

The First Genocide Committed by the Germans

The German colonization of South West Africa laid the foundation for the most sinister time period in history, when Nazi Germany had devoted its relentless efforts in their aspirations of exterminating as many Jews as they could. Nazi Germany began long before Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany. The German presence in South West Africa and its ruthless treatment of the population there provided basis for later time in German history when German aspirations were exterminating as many Jews as they could. The Ovaherero Genocide beginning in 1904, was the original holocaust, succeeded by the Jewish holocaust starting in the 1930s and was sanctioned by the same cold-blooded nation of Germany. It is most essential to comprehend how the Germans mistreated the Ovaherero and Nama people of South West Africa, which is modern-day Namibia. The Germans already had a scheme in place to handle the Jewish problem fifty years later during the Holocaust. Shark Island Concentration Camp is not the only dark secret in Namibia, and when you do sufficient research the horror can be extracted. In this paper I will illustrate how the German colonization of South West Africa was the springboard for racial hatred in Nazi Germany from 1933-1945.

Long before the Germans arrived in South-West Africa, Portuguese explorer Diogo Cao discovered the Congo. However, Cao failed to find what he was seeking, a way around the continent. Two years later, in 1484, Cao sailed

east along the shores of West Africa ("Namibia 1on1 "). There was an unknown interior that aroused explorers as they sailed past, a forest so thick and beautiful with luxurious green coastline, hundreds of miles long, and wide rivers that penetrated into the woodland, peaking their interests with endless possibilities. Cao continued to sail along the lagoons of the Niger River, turning south along the shore of Cameroon, eventually passing the Congo River. Continuing to sail south, Cao passed Modern-Day Angola, taking shelter in the harbors that would later become the home of the Portugal Slave Empire. The landscape continued to evolve the further south he sailed. The dense forest that suffocated the land was now deteriorating, leaving miles of open space between single trees. Past the mouth of the Kunene River, Cao and his men saw an area full of rich foliage, the last they would encounter on this voyage. Now, all that remained was miles of sand dunes reaching back from the coast and yellow waters rushing along the chilling waters of the Atlantic. In the far distance they could barely see mountain ranges in the smog of the scorching climate. In the mornings, a dense grey fog would cover the shore, as the freezing waters of the South Atlantic instantly turned to a burning mist as they met the hot desert sands. Diago Cao had discovered the Skeleton Coast, of Modern-Day Namibia. The Namib Desert was the never-ending sand dunes; over a thousand miles long and up to one hundred miles in width cut off South Western Africa from the rest of civilization.

Connections between the Holocaust and the Ovaherero Genocide are shockingly similar and have started to be exposed by extensive research up until

today. The parallels between the two atrocities in personality, ideology, philosophy and methodology suggest that the link may not be as complicated as previously thought. The link doesn't necessarily regard the elaborate perceptions of totalitarianism, but rather about purifying a race-based belief of exterminating those thought to be inferior. This philosophy is the focal point of augmenting the use of ethnic identification labeling, slave labor, and concentration camps to eliminate inferior beings (Sarkin). The subsequent quotation regarding the Holocaust also represents the Ovaherero Genocide and further identifies resemblances:

To understand a criminal event like the Holocaust it is crucial to distinguish between the intentions, including the ideology and world-view of the human beings who did the killing and the structural conditions under which the murders were perpetrated. Both are crucial to an understanding of the Holocaust or any other. Though the intentions of one group of killers may have been different from another, the possibility, nevertheless, remains that the structural conditions that allowed murderous intentions to be actualized in genocidal behavior were comparable and institute. Besides the motives of the perpetrators, an etiology of genocide must address those factors that helped the killers to seize power and those that facilitated the implementation of their murderous policies (Melson).

The links between the Holocaust and the Ovaherero Genocide continue to be discovered through comprehensive research.

One of the strangest places on earth is trapped between the freezing waters of the South Atlantic and the boundless dune fields of the Namib Desert. This strange place lies five thousand miles from Nuremberg, Germany; it is the tiny town of Luderitz in modern-day Namibia. Each morning a thick curtain of sea mist covers the tiny town and disguises itself as a very plain place with no luscious beauty. Brightly painted buildings in hues of red, orange and yellow are dispersed throughout a few hills surrounding the broad bay. The main avenues have recently been paved with asphalt, but the horror of the town's history is concealed within the dirt covered back alleys. The piles of dust and sand that accumulate on street corners would confuse visitors arriving by ship, resembling nothing of Africa. The visitors' confusion would intensify when they see a large Caucasian population speaking German and blacks speaking the Afrikaans of the Boers, descendants of the Dutch-speaking settlers of the eastern Cape frontier. Today most visitors arrive to Luderitz on the B4 highway, a straight paved road of asphalt laid across the Namib Desert following the old railroad that once connected what used to be German South-West Africa to Luderitz Bay (Erichsen). This settlement would become the birthplace of a new experiment in war.

Over the past century since Germany's unsuccessful massacre, German leaders who have visited South-West Africa's postcolonial successor state of Namibia refused to meet with Ovaherero representatives.

In 2005, the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul, spoke to Ovaherero leaders at the Waterberg during the commemoration of the 1904 war and acknowledged "the violence inflicted by the German colonial powers on your ancestors, particularly the Herero and the Nama" and "the atrocities committed." Wiecek-Zeul also admitted that "following the uprisings, the surviving Herero, Nama and Damara were interned in camps and put to forced labour of such brutality that many did not survive." More ambiguously, the German Minister concluded that "the atrocities committed at that time would *today* be termed genocide." (Steinmetz).

There are numerous reasons as to why a left wing German government of Social Democrats would evade admitting to genocide in Namibia. One of the reasons is that the Ovaherero Paramount Chief Kuaima filed lawsuits against the German government and some of its firms (the Deutsche Bank and SAFmarine) whose predecessors profited from the use of Ovaherero slave labor between 1904 and 1907. Another reason is that the men who led the massacre would never admit to colonial genocide, you would have to pry their admission from their cold dead bodies. The United Nations "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" defines genocide as to include "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group." Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer of Jewish descent, who immigrated to the United States in 1941, first defined genocide as ...

does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups (Steinmetz).

The Germans aren't the only nation who could be accused of genocide, especially when most modern colonial governments beginning with the Spanish conquistadors of America could easily be accused of causing "serious bodily harm" or cultural denigration and subsequently genocide. Even today, over one hundred years since the Germans attempted to exterminate the indigenous peoples of South-West Africa, denial still runs throughout Germany, living on with the descendants of the evil men who attempted genocide. Experts are uncertain on the size of the population of the Ovaherero before 1904 and on the number of Ovaherero slaughtered the same year. The specialists in genocide denial emphasize this detail even though it is crystal clear that the decisive measure for genocide is based on intention, not the overall success (Steinmetz). Without doubt the Germans clearly intended to destroy the Ovaherero people, and what

is even more disturbing is that the highest level of government officials in Berlin approved of this attempt and the number of people murdered.

Sailors and traders were the first Europeans to leave their mark in Deutsch-Sudwestafrika (German South West Africa). In 1485, Diogo Cao, a Portuguese explorer captained his second expedition along the south west coast of Africa. Cao had two objectives when he set sail; find the trade route to the east, and the church's request to discover the land of fabled Prester John. Cao landed at Cape Negro on the Angolan Coast in January 1486, however, the Portuguese explorers continued to push south and eventually set anchor in a bay where thousands of seals inhabited ("Namibia 1on1 "). On a rocky outcrop in Cape Cross, Cao raised his last padrao, "a large stone cross inscribed with the Portuguese coat of arms". The padrao had an inscription that read, "in the year 6685 of the creation of the Earth and 1485 after the birth of Christ the most excellent and most serene King Dom Jao II of Portugal ordered this land to be discovered and his Padrao to be placed by Diogo Cao, gentleman (or knight) of his house." He named the land Cabo da Padrao and claimed the land for Christ and Portugal ("Namibia 1on1 "). This event would prove to be crucial for the Germans conquest of Namibia later in the late 19th century.

A young merchant named Adolf Luderitz from Bremen, Germany, was the man who lit the wick that would start the fire, which would become the Holocaust from January 30th, 1933 to May 8th, 1945. On November 16th, 1882 Luderitz requested protection from the German chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck, for the trading post he established at Angra Pequena, which he later named

Luderitzbucht, meaning Luderitz Bay ("Encyclopedia Britannica"). On April 10th, 1883, Heinrich Vogelsang, Luderitz' apostle, arrived at Angra Pequena ("little cove"). Vogelsang negotiated with Joseph Fredericks, "Kaptein" of the native Bethanie community, a fraudulent lease of land ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). Vogelsang was deceitful when he negotiated with Fredericks by using geographical miles instead of regular miles, concealing the genuine amount of land to be leased. After acquiring the land Luderitz turned the Angra Pequena into a trading post, subsequently Otto Von Bismarck declared Angra Pequena and the contiguous lands would be now known as a German protectorate on April 24th 1884. The cove was renamed Luderitz and the Germans immediately began use of the land as a naval base. The Germans raised its flag in South West Africa on August 7th, 1884 and they officially claimed the land during an announcement at the Berlin Conference ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). Nevertheless, the native people never understood individual land as "private property" (land could never be alienated by any individual, regardless of the rank he held), all German land claims were actually fraudulent ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). The Germans were methodically beginning to take over Namibia, eerily similar to how they would take over Germany fifty years later.

In February 1885, the Tilly, the ship that had launched Luderitz's empire sank, plunging to the bottom of the sea with most of his fortune. Misfortunes would continue to haunt Luderitz, as he dreamed of diamonds, gold and other minerals, he funded a couple expeditions in hopes of striking it rich. The

explorers returned without anything. Luderitz would not live to see the irony of the expeditions he funded and returned nothing. Expert geologists and geographers marched blindly across some of the richest deposits of sparkling diamonds and returned empty handed. Luderitz started to become desperate to save his fortune; he began conversations with a group of British financiers (Erichsen). The horror of siding with the enemy terrified Bismarck. In order to prevent England from entering Germany's new colony, the Chancellor quickly fabricated a company ready to take over Luderitz's remaining assets. The German South-West Africa Colonial Company was a disaster from its inauguration. The majority of the company's initial investment was spent buying out Adolf Luderitz, and at the end of its first year in operation, the company had lost 45,159 marks, the equivalent to 32,125 (Erichsen). In order for Germany to maintain possession of South-West Africa, it was necessary for Bismarck to establish a state-financed colonial administration. It caused excruciating pain for Bismarck because he had no other option than to appoint an Imperial Commissioner.

In April 1885, a pair of German bankers, Gerson von Bleichroder and Adolph von Hanseman, industrialist, Guido Henckel, and Frankfurt mayor, Johannes von Miguel, created the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft für Südwest Afrika (German Colonial Society for South-West Africa or DKGSWA). Soon after its creation, the DKGSWA was granted monopoly rights to exploit mineral deposits. Following that, the new Society purchased the assets of Luderitz's failing companies ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). At this time, the Society was beginning to lay the groundwork to rob the Ovaherero of

their land in order to make room for German settlers as well as beginning to set the market for German industrial products (Dr. Dierks).

On September 2nd, 1885, the British cruiser The Namaqua arrived in Walvis Bay carrying the newly selected Imperial Commissioner of German South-West Africa, Dr. Heinrich Ernst Goring. Dr. Goring, the father of future Nazi leader Hermann Goring, was a middle-aged provincial judge who had no experience regarding Africa, however, since he was born on the German-Dutch border he was fluent in Dutch, which was necessary considering that was the language spoken throughout South-West Africa by the Nama and increasingly by the Ovaherero. Another key qualification that Dr. Goring had was his knowledge of the law. This qualification is critical since the first mandatory step in the colonization of South-West Africa was to be a legal matter rather than a military one (Erichsen). Dr. Goring wasted no time in starting to create the colony he envisioned by passing a law to create the colony's legal system: one standard of law for the Europeans and a separate set of laws for the natives. Things would continue to get worse for the indigenous peoples of South-West Africa when in 1888, the first unit of Schutztruppen (colonial protectorate soldiers) was secretly sent to protect the base at Otjimbingwe. The Schutztruppen taskforce was made up of two officers, five non-commissioned officers and twenty black soldiers. By the end of 1888, Samuel Maharero, the leader of the Ovaherero people, banished Dr. Goring from South-West Africa, after it was clear that Dr. Goring extended his living quarters over a Ovaherero ancestral cemetery ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). Dr. Goring infected South-West Africa

with evil the moment he arrived in Walvis Bay and it would continue to spread over the next few years. In 1888, Goring was forced to briefly abandon the colony after early resistance to the German settlement by the Ovaherero. In order to combat the defiance from the indigenous peoples, it was mandatory that the Germans assembled a capable group of enforcers to eliminate any future threats.

At dawn on a June morning in 1889, a squad of twenty-one German soldiers posing as explorers stepped on the British Port at Walvis Bay. Allegedly on expedition, each member wore the standard uniform of a 19th century explorer, khaki pants and jacket along with a matching safari helmet. For men who were supposedly explorers, they carried heavy artillery, a new Mauser 88 rifle, and their leader von Francois carried a terrifying reputation from his time commanding the Prussian army. Don't let these men fool you, they were not explorers at all, in fact they were not curious about anything scientific, the twenty-one men were German colonial soldiers (Erichsen). No one like von Francois had stepped on the sands of Namibia before. Over the span of three years, von Francois was a mercenary, under the rule of King Leopold to enforce his sovereignty over a private slave state in the Congo. The following excerpt illustrates the ruthless leader that von Francois was:

Armed with the rifle and the chicote, a hippopotamus-hide whip that cut deep into human flesh, von Francois had raided villages and traded in slaves. In the forest of the Congo basin, he had become a racial fanatic, with unshakeable views on how Africans should be

treated. Von Francois took everything he had learned in Leopolds' Congo to South-West Africa in 1889 (Erichsen).

Curt von Francois fought in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870-1871 and in 1883 he worked on an expedition exploring the Congo. With his knowledge of the region von Francois provided invaluable experience to Goring. Von Francois, the commander of the German protective troops established: "Nothing but relentless severity will lead to success." After Goring returned to the colony, he and von Francois began enforcing African oppression. In 1893, two hundred German soldiers were ordered by von Francois to execute a surprise attack on the Nama town of Hornkranz after Hendrik Witbooi, the chief of Hornkranz, refused to recognize German authority (Kiernan). The German commander gave explicit instructions to his men and ordered them to "destroy the tribe of the Witboois", ninety victims included seventy-eight women and children. The legendary Nama leader, Witbooi, gathered his warriors and retaliated to the German attacks, this was the first "Hottentot Uprising" of the Nama. After an immense struggle over eighteen tumultuous months with the Germans, the Witbooi finally submitted in September 1894.

The natives of South-West Africa would not surrender easily, two years after they succeeded to the Germans, Nama rebels rearmed along with a substantial amount of Ovaherero. Administrator Theodor Leutwein's first order of business in South-West Africa was to establish German dominance throughout the colony. However, Leutwein may have accomplished this urgent task by disturbing the tribal organizations. Approximately 1894, a German trader had

been murdered in Kailkhauan tribal territory close to Naosanabis, modern-day Leonardville, Namibia, and the chief refused to hand over the assassin to von Francois. Subsequent attacks occurred when the Kuaha had assassinated many tribesmen from a group and stole their cattle, which lived on their lands under the protection of the Germans ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). The Berg-Damara chief, who was messenger to von Francois, had most likely reported the murder to gain protection by the Germans and to end his tribe's loyalty to the Khaua. Succeeding these actions by Lambert, he had disobeyed every aspect of public order with methodical diligence (Bley). Leutwein aspired to punish the Khaua for political reasons, because the Becuhuanas who had been attacked were supposed to be protected under a treaty. Helmut Bley states the following:

In February 1894, a few weeks after landing in Swakopmund, Leutwein marched to the Khaua tribal centre with a hundred troops and one field-gun. ... His tactical surprise was only intended to prevent the tribe from scattering, and to allow him to appear as the representative of victorious state authority. ... in the negotiations of 17 March 1894, Andries Lambert accepted Leutwein's conditions[, which] involved the recognition of German sovereignty, the surrender of arms and munitions, the return of stolen cattle and the pledge that he would act 'peacefully and quietly' in the future (Bley).

In order to ensure conformity, Lambert was released "to supervise the surrender of arms and stolen goods, but hostages were detained, among them the chief's

brother. The chief then attempted to escape from the Germans with his whole tribe, but the preparations were discovered." (Bley). Consequences would be severe for Lambert, first he was arrested, and then he was executed.

Following the repercussions of this event, Leutwein attempted to restore command by implementing German authority into the tribe's natural progression. As the rightful heir to the chieftom had been mentioned by the tribe in Berseba, Leutwein selected Lambert's brother, Edward, as temporary chief of the Kailkhuan until the new chief arrived. Following his selection as temporary chief, Edward and the whole tribal assembly signed the protection treaty, which would later be ratified in Windhoek by the new chief. The tribe's weapons remained seized and the Germans purchased their horses. Also, the stolen cattle were returned to the Bechuana who were promised their land. The tribe's submission meant the end of the economy because raiding cattle was how they contributed any currency. Unlike the Ovaherero, the Khaua did not increase their herds by raising cattle and they didn't keep a reserve supplies. The tribe had no hope of survival without raiding ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). In 1896, the Khaua had their backs against the wall and forced to rebel against the shackles placed upon them in the lives. The revolt failed, and the Khaua were dispersed into prisoner of war and labor camps, they lost all of their land (Bley).

The Ovaherero Genocide in German South-West Africa is considered to have been the first genocide in the 20th century (Erichsen). The genocide was triggered when Samuel Maharero led the Ovaherero in a brief war against the

German colonial rulers. On January 12th, 1904, isolated farms were attacked and close to one hundred fifty German settlers were killed. When the war started, seven hundred sixty-six Schutztruppe and native secondary forces overpowered the Ovaherero. Then, the Ovaherero attacked, and positioned themselves strategically around Okahandja and Windhoek; the railway bridge to Osona was demolished. The Germans underestimated the weaker, unorganized fighters of the Ovaherero and couldn't defeat them. In mid-April 1904, a stalemate between the two fighting forces occurred at the Waterberg Plateau, forcing Leutwein to offer a negotiated settlement to the Ovaherero (Gewald). However, the German government at the homeland refused to allow a negotiated settlement. The German military expressed its emotions through Grosser Generalstab (Great General Staff): "He who wishes to colonize the territory must first take the sword and wage war — not with limited and puny means, but with strong measures which command respect and must persevere until the total subjugation of the natives has been accomplished." (Gewald). Subsequently, Lieutenant General Adrian Lothar von Trotha replaced Leutwein as Commander. "I. Goldblatt describes von Trotha as 'a man who believed that the bowl containing the fish should be smashed by heavy hammer blows, rather than by the quiet withdrawal of the water, which was Leutwein's policy.'" ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). On August 11th, 1904, the ruthless and unforgiving von Trotha demolished the Ovaherero in the Battle of the Waterberg, and forced them to flee, mostly into the direction of the waterless Omaheke desert.

Prior to the Battle of the Waterberg, General von Trotha had built prisoner of war camps, suggesting that at this time he was not planning on exterminating the Ovaherero just yet. However, over the next few weeks, this would become clearer. On September 13th von Trotha ordered to deny women and children any water and ten days later on the 23rd of September, he rejected Major Ludwig von Estorff's suggestion to accept the Ovaherero offer to open negotiations. The following passage is von Trotha's message to the Ovaherero on October 2 1904:

I, the great General of the German soldiers, send this letter to the Herero people. The Herero are no longer German subjects. . . . The Herero nation must...leave the country. If they do not leave, I will force them out with the Groot Rohr (cannon). Every Herero, armed or unarmed...will be shot dead within the German borders. I will no longer accept women and children, but will force them back to their people or shoot at them (Steinmetz).

Isabel V. Hull states that von Trotha continues with more orders in the following excerpt:

This proclamation is to read to the troops at roll-call, with the addition that the unit that catches a captain will also receive the appropriate reward, and that the shooting at women and children is to be understood as shooting above their heads, so as to force them to run [away]. I assume absolutely that this proclamation will result in taking no more male prisoners, but will not degenerate into atrocities against women and children. The latter will run away if

one shoots at them a couple of times. The troops will remain conscious of the good reputation of the German soldier (Hull).

The Germans knowledge of the lack of water in the Omaheke desert, their refusal to allow them to return westward would prove deadly. If the general's message was not crystal clear, he echoed his intentions on the 5th of November in a letter to Leutwein, who was returning to Germany in disgrace after opposing the genocidal position.

I know enough of these African tribes. They are all alike insofar as they only yield to violence. My policy was, and still is, to perform this violence with blatant terrorism and even cruelty. I finish off the rebellious tribes with rivers of blood and rivers of money (Steinmetz).

The "Great General" used tactics that were extreme compared to those of the Ovaherero leaders, who used more conventional warfare, and were careful to ensure that only soldiers were attacked (Hull). Von Trotha's soldiers eventually routed overpowered the Namaqua after von Trotha sent them an invitation to surrender on April 22nd, 1905:

The Nama who chooses not to surrender and lets himself be seen in German territory will be shot, until all are exterminated. Those who, at the start of the rebellion, committed murder against whites or have commanded that whites be murdered have, by law, forfeited their lives. As for the few not defeated, it will fare with them

as it fared with the Herero, who in their blindness also believed that they could make war successfully on the powerful German Emperor and the great German people. I ask you, where are the Herero today? (Drechsler).

The Nama suffered approximately 10,000 casualties from fighting and the remaining 9,000 were forced into concentration camps. This is the first time the infamous camps would be used by the Germans to hold inferior beings.

In the ... concentration camps, prisoners were forced to perform hard, unpaid labour regardless of gender, age or physical condition. The result was exceedingly high mortality in the camps — as high as 70 percent of all interned prisoners in some cases. Overall, deaths among prisoners-of-war between 1905-08 accounted for a third of the total wartime mortality among Herero and Nama. It is estimated that the Nama population was decimated by as much as 50% and the Herero by up to 80% (Erichsen).

The blame for these actions cannot be solely place on von Trotha. Count von Schlieffen, the head of the Great General Staff of the German Army who had recommended von Trotha for the command, did not immediately stop the decision made on October 2nd, 1904. "On November 23 von Schlieffen wrote to the German Chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow, insisting that "it is hard to disagree with" General von Trotha's argument that "that the entire [Ovaherero] nation should be annihilated or driven from the country," since they had "forfeited their

lives." Given the Chancellor's protests, von Schlieffen did propose as an alternative a "permanent state of forced labor, that is, a *form of slavery*" for the Ovaherero." (Steinmetz). On December 9th, only after tens of thousands had perished in the desert, did von Schlieffen order von Trotha to release all remaining Ovaherero, except individuals who were leaders and directly involved. Countless other German soldiers contributed to the genocide by shooting the Ovaherero, poisoning their water supply, and sealing off routes to the eastern edge of the desert. There is a plethora of photographs depicting German officers and soldiers standing proudly by the bodies of lynched Ovaherero.

Eventually the Ovaherero gave the German government what it wanted, von Trotha's actions called for consequences, which led Imperial Chancellor, Bernhard von Bulow, to request Kaiser Wilhelm II to relieve von Trotha of his position. Regrettably, this came too late to save the Ovaherero, as the remaining survivors were shoved into concentration camps and used for labor for German businesses, where most died from malnutrition, being over-worked, or disease ("Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial Website"). There were substantial casualties, 24,000-100,000 Ovaherero were killed and 10,000 Nama died as well.

At the beginning of March, following the rainy season, First Lieutenant Schweinitz traveled a trail through the Omaheke desert, "that could only have originated from the fleeing Hereros," discovering there "ever more numerous and larger collections of remnants of corpses, hundreds of men, women, and children

lying together.” Erichsen states that the path was lined with “human skulls and skeletons.”

Germany began an extension of its policy in extermination using more efficient methods that were foreign prior to the twentieth century with the Ovaherero prisoners in concentration camps. Across the country in various camps, the Ovaherero were beaten severely, worked and starved to death by the army of the Second Reich. Outside of Germany’s old base in Windhoek, the first concentration camp was constructed. In 1904, concentration camps were a military innovation and only had been used twice before, but in Namibia the concept was applied in a completely new way (Namibia: Genocide and the Second Reich). The first concentration camps used by the British in South Africa and the Spanish in Cuba were used only to separate freedom fighters from the people who supported them, however in South-West Africa there were not any free Ovaherero and almost all that survived the revolt were placed in camps (Madley). The prisoners were primarily women, children and old men, who were sent to camps to die, because they were not strong enough to help construct the town on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. In these camps the prisoners were used for forced labor and the stronger prisoners were used to build the port of Luderitz, as well as the railroad to Aus. Jan-Bart Gewald, a Dutch historian from the University of Cologne recorded the work finished by prisoners in the camps, documenting history that would have otherwise lost critical evidence of the Germans activities. Gewald states that the Germans constructed special camps to service the Second Reich by having Ovaherero women accessible to work as

prostitutes. However the women who worked at these camps were not paid like conventional prostitutes, these camps were actually “rape” camps. The relations between German soldiers and the Ovaherero women resulted in the births of mixed children and consequently lead to more sadistic German brutalities and scientific experimenting (Herero and Namaqua Genocide). The weather conditions throughout the camps were extremely cold because the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean cast a chill over the land. Just like in camps during the Holocaust, a few individuals received one blanket to endure the frigid climate. The Ovaherero were the first people the Germans terrorized with unforgiving treatment.

Shark Island Concentration Camp located outside of Luderitz provided the blueprint for the death camps, used by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust. The camp at Shark Island is very clearly linked to the vernichtungslagers (annihilation camps) operated by Nazi Germany. In both cases, prisoners were collected from far away locations and then shipped by rail in cattle cars called transport and then moved to a remote location beyond public observation where they were systematically destroyed (Madley). The vast industrial killings of Auschwitz and the other Nazi death camps lay in the future but the idea of separating people and simply killing them as quickly as possible was born on Shark Island in South-West Africa. Another characteristic of what happened on Shark Island that is unbearably similar to what happened in the death camps of the Third Reich is the guards at Shark Island and other camps became involved in racial sciences that were originally used to justify the war (Madley). Soldiers began to trade the skulls

of dead Ovaherero and sell them to scientists, museums and universities back in Germany. This practice was so common that post cards were produced and sold depicting the image of this tradition (Namibia: Genocide and the Second Reich). One major German contributor who visited German South-West Africa from 1904-1908, as well as having a strong working relationship with the Nazi Party in Germany was Eugen Fisher. Fisher was the director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics (KWI-A). Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, Fisher's successor, worked closely with Fisher in contributing to bridging the Second and Third Reich in a seamless transition (Schmuhl). Fischer influenced German race scientists in their research to study the skulls of decapitated Ovaherero. Fischer started to perform tests on perished prisoners of camps in South-West Africa and used his so-called research to try and prove that the black race was inferior to the Aryan race in Europe. Fischer and his protégés measured skulls, facial features and examined eye color to try to prove that the native peoples of Africa were not only inferior, but as Fischer described, "animals" (Namibia: Genocide and the Second Reich). The human remains of its victims were now advancing the racial theories that were used to justify the genocide. By 1908, the concentration camps were finally shut down, 65,000 people had been killed, and half of the Nama population had also been exterminated. Across the country hundreds of villages stood vacant and German South-West Africa finally belonged to the Germans. The Germans now had all the land they needed to colonize the country. The Ovaherero and Nama were now no longer a threat to the Germans and a new phase began as the colony

was portrayed as a settler paradise and the genocide that made all this possible was slowly forgotten. Throughout the land, the sites of concentration camps in the desert and on the coast were also forgotten (Namibia: Genocide and the Second Reich). The massacre in Waterberg faded from memory and the suffering of prisoners was swept underneath the rug.

The destiny of black Germans in Nazi Germany and in German controlled territories experienced the same mistreatment that the Jews had to endure through the Holocaust. However, there was no systematic platform for the extermination of black Germans living in the country that Hitler ruled with an iron fist ("Holocaust Encyclopedia"). During the 1920's there were 24,000 black Germans living in Germany and not one of them thought about the terror they would have to live through. After the defeat Germany suffered in World War I, it was stripped of the African countries it controlled in 1918. The German Schutzentruppen stationed in South-West Africa, as well as missionaries, colonial bureaucrats, and others returned to Germany with their racist mentalities. The Reichstag (German Parliament) mandated the separation of whites and blacks, along with a law prohibiting mixed race marriages in African Colonies. To rub salt in the wound to the Germans, the French were granted control of the Rhineland, a piece of land that exchanged hands between the two nations for centuries. In order to maintain a strong military presence, the French deployed its African soldiers to occupy the land. The Germans viewed this action as the last insult of World War I it would endure, subsequently, ninety-two percent of Germans voted to elect the Nazi Party into power (Black German

History). Germany wasn't willing to be bullied anymore by Allied Forces under the Treaty of Versailles and would act with vengeance.

Now that the Germans were not in control, the law against mixed race marriages was lifted and hundreds of African Rhineland-base soldiers married German women and raised their children as Black Germans. These children were referred to as "Rhineland Bastards", and the Nazis viewed them as a threat to the purity of the Germanic race. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote "the Jews had brought the Negroes into the Rhineland with the clear aim of ruining the hated white race by the necessarily-resulting bastardization." (Holocaust Encyclopedia). Racial discrimination prohibited the Rhineland Bastards from attending universities, holding most jobs, to include serving in the military. The Nazis continued to target the Rhineland Bastards as part of the racial and population policy. By 1937, the Gestapo (German Secret Police) used its authority to secretly round and forcibly sterilize African German mulatto children. These mixed-race children were used as subjects in experimental medical programs and some mystifyingly vanished (Holocaust Encyclopedia). The Germans were persistent in their efforts to cleanse the country of any imperfections by any means necessary. Adolf Hitler and his regime briefly disguised its racist nature during the Olympic games in Berlin during August 1936 when he permitted eighteen African Americans to compete for the United States. This is deceiving because Germany didn't actually grant permission, the International Olympic Committee allowed African American athletes to compete.

During Hitler's reign of terror, blacks were arrested, charged with treason, and packed in cattle cars destined for concentration camps. These death trains were packed full of people and lacked bathrooms and provided no food. After four long treacherous days of travel, the boxcars were opened to the sight of deceased bodies and dying prisoners. The few blacks that survived the trip were given the most inconceivable jobs imaginable (Black German History). During World War II, black prisoners of war were illegally incarcerated and experienced the mistreatment of the Nazis because they did not follow the regulations in the Geneva Convention (international agreement on the conduct of war and the treatment of wounded and captured soldiers) (Holocaust Encyclopedia). Black American soldiers who were captured and kept as prisoners of war in the concentration camps recalled that while they were being starved and forced into dangerous labor, they were still treated better than Black German concentration camp detainees, who were forced to operate the crematoriums and work in labs where genetic operations were administered (Black German History). In order to conceal this operation, these Black Germans were only killed every three months so the inner workings of the "Final Solution" would never be revealed.

Little information remains from the Rhineland Bastards, the actual numbers of how many Black Germans were captured, held in concentration camps or killed by the Nazi Party. Unfortunately the Black Germans haven't received war reparations because the Nazis revoked their German citizenship, even though they were born in Germany. Delroy Constantine-Simms from Essex University states that, "there were Black Germans who resisted Nazi Germany,

such as Lari Gilges, who founded the Northwest Rann, an organization of entertainers that fought the Nazis in his hometown of Duesseldorf, and who was murdered by the SS in 1933, the year that Hitler came into power.” (Black German History). After World War II, Black Germans who managed to survive the relentless Nazi Party were rounded up and tried as war criminals.

The following information on the different camps in South-West Africa is due to Casper Erichsen, who depicts the challenges he faced gathering the material in the subsequent passage:

My research necessarily focussed [sic] most of its attention on the 'privileged historical site' of the [National] archives [of Namibia]. The task was not straightforward, however, because files dealing with the administration of the concentration camps, a task that befell the German Army, no longer existed. In 1915, the German Colonial Administration had these files destroyed to avoid them falling in the hands of the rapidly approaching Union troops. German copies of these files are similarly believed to have gone up in flames during the heavy bombardment of Germany in the latter stages of the Second World War. So, there were no files that directly related to the day-to-day administration of Shark Island Extermination Camp or the other concentration camps. Moreover, the former head of the archives once claimed not to have seen any substantial evidence of the concentration camps in her alleged research of the archival collection (Erichsen).

On the chart below, extermination camps are marked in red, concentration camps are marked in blue, and labor camps are unmarked.

Name	Est. Deaths	Notes
Bondelslokation		
Karibib		
Ketmanshoop		
Lüderitz		
Okahandja		Four sub-camps, or <i>kraals</i> : 1. Young children; 2. Prisoners of war; 3. Sick and dying; 4. Police camp (mostly Damara)
Okomitombe		
Omaruru		
Omburo		
Otjihaenena		
Otozongombe		
Shark Island	3,000	In Lüderitzbucht, 121.2% for Nama, 30% for Herero.
Swakopmund	74%	
Windhoek	50.4%	There were two <i>lager</i> (camps) at Windhoek.

*This chart is from the Esther M. Zimmer Lederberg Memorial website.

The suffering of the Ovaherero and other rebel fighters continued, even after they surrendered. In 1905, the Acting Governor insisted the Ovaherero would have to endure a “period of suffering”, a “leidenszeit”, in the concentration camps to guarantee “they will not revolt again for generations.” (Steinmetz). At the Shark Island Concentration Camp (*Konzentrationslager auf der Haifischinsel vor Lüderitzbucht*), the death rate was over ninety percent until the Germans had a

change of command in April 1907. Sadistic murders were practiced at other camps as well using merciless methods (Erichsen). The beginning of abusing captured Ovaherero as labor slaves appears to have come from a private diamond-mining firm that was a part of the German Colonial Society for South-West Africa. In August 1904, the firm's directors requested fifty to one hundred workers from the government. The Deutsche Bank and the Woerman shipping company were primary shareholders in the Otavi Mining and Railroad Society, which used prisoners to build the railroad leading to its copper mines at Tsumeb (Steinmetz). The Third Reich implemented ideas and methods from the Ovaherero Genocide that they applied and elaborated upon. Vernichtungskrieg, the German word for genocidal rhetoric, the mass murdering of civilians, executing prisoners of war, forcing noncombatants to work in labor camps and initializing the use of death camps were all introduced through the colonization of German South-West Africa (Madley). The Germans were merciless in the maltreatment of the prisoners they held captive in camps throughout South-West Africa.

The Germans gained substantial experience from the Ovaherero Genocide and the annihilation in South-West Africa laid the foundation for applying the behavior that Nazi Germany implemented during the Holocaust. The Nazi regime in Europe essentially followed the patterns established in German South-West Africa not by coincidence, but because the Germans had founded the Lebensraum theory, the ruthless treatment of colonized people as sub-humans and the use of legally institutionalized racism. Every aspect from the

German colonization of South-West Africa was replicated in the destruction of Eastern Europe during the Holocaust. The origins of Nazi theories and policies were established beyond the Namibian colonial experience. The Ovaherero Genocide needed to be accomplished by the Germans to destroy the barriers restricting brutal colonialism and genocide and opened the gates to any behavior the Germans desired to apply in Europe. The German colonization of South-West Africa should be remembered as the initial step that laid the groundwork to the reign of heartless Nazi Germany during the Holocaust, when millions of Jews and Slavs were massacred.

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