labor force to colony.¹⁸⁵ The majority of Herero inmates at the concentration camps were women and children.¹⁸⁶

Lothar von Trotha's extermination order and his conduct against the Herero turned his allies, the Nama, against the German occupation of Southwest Africa. Although the Nama had been in an alliance with the Germans since 1894, the tribal leaders, including Hendrik Witbooi, were appalled at the atrocities the Germans committed. They also feared that they could be next.¹⁸⁷ As the Herero had been pushed off their land and out of the country, many settlers began to contemplate disarming the Nama and subjugating them.¹⁸⁸ In October of 1904, the Nama broke out in revolt. The Nama uprising started in a similar fashion to the Herero Uprising. Hendrik Witbooi, like Samuel Maherero, went to great lengths to protect German women and children. Like his contemporary, Hendrik Witbooi opposed German occupation, not all white people.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 157.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁸⁸ Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 51.

¹⁸⁹ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 176-7.

Instead of pursuing open warfare like the Herero did in the months leading up to Leutwein's removal, the Nama conducted guerilla warfare.¹⁹⁰ The Nama were very skilled on horseback and well known for their military skills. Additionally, the Nama knew the terrain very well, giving them the advantage in their guerilla war against the Germans.¹⁹¹ The Germans fought back, indiscriminately killing the Nama like they had the Herero before. German soldiers continued the practice of poisoning waterholes, causing the Nama to die of thirst. Eventually, the Germans and Nama came to a stalemate. Lothar von Trotha released another order, similar to the Herero extermination order that he released in October 1904:

Furthermore, I state that the few who do not subject themselves will suffer the same fate as the people of the Herero, who also believed in their blindness that they could successfully wage war against the might of the German Emperor and the great German people. I ask you, where today are the people of the Herero? Where are their chiefs? Samuel Maherero who was once able to lay claim to thousands of cattle has been hunted down like a wild beast who has fled over the frontier into English territory. He has become as poor as the poorest Herero of the field and now owns nothing. This was also the fate of the other elders, most of whom have been killed, and of the whole Herero people. Some of them have died of hunger and thirst in the desert, some have been killed by German troops, some have been murdered by the Ovambo. This will also be the fate of the Hottentots if they do not give themselves up and surrender their weapons.¹⁹²

The Nama continued their rebellion until Hendrik Witbooi died on 25 October 1905.¹⁹³

Soon after his death, the Nama were transferred to concentration camps.

Swakopmund and Shark Island Concentration Camps

Of the authors I've used during this study, David Olusoga, Casper Erichsen, and the contributors to *Genocide in South-west Africa*, provide the best analysis and

¹⁹⁰ Zimmerer and Zeller, *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 51.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 52.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

description of the concentration camps during the war. The Herero and Nama were relegated to two different concentration camps, both of which were horrifically brutal. After Lothar von Trotha was ordered to rescind the extermination order, Chancellor Bülow sent him instructions to house the Herero and Nama in concentration camps. These camps served to imprison the rebellious indigenous tribes and to provide “hard, unpaid manual labor.”¹⁹⁴ The concentration camps housed men, women, and children. Women and children were expected to work too. Statistics from 1906 show there were 17,018 indigenous prisoners in concentration camps around the colony, and more than two-thirds were women and children.¹⁹⁵

While the Nama were primarily housed on Shark Island,¹⁹⁶ members of the Herero tribe were placed in both Swakopmund and Shark Island. In a missionary report from 1905, Heinrich Vedder claimed that in the early days on 1905, Swakopmund concentration camps held only a few Herero. As more Herero prisoners arrived, they were forced to stay in rooms of 30 to 50 people, “without distinction of age or sex.”¹⁹⁷ Vedder reported that the men and women were forced to work everyday, under the supervision of “brutal overseers.”¹⁹⁸ As food, the men and women were given rice and flour. These were not traditional foods for the Herero, so many ate the provisions raw, which caused dysentery.¹⁹⁹ The missionary Heinrich Vedder also protested that the prisoners were not provided with pots to cook their food. Malnutrition and inadequate

¹⁹⁴ Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 85.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 216.

¹⁹⁷ Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 64.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 161.

diets led to death and scurvy. When the Herero were given meat, the Germans gave them horse and donkey, which caused prisoners to get sick and die.²⁰⁰

Swakopmund was the largest concentration camp in German Southwest Africa, primarily because it was in the largest town, which needed a large labor force to work on the railroads.²⁰¹ The Herero were considered the best workers in the indigenous community, for they were taller and considered stronger. The Nama, however, were shorter, and had difficulty completing railway work. Because the Nama were not industrious workers and they also carried the reputation of being fierce warriors, they were not economically viable in the eyes of the German colonial administration.²⁰² Although the Herero were considered “better workers,” the mortality rate among forced laborers was 50 percent.²⁰³

Swakopmund was close to the coast, and during the winter months, the climate at the concentration camp was unbearable for the prisoners. The death rates at Swakopmund were much higher than at concentration camps in the interior of the colony. As the Herero had lived in the interior of the colony, many were not used to the cold weather. Additionally, the Herero refused to sleep indoors, as their makeshift huts at the concentration camps were filled with maggots and fleas.²⁰⁴

Swakopmund was the only concentration camp that maintained death records. In 1905, 40 percent of the prisoners died within the first four months of arrival. “Any

²⁰⁰ Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 68-9.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 65-6.

²⁰² Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 205-6.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 205.

²⁰⁴ Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 66.

prisoner who entered the camp was likely to be dead within ten months.”²⁰⁵ Olusoga and Erichsen claim that the death rate was likely much higher than reported. After several reports from the missionary Heinrich Vedder, the Rhenish missionaries tried to persuade the colonial government to close the camps. The government assigned District Commissioner Dr. Fuchs to investigate the claims. Dr. Fuchs’ investigation led him to conclude that 10 percent of the population of Swakopmund died in the last two weeks of May 1905. The Herero in Swakopmund, Dr. Fuchs concluded, were dying at such high rates due to inadequate facilities, coupled with the poor climate from the ocean air.²⁰⁶ In order to combat the high death rates, Dr. Fuchs recommended that the Herero be placed in better facilities, provided warmer clothing, given better food, and receive proper medical attention.²⁰⁷ When Lothar von Trotha received the report, he argued that in spite of the death rates, the colony needed the constant flow of labor.²⁰⁸ The concentration camp in Swakopmund functioned from January 1905 until 1908.²⁰⁹

Shark Island was located in the coastal town of Lüderitz.²¹⁰ Like Swakopmund, Shark Island was in an inhospitable environment. Due to its position in the harbor, Shark Island is often besieged by gale force winds throughout the year.²¹¹ German officials set up the concentration camp at Shark Island in early 1905, claiming the camp was needed for labor.²¹² Aside from “small corrugated iron shacks for the guards,” there were no buildings on Shark Island. The prisoners stayed in tents, or makeshift tents created from

²⁰⁵ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 168.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 169-70.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

²¹¹ Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German Southwest Africa*, 84.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 86.

blankets and what little material they found on the island.²¹³ The prisoners were forced to build quays for the harbor, oftentimes standing knee-deep in the freezing water.²¹⁴

Aside from horrible conditions, both the Herero and Nama were both subjected to horrible beatings in the concentration camps. Through the use of sjamboks, German colonial officials mercilessly beat their prisoners. The following excerpt comes from a South African man traveling through Lüderitz in 1905:

On one occasion I saw a woman carrying a child of under a year old slung on her back, and with a heavy sack of grain on her head. The sand was very steep and the sun was baking. She fell down forward on her face, and the heavy sack fell partly across her and partly on the baby. The corporal sjamboked her for certainly more than four minutes and sjamoked the baby as well ... The woman, when the sjamboking had gone on for over five minutes, struggled slowly to her feet, and went on with her load. She did not utter a sound the whole time, but the baby cried very hard.²¹⁵

Prisoners at Shark Island suffered similarly to prisoners in Swakopmund.

Exposure to the elements on the coast, poor living conditions, inadequate food supplies, and brutal treatment at the hands of the colonizers contributed to staggering death rates. Missionaries, including Hendrik Vedder, implored with authorities numerous times to have the camp shut down, but each time, officials refused.²¹⁶ Eventually, the purpose for Shark Island was no longer to maintain a cheap labor force. As the casualties rose, colonial officials used the growing supply of dead bodies to send “native” skulls back to the Fatherland for scientific studies.²¹⁷ Eugenicians back in Germany studied the skulls, noting the differences between the white and black races, and then displayed them in

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 216.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 211.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 217.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 224.

museums.²¹⁸ Shark Island was finally closed in April 1907. Records suggest that close to 70 percent of the Nama who passed through Shark Island died.²¹⁹

Conclusion

German colonialism in Southwest Africa crippled the indigenous populations. While the Herero and Nama were almost wiped out, other indigenous tribes were affected negatively too. By the end of the war, the German settler population successfully gained access to indigenous land and cattle. Meanwhile, 80 percent of the Herero and 50 percent of the Nama perished.²²⁰ This was, undoubtedly, a war led by officials determined to destroy two distinct ethnic groups. While German motivations for the war were based upon access to land and cattle, the treatment of indigenous peoples at the hands of the Germans indicates how little indigenous, black life mattered to the settlers and colonial officials. Based on the extermination orders and passages from colonial and government officials, it is clear that the Herero and Nama were pursued and murdered because of their race. This war was a race war, furthering proving its genocidal aims. The next three chapters will examine German and British newspapers, and analyze how the countries covered the events in Southwest Africa and determine whether or not the German and British press were aware of the genocide occurring in the colony.

²¹⁸ Ibid,

²¹⁹ Ibid., 216.

²²⁰ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 62.

CHAPTER 3: NEUE PREUBISCHE ZEITUNG

Introduction

The most important aspect to the study of press silence in 1904 is the examination of German newspapers. Studying German newspapers provides knowledge as to whether or not the genocide was common knowledge among the German public and press. The examination of the conservative newspaper, *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, and the socialist newspaper *Vorwärts* will shed light on the different ways in which the two newspapers covered the war, as both papers represent two different ends of the political spectrum. By juxtaposing the two publications, we will see how the German media racialized the war, and to what extent each publication supported the war. This is important, for as you will remember from the previous chapters, the SPD did not support the government's action towards the Herero and Nama; August Bebel in particular believed the uprising was a nationalist movement. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* and *Vorwärts* covered the uprising almost every day, and *Neue Preußische Zeitung* published morning and evening editions. As a result, there is a much larger sample of articles to study and assess. *Neue Preußische Zeitung's* target audience included conservatives who supported the Kaiserreich. Both German newspapers did not name authors and both received updates about the uprising from the government in Berlin and from telegrams that arrived from German Southwest Africa. This chapter looks specifically at *Neue Preußische Zeitung's* coverage of the war.

Before assessing *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, it is important to discuss Germany's censorship laws under the Kaiserreich. Censorship of the written word was abolished after the Revolution of 1848 and extended to the press under the Imperial Press Law of 7

May 1874.²²¹ The government could, however, prosecute writers for libel and slander, and often did this towards political opponents. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* was an unlikely target of the Kaiserreich's censorship laws, as the newspaper was ultranationalist and conservative, and stayed loyal to the Kaiser.

Neue Preußische Zeitung

Neue Preußische Zeitung, also known as *Kreuzzeitung*, was published in Prussia, the German state known for its ties to the Hohenzollerns and conservative politics. *Neue Preußische Zeitung's* target audience included conservatives and Junkers who supported the Kaiserreich. The newspaper was not intended for the working class or bourgeoisie. To show just how nationalist the *Neue Preußische Zeitung* was, the newspaper even went as far to celebrate the Kaiser's birthday on 27 January 1904 in both the morning and evening editions!²²²

Neue Preußische Zeitung quickly covered the beginning of the uprising, publishing the first article on Friday, 15 January 1904, three days after the uprising began. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* speculated the origins of the uprising and concluded that the uprising was likely influenced by the Bondelswartz uprising²²³, which raged in the south of the colony. *Neue Preußische Zeitung's* speculation about the source of the uprising is a common theme throughout the months of January, August, and October. The newspaper only pointed the finger at German settlers when quoting outsiders. Thus, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* never speculated that German abuses or actions were the cause of the uprising. The following day, *Kreuzzeitung* reported the first civilian deaths of the

²²¹ Gary D. Stark, "The Law," *Banned in Berlin – Literary Censorship in Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 2.

²²² *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 27, 1904, No. 43 and 44.

²²³ "Aufstand der Hereros," *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 15, 1904, No. 23, 3.

conflict; a farmer and “other rumored white deaths.”²²⁴ This report starts a pattern for *Neue Preußische Zeitung*; the newspaper often published deaths notices of soldiers and civilians, most likely to increase support for the war among its readers. The publication of soldier deaths is particularly telling, as large portions of the conservative and Junker class staunchly supported the military. Reports of soldier deaths likely infuriated the readership of the newspapers, thus increasing support for the colonial war.

On Tuesday, January 19, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* published an article including new casualties. *Buschleute*, or “bush people” reportedly killed a farmer and his wife.²²⁵ Throughout the *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, the term *Buschleute* is common, as is *Eingeboren* (Native), and *Kaffer*, a racial slur used in southern Africa to refer to blacks, particularly under apartheid. These terms were used to degrade the indigenous populations in German Southwest Africa and to increase morale amongst the readership at home. If readers believed that the Germans were fighting uncivilized savages, they would undoubtedly feel more secure in their nation’s colonial empire. The above article also noted that the Herero were well armed and surrounding Okahandja.²²⁶ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* printed an article for its evening edition, which further examined the uprising. The article conceded that discontent was growing among the Herero with traders for eight months, although it does not specify the traders’ nationality, leaving the identity of the offenders unknown. Additionally, the following article is based off a report from *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Most evidence suggests that the Herero grew frustrated with farmers, as farmers were often the ones who bought their cattle and land and then forced

²²⁴ “Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 16, 1904, No. 25, 2.

²²⁵ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 19, 1904, No. 29, 3.

²²⁶ Ibid.

the Herero to work. Additionally, there were large numbers of non-German traders in the colony, leading to the ambiguity of the statement. Later, however, the same article notes that “anti-German sentiment” was brewing, indicating that the traders were German.²²⁷ To highlight their “primitive” society, the author noted that the Herero lived in inferior “urbane shelters.”²²⁸ The author also noted that the German settlers were clearly outnumbered by the Herero, who numbered close to 80,000 whereas the settler population was only close to 10,000.²²⁹

On 21 January, the newspaper published a long article explaining the outbreak of the uprising and the situation in German Southwest Africa. Explaining that readers wrote into the newspaper asking about the uprising, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* began the article by defining the most threatened areas of the colony, which included Okahandja and Windhoek.²³⁰ The newspaper also printed a map of German Southwest Africa, which included the most important cities, railroad lines, and borders with the Cape Colony and Bechuanaland.²³¹ While previous articles indicated that the Herero were in possession of modern weaponry, such as guns, this article claimed that the Herero were armed with bows and arrows and spears, furthering the implication that the Germans were fighting an uncivilized native race.²³² Furthermore, the article continually called the Herero “Buschleute,” strengthening racial implications.²³³ When it turned to analyze the causes of the uprising, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* instead examined the Bondelswartz rebellion

²²⁷ “Zum Aufstande der Herero,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 19, 1904, No. 30, 1.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ “Zum Herero-Aufstand,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 21, 1904, No. 34, 2.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

and proclaimed that the reasons for it were still unknown.²³⁴ The chief of the Bondelswartz, however, was closely linked to a member of the Herero tribe. The article implied that this link between the two tribes led to the uprising. Thus, the author of this article dismissed the author from the *Frankfurter Zeitung's* implication that anti-German sentiment was a factor in the uprising. The article also reported that the “natives” were continually looting the homes of German settlers. Again, this claim aimed to further increase animosity towards the Herero and support for German settlers and soldiers. The newspaper then named German allies in the region, including the Nama “with old Hendrik Witbooi,” and the Bastards in Rehoboth.²³⁵ While the Nama were still allied with the Germans at this time, *Neue Preußische Zeitung's* description of the leader as “old,” is ambiguous. Did *Neue Preußische Zeitung* use the term “old” to indicate that Hendrik Witbooi was a wise and respected leader? Or did the newspaper use the term to denigrate Witbooi and even call the German alliance with the Nama into question?

On 24 January, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* published a significant article, which called for the complete defeat of the Herero and a new “epoch” in German Southwest Africa.²³⁶ Claiming that the Herero should be met with anything but sympathy, the article stated that the Hereros have the same “bad attributes associated with Negros.”²³⁷ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* argued that the uprising in itself was “appalling,” and as such, the Herero should be “handled.”²³⁸ Of course, it is not clear what the paper meant by the use of the term “handled.” And while this statement is significant, it is important to note that

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ “Ueber den Herero-Aufstand,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 24, 1904, No. 39, 8.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

the newspaper did not advocate extermination. In a moment of foreshadowing, the article also argued that it was better to fight the Herero than the Nama who were better equipped and stronger in combat. Finally, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* argued that the rebellion offered the Germans a new, clean slate. After the defeat of the Herero with an “iron fist,” the settler community would have the opportunity to firmly establish German culture in Southwest Africa. And while the rebellion was indeed a sad affair, it was ultimately beneficial for the outcome of German Southwest Africa.²³⁹

Although the aforementioned article was short, it offered a lot of insight into how conservative Germans in Berlin viewed the conflict and the colony. First and foremost, the newspaper does little to hide its contempt for Africans and the Herero. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* relegates the Herero to the category of uncivilized and declares that their defeat is vital for the success of the colony. Just as importantly, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* also shows its support for German colonialism. By claiming that a Herero defeat allowed for the spread of German culture in Africa, *Kreuzzeitung* implied that it agreed with the ultra-nationalist motives of organizations such as the *Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft*. Additionally, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* racialized the war before Lothar von Trotha even arrived in the colony. The author pinned Herero culture against German culture and concluded that German culture was superior and would envelope the colony. Thus, after only two weeks of fighting, *Kreuzzeitung* established that the war was a battle between the uncivilized and the civilized; black and white; inferior culture and superior culture.

²³⁹ Ibid.

On 25 January, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* reported railway interruptions in Southwest Africa, blaming the breakdown on Herero vandalism.²⁴⁰ This sets another trend, as *Neue Preußische Zeitung* often reported that vandalism from the Herero interrupted railway lines and telegraph lines. This indicates that the Herero were aware of how important the railways and telegraph lines were to the German colonial administration, as the railway lines helped to transport goods and services along with soldiers to and from certain regions in the colony. *Schutztruppe* (soldiers) sent reports from GSWA stating that Windhoek was still threatened by the uprising.²⁴¹ In need of more troops, the *Schutztruppe* employed the help of Boers from South Africa.²⁴² This is also significant, as it shows that the use of indigenous troops was not enough to combat the Herero. Additionally, it may suggest that the German *Schutztruppe* were uncomfortable using indigenous fighters because they did not trust “the natives.” At the end of the article, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* listed casualties, including two women and two children “mutilated beyond words.”²⁴³ Whether or not this claim is true, however, remains to be seen. David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen state that the Herero only killed four women and one child throughout the entire conflict.²⁴⁴ As noted above, the Herero murdered one female settler earlier in the conflict. Based on the statistics provided in *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, the claim that two children were killed is false. Therefore, the information Berlin received from the colony was false, Berlin provided the press with incorrect casualty lists, or *Neue Preußische Zeitung* fabricated the numbers.

²⁴⁰ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 25, 1904, No. 40, 2.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 129.

The majority of the articles from January in *Neue Preußische Zeitung* gave the impression that the situation in the German colony was dire. A number of articles seemed hard-pressed to convince their audience of German superiority over the enemy. It also appeared that the government in Berlin and colonial administration in Southwest Africa were hell-bent on proving to the world that German colonialism was just as stable as British and French colonialism and that the colony was secure. The idea that the German army was losing battles to an indigenous and “uncivilized” tribe in Africa was too embarrassing. By June, the conflict became a stalemate, and the replacement of Governor Leutwein with Lothar von Trotha was intended to end the impasse and defeat the Herero.

Unlike articles in January, many articles from August 1904 focused on the wellbeing of the *Schutztruppe*. A large proportion of the articles from that month included casualty lists and gave brief biographies of the soldiers. This may have been a propaganda move to increase support for the war and the colony in Germany. By listing casualties, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* tried to increase emotions and nationalist fervor among its audience. In another authorless article, *Kreuzzeitung* published a piece on 3 August questioning the German colonial administration’s decision to align itself with other indigenous groups in the colony.²⁴⁵ Arguing that “natives” were untrustworthy, the article claimed that it was the nature of indigenous populations to deceive.²⁴⁶ While this claim drips with racism, it is understandable that *Neue Preußische Zeitung* published this article. Beginning in January, the newspaper received reports from German Southwest Africa and from the government in Berlin that continually painted the Herero in a bad

²⁴⁵ “Deutsch-Sudwestafrika, Politische Verhältnisse im Bezirk Keetmanshoop,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, August 3, 1904, No. 359, 2.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

light. Claiming that the Herero possessed the basic characteristics of “all Negroes,” the newspaper, the government, and the colonial administration worked hard to paint the entire indigenous population of Southwest Africa as untrustworthy and inferior. Aside from claiming that the indigenous population is untrustworthy, the article also expressed a strong conviction that the Germans would defeat the Herero. Noting that the Herero “fled to the mountains,”²⁴⁷ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* argued that the Germans would “destroy” the Herero because the tribe robbed and murdered German settlers.²⁴⁸ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* used the term *vernichten*, which can be translated to “destroy,” “defeat,” “crush,” “annihilate,” or “exterminate.” Of course, the use of the word *vernichten* carries strong connotations and could easily be applied to the actions taken against the Herero after the Battle of Waterberg. I do not believe, however, that the newspaper advocated extermination in this particular article. The article was written in early August, before the Battle of Waterberg. Furthermore, because the term *vernichten* can be translated in so many different ways, it is unclear whether *Neue Preußische Zeitung* implied that the Herero should, as a race, be destroyed. As noted earlier, an article in January discussed crushing the Herero culturally and imposing German culture and superiority over the colony. It is probable that this article was suggesting “destruction” along cultural, economic, and political lines as well.

On 12 August, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* published an article about the Battle of Waterberg. A brief article, the newspaper reported that the *Schutztruppe* under Lothar von Trotha defeated the Herero at the Battle of Waterberg and that tribe retreated with

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

their herds.²⁴⁹ *Kreuzzeitung*, however, did not specify in which direction the Herero retreated, failing to report that the Herero were actually chased into the desert. Of course, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* may not have received this information from the colonial administration in Namibia. As the battle was reported only one day after it occurred, it is likely that the colonial administration had yet to send a full report to Berlin regarding the Herero defeat. As a result, the article was incomplete and left gaping holes in the narrative surrounding the war.

On 16 August, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* published another article, this time with information regarding the Battle of Waterberg directly from Lothar von Trotha. Paraphrasing the General, *Kreuzzeitung* reported that a “large blow” was dealt to the “insurgent” Herero.²⁵⁰ The newspaper reported that while the Herero fought with “wild bravery,” they could not withstand the “superiority of our troops’ strategy and self-sacrifice.”²⁵¹ Providing further insight into the battle, the publication reported the Herero seized the opportunity to retreat through a break in the German lines.²⁵² While the newspaper praised German soldiers for their bravery in battle, it also conceded that the Herero fought hard and inflicted “deplorable” casualties.²⁵³ In all, the newspaper reported 20 deaths, 2 missing, and 52 wounded.²⁵⁴ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* did not report how many *Schutztruppe* fought in the battle.²⁵⁵ The above article was written in such a way that it emphasized the superiority of the Germans over the Herero. The Germans were not

²⁴⁹ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, August 12, 1904, No. 376, 2.

²⁵⁰ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, August 16, 1904, No. 382, 2.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

only able to defeat the Herero in battle because they possessed superior weaponry and tactics, but because they were a great civilization.

Between August 16 and August 23, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* reported intermittently about further *Schutztruppe* casualties. On Tuesday, 23 August, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* again reported on updates from Lothar von Trotha. The newspaper informed readers that the *Schutztruppe* pursued the Herero after the Battle of Waterberg.²⁵⁶ According to Lothar von Trotha, when the Herero escaped, they headed southeast but lacked adequate water supplies.²⁵⁷ Still, it remained unclear where the Herero were headed in their escape from the *Schutztruppe*. Bechuanaland is southwest of Waterberg, but *Neue Preußische Zeitung* did not indicate that the Herero were headed in that direction. The newspaper reported that *Schutztruppe* pursued the Herero, but this does not imply that *Neue Preußische Zeitung* was aware of General Lothar von Trotha's intentions. Based on Chancellor von Bülow's desire to keep information about the war away from the foreign press, it is very likely that German media outlets were not briefed about Lothar von Trotha's genocidal intentions.

For the remainder of August, the majority of the articles about the war in the colony were casualty listings. On 6 October, the newspaper published an article that looked further into the war between the Germans and the Herero. Basing much of the information on telegrams from Lothar von Trotha, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* wrote that the *Schutztruppe* were still in pursuit of the Herero.²⁵⁸ After capturing a group of Herero prisoners, the Germans discovered that the Herero were traveling to a previously

²⁵⁶ "Vom Aufstand der Hereros," *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, August 23, 1904, No. 394, 1.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ "Vom Aufstand der Hereros," *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 6, 1904, No. 470, 1.

unknown waterhole.²⁵⁹ While pursuing the Herero, the *Schutztruppe* encountered the rear guard of the tribe and took part in a short skirmish that resulted in the Herero fleeing.²⁶⁰ While in pursuit of the “weak” Herero, the *Schutztruppe* captured “numerous cattle,” women, and children.²⁶¹ This, the newspaper argued, would break the Herero resistance. The newspaper did not state what happened to the women or children. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* further reported that Samuel Maherero only held the loyalty of his people because the Herero feared the retribution of the Germans. Noting that the punishment was execution, *Kreuzzeitung* argued it was safer for the Herero to remain loyal. Finally, the newspaper again noted that the Herero were short of water, and this would prove detrimental to their escape.²⁶²

The above article is significant for two reasons. First and foremost, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* reported that the Germans captured women and children. Based on a study of the articles in January and August, this is the first article that states the Germans took women and children prisoner. It is difficult, however, to conclude what these captures implied, as the newspaper did not state what happened to the women or children. Another significant point from this article is the fact that *Neue Preußische Zeitung* acknowledged executions as forms of punishment against the Herero. Again, based on articles from January and August, this is the first article to explicitly mention execution.

Neue Preußische Zeitung significantly reported on the first signs of trouble among the Nama in an article on 8 October. Based on a report from Theodor Leutwein, who was still governor of the colony, the Nama showed signs of discontent with the German

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

administration.²⁶³ Leutwein reported that the Nama were “apparently more hostile” and exhibited a “tendency to leave [the region].”²⁶⁴ An article on 14 October, again based on information from Governor Leutwein reported the following: “All quiet on October 8 in the city of Hoachanas, no Witboois seen. There are rumors that the Hottentots are feeling rebellious.”²⁶⁵

Finally, on 15 October, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* confirmed that the Nama were in open rebellion. According to the newspaper, the Nama, under Hendrik Witbooi, declared war on the Germans on 3 October in the city of Swakopmund.²⁶⁶ *Kreuzzeitung* gave its readership a short introduction to the Nama, explaining that the tribe was well armed and mounted. Furthermore, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* stated that the Nama tried to overthrow German leadership ten years earlier.²⁶⁷ The paper concluded that there was no “special reason” for the Nama to revolt, but claimed that the Germans were always suspicious of the Nama.²⁶⁸ This claim brings us back to the article from, which called the German alliance with the Nama into question.²⁶⁹ Nevertheless, *Kreuzzeitung* does not cover the Nama in the same way they covered the Herero in January. In January, the newspaper worked hard to dehumanize the Herero, implying that they were uncivilized, calling them *Buschleute*, and *Kaffers*. It is clear, however, that the colonial administration in Southwest Africa reported back to Berlin that the Nama were a formidable enemy.

²⁶³ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 8, 1904, No. 474, 1.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 14, 1904, No. 483, 2.

²⁶⁶ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 15, 1904, No. 485, 2.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ “Deutsch-Sudwestafrika, Politische Verhältnisse im Bezirk Keetmanshoop,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, August 3, 1904, No. 359, 2.

Following the reports of Hendrik Witbooi's and the Nama rebellion, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* continued to report about the Herero in the same way it had before the Nama uprising. Several articles again reported that the German *Schutztruppe* continued to follow the Herero into the desert.²⁷⁰ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* also continued to note that lack of water was seriously impacting the Herero, while typhoid deaths took its toll on the *Schutztruppe*. At this point, there were still no implications that the German *Schutztruppe* under Lothar von Trotha conducted a genocidal war against the Herero. Additionally, there was no report about the *Vernichtungsbefehl*, which was released by von Trotha on 4 October. Thus, it is clear that *Neue Preußische Zeitung* was unaware of the extermination order.

On October 22, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* reported that the Nama killed two people in the course of their uprising; a veterinarian named Oskar Albrecht and a farmer named Hermann.²⁷¹ The newspaper offered a detailed obituary for "Farmer Hermann." Describing Farmer Hermann as a "successful colonist" who did "very promising cultural work" in the south of the colony, the newspaper lamented that such an upstanding German citizen was killed.²⁷² By stating that he did "promising cultural work," the newspaper implied that Farmer Hermann worked to spread German culture throughout the colony. Aside from being a successful farmer, Hermann also fought in a war against the Herero and Khauas tribes in 1896. Following the war in 1896, Hermann devoted himself to government land in the south of the colony, where the majority of the Nama lived. The newspaper does not offer an obituary for the veterinarian, Oskar Albrecht.

²⁷⁰ "Aufstand in Südwestafrika," *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 20, 1904, No. 494, 1.

²⁷¹ "Aufstand in Südwestafrika," *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 22, 1904, No. 498, 1.

²⁷² Ibid.

Nevertheless, the obituary for Farmer Hermann served to offer a face to the long lists of casualties the newspaper published every week. While it was expected that soldiers died in war, it was less common for civilians to be killed. Thus, the obituary intended to illicit more sympathy for the war effort in German Southwest Africa.

Articles published between October 22 and 25 largely listed casualties, both among Germans soldiers, civilians, and the Nama. On 25 October, a report from Governor Leutwein listed seven deaths, two of who were farmers.²⁷³ Aside from the death notices, Leutwein sent a report reassuring Germans of the *Schutztruppen's* indigenous allies. The Bastard tribe, Leutwein wrote, were a “mixed race” (*Mischlinge*) of Boers and Nama. Unlike the Herero and Nama, Leutwein characterized the Bastards as hardworking and intelligent, and indicated that they had a strong grasp on a number of languages.²⁷⁴ Leutwein’s characterization of the Bastards is important, for it further illuminates German perceptions of race. Although Leutwein characterized them as *Mischlinge*, he nevertheless acknowledged some of the Bastards better qualities, a courtesy that was not extended to the Herero or Nama. It is likely that that the Leutwein looked upon the Bastards fondly because many of them descended from the Boers. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* probably published this article in an attempt to bolster support for the war back home. Earlier, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* published articles that criticized the German colonial administration’s decision to align itself with indigenous troops. After this critique turned out to be true when the Nama declared war against the Germans, governor Leutwein and *Neue Preußische Zeitung* likely wanted to stress that other indigenous tribes remained loyal.

²⁷³ “Aufstand in Südwestafrika,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 25, 1904. No. 501, 2.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

By the end of October, *Kreuzzeitung* published a number of articles, most of which were about casualties. On Thursday, 27 October, however, the newspaper published a report from General Lothar von Trotha. In the report, von Trotha declared the Herero resistance officially broken.²⁷⁵ The Herero, he stated, had little fight left in them and had lost large numbers of their cattle. They also were out of ammunition, leading many to abandon their guns, which the *Schutztruppe* then collected.²⁷⁶ While many of the Herero escaped to the east, the Germans could not follow them into the British colony of Bechuanaland.²⁷⁷ Thus, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* printed articles in August and October without mentioning the massacres or *Vernichtungsbefehl*, implying that the Germans defeated the Herero based on pure military prowess, not by acts of genocide. Of course, there were hints that German troops were committing atrocities, such as the article from October 6, that stated the Herero feared execution and punishment at the hands of the Germans.²⁷⁸ Nevertheless, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* did not print any articles that explicitly stated the genocidal actions of the *Schutztruppe* under Lothar von Trotha.

In the same article where *Neue Preußische Zeitung* and Lothar von Trotha declared victory over the Herero, the general also conceded that the war with the Nama was still ongoing.²⁷⁹ On 31 October, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* printed a report from General von Trotha, who claimed that captured members of the Herero tribe stated that all of their cattle were lost during the war.²⁸⁰ The prisoners also stated their leaders escaped into Bechuanaland. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* included that Herero leaders

²⁷⁵ “Aufstand in Südwestafrika,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 27, 1904, No. 506, 1.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 6, 1904, No. 470, 1.

²⁷⁹ “Aufstand in Südwestafrika,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, October 27, 1904, No. 506, 1.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

remained in Bechuanaland for two reasons. First, it indicated that the Herero had successfully been booted from their homeland. And secondly, it implied that the Herero were now a tribe without a leader, with no protector. The Herero were abandoned by their own chiefs. Again, this was another attempt to dehumanize the Herero (chiefs), and to further prove complete military success against the tribe.

Von Trotha included in his report that the Herero were heading out of Bechuanaland and back west into the colony, “half-starving and dying from thirst.”²⁸¹ The General claimed that many of the returning Herero were entering the country with guns. Of course, this claim contradicted his earlier statement from 17 October, which stated that the Herero were out of ammunition. This article gives the first insight into what the Herero endured in the desert. But *Neue Preußische Zeitung* gave the impression that the Herero went into the desert on their own volition. Towards the end of October as the German war against the Nama heightened, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* continually published pieces that highlighted how well the *Schutztruppe* fought against the Herero. By the end of October, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* gave no indications that German colonial authorities were in the process of committing genocide against two distinct and important indigenous tribes in Southwest Africa.

Conclusion

Coverage of the war between the Germans and Herero and Nama from *Neue Preußische Zeitung* is significant for several reasons. First and foremost, *Neue Preußische Zeitung* provided the ultra-conservative and ultra-nationalist news to Germany. While *Neue Preußische Zeitung* undoubtedly held racist attitudes towards the

²⁸¹ Ibid.

Herero and Nama, the newspaper did not advocate for the destruction of the entire race. The coverage from January, August, and October proves that the writers at *Neue Preußische Zeitung* were unaware of the genocide committed against the Herero and Nama. With that established, we now turn to the socialist newspaper, *Vorwärts*.

CHAPTER 4: VORWÄRTS

Introduction

Vorwärts was published by the Socialist Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in Berlin from the beginning of the party's inception until the Nazi Party came to power in 1933. Being a socialist publication, *Vorwärts*' audience was mainly working class men and women. As referenced in past chapters, the leader of the SPD in the Reichstag, August Bebel, opposed the war in Southwest Africa because he believed the Herero and Nama were taking part in a nationalist uprising.²⁸² Articles from *Vorwärts*, however, do not indicate that August Bebel spoke out against the war in the Reichstag. In fact, *Vorwärts* did not even mention August Bebel. Nevertheless, articles published in January indicated that the SPD did not support the war due to its cost.

Like *Kreuzzeitung*, *Vorwärts* did not name its authors, but it published fewer articles than the conservative newspaper. Although it published fewer articles, the stories *Vorwärts* did run were very long. Thus, coverage of the war from both newspapers was equal. Another difference from *Neue Preußische Zeitung* is that *Vorwärts* only published once a day as opposed to multiple times.

As was discussed in the last chapter, the Kaiserreich did not censor the press. Otto von Bismarck censored Socialist newspapers and books between 1878 and 1890, but by 1904, the SPD was free to publish.²⁸³ The Kaiserreich was restricted from censoring the press under the Imperial Press Law of 7 May 1874,²⁸⁴ but under the Imperial Criminal Code of May 1871, the government could prosecute political opponents for libel and

²⁸² Smith, "The Talk of Genocide," 111.

²⁸³ Stark, *Banned in Berlin*, 2.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

slander.²⁸⁵ Based on my study of articles from January 1904, it does not appear that *Vorwärts* was censored. I come to this conclusion because the newspaper often called the war effort into question and even published a letter from a pastor in the colony, who claimed that the Germans were at fault for the war. By August, however, the newspaper's tone and stance shifted in support of the war. It is possible that after *Vorwärts* published articles condemning the war in January, the Kaiserreich leaned on the newspaper to publish more patriotic stories that favored the war. It is extremely important to discuss German censorship laws. If the German government did in fact censor the press, it would explain why there was no mention of the atrocities or the *Vernichtungsbefehl* in newspapers. It is also possible that the writers and publishers at both *Neue Preußische Zeitung* and *Vorwärts* were unaware of the genocide in German Southwest Africa. With that established, we now turn our attention to *Vorwärts*' coverage of the war.

Vorwärts

The first article that appeared in *Vorwärts* detailing the insurrection in German Southwest Africa was published on 14 January 1904, two days after the uprising started.²⁸⁶ Like *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, *Vorwärts* did not indicate how the uprising started. While *Neue Preußische Zeitung* speculated that the Bondelswartz helped foment the war, the latter focused on the infrastructural damage the uprising caused. *Vorwärts* reported that the Herero who lived in Okahandja destroyed a railway bridge and cut telegraph lines, while the telegraph lines that connected Okahandja with Swakopmund were still in danger.²⁸⁷ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* also reported in January that the Herero

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ "Der Aufstand der Hereros," *Vorwärts*, January 14, 1904, No. 11, pg 2.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

destroyed or damaged equipment that helped to facilitate trade and contact throughout the colony. The destruction of these facilities indicates that the Herero were aware of how important trade and communication were to a functioning colony. By disrupting transportation, trade, and communication, the Herero effectively shut down the colony. Symbolically, the Herero attempted to destroy the modern technology that set the “civilized” German society apart from the “uncivilized,” Herero.

The tone from the majority of the articles in January is urgent and indicates that the Herero were fighting hard against the Germans. On 17 January, the newspaper released an article in which the first paragraph was an official telegram from the colony. The telegram relayed the following: “Okahandja badly pressed. Numerous casualties. Immediate help requested.”²⁸⁸ Furthermore, the telegram stated that the Herero were mounted on horseback, well-armed, and pillaging towns.²⁸⁹ By printing the telegram first, *Vorwärts* showed how serious the situation was in German Southwest Africa. Also, the telegram stated that the Herero were well armed – a formidable enemy. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* often wrote about the Herero as if they were uncivilized and lacked skills in warfare. *Vorwärts*, however, portrayed the Herero as a very competent enemy that was capable of wreaking havoc in the colony. Nevertheless, *Vorwärts* also used similar racial epithets when referring to the Herero.

A week after the uprising began; *Vorwärts* published an article condemning the war, not for moral reasons, but due to the cost. The newspaper reported that the Reichstag recently approved a sum of 1.5 million Marks to aid the war effort. *Vorwärts*, however, argued that another one million Marks had already been spent to end the Bondelswartz

²⁸⁸ “Der Krieg mit den Hereros,” *Vorwärts*, January 17, 1904, No. 14, pg 2.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

rebellion in the south of the colony, which was still raging.²⁹⁰ As such, the unnamed author of the article warns the Reichstag to consider the cost of “our newest colonial war adventure,” as it could cost “a pretty penny.”²⁹¹ Based on this article, it is fair to conclude that the SPD also opposed the war against the Herero because of how much it would cost the Empire. With the Germans still fighting a stalemate against the Bondelswartz, the SPD did not think it was wise to spend even more money to put down another rebellion. This is another important point – *Vorwärts* stated, “This is not a war. This is a rebellion,” indicating that 1.5 million Marks was far too much to put down a simple rebellion, although it ultimately became a war.

While *Vorwärts* implied that the SPD it did not support the war, it conceded that sadly, German Southwest Africa was the country’s most valuable colony, much more so than the empire’s other “African sun traps.”²⁹² This statement dripped with sarcasm – the author obviously found it ironic that a colony mired in so many conflicts remained the best colony. Furthermore, the author claimed that the only cultural achievements the Germans brought to the Herero were “booze, syphilis, and the sjambok.”²⁹³ Ultimately, the author concluded the following:

The natives are a rather peace-loving people as opposed to warlike. In the last twenty years, they’ve fought the Witbos [sic] three times, once against the Bondelswartz, once against the Zwartbois, and even against the Hereros.²⁹⁴ It seems that feelings of rebellion have eaten at them for a long time, and have finally exploded in full force. This rebellion surpasses past rebellions in numbers

²⁹⁰ “Unser Neuer Kolonialkrieg,” *Vorwärts*, January 19, 1904, No. 15, pg 1.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ As indicated in previous chapters, there were many subdivisions within the Herero, which *Vorwärts* did not elaborate upon.

and intensity. The uprising is an attempt to destroy a decade of colonial activity.²⁹⁵

This article is enormously important for a number of reasons. First of all, it shows that the SPD opposed the war because of the cost. *Vorwärts* argued that the cost would weigh on the backs of the taxpayers, particularly the working class. Thus, the SPD did not only oppose the war because the party viewed it as a nationalist, but because it would negatively impact Germany's working class. Finally, this article reiterates my claim that censorship of the press was not practiced in 1904. If the Kaiserreich censored the press, it is likely that this article would have never been published.

On 28 January, *Vorwärts* reprinted an editorial from the editor at *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Franz Seiner. The editorial echoed the article from January 19, and added that tensions with traders also led the Herero to revolt. This, however, is misleading. While *Vorwärts'* article from January 19 pointed to German settlers as the source of tension, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* pointed to traders, many of who were not German. Perhaps Franz Seiner published this article in response to *Vorwärts'* article, which blamed German settlers and colonial officials. By placing blame on foreign traders, Seiner takes the guilt off German shoulders. Distinguishing himself from *Vorwärts* writers, Seiner also refers to the Herero as *Kaffern* (Kaffers). Based on the sample of articles from January, *Vorwärts* did not refer to the Herero as Kaffers, like *Neue Preußische Zeitung* did.

While *Vorwärts* distinguished itself from other newspapers by restraining its use of ethnic slurs, the writers were still insensitive to the tribes and cultures in Southwest Africa. In another article from 28 January, the newspaper reported that many readers were curious about the indigenous groups in the colony. *Vorwärts* printed a small story

²⁹⁵ "Unser Neuer Kolonialkrieg," *Vorwärts*, January 19, No. 15, pg 1.

about the indigenous peoples of Southwest Africa and included a map of the colony. In its descriptions of the colony and people, however, the newspaper noted that all of the indigenous peoples were nomadic and described each tribes' respective territory based on location.²⁹⁶ Although *Vorwärts* claimed to be describing each tribe, the newspaper merely lumped them all together as “nomadic,” implying they had no preexisting ties to the land. The tribes that were described were compared to Europeans. For example, *Vorwärts* claimed that the Bastard tribe possessed the most “European” characteristics.²⁹⁷ Consequently, the Bastard tribe was one of the groups that were allied with the German *Schutztruppe* during the war. So while *Vorwärts* tended to be less culturally ignorant than *Kreuzzeitung*, its writers still held the Herero and other indigenous peoples of Southwest Africa to a “European standard,” and considered them to be uncivilized.

Similarly to *Kreuzzeitung*, *Vorwärts* covered the war in January with great urgency. Both newspapers indicated that the uprising was serious and that the Reichstag was extremely concerned about the colony's stability. Unlike the conservative newspaper, however, *Vorwärts*' tone is distinctly anti-war. This is understandable as the publication claimed that the war would be expensive and fall on the backs of the working class.

Articles from the beginning of August, however, tended to be less urgent and more descriptive about the situation. In an article from 5 August, the newspaper provided a small history about the Herero and their leader Samuel Maherero. Although *Vorwärts* noted that Samuel Maherero came to power in 1890 with help from German colonial officials, the unnamed author also left a lot of gaping holes in the story that painted

²⁹⁶ “Die Völkerstämme in Deutsch-Südwestafrika,” *Vorwärts*, January 28, No. 23, pg 5.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

Maherero in a negative light. When the newspaper discussed Maherero's rise to power, it admitted that traditional Herero inheritance laws were ignored and that Samuel Maherero was chosen over the rightful heir, Nikodemus.²⁹⁸ *Vorwärts*, however, does not mention that Nikodemus was later executed by the German colonial administration.²⁹⁹

Accordingly, the "major pagan chiefs" of the Herero and other indigenous tribes did not acknowledge Maherero as the true leader:

They said to him: "Thou art the sovereign of the whole country, but we are heirs of the sacred fire, the women, and the herds of thy father." He retorted: "Good thing you gave me the herds, for I will do whatever I want as owner of the land! I have no revenue like my father did and I will therefore sell the land to whomever I want because I must have money."³⁰⁰

The above quote is very exaggerated and certainly not a direct quote from the Herero or from Samuel Maherero. The publication of this article indicates that between January and August, the contributors at *Vorwärts* shifted their opinions about the war. While articles from January tended to show a shred of sensitivity towards the Herero in their fight against the Germans, this passage indicates that the tone of the newspaper changed.

In addition to painting Samuel Maherero as a ruthless leader with no consideration for the wellbeing of his people, *Vorwärts* also noted that he was an alcoholic who was in debt to many traders and farmers. This is another misrepresentation of the actual situation on the ground in Southwest Africa. *Vorwärts* failed to note that German colonial administrators supplied Samuel Maherero with alcohol before he signed treaties. Thus, German duplicity coupled with Samuel Maherero's alcoholism stripped the Herero of their land and cattle, not Maherero alone. Furthermore, by stating that

²⁹⁸ "Zum Streit um die Herero," *Vorwärts*, August 5, 1904, No. 182, pg 2.

²⁹⁹ Okupa, *Carrying the Sun on Our Backs*, 110.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

Samuel Maherero sold large swaths of land, *Vorwärts* ignored the ravages of rinderpest on Herero cattle, which led many to sell their land in exchange for food and money.

Based on these debts and sales of land, *Vorwärts* asserted that the Herero held “hate in their hearts,” towards Samuel Maherero. After chronicling the many woes of Samuel Maherero, *Vorwärts* claimed the following:

Samuel realized his life was no longer secure. Finally, he had to do something in order to save himself from his people, and so he gave the fatal call for insurrection against the Germans when he himself sold the land ... This is the cause of the uprising. Pastor Ariz claimed that the Herero were following the right path and becoming accustomed to German rule. They celebrated the Kaiser’s birthday like children. They said, “We are Germans.”³⁰¹

These passages are extremely important to the overall narrative and analysis of *Vorwärts* colonial war coverage in 1904. First of all, it leaves out chunks of information that are vital to the background of the Herero war. Of course, this opens up room for more questions. Were the SPD and writers from *Vorwärts* aware of the full extent to which Germans in the colony exploited intertribal relations and politics among the Herero? Only in January, writers for the newspaper claimed that the Herero had every reason to rebel against the Germans. By August, however, the rebellion was the fault of Samuel Maherero. It is conceivable that the Kaiserreich cracked down on *Vorwärts*’ condemnation of the war after January, which would explain why there was such a dramatic shift in the newspaper’s tone. Possible action by the Kaiserreich against *Vorwärts* was certainly legal based on Imperial Criminal Code of May 1871, which prosecuted offenders for libel and slander.

Whether or not *Vorwärts* was censored is hard to establish. It is also possible that *Vorwärts* shifted its stance due to the political climate in Germany. It’s already been

³⁰¹ Ibid.

established that the SPD opposed the war and abstained from voting to pass legislation in the Reichstag that pledged 1.5 million Marks to the war effort. As we will see in the next chapter, British newspapers indicated that the SPD isolated itself in Germany by opposing the war. Thus, it is completely possible that the SPD and *Vorwärts* threw support behind the war effort so as to prevent further political isolation.

Throughout August, *Vorwärts* covered the war in a similar fashion to *Neue Preußische Zeitung*. Both newspapers printed more casualty notices, and often times issued reports that Lothar von Trotha sent from the front line. After the Battle of Waterberg on August 11, *Vorwärts* published several telegrams from Lothar von Trotha, detailing how the Herero “left in a panic-stricken flight” towards Bechuanaland in the east.³⁰² Writers from *Vorwärts* were aware of the importance of the Battle of Waterberg, as they reported extensively on it. The Battle of Waterberg for Germans at the time did not mark the beginning of the genocide, but the beginning of the end of the war. This battle signified the flight of the Herero from their homeland, leaving it the colony to the German settlers. Thus, the Battle of Waterberg, was enormously important in both *Vorwärts* and *Neue Preußische Zeitung*.

On 17 August, the newspaper stated that present at the Battle of Waterberg were 30,000 Herero, 50,000 large cattle, and 120,000 smaller livestock.³⁰³ *Vorwärts* initially reported that 24 *Schutztruppe* were killed, 2 missing, and 59 injured, but did not report the number of Herero casualties, nor how many fled east. When the Herero fled Waterberg, they left behind most of their possessions and cattle, all of which was

³⁰² “Ein neues Gefecht mit den Hereros,” *Vorwärts*, August 18, 1904, No. 193, pg 1.

³⁰³ “Ein Kampf mit den Hereros,” *Vorwärts*, August 17, 1904, No. 192, pg 2.

confiscated by the Germans.³⁰⁴ *Vorwärts* repeated Lothar von Trotha's reports that there was little pasture or water in the east, but did not state outright that that Kalahari Desert lay between German Southwest Africa and Bechuanaland. Nevertheless, indicating that the Herero were fleeing to an inhospitable environment implied that many would die in their escape. This does not, however, indicate knowledge of the genocide or Lothar von Trotha's intentions.

Throughout the rest of August, *Vorwärts* continued to report on new lists of casualties and reports from Lothar von Trotha. Towards the end of August, *Vorwärts* printed a letter from soldier to his family, detailing the hardships of the *Schutztruppe*:

There are little skirmishes almost every day. We lie under God's free sky with two blankets, our rifles always loaded. Jackals and hyenas come towards us from the east as we sleep, but run away, frightened. Otherwise all good and healthy. Of course, typhoid prevails here among the troops. Hospitals all full ... war costs millions ... the longer the war lasts, the worse for us, as more and more diseases [present themselves]. This is easily explained, as every night, we lay down without tents. With only two or three blankets or coats, rheumatism occurs easily. Little food ... strenuous treks and rides to wherever. No roads – sand, sand, and thorns. This is our colony ... The grass the Herero used to feed their cattle was razed and burnt. A horse is given a saucepan lid of oats per week. One can hang his hat on the bones of the animals, [they're so thin].³⁰⁵

This letter seems to be a veiled attempt by *Vorwärts* to show the SPD's disagreement with the war. For example, the soldier noted that the war was expensive, something *Vorwärts* also indicated numerous times in January. Additionally, the soldier talks about how sick the troops were, including typhoid fever, an illness that many soldiers encountered during the war. By showing that soldiers are suffering from illness and

³⁰⁴ "Ein neues Gefecht mit den Hereros," *Vorwärts*, August 18, 1904, No. 193, pg 1.

³⁰⁵ "Vom Südwestafrikanischen Kriegschauplatz," *Vorwärts*, August 27, 1904, No. 201, pg 2.

exposed to inhospitable elements in an “uncivilized” country, *Vorwärts* may have silently been trying to show the SPD’s dissatisfaction with the war.

Furthermore, the above passage strongly indicated how “uncivilized” German Southwest Africa is. By noting that soldiers must fend against jackals and hyenas, the newspaper painted a picture of an inhospitable, wild environment. Furthermore, when the soldier writes “no roads - sand, sand, and thorns,” this implied that there was no reason to fight for an inhospitable land filled with war, disease, wild animals, and no infrastructure. Several articles about the war in August and January indicated that German settlers built up the colony’s infrastructure with railroads and telegraph lines. The soldier’s intentions, however, could also have been to emphasize that German settlement would positively impact civilization and infrastructure in the colony. It is most likely, however, that *Vorwärts* used the above passage to clandestinely voice its disapproval for the war.

Thus, August was an important month for *Vorwärts*, not only because it was a significant month in the course of the war, but it also marked a shift in the newspaper’s attitude towards the war. In October, *Vorwärts* reported extensively on the recent Nama uprising, but made no mention of Lothar von Trotha’s infamous *Vernichtungsbefehl*. Likewise, *Neue Preußische Zeitung*’s did not report on the extermination order in October. As the aforementioned newspaper was ultra-conservative and less likely to be censored, it is reasonable to conclude that the German press was unaware of the genocidal nature of the war in Southwest Africa.

The first article published in *Vorwärts* in October seems to pick up from where our last one left off, with typhoid fever. By October, typhoid fever spread rapidly among the soldiers. The newspaper paper called the outbreak an “epidemic” and stated that the

situation was dire.³⁰⁶ Quoting doctors from South Africa, *Vorwärts* stated that climate conditions in Southwest Africa were conducive to the spread of typhoid among soldiers. Among the colonists, there were 70 doctors to treat the sick, and there were 170 confirmed cases of typhoid among soldiers in September. Thus, it's clear that the typhoid outbreak was confined to the *Schutztruppe* and did not largely affect the settlers. The death toll according to the newspaper was relatively high.³⁰⁷

Within the first week of October, however, *Vorwärts* reported that the Nama Witbooi revolted. *Vorwärts* labeled this revolt “disastrous” for the colony;³⁰⁸ obviously, the newspaper was aware that the Nama under Hendrik Witbooi were a valuable ally to the German forces in the colony. Although *Vorwärts* understood the importance of the Nama Witbooi to the German cause, the newspaper wasted no time in negatively assessing the tribe. Labeling the Nama as “war-like,” *Vorwärts* provided its readers background to the history of the Nama in German Southwest Africa. Informing its audience that the Nama were allied with the Germans after 1894, *Vorwärts* speculated the reasons behind the uprising: “We still have to wait for more news about the Witbois’ [sic] motives. Most likely, however, they revolted because of the fate of the Hereros and their treatment by German troops. The fate of the Herero tribe, their old enemies, is likely difficult for them.”³⁰⁹ The article then goes on to state that the ultimate goal after the war is to disarm all “native tribes” and utilize them as forced labor. This passage is enormously important.

³⁰⁶ “Der Typhus in Südwestafrika,” *Vorwärts*, October 2, 1904, No. 232, pg 1.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁰⁸ “Aufstand der Witbois,” *Vorwärts*, October 8, 1904, No. 238, pg 1.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

First and foremost, the phrase “fate of the Herero” raises several red flags – did *Vorwärts* know about the genocidal acts occurring in Southwest Africa? Or was the writer simply referring to the Hereros’ loss at the Battle of Waterberg? Whether or not the SPD or *Vorwärts* knew about the genocide will be further analyzed at the end of this chapter. The statement that all “native tribes” will be used for forced labor, however, indicates that *Vorwärts*’ writers assumed the Herero, Nama and other indigenous groups would be in numbers large enough to help facilitate in the building of a German colony. If the SPD and *Vorwärts* assumed that the Herero and Nama were going to be exterminated, the newspaper would not have stated that the groups would be used for forced labor. Nevertheless, the nonchalant admission that the Herero and Nama would be used for forced labor indicates that *Vorwärts* truly shifted its opinion of the war, based either on censorship or patriotism.

In August, *Vorwärts*’ articles all had a triumphant tone, implying that the war would soon be won. Articles from October, however, take a tone similar to that displayed in January. In January, it was clear that the German government back in Berlin and the colonial administration in German Southwest Africa feared for the safety of the colony and settlers. Similarly, articles in October possess the same tone of fear, trepidation, and frustration that an “inferior” and “uncivilized” tribe could cause so much trouble for a powerful European empire. In an article from 12 October, *Vorwärts* noted that defeating the Herero would be more difficult than defeating the Nama Witbooi because of the enormous influence that Hendrik Witbooi had over his people.³¹⁰ Based on the secondary sources, this is a correct assessment. Although Samuel Maherero led the Herero in their

³¹⁰ “Ueber die Ursache des Witboi-Aufstandes,” *Vorwärts*, October 12, 1904, No. 240, pg 2.

uprising against the Germans, he was not as well respected as Hendrik Witbooi and he did not have the full support of the majority of the Herero behind him. The Nama, however, were a much smaller group of indigenous people and Hendrik Witbooi was widely accepted as the tribe's leader. Samuel Maherero, as you will remember, did not have this kind of support from the Herero.

Throughout the remainder of October, *Vorwärts* continuously reported about the Nama Witbooi. The reports, however, were superficial and sometimes offered information about the Namas' history under Hendrik Witbooi. Only intermittently did the newspaper report about events on the ground between the *Schutztruppe* and the Nama. One article in particular published a selection of letters between Hendrik Witbooi and Governor Leutwein from 1894 – the same letters that were discussed in chapter 3.³¹¹ *Vorwärts* used the letters in their implication of Governor Leutwein, who the newspaper claimed was too benevolent towards the Nama. This was a sentiment that was echoed by German settlers and Germans back in Europe alike. *Vorwärts* used these articles to show that the Nama were not punished enough in 1894 and as a result, rose up in rebellion because they had been treated too leniently.

In similar fashion to *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, *Vorwärts* published many articles in October that listed the number of casualties in German Southwest Africa and began to include short biographies for each casualty. This tactic personalized the casualties for the newspaper's audience. Additionally, the casualties listed in October did not just include soldiers, but civilians too. On 25 October, *Vorwärts* reported that two under officers, one

³¹¹ “Der Aufstand in Südwestafrika” *Vorwärts*, October 19, 1904, No. 246, pg 2.

missionary, four farmers, and ten Boers were killed.³¹² The death of a religious figure, four civilians, and ten Boers would have likely struck the audience, who would have been surprised by civilian deaths.

When *Vorwärts* did not report about casualties and the Nama, the newspaper again turned its attention to the Herero. Towards the end of the month, *Vorwärts* published a report from Governor Leutwein about the Herero. The article stated that the Herero that remained in the colony were scattered throughout and set up camp around waterholes. Although the Herero were exhausted, they were still resistant to the Germans, despite having lost “half their cattle and people.”³¹³ This is noteworthy, as *Vorwärts* blatantly states that the Herero suffered enormous casualties in the course of the war. The newspaper, however, does not verify *how* the Herero lost half of their population, nor does it question the fact. Because *Vorwärts* noted several times in August and October that the Herero fled to the east, it’s possible that the newspaper was referring to the Herero who now resided in Bechuanaland. Nevertheless, the statement that the Herero lost half of their people is indicative of genocide. It is very likely that *Vorwärts* believed half of the Herero population resided in present-day Botswana and did not suspect atrocities.

Conclusion

Based on my analysis of *Vorwärts* during the months of January, August and October 1904, it is clear that the writers at *Vorwärts* were unaware of the genocidal actions occurring in Southwest Africa. There were, however, small hints that the anonymous authors were suspicious of what was really occurring in Southwest Africa.

³¹² “Südwestafrika,” *Vorwärts*, October 25, 1904, No. 251, pg 2.

³¹³ “Südwestafrika,” *Vorwärts*, October 27, 1904, No. 253, pg 3.

The biggest hint towards genocidal acts is the article from 27 October that stated the Herero lost half its population. Nevertheless, the newspaper never explicitly stated that massacres or atrocities occurred. Additionally, as historians, we must keep in mind that the tonal shift from January to August and October is indicative of censorship by the Kaiserreich. It would not be surprising if the Kaiserreich leaned on *Vorwärts* to stop printing articles that opposed the war. This explains why *Vorwärts* started to show support for the war beginning in August and continuing into October. Thus, *Vorwärts* silence on the genocide in 1904 can be explained by German censorship laws and perhaps even genuine ignorance. As explained in chapter 3, Chancellor von Bülow did not want news about the *Vernichtungsbefehl* leaking out to the international community. If domestic news outlets reported about the *Vernichtungsbefehl*, it would have been very easy for international news to pick up on the story.

What is clear from the study of both newspapers is that sections of the German public were ignorant to the genocide. It is also evident that the majority of the population in Germany knew very little about the colony. Although societies like the *Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft* worked hard to promote immigration to the colony, the fact of the matter is that many German citizens wrote into *Vorwärts* and *Neue Preußische Zeitung* requesting both newspapers to provide historical background about the colony and to explain the indigenous populations. Both newspapers did this, and printed maps of the colony that highlighted important geographical locations and the regions that indigenous peoples lived in. Thus, the German population was even ignorant about the nation's colony before the war started in 1904.

In the next chapter, I turn my attention to the British press. Based on my analysis of *The London Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*, I will determine whether or not the British press was aware of the genocide and why the British did not have a vested interest in the genocide, despite German Southwest Africa's proximity to the Cape Colony and Bechuanaland.

CHAPTER 5: BRITISH PRESS COVERAGE

The British in Africa

Of all the colonial empires in the world, the British were by far the most powerful. Having secured its hegemonic status in the early nineteenth century, the British Empire touched every corner of the world, with colonies in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia, and Africa. In Southern Africa, the British possessed the Cape Colony, now South Africa, and Bechuanaland, now Botswana. Both territories bordered German Southwest Africa, leading to tensions between the two colonial powers in the early 1880s when Germany first acquired Southwest Africa.

When the *Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft für Südwest Afrika* (German Colonial Society for Southwest Africa) was first established in 1885, its existence threatened the sovereignty of the British and Cape governments.³¹⁴ The Colonial Society was established as a commercial stock company and was intended to be a “successful vehicle” for the colonization of Southwest Africa. But the society lacked sufficient capital because no one invested in it.³¹⁵ Further complicating matters was chief Kamaherero’s refusal to sign a Protection Treaty in 1888, as referenced in the first chapter. With the prospect of a “savage” colony under the control of indigenous tribes, few Europeans were willing to invest in the company.³¹⁶ By 1891, the German Colonial Society was bankrupt.³¹⁷ Thus, British investors stepped in and reformed the company under the name *Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft*, making it an Anglo-German venture.³¹⁸ Based on British capital in

³¹⁴ Voeltz, *German Colonialism*, 1.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

the *Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft*, one could assume that the British had a vested interest in the stability of German Southwest Africa. It will become clear, later, however, that Britain did not regard German Southwest Africa as important. Britain understood throughout the course of the war that the Herero and Nama were fighting the Germans, not all white people. Thus, the British did not enter the conflict or even engage in an extensive dialogue about the war because it did not directly threaten the Empire's interests.

It is surprising that the British government did not direct more attention towards the conflict in German Southwest Africa for several reasons. As established above, the British Empire possessed colonies close to German Southwest Africa and also had commercial interests in the region. Furthermore, the British government led the international community in the outcry over the atrocities in the Belgian Congo. Thanks to the British investigative journalist, E.D. Morel, the world learned of Leopold's atrocities in the Congo that started in the late nineteenth century and continued into the early twentieth century.³¹⁹ Significantly, Morel published his findings in 1903, a year before the war in German Southwest Africa began.³²⁰

As noted in the previous chapter, officials in Berlin, particularly Chancellor Bülow, worried that news of the genocide in Southwest Africa would negatively impact Germany's image just as the atrocities in the Congo Free State negatively affected King Leopold II and Belgium. Thus, the extermination order was rescinded in December 1904, although the genocide continued. Nevertheless, evidence from British newspapers in

³¹⁹ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost – A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 185.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

1904 indicated that German officials worked hard to conceal what was actually happening in Southwest Africa.

The Manchester Guardian and *The London Times* did not devote a great amount of attention to the war in German Southwest Africa. Each newspaper only provided a handful of articles throughout the months this study focuses on. The articles that discussed the war in colonial Namibia were often short and biased. The authors, who were never named, often inserted their own moralistic views of the conflict and referred to the Herero and Nama using animalistic terms. Based on a study of the conservative *London Times* and the liberal *Manchester Guardian* during the months of June, August, and October 1904, it seems that the British were not wholly interested in the colonial war ravaging German Southwest Africa and its indigenous population. This ignorance and disinterest is significant: Why were the atrocities in German Southwest Africa neglected when the atrocities in the Congo received so much international attention? Both *The London Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* received updates on the colonial war from the government in Berlin, and Berlin received news from colonial Namibia through telegram lines. This suggests that between German Southwest Africa and Great Britain, some information was either lost or fabricated. *The London Times* in particular accessed a lot of its information through *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, the newspaper studied in chapter 3. As was seen in chapter 3, many of the articles in *Neue Preußische Zeitung* were biased and included articles praising the glories of the German Empire and lambasting the savage nature of the Herero and Nama. Thus, *The London Times*' coverage of the uprising came across as biased too. Additionally, both *The London Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* failed to acknowledge significant events, including the death toll

among the Herero at the Battle of Waterberg and the issuance of the *Vernichtungsbefehl* in October.

The London Times

The London Times is a conservative newspaper that is still in publication. *The London Times* first published an article about the uprising on 19 January. The first sentence of the article reads, “a natural bond of union links together white settlers, of whatever nationality, amid the teeming black population of the vast African continent...”³²¹ Furthermore, the *Times* acknowledged that the German government seeks to maintain the “racial supremacy” of the white settler population in Southwest Africa.³²² Thus, it is clear to the *Times* from the outset of the war that the struggle between the Herero and Germans was based on race. Additionally, *The Times* aligned itself with the Germans based upon each countries’ shared race and colonial history.

The article also pointed out that the uprising had the potential to affect British interests in the area, and as such the British should be “sympathetic” to the Germans.³²³ The article, like most scholarship, noted that the beginning of the uprising and what caused it remained unclear. Nevertheless, the *Times* reported that the majority of the white settlers lived in and around Windhoek, where the majority of the Herero also lived. As a result, the *Times* concluded, the settlers were in danger of attacks.³²⁴ Echoing German journalists, the *Times* argued that the Herero started the uprising because the tribe was “spoiled and pampered by the kindness of the administration.”³²⁵ This argument

³²¹ *The London Times*, January 19, 1904, 7.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

implied that leniency on the part of the administration lulled the Herero into a false sense of security, believing themselves capable of overthrowing German authority. This claim corroborates evidence from secondary sources that many Germans back in Europe (along with settlers) believed that the colonial administration under Governor Leutwein was too lenient with the indigenous populations of GSWA.

In an article published the following day, the *Times* reported that the German Reichstag passed legislation to suppress the Herero Revolt. The paper quoted Chancellor von Bülow, who claimed the Herero were “a race which had always been impatient of orderly government and which had not appreciated the clemency of the German rule in the colony.”³²⁶ The *Times* tried to piece together what caused the uprising, suggesting that high debts to German settlers may have instigated the insurrection. The first chapter concluded that rising debts to farmers were a contributing factor to Herero discontent with the colonial administration, but it was surely not the only one. Additionally, the *Times* brings up August Bebel, the leader of the SPD in the Reichstag. The paper stated that Bebel supported the Herero rising and “compared the Hereros to the ancient Germans defending their soil against the Romans.”³²⁷ Based on August Bebel and the SPD’s support of what they categorized as a nationalist uprising, the SPD abstained from voting on the aforementioned legislation.³²⁸ Although they abstained from voting however, the SPD did not vote against the war.³²⁹

The *Times* only published two more articles in January 1904 covering the uprising. An article from January 28 claimed that 16 settlers were killed and 70 missing,

³²⁶ “The Rising in German South-west Africa,” *The London Times*, January 20, 1904, 6.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

a claim that came straight from *Neue Preußische Zeitung*.³³⁰ One story from 29 January again tried to understand why the Herero revolted against the Germans. Based on correspondence from Cape Town, the *Times* asserted that the “rising in German Southwest Africa has been brewing for a long time.”³³¹ The author claimed that the Herero accumulated weaponry over an extended period of time, but declared it was unclear how the tribe came into possession of these weapons.³³² Furthermore, the *Times* underscored how difficult it was for the Germans to fight the Herero, as it was unclear which tribes were opposed and which tribes remained loyal. “Thousands of warlike natives” were fighting the Germans, making victory much more difficult. By characterizing the indigenous peoples of Southwest Africa as “warlike natives,” the *Times* utilized the age-old stereotype of the savage African versus the civilized white man. This shows that the British held similar racial theories to the Germans.

In early August, the *Times* reported that General Lothar von Trotha was closing in on the Herero who were settled around Waterberg.³³³ As mentioned in the previous chapter, the majority of the Herero settled around Waterberg in August while waiting to conclude a peace treaty with the Germans. This article offered a glimpse to how Lothar von Trotha intended to push the Herero out of Waterberg. That being said, the article did not offer any hint that Lothar von Trotha intended to massacre the Herero and drive them into the desert. Furthermore, the Battle of Waterberg was not reported in the *Times*. This

³³⁰ “Vom Aufstand der Hereros,” *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, January 27, 1904, No. 44, pg 2.

³³¹ “The Rising in German South-West Africa,” *The London Times*, January 29, 1904, 3.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ “The Rising in German South-West Africa,” *The London Times*, August 9, 1904, 3.

was the only article that *The London Times* reported in August, indicating that the British did not believe the Battle of Waterberg was as significant as the German press did.

Beginning in October, the *Times* reported with much trepidation that the Nama joined the war on the side of the Herero. The British were understandably anxious by this new development, as the Nama were situated in the south of the colony and within close proximity to the Cape Colony. The *Times* noted that one unnamed German newspaper was not as worried about Hendrik Witbooi joining the war because “the enemy is far more decent” than the Herero.³³⁴ The *Times*, however, called this “a cold comfort,” and argued, “experience has shown that any measure of ‘decency’ or of civilization which a savage may have attained makes him all the more formidable and effective as an opponent, especially in his own familiar land.”³³⁵ This passage shows that while European colonizers sought to “civilize” African “savages,” any indigenous man or woman who showed examples of “culture” was automatically a threat. Indeed, Hendrik Witbooi and the Nama were eventually considered a large threat to the Germans by 1905, and the Namas’ reputation as fierce warriors led to their incarceration and near-extirmination at Shark Island and Swakopmund.

In the newspaper’s final article from October 1904, the *Times* argued that the colonial war in German Southwest Africa was no longer greeted with enthusiasm and getting volunteers for the colonial army became increasingly difficult.³³⁶ What perhaps made the situation in German Southwest Africa appear so dire were the successes of the Nama against the Germans. The *Times* described the Nama as a “formidable enemy”

³³⁴ “The Rising in German South-West Africa,” *The London Times*, October 10, 1904, 3.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ “The Rising in German South-West Africa,” *The London Times*, October 24, 1904, 4.

compared to the “greatly inferior and less highly organized Hereros.”³³⁷ Thus, by the end of 1904, the Germans were having difficulty putting down the Herero and Nama.

What makes these articles so important to the history of press coverage of the Herero and Nama genocide is the fact that *The London Times* reported on the conflict only intermittently. Where *Vorwärts* and *Neue Preußische Zeitung* reported about the war almost every day, *The London Times* reported about the war only a few times a month and oftentimes, as was the case with August, reported on trivial details, such as the transport of soldiers and provisions to the colony.³³⁸ This further signifies that the war in Southwest Africa was not pertinent to British interests, and thus warranted little press coverage.

Adding to the significance of these articles is the lack of information about key events, including the Battle of Waterberg and the extermination order, indicating that the British did not know about the genocide in 1904. And while their involvement in revealing the atrocities in the Congo Free State in 1903 set the British apart from other European nations at the turn of the century, it is still evident that the British held the same worldview of other races that was so prevalent in Europe. Based on their characterization of the Herero and Nama as “savages” and “uncivilized,” it is clear that contributors to *The London Times* also racialized the war between the Germans and Southwest Africans.

The Manchester Guardian

The Manchester Guardian did not take as long as *The London Times* to report the Herero uprising, as it published its first article on 14 January. While the *Times* offered more information about the uprising, including when it started, what possibly contributed

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ “News in Brief,” *The London Times*, August 22, 1904, pg 4.

to it, and how the settlers were affected, *The Manchester Guardian* delved into how the uprising affected communication between the colony and Germany.³³⁹ The newspaper reported damage to railway lines and the interruption of telegraph lines. The disruption of telegraph lines had implications for both British and German access to information about the conflict. Two days later, the *Guardian* reported the first settler casualties.³⁴⁰ The newspaper claimed that a farmer named Lange was among the casualties including a number of other “white settlers.” The *Guardian*, however, does not specify if those killed are men, women, or children. This is significant, for if the newspaper reported who was killed, it would likely illicit sympathy for the settler community in the colony. Nevertheless, offering the deceased farmer’s name could have increased sympathy as well. Unlike *The London Times*, the *Guardian* began its initial reports about the conflict in Southwest Africa without drawing on biases. For example, when the *Times* first reported about the war, it called on all readers to support the Germans due to their shared history and race. The *Guardian*, however, tended to report the facts during the war, as opposed to reporting based on emotions and biases. As a result, the sample of articles from the *Guardian* offer a less biased and more straight-forward narrative of the events in the war as they transpired.

By 18 January, the newspaper reported that the Herero were well armed against the Germans, who were having difficulty maintaining the garrison at Windhoek.³⁴¹

Unlike the *Times*, which reported extensively on the supposed “inferiority” of the Herero,

³³⁹ “Native Rising in German South-West Africa: A Serious Position,” *The Manchester Guardian*, January 14, 1904, No. 17,918.

³⁴⁰ “Anxious Position in German South-West Africa,” *The Manchester Guardian*,” January 16, 1904, No. 17,920.

³⁴¹ “The Rising in South-West Africa: German Posts Still Threatened,” *The Manchester Guardian*, January 18, 1904, No. 17,921.

the *Guardian* identified the Herero as a formidable enemy. The newspaper also reported that Governor Leutwein declared martial law at Swakopmund and Karibib.³⁴² The declaration of martial law obviously indicated the severity of the war between the Herero and Germans.

Significantly, *The Manchester Guardian* reported on the Battle of Waterberg, although very little. On 18 August, the paper released a statement from General Lothar von Trotha:

After the fight on the 11th, the enemy dispersed in a head-long panic-stricken flight, leaving behind much cattle and other possessions and numerous dead. We captured a large number of cattle. Major von Estorff followed them from the north in an enveloping movement, and today defeated the Herero band which was retreating from Omuramba. The enemy's losses were very heavy. Our casualties were five men killed and two officers and five men wounded.³⁴³

Thus, contributors to *The Manchester Guardian* were aware of the Battle of Waterberg, but ignorant to what actually happened and to the significance of the battle. Further adding to the significance of *The Manchester Guardian* is that the newspaper only published two articles about the conflict in Southwest Africa in August 1904. This is odd, as *The London Times* published more articles in August than this. Nevertheless, both papers did not report extensively on what happened in August 1904. This provides evidence that the actual events at the Battle of Waterberg were covered up, as the international community would likely have expressed outrage.

By October, *The Manchester Guardian* reported on the war in German Southwest Africa as if it was a race war and began to show indications of bias towards the indigenous peoples of Southwest Africa. In "Little Wars in South-West Africa: New

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ "The Hereros Panic-Stricken: Heavy Losses in their Flight," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 18, 1904, No. 18,104, 4.

Rising Against the Germans,” the *Guardian* describes Hendrik Witbooi as “a spoiled child,” which is similar to how the *Times* described him.³⁴⁴ While the *Guardian* stated that Witbooi was once loyal to the Germans, it rightly pointed out that he and his followers did not come under German control until 1894. *The Manchester Guardian* echoes the *Times*, defining the Nama as well-equipped and strong warriors:

[The Witboois] are said to be well armed and well mounted, and they possess a considerable quantity of ammunition. Their constant association with the Germans during the last ten years and their employment by the latter as scouts and auxiliaries have supplemented their natural aptitudes for fighting, while the hilly character of the country which has been assigned to them for a home is eminently suited to their tactics.³⁴⁵

The *Guardian* reported that due to the increased threat from the Nama, Governor Leutwein sent for more reinforcements from Germany. Both the *Guardian* and the *Times* indicated that the colonial war was not going well for the Germans and finding reinforcements became increasingly difficult. This echoes the tones of *Vorwärts* and *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, both of which covered the war during the month of October with a sense of anxiety and urgency.

On 15 October, the *Guardian* published an article condemning the Nama uprising. It claimed the Nama had no good reason to join the war, “other than the inclination they have always been supposed to cherish for making one more effort at a favourable opportunity to shake off German rule.”³⁴⁶ The *Guardian* racialized the war when it claimed the Nama were inherently war-like. Additionally, by claiming that the Nama had no clear reason to revolt, the paper implied that the Nama were uncivilized. It also denied

³⁴⁴ “Little Wars in South-West Africa: New Rising Against the Germans,” *The Manchester Guardian*, October 13, 1904, No. 18,152, 7.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ “The South-West African Risings: A Serious Position,” *The Manchester Guardian*, October 15, 1904, No. 18,154, 9.

the right of the indigenous peoples of Southwest Africa to a homeland. By stating they had no reason to revolt, the *Guardian* essentially stated that the Herero and Nama should remain loyal subjects to the Kaiserreich.

The *Guardian* also provided evidence that the war would not affect British traders or citizens. In a letter from an unnamed correspondent in Southwest Africa, the paper included the following statement:

This is not an anti-foreign movement but a war against the Germans. The British are held in the highest respect, this favourable opinion being largely based on the reports of German natives who have gone into British possessions. Proof of this is to be found in the fact that the Herero paramount chief has issued a proclamation that no Englishmen are to be touched or their property looted.³⁴⁷

The proclamation the above passage refers to is covered in the second chapter.

Nevertheless, the passage raises more questions than it answers. Both *The Manchester Guardian* and *The London Times* strongly implied that the Germans were fighting a war against an uncivilized, savage race. But the above passage proved the Herero fought along the guidelines of the “civilized” European nations. It also left out that Samuel Maherero instructed that all women and children were to be left unharmed. This passage also provides further evidence explaining why the British did not cover the war in German Southwest Africa. The war did not directly affect British interests, nor did it impact British subjects throughout the country’s vast empire.

Conclusion

Although there was only a limited sample of articles from *The London Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*, it is evident that the British press was unaware of the genocide in German Southwest Africa in 1904. But as noted in the introduction, the

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

British government was aware of the genocide in 1905 and instrumental in hiding the genocide after 1926. So while the British were ignorant to the genocide in 1904, the Empire was also responsible for the silence of the atrocities after the end of World War I. Britain's silence helped contribute to the forgotten genocide that took almost one hundred thousand lives.

CONCLUSION

A century ago, the oppressors – blinded by colonialist fervor – became agents of violence, discrimination, racism and annihilation in Germany's name. The atrocities committed at that time would today be termed genocide – and nowadays a General von Trotha would be prosecuted and convicted. We Germans accept our historical and moral responsibility and the guilt incurred by Germans at the time. And so, in the words of the Lord's Prayer that we share, I ask you to forgive us our trespasses.³⁴⁸

The preceding passage comes from the German Minister for Development and Economics Cooperation, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, who officially acknowledged the genocide in Namibia on August 14, 2004 one hundred years after the genocide began.³⁴⁹ The Herero and Nama genocide claimed the lives of over 75,000 indigenous peoples in German Southwest Africa.³⁵⁰ Had the genocide not occurred, the Herero and Nama would constitute over 10 percent of Namibia's population today.³⁵¹ Presently, the Herero make up about 7.5 percent of the population while the Nama only make up 5 percent.³⁵² Land ownership in Namibia is still a problem, with the majority of the white population, many descended from German settlers, holding the largest swaths of land.³⁵³

Jürgen Zimmerer argues that Germany's official apology to Namibia for the genocide came from the nation's "specific ... popular culture of remembrance for the Holocaust,"³⁵⁴ that forced Germans to recognize their nation's colonial past and

³⁴⁸ Zimmerer, "Colonial Genocide," 323.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 62.

³⁵¹ Jeremy Sarkin, *Colonial genocide and Reparations Claims in the 21st Century – The Socio-legal Context of Claims under International Law by the Herero Against Germany for Genocide in Namibia, 1904-1908* (London: Praeger Security International, 2009), 25.

³⁵² Ibid., 28.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Zimmerer, "Colonial Genocide," 323-4.

responsibility in the murder of so many Namibian lives.³⁵⁵ Following World War II, Germans were forced to confront the Holocaust and their responsibility for the murder of 6 million Jews and millions more. Many believed that the Nazism and the Holocaust were black marks on the nation's history – flukes, even. But thanks to Cold-War historians, such as Horst Drechsler, the memory of the Herero and Nama genocide reemerged and confronted Germans. Germany's history of racism extended further back than the Holocaust, and Germans were again forced to accept responsibility for their nation's historical actions. Thus, Zimmerer believes that Germany's culture of remembrance that was established after World War II pushed the state to acknowledge its history after one hundred years of silence.

Among the small minority of Herero in present-day Namibia, German colonial dress is still prevalent at important cultural functions. Women wear long, nineteenth-century Victorian garb while men wear “turn-of-the-century German soldier uniforms.”³⁵⁶ Jeremy Sarkin states that the Herero continue to wear these clothes to honor their ancestors that perished at the hands of the Germans.³⁵⁷ I believe, however, that the continued use of traditional nineteenth-century clothing indicates the inability of the surviving Herero community to move past their brutal history. The Herero remain a marginalized group in Namibian society. National leaders of Namibia's independence movement used the memory of the genocide to garner support for statehood in 1990, but since then, the genocide has largely been forgotten and swept under the rug, making it

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Sarkin, *Colonial Reparations*, 46.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

difficult for the Herero and Nama to confront their history and heal the wounds that a century of silence has wrought.³⁵⁸

Based on articles from *The London Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*, we know that the British did not know what truly happened to the indigenous population of German Southwest Africa in 1904. Additionally, due to the lack of articles about the conflict, it is also clear that the British did not have a vested interest in the war. With events such as the Russo-Japanese war brewing, the British focused their attention on other international issues, and not on a colonial war thousands of miles away. Likewise, the writers at *Neue Preußische Zeitung* and *Vorwärts* were ignorant about the genocide. *Neue Preußische Zeitung* never explicitly stated to its readers that the German colonial administration was waging a war of extermination against the Herero and Nama. *Vorwärts* never explicitly stated that a genocide was under way in the colony either, although there were some hints that one was occurring, particularly when the newspaper stated towards the end of October that the Herero had lost half of their population. Nevertheless, neither German newspaper advocated for the extermination of the Herero and Nama, nor explicitly indicated that a war of annihilation was being waged in the colony. Based on the sample of articles from the above newspapers in January, August, and October 1904, the British and German press were unaware of the genocide occurring in Southwest Africa.

If the German and British press were unaware that German colonial officials and settlers were waging a war of extermination against the Herero and Nama, it is safe to assume that civilians back in Europe were ignorant to the genocide too. Because

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 47.

European civilian populations were unaware of the genocide, humanitarian movements similar to those led by E.D. Morel were not possible. This explains why so much attention was given to the atrocities in the Congo Free State, and not to the genocide in German Southwest Africa. The ignorance of the British and German press (and civilians) is the fault of the German government for hiding the genocide.

It is clear, however, that the British were at least aware of the genocide by 1918 when the Blue Book was published. But by 1926, the British ceased publication of the Blue Book and destroyed all copies of it in their colonial offices. It was argued that the removal of the Blue Book would facilitate a better relationship between the German settlers and South Africans. August Stauch, who led the crusade against the Blue Book, believed that “the honor of Germany has been attacked in the most public manner and it was right that the attack should be repudiated in an equally public fashion.”³⁵⁹ In removing the Blue Book from publication, the British also pushed the genocide and its victims by the way side “in the interests of white settler reconciliation.”³⁶⁰

Not much was known about the Herero and Nama genocide outside of South Africa until 1960, when Horst Drechsler published *Let us Die Fighting*. East German historians were the first Europeans to study the genocide because they had access to colonial archives, and thus brought attention to a genocide that was covered up by the British Empire and South African government in 1926. Today, many historians, most notably Jeremy Sarkin, David Olusoga, Casper Erichsen, Effa Okupa, and Jürgen Zimmerer have offered a wealth of information about the genocide in German Southwest Africa. Thanks to their research and scholarship, more light has been shed on the history

³⁵⁹ Silvester and Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found*, xxxii.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

of the genocide on the ground in German Southwest Africa. But there is more to be done. It is important to know about the genocide from the perspective of Europeans in the early twentieth century and the extent of their knowledge about the conflict. My thesis concluded that ordinary British and German citizens were ignorant to the fact that genocide was taking place in German Southwest Africa in 1904. As historians, we must explore further what was known about the genocide after 1904 and how European governments reacted, if at all. Like Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul stated in 2004, institutions such as The Hague and the International Criminal Court did not exist to prosecute men like Lothar von Trotha or Theodor Leutwein. But it is still important to the memory of the Herero and the Nama to understand how Europeans responded to the genocide in the early twentieth century, if at all. This knowledge will complete the history of the genocide and bring closure to its victims and the ancestors of the survivors.

Thanks to the work of historians like Horst Drechsler, Effa Okupa, David Olusoga, Casper Erichsen, Jeremy Sarkin, Jürgen Zimmerer, and countless others, the history of the Herero and Nama genocide is no longer hidden. By pushing the history and memory of the genocide into the annals of archives, we too are guilty in our silence. One hundred years after the genocide, Germany acknowledged its past and apologized to the Herero and Nama for the genocide and years of silence. As historians and citizens in a global community devoted to justice, we must encourage further scholarship and knowledge of the Herero and Nama genocide. Only then can we right the wrong of a century of silence.

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