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HENNING MELBER

Namibia: the German roots of Apartheid

Largely because of geographical and climatic features, it was only when the 'scramble for Africa' reached its final stage, that Namibia[1] became a territory that was of interest to adventurers and colonial enthusiasts. Then, in the name of European 'civilisation', they invaded the country's interior. The Namib desert along the Atlantic coast, hitherto an effective natural barrier, was no longer to provide protection for the inland areas and their peoples.

After the first concerted efforts of Europeans to settle on a permanent basis, the character and organisation of the economic and social structures within the country underwent basic changes, which corresponded to the establishment of a colonial-capitalist settler society. Henceforth, Namibia became organised as a white man's country. Although the roots of this development are to be found in the early stages of Namibian colonial history more than a hundred years ago its consequences are of more than historic interest; they are still relevant for an analysis and understanding of the situation today, the organisation of the still existing (though modified) colonial system, and the national liberation struggle against this system. The colonialism of the past had much in common with the present South African version and laid the cornerstone of Apartheid. It prepared the foundation upon which South Africa built its rigid uncompromising rule.

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Indirect colonialism

The various social structures of pre-colonial Namibia were such that the relations between them would, without the destructive influence of foreign interests, have developed further – although great differences existed in the development of the productive forces, socio-cultural institutions, and the political and social degree of organisation. Pre-colonial Namibia demonstrates clearly the dialectical relationship of different types of social organisation to the mode of production, which in turn was largely determined by the natural environment. Climatic and geographical features and conditions explain the regional differences to a certain extent: in the southern and central parts of the territory, with their vast areas of sparse vegetation and limited rainfall, the Nama (Khoi-khoi) and Herero lived with their herds as nomadic cattle-breeders. In the more fertile north, with its higher rainfall, the Ambo groups, with their more sophisticated agrarian society, based mainly on agricultural cultivation and limited livestock, had settled on a permanent basis. Dama and San – nomadic gatherers and hunters at a comparatively low level of economic development – lived partly in dependence on the other economic forms, partly in their interstices.

The development of class structures – while still in an embryonic stage throughout the territory – had progressed further among the Ovambo in the north than among the Khoi-khoi and Herero in the south. In Ovamboland, early features of 'proto-feudalist' rule were beginning to emerge. Among the Herero, differences in cattle wealth had already produced a rich elite, which operated on the periphery of the traditional institutions. Further development of class differentiation, however, was hampered, as land was still used collectively and no private property in natural resources existed. Within the Khoi-khoi societies, class division and separation between production and possession was hardly discernible, although some indications point to unequal power structures above the unit of family and kinship. Considering Namibia as a whole, it might be argued that subordinate 'classes', defined along communal lines, had already developed (e.g., the use of Dama as servants).

The level of internal trade in the north also showed a more progressive division of labour, including specialised artisans and traders. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Namibian peoples already had continuous contact with each other. Ambo traders exchanged goods for cattle, mainly with the Herero, and the Namibian communities were connected by a trade network to the north. By the middle of the nineteenth century, cattle from Namibia supplied the beef market at the Cape and even the British garrison guarding Napoleon at St Helena island.

A completely new factor in the internal development of the southern

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and central parts of the country was introduced by the immigration of the Orlam, initially part of the Khoi-khoi communities living at the Cape. The Orlam, who crossed the Orange river early in the nineteenth century on their way to southern Namibia, had already been affected by the colonial virus. Robbed of their land by invading Dutch colonisers, they tried to escape bondage by moving further north. Many of them had already experienced wage labour on European farms or had lived at missionary stations. In general, they spoke Dutch, had converted to the Christian faith and knew how to make use of their guns and the mobility provided by horses.[2] At the time of their arrival in Namibia, the Orlam communities, organised in a quasi-military fashion, possessed a higher degree of social and political centralisation than the resident Nama and were superior to them in terms of combat skills.

The immigration of the Orlam at the beginning of the nineteenth century increased competition for use and control of land and water resources, a competition made more fierce by a severe drought in 1829-30. Ultimately, this conflict led to a greater military confrontation between the different peoples of the southern and central region of Namibia (nomadic cattle-breeders, who continually needed more land and water). The clash between the Khoi-khoi and the Herero for dominance over this part of Namibia was a struggle for survival in the face of increasingly scarce resources. Indirectly, it also demonstrated the effects of European colonisation and settlement of the Cape.

This period – of struggle for survival, and for the maintenance of traditional ways of living – also witnessed the first attempts to transcend the local forms of organisation and to establish larger, intercommunal power structures. Indeed, in a limited way, it is possible to discern the sketchy beginnings of more centralised power structures in the military domination of the Orlam over hitherto independent social entities – though it is doubtful whether the militarily superior Orlam communities, whose economy was based on extensive robbery, could be considered to be more advanced economically. Indeed, the supremacy of the Orlam, in its consequences for the development of a more centralised authority, contained a destructive and regressive element – the acquisition of wealth depended on the expropriation of militarily weaker communities, and was mainly spent on maintaining the Orlam's military superiority, through buying arms and ammunition, and other goods from European traders.

The establishment of Orlam dominance (in alliance with a few Herero groups) therefore, on the one hand, contributed to the consolidation of new, larger structures of power, tending to unity on a regional basis, while, on the other hand, it decisively weakened the existing local structures.[3] As a result, the subsequent colonisation of the territory and its people was made easier.

Missionaries, traders and representatives of mining companies were

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the early agents of an informal colonialism, and became active in the territory from the beginning of the nineteenth century. At first, their ideological and economic influence remained sporadic, and although they had some catalysing effect, they did not manage to control the internal social process.[4] This situation changed in the 1850s; from then on, the increasing influence, especially of the Rhenish Mission, proved to be of considerable political, economic and social importance.

As long as the various local communities were still intact and functioning, the sporadic and uncoordinated activities of individual Europeans could not threaten their economic and social structure. The Herero, able to reproduce themselves economically by their immense wealth of cattle independently of outside influences, were correspondingly immune to foreign economic dependency and its cultural and ideological impact. The Ambo of the north had very little direct contact with Europeans. Rooted within the land they cultivated, their social organisation was a challenge the Rhenish Mission only dared to accept late in the nineteenth century (and then at first with little success). But the social units of the Orlam already undermined and deformed by the colonial influences experienced in South Africa were in a process of disintegration. Thus, foreign ideologies penetrated more quickly and had greater impact. Nevertheless, even in the south of Namibia, the mutual relations between missionaries and local leaders were never a one-dimensional or unilateral affair. The Africans always sought to make use of the missionaries for their own interests.

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the Rhenish Mission had embarked upon a strategy which proved more successful than direct proselytising. Through extensive trading activities, the missionaries managed to influence the social and political development in the territory south of Ovamboland. How much political influence the mission wielded, moreover, did not depend on the personal intentions of the missionaries; rather, it was the existing local structures which influenced the political power of the mission. From the 1860s, the Rhenish Mission started to concentrate increasingly on the Herero communities and lend them their support, deliberately stimulating the challenge to the existing Orlam-Nama dominance. This political objective also determined the participation of the mission in the conflict between Nama and Herero. The mission enjoyed a near-monopoly over access to manufactured goods, including arms and ammunition, which it used to give selective support to certain local leaders. Thus, it fostered particularistic forces in opposition to the established centralised power structures. The material assistance which it provided also made the mission more attractive to local groups striving for greater influence, and helped put military conflict on a permanent basis.

The death of the two leading personalities of the Orlam-Nama hegemony, Jonker Afrikaner and his Herero ally, Tjamuaha, resulted in

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the decline of the Orlam-Nama and greater fragmentation among the different communities, which benefited the Rhenish Mission's ambitions to expand its control over the territory. The Mission's activities then shifted from indirect military-strategic involvement to a concentration on economic and ideological priorities. Through its activities, it created a host of new wants and a wide range of new skills marketable only in a capitalist economy, a rudimentary understanding of which now gained ground. And, of course, the values introduced by the missionaries represented their own eurocentric and culture-bound perspectives and perceptions.

Influential as the Mission's role was during the second half of the nineteenth century, its activities were far from completely systematic. Yet, through them, not only were the first steps towards a more centralised power structure and inter-communal institutions undermined and reversed, but also the ability to resist foreign influence and invaders was considerably weakened. The situation that resulted provided the right conditions for the systematic colonisation of the territory.

The establishment of formal colonial rule

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British had established a station at Walvis Bay to buy cattle from the local Namibian population, mainly to supply St Helena Island, especially during the time of Napoleon's imprisonment there. In 1861, a political station for control of the guano trade was added to the post. Finally, in 1878, Walvis Bay was declared British territory, mainly to protect the few, small-scale economic activities of British individuals there. But these operations remained limited, as did British interest in the territory generally thus offering the German empire the chance to acquire Namibia as a 'protectorate'.

Germany had been a latecomer to the 'scramble for Africa' impelled more by its internal political and social situation than by the economic interests of imperialism. The subjugation of foreign peoples and their cultures was seen as a means of diverting Germany's own people from the social issues arising out of the industrial revolution. Profound social injustice and impoverishment as well as material and psychological deprivation had followed the establishment of a 'modern' capitalist system within Germany itself. The new colonial possessions, and the promise they offered of a better future, were seen as a means of appeasing growing dissatisfaction among large sections of the population and channelling their aspirations. At the same time, a small proportion of capitalists (mainly from the heavy industries), who controlled the institutions of state power, industrial production and trade, combined such arguments for the establishment of colonies with a pretended humanitarianism for the colonial peoples. Primarily, therefore, two

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arguments were used for the public justification of the violent acquisition of colonies and the subjugation of millions that such an initiative would serve not only the well-being and self-interest of all Germans, but also those of the indigenous populations. 'European culture' was exalted as the only valid criterion. Non-European or even non-German cultures were regarded as barbarous and, thereby, legitimate objects of violent conquest. The establishment of foreign institutions of dominance followed.

The 'cultural task' of the colonial invasion was a central aspect of the prevailing ideology. The spreading of 'German civilisation' in the early days of German imperialism has been described in typical fashion by a popular author of the period, who emphasised the 'human obligation' of German colonialism. 'German diligence and German energy have gained an important field of activity. Now it is their task to make these countries accessible, to lead those, who are descended into barbarism, upward towards brighter heights of morality.'[5] Typical also, and virtually undisputed, was the view expressed by a German woman settler early this century: 'What do we know about the past of this country? Thousands of years of deepest ignorance passed over it. People, living until the present day like animals, dwelt in the grasslands and mountain nooks. They lived and perished without realising any sense of life.'[6] From such a perspective it became possible to justify the destruction or even physical eradication of pre-colonial societies without remorse.

On 5 September 1884, then, the German empire formally declared the southwestern coastal strip of Africa as under her flag, from Kunene river in the north to Orange river in the south and to the sandy desert of the Kalahari in the east. This formal declaration of colonial responsibility was followed by a period in which a representative of the German empire tried to conclude 'protection treaties' with the local leaders – treaties designed to prevent the establishment of any hegemonial structure in the southern and central parts of the territory. The formal declaration of a colonial status did not, as yet, have any meaningful consequences for the Ambo communities in the north, who continued to live as before, without direct German interference. German policy was based on the antagonisms produced by the decline of the former Orlam-Nama hegemony and the growing strength of other social forces with their own particular interests. It was directed towards the establishment of a 'balance of power' among the African communities which would allow further colonial penetration without coordinated resistance from the African side.

At this time, the German empire was mainly preoccupied with building up its internal capitalist system. It was not yet in a position to take systematic advantage of its colonial prey. Economic interests within Namibia were mainly represented by a number of private 'concessionary companies', which mainly existed for speculative purposes

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only. Designed to make short-term profits, they were not interested in making capital investment, or in the development of a field of economic activity – ample investment opportunities still existed at home. Economically and politically, the colony was attractive initially only as a potential settler colony.

The German authorities at this stage were not much interested in establishing functioning administrative structures, and left the management of the territory to the concessionary companies. They, in turn, were only interested in adding more land to their possessions and acquiring more mining rights. Consequently, the territory turned out to be a financial loss for the German government. Faced with this situation, the German government formally took over the colonial administration and full responsibility for the further development of the territory in 1890. The official German administration was established in 1893. Only from that time on did a colonial power structure and administrative apparatus come into being, which in its aims and effects was soon to threaten the way of life and very existence of the Namibian population.

In the years following 1890, the German colonial power began to integrate the existing local power structures into the administrative system and tried to make use of them as part of its concept of rule. It was during this period – between 1890 and 1905 – that the basic direction of Namibia's future political and socio-economic development was set. Specifically, it was oriented towards racial segregation and its ultimate expression, 'Apartheid'.

The policy of the German colonial administration aimed at the domestication of the African population by tying the local communities to German rule through new agreements with their leaders. The strategy of 'divide and rule' emerged on a more sophisticated basis and found its expression in the 'system Leutwein', named after the first governor of 'German South West Africa', who, between 1894 and 1904, was the highest colonial official in the territory. As Leutwein put it, in his memoirs:

> The final aim of each and every colonisation is – stripped of all its idealistic and humanitarian accessories – finally just a simple business. The colonising race does not intend to bring the possibly expected fortune to the indigenous population of the country to be colonised. Instead it is in the first instance looking for its own advantage ... With respect to the way of colonisation there is consequently basically only one guiding principle, namely the one which leads most safely towards the aspired business.[7]

During this time, the ambivalent character of the traditional African leadership became apparent in all its variations: while some local leaders allowed themselves to be bribed by the colonial authorities,

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others actively led anti-colonial struggles. Leaders who were prepared to serve as instruments of the colonial administration were rewarded with pensions of up to 2,000 German Marks annually. Communities (tribally defined) were moved to fixed areas in order to restrict their mobility and to improve colonial administrative control. Reserves were established, which later, under the doctrine of Apartheid, were to be labelled 'traditional homelands'.

Although the 'system Leutwein' preferred peaceful solutions to the application of military violence, the implementation of this policy, when necessary, also included violent repression against leaders who did not cooperate. Some of them were liquidated; others were put under extreme pressure and finally forced into pacts with the administration. By the mid-1890s, Leutwein had managed to establish a sort of alliance, using his military superiority directly only in situations where the chiefs would not 'voluntarily' compromise.

For the first time, the German colonial authority thus gained a loose supremacy and overlordship within the territory. A decisive factor in the success of this policy was when Leutwein won control over the two most influential leaders of the southern and central parts of Namibia, Hendrik Witbooi of the Nama alliance, and Samuel Maharero, who, as a reward, was made the 'paramount chief' of the Herero – a position hitherto unknown among the various Herero communities, which had lacked such a structured hierarchy. Maharero cooperated with the Germans in return for the support they offered him in the stabilisation of his powerful position among the various Herero communities. Hendrik Witbooi, at this time ambitious to reconstruct a new Nama hegemony (he had already been at war with the Herero for years), rejected outright any foreign 'protection'. He was only forced into a treaty by his defeat by the German troops.[8]

The Leutwein policy of allowing limited authority to accepted leaders, while at the same time restricting their activities to a defined area, in certain respects followed the British practices of indirect rule. It sought to use the local hierarchies for its own purposes – or even created such hierarchies where they did not already exist, as the example of Maharero showed. The manipulation of groups (defined tribally) in this way enabled the colonisers to keep the African peoples separated and isolated, and so prevent their collective action. They were thus kept at bay; but complementary measures, to integrate the African people into the developing structures of the colonial settler society, were not taken.[9] There were no opportunities for Africans at all within the colonial administration, or any aspect of settler society. The infrastructure that was established was oriented solely towards the white immigrants – it did not even pretend to aim at social progress for all. Education – essential if adaptation to social change and the values of colonial capitalism were to be brought about – remained the complete and

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private responsibility of the missions (though later it was modestly subsidised by the colonial authority). The missions' training mainly concentrated on the basic skills and qualifications needed for the bottom of the social hierarchy and production processes of the colonial economy. Attempts to train Africans as artisans and petty officials in the colonial administration failed – not for lack of interest by Namibians, but because the rigidity of the settler society excluded almost without exception the colonised majority from participation in the system above the level of simple manual work.* Cheap labour was all that was needed – as domestic servants, farm workers, construction workers and, later, in the mines.

The limitations of this system became more and more obvious as the European settlement increased. Initially, the only real economic opportunity for the white immigrants was large-scale farming more precisely, ranching. Thus, their main interest lay in the brutal and systematic expansion of their holdings of land and cattle – in other words, in the further expropriation of the African population – without even offering in return opportunities of employment within the capitalist sector of the colonial economy. The settlers were only concerned with appropriating land and cattle by means of violent or fraudulent practices, and in obtaining 'legal' backing for these methods by the colonial administration. Leutwein's original concept of colonial administrative rule had favoured the creation of opportunities that would allow the African population to adapt to the emerging new structures and social relations, but under increasing pressure from the settler community, the administration extended greater and greater support to the violent and brutal methods of expropriation practised by the white settlers. For Leutwein, not to have continually passed legislation directed against African interests would have meant risking confrontation with the settler community he would have been accused of not only undermining the settlement of Germans in the territory, but of also ignoring the interests of the German empire as well. Nothing was offered, by way of compensation or economic incentive, that would have allowed even the most limited integration of the colonised into the new colonial society. There was no 'appeasement policy'.

Yet, for the first half of the 1890s, despite the establishment of a colonial administration which was to develop on these lines, and despite the first influx of German settlers, the Herero remained the strongest economic group. They still possessed an immense wealth of cattle and occupied the best grazing lands. And although they did not regularly participate in the colonial trade network, they dominated the market by

* 'Educated kaffirs' remained unemployed; they were perceived as a typical product of 'liberal' British-style economism, and were rejected. It was not until the 1950s that the first few Namibians were able to matriculate in their own country.

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sales of cattle. Their economic dominance was only destroyed by a cattle epidemic in 1897, which decisively weakened their social and economic position. The immense loss of cattle made the Herero more dependent on European goods; as they could no longer trade in cattle, the possession and sale of land started to become the subject of business. For the first time, impoverished Herero started to earn their living as wage labourers in sizeable numbers, and white settlers began to enter Hereroland to settle on a permanent basis. The Namibian economy had begun to develop on European lines.

German capital now began to participate in the long-term planning of economic development within the economy. It pressed for the construction of a railway network and other infrastructural investments for the development of the country's resources. All these measures were of strategic military value, and at the same time facilitated the exploitation and export of Namibian resources. The 'labour question' now came to the fore as the most burning issue: as the need for African workers increased, the labour supply became the main economic problem. There was a chronic shortage. To increase the supply of badly needed labourers, colonial authorities made use of increasingly violent methods. Settlers and colonial officials alike failed to realise that the most brutal methods were not necessarily the most profitable ones. Labourers for white farms, mines and railway construction now became sought after. The uncompromisingly violent character of the German colonial regime became even more obvious, as a strategy of unmitigated force was employed to force the black population into the colonial-capitalist economic system.

Leutwein's original ambitions, to integrate the African masses into the economic and social system of the colony with as little use of physical violence as possible, met the unanimous and uncompromising opposition of the settler community and even the majority of his officials within the administrative structure of the colony. These settlers and officials supported terrorist methods, aimed at the complete subjugation of the African population – even at the risk of genocide.

Under these conditions, resistance became for the Africans an existential necessity – a struggle for very survival. At the turn of the century, a series of local rebellions took place. Restricted to regional and uncoordinated actions, they necessarily ended in military defeat and further restrictions. The suppression of these isolated armed risings was used by the colonial authorities further to expand the policy of creating reserves. Through the 'peace treaties' it laid down, the colonial regime improved its system of control and dictated limited areas for settlement to the defeated communities. Rebellious leaders were executed, land confiscated, the people disarmed and deported for forced labour – especially to the railway under construction. The antagonisms inevitably increased. In 1904, the Africans rose in arms against the

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violence of the settlers and their colonial regime. The 'German-Namibian War', which lasted three years until 1907, was an act of self-defence.[10]

Politically, this war resulted in the final collapse of the 'system Leutwein'. Leutwein had been criticised from the beginning for his 'liberal' and 'kaffir-friendly' approach – though this only appeared to be a matter of tactics and did not represent any fundamental disagreement concerning the basic aims of colonial rule – and in the opening months of the war, he was finally forced to retire.

His successor embodied the rabidly racist mood that prevailed among the settler community and the colonial-nationalist circles within the German empire. According to von Trotha, who in June 1904 received orders to direct the military operations of the colonial troops in Namibia, the genocide of the African population had by now become a necessary task and even a historic cultural necessity.[11] Von Trotha's perverse philosophy culminated in the issuing of an extermination order against the whole Herero people – at a time when they were already decisively beaten. Of an originally estimated 80,000 Herero, after the war only about 16,000 were believed to be still alive. Their leader, Samuel Maharero, who had cooperated with the German authorities for the sake of his own privileges for nearly twenty years, managed to escape with a few followers through the waterless Kalahari into Bechuanaland.

The Herero's military struggle for survival triggered off hysterical reactions among the settler community and resulted in a campaign against all Africans. Race hostility of the most intense and virulent kind reached a paroxysm, resulting in the most violent repression all over the country. Finally, the Nama leader (for ten years a solid ally of Leutwein and the colonial administration) led his people into battle, but not till after the Herero had already been virtually destroyed. The Nama in the south conducted efficient small-scale guerrilla war; the most effective military forces were led by Hendrik Witbooi personally and Jacob Marengo (often incorrectly referred to as Morenga). Ethnic origin played no important role among the combatants in these small battle-units. In fact, the guerrillas fighting in the south could be seen as the first nucleus of the emerging Namibian nation in its anti-colonial struggle. Hendrik Witbooi – over 70 years old – died from a battle injury; Jacob Marengo fought on for several years, and was only defeated with the support of the British colonial authorities in neighbouring Cape Province. Witbooi and Marengo are to the present day symbols of resistance to the Namibian people. Once more, the price of resistance proved to be bloody: it is estimated that less than half of the 20,000 members of the Nama communities survived the battles or the imprisonment and forced labour that followed their defeat.

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The developed colonial economy: consolidation of Apartheid

By 1907, with the total and final defeat of the Africans fighting in the central and southern parts of Namibia, the German colonial power gained complete de facto control of and power in the territory. From then onwards, Namibia, right up to the Ambo settlement area of the north, was converted into a settler colony dominated by Europeans to an even greater extent than in contemporary South Africa. The surviving Nama and Herero were initially put into concentration camps. Subsequently, almost everyone was forced to the status of slave labour in the service of the colonial economy. By 1914, only about 200 men of the two tribes were reported not to be in employment.[12]

The consequences of the insane philosophy of General von Trotha (who, in fact, only represented and articulated the extremist ideology of the Europeans at that time) became obvious with the even greater shortage of labour. Though calculated for in military terms, the complete destruction of the tribal societies, culminating in genocide, ran counter to the economic logic of the capitalist interest.

The white settler community, faced again with the chronic labour shortage, once more relied upon the intensification of non-economic violence. The colonial administration combined this approach with regulations which would prevent further organised resistance of the African majority once and for all. The greater portion of the new regulations were intended to force the Africans into employment in the colonial-capitalist sector, while at the same time they attempted to destroy the last ties between the African communities. In 1906, all non-Ovambo were prohibited from entering the northern part of Namibia. In the same year, the authorities decided to expropriate almost all Namibians south of Ovamboland of their communal land and cattle. This step destroyed the last opportunity for Africans to contine, at least on a modest basis, with their traditional methods of production and social organisation.

And, of course, the gulf between black and white had already been unbridgeably fixed. In 1905, a law had been issued prohibiting mixed marriages. Thus, the social separation according to racial categories which already existed was legally cemented. Racial differences were the basis for colonial class antagonisms and were the criteria for strict social segregation. Strict social segregation according to racial differencese was based on 'science' of 'race superiority'. Paul Rohrbach, formerly commissioner of settlement issues in Namibia and a typical representative of colonialism, based his programme and policy on the premise that Africans had a biologically determined limit to their development, and would always be incapable of reaching the level of the whites. Miscegenation would pose a threat of basic degeneration to the whites, with the consequent gradual loss of their racial superiority.

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Racial superiority was to be the guiding principle for any interaction, based on the master-servant relationship.[13]

European domination was now deeply entrenched in every sphere and, from this time onwards, serious alternatives to the newly established system were no longer even mooted. The prime necessity was cheap African labour, and Ordinance no 82 of 1907 regulated anew the control of the African population, defined contracts for service and employment, and made it obligatory for Africans to carry a pass. It also called for the prohibition of cattle-breeding and land purchase by Africans, and the introduction of organised contract labour. With the discovery of diamonds in 1908, and the development of a labour-intensive diamond industry, the demand for labour became even more urgent.

Before this period, the settlement of the Ambo groups had, as was mentioned earlier, been influenced only indirectly by the German colonial administration. Of no real interest to the white settlers hitherto, the Germans had not included the northern area in their immediate and direct sphere of control. Instead, they had established a moderate degree of influence, largely based on the cooperation of the Ambo leadership. But now, it became increasingly attractive as a potential reservoir of black labour to be used in the colonial economy. After the discovery of diamonds in 1908, Ovamboland became the supply-base for migrant labour in the mines and was thus effectively integrated with the capitalist sector of the colonial society.[14] This policy was given further impetus by the effects of a severe drought in the northern parts of Namibia during 1912 to 1914, which finally forced many Ovambos to earn their living within the settler-dominated money-economy. (In 1911, the first governmental labour management institution for contract workers had been installed at the border of Ovamboland. By the end of 1912, recruiting agents for migrant workers had been appointed in the northern areas.)[15]

With this economic penetration of the Ambo societies, the military invasion and subjugation of this area became unnecessary. The expansion of the colonial economy had undermined the mode of production and social structures of the Ovambo much more effectively and profitably. Up to today, the migrant workers from the northern parts of Namibia represent the most deprived category of Namibians. As a consequence, they formed the social basis for the rise of SWAPO half a century later.

Geographical separation according to racial and ethnic categories; reserves, in which the African population was condemned to live; pass-laws; a rigid legal superstructure, which made race a criterion for class positions all these are phenomena of a racist class society, as it already existed in Namibia under German colonial rule. When South African troops occupied Namibia in 1914-15, German colonialism had

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prepared and created the structures of Apartheid, which afterwards were perfected by the South African regime and supplied with a specific ideology and doctrine of racial rule. The model, however, bore a German trade-mark.

References

1 In this article the country is consistently referred to as Namibia. For political reasons the use of this term and its application to earlier times seem justified, even though 'Namibia' came into use only in the mid-1960s.

2 On their impact, see Department of Information and Publicity/SWAPO of Namibia, *To be born a nation: the liberation struggle for Namibia* (London, 1981).

3 For an attempt to reconstruct this period in more detail, see Henning Melber, 'Das doppelte Vermächtnis der Geschichte: Nationwerdung, Kolonisierungsprozess und deutsche Fremdherrschaft in Nambia (ca. 1800 bis 1914)', in *Namibia: Die Aktualität des kolonialen Verhältnisses. Beitrage aus dem Projekt 'Politische Landeskunde Namibias'* (University of Bremen, Diskurs No.6, 1982).

4 See Richard Moorsom, 'Colonisation and proletarianisation: An exploratory investigation of the formation of the working class in Namibia under German and South African colonial rule to 1945 (MA thesis, University of Sussex, 1973, unpublished), and SWAPO, 'Namibia: people's resistance, 1670-1970', in *Race & Class* (Vol XXII, no 1, 1980).

5 C. Falkenhorst, *Jungdeutschland in Afrika: Der Baumtöter* (Dresden, 1894), author's translation.

6 Clara Brockmann, *Briefe eines deutschen Mädchens aus Südwest* (Berlin, 1912), author's translation.

7 Theodor Leutwein, *Elf Jahre Gouverneur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (Berlin, 1906), author's translation.

8 Leutwein was intelligent enough to present the Nama leader with acceptable conditions, which guaranteed Hendrik Witbooi his further influential position among the Nama and offered him a capitulation without humiliation. The respect Leutwein demonstrated towards the traditional meaning of Hendrik Witbooi's chieftainship was honoured by this outstanding leader with unconditional acceptance of the German authority for a long period. On the subjugation of Hendrik Witbooi and the position of this Namibian leader, see *Namibia: Die Aktualität des kolonialen Verhältnisses* ... , op. cit. In the meantime, the personal diary of Hendrik Witbooi (mainly correspondence of the years 1884 to 1894) has been published in a German translation (the original 'diary' is in Cape-Dutch): Hendrik Witbooi, *Afrika den Afrikanern! Aufzeichnungen eines Nama-Häuptlings aus der Zeit der deutschen Eroberung Südwestafrikas 1884 bis 1894*, edited by Wolfgang Reinhard (Berlin/Bonn, 1982). For a new and stimulating approach concerning Witbooi's 'traditional' resistance to German colonialism, see Neville Alexander, 'The enigma of the Khowesin 1885-1905', in Christoph Saunders (ed), *Perspectives on Namibia: past and present* (Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1983).

9 For basic information on the period of German colonial rule and its effects on the Namibian people, see especially the contributions of two German historians, whose main works have meanwhile been published in English translations: Helmut Bley, *South-West Africa under German rule 1894-1914* (London, 1971) and Horst Drechsler, *'Let us die fighting': the struggle of the Herero and Nama against German imperialism (1884-1915)* (London, 1980).

10 A good account on the background, course and result of this war is Horst Drechsler, op. cit. Superficial and disappointing in its analytical dimension, but very detailed

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with regard to the chronology of the military conflict, is the recent book of Jon M. Bridgman, *The Revolt of the Hereros* (Berkeley, 1981).

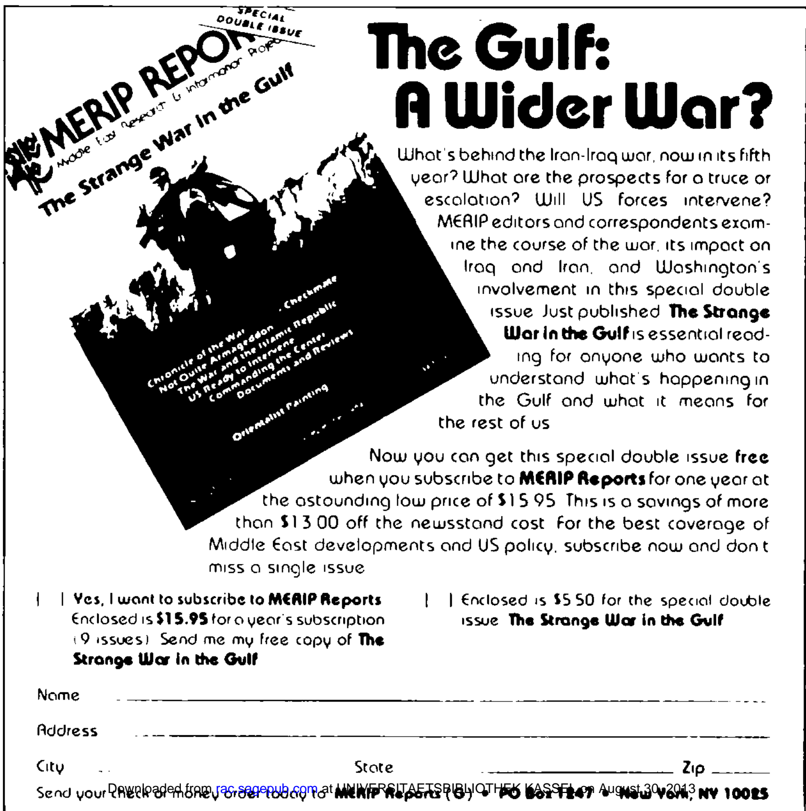
11 On the prevailing ideology of this time, see Henning Melber, 'Historische Grundlagen der Apartheid: 'Bis zur völligen Niederwerfung der Eingeborenen' – Die kulturverpflichtete Aufgabe des Völkermords', in *Informationsdienst Südliches Afrika* (No. 4, 1980).

12 See two essays by Fritz Wege, 'Die Anfänge der Herausbildung einer Arbeiterklasse in Südwestafrika unter der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft', in *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (1969/I) and 'Zur sozialen Lage der Arbeiter Namibias unter der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft in den Jahren vor dem ersten Weltkrieg', in *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (1971/III)

13 Cf. Paul Rohrbach, *Kulturpolitische Grundsätze für die Rassen- und Missionsfragen* (Berlin, 1909).

14 See the essay by W.G. Clarence-Smith and Richard Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and class formation in Ovamboland, 1845-1915', in *Journal of African History* (Vol. 16, no.3, 1975).

15 The catastrophic labour conditions and the high mortality rate on the diamond fields, as well as the extreme exploitation of the Ovambo migrant workers, is illustrated in Heinrich Loth, 'Kolonialismus und Antikolonialismus, Aspekte der Geschichte des südlichen Afrika aus der Sicht deutscher Quellen, in *Asien, Afrika, Latein-amerika* (Vol.8, no. 4, 1980). See also Richard Moorsom, 'Migrant Workers and the Formation of SWANLA 1900-1926, in *South African Labour Bulletin* (Vol. 4, nos 1-2, 1978).



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