Internal colonisation and an oppressed minority?1
The dynamics of relations between Germans and Afrikaners against the background of constructing a colonial state in Namibia, 1884-1990
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Abstract
The paper aims to demonstrate how the colonial state, ostensibly engaged in a project designed to promote 'civilisation' and 'development', often struggled to contain serious disagreements about the nature of the colonial project among members of the white settler community. The 19th century is touched upon to demonstrate a state of affairs sharply at odds with recollections about the period by Europeans. The focus on the German colonial period (1884-1915) points to certain advances and innovations that the South African Administration, it is claimed, either ignored or terminated. The first phase of South African rule, 1920-1950, is a record of ideological conflicts in intra- and intergroup contexts. The post-1950 period demonstrates how South Africa constructed a form of colonial domination that amounted to establishing Afrikaner hegemony over the public sector in particular. From a German point of view, this amounted to a case of de facto internal colonisation.

Introduction
Studies about the colonial period in Namibia produced before the 1980s, by and large, celebrated European advances and the transformation of perceived backward polities, characterised by inter-ethnic strife and instability, towards modernisation. Except for a few observers who touched on the illiberal aspects of colonial rule, works of non-fiction were premised on the discourse of modernisation and the challenges facing representatives of 'advanced' cultures imparting 'civilised' values and beliefs.2 Most of

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1 The late Namibian historian and fierce critic of South African colonialism, Brigitte Lau once remarked that while the German community in Namibia are constantly reminded of their complicity in the infamous wars of extermination conducted against the Herero and Nama people from 1904-1908, the surface of South Africa’s colonial record has been barely scratched. She commented that the German community comprised “an oppressed minority” in the face of South African colonial hegemony. (Personal communication, January 1996).

the Eurocentric studies on Namibia suffer from what Stuart Schwarz, in another context, called an inability to “steer clear from either a deconstructionist or empiricist discourse". In the studies on Namibia referred to above, it is the latter defect that stands out. These studies operated within a paradigm that reflected the essentially benign intent of colonialism. Mindful of the fact that much still needs to be done to deconstruct various aspects of colonial rule and policy, this paper has a more limited aim, namely, to unravel the perception of an essential harmony underlying the colonial project, especially as far as members of the white settler community were concerned. For all the retrospective celebration of ‘European achievements’ and cooperation between sections of the white community, discontent always seemed to simmer just below the surface of public discourse. Colonial rule, especially during the period of National Party rule after 1950, was primarily concerned with constructing a façade of white unity, built on oppression and privilege alike. A retrospective assessment, though, suggests that it failed to establish more than a superficial entente among whites.

The central argument of this paper is that political power was always contested in the white community, if not always openly, then in subversive ways. More pertinently, an analysis of beliefs, attitudes and perceptions harbourd by both German- and Afrikaans-speakers, will, it is hoped, throw new light on issues and key political, social and economic events and developments in the colonial period. A drawback in such a venture is the paucity of sources. However, an attempt was made to utilise secondary and primary sources in such a way that inferences can be made and certain trends indicated, rather than to reach definitive conclusions. By way of example, it is generally considered that Germans happily embraced Afrikaner political domination and apartheid policies after 1950, yet the ambiguity which their political support engendered, hardly touched upon in existing published sources, can only be teased out by combining pointers in written sources with oral evidence. This paper will therefore point towards neglected or lesser-known issues and developments that influenced relations between Germans and Afrikaners.


4 Sources for Namibian history are notoriously incomplete, especially for the period between 1955 and 1975. This often necessitates recourse to sources lacking systematic research and investigation into issues pertaining to the white community, such as accounts by foreign academics or travellers. Oral evidence was also obtained from a few seasoned observers of the local socio-political scene.
Inter-cultural contacts among equals: Africans and Europeans in the period of merchant capitalism and emergent Christianity in the pre-1884 era

Recent research presents a far more nuanced picture of the pre-colonial era of present-day Namibia than older historical works, which by and large stressed European agency (traders, hunters & missionaries) and internecine African warfare as seemingly permanent features of the history of 19th century Namibia. The view that Europeans, Germans in particular, somehow saved the warring African polities from themselves has been significantly adjusted.

The introduction of merchant capital early in the 1800s by Afrikaner Oorlams from the Cape Colony and foreign traders, introduced a new structural dynamic that eventually fundamentally transformed the nature of pre-capitalist social formations in southern and central south western Africa. It was also instrumental in the transmission of economic and military power from the Nama-Oorlams of southern Namibia to the stock-possessing Herero people after 1860. In recent studies African agency is vividly displayed, particularly in the way it demonstrates the acuity that informed local strategies aiming to achieve economic, political and social reconstruction and attempts at political hegemony. Europeans appear no longer as the heroic forebears of ‘civilisation’, but as rather insecure agents of foreign cultural, political and economic centres, very much dependent on constructing and maintaining relationships of trust and cooperation with African leaders on a basis of equality. European traders in the pre-1880 period, mostly of Swedish and British extraction, often attached themselves to the settlements of leading members of the Herero elite, establishing pacts of mutual benefit for both parties. Many engaged in sexual relations with local women and sometimes even had the children born from such unions educated by missionaries. The latter, often more aloof

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6 Brigitte Lau subjected the doyen of Namibian historiography, Heinrich Vedder to scathing criticism, because Vedder depicted Namibian history in the 19th century as characterised by a series of endless conflicts, which, she argued, served to justify the establishment of German rule. Cf. Brigitte Lau, “Thank God the Germans came. Vedder and Namibian historiography”, in: History and historiography, 4 essays in reprint, Windhoek, Discourse/MSORP, 1995: 1-16.

7 Cf. Henrichsen, Herrschaft & Lau, Namibia.

8 Dag Henrichsen has convincingly disproved Brigitte Lau’s thesis according to which the conflicts that dislodged Nama-Oorlam hegemony in 1863 were initiated and controlled by Europeans, such as the trader Andersson of Otjimbingwe. He pointed to the fact that the dominant Herero leader, Kamaherero, played a central role in these events and that it was in fact the European traders who had to rely on Herero support to end Nama-Oorlam domination. What made the establishment of a stock-owning Herero hegemony particularly significant is that it was, unlike Oorlam domination, not constructed on the back of stock-raiding and hunting only, but comprised stock-raising and maintenance of extensive socio-political networks.
as far as social engagement with Africans was concerned, displayed a profound sense of sexual ambiguity concerning their charges and engaged in lengthy discourses on the nature of sexual morality among Africans.

The apparently relaxed atmosphere and relative ease with which Europeans could access African communities continued into the early part of the German period. Herero leaders like Kambazembi displayed a keen sense of diplomatic acuity in the way they negotiated alliances with traders like Eriksson and Green. This grew out of the oupanga system according to which “individuals from different social groups and populations met and formed relationships based on material reciprocity, mutual respect, emotional support and consent”, ranging from “close friendships to purely sexual unions to monogamous affiliations and even conjugal commitment”. European traders tended to regard attempts to ensnare them in such relationships with discomfort, considering that they were almost exclusively interested in a physical relationship or to utilise contacts with African leaders for commercial advantage. This reminds one of Robert Young’s observation that desire was not simply a “straightforward sexual or even cultural matter: in many ways it preserved the older commercial discourse that it superseded”. The history of the meanings of the word ‘commerce’ includes the exchange both of merchandise and of bodies in sexual intercourse. The exploitative nature of relationships did not only centre on material gain, but was characterised by sexual violence. This was a matter of particular concern to, for example, Herero leaders and a crucial element in the volatile mix of emotions and causes that exploded in the war of 1904 between the Germans, Herero and Nama.

By 1900 the growing sense of disquiet that became evident among German officials and missionaries alike about the extent to which German settlers and soldiers engaged in sexual liaisons and even established long-lasting, at times committed, relationships with local women was expressed in attempts to enact legislation to forbid miscegenation and preserve the purity of the German population. What is of significance to the historian is

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13 Hartmann concedes that concrete evidence of the exact nature of sexual engagements and the perceptions and attitudes that informed such activities is, for obvious reasons, lacking. He is of the opinion, though, that there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to proclaim that it was widespread, more often than not of a violent, non-consensual nature, but sometimes evidence of more permanent, apparently consensual, relationships of spouses with lasting attachments to children do surface. Some high-ranking German officials, such as Governor Curt von François, had children with African, mostly Baster, women (Hartmann, *Encounters*: 195) and Otjimbingwe station commander Victor Franke was accused of rape (ibid.:
that subsequent German accounts of this earlier period largely ignored the remarkable fluidity that characterised inter-group relations and the relatively fragile position of Europeans. The South African Administration, too, was mostly ignorant of the dynamics that animated inter-group relations during the 19th century. The stereotypical colonialist view of 19th century Namibia as being consumed by inter-group violence14 is counterbalanced by a vivid portrait, albeit filled with ambiguity, of the often informal and non-hierarchical nature of European-African relations and interactions in a recent book of photographs and essays.15

German rule, 1884-1914: An incomplete experiment and a controversial legacy

The defeat of German troops by South Africans led by General Louis Botha in 1915 terminated German rule and the all-too brief attempt to construct a fitting edifice for the increasingly assertive metropolitan German state. It is important to understand, in the context of the subsequent history of the German community in Namibia, the exalted ideals that informed the beginning of German settlement in South West Africa. For colonial enthusiasts, members of the Kolonial-Gesellschaft (Colonial Society) in particular, colonies “offered a locale away from the homeland’s cultural and social changes, to preserve a pre-industrial, agrarian vision of Germany society”.16 Robbie Aitken agrees, arguing that for the largely elitist colonial enthusiasts and government authorities the imagined colonial settlement society was to be an exclusive society made up of German farmers, cattle breeders and their sons, members of the middle classes; thus, settlers drawn from a specific social background and with specific ethics and traditions, which mirrored those of the colonial proponents.17

These hopes were never realised as the sought-after settlers could not be attracted, preferring rather to stay in Germany or move to more attractive locations such as Argentina and southern Brazil. Nevertheless, the pre-1920 German settlers, the ‘alte Afrikaner’, laid the foundations for an enduring German presence and constituted the core of a German-speaking community that has struck deep roots in the territory. From the beginning this community was determined to involve itself in constructing a localised German identity.

245). See chapters 5 and 6 (ibid.) for evidence about the extent to which German soldiers, in particular, were involved in sexual activities since 1890.


Germans encountered Afrikaners – ‘Boers’ as they were commonly known in the 19th and early 20th century – in the 1880s as prospective settlers in southern Namibia. Contact between German missionaries and small numbers of Dutchmen can be traced further back to the 1840s. An interesting feature of this encounter is the role of the Boers’ language Afrikaans, originally carried to Namibia by the Oorlams and widely used as a medium of communication in 19th century Namibia, in the fields of both trade and religion. Its function as a de facto lingua franca further expanded during the course of colonial rule under South African auspices in the 20th century. Decidedly ambiguous responses were evoked during the course of unfolding intercultural contacts between Germans and Boers. An image of the Boer as rather dour, pious, yet honest men of the soil took root, a view that was gradually adjusted, but never totally eclipsed. The concept of ‘Verbuhrung’ (descending to the level of the Boers, or ‘going native’) which was to feature prominently in German everyday discourse deep into the 20th century derived from these early encounters. Germans apparently experienced trouble in distinguishing between Boers and Basters, the descendants of white, Khoekhoe, African and slave miscegenation. German observers from the outset commented on what was considered to be the peculiar position of ‘Boers’ in southern Africa (South West Africa in particular), neither exactly descended to the level of Africans (though displaying features of the latter’s lifestyle and lack of ‘civilised’ cultural attributes), nor elevated to the level of European metropolitan representatives. Governor von François, initially opposed to Boer settlement and prejudiced towards their way of life and sense of aloofness, changed his mind when he observed the ‘pioneering work’ done by Boers in Namaland. The Allgemeine Deutsche Verband, an association of Germans worldwide, then advocated Boer settlement through its Cape branch in 1894. The number of Boers gradually increased from 606 in 1902 to 2709 in 1910.

Georg Trümpelmann, in his comprehensive, empirical study of Afrikaners in pre-1950 Namibia, recounts instances of mutual cooperation and German admiration for the skills of Boers, particularly as transport riders and cattle producers. Their knowledge of the environment was also quite useful to the German administration and settlers. Imperial Governor Leutwein expressed admiration for these rugged sons of the soil. German

22 Trümpelmann, “Boer”: 120 & 152
23 Ibid.
perceptions of Boers were also strongly influenced by the 'Boer war' against Britain and feelings of affinity arising from the joint struggle against British imperialism. This was an issue that featured prominently in German literature at the time. In 1914 a number of Boers from South Africa demonstrated their solidarity with Germans in their struggle against Britain, by joining the war effort in South West Africa. Although the German colonial administration allowed groups of Boers to settle in the territory and initially allowed freedom of choice as far as religion and education was concerned, there was a growing tendency to place restrictions on these rights. Attempts were made to prevent Boers from settling down in separate blocks and to require that they enrol in German schools. These measures were informed by what was considered the Boers' suspicious attitude towards cooperating with the German administration and the determination with which they clung to their traditional ways. Though Rhenish missionaries rendered sterling service to Boer congregations in the absence of Dutch ministers, Boers resolutely exhibited a preference for their own form of religious organisation. This sense of aloofness struck many observers in southern Africa as peculiar to Boers. Evidence about the treatment of Boers by the German Administration differs: some Boers complained that they were promised farms by the German administration after having served in the war, a promise allegedly not honoured. Others did well, acting as scouts and drivers of trade caravans for the Germans.

It should be borne in mind that Boers, when they first entered South Western Africa by the 1860s, were literally pastoral nomads, much like many Khoikhoi peoples. Both Boers and the people derived from Khoikhoi, slave, African and white intermixing, called Baster, Oorlam and Griqua amongst others, shared a further distinction, that of availing themselves of the commando system. It comprised men on horseback which formed a defence-style military/political organisation that crucially shaped perceptions of them (and informed self-perceptions). German perceptions vis-à-vis the Boers are graphically illustrated in two contemporary photographs, one depicting a group of Boers around a camp fire, with a black cooking pot, signifying the Boers' African character, as these pots are today still a feature of rural African life. The group was reasonably well-clad and one brandished a bottle of, apparently, brandy. The caption to the photography is 'unser lieben! Buren' (our beloved Boers), an ironic comment on the ambiguous relationship between the two groups. The second photograph pictures a number of dismounted Boers posing formally with their rifles behind three gemsbok (oryx). The image would have struck a chord with many German-speakers who subsequently happened to view it, as Boers were widely considered to have been destroyers of wildlife. In 19th century South Africa similar prejudices were current among the English

24 I am indebted to Gregor Dobler for providing this information.
25 Ibid.: 89. Trümpelmann’s study of Afrikaners in Namibia during the German period, though analytically deficient, provides valuable empirical evidence about them and highlights the ambivalent attitude of German officials towards Afrikaners, veering between distrust and attempts to accommodate them.
26 Sam Cohen Library, Swakopmund, PA 8/065 & PA 8/093.
sportsmen hunter element who regarded Boers trading in game products with contempt.27

An issue that continues to resonate in the German community is that the German period is generally associated with the extermination of African peoples during the war of 1904-1907, to the exclusion of other considerations. Towards the end of World War I, the South African government, keen to secure control over South West Africa, started to collect evidence about German treatment of the local population.28 The result was information contained in the so-called Blue Book, which clearly aimed to discredit German colonial rule and present Germans as unfit to exercise control over colonies. This added injury to the humiliation of defeat in the war and internment of a large number of German males.

Another issue that rankled as far as Germans were concerned was the failure to adequately recognise the merits of research and development initiatives undertaken by the German Administration. Though quite brief, the German period was characterised by a remarkable spate of enterprises and initiatives in the period after 1908. According to Gretschel,

- their enterprise has transformed infrastructure, agriculture, economy, industry,
- mining, prospecting, water conservation and storage, nature conservation.
- Furthermore they were very successful in the scientific recording of the country,
- surveying and mapping, collecting of ethnographic data, bible translations,
- writing of grammars and dictionaries for the indigenous languages,
- the founding and running of farm schools and hostels etc.29

These accomplishments are by and large not reflected in the existing (non-German) literature and South African official accounts. A few examples should suffice to underwrite the argument: German agricultural experiments of potential significance for the arid territory had been largely dismounted or discontinued by the South Africans. Brigitte Lau pointed to the discontinuation of several enterprises that could have contributed to the establishment of a degree of local food and manufacturing self-sufficiency, as the result of South Africa’s aim to capture the Namibian market for its own produce. In 1966 a South African economist testifying before the World Court which heard the case brought before it by Ethiopia and Liberia, referred to the German period as at best an ‘experimental’ one, with little in terms of lasting contributions having been effected and only hesitant starts introduced in the fields of stock-farming and mining.

28 The Blue Book was compiled by the SWA Administration in 1917, but published in London. It depicted atrocities committed by Germans against the local African population during the wars against the Nama and Herero peoples. It was re-published in 2003 as: Jeremy Silvester & Jan Bart Gewalt, (eds.), World cannot be found. An annotated reprint of the 1918 Blue Book. Leiden, Brill, 2003.
29 Volker Gretschel, “Community’s”- 80. For a more detailed treatment of German initiatives in the fields of agriculture and water preservation, see Brigitte Lau & Peter Reiner, 100 years of agricultural development in colonial Namibia, a historical overview of visions and experiments, Archeia 17, Windhoek, National Archives of Namibia, 1993 & Christel Stern & Brigitte Lau, Namibian water resources and their management, a preliminary history, Archeia 15, Windhoek, National Archives of Namibia, 1990.
None of the considerable achievements in cartography, water conservation experiments, crop cultivation, dairy farming and related research experiments conducted in the era before 1915 merited a mention in the economist's account that essentially argued that 'real development' started after 1920 when South Africa assumed the mandate.30

A contested mandate: Emerging fault-lines in the white community —
The military period: 1915-1920 and the first phase of South African rule, 1920-1950

The political future of South West Africa was decisively shaped in the years between 1915 and 1920. Immigration of Afrikaner trekboers from the northern Cape region in South Africa was permitted, thereby laying the foundation of an eventual numerically dominant element in the white community. Apart from the publication of the Blue Book, the South African military administration also launched a ‘hearts-and-minds’ campaign to discredit Germans among the local African population and portray themselves as essentially benign overlords. Having achieved the objective of securing control over South West Africa when the mandate was awarded by the League of Nations in 1920, the South African government then proceeded to adjust its policies to accommodate the German section. However, World War I, German defeat and the depiction of Germans as unfit to be entrusted with the sacred task of civilising native peoples, continued to cast a lengthy shadow over the subsequent twenty years of South African rule. In this period Germans regularly contested the way in which South Africa implemented and interpreted the mandate, especially in so far as it failed to accord to Germans full equality with the Afrikaners and English-speakers.

Before proceeding to analyse the developments that constituted the fault-lines in the white community, a brief introduction to some characteristic features of the socio-economic and cultural background of the three white groups in the inter-war period is provided. Germans, especially the pre-1920 settlers, tended to be generally enterprising, inquisitive and already possessed of a self-image that depicted them as being a distinctly localised German entity. They also represented a more urbanised element, compared to Afrikaners.31 Such self-confident, forward-looking attitudes and approaches among German-speakers were noticeably absent amongst Boers, or Afrikaners as they increasingly started to call themselves from the early 20th century onwards.32 Afrikaners comprised the predominantly rural element amongst the white


31 Though soldiers, officials and farmers dominated the pre-1920 German local population after 1920 a small, yet significant number of craftsmen and technicians entered the territory. There is no comparable evidence for a similar occupational category amongst Afrikaners and English-speakers. Cf. Reports of the government of the Union of South Africa to the League of Nations, 1921-1939.

32 Herman Giliomee in his magisterial The Afrikaners, biography of a people, Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2003, mentions that the term Afrikaner, though current from the early 1700s, carried an imprecise meaning until at least the last quarter of the 19th century. Afrikaners, likewise, though already aware of themselves as a
population in South West Africa. Religion played a vital role everywhere for Boer rural communities in their frequent wanderings throughout southern Africa. In the formative years of Boer settlement in South West Africa religion was closely associated with education and imparting moral values required to cope with what was perceived as at best a foreign world encroaching upon them. This was especially true of the first wave of Trekboer (pastoral nomadic) Afrikaners who entered Namibia between 1870 and 1919 from the Cape Colony in South Africa. The role of Afrikaners in the cultural life of the territory was not particularly noteworthy. Afrikaans only attained the status of a written, cultural and reading language at the beginning of the 20th century and the term Afrikaans was only standardised at the end of the 19th century. In this respect South West Africa lagged considerably behind South Africa. The Afrikaans-speaking editor of the local daily, Die Suidwes-Afrikaner, Ernst Schlengemann, who was of Anglo-German descent, tried to promote Afrikaner cultural life, constantly admonishing people about their lack of interest in commemorative festivals like Dingaansfees (Day of the Vow) and their lack of enthusiasm for using Afrikaans.33

Contact between these rural Afrikaners and Germans in the pre-1915 era was therefore between representatives of a rapidly industrialising country in the grip of a profoundly-dislocating modernisation process and representatives of a rural lifestyle whose way of thinking was essentially shaped by generations of volatile engagement with African communities and the British in South Africa, as well as the German-speakers in the former German South West Africa. Afrikaners in South West Africa have retained their rural character for a far longer period than their counterparts in South Africa. For more than half a century, relations between Germans and Afrikaners were shaped by this dichotomy represented by an enterprising German element deprived of political power (after 1929), dominating the world of business and finance (together with the English-speaking element, which included a small, yet energetic Jewish community) and Afrikaners slowly coming to grips with the demands of a modernising state.34 German attitudes towards Afrikaners should be considered within the wider southern African context. English observers, even historians, have on occasion viewed them as an essentially pre-industrial, pre-Enlightenment people, with an inbred aptitude for the rural-based trekboer lifestyle. Norman Etherington pointed out that this almost racist perception was quite prevalent until recently and Afrikaner historians actually demonstrated remarkable tolerance for this view. This was due to the fact that it helped separate group, different from the British and original German, Dutch and French ethnic groups in the 19th century, often tended to use the term in a more inclusive, rather than the 20th century ideologically-exclusive sense. (Cf. Giliomee, Afrikaners: 22-23, 50-53, 195-196, 198, 356 & 664).

33 Schlengemann, (editor, Suidwes-Afrikaner) wrote on 25 November 1927 that Afrikaners rather avail themselves of English or German in public correspondence. A clerk in a Windhoek legal practice informed him that they had no need for appointing Afrikaners in the firm because all correspondence were conducted in English or German (Die Suidwes-Afrikaner, 25 November 1927).

34 The role of the Jewish community in colonial SWA awaits investigation. Many Jews played a prominent role in the colony, especially before 1950. Though largely absent from politics, they featured very prominently in trade and finance and in the social and professional fields. Cf. Olga Levinson, “The Jewish contribution to the development of Namibia”, SWA Annual, 1982: 81-86.
to promote the cause of Afrikaner nationalism and affirmed its ruralised, soil-based origins.35

A notable feature of the new South African Administration that replaced the military administration was the relatively large number of English-speakers who arrived as officials, mostly magistrates, senior civil servants, soldiers and policemen. Afrikaans- and English-speaking officials of the local administration comprised a pro-British element, representative of the broader, more inclusive nationalism of the Smuts government in South Africa. There was an element of cultural interaction during the mid- and late 1920s, apparently restricted to the upper classes. This was evident in the fact that cultural events were often frequented by members of other language groups. Celebrations of the Afrikaner Day of the Vow (also known as Dingaansdag), for example, were regularly attended by other groups, while English-speakers and Afrikaners often attended German cultural events, such as music evenings. Debates about the nature of the mandate and the territory’s future featured prominently in the local press. Editorials in Die Suidwes-Afrikaner, mouthpiece of the local United National South West African Party (UNSWP), often defended itself against attacks by German papers who claimed that the UNSWP favoured incorporation of the territory by South Africa.36 Die Suidwes-Afrikaner, in turn, accused German papers, especially those published in Luderitz and Swakopmund, of ethnic chauvinism and of supporting a campaign for returning South West Africa to Germany. Die Suidwes-Afrikaner articulated a position that reflected progressive thinking current at the time, which endorsed the idea of a broader Southern African Federation.37

The first manifestation of South Africa’s new accommodating approach towards the German community in the post-war era was in the form of British citizenship offered in terms of the London Agreement of 1923, concluded between the German and South African governments. The issue of local Germans’ status vis-à-vis metropolitan Germany was sidestepped in the document. Most Germans accepted the citizenship offer, but concerns about their status in the mandate territory were reinforced when it became evident that South Africa attempted to secure numerical preponderance for the Union section through a comprehensive land settlement programme and the relocation of the Angola Boers in 1928.38 The entente initiated by the South Africans after 1920

37 These debates were conducted in editorials of the respective papers in the period 1926 to 1930. The dominant German papers were the Lüderitzbucht Zeitung and the Allgemeine Zeitung and The Windhoek Advertiser catered for English-speakers.
38 The Union section comprised English- and Afrikaans-speakers who were politically represented in the local equivalents of South African political parties: the dominant (until 1950) United Party and the National Party. Germans were represented in the German Bund, an organisation that promoted German cultural interests. South African citizenship was automatically conferred upon the Union section.
contributed to improved relations between the three white groups evidenced in a brief period of German control of the local legislative assembly, German participation in local official commissions, and promises to consider the status of German as an official language. The local administration also extended financial support to German schools. By 1929, however, certain events helped to inflame sectional relations. The first was the decision to resettle about 1,200 Boers from Angola. In 1929 it was decreed that German immigrants would henceforth need to reside for five years in Namibia before they could claim citizenship, in contrast to British (i.e. South African residents) who required only two. In 1932 it was decided not to grant German the status of an official language, and the matter of citizenship was also not addressed as had been promised by the local administration. Germans felt betrayed by this and rejected the explanation that it was due to increased Nazi activities. Prominent German spokesperson B. Hirsekorn argued that it could not be expected of Germans to accept constitutional and political arrangements (i.e. incorporation into South Africa), that would jeopardize their allegiance to Germany. D. Ballot, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, told the South West Africa Commission in 1935 that A. Voigts, former leader of the Deutsche Bund, once remarked that though they accepted foreign nationality according to the London Agreement of 1923, the rewards proved to be illusory. For many Germans, then, the failure to be granted equal treatment with the Union section proved to a source of enduring discontent. Weiland would later argue that South Africa subjugated Germans as “military foes and then turned them into second-class citizens”. Compared to black people, though, they remained “fairly privileged”, it was conceded.

Such manifestations of inter-group animosity should be seen against the background of contemporary debates about the nature of the mandate. South African leaders generally tended to treat Namibia as an extension of the mandatory. Prime Minister Jan Smuts ventured that “the declaration of this territory as an integral part of the Union brought us as near actual incorporation as we could possibly get”. German leaders in Namibia have tended towards a more literal reading of the mandate, stressing that all white groups ought to receive equal treatment. They therefore astutely pointed to South Africa’s preferential treatment of its own citizens as being incompatible with the League charter. This is a matter that was never really subjected to public debate although German leaders underlined it in their testimony before the South West Africa Commission in 1935. The stated reason, as mentioned before, for not granting Germans full civil

40 Weiland, “Detachment”: 18
41 Gail-Marise Cockram, South West Africa Mandate, Cape Town, Juta, 1976: 44.
42 The commission, also known as the Van Zyl Commission, after its chairman, was appointed to investigate wide-spread disaffection with the existing form of government in the territory. This followed a motion by the local Legislative Assembly, passed by a two-thirds majority, “that South West Africa be governed as an integral part of the Union of South Africa, under the conditions of the Mandate Agreement”. The SA government did not, however, accede to the request to treat SWA as a ‘fifth province’. Cf. du Pisani, SWA/Namibia: 80-1.
rights, was the growth of National Socialism and the assumption that Germans increasingly favoured the idea of being governed by metropolitan Germany, a sentiment reflected in the increasingly assertive behaviour of a younger generation of German immigrants who arrived after 1920. There is little doubt, however, that the local administration never really favoured the idea of granting Germans equal rights. South Africa, gradually emerging from British suzerainty, took great pride in its new role as a colonial power and was not going to risk control over the territory by conceding to Germans those rights that might result in a challenge to its power. It should be kept in mind that the Union element still constituted a slender majority in 1926 and political divisions resulted in a German victory when legislative assembly elections were held in that year. The land settlement policy, though open to Germans too, nevertheless resulted in creating a firm majority for the Union section by 1936 when Afrikaners numbered 18,088, English-speakers 2,405 and Germans 9,634. The relocation of the approximately 1,200 Boers from Angola in 1928 helped to cement the numerical preponderance of the Union element and further fuelled German resentment of what was considered a deliberate ploy to ‘swamp’ the electorate with Union nationals.

Viewed retrospectively, it is quite clear that representatives of the Union section in South West Africa operated on the assumption that South Africa enjoyed a superior claim to South West Africa, implicitly derived from Germany’s poor colonial record and the legal allocation of the mandate to South Africa by the League of Nations. Yet, the charter that guided the mandate required upholding the interests of the indigenous African majority, not preferential treatment of only the Union section of the settler community. This crucial distinction is missed from most historical accounts that tend to subsume the disagreements in the white community between 1926 and 1933 into an increasingly assertive German nationalism fuelled by the rapidly expanding Nazi movement. In a recent article this view was given a new twist by posing the argument that although the non-recognition of German cultural rights indeed proved to be a bone of contention, the deeper causes of the rift in the white community were negative underlying perceptions of Afrikaners harboured by Germans. According to this view Afrikaners were still viewed as ‘trekboers’, with all the negative connotations associated with the term, such as cultural backwardness, and Afrikaans was perceived an inferior language (‘kitchen-Dutch’). Such perceptions did indeed exist, yet form only part of a complex array of factors that impacted on intergroup relations.

43 A SWA delegation that met with representatives of the SA government in Cape Town in 1932 was informed that they should not “give everything away”, i.e. they should retain a bargaining chip. Granting Germans equal rights, in other words, could have undermined the position of the “Union Group” vis-à-vis the Germans. NAN, KSW, Minutes of SWA Commission, 31/8/1935, Okahandja. L. J. van Aardt, farmer and MLA, told the Commission that a SA government minister told UP delegates in Cape Town in 1932 that they should not “throw away their cards” when negotiating with Germans about the latter’s claim to equal civil rights.


45 Auguste de V. Cluver, “The role of stereotypes in the German perception of Afrikaans in Namibia at the turn of the century”, Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Taalkunde, November 1996, supplement 32.
In the late 1920s and early 1930s statements were recorded from African workers according to which German farmers boasted of soon driving Afrikaners from the land and recapturing it for Germany. Afrikaners testifying before the South West Africa Commission in 1935 often mentioned that they had experienced prejudicial behaviour, or were subjected to contemptuous treatment from German-speakers. However, there is also evidence of mutual respect and friendly relations between Germans and Afrikaners. Two points need to be stressed: a minority of Afrikaners increasingly associated with and supported cooperation with Germans, and the German community was far from a functionally-harmonious unit in itself. It is therefore necessary to briefly investigate the support that the Nazi movement in South West Africa enjoyed amongst German-speakers. There existed significant tensions between the younger, recently arrived German element most active in Nazi ranks, and the older settlers, called by Germans the ‘alten Afrikaner’, many of whom were generally anti-Nazi. The Attorney-General of South West Africa candidly stated that “I can say with full knowledge that there are many Germans in the territory who have no sympathy for the Nazi regime, who are anxious to co-operate with us”. The former German Bund leader, Albert Voigts, on one occasion in September 1939 argued that the ‘home country’ (i.e. Nazi Germany) was not in a position to understand the complexities of the situation in the territory and that it was simply politically unwise to think that the local administration would have tolerated a Nazi-dominated Bund. Implicit in his argument was the recognition that politics in the territory constituted a matter of give-and-take. This in fact is the political philosophy that constituted the point of departure from which the German Bund under his leadership had operated in the early and mid-1930s.

By the early 1930s, a noticeable hardening in relations between the German and Union sections started to occur and it proved to be increasingly difficult to defuse hostile attitudes. However, as mentioned, the Union section was also not united, with a smaller, almost exclusively Afrikaner, right-wing section professing sympathy for the German cause. The growth of a rampant ethnic chauvinism in German ranks was paralleled by a similar movement amongst Afrikaners, which drew to some extent on German ideological resources. To assess the impact of National Socialism on Afrikaners in South West Africa, it is necessary to briefly sketch the appeal that it exerted in South Africa at the time. This discussion will facilitate understanding of the ambiguity that characterised intergroup relations at the time and the reasons why Afrikaners managed to effect an entente with Germans after 1950.

Hermann Giliomee argued in his history of the Afrikaners that there is “no convincing evidence that radical right-wing movements like the Ossewa Brandwag or the Greyshirts had anything but a fleeting impact on the Afrikaner nationalist movement or on

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46 NAN, SWAA 2923, A 837/23, Deutsche Bund, Attorney-general to Secretary for South West Africa, 8 November 1939.
47 NAN, SWAA 2923, A 837/23, Summarised extracts showing the gist of the content of files, taken from German Consul’s office, Windhoek, Annexure B.
apartheid as an ideology”.48 Giliomee’s argument boils down to the fact that Nazism was an ideology foreign to Afrikaners, while Patrick Furlong’s holds the view that it had a more fundamental impact on Afrikaner thinking than generally recognised by Afrikaans-speaking historians. He points to the fact that several key National Party leaders were Ossewa Brandwag members. The Ossewa Brandwag was a paramilitary organisation, which explicitly rejected parliamentary politics. It was estimated to have had 100,000 members at one stage. Furlong argued persuasively that Nazi ideas and practices were more ingrained and affected the National Party and many Afrikaners more than is generally admitted. According to him Fascist or broader movements of the radical or conservative Right were successful precisely because they reflected indigenous values and culture rather than simply imitating Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany.

The National Party, he argues, was able to capture the hearts and minds of most Afrikaners because of the “limited pluralism and internal debate” in the National Party, in contrast to the more obviously imported forms of authoritarianism to be found in the Ossewa Brandwag. The National Party’s success also rested on its adoption of a “hierarchical quasi Fascist structure of cells, wards and districts each headed by a ‘leader’, thus outflanking the Ossewa Brandwag with its own model of a disciplined Afrikanerdom”.49 Furlong presents a powerful argument, especially if one considers the enduring and deepening strand of authoritarianism in Afrikaner politics in the post-1950 period. It is true that the National Party later distanced itself from Fascist organisations in favour of an engagement with parliamentary politics; this was, however, simply the result of a growing belief that through this route they were more likely to attain their conservative social and political objectives.

This argument gains in persuasiveness if one considers the way in which Afrikaners in South West Africa quickly abandoned their overt flirtation with Fascism and supported the National Party in growing numbers. By 1941, the Ossewa Brandwag in South West Africa had enlisted an estimated 4,000 members, against 100,000 in South Africa. Its members loudly cheered setbacks experienced by the British during the war and the anti-war pronouncements among Ossewa Brandwag members caused the authorities to instruct the police to keep files on some of the leading elements.50 However, no paramilitary training had been engaged in and unlike the situation in South Africa, where the Ossewa Brandwag and Greyshirts were involved in sabotage, disruption of election meetings and military training, local Ossewa Brandwag members appeared to have confined themselves to vocal condemnation of the war. Perusal of archival documents dealing with their activities, particularly those containing letters of members intercepted by the war censor, confirm the impression that most right-wing Afrikaners were more concerned with unity in Afrikaner ranks and opposition to British imperialism, than with expressions of ideological conformity with National Socialism. When questioned by the

48 Giliomee, Afrikaners: 444.
50 Mr. D. J. Botha, personal communication, Outjo, 9 May 2000.
military police, suspected Ossewa Brandwag members confirmed their opposition to the war, but expressed opposition against the idea of a German-controlled South West Africa.51

If Afrikaner attitudes towards Nazism gave cause for ambivalence, there is little doubt as to the position of the English-speaking section of the white community. A military officer expressed annoyance that Germans continued to be active in the local economy during the war and that even internees were allowed to engage in trading activities, such as selling karakul pelts. A perusal of files in the archives about war-time complaints by mostly English-speakers about Germans reveals fairly widespread discontent about what was considered to have been a lax official attitude concerning German liberties.52 Letters in the files reflect strong views: one writer complains about the freedom that Germans enjoyed to continue trading, and another states that Germans act with exceeding arrogance. “A more revolting and objectionable crowd I have never met”, was the opinion of another, while a fourth observer gave graphical expression to his disgust: “I can just spit on them when I see them”.53 What many such observers may have failed to understand was that a significant section among Afrikaners did not necessarily share these strong views, on account of their own powerful anti-British prejudices. A pro-British member of a local business firm remarked that the very strong German presence and even domination of the local economy was partly the result of the policy of administrators Werth (1926-1933) and his successor Conradie (1933-1941). “Every sympathy was lavished on the Germans who were pandered to and encouraged with their national graft, obsequiousness and winning ways got right into the centre of our commerce”. He perceived Germans “truckling to the Afrikaner element” in the hope “of making trouble for us” after the war.54 This was indeed happening and resulted in growing support from the German community for the Afrikaner-dominated National Party in the post-1950 era.

By 1945 the local National Party appeared to have positioned itself to take advantage of the vulnerable political position to which the German community as a whole was reduced. The National Party became quite vocal in condemning the local administration’s policies concerning German-speakers and the allegedly preferential treatment that soldiers who fought for the Allied cause enjoyed in the allocation of farms. Support for the local German cause was qualified, however. An editorial in the mouthpiece of the local

51 Files in the National Archives of Namibia reveal very little, if anything, in terms of illegal activities among OB members. OB members suspected of harbouring and disseminating anti-war and anti-British propaganda generally stressed that they opposed the war, but did not support Germany’s war effort. For information about anti-war propaganda and OB activities, cf. NAN, 2923, files A 837/17, A 837/19 & A 837/26.


53 NAN, SWAA 2926, A837/38, Loyalist complaints re. Nazi liberties, letter from dep. Chief Censor Windhoek to Deputy-Chief Control Officer for SWA, 2 February 1942.

54 NAN, SWAA, A837/46, Property of enemy aliens, SWA, Investment of German capital in property in SWA, memo by Deputy-Commissioner SAP, Windhoek to Secretary for SWA, 6 January 1944.
National Party reflected the changing trend towards the formulation of a hegemonic conception of South West Africa as Afrikaner political territory. It bluntly stated that Germans, by embracing “Southwest” as their “fatherland”, should renounce the idea of “heimat”, just as English-speakers were called upon to bade farewell to the idea of “home”\textsuperscript{55}. A retrospective assessment of the entente between conservative Afrikaners, vis-à-vis the local National Party and the German-speaking community, supports the conviction that it was premised on the assumption of a convergence of socio-political views. The constituent elements of these views were support for apartheid, a residual anti-Semitism and an enduring anti-British animosity. Nevertheless, as the next section attempts to demonstrate, German-speakers were not always comfortable with being subjected to a position of political and ideological conformity with Afrikaners.

The post-war era, 1950 – 1990: the psychological effects of war, demographic, economic and political indicators of Afrikaner domination and identity constructions

In several respects 1950 served as a watershed in Namibian history. As happened in South Africa in 1948, the National Party became the dominant party in the local Legislative Assembly, foreshadowing a turn towards Afrikaner political hegemony. It heralded the termination of the dynamic, participatory role in public politics and civil society that the relatively small yet influential English-speaking section played in the pre-war era. Germans were co-opted by the local National Party in a collaborative but politically subordinate position to Afrikaners. In contrast to the acrimonious manner in which the respective sections of the white community contested the character and future of the mandate territory before the war, the post-war period witnessed deliberate attempts by the National Party-controlled local administration to harmonise interests and promote cooperation. To detect discord more subtle manifestations of disagreement have to be looked for: either in the ways and means Germans explored to reposition themselves as an ethnic-culturally distinct community, and by analysing how growing Afrikaner domination directly or indirectly affected Germans. The rest of this paper consequently deals with the following issues: firstly, the manner in which Germans tried to cope with psychological trauma and the humiliations that war, defeat and international opprobrium conferred on them collectively, by engaging in a form of internal migration. Secondly, an exposition of the manner in which Afrikaners in particular benefited from National Party rule in the post-war period will pose questions about assumptions concerning the uniform nature of white privilege in this period. The final part of the paper attempts to identify the nature of identity constructions and reflections among Germans and Afrikaners in the post-war period.

\textsuperscript{55} Editorial, \textit{Die Suidwester}, 3 May 1946
(i) The psychological impact of war: discordant memories

Although little evidence is available about German recollections of war-time experiences, oral evidence suggests that it continues to cast a dark shadow in the German community, particularly as far as the generation of older German-speakers is concerned. Apart from the internment of large numbers of German men during the war, a retrospective assessment provides evidence of the extent to which the German community was to be subjected to pressures during and after the war. From about 1944 rumours started to circulate that Germans were to be repatriated and their assets confiscated. Certain representatives from insurance companies were not averse to exploiting the situation by trying to entice German-speakers into buying life insurance policies and pay premiums even years in advance on the premise that they might lose all their possessions and then at least would have something to fall back on. Fearful residents started hoarding cash on a large scale. Banks even reported temporary shortages of cash. The magistrate of Okahandja noted that “it is common knowledge that speculators who buy stock from Germans have to produce cash and not cheques”. Rumours of German assets to be sold were widespread: one Eklund wrote from Johannesburg to enquire whether “German farms are to be sold as he was informed” for low prices to those who “have rendered service in the cause of world justice, freedom, Christianity, etc., etc.” He was bluntly informed that his “information is incorrect, there is no loot being distributed”.

It seems that a section of the German community, probably those not interned, experienced relative prosperity. The number of farm and town properties sold to and built by Germans increased and the German share in the commercial and trade sectors of the economy appeared to have been maintained. In 1946 the Smuts government appointed the deportee commission which recommended that 197 South West Germans be expelled from the territory. Plans were underway to dispose of the landed property of ‘enemy aliens’, i.e. Germans who left the territory during the war. When the National Party came to power it revoked the deportation decree and

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56 Most of the oral evidence used in this part of the paper was obtained from three informants: Prof. H.V. Gretschel, Dr. W. Hartmann & Mr. D. J. Botha. The former two were born in the territory and the latter arrived in 1929. All three informants experienced extensive exposure to developments, discourses and events in both German and Afrikaner communities.

57 NAN, SWAA 2927, A837/46, Property of enemy aliens in SWA, sworn statement by F. Schiller to Detective Sergeant W. Schickerling, 3 October 1944. (Schiller was the manager of SA Liberal Insurance Comp.); NAN, SWAA 2927, A 837/46, Property of enemy aliens in SWA, Dep.Com. SWA Police to Secretary for SWA, 12 May 1944. The deputy-commissioner viewed this trend as an attempt by Germans to evade the regulation that only a nominal amount of money could be taken out of the country in cases of repatriation.

58 NAN, SWAA 2927, A837/46, Magistrate to Secretary for South West Africa, 21 November 1944.

59 NAN, SWAA 2927, S. O. Eklund to Secretary for SWA, 13 July 1946; NAN, SWAA 2927, Secretary for SWA to Eklund, 29 July 1946.

60 NAN, SWAA 2927, A 837/46, Property of enemy aliens, SWA, Investment of German capital in property in SWA, Deputy-Commissioner SAP, Windhoek, to Secretary for SWA, 6 January 1944.

61 Walther, Germans: 180.
introduced steps to return assets that were impounded by the Custodian of Enemy Property during the war. Nevertheless, as late as 1953 certain individuals were still trying to obtain legal assistance to recover assets.62

Even though relatively few local Germans participated in World War II, many had relatives who did, and many families counted war deaths in their immediate or close kin networks. A delayed awareness and recognition of the reality of the atrocities in Europe visited by Germans on Jews in particular, characterised the responses of many in the war-time generation. In South West Africa this awareness has taken much longer to manifest itself, if at all. Though local Germans could with some justification claim that they were not involved, they had to share the burden of psychological guilt and shame. In Germany the showing of the American film Holocaust on German television in the late 1970s brought the whole question of German guilt to the fore. A debate about German suffering on account of the war is a relatively recent phenomenon and was kicked off by Jörg Friedrich with his publication of a history of the air raids on German cities by the Allies.63 The latter has sparked off a controversy over the whole issue of national amnesia, quite acrimonious at times and still characterised to a large degree by a general German unwillingness to realise what brought forth these raids.64

Informal conversations with representatives of the older generation of local Germans suggest that the same deep emotions, ranging from psychological stress, anger and shame, appear to pervade their collective psyche. Elderly Germans recalled the immediate post-war years as a period during which they often experienced abuse at the hands of Afrikaners.65 A young missionary recalled having been beaten up and in some cases German religious communities in towns across Namibia were deprived of the use of Dutch Reformed Church buildings previously utilised for church services.66 The difficult position of women whose men were interned during the war has, until recently, never been investigated. The resourcefulness of these women in a time of great adversity was the subject of a research project by Volker Gretschel who conducted interviews with German women. The psychological stress in managing farms single-handedly is evident from these interviews. Sometimes neighbours, mostly Afrikaner men, assisted women

62 Botha, “Politics”: 247.
63 I am indebted to Wolfram Hartmann for this information.
64 The acclaimed writer, the late W. G. Sebald, also drew attention to the destructive bombing of German cities during the war. Günther Grass dealt in his novel, ‘Krebsgang’ with the trauma of German civilian suffering. Gabriele Annan recently reviewed a diary by an anonymous women writer entitled ‘A women in Berlin: eight weeks in the conquered city’, about the experiences of women in the immediate aftermath of Allied victory and Russian occupation of Berlin, recounting the sale of sexual favours in order to survive. Cf. Gabriele Annan, ‘When the Russians came’, in New York Review of Books, vol. 52, no. 15, October 6, 2005. The diary was only published in 1959 by a Swiss publisher and the foreword by essayist Hans Magnus Enzensberger mentions that “German readers were obviously not ready to face some uncomfortable truths, and the book was met with either hostility or silence”.
65 In a personal communication a German-speaker remembers what was perceived to have been the notoriously judgmental attitude of Afrikaners concerning religion and their perception that Germans were at best slack and at worst irreligious.
66 W. Hartmann, personal communication, October 2006.
with some of the more arduous farm tasks. In some cases relationships evolved and occasionally children were born from these liaisons, no doubt adding to the ambivalent feelings of both German men and women about the war-time era.67

(ii) The construction of Afrikaner hegemony and German political subordination

The National Party election victory in South Africa in 1948 was soon followed by the triumph of the local National Party, winning fifteen of eighteen Legislative Assembly seats in 1950, reflecting, according to André du Pisani, the “degree of ideological control that South Africa had attained over the local white electorate”.68 The National Party continued to solidify its control and by the 1970s the opposition United National Southwest Party (commonly known as the United Party) had failed to gain a single seat in the Legislative Assembly. Apart from ideological affinity, efficient organisation accounted for this success. The National Party of South Africa managed to impart to its local counterpart features of “an ethnically based, tightly disciplined, ideological party with a mass, card-carrying membership”, much more than was the case with the United Party.69 General Jan Smuts, in a message to the South West African electorate in 1950, stressed the United Party’s refusal to direct an appeal to the electorate based on “racial ties or ties of blood”, choosing rather to attract support on the basis of its social and economic programme.70 It is, however, precisely due to perceived ties of blood and the appeal of racial distinctions that the National Party managed to exert such a powerful grip on the allegiance of the majority of white Afrikaners.

By 1950, the German community was ready to embark on a formal break with the past. This was clearly illustrated in three meetings with South African prime ministers, two in 1947 with General Jan Smuts and one in 1948 with Dr. D. F. Malan. The first comprised a “deputation of old German citizens of South West”, who were “nationalised and as such fought National Socialism”. They supported incorporation into the Union of South Africa as a fifth province. A second delegation presented itself to General Smuts as representing “the younger generation” of Germans and assured him that those Germans born and brought up in South West Africa “regarded South West Africa as their fatherland”. They pleaded that they would be grateful if by “some official act the odium of enemy nationality at present attaching to Germans would be removed”. Smuts expressed sympathy, but pointed out that the deportation issue was still unresolved.71

The victorious National Party of Dr. Malan dealt more decisively with German grievances. When Malan visited Namibia in 1948 he affirmed that his government would resolve these issues (release of confiscated property and return of relatives of local Germans) as well as the matter of citizenship as speedily and sympathetically as possible. A

67 Quoted from Volker Gretschel, unpublished manuscript; Mr. D. J. Botha, Outjo, personal communication.
68 du Pisani, SWA/Namibia: 142.
70 Ibid: 77.
71 Windhoek Advertiser, no. 2871, 19 July 1947.
German delegation headed by Dr. Heinrich Vedder expressed their loyalty and support to South Africa and declared themselves willing to throw in their lot with the Union of South Africa. They were especially gratified by the way the matter of deportation had been handled by the National Party government, according to a statement. The National Party-controlled administration’s willingness to consider elevating German into a position as a third, unofficial, language further facilitated cooperation. In retrospect, however, it is clear that at least a section of the German community displayed ambiguity about their effective co-optation as a subordinate partner to the ruling National Party. Between the late 1950s and 1990 leading German figures attempted to reposition their community in such ways that room for more autonomous action was possible, without offending Afrikaner sensibilities too much. Political subordination to Afrikaners was particularly galling for Germans considering the pre-war dynamics of white inter-group relations. Afrikaners were then generally considered to have been socially and politically the least sophisticated entity in the white community. Germans and English-speakers were in important respects the real political adversaries and shapers of public debate at the time, a fact that contemporaries tended to confirm. In 1958 the Allgemeine Zeitung published a series of articles about alternative political options to incorporation in South Africa and Mr. Kurt Dahlmann floated the idea of a possible federation between South Africa and South West Africa. A short-lived attempt at fashioning an independent political position for at least a section of the German-speaking community occurred with the foundation of the Independent South West Party in Walvis Bay in 1958. It soon floundered when events in the former Belgian Congo in 1960 instilled fear in whites about the future. For the next twenty years Germans effectively shunned active involvement in party politics, apart from a tacit acceptance of apartheid and support for the National Party, without, according to Heribert Weiland, “much of a bad conscience”. Despite Germans’ gratitude for National Party assistance after the war, they were not comfortable with the dogmatic element in National Party politics, especially its failure to adopt a more pragmatic attitude in the Turnhalle political talks in the mid-1970s.

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72 Die Suidwester, 20 October 1948.

73 Former SWA Administrator J. A. Werth, testifying before the SWA Commission in 1935, noted that Afrikaners lacked political expertise and could not really compete with Germans and English-speakers on an equal footing. They particularly lacked expertise, though there were good officials (KSW 5, Report of the SWA Commission, Cape Town, 11 November 1935). The prominent newspaper editor and member of the Legislative Assembly, J. D. Lardner-Burke, was of the opinion that more Germans ought to be represented in the Legislative Assembly, because they “are thoroughly sound people, they think deeply, they are keen businessmen and I think they would add to the value of our debates”. Testifying before the SWA Commission several prominent Afrikaans-speaking farmers or politicians confirmed the widely held view that Germans considered Afrikaners to be less sophisticated, in some respects even backward. Afrikaners were at the time not a match for the politically and socially more sophisticated Germans, was the general opinion.

74 du Pisani, SWA/Namibia: 144. Dahlmann subsequently became editor of the Allgemeine Zeitung, a post he retained until 1978. During the 1950s several attempts were made to establish white political formations more or less independent from South Africa. All proved to be short-lived. Cf. ibid.: 141-144.

In early 1977 the local National Party decided to conduct a referendum amongst whites to determine support for the Turnhalle initiative, but only South African passport holders were allowed to participate. It was reported to have led to an angry anti-South African backlash amongst German-speakers. About 8,000 of the almost 30,000 German-speakers were excluded from voting.\textsuperscript{76} In October of the same year Mr. Dirk Mudge broke away from the National Party and attracted substantial German support.\textsuperscript{77} An \textit{Interessengemeinschaft Deutschsprachiger Südwester} (IG), later renamed as the \textit{Interessengemeinschaft Deutschsprechender für Namibia}, was established in the early 1980s, ostensibly to create an organisation that could speak on behalf of the German community as far as cultural and language rights were concerned. There is little doubt that this step signalled the intention of leading Germans to position the IG as an independent political-cultural entity. According to Weiland the IG hoped to shape itself as an organisation promoting “national interests above group interests”, but its political appeal was limited and its demise in 1992 reflected the lack of broad-based support amongst Germans.\textsuperscript{78} In the mid-1980s a small number of younger Germans joined SWAPO, while others chose exile to escape service in the South West African Territorial Force (SWATF).

As could be expected, the National Party of South West Africa closely followed the party line laid down by its South African counterpart. However, local support for South African policies did not merely reflect a slavish adherence to policy directives imposed from outside. Support for apartheid could draw on a reservoir of moral conviction as well. Hermann Giliomee has argued that apartheid, which represented the racial policy element in the Afrikaans Nationalist movement, originated in the 1930s and 1940s from among the nationalist intelligentsia of Stellenbosch, the Cape National Party and the Burger newspaper, not the more radical Afrikaner nationalists from the Transvaal. The latter were people who were tainted by their strong National Socialist ideas, people like Hendrik Verwoerd, Nic Diederichs and Piet Meyer. The Cape Nationalists placed heavy emphasis on paternalism, indirect rule and trusteeship and thus imparted a moral dimension to apartheid that accounts for the enduring support government policies continued to enjoy among Afrikaners in particular, even when opposition against it mounted.\textsuperscript{79} Such a distinction is helpful in making sense of the trajectory of National Party rule in South West Africa after 1950.

Since 1950, the axis of power and radical Afrikaner Nationalism within the National Party in South Africa had decisively shifted from the south (Cape) to the north (Transvaal). It is from Pretoria, the administrative capital, that the majority of largely Afrikaner civil

\textsuperscript{76} Karl Breyer, ‘Namibia: Der Stein am Hals’, \textit{Times of Namibia}, Windhoek, May 1977.
\textsuperscript{77} The majority of the estimated 33,000 Germans supported the Republican Party in the 1980 white ethnic elections, which was won by the National Party capturing 11 of the 18 seats. Cf. du Pisani, \textit{SWA/Namibia}: 451.
\textsuperscript{78} Weiland, “Detachment”: 21.
\textsuperscript{79} Herman Giliomee, “The making of the apartheid plan, 1929-1948”, \textit{Journal of Southern African Studies}, 29, 2, 2003: 375. According to Giliomee, as recently as 2001 many Afrikaners continued to believe that obvious abuses aside, “the ideas behind apartheid were basically good".
servants that exploded white population numbers in South West Africa after the 1960s had been drawn. They proved to be reliable supporters of the conservative majority within the ranks of the South West Africa National Party, people who fiercely resisted a dilution of white supremacy. The impact of this development is evident from Andre du Pisani’s observation that the 1980 white ethnic elections proved the “dilemma of bureaucratic penetration faced by Mr. Dirk Mudge as the majority of white civil servants voted against his moderate reformist policies”.

The rift that developed in local Afrikaner politics, resulting in the establishment of the Republican Party by Mudge in 1977, signalled the first breach in the walls of Afrikaner unity. Though clear evidence is lacking, it would seem that opposition against National Party rule in South West Africa derived from people with deeper roots in the territory, having settled there at least before 1950. It would appear that the Republican Party derived support partly from a section of the white community who used to support the old United Party, as well as a younger generation of reform-minded whites, Afrikaners and German-speakers in particular.

(iii) The demographic politics of South African colonial rule

The very rapid increase in the number of Afrikaners in South West Africa in the post-1950 era can be rightly considered a consequence of demographic politics. The socio-economic consequence of this demographic growth was an adjustment away from farming towards the civil service as the main sector for white employment. Afrikaners, the main beneficiaries of this transition, emerged from a position of economic backwardness to one of relative prosperity as members of the middle and lower middle classes. The figures below graphically demonstrate the dramatic increase in Afrikaner population numbers in the post-1960 era, when compared to German- and English-speakers.

From a slightly inferior numerical position vis-à-vis Germans in 1920, by 1946 Afrikaners had achieved numerical superiority at a ratio of three to one. This was largely the result of the officially-sponsored land settlement programme. The huge increase in Afrikaner population numbers after 1960 was largely due to the influx of civil servants, a clear indication that South Africa, under Nationalist Party rule was determined to cling to Namibia as international opposition to apartheid started to escalate. In the 1950s the territory’s financial prospects experienced a significant stimulus. The Gross Domestic Product, which stood at R10.4 million in 1940 had doubled by 1946 (R22 million), and in 1950 it had escalated to R56.8 million. This was largely due to substantially increased investments, both in financial and human resources, by South Africa in the territory. A more favourable arrangement for the export of local beef (the most important product of the white farming industry) had been negotiated and Pretoria also

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80 du Pisani, SWA/Namibia: 451.
increased its control over the local administration: this was achieved by taking over certain functions of local administrative departments in the mid-1950s and relocating them to Pretoria. The dramatic increase in the number of civil servants in South West Africa occurred in two areas: on the one hand staff to service the expanding agriculture sector and on the other recruits for the newly-established ethnic ‘homelands’. A comprehensive attempt to promote development in the African ‘homelands’ envisaged by the Odendaal Commission in the mid-1960s added several new layers of civil servants in the 1970s. These often comprised senior Afrikaans-speaking civil servants from South Africa, with growing numbers of local Afrikaners beginning to occupy the middle layers of this rapidly expanding bureaucracy. In the regular civil service it was particularly in the Department of Agriculture that staff numbers exploded, increasing by

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<th>Germans</th>
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82 NAN, AP 5/3/1, South West Africa, Report on the census of the population, 3 May 1921, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1923. The report is not clear on the number of English- and Afrikaans-speakers: apart from the figures listed for each group, it presents a category containing both “English & Afrikaans”, numbering 5,750.
83 NAN, AP 5/3/1, SWA, Report on the census of the European population, 4 May 1926, Pretoria Government Printer, 1927. Again, a number of 8,901 English-Afrikaans-speakers are listed separately, in addition to the numbers for each group.
85 Ibid.
86 NAN, AP 5/3/1, SWA Population Census, 8 May 1951, Govt. Printers, Pretoria. The 1960 census presents slightly different numbers for Germans (11,931) & Afrikaners (33,091) for 1951.
89 The statistics for the respective white groups are derived from Guido G. Weigend, ‘German settlement patterns in Namibia’, Geographical Review, 75, 1985: 160. The preliminary results for the 1981 census indicate only the total number of whites, i.e. 75,946, compared to Weigend’s figure of 76,430. Cf. South West Africa, Population Census, Directorate Development Coordination and Statistics, Report 01-01, Preliminary results, Geographical Distribution, 1981. The sharp reduction in numbers since 1970 reflects uncertainty about the political future among whites, Afrikaners in particular. Weigend argued that the numbers for Germans, obtained from “unofficial estimates”, were closer to 20,000.
700% between 1960 and 1966, while the overall number of civil servants rose from 7,385 to an estimated 68,000 between 1970 and 1990. The latter figure appears to be inflated. A study by the International Defence and Aid Fund estimated that in the late 1970s over half of the whites in Namibia were South African state employees or employees of State Corporations, like the First National Development Corporation, while about one-fifth were employees of foreign-based companies.

Although exact figures reflecting the influx of white South Africans after 1960, and the Afrikaner share of it, are lacking, the outlines of this process are clear. In 1951 the principal occupations for Afrikaners were in farming: 3,765 Afrikaners against 994 Germans and 128 English-speakers. They also dominated clerical occupations: 962 Afrikaners against 211 Germans and 266 English-speakers and education: 179 Afrikaners against 36 German and 27 English-speakers. They were also the dominant numerical element in the mining industry, as motor drivers, delivery workers and on the railways. By contrast, English- and German-speakers dominated most professional occupations: engineering: 8 English, 2 Afrikaner and 11 German; law: 21 English, 7 Afrikaans and 1 German; accounting: 4 English, 6 Afrikaans and 24 Germans.

The progress of Afrikaners into the professions occurred, in the absence of statistics, only incrementally and farming ceased to be the dominant choice of occupation for the majority of young Afrikaners after 1960. Traditionally, Afrikaners were noticeably absent from the trade and manufacturing sectors, which Germans and to a lesser extent the English had long monopolized. English-speakers gradually disappeared from the civil service in the post-1950 period, while German-speakers occupied a small yet not insignificant role. The extent to which Afrikaners moved into this area effectively ensured that the civil service became an Afrikaner preserve. By the mid-1970s there were an estimated 9,000 Afrikaner families in the civil service, out of a total of 10,000 (600 Germans and 400 English families). Significantly, about 35% of Germans remained in agriculture, largely stock-farming: out of a total of 7,000 families they comprised 2,500, compared to 4,500 Afrikaners.

90 Lau & Reiner, 100 Years: 54. Lau and Reiner do not disclose the source for the figure of 68,000. It can be assumed that it includes South African military and police personnel.
91 Green, “Namibia”.
92 SWA Population Census, 8 May 1951.
93 The Director of Education stated that before 1950 white parents in rural areas did not attach a high priority to schooling, as children were needed to assist with farming chores. Cf. EDU 260, E1/1/14, Commission of Enquiry, 1956. Report by M. H. Greef, Director of Education to Secretary, Education Commission, 19 June 1956. In 1955, he reported that only 33 white persons underwent technical training in South Africa (EDU 260, E 1/1/14, Director of Education, commentary on education report, 27 June 1956).
roughly 33 percent of the white population. By 1980 their share has dropped to about 27 percent. In 1951, out of a white population of 49,930, 22,318 were local born and 18,670 were South African born. In 1960 whites numbered 73,464, of whom 34,680 were local born and 27,320 came from South Africa. In 1970 the number of whites has increased to 89,389, but political uncertainty resulted in a sharp reduction, causing the white population to decline to 75,946 in 1980.

(iv) The political economy of South African colonialism

Even a superficial analysis of colonial economic policies reveals the ideological and political imperatives that underpinned it. The farming sector and the civil service (after 1960) were key concerns of the South African government. Apart from the mining sector, where foreign interests were accommodated on favourable terms, the other economic sectors were, by comparison, accorded low priority in terms of development goals. As the statistics in the previous section clearly indicate, Afrikaners were primarily concentrated in farming and government service. They were the principal beneficiaries of the officially-sponsored land settlement scheme introduced in 1920, though it also attracted sizeable numbers of Germans and to a lesser extent English. In 1936 an estimated 40% of existing farms in Namibia was considered to have been in German hands. During the first two decades of the settlement programme Afrikaners from South Africa were favoured in the allocation of farms, thereafter local-born or resident, landless local whites, mostly Afrikaners, were increasingly preferred. Eventually, a total number of 3,211 farms were allocated in terms of the land settlement scheme, representing about one half the total number of farms owned or rented by white farmers in the 1960s. The rest, roughly 50%, were acquired through the Land Bank, which set higher interest rates and required a payment of one-tenth of the purchase price, as well as through commercial banks and private purchases. If selected figures for the mid- and late 1920s, the period in which substantial German immigration to South West Africa took place, are considered, a significantly bigger proportion of German farmers obtained land through the latter two avenues, i.e. the Land Bank and private banks.

The need to accommodate white settlers in the pre-1960 era resulted in the creation of farming units generally considered too small for commercial farming purposes. The post-1960 era witnessed the consolidation of farming units, with possibly as many as twenty percent of white farm owners abandoning farming. Germans, on the other hand, maintained or expanded their position in the farming, commercial, service and

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95 NAN, Section Lands, ‘Wat vir Suidwes-Afrika gedoen en uitgegee is deur die Republiek oor die jare van sy beheer’, 18 July 1961.
96 Reports presented by the Government of the Union of South Africa to the Council of the League of Nations Concerning the Administration of South West Africa for the years 1921, 1924, 1928, Pretoria. The title of the reports varied slightly over the years.
97 The Odendaal Commission listed a number of 6,821 farms for 1962, but in 1992 only 4,205 “farming enterprises” existed, indicating the extent to which consolidation of farming units had taken place. Cf. 1. Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs, 1962-1963: 2; Botha, “Politics”: 270.
construction sectors. More specific recent data about their share in these three sectors is lacking, but it is evident that they were able to maintain a substantial role due to their long experience and exposure in these fields and the relative low priority accorded by South Africa to them. In 1944 the dominant position of Germans in the field of commerce is evident from a contemporary estimate that German-run businesses comprised 66% of the local trade sector and handled 78% of available commodities in the wholesale trade, with South African traders restricted to only 22%. The evidence also suggests that Germans were active in acquiring property during the war years. Fifty-seven farms were sold to Germans between 1 January 1943 and 31 August 1943; only eleven farms were sold by Germans to Union nationals. In the same period the South West African Administration allocated 89 farms to South African nationals and 24 to Germans. The coastal town of Swakopmund experienced a building boom and Germans constructed more houses there since the start of the war than in the preceding twenty years. Though most German men were interned, it can only be assumed that most of those people who escaped internment were not only economically active, but appeared to have dominated in particular economic sectors, such as construction, commerce and financial services.

According to conventional wisdom the tightening of South Africa’s grip on Namibia after 1950 reflected the security and ideological concerns of the new National Party government. Duncan Innes, however, has argued that at the same time that the Anglo American Group of Companies expanded and consolidated its control over the mining, industrial and financial sectors in South Africa after 1950, effectively creating the phenomenon of monopoly capitalism, South Africa began to embark on imperialist ventures in southern Africa. Namibia is an instructive example of this transformation, designed to increase South African political and economic influence and control in the southern African region, he argued. The manner in which South Africa became “an active participant in forging the international network of political and economic relations which constitutes the modern system of imperialism” means that South Africa could then (1980s) “no longer be classified as simply an underdeveloped Third World country, but rather must be ranked as an imperialist power located on the periphery of world capitalism”. The benign neglect which Namibia experienced during the first phase of South African rule, except for funding of a relatively small number of white settlers in the pre-war era, is in stark contrast to the huge increases in investment capital directed towards the territory after 1950. The economy began to acquire an overwhelmingly export-oriented character, effected in tandem by South African and foreign mining concerns.

98 Thomas, Development: 44.
99 NAN, SWAA 2927, A837/36, Property of enemy aliens, investment of German capital in property in SWA, memo from deputy-commissioner South African Police, to Secretary for South West Africa, 6 January 1944.
100 Ibid.
Though some observers argued that Germans were marginalised economically, it would be more correct to say that they were excluded from the economic sectors that made the biggest contribution towards GDP, but were active in smaller ones: they were largely excluded from government administration, financial services and almost completely from fishing and mining in 1977. By far the largest numbers of economically-active Germans were concentrated in farming, a sector that contributed only 7% to GDP in 1984. The only other sectors where they featured prominently were trade and manufacturing (together about 19% of GDP).102 This means that Germans in Namibia did not experience a significant transformation from farming to other forms of economic enterprise as happened with Afrikaners of whom the vast majority (in excess of 80%) had depended on farming in the 1920s. The number of Germans in farming remained almost stable: 40% in both the 1930s and 1980s, while only 21% of Afrikaners were still involved in farming in 1975.103 The development envisaged by the Odendaal Commission from the mid-1960s onwards, largely concentrated on infrastructure projects, actually benefited whites much more than black people, particularly in the field of construction, most of which was undertaken by white-owned enterprises. Local small and medium-sized construction companies, where local German firms were prominent, benefited from the expansion in construction work, but large projects went to South African companies. Manufacturing marginally increased its contribution to GDP from 3% in 1960 to 6% in 1970.104

Apart from the fact that Afrikaners benefited disproportionately from the allocation of land in South West Africa, they also reaped substantial rewards in terms of emergency aid as a consequence of their dominant numbers and the political importance attached to farming. The drought and depression of the early 1930s induced the government to extend financial relief to farmers. The droughts of 1959-62 and the early 1980s were accompanied by extensive support for white farmers. Even support measures originally intended to promote soil conservation through the establishment of a Fund for the Promotion of Farming Interests in 1952 soon proved to be simply another avenue for farmers to secure funding for capital projects (fencing, water installations, machinery). In 1965, the Land Bank were continuing to administer the following loan schemes on behalf of the administration: Farmers Special Support Scheme (1948, for purchase of stock), Grazing Schemes for landless farmers (1952 and another in 1958), a Rehabilitation Scheme for farmers (1960), as well as advances for farmers affected by Foot-and-Mouth disease (1961-63).105 The scope of aid rendered to the white farming sector until 1990 has attracted stringent criticism from those who predicted that commercial agriculture would collapse if the various forms of government subsidies and

103 Ibid.: 72. Thomas put the figure for Germans in farming at 35% – see footnote 94.
aid were withdrawn. Other observers pointed out that commercial farming called for high capital inputs and a high level of competence to be successful. The farming industry in colonial South West Africa was further characterised by a poorly developed environmental awareness and a failure of diversification. A former Chief Agricultural Officer once remarked that loans for soil conservation effectively amounted to increasing capital inputs in farms to maximise resource use and minimise resource protection. Afrikaners, he stated, never viewed soil conservation as an essential part of their culture; droughts and periods of below-normal rainfall were not viewed as regular climatic phenomena; land users often overestimated the potential of natural resources; farming activities were not adapted to the resource potential of the land and conservation measures were often fragmentary and un-coordinated. Such a view would have resonated with German-speakers, among whom perceptions of Afrikaners as destroyers of wildlife, and being excessively dependent on government aid, were common currency. Critics of South Africa’s economic policies in South West Africa also charged that it contributed towards a meat-monoculture, with the overemphasis on cattle and karakul tending to harm enterprises aiming to promote diversification of the farming industry.

Although officials, from colonial administrators to agricultural extension officers, regularly expressed criticism about poor farming and conservation practices, political considerations continued to dictate official policy. This was a defining feature of the colonial period, with white commercial farming being favoured despite agriculture’s relatively low contribution towards GDP. In the 1940s it was estimated that only eight percent of white farmers had an annual income higher than £1,000, the level of income below which it was considered impossible to have a successful farming operation, raise and educate a family and “be a credit to the community”. In the 1940s the local National Party as well as the United Party supported the principle of maintaining smaller farm units to facilitate the settlement of as many farmers as possible. At the time, a proposal for introducing a sliding tax scale aiming to penalise bigger farm properties was put forward, but there is no indication it was ever considered necessary to implement such a measure. In 1967 the Soil Conservation Board called for a restriction on uneconomic farm units. Too many farmers overstocked their farms, beyond recommended rates, and large concerns were buying up land, causing “land hunger”.

109 Lau & Reiner, 100 Years: 58.
111 Botha, “Politics”: 256.
The administration’s attempt to meet farmers’ land needs contributed to the problem as it continued to make loans available for uneconomic farm units.\footnote{112} To conclude, whereas the South African government persistently tended to treat the white community in South West Africa as a monolithic unit for political purposes, it systematically favoured Afrikaners in the two principal occupational sectors of the economy, first farming and after 1960 government service. This pattern has, predictably, persisted after independence, though farming has not, for various reasons, served as a motor for economic take-off for black people, to the extent it did for whites.

**Ethnic-cultural constructions among Germans and Afrikaners**

**The Afrikaners**

A peculiar feature of the cultural, political and economic history of Afrikaners in Namibia is that they never attempted to construct a recognisably local ethno-cultural identity. Jeremy Silvester has observed that there was a tendency for Afrikaner commemorations to be incorporated within the larger narrative of South African Afrikaner nationalism and to use given markers of historical moment from this narrative, rather than constructing and celebrating events and personalities associated with the territory.\footnote{113}

In South Africa the end of apartheid heralded the collapse of a wide array of cultural organisations like the Afrikaner Broederbond and the re-organisation of several others to move away from the narrow ethnocentric character of these cultural organisations. Such moves were accompanied by lively debates about various issues, for example the future of the Afrikaans language, former Afrikaans-only universities, the best ways to engage the ANC-controlled government, and attempts to promote formal unity between the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and its former ‘Indian’ and ‘Coloured’ churches. In Namibia these ethnically-based organisations and bodies ceased functioning almost without notice, again testifying to the fact that Namibian Afrikaners constituted a captive market for ideological and organisational exports from South Africa.\footnote{114} This contrasts starkly with the way in which German-speakers have long since repositioned themselves in a number of niche areas that allowed for a significant degree of autonomous action, resulting in a decidedly German imprint in fields such as tourism, environmentalism and amateur science. Local Germans have always insisted that though strong historical and cultural ties to metropolitan Germany persisted, they have evolved a distinctly local, or African, identity.

\footnote{112} NAN, LAN 1738, file 5919, Grondbewaring, Memo: “Onekonomiese hoeves en metodes om dit verhoed”, 7 July 1967 (Soil Conservation: memo: uneconomic units and how to prevent it).


Though reliable evidence is largely lacking, an attempt will be made to account for the fact that local Afrikaners were by and large consumers, instead of producers, of cultural products that emanated from across the border. An analogy adapted from the phenomenon of capitalist expansion might well have a cultural application here: South West Africa, its whites and Afrikaners in particular, constituted a periphery of the regional metropolis, consuming what it did not produce.\textsuperscript{115} In the period 1940-1990 sustained efforts were made to cement close cultural, political, social and physical ties between Afrikaners in South West Africa and South Africa. South Africa’s tight reign over the territory’s political and economic fortunes was mirrored by the excessively close links between Afrikaner cultural organisations. From ideological control via the local Afrikaner Broederbond and the National Party, to control exerted by the dominant religious institutions and bodies in South Africa, little room was left for independent local initiative and deviation from stipulated contours of thinking and action. It would thus be difficult, and the lack of evidence supports this view, to detect any signs of independent local cultural and identity constructions among Afrikaners in the period up to 1990.

What then, it may be asked, was the nature of cultural constructions emanating from South Africa? The emphasis would appear to have been much more on the construction of Afrikaner hegemony than to develop an inclusive, flexible cultural identity. To former South African academic, opposition political leader (of the Progressive Federal Party) and Afrikaner dissident, Van Zyl Slabbert, there is no doubt that apartheid legislation, despite pretensions about cultural diversity, essentially used race as motivation for ordering the state system in South Africa. The failure to invest Afrikaner identity with content that could transcend an obsession with race ultimately politicised and narrowed it down.\textsuperscript{116} Despite a cultivated pride in what was perceived to be uniquely Afrikaner cultural constructions, culture brokers remained careful to position Afrikaners within the mainstream of Western civilisation. According to Werner Hillebrecht, apartheid policies in Namibia served as a divisive instrument instead of promoting bridge building and also stressed the ‘elevated’ nature of European culture compared to those of Africans.\textsuperscript{117} With this observation in mind an attempt can be made to explore local Afrikaners’ peculiar relationship with their South African counterparts and how they adjusted to the termination of the umbilical cord with South Africa after 1990.

\textsuperscript{115} For a discussion of the way in which Afrikaners responded, belatedly, to popular cultural trends in Western Europe and the United States, see Albert Grundlingh, “‘Rocking the boat’ in South Africa? Voëlvry music and Afrikaans anti-apartheid social protest in the 1980s”, \textit{International Journal of African Historical Studies}, 37, 3, 2004: 483-514. In a sense, even the limited forms of anti-apartheid protest and counter-cultural constructions that took shape in South Africa failed to have a noticeable impact in Namibia.

\textsuperscript{116} Van Zyl Slabbert, \textit{Afrikaner, Afrikaan, Anekkotes en Analise}, Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 1999: 54; Ironically, N.P. van Wyk Louw, a leading Afrikaner intellectual of the 1950s and 1960s, advocated a form of ‘liberal nationalism’ in the 1950s and warned against the development of intolerable strains in Afrikaner nationalism.

The process of aligning the interests of Afrikaners in South West Africa with those of their South African counterparts was facilitated by the continuing influx of white South Africans into the territory. These were mostly Afrikaner civil servants, people who could be counted upon to be strong defenders of South African interests. Although statistics and census figures no longer provide for distinctions on an ethnic basis, the present-day membership of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) is used for projections that allow one to arrive at a reasoned guess at the decline of the number of Afrikaners since 1990. In 1960 there were 39,759 DRC members out of a white population of 73,464. Of the latter total local-born whites comprised 34,680, about 44%, with Afrikaners constituting the biggest component, roughly 24,000 (Germans and English-speakers the rest). Of these local-born Afrikaners a large number belonged to the DRC (about 20,000). This means that there were about 15,000 DRC members that were not locally born. In 2007 DRC membership figures have decreased to 22,000, of whom 6,000 are baptismal members. Allowing for the rather inexact nature of the calculations, it would nevertheless be possible to venture a tentative conclusion, namely that present-day Namibian Afrikaners by and large represent the descendants of local-born people, in many cases of several generations. Though emigration of local-born Afrikaners took place in the period 1978-1990, by far the biggest number of Afrikaners who left the territory were those that entered Namibia after the mid-1960s and were predominantly civil servants, army and police personnel. These were people with a more tenuous relationship with the territory than older settlers. On the basis of this conclusion it would be possible to assess the nature of cultural adjustments among local Afrikaners since independence. It would seem that this adjustment had been determined to a significant extent by these people’s lengthy residence in the territory.

In one sense, local-born Afrikaners experienced the loss of political power somewhat differently from their counterparts in South Africa, simply because they were subject to a degree of internal colonisation themselves, albeit as a privileged minority. At independence they had, for the first time ever, to reposition themselves as a minority group increasingly deprived of the cultural, political and economic ties to South Africa which sustained their hegemonic position. Of particular interest is the manner in which local Afrikaners adjusted to black rule without the public displays of anguish and recriminations of their counterparts across the border. This adjustment, it can be argued, was facilitated by the fact that local Afrikaners were people with strong historical ties to the land, for possibly two or more generations. They continued to embrace and retain a relationship with the land, organised religion, language and specific forms of community mobilisation. It would be no exaggeration to claim that many Namibian Afrikaners, especially those whose family roots in the territory go back to the pre-1950 era, still generally consider themselves to be people with close ties to the land and

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118 NAN, AP 12/5/1, South West Africa, Population Census, 6 September 1960, volume 1, Social Aspects, All Races, p. 26. The estimate for local-born Germans are arrived at by subtracting the roughly 7,000 Germans who arrived since 1950 from the figure for Germans in 1960 (16,000).

119 Ibid. The number of local-born Afrikaners is arrived at by subtracting the number of Germans (about 7,000) and English-speakers (an estimated 3,000) who arrived since 1946, from the total of 34,680.
possessed of values and attitudes associated with generations of land ownership and toil to secure, maintain and work the land.¹²⁰ A significant number of Afrikaners still retain a direct or indirect link with land, either as land-owners, or as proprietors or employees of game farms or hunting lodges. There is also Afrikaners’ enduring fascination with nature. In the limited output in Afrikaans fiction dealing with Namibia, the dominant themes are the frontier, the wandering trekboer, and their heroic battles with the elements, both natural and human.¹²¹ By contrast, Germans were less concerned with the frontier and more concerned about resolving the contradictions between their metropolitan and colonial identities: Dorian Haarhoff has argued that “German writers propagated the egalitarian myths of the colony as a leveller of class within white society.”¹²²

Another element that facilitated the transition for Afrikaners in post-independent Namibia is organised religion. Though Afrikaners’ adherence to a form of religious fundamentalism and a conservative social ethos experienced adjustment with changing times, these are still people recognisably different from their local white counterparts because of their decidedly pious outlook and lifestyle.¹²³ Where religious changes have occurred it entailed either a move towards charismatic churches, especially amongst the youth, or an inward movement stressing a spiritual experience to the almost total exclusion of an engagement with the social and ecumenical dimensions of faith. Observers have identified two aspects peculiar to Afrikaners’ religious sensibilities: fundamentalism and insecurity. Robert Carrol has argued that religious fundamentalism, once so characteristic of formal Afrikaner religious life, in essence entailed a protection of middle class values. Though a degree of flexibility has entered Afrikaner religious thinking in the last decade or so, there is still the characteristic tendency to turn inwards, instead of engaging others. This tendency may be related to what some observers have identified as a peculiar sense of insecurity in Afrikaner religious experience and conceptions. A Stellenbosch philosopher argued that a prominent feature of Afrikaners’ religious belief system is the question of an agonising guilt.


¹²¹ Dorian Haarhoff, The Wild South-West. Frontier Myths and Metaphors in Literature set in Namibia, 1760-1988, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1991: 143-157. The most prolific writer in Afrikaans in Namibia, the venerable Doc Immelmann, boasts an oeuvre of popular fiction that spanned several decades and numerous reprints. His work is strongly gendered (the Afrikaans hero as conqueror of both indigenous people and women) and paternalist, even racist: black people are depicted as either good or bad, depending on whether they co-operated with the whites or opposed them. Cf. Petrus Hendrik van Rooyen, Doc Immelman in Namibies-Afrikaanse literatuur, ‘n analise van rasse- en gender-stereotipering in sy werk. M. A thesis, Windhoek, University of Namibia, 2002.

¹²² Haarhoff, South-West: 3.

¹²³ Gilioee argues that in South Africa Afrikaners continue to consider religion as important, Gilioee, Afrikaners: 661.
complex born of the concept of original sin. Strong emphasis is placed on the concept of original sin, a condition from which only God can rescue them.\textsuperscript{124}

Throughout almost a hundred years of changing fortunes for Afrikaners in South West Africa, from relative obscurity to political hegemony and the eventual collapse of the various institutions that sustained this power, these features (i.e. an attachment to the land and religion) had been one constant in Afrikaners’ socio-cultural and psychological construction. It is not surprising that Afrikaners’ marked aloofness towards others engenders in them a preference for seeking the company of their own kind. Although Afrikaners’ conservative racial attitudes have long been accepted as a defining feature, religion also contributed towards the decidedly ambiguous relationship they enjoyed with English- and German-speakers.\textsuperscript{125} According to a former prominent DRC leader, the maintenance of a conservative religious ethos is not merely due to uncertainty as to how to respond to the collapse of a discredited politically-sanctioned religion, but represents a determined effort by Afrikaners to retain control over at least one area largely untainted by rapid political change and the thrust of globalisation.\textsuperscript{126} The church was put under immense pressure by members of its flock, who expected the church leadership to act to retain its ethno-religious character. This explains why the church leadership largely shunned a deliberate outreach programme aimed at engagement across the socio-religious fold in Namibia and instead chose to construct a spiritual ‘laager’ for their flock. Compared to the situation in South Africa, Namibian Afrikaners display far less enthusiasm for religious engagement across denominational and racial boundaries.

A sense of ethnic community is further deliberately cultivated in the sphere of education, where private schools and learner numbers, especially in towns that serve the rural farming community, have dramatically increased in numbers during the last seventeen years. This has enabled Afrikaners to merge two key concerns, language and religion, and to continue to assert control over the minds of a section of the Afrikaner youth. The growth and expansion of these schools clearly suggest a success story and contrasts powerfully with distinct signs of stress exhibited by the Namibian educational system.\textsuperscript{127} The use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in private schools and the institutionalisation of religious practices interact powerfully with a historical tradition to facilitate the creation of a tight socio-cultural community network that features a high


\textsuperscript{125} Giliomee observes that the new ruling elite in SA’s vigorous embrace of English and British-American culture and the growing official marginalisation of Afrikaans further contribute to render Afrikaner-English relations problematic, Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners} : 661-2.

\textsuperscript{126} Reverend P. D. Strauss, former Mission Secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church, personal communication, April 2000.

\textsuperscript{127} President Pohamba recently called the below 50% pass rate in the grade 10 & 12 exams an “embarrassment”. \textit{Die Republikein}, 25 January 2007. The rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Prof. K. Tjavikua, called the Namibian educational system deficient in its inability to properly prepare school leavers for tertiary education, \textit{Die Republikein}, 1 February 2007.
degree of ethnic loyalty. This, it would appear, compensates meaningfully for the loss of a hegemonic role in public affairs, as, of course, does the level of relative prosperity for whites in general. At least five private schools belong to NAVKU (Namibian Afrikaans Association for Christian Education) while at least another six share its Christian ethos but employ English as a medium of instruction. All these schools are attended by mostly white, Afrikaans-speaking learners. A spokesperson for the association ascribed the growing popularity of these schools to the maintenance of discipline, effective organisation, academic excellence and a Christian religious ethos.\textsuperscript{128}

More or less at peace with political change, and relatively secure within the confines of their adjusted, ethnic, linguistic and religious folds, Afrikaners display a marked aloofness towards organised politics. The only area where they are still organisationally active is in the field of agriculture, through the Namibian Agricultural Union. In what would appear to be in stark contrast to the situation in South Africa, Afrikaners in Namibia do not seem excessively concerned about their loss of institutional power. If anything, it may reflect a feeling of relief and respite from times when Afrikaners were the object of international scrutiny and scorn.\textsuperscript{129} There is evidence that present-day Namibian Afrikaners, faced with the reality of black political domination, have quietly opted to retreat into modern versions of the laager, where group membership is still largely determined by ethnic criteria: whiteness, the Afrikaans language and a form of religious organisation that has jettisoned its ‘burgerlike’ (civil) character, but retained the intensely pious, spiritual element derived from Calvinism. As this section attempted to argue, this may be due to the fact that the majority of Namibian Afrikaners have cultivated strong roots to the land over several generations and that they do not feel the need to look to South Africa for support any more. It is doubtful, though, to expect that two separate Afrikaans language communities, akin to the former East and West Germany, will eventually emerge, especially since a variety of informal ties are still maintained, including family and educational links (many young Afrikaners study in South Africa) and there appears to be a growing consumption of Afrikaans literature in Namibia.

**Germans**

It is against a background of relative political subordination that one should consider the significant investment in sustaining their cultural life undertaken by Germans. Culture for Germans is viewed differently from the way English speakers consider it: the latter have increasingly been called upon to mediate between a more narrowly English cultural

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\textsuperscript{128} Mr. H. Vermeulen, secretary of NAVKU, personal communication, 14 February 2007.

\textsuperscript{129} Afrikaners in South Africa, more than any other group, had always been an object of fascination. Books featuring either a history and the perceived central role of Calvinism in shaping their religious and secular beliefs, or dealing with the perceptions of African, English-speaking and Jewish South Africans towards Afrikaners, were a publishing phenomenon, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s as the prospects for peaceful change seemed to have grown progressively weaker. Cf. Streak, Afrikaner, for an outsider account, while Giliomee, Afrikaners and de Klerk, Puritans, present analyses of Afrikaners from the inside.
construction and a broader-based British cultural identity, which in turn is challenged and redefined by former colonial subjects who now engage the colonial metropolis with great literary and socio-cultural vigour. To Germans, culture is infused with notions of civilisation and a peculiar attachment to one’s identity, and according to Volker Gretschel, “connotations of exclusivity and upliftment”. Such a conception of culture does contain important strands of German continental traditions, but it also features a fiercely proud sense of a unique, African-orientated local German culture.

Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, who researched the way in which local Germans celebrated Christmas, came to the conclusion that they have imposed elements of continental German Christmas celebrations (the tree, candles, presents, a sumptuous dinner and songs such as *Leise rieselt der Schnee*) to affirm their essential German character, while being fully aware of the changed conditions under which it takes place in Africa. On the one hand the essential German identity is affirmed and re-constituted while on the other unique local patterns of hierarchy and mutual obligation are asserted. Celebrating Christmas may take place under conditions totally different from continental Germany, but it allows people to convert Africa to German territory: “obwohl es Afrika ist, ist Südwest Deutsch”. Christmas furthermore assists in constructing and reconstructing the borders separating Germans from other Namibians. Giving presents to African farm workers is also an act full of symbolic significance: it reproduces the “narrow personal dependence on the employer and the hierarchical relationship”. Schmidt-Lauber also conceives of ‘German’ culture as a social construct, constantly reaffirmed and renegotiated, rather than the often perceived narrow, reactionary clinging to a perceived identity. Such an ideal-typical localised German identity may strike foreign observers as artificial, even superficial, and there are Germans who are fiercely resentful of being typified in this manner. Perhaps such views simply reflect the peculiar position of German-speakers in Namibia who experienced colonialism in a decidedly ambiguous fashion. Not only were their ambitions as a colonial power abruptly extinguished after World War I, they suffered huge damage to their collective national psyche as a result of the Holocaust. Between 1930 and 1990 they have also gradually been marginalised politically and to some extent socially within the context of white colonial society. Having to come to terms with the legacy of this past, they silently, and it is clear now in retrospect, resentfully, accepted the position of being political support-players within the white settler community. It is against this background that one should assess their search for meaningful cultural and social constructions. A similar, deliberate reshaping of customs and traditions does not exist among Afrikaners and English-speakers in Namibia.

Having been relegated to the margins of political respectability after 1945, Germans repositioned themselves in other fields. Their contributions in the fields of amateur and

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130 Gretschel, “Community’s”: 82.
professional scientific research in Namibia, such as Anthropology, Archaeology, Linguistics, History, Botany, Soil and Nature Conservation and Hydrology, were quite significant, even though occasionally tainted by prejudice and exclusion. The South West Africa Scientific Society has been dominated by German-speakers and according to Werner Hillebrecht the society has an impressive record of involving interested amateurs in scientific research and broadening the basis of knowledge and expertise, though it failed to fulfill its promise as a truly national scientific institution, having chosen to “narrow itself down to a German tradition club”. Professional, scientific investigations were generally undertaken by German academics and local amateur researchers. Some of the most notable amateur and professional academics and scientists in South West Africa were Germans: Heinrich Vedder, missionary, linguist and historian, Otto Wipplinger and H. W. Stengel, engineers, Gunther Wagner, Rudolf Lehmann and Oswald Köhler, anthropologists.

Informants have cautioned against taking at face value Germans’ assessment of their own exceptionalism, but this does not lessen the fact that discourses and perceptions were often informed by such a notion: “‘Culture’, for most Germans, has connotations of exclusivity and upliftment, and is seen as a spiritual source accessible only to those who possess certain privileged codes and rituals. ‘Culture’ therefore serves to protect Germans from contamination by others.” According to Gretschel, this was a response to the manner in which they, convinced of their own cultural, economic & linguistic superiority over Afrikaners, were politically downgraded, an experience that led “to an exaggerated emphasis on the purity of culture and language”.

A good example of the irritation elicited by the manner in which the contributions in Namibia by Germans were perceived to have been ignored or downplayed in the period of South African rule, is the life and activities of late historian and archivist, Brigitte Lau. Having been in the forefront of the first waves of anti-colonial research in the early 1980s, she gradually came close to a defence of the aims of the German Colonial Administration in the war of 1904-1908, something for which she drew fire from progressive academics and applause from right-wing apologists of German colonialism. She also made no secret of her contempt for many features of South African colonialism. Two publications she co-authored with fellow Germans deliberately set out to discredit South Africa’s pretensions to have ‘developed’ Namibia. The first focused on achievements in German agricultural research and its practical application, and the extent to which these were ignored or abandoned by the South African Administration. This was followed by an investigation into German water conservation efforts, which she argued were far more conservation-orientated than the huge dam-
building projects in the South African period that principally benefited white urbanites. Pride in the varied initiatives and the expertise that sustained it, displayed by Germans, animate these publications.\textsuperscript{137}

If Afrikaners appear to have made their peace with African political domination by withdrawing into themselves, there are tentative signs that German-speakers may experience decidedly mixed emotions about this political transformation. Heribert Weiland conducted opinion polls in 1989 and 1991 and the results are suggestive. Among German-speakers the number of people who had high hopes about Namibia’s democratic future declined from 75\% to 56\%, while among Afrikaans-speakers it slightly increased from 71\% to 75\%. Optimism that race relations would improve declined amongst German-speakers from 75\% to 54\% but among Afrikaans- and English-speakers it increased from 66\% to 71\% and 68\% to 83\% respectively.\textsuperscript{138} Providing explanations for these changes would amount to a speculative endeavour at best. For Afrikaners, one possible explanation might relate to the very high degree of anxiety, anti-black prejudices, the grip of a dogmatic political creed current in the pre-independence period, and a feeling of relief with the arrival of a stable democracy. Germans, on the other hand, might have expected to play a more significant role in independent Namibia. According to one observer, some prominent Germans were disillusioned by the lack of recognition they were accorded, a case of adding insult to injury after the period of Afrikaner-domination.\textsuperscript{139} Germans’ awareness of their position of qualified equality within the white community is clearly reflected in the status of the German language during the colonial period. German never obtained the status of an official language, though it was prescribed that Germans should be served in their language in the local civil service and official documents had to be made available in German on request. A memo in this regard stated that German should continue to enjoy certain privileges and that it can be “freely utilised in public offices and in official correspondence.”\textsuperscript{140}

White memories of a discredited past

Finally, a brief reflection on the manner in which Afrikaners and Germans respond to the discredited aspects of the colonial past suggests an unresolved engagement with history. The policy of national reconciliation introduced at independence to promote a sense of common Namibian nationhood effectively relegated debates about apartheid abuses and SWAPO’s own unfortunate history of dealing with the detainee issue to the margins of societal discourse. The Namibian government approached its German counterpart for funding for a project designed to collect records of resistance against

\textsuperscript{137} These issues are dealt with in two publications: Lau & Reiner, 100 years, and Lau & Stern, Water.

\textsuperscript{138} Weiland, “Detachment”: 25, 26.

\textsuperscript{139} Visiting Russian historian, Prof. Alexander Balesin, personal communication, 1990.

\textsuperscript{140} NAN, DEE, 1/17, D 29/5, Secretary of Justice, Pretoria, to Manager Volkskas Bank, 16 October 1972. The memo, in response to the bank’s query about problems experienced with the translation of deeds, advised that such documents can be accepted in German provided there were accompanied by translations.
colonialism. The title: “Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle” only covers the period up to 1966, the year in which SWAPO launched its struggle against South African colonial rule. The intensified recent focus on the war of 1904 and calls for Germany to compensate Namibians for the losses inflicted on local peoples, while the horrors of apartheid abuses have been largely swept under the carpet in the name of national reconciliation, have stimulated feelings of intense annoyance amongst Germans-speakers. For them, a particular reading of the colonial past seems to have enabled the British and Afrikaners to escape the verdict of history relatively lightly, while special opprobrium appears to have been reserved for the Germans.

This much is evident in a rather acrimonious debate that erupted amongst German academics, with one side accusing the other of favouring an attitude of collective amnesia concerning the war of 1904 in particular and a defence of German colonialism in general. There is an alleged refusal to consider a possible link between the killing of Herero in 1904 and the Holocaust.141 The ‘accused’ have responded by stressing that those who equate the war against the Herero as a staging ground for the Holocaust and support reparation payments ignore the complexities of official policy, intentions and conduct of the German-Herero war.142 This debate is taking place against the background of an apparent hardening of attitudes between members of the German and Herero communities. Herero leader Kuaima Riruako recently cautioned that a failure to pay reparations to the Herero people might not only cause people to engage in violence, but would constitute a refusal to allow the Herero to regain their dignity.143 Local Germans are seriously concerned about the recent re-issue of the Blue Book that depicted graphic evidence of German abuses during the war of 1904-1908.144 To publish such a document, considered to be the result of a highly deficient historical methodology, only serves to inflame passions and poison relations between Germans and Herero in particular, it is argued. This can only have the unfortunate effect of rupturing the modus vivendi that was constructed in the post-1950 period between the German and Herero communities. Demonstrations of empathy occurred through attendance at the Herero annual Heroes Day by German-speakers and it is argued that this carefully constructed entente is at present in danger of unravelling.

For Germans, and some neutral observers, the focus on the wars during the period of German rule and the general failure to investigate the period of high intensity-war and counter-insurgency that characterised the period 1970-1990 reflects a case of selective morality. Apart from a few popular events (in terms of propaganda value for the

143 The Namibian, 28 August 2006.
144 A cursory scan of the local daily, Die Allgemeine Zeitung, reflects these concerns, expressed in a steady stream of letters to the paper and opinion pieces by prominent German-speakers.
liberation struggle), such as the Old Location shooting in 1959, the migrant labour strike in 1971 and the Cassinga massacre in 1979, hardly any systematic investigations of human rights abuses during the South African period have been undertaken.\textsuperscript{145} A history conference scheduled in 2000 to reflect on some of the hidden truths of this past was titled “Public History, forgotten History”. The government was reportedly not impressed by the general thrust of the conference, perceived to have been aimed at its reluctance to engage with the negative aspects of the past in which SWAPO itself was involved.

Namibian Afrikaners, though strongly supportive of South African, and, by extension, white rule in the colonial period, failed to develop a tradition of fictional writing premised on a defence of colonialism. This is in contrast to German colonial literature, covering both the period of German rule and a while thereafter, which by and large engaged in a defence of white domination and a tendency to dehumanise black Africans.\textsuperscript{146} The fiction of Doc Immelman introduced escapist literature in Afrikaans to Namibia in 1959, but his work, without pretentions of literary merit, only implicitly serves to justify Afrikaner colonialism.\textsuperscript{147} In the 1980s a new generation of younger Afrikaans-speaking South African writers produced a body of literature with the border war as a central theme. These works often deconstructed official accounts and public perceptions about the border war.\textsuperscript{148} There is, however, no systematic body of critical non-fiction writing by Namibian Afrikaners in either the pre- or post-independence period similar to that produced by prominent Afrikaans writers, either in English or Afrikaans, in South Africa before and after 1994.\textsuperscript{149} Without belittling the attempt to identify perceived links between the wars of 1904-1908 in Namibia and the Holocaust, it would seem odd that so much energy is expended on a very brief, albeit immensely important, episode in Namibian history, while many aspects of the subsequent colonial history are calling out for similar scrutiny.\textsuperscript{150} This is in stark contrast to the impressive work produced in recent years by German-speaking scholars such as Dag Henrichsen, Tilman Dedering, Gesine Kruger and Wolfram Hartmann, on 19th century Namibia, studies that immensely enhanced our understanding of an era once the subject of much myth-making of European origin.

\textsuperscript{145} The late Brigitte Lau, former head of the Namibian National Archives, once decried the lack of focus on various aspects of South African rule in Namibia (personal communication, November 1995). The present head of the National Archives, Werner Hillebrecht, reiterated this view and confirmed that a mass of material awaits prospective researchers into this topic (personal communication, October 2006).

\textsuperscript{146} Haarhoff, \textit{South-West}: 72-3, 80-1.

\textsuperscript{147} van Rooyen, \textit{Immelman}.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.: 193-223.

\textsuperscript{149} Virtually the only two exceptions are André du Pisani, political scientist and analyst of the Namibian political scene, and Bryan O’Linn, former politician and judge, both of whom wrote critical analyses of aspects of colonial rule.

\textsuperscript{150} Such attempts have been hamstrung by the secretive manner in which the South African government dealt with information deemed to be harmful to its interests. The paucity of official statistics about the economy, in particular, was especially noticeable during the period 1955-1975.
The differing ways in which Germans and Afrikaners have responded to their complicity in colonial exploitation and oppression simply confirm an enduring sense of unease in the white community throughout the period of colonial rule. This aspect was often hidden beneath loud proclamations of the perceived advances secured by European initiatives and demonstrations of colonial power. In a perceptive article dealing with the ambiguities of power relations in colonial society in Namibia in the early phase of South African rule, Robert Gordon has argued that in the absence of an adequate police force and faced with the reality of stark divisions in settler society, the colonial administration resorted to the introduction of a panoply of laws and regulations that were designed to assuage white settler fears and anxieties, rather than to effectively dominate Africans. The colonised had, in Gordon’s words, to be impressed, not by force, but by awe and respect and the ritualised performance of laws and regulations effectively acted as a massive anaesthetic for the settler society and served to inculcate the proper attitude that long-term success (i.e. effective colonial control) required.151 This observation may serves as an apt metaphor for the colonial period as a whole, with the sound and fury of formal colonial rule, in its pronouncements and pretensions, often hiding the insecurities, disagreements and lack of unity in the white community.

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