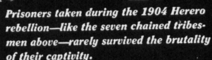
THE FINAL SOLUTION IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA

The confrontation between Germans and native Africans had mortal consequences not only for blacks but, ultimately, for Europe's Jews.

by Jon Swan



Prisoners taken during the 1904 Herero rebellion—like the seven chained tribesmen above—rarely survived the brutality of their captivity.

Last summer—a midpoint between the time the former German protectorate of South West Africa became the independent republic of Namibia, on March 21, 1990, and the reunification of the two Germanys on October 3—West Germany's foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, received an unexpected visitor, a kind of ghost briefly interrupting the great West German feast of plenty. Kuaima Riruako, chief of one of the largest native African tribes in Namibia, had come to Bonn to request reparations for the attempted genocide of the Herero people, carried out by German troops in the early years of this century. An account of Chief Riruako's visit in *Der Spiegel* suggested it was unlikely that either West Germany or the new unified Germany would feel obliged to pay for atrocities committed a long time ago about which few Germans living today had ever heard.

This largely forgotten piece of history merits the attention not only of Germans who want to come to terms with their country's past but also of blacks and Jews, in the United States and elsewhere, who may be seeking common ground. For the German confrontation with non-Aryan people in South West Africa had mortal consequences for whites as well as blacks, for Jews as well as Hereros.

As Dr. Benno Müller-Hill has pointed out in *Tödliche Wissenschaft,* a remarkable book published by Oxford University Press in 1988 under the title *Murderous Science,* significant links in the chain of perverted logic that led to the Holocaust were forged by racial studies carried out by a German scientist named Eugen Fischer, who traveled to South West Africa on a fellowship in 1908. By that time the attempt to exterminate the Hereros had finally come to an end and the so-called protectorate had been turned into a huge forced-labor camp within whose confines the native people were compelled to wear numbered identification tags bearing the stamp of the German imperial crown.

Interestingly—ominously—the man chosen by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to serve as *Reichskommissar* of the newly claimed territory called South West Africa was Dr. Heinrich Göring, whose son Hermann subsequently served as Hitler's *Reichsmarschall* and head of the Luftwaffe. Forty-six years old when Bismarck picked him in the spring of 1885, Göring was, it seems, eager to get out of the country. A university graduate and a veteran of two wars—the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War four years later, out of which the German Empire was born—he had served as a court assessor in a series of provincial towns for fifteen years and had fathered five children. Now a widower, he had gotten a young woman pregnant. Leaving his children in the care of relatives, he and twenty-six-year-old Franziska Tiefenbrunn traveled to London, where on May 28 they were married.

While in London, Göring seems to have tried to acquire some knowledge about how to administer a colony—a field of study in which the Germans had little or no experience. In August, Frau Göring returned to Germany to bear their first child, and the *Reichskommissar,* accompanied by an administrative staff of two, set out for Africa. The three Germans arrived at the small Atlantic Ocean port of Angra Pequena on August 25, 1885.

Göring's mission was to extend German authority beyond a thin coastal strip of South West Africa called Lüderitzland—named by and after a German entrepreneur who had bought the land, hoping to get rich by selling arms and ammunition, but who had gone bankrupt instead—by persuading tribal chiefs to sign treaties of protection. The chief the Foreign Office urged him to see first off was a Herero named Kamaherero. Thus, after disembarking, Göring headed north to the settlement of Otjimbingwe, headquarters of the German Colonial Company and near the southern edge of Hereroland, a vast tract of grazing land and thornveld stretching from the central highlands around Otjimbingwe and Windhoek to the Otavi Mountains in the north.

The first part of the voyage in particular must have made Göring wonder at the wisdom of his decision to sign up for service abroad. An early settler tersely described the coastal region as "horribly desolate," and added: "The Dune region extends 15–30 km. inland from the coast—is succeeded by an equally desolate tract of wilderness—the Namib—50 to 90 km. wide. It is said that on a cold night following a hot day the splitting of the rocks sounds like the rattle of musketry."

Upon arriving in Otjimbingwe, Göring established headquarters in a building leased from Lutheran missionaries. In October he set off to visit Chief Kamaherero at his principal encampment at Okahandja, some fifty miles to the east, and scored his first diplomatic success: Kamaherero agreed to accept the kaiser's protection. Each party to this agreement, however, took the term *protection* to mean something quite different.

To the Germans it meant that these Hereros recognized that the Germans, rather than the British, had a right to be in the land and that they would allow German judges to hear cases involving Europeans and Hereros. The Hereros, for their part, took the term *protection* literally and expected the Germans to protect them from their traditional enemy, the Witboois, who were threatening to attack at the time Chief Kamaherero signed the treaty.

In any event, a German flag was duly hoisted over Okahandja, and Göring went on his way, persuading a few other, lesser chieftains to accept German protection and to draw up lines defining their territories—a request that encouraged each chief in turn to draw claim lines where none had been drawn before. Usually these lines overlapped.

Having concluded his business, Göring sailed southward from Angra Pequena to the British Cape Colony and then from Cape Town back to Germany, a voyage that could take a month or longer. During his stay in Angra Pequena, he composed a rosy report on the future of the protectorate: Parts of Hereroland could be irrigated, making farming possible; in mountainous Namaqualand, to the south, rivers could be dammed to provide reservoirs, and fertile riverbeds could be planted with crops. Although no rich copper deposits had yet been found, he asserted that there were abundant signs of such deposits. Like ambitious officials before and since, he was telling his superiors what he thought they wanted to hear—and what he himself, presumably, hoped might turn out to be true.

ULLSTEIN BILDERDIENST, BERLIN

Meanwhile, there was one important chief whom Reichskommissar Göring had been unable to talk into accepting German protection. His name was Hendrik Witbooi and he was *kaptein* (head) of the Witboois, part of a larger group known as the Namas or, to Europeans, as Hottentots, a term indiscriminately applied to several African peoples. Like certain other tribes that had trekked into South West Africa from the Cape Colony in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Witboois were of mixed race—part Dutch, as the result of miscegenation among the Boers of the Cape Colony.

Born in 1838—the same year as Göring—Hendrik Witbooi had converted to Christianity at the age of twenty-five and had learned Dutch at a mission school. A German farmer and trader who knew him well described Witbooi as "always neatly and cleanly dressed" and "very well grounded in the Bible," often defending his actions with verses from the scriptures. The seat of the Witboois was named Gibeon, after the place where Joshua ordered the sun to stand still.

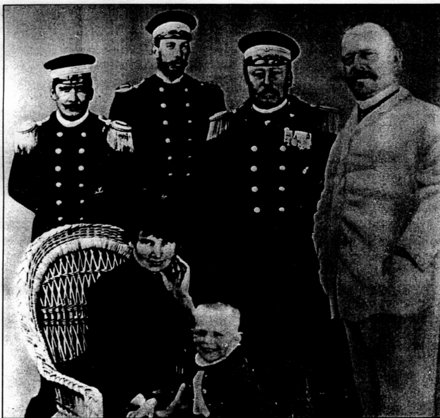
For decades before the Germans claimed South West Africa, the Namas had engaged in cattle wars with the Hereros, who, in search of fresh grazing lands for their huge herds, tended to drift farther and farther south. The Hereros venerated their herds, and a Herero chief might possess as many as 25,000 head of cattle, while underchiefs might have 10,000. Attracted by the Hereros' herds, bands of warriors would ride up from the south, shoot or scare off the herders, then drive off hundreds of cattle, which they would then sell to Cape Colony traders, buying more arms and ammunition with the profits.

So long as the raiders had a monopoly on rifles and horses, they could carry out their raids with impunity. By the 1860s, however, the Hereros were obtaining both arms and horses from Swedish and British traders and from German missionaries. At this point they were able to fend off and, on occasion, attack their traditional enemies, among them the Witboois. In 1884, the same year the Germans claimed South West Africa, Hendrik Witbooi succeeded his father as chief of the Witboois and promptly declared a kind of holy war against the Hereros.

In a letter to a German missionary teacher, Witbooi explained that his decision was the result of a revelation he had experienced after he alone of a party of Witbooi warriors had miraculously escaped from their Herero captors. The revelation was that all the Namas should be united under one leader, himself; then, Moses-like, he would lead his people to the promised land—Hereroland. (Later, in a conversation with Göring, Witbooi expressed himself in more down-to-earth terms: If it were not for all those stolen Herero cattle, he and his people couldn't possibly make ends meet.)

It was the prospect of renewed fighting between the Witboois and the Hereros that had prompted European settlers to demand protection—which in turn had prompted Bismarck to send Göring hurrying off to Africa in the first place.

Reappointed to serve a second term, Reichskommissar Göring returned to South West Africa in January 1887. This was the year of the great "gold find"—a bit of good news that helped to counterbalance the bad news, which was that natives and Europeans alike were losing all respect for the Germans' ability to administer their protectorate. Time and again that spring and summer the Witboois attacked the Hereros, who were supposedly enjoying some sort of German protection. "The German Protectorate on the south western side of Africa is proving a melancholy farce," observed a lead article in the September 1 *Cape Times*.



SÜDDEUTSCHER VERLAG, MUNICH

Dr. Heinrich Göring (right), father of the future Nazi **Reichsmarschall**, *was the colony's first* **Reichskommissar**. *Seated are his wife and their eldest son, Karl.*

The very next day Göring received a note from the head of a party of Australian prospectors, informing him that gold had been found on an island in the Swakop River not far from Otjimbingwe. Göring hurried over to look at the find—a three-mile-long reef in which glints of gold could be seen with the naked eye. Thus, when it came time to return to Germany, Göring once again was able to provide an optimistic report: The colony would finally pay off in golden dividends.

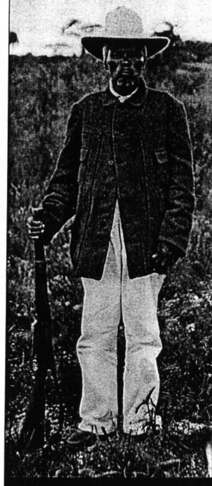
By the time he returned to the protectorate, in May 1888, a tent town housing prospectors of several nation-

alities was springing up on the banks of the Swakop. The town kept growing until, in August, an expert tested a collection of samples and reported that not one of them contained even a trace of gold. It was later discovered that the reef had been "salted," the Australians having shot gold into the rock with their rifles. While some historians assume that Göring was duped, others suggest that he may have been a party to the fraud, which helped to keep Berlin interested in its so-far unprofitable acquisition and greatly excited the directors of the German Colonial Company.

Now more than ever the German presence in South West Africa seemed farcical. When Göring paid a visit to Chief Kamaherero in October 1888, by which time the golden bubble had burst and the tent town had folded up, the chief repudiated the German protection treaty and declared invalid all German claims to a mining concession in his territory. He acknowledged only the claim of an Englishman who had close ties with the Hereros and who kept assuring them that sooner or later the Germans would leave and the British would take over and all would be well. Time and again at this meeting, attended by about 100 Hereros, Göring was asked what sort of protectorate this German thing was that offered no protection against the Witboois.

At this point, all his efforts in Hereroland seemingly nullified, Göring packed up his belongings in Otjimbingwe and holed up, with his wife and first-born son, Karl, in the Cape Colony enclave of Walvis Bay, the best harbor along the roughly 900-mile coastline of South West Africa. Writing from this small but safe foreign port, he urged Bismarck to send an expeditionary force of 400 to 500 men, plus field artillery, to the protectorate. In March of the new year, 1889, he was informed that a contingent of between twenty and thirty men was being dispatched; their purpose—to seize and deport the troublesome Englishman as a first step to asserting German authority in the area.

Twenty-one volunteers under the command of Captain Kurt von François sailed from Britain on a British ship. To avoid arousing suspicion, they gave themselves out to be members of a scientific research expedition. They disembarked at Walvis Bay on June 24, 1889, just two days after the Görings set off for their annual visit to Germany.



THEODOR LEUTWIN, *ELF JAHRE GOUVERNEUR IN DEUTSCH-SÜDWEST AFRIKA*, BERLIN, 1907

Christian-educated Kaptein Hendrik Witbooi saw what was coming. In 1893 the Germans set out to destroy his tribe.

Von François and his men arrived in Otjimbingwe in July, and almost immediately assumed a belligerent attitude toward the Hereros. "The Europeans have failed to give the black man the right kind of treatment," von François wrote to a friend. "Nothing but relentless severity will lead to success." A German missionary observed that for the captain "it is a foregone conclusion that war will break out between him and the Hereros sooner or later." Two of von François's first acts were to request reinforcements and to ban the transport of ammunition into Hereroland—this at a time when Hendrik Witbooi was laying up large stores of ammunition for his war with the Hereros.

The Hereros found the German officer's behavior strange, to say the least. Chief Kamaherero's son Samuel wrote a letter to the Cape Colony's magistrate in Walvis Bay, urging him to encourage the British to persuade the Germans to leave South West Africa. "I don't like them, will not have them, they are not doing me or my country any good," he wrote.

On November 3, Bismarck—a reluctant colonialist—instructed von François that under no circumstances were troops to be used against the natives; they should be used only to protect individual Europeans from the natives. The next month Göring was again appointed *Reichskommissar,* and in December, too, a contingent of forty-one volunteers sailed from Hamburg. A British inquiry elicited the reply that the men were a police force, not a military one.

In what proved to be his last year as *Reichskommissar,* Göring managed to persuade Chief Kamaherero once again to accept German protection—a decision prompted by the chief's fear of antagonizing the well-armed and increasingly truculent Germans at a time when he expected another attack from the Witboois. Upon learning of Kamaherero's decision, Kaptein Witbooi wrote him, prophetically:

> You think you will retain your independent chieftainship after I have been destroyed . . . but my dear Kaptein you will . . . forever regret having handed over your country and your governing rights to the white man. . . . No, you will not understand Göring's actions, and you will in due course regret them, but then it will be too late for you, seeing that you will already have given them the unqualified right of control. . . .

Göring tried to persuade Kaptein Witbooi, too, to accept German protection and call off his war against the Hereros. Witbooi didn't take the man seriously. He reprimanded the *Reichskommissar* for trying to order him around in his own country, and shortly therafter he and his troops resumed their raids, making off with about 4,000 head of Herero cattle in July of 1890 and another 3,000 a few weeks later.

The year 1890 was in many ways a turning point. In March, Kaiser Wilhelm II dismissed Bismarck, replacing him with the ardent and inept procolonialist Count Leo von Caprivi. In October, Chief Kamaherero died and

was succeeded—with German assistance and against his father's wishes—by his Christian son Samuel Maherero. In the same month Captain von François moved his troops from the neighborhood of Otjimbingwe to Windhoek, which the Hereros claimed as their own. Von François challenged the young new chief to try to drive him out.

That year was also a turning point in the life of the Görings. The family—Heinrich, Franziska, son Karl, and daughter Olga—departed for Germany and a life that, for Dr. Göring, soon degenerated into a truly Nabokovian nightmare: a posting as consul general to Haiti; the return to a dull life in a Berlin suburb; an invitation from a castle-owning millionaire whose acquaintance the Görings had made in South West Africa and who was godfather to the Görings' second son, Hermann, to come live, rent-free, in a small castle near Nuremberg; the generous friend's undisguised use of Frau Göring as his mistress for fifteen years, during which time the adoring Hermann absorbed his godfather's passion for pseudo-medieval pomp and circumstance, and the former *Reichskommissar* consoled himself with drink, dying in 1913, one year before the outbreak of World War I and two years before the protectorate was wrested from the Germans by the Union of South Africa, in one stroke annulling everything he and his successors had accomplished, except for the killing and enslavement of whole tribes of people.

For two years after Göring's departure, things went on much as usual in the protectorate: The Witboois raided the Herero herds; the Germans protested but did nothing. Meanwhile, von François—whose new title was *Landeshauptmann* (national captain)—had a large fort built in Windhoek, and in 1892 a trickle of German colonists, subsidized by a private company, began to settle in and around Windhoek.

Throughout those years Chancellor von Caprivi had left standing his predecessor's firm order that German troops not be used against the natives. The continuance of this policy may well have been due in large part to the new chancellor's lack of interest in the protectorate—which at various times he indicated he was prepared to sell to the highest bidder. One interested party was the Cape Colony, whose representatives told colonial authorities in London that the Cape would be willing to exchange Ascension Island for South West Africa or, alternatively, to meet and even top the reported German asking price of three million marks. Whitehall, however, declined to take any such radical action.

Two people who kept hoping that the British might be persuaded to take over the protectorate or intercede in their behalf in some fashion were Samuel Maherero and Hendrik Witbooi. In February 1892 Maherero wrote the British magistrate in Walvis Bay—a man named Cleverly—complaining that the Germans would not let him buy arms and expressing fear of a future when "we see the [German] guns forced into our faces and perhaps before we know where we are there will be powder burnt in our faces." Six months later Kaptein Witbooi vented his hatred of the Germans in a letter to the same magistrate, writing, in part:

> He introduces laws into the land . . . [which] are entirely impossible, untenable, unbelievable, unbearable, unmerciful, and unfeeling. . . . He personally punishes our people at Windhoek and has already beaten people to death for debt. . . . He flogs people in a shameful and cruel manner . . . for he stretches people on their backs and flogs them on the stomach and even between the legs, be they male or female, so Your Honour can understand that no one can survive such a punishment.

This letter was forwarded to the Colonial Office in London, where the hand-wringing response was, "This is a very miserable business, and disgraceful to us. But we can do nothing."

Finally, seeing that he could expect no help from the British and foreseeing that the Germans would, sooner or later, move against him, Kaptein Witbooi put out peace feelers to his traditional enemy—the Hereros. In November 1892 the Peace of Rehoboth was concluded, ending a war between the two that had gone on intermittently for almost half a century.

The Germans reacted with alarm. The two leaders, having settled their differences, might now turn against their sovereign protectors. This, anyway, was the reasoning von François employed to persuade Berlin to send more troops as soon as possible.

By this time the colonial cause had staunch supporters in the fatherland: The German Colonial Society, for example, founded in 1882, had quickly grown to become a powerful lobbying group with some 18,000 members, a majority of them military officers, government officials, and businessmen.

One of the most vociferous of these colonialists, Paul Rohrbach, wrote:

> The decision to colonize in South Africa means nothing else than that the Native tribes must withdraw from the lands on which they have pastured *their* cattle and so let the *White man* pasture *his* cattle on these self-same lands. . . . From the point of view of the economy of the country, the Hottentots are generally regarded . . . as useless, and, in this respect, providing no justification for the preservation of this race.

Pressed by the powerful Colonial Society and other nationalist groups, the government responded promptly, and generously, to von François's request for reinforcements. The *Landeshauptmann* had expected 90 men; the force that disembarked in Walvis Bay on March 17, 1893, numbered 214 men and two officers. They set off by foot and arrived in Windhoek, some 225 miles to the north and east, on April 2. On April 5 von François received the ambiguous instruction from Berlin that while his principal mission was to protect the colonists around Windhoek, he was at liberty to use the forces at his command at his own discretion to maintain and strengthen German sovereignty within the protectorate.

As far back as April 1891, von François had drawn up a detailed "Plan of Action against Hendrik Witbooi." Now, with a force of about 250 soldiers, he wasted no time in preparing to attack this last holdout against German rule. The *Landeshauptmann* could no longer legitimately claim to be protecting the Hereros, who had so recently concluded their peace treaty with the Witboois; he could point to no harm done to the settlers by the Nama *kaptein*. He could, however, claim to be acting in

conformity with his April 5 carte-blanche instruction from Berlin.

Hendrik Witbooi's encampment was in Hoornkranz, rugged upland country about ninety miles southwest of Windhoek. Von François gave his new men less than a week to rest up. On April 8, patrols were sent out to take up positions in the pass through the range of low mountains south of Windhoek. At 8 P.M. a force consisting of two officers, twenty-three noncoms, and 170 men set out on what von François had said was merely a night march. Only the officers knew the object of the mission, which was, von François explained, "to destroy the tribe of the Witboois."

The troops reached the Hoornkranz plateau on the evening of April 11. The assault began at sunrise the following morning and caught the Witboois by surprise—most were still asleep. Within the first half hour, the Germans expended 16,000 rounds of ammunition, shooting at everything that moved. Their rifle was the Model 88, a repeating rifle mortally effective at a distance of up to half a mile. The main rifle used by the Witboois appears to have been the less effective Martini-Henry. The fighting lasted three hours as the Witboois tried to hold off the Germans and withdraw into the highlands to the south. The Germans lost one man; eighty-five Witboois were killed—seventy-eight of them women and children. Returning to Windhoek with about fifty women and children prisoners, von François believed he had crushed the Witboois once and for all.

He hadn't, but he had taken a fateful step: For the first time in South West Africa, the Germans had waged war against a native people. The attack sent shock waves throughout the territory. As John H. Wellington observes in his authoritative book *South West Africa and Its Human Issues*:

> The shocking thing to the Native was that a great Protecting Power, which in its treaties had promised its "all-highest protection," should without warning descend to the trickeries of the tribal fight and kill men, women, and children indiscriminately. . . . And this for no other reason than that the tribe had not seen fit to accept a protection agreement which was offered on a free-will basis.

The timing was replete with irony. Little more than two years before the Battle of Hoornkranz signaled the beginning of a war against the native tribes of South West Africa, the massacre at Wounded Knee in the new state of South Dakota had marked the end of the long conflict between Native Americans and white settlers. Meanwhile, just as the Germans set out to destroy tribal life within a protectorate they claimed as their own, back home Karl May, a German who had yet to set foot in the United States, was making a fortune by writing novels celebrating the wildly unrealistic exploits of an Apache chief named Winnetou—the embodiment, May wrote, of "a great, misunderstood, massacred Indian nation."

Behaving much as Chief Winnetou might have, Kaptein Witbooi refused to be daunted. The Germans had taken with them all the Witboois' horses, which the *kaptein* and his men had had to leave behind as they withdrew under fire. What was to be done? Witbooi sent out a small band of men, who followed the Germans as they returned to their capital, leaving the captured mounts at a horse post up in the mountains. A raid on the post netted more than thirty horses. Another unpleasant surprise was in store for the Germans: Learning that von François was negotiating for the purchase of 120 horses from a German trader, the *kaptein* and his men stole the entire consignment. This left the Witboois with about 300 horses, the Germans with only 70.

Once again, von François made an urgent request for reinforcements. While awaiting their arrival, he drew the Rehoboth Basters into his war against the Witboois. The Basters, or Bastards, of Rehoboth were a mixed-blood tribe that had been among the first to sign a treaty with the Germans. And it was they whom the racial theorist Dr. Eugen Fischer studied for four months near the end of the German occupation of South West Africa. (Among the proudly borne Baster names listed by Fischer are at least two that still resonate in Africa and beyond: Kruger and de Klerk.) In his first contribution to racist literature, published in 1913, Fischer provides a good description of the region around Rehoboth—the gateway to the south and thus traversed by the Germans whenever they set out from Windhoek to subdue revolts among the Namas and others.

The road wound up to a pass in the 6,000-foot-high Aus Mountains; from the pass, Fischer notes, one can see the jagged mountain peaks receding in endless procession. The land of the Basters, a high plateau, is, he says, renowned for its excellent grazing pastures, and he describes the "silver- or gold-gleaming" appearance of the grassland in the dry season and the trees—"camel thorn, giraffe acacias" and "wonderful ancient trees . . . which, fortunately, it is a criminal offense to injure in any way." Such sensitivity to nature—excluding humans—is characteristic of much writing of the period.

In May of 1893, fifty Basters joined the Germans in an attack on Hoornkranz, which had been reoccupied by a small band of Witboois. Later that month the Germans made contact with the main force of the Witboois in a new location up in the mountains southwest of Windhoek. A heavy skirmish in which one soldier was killed and two were wounded convinced von François that cannon would be required for a successful assault. He went off to Walvis Bay to fetch two that he had requisitioned months before, only to find himself the loser in a red-tape skirmish with Magistrate Cleverly. After sending off a telegram to Berlin asking for more troops, the frustrated *Landeshauptmann* was compelled to return to Windhoek without his cannon.

He finally got them, in late July. A month later the reinforcements he had requested arrived—two officers, ten noncoms, 105 men, and two medics. He also received a promotion, to the rank of major. Thus strengthened, in September he set out to vanquish the Witboois. The Witboois, however, simply withdrew deeper into the mountains. Drifting farther to the south, they replenished their supply of livestock by raiding an experimental farm set up by the German South West Africa Company, driving off more than 2,000 sheep, 125 oxen, and 28 horses. Proceeds from the sale of the animals went into buying more arms and ammunition from Cape traders.

Back in Germany, politicians and editorial writers began asking for von

François's recall. And from the protectorate, the head of the recently raided experimental farm wrote: "If [von François] is not replaced by another military man shortly, the whole country may go up in flames within a matter of months." The *Landeshauptmann,* for his part, was so sure that he had broken the power of the Witboois that he was already plotting "a carefully prepared attack" on the Hereros in the event that Samuel Maherero should refuse to go along with the Germans' scheme for redrawing tribal boundaries.

On January 1, 1894, the man who was soon to replace von François arrived at the landing at the mouth of the Swakop River. Major Theodor Leutwein, a veteran of the Franco-Prussian War and a professional officer, had been empowered by Chancellor von Caprivi to supervise von François's activities and instructed to strengthen "our military position vis-à-vis the natives." In short, his mission was to succeed where von François had failed.

He set to work with considerable energy. First he intimidated some minor tribes into accepting German suzerainty, rather than protection. He also ordered the construction of a network of forts throughout much of Namaqualand. In April 1894 he wrote Kaptein Witbooi, asking if he wanted to continue the war or submit to German rule. Witbooi replied that while he had no wish to continue fighting, neither did he see any reason to submit to the Germans, especially in light of the "terrible treatment" he and his people had suffered in the attack on Hoornkranz.

In May, von François left on home leave, from which he never returned. In May, too, Acting Landeshauptmann Leutwein sent reconnaissance parties into Noukloof Mountain, where a few rough skirmishes with the Witboois led him, like his predecessor, to put off a major battle until yet another shipload of reinforcements arrived. On May 22 he was informed that an additional 250 men would be arriving in July, whereupon he signed a two-month truce with Kaptein Witbooi. Both sides were to resume their positions on August 1.

The reinforcements duly arrived, bringing the number of Leutwein's forces up to 510 men and 17 officers. Of these, about 300 took part in the mountain war. With them they brought two quick-firing mountain cannon. Artillery fire, the Germans knew, had a devastating effect on a tribe like the Witboois, whose 300 or so armed men were fighting to protect 2,500 or more women and children and old men, as well as the tribe's livestock.

On August 27, after the Germans had blocked the passes to the north, east, and south, battle was joined. The fighting was fierce; the Witboois put more than a hundred Germans out of action and almost succeeded in capturing one of their cannon. (In his otherwise garrulous memoirs, Leutwein fails to provide a count of the casualties, citing as a reason "the lack of available space.") Finally, however, Leutwein's men drove the Witboois off the slopes of the Noukloof. Still, avoiding repeated attempts to cut off their retreat, the *kaptein* and his people managed to slip away into the mountains.

The Germans pursued relentlessly. On September 1, the main force made contact with the Witboois near the last water hole in Witbooi territory. Five Germans were killed in an ambush, but again the Witboois were compelled to withdraw. In a strange appeal to Leutwein's humanity, Kaptein Witbooi left a note on the corpse of an officer killed in the ambush; it read: "Can't you see that I am fleeing?"

Finally, on September 9, his people exhausted from the long pursuit, Witbooi surrendered. In a cable to Berlin, Leutwein asserted that the enemy had "submitted unconditionally to German protection." This was far from the truth: While the treaty signed on September 15 obliged Kaptein Witbooi to preserve peace and order and to help keep the peace among other groups of Namas, it allowed him and his men to retain their weapons and ammunition and horses. The Witboois would be resettled on land near Gibeon, but otherwise their life would not be disrupted.

The lenient terms of the treaty drew fire from settlers in the protectorate and from the influential Colonial Society and nationalists in Germany. One of the fiercest critics was former governor von François, who called the treaty "far too mild," adding that the Witboois must be disarmed and broken up as a tribe. Leutwein defended his treaty by pointing out that he had faced a simple choice—"to accept Witbooi's submission or to pursue his destruction," and the latter course would have meant a long and costly war.

Kaiser Wilhelm II, who liked to strike bellicose poses, postponed ratifying the treaty for more than a year. By the time he did so, in November 1895, a codicil had been attached that was to have disastrous consequences for the people of South West Africa. The Witboois agreed "to respond unconditionally and immediately, with all men capable of bearing arms, to any call from the Governor . . . to resist external and internal enemies of the German protectorate."

Even before the final signing of the treaty, Leutwein had begun formulating plans for a campaign against various Herero tribes whose chiefs, unlike the pliant Samuel Maherero, paid little heed to the wishes of distant administrators. "My plans," he confided to the chancellor in October 1895, "are to catch the Hereros in a pincer movement . . . and to drive them back across their [German-drawn] borders. Anyone offering resistance would be shot and all cattle within reach would be impounded. . . . In view of the vast cattle stock of the Herero," the *Landeshauptmann* pointed out, "a war against them can be quite profitable."

Leutwein requested temporary reinforcements for this campaign—four officers, 100 men, and more cannon. In November 1895 the Germans began to impound and sell cattle that had strayed over the German-drawn borders. In December Leutwein noted that "Hereroland is in ferment," adding in a communication to the chancellor: "The people see their property threatened from all directions, not knowing what to do with their enormous herds of cattle. What is at stake is nothing less than their existence, and it will be quite a difficult job to resolve this question without striking a blow." In February of the new year, 1896, he again requested reinforcements—a mere 100; settlers in Windhoek, eager for war, demanded that the fatherland send 2,000 men.

In March 1896 the so-called War of the Boundary broke out, involving small Herero and Nama tribes east of

Windhoek. What the Germans called impounding, the leaders of these tribes regarded as theft, and they rebelled. Leutwein's divide-and-conquer policy, however, doomed the rebellion to failure. Fulfilling his treaty obligations, Kaptein Witbooi provided a contingent of scouts to assist the Germans; Chief Maherero also provided assistance.

By mid-May the rebellion had been crushed. At least a dozen prisoners of war were executed—simply shot. Several women and girls were taken back to Windhoek to be used as prostitutes. The Germans seized, among other booty, some 12,000 head of cattle. Leutwein noted with satisfaction that this would "provide a number of settlers with a foundation on which to build a stock of cattle, at the same time trimming the oversized herds of the Hereros to some extent."

While crushing this native rebellion—a rebellion that, remarkably, had brought together two traditionally hostile tribes—Leutwein, like von François before him, expressed doubt that rules drawn up at the Geneva Convention of 1864 were applicable in colonial wars. "A consistent colonial policy would require that all prisoners capable of bearing arms be killed," he wrote the chancellor, adding: "I for one would rather not resort to such a drastic method, but neither would I upbraid those who did."

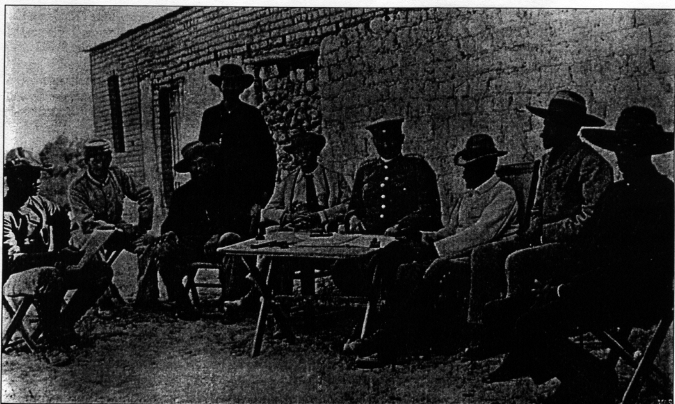
His successor as *Landeshauptmann* would have no such qualms when, in 1904, the Hereros rose up against their German protectors.

In a letter to Prince Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, the third chancellor to set colonial policy for the German empire, Landeshauptmann Leutwein wrote in February 1896, "I have no doubt in my mind that, barring some unforeseeable event, Samuel [Maherero] would side with us in case of war." As it happened, the unforeseeable event was not the failure of the Hereros to side with the Germans but Samuel's willingness to wage war against armed forces of the strongest nation in continental Europe in a desperate attempt to rid Hereroland of the Germans.

A multitude of pressures and grievances and fears drove the Hereros to take up arms against a military force that made no pretense of protecting black Africans, serving only to protect the colonists, who wanted the best and cheapest land, which was to be found in Hereroland.

As a Christian, Chief Maherero did not feel bound by tribal traditions and laws that forbade the sale of tribal lands. And for a time he was only too eager to help the Germans acquire land, so long as it belonged to other Herero chiefs and so long as the Germans paid him for his services. By 1903 so much tribal land had been sold to or acquired by the Germans through fraud or force that more than a quarter of Hereroland—some 8.5 million acres out of 30 million—had become the private property of the colonists.

Meanwhile, the white civilian population of the protectorate was growing fast—from a mere 2,000 or so in 1896 to nearly 5,000 in 1903. By this time a railroad line connected the port of Swakopmund with Windhoek, and another line was being planned that would run north, dividing Hereroland and depriving the Hereros of large blocks of land on either side of the rail line, which would be ceded to the construction company.



THEODOR LEUTWIN, *ELF JAHRE GOUVERNEUR IN DEUTSCH-SÜDWEST AFRIKA*, BERLIN, 1907

Theodor Leutwein (in uniform at table), governor of the colony from 1894 to 1904, meets with Samuel Maherero (to his left) in 1895. The Herero chief had thought he could ensure his tribe's safety by cooperating with the Germans.

Greatly adding to the Hereros' sense that their world, their way of life, was being destroyed was an outbreak of rinderpest, a cattle disease. It has been estimated that in the early 1890s the Hereros had more than 100,000 head of cattle; by 1902, five years after the disease began to spread, they had only about 50,000. No blow could have struck the Hereros harder.

In his pioneering study of South West Africa, John Wellington, emeritus professor of geography at the University of Witwatersrand in the Republic of South Africa, rarely editorializes. After describing the devastating consequences on the Hereros of the rinderpest plague, however, he pauses to speculate: "Perhaps there was not enough inoculum to deal with their vast herds but one wonders if perhaps even an attempt by the Government to inoculate some of these cattle ... might not have brought a new spirit into the Herero-German relationship." In light of the Hereros' attachment to their cattle, he suggests, a compassionate act of this kind "could have altered ... the whole subsequent course of the Protectorate's history." As it was, the Germans inoculated only their own cattle.

While the plague killed thousands of Herero cattle, German settlers used a variety of unscrupulous means to deprive them of thousands more. The result was that by 1903 almost as many cattle were owned by the 5,000 or so settlers as by the protectorate's roughly 100,000 Africans.

The most pernicious technique for acquiring Herero cattle was also the most common. A settler would offer goods on credit to a Herero cattle owner, then return some months later and demand payment—in cattle—and explain the extravagant markup as interest. If the native complained, the settler could call in the police, who invariably sided with the settler and might even punish the native for challenging the integrity of the settler.

To his credit, in 1899 Leutwein issued an ordinance forbidding the granting of credit to the natives. So fierce was the opposition to the ordinance, however, that he was compelled to shelve it until, in 1903, yet another chancellor, Prince Bernhard von Bülow, backed him up, banning credit in all transactions with the native people and setting a one-year statute of limitations on the collection of loans. The result was one Leutwein had not foreseen: All the creditors demanded full payment at once and, rifle at the ready, seized as many cattle as they figured they deserved or could get away with. In this way the Hereros' once-vast herds were again cut down.

The continual loss of their cattle led to a sense of despair among a once-proud people. The superior attitude of most whites and their almost casual brutality, including merciless flogging, helped to transmute this despair into bitterness and, finally, hatred.

Protests in the Reichstag against the practice of flogging resulted in half-hearted attempts by the Colonial Office to restrict the use of the whip, but the settlers stoutly defended the practice. In a petition addressed to the Colonial Office in 1900, seventy-five Windhoek residents explained their position:

> Any white man who has lived among natives finds it almost impossible to regard them as human beings at all in any European sense. They need centuries of training as human beings, with endless patience, strictness, and justice.

This view of the African as subhuman was codified in regulations drawn up by the German Colonial Society, to be applied to the Bondelswarts people, in the southern part of the protectorate: (1) Every colored person must regard a white person as a superior being; (2) in court the evidence of one white man can be outweighed only by that of seven colored persons. A missionary observed: "The real cause of the bitterness among the Hereros toward the Germans is without question the fact that the average German looks down upon the natives as being on about the same level as the higher primates (baboon being their favorite term for the natives) and treats them like animals."

Samuel Maherero listed the brutal treatment of his people as one of the causes of the revolt of the Hereros. One particular instance of gross injustice, however, appears to have triggered the revolt. In early 1903 the son of a Herero chief was traveling by wagon with his wife and child near the town of Omaruru when they overtook a German trader who was on foot. The young Herero offered him a ride. That night the husband was awakened by screams and a pistol shot. He saw the trader running from the wagon, then saw that his wife was dead—killed, he later testified, for resisting the trader, who had tried to rape her. The trader denied trying to rape the woman but admitted he had killed her, accidentally: He had had a nightmare in which Hereros attacked the wagon and, waking, had fired wildly. The judges acquitted him on the ground that an intoxicated man could not be held responsible for his actions.

"This acquittal aroused extraordinary excitement in Hereroland, especially since the murdered woman was the daughter of a chief," Landeshauptmann Leutwein later wrote. "Everywhere the question was asked: 'Have the white people the right to shoot native women?' " Although the prosecutor appealed and the trader was subsequently sentenced to three years' imprisonment, the anger among the Hereros did not subside. The generally arrogant and frequently vicious behavior of the settlers and the police provided a constant stimulus for it.

In October 1903 an uprising that caught Leutwein by surprise broke out some 400 miles south of Windhoek. A high-handed German lieutenant, after interfering in a tribal judicial proceeding, had marched in with some soldiers to make an arrest. The man he intended to arrest was the chief of the Bondelswarts—the very people the German Colonial Society had recently insisted must regard themselves as inferior beings.

Each side later insisted that the other had fired first. In any event, both the chief and the lieutenant were killed, and the Bondelswarts, who could muster about 500 armed men, rose up against the Germans. One group surrounded the German garrison town of Warmbad, prompting Leutwein to dispatch a company to relieve the siege. Farther south, around the Orange River valley, another group chased German troops over the border into the Cape Colony, where they were taken into custody.

Leutwein, alarmed, set off at the head of two more companies, one based

in Windhoek, the other in Omaruru, to the north. As Jon M. Bridgman, a professor of history at the University of Washington in Seattle, points out in *The Revolt of the Hereros,* the removal of these troops left "only a company far to the north at Outjo and a battery at Okahandja . . . to guard 25,000 square miles and 20 towns" of Hereroland.

Now, if ever, was the time for the Hereros to revolt. Yet it seems possible that, despite their many just grievances, they might not have risen up at this time had it not been for the spread of rumors intended to goad the Hereros into an act of desperation that would justify an all-out war against them. Thus, for example, German settlers, knowing of the trust many Hereros placed in Leutwein, converted the news of his departure from Windhoek into the rumor that he had been killed or interned.

In a letter to Leutwein explaining what had driven him to take arms against the Germans, Maherero wrote:

The war wasn't started just this year by me, but was started by the white people; for you know how many Hereros have been killed by white people . . . with rifles and in prisons. And always when I brought these cases to Windhoek the blood of the people was valued at no more than a few head of small stock.

After referring to the credit problem and seizure of Herero cattle, he wrote:

And in these times the white people said to us . . . the Governor who loves you has gone to a difficult war; he is dead and as he is dead you also must die. They went so far as to kill two Hereros of Chief Tjetjoo; even Lieutenant N. began to kill my people in the jail. Ten of them died, and it is said they died of illness; but they died by the hands of the labor overseer and by the lash.

An astonishing order was promulgated among the Hereros before they went to war. As Under-Chief Daniel Kariko subsequently stated in an affidavit:

We decided that we should wage war in a humane manner and would kill only the German men who were soldiers, or who would become soldiers . . . and then not young boys who could not fight. . . . We met at secret councils and there our chiefs decided that we should spare the lives of all German women and children. The missionaries too were to be spared, and they, their wives, and families and possessions were to be protected by our people from all harm.

Samuel Maherero drew up an order to this effect and, as "the chief leader of the Hereros," proclaimed it as a law.

"We knew what risks we ran. . . ," Under-Chief Kariko's son Samuel later stated under oath, "yet we decided on war, as the chiefs said we would be better off even if we were all dead."

Chief Maherero, who had succeeded in uniting the Hereros in this effort, hoped to persuade Hendrik Witbooi to join the uprising and, as he wrote in a letter to Witbooi, "to make your voice heard so that all Africa may take up arms against the Germans. . . . Let us die fighting rather than die as a result of maltreatment, imprisonment, or some other calamity. Tell all the *kapteins* down there to rise and do battle."

The letter never reached Witbooi. The chief of the Rehoboth Basters, asked to arrange for its delivery, handed it over to the Germans.

The uprising began on January 12, 1904—the date on which, in Germany, Hermann Göring celebrated his eleventh birthday. Throughout Hereroland, towns and military outposts were surrounded and German farms attacked. More than 120 German soldiers and male settlers were killed. Railroad lines were ripped up, telegraph lines pulled down, bridges destroyed. Germans expressed amazement that "our Hereros" should rise up in this fashion.

A detachment of 100 German soldiers from Swakopmund moved quickly to relieve the siege of Okahandja, whose civilian population had taken refuge in the big, thick-walled fortress. A company that had been dispatched to the south was recalled to raise the sieges of Windhoek and Omaruru and to help out at Okahandja. The company commander and his men covered nearly 200 miles in 100 hours and arrived at Okahandja on January 27.

In his account of the uprising, Professor Bridgman provides a useful tally of the men and matériel available to each side at the start of hostilities. On the Herero side there were some 8,000 warriors, more than half of them armed with an assortment of old rifles, including some M71 Mausers that had been sent down to the protectorate in the Bismarck era. The total number of German soldiers on active duty was 766, about two-thirds of them assigned to the four companies that constituted the field forces. In addition to these, Leutwein could call up the trained reserve—many of them veterans who had been given land grants—comprising thirty-four officers and 730 men. Then there were another 400 or so able-bodied men who knew how to use a rifle and ride a horse. Finally, the Rehoboth Basters would provide 120 scouts and Hendrik Witbooi could be counted on to provide as many or more auxiliaries. All told, then, the Germans could muster about 2,000 men.

Inferior in numbers, the Germans had an overwhelming advantage in weaponry. Not only were their repeating rifles newer and better than those of the Hereros, they never had to worry about running out of ammunition, as the Hereros did. Also, they had artillery—five modern quick-firing mountain guns and five older pieces. These guns, though unimpressive in a European context, had a powerful effect in South West Africa, because, as Bridgman points out, "the Hereros held any artillery in awe and tended to avoid contact with troops accompanied by field pieces." Finally, the Germans had five Maxim machine guns, the total firepower of which, Bridgman adds, "was probably not much less than that of all the native weapons put together."

After hurriedly putting together a peace agreement with the Bondelswarts, Leutwein arrived in Swakopmund on February 11, a month after the outbreak of the rebellion. Shortly thereafter he received instructions from Berlin: He was not to negotiate with the Hereros but to demand unconditional surrender. His reply to this order is interesting. After stating that he shares the view that "after all the outrages the Hereros have committed, nothing short of unconditional surrender will have to be enforced," he goes on to say:

On the other hand, I do not concur with those fanatics who want to see the Hereros

destroyed altogether. Apart from the fact that a people of 60,000 or 70,000 is not so easy to annihilate, I would consider such a move a grave mistake from an economic point of view. We need the Hereros as cattle breeders, though on a small scale, and especially as laborers.

It is impossible to know what proportion of the protectorate's white population could be considered fanatics, but the cry for annihilation seems to have gone up throughout the land. In *Let Us Die Fighting: The Struggle of the Herero and Nama against German Imperialism,* the East German historian Horst Drechsler cites several documents attesting to the murderous mood of the colonists. An excerpt from a letter written by a missionary sums it up:

All you hear these days is words like "make a clean sweep, hang them, shoot them to the last man, give no quarter." I shudder to think of what may happen in the months ahead.

After the first days of the revolt, instead of pressing their attack, the main body of the Hereros began to withdraw into the Onjati hills north of Windhoek. At this point Leutwein's primary objective was to prevent other, smaller groups of Hereros—in the north and in the east, near the border shared with the British protectorate of Bechuanaland (now Botswana)—from joining the roughly 50,000 Hereros led by Samuel Maherero. Accordingly, he divided his forces into three sections.

In mid-February, East Section, comprising four companies, all new arrivals, marched off toward the garrison town of Gobabis; its assignment was to prevent the Hereros from crossing over to British territory—and taking with them their herds (to which the Hereros had recently added thousands of stolen German cattle). Led by an incompetent major eager to make a name for himself, East Section was mauled in two March and April engagements, losing eight officers and fifty men. These losses, followed by an outbreak of typhoid, reduced the force from 534 to 151 men; in May the contingent was dissolved.

West Section—comprising two veteran companies and one of newly arrived marine infantry—marched north and west until it encountered a sizable group of western Hereros. Then, according to Major Ludwig von Estorff, "we fought for ten hours against an enemy who was well entrenched among a field of large boulders. It was hard going because the sun burned hot and the thirst was almost unbearable, but by evening we had stormed their boulder fortress." Fifty Hereros were reportedly killed in this engagement, while the Germans lost two men. The kaiser sent his congratulations for what was made out to be a significant victory. The skirmish, however, failed to keep the western Hereros from joining up with the main body in the rugged country north of Windhoek.

Leutwein, meanwhile, stayed put in Okahandja, awaiting reinforcements before making his move and under constant pressure from Berlin to get on with the war. On April 7 he set off at the head of a force of 800 German soldiers and 160 Witbooi and Rehoboth Baster auxiliaries. By the second day of their march, they had come to the Otjisasu valley, above which rises Mount Onganjira. Suddenly the Germans came under heavy fire. Jon Bridgman recounts what happened next:

Following normal procedures Leutwein ordered his men to dismount and fan out. Even before the line was completely formed, the Hereros began an all-out attack on the German flank with the intention of rolling up the line. This danger was only barely averted by the timely arrival of all the machine guns and artillery. In a desperate attempt to overcome German firepower by raw courage, the Herero warriors twice charged straight into the muzzles of the German guns. The courage of the men was sustained by the wild chanting of the women, who shrieked over and over again: "Who owns Hereroland? We own Hereroland!" In the end, however, the Maxims ruled the field. . . .

German casualties were fourteen killed, twelve wounded; the Hereros were thought to have lost more than 100 men. Two Hereros were taken prisoner; one died of wounds, the other was executed on what appears to have been a trumped-up charge. Evidence suggests that from that time on the Germans took no prisoners.

Two days after this first encounter, Leutwein resumed the march north, moving into heavy-bush country. At about noon on April 10, as the Germans approached a water hole, they came under heavy fire from three sides. As Bridgman observes: "Against an unseen enemy the German artillery . . . [was] largely useless. To have advanced into the brush would have been suicidal; to remain in the clearing was hardly an alternative." Leutwein, having suffered higher casualties this time than in his first skirmish, ordered a night retreat. A German military writer concluded that the whole contingent came close to being wiped out.

Later, Leutwein explained to a group of recently arrived officers the lesson the Hereros had learned in the course of these April engagements. In the first engagement, they had occupied high ground, and though they had dug themselves in and were well protected by thornbush barriers, they were still exposed to the rapid-fire field artillery. "From which they drew the conclusion," wrote First Lieutenant Erich von Salzmann, one of the officers in the group addressed by Leutwein, "that it was pointless to fight in mountainous terrain. . . . Their battleground is the thick bush, in which they can quietly come up on us and then blow us away. Artillery is ineffective here; the machine gun, on the other hand, here first proves its full worth." (Field experience in the Herero War, followed by field observation during the Russo-Japanese War, which also broke out in 1904, prompted the Germans to equip every infantry regiment with six Maxims. The ineducable British, meanwhile, continued to rely on rapid fire by trained riflemen right up to, and well into, World War I.)

"Public opinion in Germany, including many men with experience in Africa, has dramatically underestimated the Hereros," Leutwein wrote after returning from his unsuccessful campaign in the highlands north of Okahandja. "Even we in the colony had not expected much resistance. The Hereros apparently believe that they can expect no quarter and are therefore fanatically determined. They sacrifice themselves with equanimity." The outcome of his campaign proved, he added, "that our

troops at their present strength are not in fact capable of putting down the uprising." Bridgman provides a useful summation of how things stood in late April 1904, four months after the outbreak of the revolt:

In six battles and a number of skirmishes [the Hereros] had defeated the Germans as often as they themselves had suffered defeat. In terms of losses it does not seem improbable that they had killed one German for every one of their own men that fell. . . . The greatest military machine in the world had ground to an inglorious halt, and it was unclear when and how it would be set in motion again.

The General Staff in Berlin thought it knew how to set its mighty machine in motion: by replacing Leutwein with a man who could be counted on to act vigorously to put down this revolt. In late April, Kaiser Wilhelm named the man—Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha. Leutwein was instructed to desist from further decisive operations "until the arrival of the new commander in chief and the reinforcements being newly assembled at home."

Fifty-six years old, von Trotha had served in the Franco-Prussian War and as commander of the First East Asian Infantry Brigade in China in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion, a desperate uprising against Westerners and Western influence. Kaiser Wilhelm had ad-

ARCHIV FÜR KUNST UND GESCHICHTE, BERLIN

JON SWAN

Samuel Maherero led his people in war against the Germans in 1904. Pursued by 4,000 men armed with 30 artillery pieces and 12 machine guns, more than 50,000 Hereros fled to the region overlooked by Waterberg (above). Following the battle and massacre there (print at top), the Germans drove the surviving Hereros into the desert and poisoned all nearby water holes.

dressed his troops before their departure for China, his rhetoric as usual becoming increasingly and embarrassingly bombastic:

Show yourselves Christians, happily enduring in the face of the heathens. May honor and fame attend your colors and arms! . . . No pardon will be given, and prisoners will not be taken. Anyone who falls to your hand falls to your sword. Just as the Huns and their King Attila a thousand years ago created for themselves a name which men still respect, you should give the name of Germany such cause to be remembered in China for a thousand years that no Chinaman, whether his eyes be slit or not, will dare to look a German in the face. . . .

Von Trotha seems to have accepted the kaiser's "Hun speech" as sound advice for a career officer. "As leader of the China expedition in 1900 and as Commander in German South East Africa during the years 1894–7," writes John Wellington, "he had won a great reputation for his utterly ruthless methods with rebels."

The man to whom von Trotha owed his appointment was Count Alfred von Schlieffen, the chief of the German General Staff, who developed the basic plan used to fight a war on two fronts in World War I and, in a modified form, to defeat France in World War II. The battle plan von Trotha chose to employ against the Hereros was the classic one taught in German staff colleges—encircle and destroy. He arrived in the colony on June 11, five months after the outbreak of the revolt. Thus, ten years after Leutwein replaced von François, his mandate being to preserve and enhance Germany's military position in South West Africa, Leutwein found himself replaced by a man with a similar mandate, a crucial difference being that von Trotha was given a much freer hand to carry it out. As he explained in a letter to Leutwein in November 1904, the month the *Landeshauptmann* asked to be relieved of his duties:

His Majesty the Emperor and King said to me only that he expected that I would crush the uprising with whatever means were necessary and to inform him later of the causes of the uprising. . . . I know the tribes of Africa. They are all alike. They respond only to force. . . . I shall destroy the rebellious tribes by shedding streams of blood and money. Only thus will it be possible to sow the seeds of something new that will endure.

Von Trotha did not move immediately against the Hereros. Like his less ferocious predecessors, he waited for reinforcements. They were not slow to arrive. Between May 20 and June 17, five troop transports set out from Hamburg. (The Woermann Line had begun providing regular service to the protectorate in 1891, making huge profits by overcharging the government, as a Reichstag investigation later showed.) Their arrival in Swakopmund and Lüderitz Bay more than doubled the number of officers and men under von Trotha's command—from 2,000 to nearly 5,000, not counting reservists and auxiliaries.

Leutwein estimated that the Hereros, for their part, had only about 2,500 rifles, many of them antiquated muzzle-loaders and flintlocks. Their supply of ammunition was meager, few men having as many as fifteen or twenty cartridges, and of course they had no artillery. They were further handicapped, as the Witboois had been in their battles with Leutwein, by being constrained to move en masse, the armed warriors protecting nearly 50,000 noncombatants—women, children, the elderly, as well as the hundreds of young men who lacked weapons.

Then, too, the movements of this great mass of people were constrained by the need to provide fresh grazing grounds and water holes for the many thousands of cattle that not only provided the milk that constituted a large part of the Hereros' diet but also gave meaning to life. (The Herero story of creation culminates in the first Herero man and woman walking away from the rest of humanity, all quarreling about how to divide the animal kingdom, with a bull and a cow. From the beginning of time, then, the Hereros and their cattle were inseparable.)

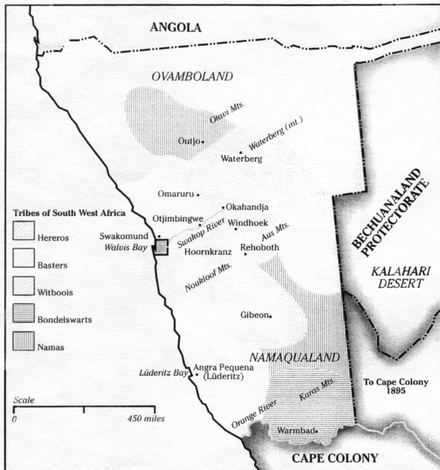
While von Trotha awaited reinforcements and set up advance bases, the Hereros drifted north, in the direction of the good grazing land around a long buttelike mountain called Waterberg. David Kambazembi was the chief here, and his willingness to play host to the entire Herero people testified to the transformation taking place in this once-divided tribe. In what proved to be the last weeks of its existence as an independent people, a nation was being created.

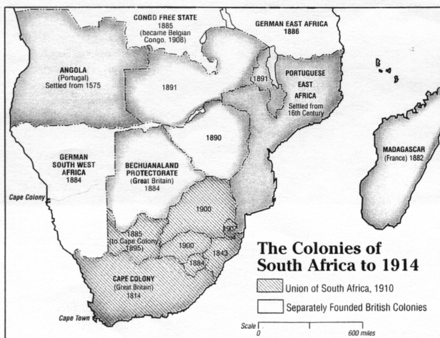
More than anyone else, Samuel Maherero had helped to divide his people, by consenting to German-drawn boundaries and to the sale of tribal lands, among other acts from which he profited and others lost. Now, in their shared desire to be rid of the Germans, all the chiefs and under-chiefs united behind him. From as far away as the Cape Colony, 300 Herero miners walked off their jobs and started the long trek north to take part in the struggle to defend Hereroland.

As the Hereros withdrew to the north, the Germans moved slowly after them. Von Trotha deployed his men so that, finally, the Hereros would be encircled in the great veld whose northern perimeter was the sheer escarpment of Waterberg and which, to the east, gives way to the Omaheke Desert, a particularly barren and arid part of the Kalahari. (Waterberg, or "water mountain," takes its name from the abundance of springs at its base; there are springs at the top as well. Had the Hereros not been so attached to and dependent on their cattle, they might have held out indefinitely on top of Waterberg. But getting their herds up the steep trails would have been extremely difficult, and the idea seems never to have occurred to the Hereros.)

First Lieutenant von Salzmann, who arrived on a troopship on April 20, describes the landscape through which in late May he and his men marched on their way to Okahandja as one in which every tree and bush was prickly with thorns, "so that if you go into the bush you are immediately held fast; tugging doesn't help because that just rips things; you have to stop and very carefully unhook the thorns." He describes great stretches of veld—"many kilometers in circumference"—where the Hereros' herds have grazed the land completely bare. Eager for battle, he says, "our greatest regret is that operations have been postponed pending the arrival of reinforcements still at sea, as a result of which we have to just sit around and wait for weeks on end."

GERMAN SOUTH WEST AFRICA





The natives of what became (in 1884) German South West Africa were largely migratory herdsmen. The map at top roughly shows their distribution. In the final two decades of the 19th century, southern Africa was colonized as shown at bottom: Britain, Germany, and Portugal raced to define their borders.

On June 19 Major von der Heyde and the Second Battalion move "to form one more part of the great circle being gradually drawn around the Hereros." Von Salzmann longs to hear the whistle of bullets, the thunder of cannon: "For what other reason have we come all this way? Surely no one will ever blame a young soldier for such a wish."

In early July he notes that the plateau across which he and his men are marching is more than 3,000 feet above sea level; the air is very thin, and on the night of July 4—midwinter south of the equator—the temperature drops below freezing.

On July 12 he reports that contact with the enemy has been made at last. A group of Witbooi auxiliaries under the command of a German lieutenant went out on patrol and killed eight Hereros; they then rode north and into thick bush, where they encountered heavy fire and were almost surrounded. The lieutenant had been compelled to draw his Browning service pistol and shoot a Herero, who, armed with "an old blunderbuss," rushed up to within a few feet of the officer.

On July 17 a patrol party, hearing voices all around them in the thick bush, realized they were in the midst of the Hereros' encampment—and managed to slip away, guided by a Herero woman whom they took prisoner.

By this time, Commander in Chief von Trotha had arrived on the scene. And, by this time, 4,000 men, 30 pieces of artillery, 12 machine guns, and 10,000 horses and oxen were deployed around Waterberg. On August 4 von Trotha addressed his troops: "I want to attack the enemy . . . simultaneously with all sections in order to annihilate him," he said. The attack would begin in one week, on August 11.

Did Samuel Maherero and the other chiefs believe they could beat the Germans? Professor Bridgman concludes that "one can only infer that [Samuel] must have thought he could have defeated them; otherwise his failure to escape while the opportunity was still open is inexplicable." He goes on to suggest two possible reasons for Maherero's hope of besting the Germans. One was that the advance over difficult terrain would inevitably sap the Germans' strength and morale. Another was that

the thorny scrub—cut and wedged together to form a barrier—would serve as an effective defense. He cites the testimony of a German officer who wrote that "the worst enemy of the German soldiers, far worse than the Hereros themselves, is the thorn bushes. . . . The Hereros are used to them . . . but they are for the white soldier just the same as hundreds of barbed-wire entanglements."

Bridgman further speculates that Chief Maherero may have believed that even if he and his people could not decisively defeat the Germans, they might at least "impose such losses that they would give up and let him enjoy his spoils in peace. He was, of course, wrong, but not irrational."

On the night of August 10, German advance forces moved toward Hamakari, the site of the main Herero encampment. Also, taking advantage of the dark, a small detachment equipped with a heliograph established a signal station on Waterberg; this would enable von Trotha to relay information and commands to the six sections into which he had divided his troops.

The battle plan was as follows: The largest section would attack from the west, along the base of Waterberg; a second section would attack from the south; a third from the east. Two smaller sections were positioned to block the passes leading out to the north; the sixth—and smallest—section would attack from the southeast.

Two officers had raised objections to von Trotha's deployment. One was Leutwein; the other, Major Ludwig von Estorff, in command of the section that would attack from the east. Both men argued that by positioning the largest force to the west and the smallest to the southeast, it was all but inevitable that if the Hereros managed to break out of the German circle, they would do so through the least strongly held part of the front—and ahead of them would lie the great thirstland of the Omaheke Desert and, beyond the desert, British Bechuanaland. The danger was that an entire people, and their cattle, would be lost, either dying in the desert or escaping over the border.

As Horst Drechsler observes in his often polemical but impressively documented *Let Us Die Fighting,* this point had not been overlooked by the German General Staff. "If . . . the Hereros were to break through," a study prepared for the General Staff stated, "such an outcome . . . could be even more desirable . . . because the enemy would then seal his own fate, being doomed to die of thirst in the arid sandveld."

In any event, von Trotha declined to alter his battle plan.

Before dawn on August 11, the six sections moved out. The main problem for the Germans, despite the signal station on Waterberg, was sighting the Hereros in the dense bush. As Wellington notes, "For most of the morning the opposing forces shot at each other whenever small groups were visible, without much concerted action being possible."

Most of the fighting occurred to the south and southwest; the Hereros managed to surround one section, which had to seek assistance by heliograph. Fighting went on all day. At the end of the day, the German casualties were twelve dead, thirty-three wounded. Every indication is that the Herero casualties—especially among noncombatants—were high. More than 50,000 people and as many or more cattle were packed into an area some five miles wide and ten long, and there was no escaping from the incessant fire of the German field artillery. To a people who loved their cattle, the sight and sound of hundreds of wounded and dying or panic-stricken animals must have been almost as demoralizing as the loss of human life that day.

That night Chief Maherero and the other chiefs decided their only hope lay in flight. Orders were given to break out, and this was done—through the one weak point in the German circle, in the southeast, beyond which lay the desert. And there, in the words of a General Staff paper, "The arid Omaheke was to complete what the German Army had begun: the extermination of the Herero nation."

When German troops moved in on the site of the former Herero encampment, they found old men and women and children cowering in lean-tos, the sick and the wounded and dying gazing up from where they lay. Von Trotha supposedly forbade the killing of women and children, but as several eyewitnesses later attested under oath, if there was such an order, it was ignored by virtually everyone, including von Trotha. Two examples from *Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany,* prepared in Windhoek and presented to both Houses of Parliament in 1918, must suffice.

One Jan Cloete, of Omaruru, who had served as a guide for the Germans, gave the following testimony:

> I was present at Hamakari, near Waterberg, when the Hereros were defeated in a battle. After the battle, all men, women, and children, wounded and unwounded, who fell into the hands of the Germans were killed without mercy. The Germans then pursued the others, and all stragglers on the roadside and in the veld were shot down and bayoneted. The great majority of the Herero men were unarmed and could make no fight. They were merely trying to get away with their cattle.

Jan Kubas stated under oath:

> I went with the German troops to Hamakari and beyond. . . . The Germans took no prisoners. They killed thousands and thousands of women and children along the roadsides. They bayoneted them and hit them to death with the butt ends of their guns. Words cannot be found to relate what happened; it was too terrible. They were lying exhausted and harmless along the roads, and as the soldiers passed they simply slaughtered them in cold blood. . . . I saw this every day; I was with them.

There is a passage in Thomas Pynchon's novel *V* that probably strikes readers as merely surrealistic. It reads, in part:

> Returning from Waterberg with von Trotha and his staff, they came upon an old woman digging wild onions at the side of the road. A trooper named Konig jumped down off his horse and shot her dead; but before he pulled the trigger he put the muzzle against her forehead and said, "I am going to kill you." She looked up and said, "I thank you."

The passage comes from the testimony of Manuel Timbu, former groom to

General von Trotha. Like many others, he testified on oath that he had heard the general say of the Hereros, "We must exterminate them, so we won't be bothered with rebellions in the future."

About 1,200 Hereros, including Samuel Maherero, managed to find water holes in the Omaheke and cross into Bechuanaland; a smaller number trekked north into Ovamboland. The great mass of the survivors of the Battle of Waterberg, however, were literally herded into the Omaheke by the Germans. Acting under von Trotha's orders, the soldiers then cordoned off the perimeter to make sure no one escaped from the desert. Leaving nothing to chance, they poisoned the water holes along the desert rim, so that, as Hendrik Fraser testified, "fugitives who came to drink the water either died of poisoning or, if they did not taste the water, they died of thirst." German patrols later came on evidence of the Hereros' desperate search for water—hand-dug holes forty feet deep.

And still von Trotha was not satisfied. On October 2, 1904, two months after the Battle of Waterberg, the commander in chief promulgated an order known as the "extermination order." It read, in part:

> All the Hereros must leave the land. If the people do not do this, then I will force them to do it with the great guns. Any Herero found within the German borders with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot. No women and children will be allowed in the territory. They will be driven back to their people or fired on. These are my words to the Herero people.

In an addendum von Trotha stated that while "no male prisoners will be taken, the order should not be construed as permitting the killing of women and children. . . . The soldiers will remain conscious of the good reputation of German soldiers."

The order incited soldiers and settlers to new levels of violence. Wellington sums up:

> The grim execution of this order over the following months when small groups of Herero . . . men, women, and children or solitary individuals were met with by the German pursuing parties or by patrols in the sandveld and in the mountain fastness of Hereroland, makes a horrifying record of inhuman butchery, which drew loud protests from the people of Germany itself.

It took about two months for belated protest to result in inadequate action. The Rhenish Missionary Society was one organization that raised its voice. (As Drechsler notes, if von Trotha had been allowed to kill off all the Hereros, the mission would have had to close up shop in the colony.) In the Reichstag, liberal Social Democrats raised their voices. Meanwhile, settlers who had previously supported von Trotha's extreme measures began to have second thoughts: If the Hereros were wiped out, who would do the hard work on the cattle stations and in the mines? Then, too, there was the growing awareness that von Trotha's policy was damaging Germany's reputation abroad.

Chancellor von Bülow tried to persuade the kaiser to rescind the extermination order. The policy was inconsistent with Christian precepts, he explained in a November 24 communication; moreover, it could not be carried out without committing many more soldiers to this task. If it *were* carried out, the lack of an important source of labor "would seriously undermine the colony's potential for development." Finally, the policy would "be detrimental to Germany's place among the civilized nations."

The kaiser reluctantly directed von Trotha "to show mercy to the Hereros ready to surrender and to bring this to their notice in an appropriate manner." From December 1904 on, then, von Trotha was compelled to admit Hereros to South West Africa. By late May 1905, about 8,000 Herero men, women, and children—exhausted, emaciated, demoralized—returned to what had been their homeland. Having fled from the hell of the Omaheke, they now found themselves in another hell: Weak and starved as they were, they were put to hard labor. One Herero who turned himself in, under an amnesty declared by von Trotha's successor, described conditions in a typical work camp:

> As our people came in from the bush they were made to work at once; they were merely skin and bones; they were so thin that one could see through their bones. . . . I was a kind of foreman over the laborers. I had 528 people, all Hereros, in my work party. Of these 148 died while working on the [railroad] line. . . . When our women were prisoners on the railway work they were compelled to cohabit with soldiers and white railway workers. The fact that a woman was married was no protection. Young girls were raped and very badly used. . . . I don't think any of them escaped this, except the older ones.

Commenting on the high death rate among the Hereros, one bureaucrat commented, "The more the Herero people experience personally the consequences of the rebellion, the less will be their desire—and that of generations to come—to stage another uprising."

Hendrik Witbooi had personally experienced the consequences of rebelling against one German governor; bound by treaty to assist the Germans by providing auxiliaries, he had helped suppress the uprising of the Hereros. He came to regret having done so. Nineteen Witbooi auxiliaries, ordered to take part in the indiscriminate slaughter of Hereros following the Battle of Waterberg, deserted and returned to Gibeon, where they told Kaptein Witbooi that they had been treated badly by the Germans and that the talk among the soldiers was that once the Hereros had been finished off, "the Hottentots" would be next.

Other news and events combined to push Kaptein Witbooi to revolt. He learned that fresh German troops were being landed at Lüderitz Bay for service in the south; this seemed to substantiate the report that his people were next in line to be exterminated. Then, too, a prophet newly arrived from the Cape Colony said he had been sent by God to drive the white man from Africa. The religious *kaptein* may have taken this prophecy seriously. "The time is now ripe for God the Father to free the earth," he wrote to Leutwein, "[and] I have now stopped walking submissively."

On October 3, 1904, Kaptein Witbooi duly notified his district commissioner that he was declaring war. He was joined by all the other chiefs of Namaqualand, save one. In early October, Witbooi warriors killed about forty German soldiers and civilians.

Fighting the Witboois in the mountains and gorges of the south proved far more arduous than fighting the Hereros on the bushveld in the north. As Bridgman points out, the Namas became convinced, after being surprised by the Germans in an early engagement, that "their best plan was to avoid pitched battles, in which the German artillery and machine guns would be decisive. Instead, they relied on hit-and-run tactics to keep the Germans off balance."

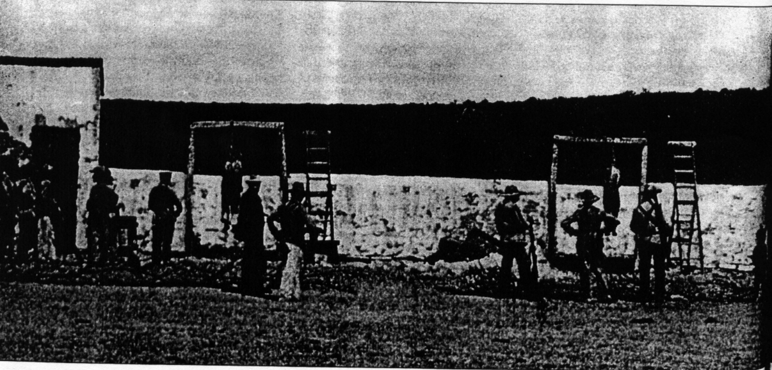
By January 1905 the Germans had committed more than 4,000 men to crushing this second major uprising. Two months later the Germans discovered that bands of Hereros—one as large as 250 men, led by Samuel Maherero's son Friedrich—had linked up with the Witboois. Both in Windhoek and in Berlin, von Trotha came under strong criticism, which he sought to stifle by forbidding officers returning to Germany to talk to the press about the conduct of the war. Plans were drawn up to replace the increasingly unpopular commander in chief: It would be convenient, the planners decided, if he could go after completing an operation successful enough to be called a victory.

In July von Trotha received word that the Witboois, after leading the Germans on a wild-goose chase around Namaqualand, had returned to their tribal area at Gibeon. To discover if this report was accurate, von Trotha resorted to a simple trick previously employed by Leutwein—he sent a messenger with a letter, calling for Kaptein Witbooi's unconditional surrender. Witbooi rejected it—"in your peace I can see nothing but a desire to destroy us to the last man"—but von Trotha now knew where his foe was.

Aware that his days as commander in chief were numbered, von Trotha set about planning the decisive engagement that would restore his reputation. Against a Witbooi force of about 750 men, he deployed twice as many mounted infantrymen, twenty pieces of field artillery, and two machine guns. The attack began on August 25—exactly twenty years after Dr. Göring set foot on African soil. When the four columns converged on Gibeon, however, they found no sign of the *kaptein* and his men. The Germans marched west; the Witboois turned up 200 miles to the south, where they attacked a German wagon train and rode off with 1,000 head of cattle. This was too much for the German General Staff: Von Trotha was relieved of his command.

To this humiliating reverse, another was quickly added. At about the same time as Hendrik Witbooi rose up against the Germans, a fascinating figure named Jakob Morenga appeared on the southern horizon. Morenga's father was a Nama, his mother a Herero; educated in a mission school, he spoke three European languages—Dutch, English, German—and several African languages. He was a gentleman warrior. As Bridgman observes: "He treated his prisoners in a courtly manner and often followed the eighteenth-century tradition of paroling them. Even when the Germans violated a truce, as they did twice, he took no revenge on their negotiators, who were both times in his power."

It was Morenga and his band of Nama and Herero warriors—only 11 at the start, then 150, then 400, and finally perhaps as many as 800 as word of his successes spread—who made sure that von Trotha departed ingloriously. On October 24 the Germans suffered what Bridgman calls "their worst single defeat in the South West African campaign." Morenga's base was in the Great Karas Mountains, whose foothills extend south to the Orange River, the border between the German colony and the British Cape Colony. Four companies of German soldiers came looking for Morenga; they were marching west along the river when they walked into an ambush. "Forty-three men were killed, wounded, or missing that day," Bridgman notes, adding, "Morenga probably did not lose a man."



Before returning to Germany, von Trotha could console himself with at least one piece of news: On October 29, at the end of a skirmish with the Germans, Hendrik Witbooi was struck in the shin by a bullet; he died a few days later. "You couldn't have brought me a more beautiful message," von Trotha said on learning of his death.

On November 20—the day after von Trotha left South West Africa—one of Witbooi's sons made contact with the Germans. Thereafter, one by one the majority of the Nama chiefs and underchiefs agreed to turn in their weapons and ammunition. The Germans' other major opponent, Jakob Morenga, was killed in 1907, not by the Germans but by Cape police acting in collaboration with the Germans. In March of that year, the Germans declared South West Africa officially pacified.

In the course of the three years between the revolt of the Hereros and the end of the revolt in Namaqualand, German casualties totaled 676 dead, 76 missing, 907 wounded. The casualties suffered by those who rose up against them were staggeringly high. Before the Battle of Waterberg, most historians agree, there were approximately 80,000 Hereros and 20,000 Namas and related peoples. "In 1911," Horst Drechsler writes, referring to a census taken that year, "a mere 15,000 Hereros were left out of an original 80,000 and of an original 20,000 Nama 9,781. Thus, no fewer than 80 percent of the Hereros and 50 percent of the Nama had fallen victim to German colonial rule."

Most died, not in battle, but in the camps, where, as Drechsler points out, 7,682 of nearly 15,000 Hereros and 2,000 Witboois and other "Hottentots" died—of exhaustion, acts of brutality such as flogging, and sickness caused in many cases by a change of diet from milk-based foods to grain. In a contribution to *South West Africa: Travesty of Trust,* Helmut Bley of the University of Hamburg writes: "Sexual exploitation of the women in the camps reached catastrophic proportions. Syphilis was so widespread that the birth rate virtually came to a standstill."

When at last the captive population was released—largely because settlers needed laborers—they found that all land was now German crown land, that all cattle were now German cattle, and that all Africans now had to wear a numbered identification tag bearing the imperial crown and the name of the bearer's home district. All, that is, except the Rehoboth Basters, who had remained loyal to the Germans. (That sensitive researcher Eugen Fischer would reward them for their loyalty by citing them as evidence of the potentially harmful results of "hybridization" and of the need to develop "a practical eugenics—a race hygiene.")

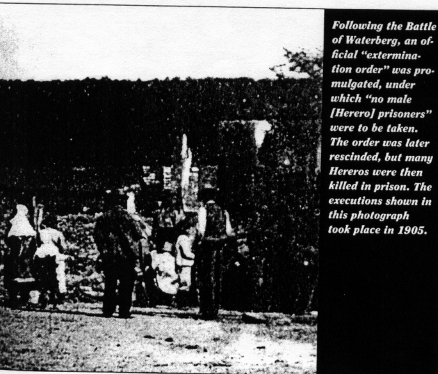
Of the Hereros and Namas, Drechsler writes, "Their status . . . was that of forced laborers, differing from that of slaves only in that they were not the property of their masters and so could not be bought or sold. But in some respects forced laborers are even worse off than slaves," because the latter are regarded as property and are thus generally treated with some care.

The terrible floggings increased in violence and in recorded numbers, as Helmuth Stoecker points out in an essay titled "The Position of Africans in the German Colonies." Stoecker also observes that although flogging was practiced by all of the colonial regimes in Africa, "nowhere was corporal punishment dealt out so frequently as in the German colonies, except perhaps the Belgian Congo." Many of the whips that were used by farmers had strips of iron woven into the thong. Floggings could kill.

Stoecker's mention of the Belgian Congo serves as a reminder, if one is needed, that nationals of every European country felt free to behave in Africa, against Africans, with a barbarity unthinkable at home—until, of course, the rise to power of Adolf Hitler in Germany and Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union. The Belgian Congo was the great free-enterprise killing ground of the late nineteenth century; millions died. Yet in *The Rulers of Belgian Africa: 1884–1914,* L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan of the Hoover Institution, who have written and edited several books about southern African history, conclude: "No Belgian soldier was quite as ruthless as General Lothar von Trotha." Elsewhere, they write of the Germans generally, as opposed to von Trotha in particular, that

> for all their ruthlessness, [they] were no more brutal against the Herero than the Australians had been in their treatment of the Tasmanians, than the Americans were in their conduct toward the Indians, or than the Hausa were to be in their dealings with the Ibo in northern Nigeria.

In another study, *The Rulers of German Africa: 1884–1914,* Gann and Duignan discuss a thesis advanced by



Following the Battle of Waterberg, an official "extermination order" was promulgated, under which "no male [Herero] prisoners" were to be taken. The order was later rescinded, but many Hereros were then killed in prison. The executions shown in this photograph took place in 1905.

ULLSTEIN BILDERDIENST, BERLIN

Hannah Arendt in *The Origin of Totalitarianism*. In her book, Arendt writes:

African colonial possessions became the most fertile soil for the flowering of what later was to become the Nazi elite. Here [the Germans] had seen with their own eyes how peoples could be converted into races and how . . . one might push one's own people into the position of the master race.

Gann and Duignan contend that "it was World War I, not the colonial experience, that created the instruments and institutions for totalitarianism," and that the essence of totalitarian terror does not lie in "terror tactics of the kind used by Trotha in South West Africa" but in "prophylactic liquidations." They go on to say:

The practitioners of totalitarian terror . . . believe that mass murder—of the kind practiced in Treblinka and Auschwitz—somehow has a therapeutic value for society, and will help to change the very nature of mankind. The Nazis thus tried to wipe out the Jews and other groups of people not because they feared insurrections but because they wished to create a new type of "Aryan man," whose fate they believed to be threatened by the mere existence of supposedly Satanic peoples.

In arguing their case, the two scholars seem to have overlooked, or perhaps discounted as irrelevant, the writings of Paul Rohrbach. Rohrbach, the head of the South West Africa Settlement Commission, was the author of *German World Politics,* written in 1912 and brought out in an English translation in 1915, the year after World War I began. It was also the year the British won what the *London Daily Mail* called "the first great and complete victory that has been gained by the British armies in this war"—namely, the unconditional surrender of the German forces in South West Africa to General Louis Botha of South Africa.

In his book, the German writer speaks of colonies as attracting and producing "a race of special qualities . . . better accustomed to living on a big scale both without and within." Rohrbach goes on to develop a rationale for the extermination or expulsion of the native inhabitants of those colonies in which this new breed of Germans could develop:

On the soil which the German farmer has bought, aborigines have for countless ages spent lives . . . useless to the culture and the social economy of the world. . . . It is not right either among nations or among individuals that people who create nothing should have a claim to preservation. No false philanthropy or race-theory can prove to reasonable people that the preservation of any tribe of nomadic South African Kaffirs . . . is more important for the future of mankind than the expansion of the great European nations, or the white races as a whole.

Admittedly, Rohrbach's musings constitute only a hazy outline, or daydream, of the prophylactic liquidations by the Nazis. Recently, evidence has been brought forward that establishes a much clearer link between the German experience in South West Africa and the Holocaust in Europe.

In 1980 Dr. Benno Müller-Hill, a professor of genetics at the University of Cologne in West Germany, began looking into the question of how, during the Nazi era, scientists had allowed ideology to pervert science and, more specifically, how studies in genetics had been used to justify an experiment in genocide. Many German scientists, Dr. Müller-Hill believed, were only too willing to slip from the nightmare of the past "into the deep sleep of forgetfulness. I, myself," he writes in his introduction to *Murderous Science,* "am trying to wake from this sleep."

To that end, Dr. Müller-Hill immersed himself in the writings of German anthropologists and psychiatrists whose careers had flourished between 1933 and 1945. He also interviewed some of the surviving scientists.

The opening chapter of his book is titled "A German chronicle of the identification, proscription, and extermination of those who were different." It consists of dated entries, the first date being 1900, when "the work of Mendel is rediscovered" and "those who regard the mental traits of man . . . as being primarily inherited believe that their hypothesis is scientifically proved by Mendelian genetics."

The entry dated 1908 states, in part:

In the German colony of South West Africa, all existing mixed marriages are annulled and such marriages are forbidden in the future. . . . Dr. E[ugen] Fischer, a Dozent in anatomy at the University of Freiburg, begins to investigate the "bastards" . . . of Rehoboth in German South West Africa. . . .

The next entry is for 1913:

Dr. E. Fischer's book [*The Bastards of Rehoboth and the Problem of Miscegenation in Man*] . . . is published. In it he writes about the people of mixed blood in German South West Africa: "We should provide them with the minimum amount of protection which they require, for survival as a race inferior to ourselves, and we should do this only as long as they are useful to us. After this, free competition should prevail and, in my opinion, this will lead to their decline and destruction.

This is followed by

11 November 1918 The war comes to an end. Germany has lost her colonies with their "inferior" Negroes.

1923 Hitler reads the second edition of the textbook by E. Baur, E. Fischer, and E. Lenz [*The Principles of Human Heredity and Race-Hygiene*] . . . while imprisoned in Landsberg, and subsequently incorporates racial ideas into his own book, *Mein Kampf*.

Most of Hitler's biographers refer to his having read racist literature while comfortably imprisoned at Landsberg; none that I had read mentioned a specific book. There was an awful lot of such literature, notably the French count de Gobineau's bizarrely pro-German essay on the inequality of races and the British Houston Stewart Chamberlain's pro-Aryan and anti-Semitic *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* ("Whoever asserts that Christ was a Jew is either ignorant or insincere").

I asked Dr. Müller-Hill, in recent correspondence, how he had been able to ascertain that Hitler had in fact read the Baur, Fischer, Lenz textbook. His reply was in keeping with the scrupulous attention to detail evidenced throughout *Murderous Science*. Lenz, he wrote, had reviewed *Mein Kampf* for a respectable scientific journal—*Archiv der Rassenhygiene*—in 1931, and in

his review Lenz told of how the publisher of *The Principles of Human Heredity* had personally presented a copy of the second edition to Hitler at Landsberg. In the review, too, Lenz asserted, or rather boasted, that he had found many examples of Hitler's having borrowed directly from the book.

Several borrowings caught my attention during a recent skim-through of *Mein Kampf*. Among them: "Every race-crossing leads necessarily sooner or later to the decline of the mixed product" and "In countless cases where the race holds out, the bastard breaks down." Other passages sound like Paul Rohrbach, although the ranting tone is distinctively Hitlerian: "[I]t is a sin against the will of the eternal Creator to let hundreds of His most talented beings [i.e., Germans] degenerate in the proletarian swamp of today while Hottentots and Zulu Zafirs are trained for intellectual vocations."

Continuing to track the progress of the scientist who, in effect, did the pseudoscientific field work that was used to justify the Holocaust, Dr. Müller-Hill finds that in 1927 Fischer was made director of the newly established Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Heredity, and Eugenics in Berlin-Dahlem. He also finds that in 1933, the year Hitler became chancellor of the Third Reich, Fischer was elected rector of the University of Berlin, "in which capacity he is responsible for signing his Jewish colleagues' dismissal notices."

The following year: "The first course for SS doctors is given at the [Kaiser Wilhelm Institute] of Anthropology under the direction of Professor Fischer." One year later Fischer and colleagues discuss "with civil servants from the Ministry of the Interior the illegal sterilization of German colored children," and the Nazi party officially bans marriages between Jews and "citizens of German or related blood."

In 1937, after Fischer and colleagues have submitted the requisite expert reports, the sterilization of all German colored children begins. Two years later Fischer says in a lecture:

> When a people wants . . . to preserve its own nature, it must reject alien racial elements, and when these have already insinuated themselves, it must suppress them and eliminate them. The Jew is such an alien and, therefore, . . . he must be warded off. This is self-defense. In saying this, I do not characterize every Jew as inferior, as Negroes are . . . [but] I reject Jewry with every means in my power, and without reserve, in order to preserve the hereditary endowment of my people.

ULLSTEIN BILDERDIENST, BERLIN

***Dr. Eugen Fischer's racial theories influenced Hitler's* Mein Kampf.**

In Dr. Müller-Hill's chronology, the name Fischer appears again in 1941. Lecturing in occupied Paris, Fischer says that "the morals and actions of the Bolshevist Jews bear witness to such a monstrous mentality that we can only speak of inferiority and of beings of another species." (The chronology reminds us that it was on March 23, 1941, that Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, presented Hitler with a memorandum titled "Some Thoughts About the Treatment of Foreign Peoples in the Eastern Territories." In it Himmler wrote: "I hope to see the very concept of Jewry completely obliterated"—words reminiscent of General von Trotha's thoughts about how the Hereros should be treated: "I believe that the nation as such must be annihilated. . . .")

In January 1942, while Fischer is still lecturing in Paris, "the first gas chamber is built in Auschwitz." In the fall of that year, Fischer retires as director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Heredity, and Eugenics. His successor is Professor Otmar von Verschuer, a friend of Fischer's and the author of a 1937 report titled *Proposals for the Registration of Jews and Part-Jews*.

In March 1943 Fischer writes an article for *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung,* which begins:

> It is a rare and special good fortune for a theoretical science to flourish at a time when . . . its findings can immediately serve the policy of the state.

Two months later:

> Dr. [Joseph] Mengele, a former assistant to Professor von Verschuer . . . and a visiting scientist in Professor von Verschuer's KWI [Kaiser Wilhelm Institute] of Anthropology in Berlin-Dahlem, becomes a camp doctor in Auschwitz. His first act there is to send those Gypsies who are suspected of suffering from typhoid to the gas chambers.

After the war, Fischer professed to be "very deeply shocked by what has been revealed" about the death camps.

As part of his painstaking effort to understand Fischer, among the many other scientists who provided the Nazis with a rationale for the Final Solution, Dr. Müller-Hill interviewed Fischer's daughter, Gertrud, the professor himself having died in 1967 at ninety-three.

Asked whether her father was an anti-Semite, Miss Fischer says he was not, adding that he "worried a lot about what happened to his Jewish colleagues and their wives." Asked whether she and her father ever discussed the persecution and extermination of the Jews, Miss Fischer says they did not, adding, "He must have known. But we didn't ever discuss it. . . . In any case, why are you picking on him in particular? They were all guilty. He didn't do anything special."

Her father, Miss Fischer says, "was clear-headed right up to the end. At ninety, he was dictating to me from his bed. He thought a great deal about the history of the white man in Africa."

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