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Shadows of the Past: The Consequences of Colonisation and German Colonial Rule in Namibia

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Because of geographical and climatic features, Namibia has been free of outside influences for quite a long time. Only when the "scramble for Africa" already reached its final stage, the territory became an interesting object for the adventurers and colonial enthusiasts, who, in the name of European "civilization" invaded the country's interior. The Namib desert along the Atlantic coast, until this time in the 19th century an effective natural shelter, could then not any longer protect the land and people inside effectively.

After the first concerted efforts of Europeans to settle on a permanent basis, the character and organisation of the economic and social structures within the country underwent basic changes, which corresponded to the establishment of a colonial-capitalist settler-society. Henceforth, Namibia became organised as a white man's country.

The first impacts to this development lie far back in the early stages of Namibian colonial history, more than hundred years ago. Their consequences are nevertheless of more than historic interest and still relevant for an analysis and understanding of the present situation, the organisation of the still valid (though modified) colonial system and the national liberation struggle against this system with its present features. Therefore, also in the context of a reader dealing with aspects of Namibia's nowadays situation, it seems justified and necessary to take a look at these early times of white settlement in Namibia, as this illuminates some essential aspects in their historic continuity.

This essay tries to do so by briefly summarizing the pre-colonial situation to sketch the background of colonisation. This is followed by a discussion of the impact of the "informal colonialism", especially the missionary activities, which in fact contributed essentially to the colonizing task already before the formal
establishment of power by the Germans, who then renamed the "Land between two deserts" into "German South-West-Africa", to label their possession as such.¹

In a further step the development of the German settler-colony and the results of this process for the colonized majority is sketched. It should become obvious from this presentation, that the colonialism of the past had much in common with the South African one of today and contributed basically to the cornerstones of what later became notorious as Apartheid and "separate development", thereby preparing the foundation upon which South Africa built a rigid and uncompromising foreign rule.

1. The Pre-Colonial Structure and History

The characteristics of social structures in pre-colonial Namibia demonstrate that - independent of different stages of development and varying degrees of social organisation - among and between the tribal societies existed relations and interactions, which without the destructive influence of foreign interests could well have developed further and by no means have been static.

With regard to the development of the productive forces, the socio-cultural institutions and the political and social degree of organisation, a broad variety is to be identified. It corresponded to the dialectic relationship of social organisations with the mode of production of the tribal societies according to the natural environment in which the people were living and operating. The climatic and geographic features and conditions seem to explain the regional differences to a certain extent: In the southern and central parts of the territory, with vast areas of little vegetation and a small amount of rainfall, the Nama (Khoi-khoi) and Herero were living with their herds as nomadic cattle-breeders. In the park-landscape of the northern part, with more fertile soil and higher rainfall, the Ambo-tribes with their more sophisticated agrarian reproduction basis (a mixed economy with mainly agricultural cultivation and limited life-stock) had settled on a permanent basis. Dama and Saan - nomadic gatherers and hunters
on a comparatively low level of economic development - lived partly in dependence of the other economic forms, partly independent in between.

As common features and characteristics of the varying forms of (household-)production can therefore be emphasized the different ecological imperatives for the individual tribal societies. As a result, a harmony of geographic and ethnic identity with the specific economic form of reproduction can be stated for the three dominant tribal societies of the Khoi-khoi, Herero and Ambo. The development of (tribal) class-structures had been - although in general in the whole territory still in an embryonic stage - more progressive among the Ovambo in the North than in the South among the Khoi-khoi and Herero. In Ovamboland, first features of "proto-feudalist" rule seemed to develop. Among the Herero, the differences in wealth of cattle already produced a rich elite outside of the traditional tribal institutions. But their further development was hampered, as the use of land still happened collectively and no private property of natural resources existed. Within the Khoi-khoi societies, a social progress of class-division and separation between production and possession had hardly been recognizable, although some indications point to unequal power-structures on a general level above the unit of family and kinship. Altogether, in the whole of Namibia, subordinate classes along ethnic lines had already developed (e.g. the use of Dama as servants). The level of the internal trade in the North also showed a more progressive division of labour, including specialised artisans and traders.

The Namibian people by the beginning of the 19th century possessed already a clear knowledge and consciousness about the natural territorial boundaries of Namibia and had continuous contact among each other. The Ambo-traders exchanged goods for cattle mainly with the Herero and the Namibian tribes via the Ambo were connected with a trade-network to the North. By the middle of the 19th century cattle from Namibia supplied the beef-market at the Cape and was even delivered to Napoléon's garrison at St. Helena island.
A completely new factor to the internal development in the southern and central parts of the country represented the immigration of the tribal factions of the Orlam, initially part of the Khoi-khoi communities living at the Cape. The Orlam, when crossing the Orange River early in the 19th century on their way from the Cape Colony to southern Namibia, had already been infected by the colonial virus. Robbed of their land by the invading Dutch colonisers, they tried to escape bondage by moving further north. Many of them already had experienced wage-labour under European farmers or had lived on premises of the missionary stations. In general they spoke Cape-Dutch, had converted to the Christian faith and knew excellently how to make use of their sophisticated weaponry (guns) and their mobility by horses. At the time of their arrival to Namibia, the Orlam-communities by their military character possessed a higher degree of social and political centralisation as the resident Nama and were in terms of combat-skills superior to the other Khoi-khoi living in this region.

The immigration of the Orlam at the beginning of the 19th century escalated the competition for use and control of the natural means of production (land and water resources). This competition increased even more by the reduction of these resources as result of a severe drought in 1829/1830. Finally, this conflict lead to the continual military confrontation between the tribes in the southern and central region of Namibia with a mode of production rooted in expansionist tendencies (nomadic cattle-breeders, who for their further economic development were in need of more land and water). The clash between Khoi-khoi and Herero, which concentrated finally on the gaining of the dominance over this part of Namibia, can therefore at the same time also be classified as a struggle for survival, owing to the increasingly scarce resources. At least indirectly, this aspect also articulates the influence of the progressing colonialism of the European settlers at the Cape. As the migration of the Orlam-communities demonstrates, the African population already had to face existential threats to their original way of life. By escaping these, they became a threat themselves to other tribes in the neighbouring regions.
This situation introduced the dimension of a struggle for survival to the conflicts emanating for securing or regaining the prior way of living.

On the other side, the level of communal organisation at this time started to provoke the first attempts for the establishment of supra-regional and inter-tribal power-structures. In this modest sense and meaning, there could well be referred to the development of a first tendency towards the erection of a state-apparatus, which demanded the supremacy of a hegemony over various tribal factions and until then independent social entities. Such a process of "state formation" required the establishment of a military rule, which for its realisation and stabilisation necessarily provoked military conflict. In this context it is doubtful, whether the militarily superior Orlam-communities with their extensive practice of robbery, which had been an essential part of their reproduction, indeed could be judged as higher economic unit. Correctly, some few studies indicate, that this supremacy of the Orlam and its consequences for the further development of more centralised power-structures and authorities also bore a destructive and regressive element, as acquisition of wealth and security of income depended on the expropriation of military weaker communities. The establishment of a hegemonial structure under leadership of the Orlam (in alliance with a few Herero chiefs) therefore on the one side contributed to the consolidation of new, all-embracing structures of power and an unification tendency of the people on a regional basis, but at the same time also weakened decisively the existing tribal orders. Thereby, the following colonisation of the territory and its people became easier as manipulable task.

It would go beyond the scope of this essay, to sketch the details of this period, when the Khoi-khoi and Herero societies fought for the dominance in the central and southern parts of Namibia. The general arguments presented should nevertheless be sufficient for a conclusion objecting the colonial clichés of Namibia's pre-colonial past: In spite of the claims of colonial apologists it becomes obvious from the results of historic research that Namibia has neither been an uninhabited vacuum, nor a land
without internal dynamics. Quite opposite, ecological constraints already 150 years ago resulted in the military confrontation for the control of the territory's natural resources by Khoi-khoi and Herero trying to gain a kind of overlordship in the southern and central parts. And this conflict further demonstrates, that the people of Namibia at this time had a history of their own.

2. The Process of Informal Colonial Penetration

First travelogues of individual European explorers reporting on various isolated impressions of environment and human life in Namibia - by no means systematic aspects of the pre-colonial social structures - indicate that during the early 19th century the interests of these Europeans were mainly of an "academic" explorative nature and not yet directly linked to and influenced by massive economic motives on a large scale. Nevertheless, of course, by offering at least some informations on the country, these travelogues already indirectly paved the way for future activities directed by obvious self-interests of the strangers.

Missionaries, traders and representatives of mining companies were the early agents of an informal colonialism and became active in the territory from the beginning of the 19th century. Their ideological and economic impetus remained until the mid-century rather sporadic and harmless. Although they had some catalyst effect right from the beginning of their activities, they never managed to control or to direct the internal social process of transformation in this phase. This changed since the mid-19th century: especially the increasing influence of the Rhenish Mission from thereon proved to be of considerable political, economic and social influence in the further development of Namibia's internal forces. Less so were the first mining activities in the country, the exploitation of the large guano deposits on the islands offshore the Namibian coast and the fishing-enterprises in this region.
The first attempts of an ideological interference and influence by representatives of Christian missionary societies had little effect on the various Namibian tribal societies. They were still intact and functioned, the sporadic and uncoordinated activities of individual Europeans could not threaten the economic and social structure. It should be noted, however, that within the Namibian territory the effects and consequences varied, according to the general external influences upon the single communities. The Herero, able to reproduce themselves economically by their immense wealth of cattle independently of colonial influences, showed a correlating immunity against foreign cultural and ideological impacts. At the same time, the Ambo tribes in the North were not at all confronted with any direct contact to Europeans. Rooted within the land they cultivated, their social organisations were a challenge the Finish missionary society only dared to accept late in the 19th century (and then still with little success). On the other side, the tribal units of the Orlam, already undermined and deformed by the colonial influences experienced in South Africa, were already in a process of disintegration. This allowed foreign ideologies more means for penetration and proved better results. Nevertheless, also in the south of Namibia, the exchange relations between missionaries and tribal leaders have never been an one-dimensional or unilateral affair. The local chiefs always sought to make use of the position of the missionaries for the realisation of their own interests. The London Missionary Society had to experience this in the early half of the century with much frustration and finally gave up her activities in the territory. The Wesleyans dared another attempt during the 1830s and in direct competition with the Rhenish Mission (which operated in Namibia since 1842) in 1844 even managed to become the most important missionary enterprise. But when in the following years the Rhenish Mission gained increasingly influence, the English Methodists in 1850 resigned like their predecessors from the London Missionary society and gave up their activities in Namibia.

The Rhenish Mission by that time had embarked upon a concept which proved to be more successful than direct ideological activity
would have been. Based on extensive trade activities, the missionaries soon managed to influence the further social and political development in the territory south of Ovamboland according to their own interests. Hereby it has to be differentiated between the sphere of influence of Christian ideology and the effectiveness of the political-economic factor. The latter one also secured means of influence without an ideological penetration in the sense of Christianisation of the tribal communities and turned out to be more effective. At the same time, of course, the degree of political influence of the mission did not genuinely depend upon the personal decision of the missionaries. Instead, it were the existing local structures, which influenced the political power of the mission.10

As mentioned already, Namibia in the mid-19th century had reached a stage of internal development, in which the Nama and Herero in the southern and central parts of the territory were fighting for an overlordship, which could well be labelled as a rudimentary process of state-formation. The Rhenish Mission Society at this stage and in this situation could profit from the fact that the Orlam-factions were already Christianized Khoi-khoi, who were prepared to cooperate with the mission, thereby supporting at least unwillingly her extension of the zone of influence and power. - When Jonker Afrikaner, at that time undisputed leader not only of the Orlam but the alliance representing the hegemony in the central and southern parts of the territory, finally disputed the mission's claim and founded his own spiritual community, he forced the Rhenish mission out of the centre of power and thereby became objectively an enemy of the mission's far-reaching ambitions for control of the power-structures. The Rhenish mission in the 1860s therefore started to concentrate increasingly on the Herero communities and lend them their support. The Herero-mission stimulated the challenge of the Orlam-Nama dominated hegemony. This political objective also determined the participation of the mission in the conflict between Nama and Herero. With nearly a monopoly of the mission with regard to manufactured goods - including the trade with weapons and ammunition - and the selective support of individual tribal
leaders with such material, the policy of the Rhenish mission became identical with the fostering of particularistic forces in opposition to the established centralised power-structures. The material assistance on the other side resulted in more attractiveness of the mission for individual tribal leaders. The death of the two leading personalities of the Orlam-Nama hegemony, Jonker Afrikaner and his Herero-ally Tjamuaha, finally resulted in the decrease of influence of the Orlam-Nama hegemony and new tendencies of particularism of the tribal communities. The growing atomization benefitted the Rhenish mission's ambitions to expand the control of the territory. The mission's activities from now on shifted from an indirect military-strategic involvement to an economic and ideological priority. Enterprises of the mission gained far-reaching influence on the economy as well as the religion and education. They created a host of new wants and a wide range of new skills marketable only in a capitalist economy, according to their own, eurocentric and culture-bound perspective and perception.  

A rudimentary understanding about the capitalist economy gained ground. Under the influence of the mission and in the vicinity of mission stations some Herero started along the banks of the Swakop river to cultivate corn. In 1865 already a surplus-production was used to sell the corn for money to English miners and in the years following this surplus-production continually increased.  

The domestication effects, i.e. the mechanisms for internalisation of capitalist dispositions, are obvious. The later on founded trade-company of the mission also tried (although at this time in vain) to persuade the Herero to realize the trade-value of their holy cattle. A comparatively small part of the Dama, the "Omene" ("resident people"), too, lived at the time of German annexation of the territory already in villages within the Herero-region, bred under the influence of the mission some small stock, later on also cattle, and cultivated crops for sale on the market along the banks of river-beds.
In spite of all these indicators which tend to support the argument of the mission's influential role during the second half of the 19th century, her activities were still far from being completely systematic. According to the unclear situation concerning the future development (until that time no colonial power had officially shown preparedness for an annexation of the territory), the activities of the mission remained fixed to a degree of preparing the suitable pre-conditions for a colonial take-over. And this of course in general also not happened with a stringent awareness about the consequences of her activities — at least this seems to have not been the case with regard to the majority of individual missionaries active within Namibia. Consequently, a long-term perspective could not be created until a colonial power offered the mission support and shelter.

By far more essential than the meagre output of missionary activities until the 1880s in terms of baptized Africans was in fact the qualitative effect resulting from the mission's operations. As described, she contributed to newly arising tribal particularisms at a time, when a first central power-structure had been established, and thereby helped to install military conflict among the opposed forces on a permanent basis by selective support of single factions involved in the conflict. By doing so, not only the first steps towards a more centralised power-structure and inter-tribal institutions were undermined and reversed, but also the stability against foreign influences and invaders considerably weakened, by strengthening particular interests and immanent antagonisms. This finally offered a suitable basis for a systematic colonisation of the territory.

Concerning the historic development, it can therefore be concluded, that the interference of the Rhenish mission and the German colonial power had not been the result but the origin for the deformed development, the destruction of tendencies towards a central authority and the stagnation of the social conditions in Namibia.15 Neither in moral terms, nor on basis of individual commitment, but well in their objective consequence, the mission's activities in Namibia therefore represented an essential factor in the informal
colonial penetration of the southern and central Namibian territory and its inhabitants.

3. The Establishment of Formal Colonial Rule

The initial phase of official German colonialism in the territory can be divided into two stages: the concessionary period and the one of treaties. The concessionary period at the beginning of the 1880s paved the way for an official annexation of the land by the German empire in creating already de facto colonial possessions and private property in German hands, although the ownership rights mainly based on at least very dubious agreements with local headmen of the tribal communities.

During this phase, representatives of colonial interest groups within Germany tried without any direct participation of the German government to acquire vast territories overseas. In the course of these enterprises, a trading-agent of the German businessman Adolf Lüderitz in April 1883 entered Namibia to secure land and ownership rights by fraudulent and unfair deals with local tribal leaders, who for short-sighted personal privileges were prepared to embark upon agreements whose consequences were not realized. By "transactions" of this kind the trading-house of Lüderitz added within short a vast area of land in Namibia to its overseas possessions. In addition, Lüderitz acquired the mining rights for minerals in a considerable part of the remaining portion of the territory. Typical for these pacts and treaties were, that the tribal leaders agreed to them according to their own traditional understanding and interpretation of ownership rights. I.e., private property in the capitalist meaning had until then been an unknown phenomenon with regard to the use of land. This had been the collective property of the tribal community, and only the grant of conditioned rights for use of natural resources were a familiar practice.

On September 5th, 1884, the German empire formally declared the southwestern coastal strip of Africa under her flag. The area henceforth under her "protection" stretched from Kunene river...
in the north to Orange river in the south and to the sandy desert of Kalahari in the east. The 'legal' basis for this proclamation represented the land within this region that had been acquired by Lüderitz. This formal declaration of colonial responsibility was then followed by a period, in which a representative of the German empire tried to agree upon 'protection treaties' with the local chiefs. In their basic tendencies, these individual agreements and treaties between the German empire and the local communities were trying to prevent any new constellation and perspective for a kind of hegemonial structure on the side of the African population in the southern and central parts of the territory. At the same time, the formal declaration of a colonial status did not yet have any meaningful consequences for the Ambo-tribes in the north, who as before could live in their region without any direct interference. The German authorities successfully aimed at the conservation of the atomized ethnic units. The fundament for this policy rooted in the antagonisms that were produced by the decrease of influence of the former Orlam-Nama hegemony and the growing strength of other social forces with particularistic interests. The aim of the new foreign authority was directed towards the establishment of a "balance of power" among the African tribal entities, which would allow a further colonial penetration without coordinated resistance from the African side by taking advantage of the disintegrative forces within the Namibian society.

But the German empire at this time had still been too much busy with building up the internal capitalist system at home and was not yet in a situation to take advantage of her colonial prey systematically. The economic interests within Namibia were therefore mainly represented by a number of private "concessionary companies". These were founded as investment for the growing finance capital and in the main only existed for speculative purposes. They wanted to make short-term profits and were not interested in capital investment and a field of economic activities as long as there was enough investment opportunity still at home. Economically and politically, the further perspectives of the Namibian colony were only attractive for the Germans during this stage in terms of developing a settler-colony (although this
had more importance as internal political argument than really chances for the practical realisation).

As a result of this vague and hesitant handling of the colonial question, the concessionary companies within Namibia originally had the power of a para-state. The German authorities at this stage were not much interested in establishing functioning administrative structures, and left the management of the territory to the land companies. They in turn were only interested in adding more land to their possession and acquire even more mining rights. Consequently, the territory turned out to be a complete loss for the German government and the colonial involvement run danger to meet a financial collapse. Facing this situation, the German government by the end of the 1880s decided upon an increase of her colonial engagement in Namibia and finally in 1890 formally took over the colonial administration with full responsibility and control for the further development of the territory. The official German administration established itself in 1893. Only then, a colonial power-structure and administrative apparatus became installed, which in its aims and effects started to threaten the existential interests of the Namibian population.

4. The Systematic Colonisation of the Territory

In the years following 1890, the German colonial power started an attempt to integrate the existing local structures of power into the administrative system and tried to make use of them as part of the concept of rule. It was this period in the years between 1890 and 1905, in which the basic shift for the further political and socio-economic development of Namibia with the specific orientation towards racial segregation and its final product "Apartheid" was designed and initially put into practice.

This more systematic policy of the German colonial administration aimed at the domestication of the Namibian people by tying the tribal communities to the German foreign rule via new agreements with their leaders. The strategy of "divide and rule" emerged on more sophisticated basis and found its expression in
the "system Leutwein", named after the first governor of "German South West Africa", who between 1894 and 1904 was the highest colonial official in the territory.

During this time, the ambivalent character of the traditional African chieftainship became visible in all its variations: passive bribery on the one side, active participation and leadership in the anti-colonial struggle on the other side marked the wide range of reactions by local leaders to the emerging system of foreign domination. Cooperative chiefs, who were prepared to serve as instruments in the interest of the colonial administration, were rewarded with pensions amounting up to 2000 German Marks annually. The tribal communities were ordered successively to move to fixed areas, to restrict their mobility and thereby to improve the means of control for the benefit of a more effective administrative policy in the interest of the colonial power. For the first time in Namibian history, reserves became installed, which in the afterwards created racist Apartheid-doctrine were then labelled as "traditional homelands".17

Although the "system Leutwein" preferred peaceful solutions to the application of military violence, the implementation of this policy when necessary also included violent repression against non-cooperative leaders not prepared to sell out their land and people. Some of them were liquidated, others put under extreme pressure and finally forced into pacts with the administration. By the mid-1890s, Leutwein had managed to establish a sort of alliance by means of such a policy using the military superiority directly only in situations, where the chiefs were not "voluntarily" compromising.

For the first time, the German colonial authority gained a loose supremacy and overlordship within the territory. Decisive for the success of this policy turned out to be, that Leutwein managed to win control over the two most influential tribal leaders of the southern and central parts of Namibia, Hendrik Witbooi of the Nama alliance and Samuel Maharero as paramount chief of the Herero.
Maharero cooperated with the Germans for the support they offered him in the stabilisation of his powerful position among the various Herero communities. Hendrik Witbooi, at this time ambitious to reconstruct a new Nama-hegemony and for years already at war with the Herero, was only forced into a treaty by the uncompromising application of military violence and his defeat by the German troops. \(^{18}\)

But the "system Leutwein" did only in part make use of the English practices of indirect rule. Concentrating mainly on the establishment of treaties and favourable conditions for a better control of the territory's population, like the English colonial concept it tried to use the local hierarchies for its own purposes. The instrumentalisation and functionalisation of the tribal leaders should keep the African population at bay. But the necessary complementary measures for a general social integration of the African people into the emerging structures of the colonial settler society were neglected. \(^{19}\)

The establishment of educational opportunities and other cultural institutions for domestication of the colonised majority still depended solely upon the activities of the mission. Chances and opportunities for a social career within the colonial administration or the structures of the settler-community did virtually not exist. The establishment of an infrastructure was orientated only towards the advantages of the immigrating whites and was not designed for the benefit of all inhabitants. - The policy of this time was uncapable to extend the integrative mechanisms to the broad economic field.

The limitations of this system became obvious with the increasing settlement of Europeans. The economic interests and the basis for an existence of the immigrating whites laid in their career as farmers by means of extensive land cultivation (cattle-ranching). Therefore, the main interest of the settlers vested in the brutal and systematic expansion of "their" land possessions and property of cattle, which in its consequences resulted in the further
expropriation of the African population. This expropriation did not yet take place under the aspect of setting free a landless labour class, which as newly created proletariat could be used in the establishing colonial-capitalist economy. Instead, only the complete destruction of the people's basis for reproduction and their social relationships was the aim. The settlers' interests were orientated primarily only to the narrow goal of appropriation of land and cattle by means of violent or fraudulent practices and the "legal" backing of these methods by the colonial administration. Governor Leutwein, who had little support for his own, more enlightened ideas of an administration serving the interests of all inhabitants of the country at least to a certain extent, was thereby put under pressure. If he did not want to risk the confrontation with the settler-community, he permanently had to pass new legislations directed against the African interests and assisting the implementation of the settlers' ambitions. Otherwise, he would have faced the blame to boycott the increasing settlement of Germans in the territory and thereby ignoring the interests of the German empire too. This contradictory process resulted in a considerable shift of the priorities within the colonial administration policy. While the original intentions in the concept of Leutwein had been aiming at the establishment of a state-apparatus according to European models, in which the tribes should have the opportunities for adaptation to the emerging new structures and social relations, the colonial administrative body now extended unconditioned support to the violent means of oppression and expropriation as practiced by the settlers according to their economic interests. Compensation and economic incentives, basic prerequisites for the integration of the colonised majority into the structures of the new colonial society, could not be offered as essential parts of an "appeasement policy".

In spite of these rigid tendencies, during this phase of settlement and its consequences for the economic penetration, the strongest economic group during the first half of the 1890s had still been the Herero. They were still possessing an immense wealth of cattle and occupied the best grazing lands. And although
they did not yet permanently and constantly participate at the established network of capitalist trade, they dominated the market-structures by occasional sales of cattle. Their economic dominance was only destroyed by a natural disease in 1897. It robbed the Herero of large parts of their cattle and for the first time endangered their basis of production, thereby weakening their economic and social position decisively. The immense loss of cattle made the Herero more dependend upon the European goods offered on the market and confronted them with new dependencies. The trade with cattle as the basis of exchange relations was excluded, the possession and sale of land started to become the subject of business. For the first time, impoverished Herero in bigger numbers started to earn their living as wage-labourers. White settlers now entered Hereroland to settle there on a permanent basis. The Namibian economy gradually started to develop along "European" lines.

This reduced the risk for a loss of investment to the German capital, for the first time this capital participated in a long-term planning of an economic policy within the colony. It was decided upon the establishment of a railway-network and other corresponding infrastructural investments for the disclosure of the country's opportunities. All these measures were of strategic-military value as well as at the same time an improvement of the conditions for exploitation and export of the Namibian resources. Now the "labour question" turned out to become the most burning issue: the need for African workers permanently increased, became the main economic problem and remained a chronical shortage. To increase the supply of so badly needed labourers, the colonial authorities made use of increasingly violent methods. Settlers and colonial officials alike, in most cases simply did not realize, that the most brutal methods not necessarily proved to be the most profitable ones. Labourers for the white farms, the mines and the railway construction now became the most attractive object. At this stage, the uncompromising violent character of the German colonial regime became even more obvious than before and turned out to rely solely upon an ever more increasing strategy of
violence and oppression to force the black majority into the colonial-capitalist economic system.

Leutwein's original ambitions, to integrate the African masses into the economic and social system of the colonial set-up with as little use of physical violence as possible, met the strict and anonymous opposition of the settler-community and even the majority of his officials within the administrative structure of the colony. These settlers and officials supported terrorist methods, aiming at the complete and uncompromising submission of the African population - even with the consequence of the complete destruction of their physical existence.

Resistance for the Africans under these changing conditions became an existential necessity, a struggle for survival. At the turn of the century, a series of local rebellions took place. But restricted to regional and uncoordinated actions, they necessarily provoked the military defeat and further restrictions. The suppression of these isolated armed conflicts was used by the colonial authorities to further expand the already practised policy of creating local reserves. The destruction of these ineffective forms of resistance at the same time resulted in "peace treaties" with the colonial regime, which managed to improve the efficiency of the system of control and dictated limited areas for settlement to the defeated communities. Rebellious leaders were executed, land confiscated, the people disarmed and deported for forced labour, especially at the railway under construction. The antagonisms further increased, an escalation was inevitable. In the struggle for their survival, the tribes rose in arms, to defend themselves against the violent destruction by the settlers and their colonial regime. The "German-Namibian War" of the years 1904 to 1907 turned out to be under the then existing social conditions a simple act of self-defence. 20

The outbreak of the war started as a secretly planned and collectively initiated attack of the Herero in January 1904 against the German occupation. Politically, this resulted in the final collapse of the "system Leutwein". Criticized right from the beginning
for his "liberal" and "kaffir-friendly" approach, Leutwein in the first months of the war had to retire from his position. His successor represented the prevailing reactionary mood of the settler-community and the colonial-nationalist circles within the German empire. In the theory of von Trotha, who in June 1904 received orders for directing the military operations of the colonial troops in Namibia, and thereby replaced Leutwein, the genocide of the African population became a necessary task and even a historic cultural necessity. Von Trotha's perverse philosophy culminated in an extermination-order against the whole Herero-tribe. This order was issued at a time, when the Herero were already decisively beaten. Of the originally estimated 80,000 Herero, after the war only about 16,000 were suspected to be still alive. Their leader Samuel Maharero, who had cooperated with the German authorities for the interest of his own privileges over a period of nearly 20 years, managed to escape with a few followers through the waterless Kalahari into Betchuanaland.

The military struggle for survival of the Herero caused hysterical reactions among the settler-community and resulted in a large-scale campaign against all Africans. The inhuman racist attitudes reached the peak of ignorance and prejudices, resulted in violent actions and repressions all over the country. Aware of the growing tensions and the aggressiveness of the colonial monster, Hendrik Witbooi, - for ten years a solid ally of Leutwein and the colonial administration - finally lead his people into battle at a time, when the Herero already had been destroyed by the German war-machinery.

On the side of the Africans, the political intentions and the military aims of their struggle were identical. They just wanted to save the means for the continuation of their original production basis. This defensive determination was modified according to the mode of production: The Nama and Herero had many possibilities to attack and retreat in comparison with the settled Ambo-tribes. This mobility of the Namibians at war (the Ambo only marginally and mainly by material assistance participated in the war, as still they were rather unhampered by the German authorities
in their settlement area) had an ambivalent result. On the one side, the German troops with their clumsy strategy of conducting a regular war with superior but immobile material were fooled once and again by the small groups of Nama-combatants operating in the south. On the other side, by leaving their regions and keeping mobile, the Namibians at the same time left their land to the enemy.

While the Herero had already in 1904 sought a decisive and unsuccessful battle with the technically and militarily superior German troops, the Nama in the south of the territory lead an efficient small-scale guerilla-war. The most effective military centres were operating under Hendrik Witbooi and Jacob Morenga. The tribal origin of the combatants in these small battle-units did not play any meaningful role. In fact, the guerilla-cadres fighting in the south could be seen as the first nucleus of the emerging Namibian nation in its anti-colonial struggle. While Hendrik Witbooi - more than seventy years of age - suffered death from an injury in the fights, Jacob Morenga could only after several years be liquidated with support of the English colonial authorities in the neighbouring Cape Province. By his courage and ability, Jacob Morenga like Hendrik Witbooi became a legendary figure in the long struggle for liberation of Namibia. Jacob Morenga and Hendrik Witbooi are until the present day among the Namibian people the symbols of resistance.22

5. The Developed Colonial Economy

With the total and final defeat of the Africans fighting in the central and southern parts of Namibia, the German colonial power by 1907 for the first time gained the complete factual control of and power in the territory. From then onwards, Namibia in the parts south of the Ambo-settlement area was converted into a settler-colony dominated by Europeans to such an extent even South Africa of this time could not compete with. Of the surviving Nama and Herero, initially put into concentration-camps, almost everyone was forced to a status of labour-slaves in the service
of the colonial economy. By 1914 only about 200 men of the two tribes were reported to be not in employment. 23

Together with the "pacification", the economic activities were again intensified. 24 The consequences of the insane philosophy of a General von Trotha (who in fact as a person only represented and articulated, but not created the radical ideology of the Europeans at that time) became obvious by an even more increasing shortage of productive forces to be exploited in the capitalist economy. The complete destruction of the tribal societies - culminating in the genocide - though calculated in the course of the military actions, even opposed the economic logic of the capitalist interest. 25

The white settler-community, faced again with the chronical labour-shortage, once more relied upon the intensification of non-economic violence. The colonial administration combined this approach with regulations which should rule out further organised resistance of the African majority once and for all. The aim was to prevent by all means the restauration of the tribal identities, which until then were the foundations of anti-colonial resistance. In addition, a law issued in 1905 prohibited mixed marriages. Thereby, the anyhow existing social separation according to racial categories was cemented even within the frame of the legal set-up. The racial differences consequently at this time already finally became a class antagonism and criterion for strict social segregation.

The greater portion of the introduced regulations had the intention to force the Africans into employment in the colonial-capitalist sector, while at the same time tried to destroy the last ties between the tribal communities. In 1906, all non-Ovambo were prohibited to enter the northern part of Namibia. In the same year, the authorities decided to expropriate all Namibians south of Ovamboland of their communal land and cattle. This prevented the last opportunity for the Africans to continue at least on a modest basis with their traditional production and social organisation.
The European dominance was now deeply rooted in all social spheres, alternatives to the introduced new colonial relations from this time onward virtually did not exist any longer. But the main problem still continued to be for the colonial economy the solution of the labour question. On this the administration had to concentrate now primarily, and the issue became even more burning after the discovery of diamonds in 1908 and the then following establishment of a labour-intensive diamond-industry.

As basis for the further supply of cheap African labour served the regulations of 18th August 1907, entitled "Ordinance No. 82". They regulated anew the control of the Africans, defined the contracts for service and employment and created an obligation to Africans for a pass. These regulations among other arbitrary details contained the following basic elements: prohibition of land-purchase for Africans; prevention of cattle-breeding by Africans; introduction of organised contract-labour and detailed pass-laws.

The settlement-area of the Ambo-tribes, until that time only indirectly touched and influenced by the German colonial administration and never on a large scale of interest to the white settlers, now became increasingly attractive as potential and reservoir of black labour to be used in the colonial economy. The Germans until that time had not dared to include the northern part of Namibia under their immediate and direct sphere of influence. Instead, they concentrated on a system of moderate indirect control, based on and orientated towards the cooperation of the local hierarchy among the Ambo. Direct influence was restricted to the central and southern area, the so-called "Police Zone". It stretched from Orange river in the south to the border of the area in which the Ambo-communities were residing. Within this southern and central part of the Namibian territory, settlers and administration established the colonial relationships in direct confrontation with the African population.

Only from 1908 onward, the potential of the Ovambo as productive forces within the colonial economy gained greater importance,
although a regulation passed in January 1906 already organised the recruitment of Ovambo workers. In the years following, the Ovamboland became the supply-base for migrant labour and thereby efficiently tied economically to the capitalist sector of the colonial society. Once again, in the course of these events, a natural catastrophe supported the aims of the colonial rulers, when a severe drought in the northern parts of Namibia during 1912 to 1914 forced many Ovambos to earn their living within the money-economy of the settlers. In 1911, the first governmental labour management institution for contract workers was installed at the border of Ovamboland. At the end of 1912, even Ovambo themselves were hired and appointed as recruiting agents for migrant workers in the northern area.

With this economic penetration of the Ambo-societies and the integration of their labour potential into the money-economy of the colonial sphere of production, the military invasion and subjugation of this area finally became unnecessary. The increasing expansion of the colonial economy had undermined the mode of production and social structures of the Ovambo in the end much more effective and profitable.

By 1913, about 90% of the adult male Africans within the "Police Zone" were employed in the capitalist sector. More than 12,500 of them on farms, nearly 10,000 in bigger mining or government enterprises. They were joined by the Ovambo migrant workers, whose numbers were at this time amounting between 11,000 and 12,000 workers a year.

"German South West Africa" started to flourish and for the first time in the colonial history of Namibia profits on a large scale were realised. And the Africans were worse off than ever before. The last stage of the German colonial era was characterised by the inhuman logic of the colonial-capitalist interest in realising as much profit as possible, even if this included the death of large numbers of African workers. The application of non-economic physical violence still continued to be one of the main pillars of the system, resulted in a monstrosity entitled "legal apparatus"
and contributed to the fact, that the racial membership became the dominating class antagonism. When in 1914/15, after the outbreak of World War I, South African troops occupied Namibia, and the German empire as consequence of the lost war had to give up the colonial territories, the loss of this profitably developing colonial prey was largely mourned.

6. Conclusion: Consequences and Effects of German Colonial Rule

Geographical and local separation according to racial and ethnic categories; reserves, dictating the African population where to live; reduction of mobility by pass-laws; a rigid legal supra-structure, which determines the racial category as criterion for class positions and the dominant social antagonism - all these are phenomena of a racist class-society, as it already existed in Namibia under German colonial rule. It was not a genuine idea of the South African Boers, to import their Apartheid to Namibia. It has been the German colonialism, who prepared and created the structures. Structures, which afterwards were perfectioned by the South African occupation regime and supplied with a specific ideology and doctrine of racial rule. But the model originally has been a German trade-mark.

This essay wanted to sketch briefly, that the present struggle for more than a formal independence of the Namibian people at the same time is still a struggle against the colonial heritage of the German past. And in the course of national (re-)construction, the shadows of this past with all their challenges and effects, still for a long time will be of influence on the way to a just and liberated society.
Notes

1. In this essay it is constantly and independent of the time referred to the country as NAMIBIA. For political reasons the use of this term and its application to earlier times seems justified in spite of the fact that Namibia as name for the country is used only since the mid-1960s.


3. Of course, categories and terms like "feudalism" can only have provisional and artificial meaning in their application to non-European social phenomena, which are determined in most cases by other factors than those originally giving the basis for the use of such eurocentric labels.

4. Cf. Colonisation and Proletarianisation..., pp. 23f. Some studies on the pre-colonial structures within Namibia have over the past years been presented by German scholars, who made extensive use of the existing early ethnographic material by European observers and tried to interpret it according to a critical point of view. See i.a.: Lothar Berger, Der Einfluß der Grenzziehung auf die Ovambo (University of Mainz, B.A. Thesis, 1980); Christoph Borkowsky, Zu einigen Aspekten des Ovambolebens (Free University of Berlin, B.A. Thesis, 1975); Rainer Clauß, Reaktionen auf Kolonialismus und Imperialismus - Untersuchung der Völker Namibias (Free University of Berlin, Ph.D. Thesis, 1976).


6. Interesting is for this period the study of Heinrich Loth, Die christliche Mission in Südwestafrika - Zur destruktiven Rolle der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft beim Prozeß der Staatsbildung in Südwestafrika (1842-1893) (Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1963). Loth makes in his sound analyses excessively and very uncritical use of this term. It should be noted, however, that in the social context of pre-colonial Namibia, the classification of the development as process of 'state formation' certainly by no means implies reference to the genesis of a state-structure as commonly understood in the 'classical European' sense of nation-states emanating with the introduction of the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, it should instead be referred to this process as one for the establishment of centralised authorities in the broadest sense.

7. Considerations in this direction are especially found in Colonisation and Proletarianisation..., pp. 23ff., while other noteworthy studies rather uncritically proclaim the higher stage of development of the Orlam as historically superior to the other Namibian communities. Cf. Winfried Nachtweij, Namibia - Von der antikolonialen Revolte zum nationalen Befreiungskampf (Mannheim, Sander Verlag, 1976), p. 22.
8. For an attempt to reconstruct this period in more detail, see Henning Melber, "Das doppelte Vermächtnis der Geschichte: Nationwerdung, Kolonialisierungsvorgangs und deutsche Fremdherrschaft in Namibia (ca. 1800 bis 1914)." In: Namibia. Die Aktualität des kolonialen Verhältnisses. Beiträge aus dem Projekt 'Politische Landeskunde Namibias' (University of Bremen, Diskurs No. 7, 1982).


10. See Die christliche Mission in Südwestafrika..., p. 36.


13. Ibid., p. 135.

14. This detail, like many other noteworthy indicators, is found in Union of South Africa, Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1918), pp. 105ff.

15. This position is following the arguments of Die christliche Mission in Südwestafrika..., p. 134, although in general Loth tends to overemphasize and overestimate in his work the influence and deliberateness of the missionaries' actions. They certainly were often unaware of the objective impetus of the fulfillment of their 'holy task'.


17. The legal basis for these reserves had already been adopted by the German parliament during its legislative period of 1893/94. For these recommendations and the afterwards implemented regulations within Namibia see Gert Sudholt, Die deutsche Eingeborenepolitik in Südwestafrika, Von den Anfängen bis 1904 (Hildesheim/New York, Georg Olms Verlag, 1975), pp. 149ff. This book contains a lot of interesting sources and empirical evidence, but in spite of these impressive documents on the nature of the colonial system the author comes to rather uncritical and moderate conclusions.

18. Leutwein in this situation was intelligent enough, to confront the Nama-leader with acceptable conditions, which guaranteed Hendrik Witbooi his further influential position among the Nama and offered him a capitulation without humiliation. The respect Leutwein demonstrated towards the traditional meaning of Hendrik Witbooi's chieftainship was honoured by this outstanding leader with unconditioned acceptance of the German authority for a long period. On the subjuga-
tion of Hendrik Witbooi and the position of this Namibian leader see i.a. Namibia. Die Aktualität des kolonialen Verhältnisses...

In the meantime, the personal diary of Hendrik Witbooi (mainly correspondence of the years 1884 to 1894) has been published in a German translation (the original 'diary' is in Cape-Dutch): Hendrik Witbooi, Afrika den Afrikanern! Aufzeichnungen eines Nama-Häuptlings aus der Zeit der deutschen Eroberung Südwestafrikas 1884 bis 1894, edited by Wolfgang Reinhard (Berlin/Bonn, J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1982).

19. As basic studies for this and the following period of German colonial rule and its effects on the Namibian people see especially the contributions of two German historians, whose main titles have meanwhile been published in English translations: Helmut Bley, South-West Africa Under German Rule 1894–1914 (London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1971) and Horst Drechsler, 'Let Us Die Fighting' — The Struggle of the Herero and Nama against German Imperialism (1884–1915) (London, Zed Press, 1980).

20. A good account on the background, course and result of this war is 'Let Us Die Fighting'... Rather superficial and disappointing in its analytical dimension, but very detailed with regard to the chronology of the military conflict, is the comparatively new book of Jon M. Bridgman, The Revolt of the Hereros (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981).


24. On the internal social and economic factors in the German empire, influencing the various stages of colonial policy and especially the economic activities, informs Manfred Nussbaum, Vom 'Colonial-enthousiasmus' zur Kolonialpolitik der Monopole — Zur deutschen Kolonialpolitik unter Bismarck, Caprivi, Hohenlohe (Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1962).
25. The rigid system and ideology finally emerging after the complete defeat of the Namibians could well be characterised as a preliminary form of the later manifest fascism. The most interesting work on this aspect with reference to the ideology articulated in Namibia under German rule clearly represents Peter Schmitt-Egner, *Kolonialismus und Faschismus - Eine Studie zur historischen und begrifflichen Genesis faschistischer Bewußtseinsformen am deutschen Beispiel* (Giessen/Lollar, Verlag Andreas Achenbach, 1975).


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