

“Rivers of Blood and Money”: The 1904 Herero Genocide and its Effects on German Rule in Colonial South West Africa

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In 1904, the Herero people of South West Africa rose up against the perceived threat of German colonial rule.¹ In less than a year, their rebellion had been crushed, their population decimated, and their national cohesion rendered virtually non-existent.² While still ‘mopping up’ the residual Herero population in the North, the Germans were faced with a second rebellion by the Nama people in the south, which was put down with the same ferocity.³ The genocidal nature of the wars between the German colonizers and the Herero and Nama peoples was so brutal and excessive that it is estimated (from a census in 1911) that out of 80,000 Herero before the war, only 15,130 were alive, and out of 20,000 Nama, only 9,781 had survived.⁴ The implications of this prolonged and sadistically genocidal war on German colonial rule in SW Africa were contradictory. The most important outcome of the Herero and Nama wars was that the German authorities fully consolidated their power over the colony. Their enemies were defeated, and there remained virtually no groups within the

¹ The present day title of the nation is Namibia, but I have decided to use the historical name for the colonial state, South West Africa (which will be referred to hereafter as SW Africa). I am using this terminology primarily because the majority of my sources use this title, but also because my narrative centers on a historical period when South West Africa was the proper title of the region.

² Jan-Bart Gewald, *Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia, 1890-1923* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 1999), 141.

³ John H. Wellington, *South West Africa and Its Human Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 210.

⁴ Horst Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting: The Struggle of the Herero and Nama against German Imperialism (1884-1915)* (London: Zed Press, 1966), 214.

territory which could challenge German rule.⁵ In this way, German colonialism was strengthened and enhanced through the brutal subjection of the Nama and Herero. On the other hand, destroying such a huge part of the population in SW Africa had negative implications for colonial rule. Without a strong labor base the German authorities found it very hard to exploit the resources and land that they had won through genocidal conquest.⁶ The German conduct in the Herero and Nama wars shows a contradiction, as the outcome of the wars simultaneously strengthened and weakened the social, political, and economic power of the German colonial state in SW Africa.

Before the outbreak of war in 1904, the power of the German colonial state in SW Africa was limited, but their presence was growing increasingly stronger. Due to its location and inhospitable coastal environment, SW Africa was one of the last territories in Africa to be colonized by Europeans.⁷ In 1883, the first land was purchased in the territory by F.A.E. Luderitz, a merchant from Bremen, but only in small tracts near the coast.⁸ In order to protect its citizen interests, Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor pledged his support and protection for the new colonial inroad into SW Africa.⁹ While Luderitz's purchases 'kick started' the beginnings of German colonialism in SW Africa, it would not be until the end of the German-Herero war in 1907 that direct colonial control was established in the territory.

The early German colonial penetration of SW Africa was organized by an underfinanced concession company. In 1884 the *Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft für Südwest Afrika* was commissioned by Bismarck in order to keep competing British interests from developing in the territory.¹⁰ The company proved less than competent in maintaining German interests, so much so that in 1885 Bismarck dispatched an Imperial Commissioner, Dr. Heinrich Goering, to

⁵ Ruth First, *South West Africa* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), 83.

⁶ I. Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (Cape Town: Juta and Company Ltd. 1971), 182.

⁷ First, *South West Africa*, 61.

⁸ Heinrich Vedder, *A History of South West Africa* (Capetown: Maskew Miller Ltd., 1960), 43.

⁹ First, *South West Africa*, 71.

¹⁰ Richard A. Voeltz, "The European Economic and Political Penetration of South West Africa, 1884-1892," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 17: (1984), 623-699.

administer the colony.¹¹ The development of the colony proceeded, and treaties of German protection were signed with many of the African groups in the territory, including the Herero, who were involved in a long war with the Nama.¹² In 1888, one of the most powerful Herero chiefs, Kamaherero, incited by the British trader Robert Lewis, withdrew from a protection treaty which he had signed with the Germans.¹³ Goering was targeted for attack, and had to flee to the coast of the colony, an action which prompted the German government to dispatch the first 21 German soldiers to the colony in 1889.¹⁴

The number of soldiers gradually expanded over the next few years during which time the Germans set up their capital at Windhoek and began 'pacifying' the Africans who would not negotiate treaties, most notably the Nama chieftain Hendrik Witbooi.¹⁵ Thus, by 1897, under the direction of the colonial governor Leutwien, the German protectorate was established and development of the new colony began, starting with the construction of the Swakopmund-Windhoek railway which helped to encourage European settlement in the territory.¹⁶ The level of settlement was initially very low and would significantly increase only after the Herero and Nama wars against the Germans officially ended in 1907.

The German settlers were farmer-traders, who split their time between developing their agriculture and trading with the Herero and other African groups in order to build up capital in the form of cattle herds.¹⁷ As the trade of cattle and sale of land grew stronger, the traders began giving the Herero credit, and subsequent abuses of the credit system had a significant negative impact on the Herero's cattle and land holdings.¹⁸

¹¹ J.P. Vans. Bruwer, *South West Africa, the Disputed Land* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk, 1966), 71.

¹² Vedder, *A History*, 36.

¹³ Voeltz, "Penetration," 624.

¹⁴ Voeltz, "Penetration," 624.

¹⁵ Bruwer, *South West Africa, the Disputed Land*, 72. It is prudent to point out that these initial campaigns did not have any of the genocidal excesses that would characterize the wars several years later.

¹⁶ Vedder, *A History of South west Africa*, 50.

¹⁷ First, *South West Africa*, 75.

¹⁸ Jan-Bart Gewald and Jeremy Silvester, *Words cannot be Found, German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 84.

The Herero watched with consternation as treaties were abrogated, the rulings of their chiefs and old tribal custom ruthlessly replaced by the new German law, and Samuel Maherero coaxed or bullied into boundary agreements which led to the confiscation of trespassing cattle and the loss of their land.¹⁹

This increasing pressure on the Herero, especially in consideration to their land and cattle holdings made them fearful of assumed German plans for control of the rest of their land. As a consequence of increasing pressure on their land and herds, the Herero revolted in January 1904. The revolt came as a complete surprise to the Germans, who had the bulk of their military forces in the south of the colony, fighting a smaller rebellion.²⁰ The Herero were initially successful in their war, mostly due to the few numbers of German troops in the region. Their initial offensive claimed the lives of less than a hundred and fifty German traders and farmers, instilling a genuine fear of the Herero among the German population in the colony.²¹

The Herero initially had some successes in pushing the German forces out of their territory and laying siege to their isolated forts, but by June of 1904, the German governor Leutwein had had his military power stripped by the German Kaiser and given to a new commander, General Lothar von Trotha.²² The appointment of von Trotha signaled a drastic change in German strategy. Governor Leutwein had been pushing for a negotiated truce with the Herero, but this approach was negated by Trotha's obsessive desire to annihilate the

¹⁹First, *South West Africa*, 76. It seems as though it was very unclear to the Herero as to why their land was being taken from them at all. For the Herero, the land they lived and pastured their cattle on was the property of the entire group, and the sale of that land by their chief, Samuel Maherero, was contrary to their traditional customs. The confiscation of cattle occurred after a law was passed that allowed settlers to confiscate any cattle found on their land. This, combined with unfair trading practices by the settlers, led to the loss by the Herero of almost fifty percent of their herds before the war broke out in 1904.

²⁰Tilman Dederig, "A Certain Rigorous Treatment of all Parts of the Nation: The Annihilation of the Herero in German South West Africa, 1904," in *The Massacre in History*, eds. Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999), 206.

²¹Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 143-44.

²²Gewald, *Herero Heroes*, 169.

Herero entirely.²³ Von Trotha initiated his strategy by encircling the entirety of the Herero nation, including women, children and livestock, at the Waterberg, a mountainous region to where the Herero had retreated between April and August.²⁴ It was at this locale that the destruction of the Herero nation began. On 11 August 1904, von Trotha's forces attacked the encircled Herero at the Waterberg and they were forced to flee to the South-East through the only hole in von Trotha's cordon.²⁵

The majority of the Herero nation fled from the Waterberg and into the Omaheke (Kalahari) Desert and was subsequently pushed further into the inhospitable terrain by harassing German patrols. It was after this that Trotha initiated his policy of eradication and created a 250 kilometer cordon around the Omaheke, effectively sealing the majority of the Herero in a waterless and inhospitable terrain, where they began to succumb to hunger, thirst, and exposure.²⁶ Von Trotha had essentially completed his campaign, that being the military defeat of the Herero. After the battle of the Waterberg, there was essentially no more fighting as the Herero had been decisively defeated in a single battle and had lost all military cohesion. However, von Trotha would not accept peace from the Herero, and continued his sadistic plan of complete and total obliteration.²⁷ On 2 October 1904, he issued his infamous "extermination order":

I, the great General of the German soldiers, send this message to the Herero people. Hereros are no longer German subjects. They have murdered and robbed....and now out of cowardice they refuse to fight...The Herero people must depart from the

²³ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 153-54. Von Trotha had won a reputation as a brutal colonial warrior after his successes in putting down rebellions in East Africa as well as his role in the Boxer Rebellion in China. His brutal strategy toward the Herero is summed up in a letter he wrote to Leutwein. In the letter he writes; "I know enough tribes in Africa. They all have the same mentality insofar as they yield only to force. It was and remains my policy to apply this force by unmitigated terrorism and even cruelty. I shall destroy the rebellious tribes by shedding rivers of blood and money."

²⁴ Gewalt, *Herero Heroes*, 170.

²⁵ Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, 207.

²⁶ Dederling, "A Certain Rigorous Treatment," 210.

²⁷ Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa*, 131.

country. If they do not, I shall force them to do it with large cannons. Within the German boundaries, every Herero, with or without rifle, with or without cattle will be shot.²⁸

From the issue of the proclamation until the Herero were finally allowed to surrender under the new German Governor, Fredrich von Lindequist in late 1905²⁹, the strategy employed upon them can be called nothing but genocide. By the time the Herero were allowed to come out of the Omaheke, their entire society and way of life had been obliterated. The few who made it out of the inhospitable conditions of the desert were starved and broken, reduced to skin and bones. Very small groups of Herero who succeeded in escaping the German cordon fled eastward to Bechuanaland where they regrouped under the leadership of the chief Samuel Maherero.³⁰ In all aspects, von Trotha's obsessive and macabre goals had been achieved; he had swiftly and decisively obliterated an entire nation of people.³¹ The Hereros captured after late 1905 were herded into forced-labor concentration camps on the coast, where many hundreds more died from disease and exposure.³² While von Trotha may have seen his excessively brutal strategies as beneficial to building a strong German colony in SW Africa, the real consequences of his genocidal policies were very counter-productive to his intended goals.

It is interesting to note that Leutwein offered a very different strategy for defeating, but not destroying, the Herero. In a report to the Colonial Department prepared by Leutwein during the early stages of the war, he wrote:

²⁸Karla Poewe, *The Namibian Herero: A History of their Psychosocial Disintegration and Survival* (Lewiston, Queenstown: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 63-64; Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 156-57. There has been some discussion as to whether Trotha's 'extermination order' was really intended to annihilate the Herero people. Some have argued that it was meant for Herero men only, since women and children were only meant to have warning shots fired over their heads to drive them away from German soldiers, and consequently, further into the Omaheke desert. While it is possible that Trotha did not understand the severity or consequences of his proclamation, it is highly improbable due to the brutality that the German forces visited on the Herero after the battle at the Waterberg.

²⁹ Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, 132.

³⁰ First, *South West Africa*, 79.

³¹ *Gewald Herero Heroes*, 191.

³² Drechsler *Let Us Die Fighting*, 207.

I do not concur with those fanatics who want to see the Herero destroyed all together. 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 Herero as cattle breeders, though on a small scale, and especially as laborers. It would be quite sufficient if they are politically dead.³³

Essentially, Leutwein had already written the counter-productive effects of destroying the Herero before it had even happened. Von Trotha's excessive strategy of complete and total destruction of the Herero left the German colonial state in complete power over its territory, but at the expense of significant labor and livestock resources.³⁴

The war had left the German colony in dire straits. Railroad construction had been halted, and any farming or land development had been stalled because of the war resulting in a significant economic crisis for German farmers.³⁵ The economic crisis was partially resolved by policies that essentially made the Nama and Herero forced laborers, but there was still a significant dearth of labor as well as a devastated cattle population which meant that settlers had a difficult time restoring their herds quickly.³⁶

As Leutwein had foreseen, the immediate economic consequences of the Herero rebellion on German colonialism were negative. As the rebellion drew to its close, Leutwein remarked:

At a cost of several hundred millions of marks and several thousand German soldiers, of the three economic aspects of the colony, mining, farming, and

³³ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 148.

³⁴ Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, 212.

³⁵ Helmut Bley, "German South West Africa after the Conquest, 1904-1914," in *South West Africa, Travesty of Trust: The Expert Papers and Findings of the International Conference on South West Africa, Oxford 23-26 March 1966, with a Postscript by Ian MacGibbon on the 1966 Judgment of the International Court of Justice* (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1967), 41.

³⁶ Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, 213.

native labor, we have destroyed the second entirely and two-thirds of the third.³⁷

The immediate consequences of the war on the Herero people was their internment in forced-labor concentration camps in the coastal towns of Luderitzbucht and Swakopmund, where they were employed as laborers on harbor and railroad construction.³⁸ The conditions in the camps were horrendous, and many hundreds of Herero men, women, and children died from exposure, disease, and over-work.³⁹ As well as being forced to live in atrocious conditions, diseases spread across the camps, and syphilis became a serious problem, not only because it caused significant death and disease in the short term, but also because it left many Herero women sterile.⁴⁰ It is in this context that one can see the apparent contradictions of using the defeated and broken Herero people. The need for a significant amount of African labor to rebuild what had been destroyed in the colony during the war, as well as to continue to build a strong colonial state in its aftermath, was met by employing extremely unfit Herero prisoners. The Herero survivors provided relatively un-satisfactory labor, which, in turn, did very little to help build a strong colony.⁴¹

By 1908, the concentration camps had been closed down but a more comprehensive and widespread system of forced labor had been enacted by the colonial state. Horst Drechsler has referred to the period after the war ended in 1907 until 1915 as “the peace of the graveyard.”⁴² It cannot be disputed that the

³⁷ Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, 213.

³⁸ Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa*, 145.

³⁹ Gewalt, *Herero Heroes*, 188-189; Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 213. A report by the ‘High Command of the Protection Force’ on the death rates in the camps indicates that nearly half of the Herero and Nama who actually made it to the camps died from 1904 to 1907.

⁴⁰ Poewe, *The Namibian Herero*, 91; Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 232. The impact that syphilis had on the Herero population cannot be overstated. The Herero population stagnated after 1904 as a direct consequence of the conditions in the Omaheke and the concentration camps. Also, the Herero increased abortion in order that their offspring would not be born into the subjugation inflicted upon them. Therefore, one can see how, as a direct result of the Herero genocide, the labor force of the colony was negatively altered in a drastically.

⁴¹ Gewalt, *Herero Heroes*, 187.

⁴² Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 231.

aftermath of the war showed Germany to have consolidated complete political control over most of SW Africa. Although some groups of people (most notably the Ovambos and the Bastards of Rehoboth) were left politically and socially autonomous, they remained underneath the economic thumb of the colonial state.⁴³ However, for most of the Africans in SW Africa the German victory over the Herero and Nama signaled an end of their independence.

In August 1907, coinciding with the official end of the war, the German authorities signed into law an Ordinance entitled “Measures for the Control of the Natives” which completely dispossessed the Herero and Nama people.⁴⁴ The Ordinance expropriated all land and cattle that the Herero and Nama owned and placed it in the hands of the colonial state.⁴⁵ The amount of land that the colonial state was able to confiscate was immense. In 1903, one year before the war, the Crown land in SW Africa amounted to 19,250,000 hectares and after the war, owing to the land confiscations as well as of an agreement with the concession companies, the Government found itself with nearly 46 million hectares of land, ready for settlement.⁴⁶ Thus, immediately following the end of the war in 1907, the German colonial state directly owned nearly half of all the land in SW Africa. This consolidation of land and African resources made the profile of the colonial state much more pronounced, to the point that it penetrated virtually every aspect of life in the colony. But with the serious deficiency of African labor, developing the gains made by confiscating that land would prove to be a trying business for the colonial state.

In effect, the Herero and Nama were to be ‘proletarianized’; molded into an African working class which could be used by German settlers and the colonial government to build and develop the colony.⁴⁷

In his study of colonial economy in SWA (South West Africa), which met with great approval in SWA and was even used as a school textbook, Paul Rhorback wrote in 1907 that it was the German’s task ‘to divest the Herero as far as possible of their national

⁴³ Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa*, 150.

⁴⁴ Gewald and Silvester, *Words Cannot be Found*, 192

⁴⁵ Bley, *South West Africa under German Rule*, 171.

⁴⁶ Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, 213, 216.

⁴⁷ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 231.

characteristics and merge them with other native groups into a single colored working-class.⁴⁸

In fact it can be seen that the confiscation of Herero and Nama land coincided with rising levels of German settlement. From 1903 to 1913, the white population of German South West Africa expanded from 3,701 to 14,840.⁴⁹ Concurrently, the number of farms which were sold to whites increased exponentially after 1907. In 1903, the number of farms the colonial government and concession companies had sold or leased to settlers was around 450.⁵⁰ From 1907 to 1909, the period of the most rapid European settlement, the number of farms leased or sold was somewhere around 400, and it climbed by nearly 100 farms every year until 1913.⁵¹ The reasons for steadily increased European settlement during this period can be attributed to abundance of inexpensive land the aftermath of the Herero and Nama wars.

After peace had been achieved in 1907, inexpensive and abundant land confiscated from the Herero and Nama was made available to settlers by the colonial government. Not only was this land cheap and fertile, it was also safe and secure for the new settlers. This is another consequence of the Herero and Nama wars that deeply affected German colonial rule in SW Africa. In winning the wars, the Germans had exerted their direct control over the territory of SW Africa, but also found that their coercive rule had to be constantly re-applied to the Africans in order to 'keep them in line'.⁵² It is here that one can see another of the most important impacts of the Herero genocide on colonial rule in SW Africa. To put it bluntly, the eradication of the entire Herero nation made it possible for the German colonial authorities to open up the entirety of the Herero land, secure, cheap, abundant and fertile, to hundreds of white settlers who may otherwise never had had the chance. While white settlement was gaining speed, the colonial government also made it possible for the new settlers to have a widely available and malleable source of wage labor to work their land.

⁴⁸ Bley, *South West Africa under German Rule*, 223-24.

⁴⁹ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 244.

⁵⁰ Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, 218

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 218-219.

⁵² Bley, "German South West Africa," 43.

The same Ordinance of 18 August 1907 which dispossessed the Herero of their land and cattle also included sections which consolidated direct control over natives by settlers.⁵³ The Ordinance had special provisions restricting the movement and freedom of the Herero and Nama, essentially putting them at the mercy of their settler masters. The Ordinance declared that all Africans over the age of seven had to register with the government, as well as carry an identity card without which one could not procure food, lodging, or employment.⁵⁴ Moreover, if it was found that the Africans in question could not prove that they were employed, then they could be brought to the nearest police station and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.⁵⁵ Restrictions were also placed on personal ownership; Africans were not allowed to own land or livestock without the permission of the Governor of the colony.⁵⁶ Finally, any organization along 'tribal' lines by the Herero was abolished and the actual numbers of Herero allowed to be in contact with each other was significantly restricted.⁵⁷ The result of all of these restrictions and regulations on the Herero and Nama after 1907 was that they became, in effect, forced laborers for the white settlers.

The suppression of the great uprisings brought to a close the process of dispossessing the Herero and Nama, an essential prerequisite for reducing them to the status of wage laborers. The forcible nature of their expropriation, however, prevented them from becoming free wage laborers.⁵⁸

An African worker could be dismissed for even the most trivial offenses, and there were virtually no legal recourses available to those workers who felt they had been wronged.⁵⁹ The white settlers, on the other hand, were given almost

⁵³ Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, 230.

⁵⁴ Gewald and Silvester, *Words Cannot be Found*, 194.

⁵⁵ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 231.

⁵⁶ Bley, *South West Africa under German Rule*, 172. Even with this provision, it was not until 1912 that any native was allowed to own livestock or land and even then the number of people it actually affected was insignificant.

⁵⁷ Bley, *South West Africa under German Rule*, 184.

⁵⁸ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 231.

⁵⁹ Bley, *South West Africa under German Rule*, 172.

complete control over their African workers, which often resulted in episodes of brutal and indiscriminate beatings and violence.

The treatment of the predominantly Herero laborers on European settlers' farms was a brutal and inhumane existence, characterized by vicious and regular beatings by their 'employers'.⁶⁰ This violence is an important consequence of the Herero genocide, since the reliance on savage coercion to control Herero labor was in no small part a reaction to settler's paranoia to the possibility of renewed violence:

The Farmers spoke of their right to administer their own justice and declared that they were living in a state of constant emergency. Certainly conditions of panic and anxiety were prevalent, many farmers suffered from persecution mania and went in fear of being poisoned by their own workers.⁶¹

Even though this reliance on beating was not officially condoned by the colonial government, it was none the less punished, albeit rarely, and existed as an unspoken rule in the forced-labor economy of the farms.⁶²

One can see how the Herero genocide thus changed the face of German colonial rule in SW Africa. Lacking anyone strong enough to oppose them, the Germans were able set into law and enforce an Ordinance which essentially made the Africans of SW Africa forced laborers for the white settlers.

The wars that the Germans fought against the Herero and Nama tribes were the last of their kind in South West Africa- and the last that Germany won this

⁶⁰Gewald and Silvester, *Words cannot be Found*, 202.

⁶¹ Bley, "German South West Africa," 49.

⁶² Wellington, *South West and Its Human Issues Africa and Its Human Issues*, 230-31, 232-33. The primary example of a European being punished for excessive violence was the trial of Ludwig Cramer in 1913. Cramer was brought to court after it was alleged that he savagely beat one of his most loyal workers, as well as the man's pregnant wife (who was beaten so savagely that she gave birth to a dead child), on the allegation that they had killed a sheep. The next day, Cramer beat several other women, one so badly that she died of her wounds because he believed that they were going to poison him. He was originally given a 27 month prison term, which was appealed and reduced to a four month term and a fine of 2,700 marks.

century; her pacification of the tribes left them scattered and weak for a new and different phase in the history of their subjection.⁶³

But again, it must be stressed that while the colonial authorities had success exploiting and controlling the African population after 1907, they were still only controlling a fraction of the labor power that they could have if von Trotha's policy of genocidal annihilation had been avoided.

Aside from the lack of an abundant labor force, due to a sadistic policy of eradication, the huge herds of the Herero were also destroyed during the war and the subsequent flight of the Herero into the Omaheke. The European settlers needed cattle stocks immediately after the war to replenish and rebuild their farms and lives which had been severely disrupted during the fighting in 1904.⁶⁴ The contradictory nature of fighting a genocidal war to build a strong colony is thus highlighted yet again in this example, since even though plenty of Herero land was expropriated for settlers' use, the once mighty herds of the Herero, which, even after trading with white settlers were quite substantial before 1904, were almost totally destroyed:

Most of the White settler's cattle were taken by Hereros in the early stages of the rebellion: by the end of the rebellion nearly all the Herero cattle had perished in the sandveld [desert] or had actually been destroyed. Only some 3,000 head had been taken as booty by the German raiding parties. The livestock situation after the rebellion was therefore not only discouraging but *prohibitive of rapid settlement*.⁶⁵

By 1914, the numbers of livestock had stabilized with the introduction of European cattle and sheep, but this was mainly facilitated with profits made from diamond mining.⁶⁶ It is entirely plausible that if an attempt had been made

⁶³ First, *South West Africa*, 83.

⁶⁴ Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa*, 150.

⁶⁵ Wellington, *South West Africa and Its Human Issues*, 218. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 222-23.

to save a majority of the Herero's cattle during the 1904 war, this expenditure would have been unnecessary.

After 1907, the economic makeup of the colony changed rapidly. Not only was the settlement expanding quickly, but the construction of railroads, and mining of copper and diamonds were also picking up pace.⁶⁷ Again, the colonial authorities were at a loss as to where the labor for simultaneous development in mining, agriculture, railroad construction, and industry was to come from.⁶⁸

Both industrial and agricultural, or rather pastoral, development were dependant upon an adequate supply of labor. So too were the commercial activities of the inhabitants of the Territory. This Labor had to be Native labor. On account of the destruction of the greater portion of the Hereros and Nama, there was at no time a sufficiency of Natives to keep pace with the demand.⁶⁹

Because of an acute labor shortage, the colonial authorities were forced to recruit workers from any area they could find. The Ovambo, which were one of the only groups in SW Africa that still had any measure of autonomy, were recruited on a migrant worker basis, but this hardly sufficed.⁷⁰ Still, the German colonialist found that diamonds would be the most profitable resource in the colony after their discovery in 1908.⁷¹ Mainly because of diamond mining, in 1912, exports from the colony finally surpassed imports, and the colony actually began to pay off for Germany.⁷² 1912 was also the year that some of the draconian restrictions on Africans in the colony were softened somewhat.⁷³ Although it cannot be argued that colonial development did not proceed after the Herero genocide, it must be understood that it could have developed much more quickly and substantially if the labor power of the Herero had not been eradicated through a counter-productive and sadistic policy of genocide.

⁶⁷ Wellington, *South West Africa and Its Human Issues*, 222-23.

⁶⁸ Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting*, 232.

⁶⁹ Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa*, 182.

⁷⁰ Gewalt, *Herero Heroes*, 216.

⁷¹ Vedder, *A History of South West Africa*, 61.

⁷² First, *South West Africa*, 87.

⁷³ Bley, "German South West Africa," 50.

Thus, the development of SW Africa as a German colony proceeded until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. In January of 1915, forces under the control of the Union of South Africa's Prime minister, General Louis Botha, invaded the German colony.⁷⁴ In less than a year, the German forces had been decisively defeated by the South Africans, and German colonial rule over SW Africa was brought to a close.⁷⁵ In 1919, after the Treaty of Versailles, the Union of South Africa was given a mandate by the League of Nations to oversee and administer South West Africa.⁷⁶

In 1904, the Herero people rose up against the apparent threat of German imperialism in their land. Their rebellion, while initially successful, was doomed to failure. As a result of General Lothar von Trotha's obsessively sadistic policy of exterminating the Herero, from 1904-1907 the Herero were nearly wiped off the face of the earth. In this policy of complete extermination, one can see an apparent contradiction between the goals of the colonial state and the forms of achieving said goals. By utterly destroying the Herero, the colonial state was made significantly stronger in its ability to exercise direct power over the majority of SW Africa and its people. Also, the confiscation of African land made it possible for increased European settlement, agricultural and industrial development, and mining. Simultaneously, by following a policy of sadistic annihilation, the most significant and necessary resource of the colony, African labor was almost entirely lost. Without the reserves of labor, the colonial state could not develop its agriculture, mining and industry to the fullest extent, and was therefore made weaker. Thus, one can see the apparent contradiction between the ends and means of the German colonial state in SW Africa.

⁷⁴ Roger Louis, "The Origins of the 'Sacred Trust,'" in *South West Africa, Travesty of Trust: The Expert Papers and Findings of the International Conference on South West Africa, Oxford 23-26 March 1966, with a Postscript by Iain MacGibbon on the 1966 Judgment of the International Court of Justice*, eds. R. Segal and R. First (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1967), 59.

⁷⁵ Gewalt, *Herero Heroes*, 231.

⁷⁶ Vedder, *A History of South West Africa*, 70.