



## Genocide and the Politics of Memory in the Decolonisation of Namibia

Fabian Krautwald

**To cite this article:** Fabian Krautwald (2022) Genocide and the Politics of Memory in the Decolonisation of Namibia, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 48:5, 805-823, DOI: 10.1080/03057070.2022.2127587

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2022.2127587>



Published online: 19 Oct 2022.



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# *Genocide and the Politics of Memory in the Decolonisation of Namibia*

FABIAN KRAUTWALD 

(Princeton University)

*This article examines how Namibians recalled colonisation by Germany (1884–1915) under subsequent South African colonial rule (1915–90). Focusing on Herero communities and political leaders between 1915 and the beginning of an armed struggle in 1966, it argues that invoking the first colonial occupation became an idiom that allowed the Herero to challenge the continued depredations of settler colonialism, negotiate the colonial encounter, and advance particularistic interests. Drawing on hitherto neglected documentary sources and newly collected oral histories, I illustrate how Herero petitioners to the United Nations intertwined memories of the genocide of the Herero and Nama (1904–08) with those of what came to be understood as the Holocaust during the 1960s to criticise South Africa’s imposition of apartheid in Namibia. In this way, I demonstrate the ways in which remembering the first colonial occupation shaped the emergence of modern Namibian political discourse as well as post-colonial restorative justice campaigns. The article thereby underlines the importance of memory making in the decolonisation of Namibia and contributes to a long history of the end of empire and restorative justice in Africa that reaches back to the First World War.*

**Keywords:** Namibia; memory; genocide; decolonisation; restorative justice; League of Nations; United Nations; German colonialism

## **Introduction**

In May 2021, the governments of Namibia and Germany concluded, after six years of negotiations, the first-ever ‘reconciliation agreement’ between a former colony and colonial power. The agreement involves an official apology by Germany for the genocide of the Herero and Nama in 1904–08 and €1.2 billion-worth of development aid targeted at descendants of the affected communities.<sup>1</sup> The agreement was a response to persistent demands for restorative justice by civil society activists in both countries, many of whom have rejected the deal as insufficient.<sup>2</sup> Lawsuits by Herero and Nama plaintiffs in 2001 and

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This article has been re-published online with minor updates to two terms on p.2.

1 Joint Declaration by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Namibia, 15 May 2021. On the genocide, see, among others, M. Häußler, *The Herero Genocide: War, Emotion, and Extreme Violence in Colonial Namibia* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2021); J. Zimmerer and J. Zeller (eds.), *Genocide in German South-West Africa: The Colonial War of 1904–1908 and its Aftermath*, trans. E. Neather (Monmouth, Merlin Press, 2008).

2 On the agreement, see H. Melber, ‘Colonial Genocide and the German-Namibian “Reconciliation Agreement”’, *The Round Table*, 110, 4 (2021), pp. 510–11; H. Melber and K. Platt (eds.), *Koloniale Vergangenheit, postkoloniale Zukunft? Die deutsch-namibischen Beziehungen neu denken* (Frankfurt am Main, Brandes & Apsel, 2022).

2017 pressured both governments to address the issue of restorative justice.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the politics of memory of German colonialism have thus shaped Namibia's history since independence in 1990, it is less clear what role such politics played under preceding South African rule (1915–1990), particularly before the beginning of an armed conflict for independence in 1966.

This article considers this question. It argues that recalling the first colonial occupation became a language through which Namibians contested the persistent injustices of settler colonialism and negotiated the meaning of the colonial encounter. Although the South African invasion of 1914 brought a reprieve from the violence of German rule, it also cemented white control. Amid this challenge, Namibians recalled German rule in negotiations with South African officials to demand more land, better education and basic infrastructure. After the Second World War, indigenous leaders and exile politicians reasserted these demands in petitions to the United Nations to demand independence. Together with international allies, they wove a support network that reached from the streets of Windhoek to the halls of the UN and the airwaves of Radio Beijing.

I analyse this memory politics with a focus on Herero communities and leaders, who were paradigmatic for similar 'memory work' among the peoples of central and southern Namibia during this period.<sup>4</sup> Together, the memory politics of these groups influenced how northern Namibians, who had remained outside the German sphere of influence, came to speak about the first colonial occupation as members of nationalist parties and UN petitioners.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the study of Herero memory work before 1990 contributes to a better understanding of the gestation of modern Namibian political language.

In one idiom of this language, the Herero connected memories of German colonialism with what came to be understood as the Holocaust. While Herero elders knew about *ondjembo* (the war) and *onđiro onguru* (the old death), they had no term that encapsulated what the 1947 UN Convention would come to describe as 'genocide'. Indeed, the Otjherero term for genocide, *otjĩr'otjindjandja* (mass killing), emerged only after independence.<sup>6</sup> Yet in 1960, Herero UN petitioners began to compare the war of 1904–1908 to the destruction of European Jewry to discredit South Africa's imposition of apartheid in Namibia.

Michael Rothberg has argued that memories of the Shoah offered anti-colonial intellectuals a register to advance their cause, and that they, in turn, shaped the emergence of

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3 On the history of reparation politics since 1990, see J. Sarkin-Hughes, *Colonial Genocide and Reparations Claims in the 21st Century: The Socio-Legal Context of Claims under International Law by the Herero against Germany for Genocide in Namibia, 1904–1908* (Westport, CT, Praeger Security International, 2009); D. Barguño, 'Cash for Genocide? The Politics of Memory in the Herero Case for Reparations', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 26, 3 (2012), pp. 394–424; R. Kössler, *Namibia and Germany: Negotiating the Past* (Windhoek, UNAM Press, 2015); E. Hamrick and H. Duschinski, 'Enduring Injustice: Memory Politics and Namibia's Genocide Reparations Movement', *Memory Studies*, 11, 4 (2018), pp. 437–54.

4 On 'memory work', see I. Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1994), p. 13; on memory politics, see S. Radstone and B. Schwarz (eds.), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2010). A comparative analysis of Namibian memory making would be a valuable addition to the historiography.

5 On the conquest of northern Namibia, see E. Kreike, *Re-Creating Eden: Land Use, Environment, and Society in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2004); on Ovambo petitioners, see G. Dobler, 'Becoming Anticolonial in Northern Namibia, 1950–1954: The Emergence of Both Crisis and Critique from Everyday Interpretations', in D. Fassin and A. Honneth (eds.), *Crisis under Critique: How People Assess, Transform, and Respond to Critical Situations* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2022), pp. 166–90.

6 Interview with Alexander Jarimbovandu Kaputu, Windhoek, 14 February 2019. Interviews were based on an English-Otjherero questionnaire that was shared with interviewees during prior, informal meetings. Complete transcripts of interviews are in possession of the author. The interviews cited here were conducted in English. Other translations from Otjherero, German and Afrikaans are my own, except where otherwise noted.

the concept of the Holocaust.<sup>7</sup> However, it is unclear whether this argument applied to African liberation movements.<sup>8</sup> The efforts of Namibian UN petitioners suggest that this could be the case. Conversely, Herero memories influenced the emerging understanding of the Holocaust.<sup>9</sup> While working on the UN Genocide Convention, Raphael Lemkin drew on the case of the Herero and Nama in his draft for a global history of genocide.<sup>10</sup> The two mass atrocities thus became ‘multidirectional memories’ through ‘ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing’.<sup>11</sup> This article uncovers the hitherto obscure circulation of memories of genocide, knowledge about it, and people who lay at the heart of this process.

Before Namibian petitioners, others already drew connections between German colonialism and Nazi imperialism. Aimé Césaire and Hannah Arendt argued that the Nazi subjugation of Europe represented the reversal of colonialism on to purported colonisers.<sup>12</sup> Taking up their arguments, historians have explored potential continuities between the Herero and Nama genocide and the Holocaust.<sup>13</sup> Although their analyses have enriched the comparative study of genocides, the continuities in question do not amount to causal links between the two events.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the continuity thesis has inadvertently fostered a focus on perpetrators.<sup>15</sup> To understand Herero comparisons, we must shift perspective. What was it about the Shoah that reminded them of the war of 1904–1908?

Answering this question illuminates the changing ways in which Namibians have made memories about the genocide. Historians and anthropologists have analysed the oral traditions and rituals through which the Herero and Nama have recalled the past.<sup>16</sup> Jan-Bart Gewald has demonstrated how diverse actors appropriated the genocide for their political rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> And scholars such as Zedekia Ngavirue have emphasised that the lingering consequences of German rule informed ‘escapist and millenarian’ strategies of

7 M. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 6.

8 On African perceptions of Nazism and the German treatment of Jews before and during the Second World War, see E. Kissi, *Africans and the Holocaust: Perceptions and Responses of Colonized and Sovereign Peoples* (New York, Taylor and Francis, 2020).

9 P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), pp. 127–45.

10 A.D. Moses, ‘Empire, Colony, Genocide: Keywords and the Philosophy of History’, in A.D. Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 3–54.

11 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, p. 3.

12 A. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 2000), p. 36; H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1951), p. 206.

13 See, for example, Zimmerer and Zeller (eds.), *Genocide*; M. Perraudin and J. Zimmerer (eds.), *German Colonialism and National Identity* (New York, Routledge, 2011); V. Langbehn and M. Salama (eds.), *German Colonialism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011).

14 T. Kühne, ‘Colonialism and the Holocaust: Continuities, Causations, and Complexities’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 15, 3 (2013), pp. 339–62.

15 Similarly, the recent German debate about the relationship between memories of the Holocaust and colonialism remains caught in a focus on the former metropole.

16 See, for example, A.G. Hoffmann, ‘“Since the Germans came it rains less”: Landscape and Identity of Herero Communities in Namibia’ (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2005); C.W. Erichsen, ‘*What the elders used to say*: Namibian Perspectives on the Last Decade of German Colonial Rule’ (Windhoek, John Meinert, 2008); K.L. Morgan, ‘“To heal the wounds”: Namibian Ovaherero’s Contests over Coming to Terms with the German Colonial Past’ (PhD thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010); L. Förster, *Postkoloniale Erinnerungslandschaften. Wie Deutsche und Herero in Namibia des Kriegs von 1904 gedenken* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, Campus, 2010); M. Biwa, ‘“Weaving the past with threads of memory”: Narratives and Commemorations of the Colonial War in Southern Namibia’ (PhD thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2012); Kössler, *Namibia and Germany*, pp. 179–220.

17 J-B. Gewald, ‘Herero Genocide in the Twentieth Century: Politics and Memory’, in J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn, and K. van Walraven (eds.), *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (Boston, Brill, 2003), pp. 279–304; J-B. Gewald, ‘Imperial Germany and the Herero of Southern Africa: Genocide and the Quest of Recompense’, in A. Jones (ed.), *Genocide, War Crimes and the West: History and Complicity* (London, Zed Books, 2004), pp. 59–77.

accommodation during the interwar period.<sup>18</sup> However, the changing vocabulary that survivors and descendants used to talk about what had occurred has remained elusive. Based on a close reading of documentary records as well as newly collected oral histories, this article illustrates the ways in which the Herero developed a vernacular language of genocide, and how they mobilised it for political ends. This language became an underlying grammar of Herero political rhetoric, which influenced land claims, millenarian hopes for emancipation through Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the UN, as well as intra-Herero debates about the colonial encounter.<sup>19</sup> I thereby reveal little-known conflicts between survivors over who was to blame for the catastrophe of 1904–1908 and demonstrate the limits of appeals to Herero unity after the genocide.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the history of these memory politics illustrates the origins of contemporary Namibian calls for reparations for colonialism. Since the 1920s, Herero intellectuals likened the fate of their people to that of the Israelites in Egypt.<sup>21</sup> After independence, Herero leaders combined such analogies with references to Jewish compensation after the Second World War in legal claims for reparations.<sup>22</sup> Scholars of restorative justice contend that these campaigns reflect a shift from the emancipatory politics of liberation to a retrograde concern with the past.<sup>23</sup> By tracing how the Herero invoked German rule between 1915 and 1966, this article demonstrates that African calls for reparations are born not from recent political disillusionment but from long-standing struggles of affected communities for recompense. Yet not all references to the colonial past can be subsumed under a teleology of restorative justice.<sup>24</sup> Rather, the goals of these politics shifted over time, ranging from the pursuit of accommodation with current colonisers and attaining self-determination to advancing particularistic interests. For the Mbanderu, also called the eastern Herero, the politics of memory became a way to assert an ethnic identity separate from their Herero kin.<sup>25</sup>

The League of Nations mandates and UN trusteeship system became a key resource for Namibians to articulate these politics. After Germany's defeat in 1918, the victorious Allies divided the empire's colonies among each other as mandates under the supervision of the

18 Z. Ngavirue, *Political Parties and Interest Groups in South West Africa (Namibia): A Study of a Plural Society* (1972) (Basel, P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1997), p. 184; G. Krüger and D. Henrichsen, "'We have been captives long enough. We want to be free'" – Land, Uniforms & Politics in the History of Herero in the Interwar Period', in P. Hayes et al (eds.), *Namibia under South African Rule: Mobility and Containment 1915–46* (Oxford, James Currey, 1998), pp. 149–74; J-B. Gewald, 'We thought we would be free': *Socio-Cultural Aspects of Herero History in Namibia 1915–1940* (Köln, Köppe, 2000), pp. 147–55.

19 On the UN and intra-Herero debates, see below. The grievances at the heart of the brief popularity of UNIA in 1921–22 were all rooted in German rule – that is, loss of land, cattle and rights. See Gewald, *Herero History*, p. 156.

20 On these efforts see, for example, J-B. Gewald, *Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia, 1890–1923* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1999), p. 289.

21 On these comparisons, see Hoffmann, 'Landscape and identity', pp. 210–15.

22 *The Herero People's Reparations Corporation v. Deutsche Bank AG, Terex Corporation, and Woermann Line*, Case No. 01-0004447 (2001), p. 21; *Vekuii Rukoro v. Federal Republic of Germany*, Case No. 1:17-cv-00062 LTS, p. 12. On this form of legal activism, see Howard Rechavia-Taylor, 'German Colonialism in the Court Room – Law, Reparation, and the Legal Grammars of the Shoah', *Humanity*, 23 (2023), forthcoming.

23 D. Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 13–14; J. Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed: On Reparations Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 8–9; on reparations, see R.E. Howard-Hassmann, *Reparations to Africa* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 26–41.

24 For such an argument, see M.A. Hasian, *Lawfare and the OvaHerero and Nama Pursuit of Restorative Justice, 1918–2018* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), p. 1.

25 Linguistic and cultural differences between the Mbanderu and Herero are slim. On the fluidity of Herero ethnic identifications, see J.T. Castro, 'A Política OvaHerero. Poder e conflito na Namíbia central' (PhD thesis, Universidade de Brasília, 2013), pp. 31–3; on the Mbanderu, see T. Sundermeier, *Die Mbanderu: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur* (St. Augustin, Athropos-Institut, 1977). Unless interviewees or sources suggested otherwise, I refer to all Otjiherero speakers as Herero.

newly created League. With the creation of the United Nations in 1945, mandatories assumed control over what were now designated trusteeship territories. Both the League Covenant and the trusteeship agreements included the right to petition these international bodies over abuses by the mandatory.<sup>26</sup> Historians of Namibia and other former German colonies in Africa have shown how administered peoples seized petitioning to pursue disparate goals, ranging from independence and the redress of grievances to a return of erstwhile colonisers.<sup>27</sup> But whereas existing works have emphasised that Africans engaged in this politicking to challenge the mandatory, the case of Namibia highlights that African UN petitioning equally drew on and negotiated the experience of prior colonisation. By reconstructing how the Herero remembered and shared memories of German rule, this article highlights that memory making was integral to the development of Namibians' anti-colonial activism at home and before the UN. In this way, the history of Herero memory politics contributes to a long history of African decolonisation that reaches back to the First World War.<sup>28</sup>

In turn, the peculiarities of Namibia's mandate and trusteeship status illuminate that African memories of colonialism, while rooted in specific communities and places, have also emerged through exchanges with former colonisers and anti-imperialists. Although scholars of southern Africa have begun to examine the intersection between memory, transnational activism and decolonisation, most have tended to analyse the politics of memory as domestic conflicts between the post-colonial state and subaltern 'counter' memories that congeal around physical monuments and heritage.<sup>29</sup> At stake in these different perspectives is the question to what degree Africans' increasing international

26 On the history of the African mandates, see M.D. Callahan, *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914–1931* (Portland, OR, Sussex Academic Press, 1999); M.D. Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa, 1929–1946* (Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2004). On trusteeship, see N. Eggers, J.L. Pearson, and A. Almada e Santos (eds.), *The United Nations and Decolonization* (New York, Routledge, 2020).

27 On Namibia, see T. Emmett, *Popular Resistance and the Roots of Nationalism in Namibia, 1915–1966* (Basel, P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1999); T. Dederling, 'Petitioning Geneva: Transnational Aspects of Protest and Resistance in South West Africa/Namibia after the First World War', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 4 (2009), pp. 785–801; M. Kerina, *Namibia, the Making of a Nation*, (New York, Books in Focus, 1981), pp. 76–97; J.M. Morgan, 'A Global Struggle: Namibian Nationalism and South African Imperialism at the United Nations, 1945–1960' (PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2014); M.R. Hogan, "'Remov[e] us from the bondage of South Africa": Transnational Resistance Strategies and Subnational Concessions in Namibia's Police Zone, 1919–1962' (PhD thesis, West Virginia University, 2021), p. 1; on other former German colonies, see M. Terretta, "'We had been fooled into thinking that the UN watches over the entire world": Human Rights, UN Trust Territories, and Africa's Decolonization,' *Human Rights Quarterly*, 34, 2 (2012), pp. 329–60; U. Lohrmann, *Voices from Tanganyika: Great Britain, the United Nations and the Decolonization of a Trust Territory, 1946–1961* (Münster, LIT Verlag, 2007).

28 M. Thomas and A.S. Thompson, 'Rethinking Decolonization: A New Research Agenda for the Twenty-First Century', in M. Thomas and A.S. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1–22, 7. For steps in this direction, see M. Terretta and B.N. Lawrance, "'Sons of the Soil": Cause Lawyers, the Togo-Cameroun Mandates, and the Origins of Decolonization', *The American Historical Review*, 124, 5 (2019), pp. 1709–14; M. McCullers, 'Betwixt and Between Colony and Nation-State: Liminality, Decolonization, and the South West Africa Mandate', *The American Historical Review*, 124, 5 (2019), pp. 1704–8.

29 For exceptions see Kössler, *Namibia and Germany*; R.M. Arieli, 'Ahmed Kathrada in Post-War Europe: Holocaust Memory and Apartheid South Africa (1951–1952)', *African Identities*, 17, 1 (2019), pp. 1–17; on memory in the region see S. Nuttall and C. Coetzee (eds.), *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1998); R. Kössler, 'Facing a Fragmented Past: Memory, Culture, and Politics in Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33, 2 (2007), pp. 361–82; S. Marschall, *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials and Public Statuary in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Boston, Brill, 2010); H. Becker, 'Commemorating Heroes in Windhoek and Eenhana: Memory, Culture and Nationalism in Namibia, 1990–2010', *Africa*, 81, 4 (2011), pp. 519–43; V. Igreja, 'Politics of Memory, Decentralisation and Recentralisation in Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 2 (2013), pp. 313–35; R. Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation: History and Memory in Making Zimbabwe* (London, University of Virginia Press, 2015).

contacts through diplomacy, education and the Cold War shaped on-the-ground memory making in the 20th century, and vice versa.

Rather than being mutually exclusive, different scales of African memory politics – ranging from local commemorations to the halls of international diplomacy – influenced each other. Before going into exile, Herero UN petitioners grew up participating in the commemorations of the *oturupa*, a mutual aid society formed after the genocide.<sup>30</sup> In turn, residents of Herero reserves developed high hopes that the UN would deliver them from the dispersal and land alienation initially caused by German colonisers.<sup>31</sup> Under colonial rule, Africans drew on local, regional and international inspiration to form their historical imagination.<sup>32</sup> The concept of entanglement helps to understand these processes. On the one hand, it denotes the physical movement of carriers of memory such as people and texts.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, the term reflects the inherent temporal ‘entangledness’ of memories, meaning that interpretations of events not only differ synchronically but also evolve diachronically.<sup>34</sup> As Sarah Nuttall observes: ‘Entanglement... is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness’.<sup>35</sup>

To reconstruct these relationships, the article first examines how making memories of the first colonial occupation became an idiom to demand concessions from South African officials during the interwar period. Second, it analyses how exiled Namibians and their international allies continued these efforts by translating personal memories into historical knowledge in UN petitions, radio broadcasts and academic papers. Finally, I assess the impact of this knowledge in UN bodies and within colonial Namibia.

## Recording History

The Herero seized the first opportunity to publicly recall German rule as soon as it ended.<sup>36</sup> Their recollections thereby became entangled with international and imperial politics leading up to the Paris Peace Conference. After the surrender of German troops on 9 July 1915, the South African government began to prepare a report on the treatment of the territory’s indigenous population to bolster its claim over the colony. The resulting *Blue Book* detailed the endemic violence under German rule.<sup>37</sup> Despite its propagandistic purpose, the report’s findings have been corroborated by subsequent research.<sup>38</sup> The *Blue Book* drew on local German documents and on oral testimony – and Namibians’ willingness to give that

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30 Interview with Mburumba Kerina, Windhoek, 22 October 2018; interview with Katuutire Kaura, Windhoek, 6 February 2019. On the *oturupa* and similar Nama commemorations, see Kössler, *Namibia and Germany*, pp. 179–220.

31 M. McCullers, “‘The time of the United Nations in South West Africa is near’: Local Drama and Global Politics in Apartheid-Era Hereroland”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 2 (2013), pp. 371–89.

32 For an analysis of these dynamics in colonial Buganda, see J.L. Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire: Political Thought and Historical Imagination in Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017).

33 A. Erl, ‘Travelling Memory’, *Parallax*, 17, 4 (2011), pp. 4–18.

34 G. Feindt et al., ‘Entangled Memory: Toward a Third Wave in Memory Studies’, *History and Theory*, 53, 1 (2014), pp. 24–44.

35 S. Nuttall, *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2009), p. 1.

36 On Namibian petitions to early South African administrators, which referenced German rule, see M. Wallace, ‘Personal Circuits: Official Tours and South Africa’s Colony’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 3 (2015), pp. 635–52.

37 Administrator’s Office, Windhuk, *Report on the Natives of South West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany Blue Book* (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1918).

38 J.-B. Gewald and J. Silvester, ‘Footsteps and Tears: An Introduction to the Construction and Context of the 1918 “Blue Book”’, in J. Silvester and J.-B. Gewald (eds.), *Words Cannot be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia. An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Boston, Brill, 2003), pp. xv–xix.

testimony. Andreas Eckl has rightly warned that since no transcripts of the *Blue Book* interviews have survived, we cannot know how they were conducted and translated.<sup>39</sup> But these narratives should also not be dismissed outright. Although we cannot rule out that interviewees were compelled to testify, forcing them to do so would have jeopardised the South Africans' goal to present themselves as liberators. It is also unlikely that testimonies were fabricated. Its main interviewees were not anonymous or invented figures, but prominent Herero who had fought in the war of 1904–1908.<sup>40</sup> Their accounts not only dovetail with those of German missionaries and soldiers, but also with their own, later versions of events.<sup>41</sup>

As records of memory, the *Blue Book* narratives are relevant in two respects. First, they reveal some of the early Herero vocabulary used to refer to the genocide, albeit only in English translation. Evangelist Samuel Kariko called the war a 'wholesale slaughter'.<sup>42</sup> His father, Subchief Daniel Kariko, stated: 'Our people have disappeared now'. Hosea Kutako, who had just been appointed Herero headman of Windhoek and who, as Paramount Chief of the Herero, would become the leading force in Namibian UN-petitioning between 1945 and his death in 1970, lamented that '[w]e were crushed'.<sup>43</sup> Beyond the common notion of *ondjembo* (the war), these images of 'slaughter', 'disappearance' and 'crushing' reveal a wider rhetorical repertoire through which survivors conceived of what had occurred.

Second, the narratives shed light on the history of the extermination order. On 2 October 1904, German commander Lothar von Trotha proclaimed that Herero remaining 'in the German country will be killed with the gun. I will not take women and the sick anymore, I will chase them to their chiefs or I will kill them with the gun'.<sup>44</sup> The order reflected the radicalisation of military strategy after the failed encirclement of Herero forces at the Battle of Waterberg.<sup>45</sup> Samuel Kariko recalled: 'A new General named von Trotha came, and he ordered that all Hereros were to be exterminated, regardless of age or sex'.<sup>46</sup>

The reference of Kariko and two other witnesses to 'extermination' suggests that they either recalled von Trotha's order or were informed about it by Major Thomas Leslie O'Reilly, who was the principal author of the *Blue Book* and included it in his report. It is possible that survivors knew about the order. On 1 October 1904, von Trotha formulated his proclamation in Otjiherero with the help of two Hereros named Kean and Philippus.<sup>47</sup> He then disseminated it by releasing Herero prisoners of war, who carried copies to the

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39 A. Eckl, 'The Herero Genocide of 1904: Source-Critical and Methodological Considerations', *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 3 (2008), p. 38.

40 Mads Nielsen neglects this aspect in his otherwise insightful analysis of the *Blue Book* as a propagandistic violence narrative. See M.B. Nielsen, 'Delegitimizing Empire: German and British Representations of Colonial Violence, 1918–19', *The International History Review*, 42, 4 (2020), p. 834.

41 Gewalt, *Herero Heroes*, pp. 192–230.

42 Administrator's Office, Windhuk, *Report on the Natives*, p. 63. On Samuel Kariko, see H.-M. Milk, '... der im Sturm steht wie ein Kameldornbaum'. *Die Evangelisten Namibias und ihre Geschichte* (Köln, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2019), pp. 151–8.

43 Administrator's Office, Windhuk, *Report on The Natives*, p. 63; at this time, Kutako was also referred to as Hosea Mungunda, which is the name given here. On Kutako, see J.-B. Gewalt, 'Chief Hosea Kutako: A Herero Royal and Namibian Nationalist's Life Against Confinement 1870–1970', in M. de Bruijn, J.-B. Gewalt and R. van Dijk (eds.), *Strength beyond Structure: Social and Historical Trajectories of Agency in Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 89. On the Karikos, see Erichsen, 'Elders', pp. 56–7.

44 A. Eckl, M. Häussler and J. Kavari, 'Oomambo Wandje Komuhoko WOVaherero. Lothar von Trotha's "words to the Ovaherero people"', *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 23 (2018), p. 133.

45 Häussler, *Herero Genocide*, pp. 153–98.

46 Administrator's Office, Windhuk, *Report on The Natives*, p. 63.

47 Eckl et al., 'Oomambo Wandje', p. 126.

dispersed refugees in the Omaheke desert.<sup>48</sup> Although one of these copies survived in the Botswana National Archives, it does not include any Otjiherero equivalent of ‘extermination’.<sup>49</sup> The inclusion of the term in the *Blue Book* therefore was either a stylistic choice of O’Reilly or that of his unknown Herero translators. If we re-translate the English terms discussed above, interviewees would have talked about *okuzepa* or *amazepero* (slaughter), *okujanda* or *okuzenga* (disappearance) and *okunjaa* (crushing).<sup>50</sup>

Because it included both oral testimony and von Trotha’s order, the *Blue Book* became the most important document in Herero memory politics. It marked the first time the perspective of survivors became entangled in a written form *and* included at the highest level of international politics. After 1945, it became the basis for UN petitions, historical research and reparations lawsuits.<sup>51</sup> At the Paris Peace Conference, the report mobilised opposition against German demands for colonial restitution.<sup>52</sup> Although remembering German rule thus helped Namibians to prevent the return of German administration, their success proved short-lived. In 1926, the South African administration removed the report from circulation to appease the colony’s remaining German population.<sup>53</sup>

The banning of the *Blue Book* in Namibia deprived the Herero of potential leverage but did not prevent them from continuing to raise the spectre of German colonialism. The issues that provoked these references were land, education and the threat of a German return. In 1923, the South Africans abandoned their hitherto lenient approach to land policy in an effort to increase racial segregation in the colony. That year, the administration ordered a significant part of Africans in the so-called Police Zone – the area marked out for white settlement – to settle in designated tribal reserves.<sup>54</sup> The Herero voiced their opposition to this system by framing it as part of injustices inflicted on them since German times. On 2 June 1933, for example, a deputation from the three major Herero reserves complained to the new South African Administrator David Gideon Conradie. Interviewed by Secretary H.P. Smit, their spokesman Hosea Kutako proclaimed: ‘We are the people that are born in this country and who are the owners of this territory’.<sup>55</sup> He reminded Smit that when ‘the present Government came into the country they had to release people who were trussed to the trees’ and demanded to know ‘why, whilst we were in the hands of the Germans and were ill-treated, we are now, under this Government, also ill-treated’.<sup>56</sup>

The deputation demanded that all Herero reserves be joined into one by incorporating the land in between them. Kutako justified this claim with the historical value of the land in question. Describing themselves as ‘owners’ of the land had a long pedigree in Herero political language. Since the 1860s, Herero chiefs expressed their growing power through

48 G. Pool, *Die Herero-opstand, 1904–1907* (Cape Town, Hollandsch Afrikaansche Uitgevers Maatschaap, 1979), p. 251; however, some scholars question the likelihood of this happening. See Eckl et al., ‘Omaambo Wandje’, p. 128.

49 The Otjiherero original, which is marked by faulty orthography, reads: ‘ene vaherero na mbano ehi retheje orvando itji nutjimuihi no ku va ngao kutjita otji otji naihi amimevenini kizatjinene nondjembo onene omundu mehri ro vando itjimatu nondjembo. hinoku kambura ovakazendu no vavere korukuaove meve rambere kovahona vao poo meve zepa nondjembo’. See Eckl et al., ‘Omaambo Wandje’, pp. 131–2.

50 J. Irle, *Deutsch-Herero-Wörterbuch* (Hamburg, L. Friederichsen & Co., 1917), pp. 288, 350, 376, 435.

51 On UN petitioning and academic papers, see the section below; on reparation lawsuits, see footnotes 3 and 22.

52 Nielsen, ‘Delegitimizing Empire’, p. 837.

53 Silvester and Gewalt (eds.), *Words Cannot be Found*, p. xxxii.

54 However, this order was undermined by the growing need for African labour, the contract labour system and the diversity of reserve populations. See Hayes et al. (eds.), *Namibia under South African Rule*; J. Kinahan and M. Wallace, *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990* (London, Hurst, 2011), pp. 218–23; W. Werner, ‘No one will become rich’: *Economy and Society in the Herero Reserves in Namibia, 1915–1946* (Basel, P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1998), pp. 100–9.

55 NAN SWAA 1161 A158/29/3, Deputation of Representatives of the Herero People Interviewed on Friday, 2 June 1933 by the Secretary for South West Africa, p. 2.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

the notion of *ehi rovaHerero, okuti kuetu*, that is, ‘the land of the Herero, our veld’.<sup>57</sup> During the 1904–1908 war, women reportedly accompanied the men’s charge with chants of ‘Who owns Hereroland? We own Hereroland’.<sup>58</sup> The *Sandveld*, the area between the three reserves, lay at the heart of this idea. Large numbers of Herero died crossing it during the war. War-time leader and Paramount Chief Samuel Maharero traversed it on his route into exile. According to Kutako, its historical sites should be freely accessible because ‘up to now we are still pained that the German people took our country away from us’.<sup>59</sup>

South African officials denied any responsibility for what occurred under the first colonial occupation. Smit dismissed the deputation’s emotional plea as ‘quite general’.<sup>60</sup> The administration saw Herero demands as misguided visions, which were allegedly stoked by foreign UNIA agitators.<sup>61</sup> Invoking German colonialism also worked both ways. South African officials brought up German rule to rebut Herero demands. On 7 August 1935, Native Commissioner Francis Priestly Courtney-Clarke asked Hugo Kamatase of Waterberg East Reserve to compare conditions under both colonial powers. Kamatase had to concede: ‘We fought the Germans and they scattered us. Our present rulers have collected us again’.<sup>62</sup> Courtney-Clarke reminded Kamatase of German colonialism to highlight what he considered to be the more benign character of South African rule.

Another focal point for making memories of the first colonial occupation revolved around education. In German-ruled Namibia, the only education available to Africans was supplied by missions, especially the Lutheran Rhenish Mission Society. Before the genocide, its missionaries struggled to attract converts.<sup>63</sup> This changed because of the war. Without their land and cattle, emaciated Herero turned to the missionaries’ assembly camps, where they converted to Christianity.<sup>64</sup> But as soon as German control crumbled, many Herero revived ancestral worship and opposed the establishment of new German mission schools. In July 1928, the Magistrate of Otjiwarongo reported that inhabitants of Okakarara only accepted religious education ‘as a sort of necessary evil’ and that they would only accept an English instructor because ‘they want no Germans’.<sup>65</sup>

On the one hand, this opposition grew out of the fact that some Hereros associated Christianity with the genocide. In 1923, attendees at the funeral of Samuel Maharero conducted a mock trial of evangelist Samuel Kariko, who was charged with having aided his people’s destruction. According to distraught missionary August Kuhlmann, ‘ringleader Hosea Kutako’ alleged that by helping German missionaries convert the sons of Herero chiefs, evangelists had undermined their resistance, paving the way for military conquest.<sup>66</sup> The mock trial highlights that the physical reconvening of survivors at the funeral and subsequent annual commemorations was not tantamount to the creation of Herero unity.

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57 D. Henrichsen, *Herrschaft und Alltag im vorkolonialen Zentralnamibia: Das Herero- und Damaraland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2011), p. 20.

58 W. Anz, ‘Gerechtigkeit Für Die Deutschen in Südwestafrika’, *Die Christliche Welt*, 18, 28 (1904), p. 657.

59 NAN SWAA 1161 A158/29/3, Deputation of Representatives of the Herero People Interviewed on Friday, June 2 1933 by the Secretary for South West Africa, p. 3.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

61 Emmett, *Popular Resistance*, pp. 139–54; Krüger and Henrichsen, ‘We have been captives long enough’, p. 154.

62 NAN SWAA 1148 A158/23/1 v4, Tribal Meeting of Hereros at Waterberg East Native Reserve on the Occasion of the Visit of his Honour the Administrator and the Marquis Theodoli, held on 7 August 1935, p. 1.

63 L. Engel, *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus im deutschen Protestantismus in Namibia 1907 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1976).

64 Gewalt, *Herero Heroes*, p. 196.

65 NAN SWAA 1147 A158/23/1 v2, Magistrate Otjiwarongo to Native Commissioner, 30 July 1928.

66 Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, Windhoek (ELCRN) II.1.37, Missionary August Kuhlmann to Praeses Wilhelm Eich, 6 November 1923, p. 259. On the trial see also Engel, *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus*, p. 227.

Rather, the funeral became an opportunity for different groups in Herero society to reckon with the impact of colonisation and genocide.

On the other hand, opposition drew on parents' grievances about language instruction in mission schools.<sup>67</sup> In 1935, the visiting chairman of the Mandates Commission asked Otto Maharero, one of the brothers of Samuel Maharero, why the Herero of Waterberg preferred education in English to Otjiherero. Maharero pointed to the Union Jack in the flag of the Union of South Africa and explained that this was the flag 'which loosened the chain from my neck. Why, therefore, should I seek another language?'.<sup>68</sup> While the Herero criticised the medium of instruction, they realised that having schools constituted progress. A veteran member of the Windhoek Location Board, Aaron Mungunda, impressed this upon military recruits in Tsumeb in 1942. He urged them to seek all available education, since this privilege was denied to him because 'I myself at the age of 9 was chased from this country by the Germans'.<sup>69</sup>

The Second World War became a crucible for these debates about history and progress. In the 1930s, rumours about the Herero's alleged support for Germany kept worrying officials.<sup>70</sup> In fact, Herero leaders supported the Allies because they feared a return of German rule. Speaking before the same recruits at Tsumeb that Aaron Mungunda addressed, Kutako expressed this fear by raising the spectre of renewed destruction. He warned: '[The Germans] have not tormented us sufficiently yet. They want to continue with the murder of our people, you must help to save this country from going back to them'.<sup>71</sup> Kutako demonstrated public support for South Africa and reminded a younger generation of the origins of their present unfreedom. His speech marked the highpoint in a two-decade strategy of accommodation by Herero leaders.<sup>72</sup> The politics of memory were an important pillar of this strategy. Invoking German rule allowed the Herero to both criticise and curry favour with subsequent rulers. In this way, they wrested small but tangible concessions from the South Africans. These ranged from the right to trade in the reserves to the ability to produce their own locally brewed beer.<sup>73</sup>

## Entangling Memories

But after the Second World War, hopes that accommodation would lead to political emancipation received a serious blow. In 1946, the South African government sought to incorporate Namibia as a fifth province in a sham referendum.<sup>74</sup> When the UN rejected the outcome, South Africa refused to acknowledge its authority. In 1948, the newly elected

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67 NAN SWAA 2081 A.460/5 v1, The Chief Native Commissioner interviewed the following Natives from the Epukiro Reserve on 7 November 1935.

68 NAN SWAA 1148 A158/23/1 v4, Tribal Meeting of Hereros at Waterberg East Native Reserve on the Occasion of the Visit of his Honour the Administrator and the Marquis Theodoli, held on 7 August 1935, p. 2.

69 NAN SWAA 468 A.50/169 v1, Visit of Headman Hosia [sic] and other influential Hereros to N.M.C. Camp (V) N.E.A.S. Tsumeb, on 21 April 1942. I am grateful to Werner Hillebrecht for pointing me to this record.

70 NAN SWAA 1138 A158/16 v4, Welfare Officer Ovitoto to Native Commissioner Okahandja, 28 February 1939.

71 NAN SWAA 468 A.50/169 v1, Visit of Headman Hosia [sic] and other influential Hereros to N.M.C. Camp (V) N.E.A.S. Tsumeb, on 21 April 1942.

72 On this strategy, see Ngavirue, *Political Parties*, p. 192.

73 On trading, see NAN SWAA 1158 A158/29 v1, Notes of Interview of Herero Deputation from Aminuis, led by Headman Hosea and introduced by Mr. Cope, 25 February 1926, Windhoek, pp. 16–17; on beer, see NAN MWI 2/1/115 36/19/37 v2, Minutes of Advisory Board Meeting held at the residence of Chairman Bowker, 7 October 1933.

74 On the referendum, see J. Silvester, 'Forging the Fifth Province', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 3 (2015), pp. 505–18. Statements opposing incorporation often invoked German land theft. See, for instance, NAN SWAA 2544 604 v3, Vergadering Waterberg-Oos Naturelleserwe, 27 July 1949; NAN SWAA 2544 604 v3, Magistrate Otjiwarongo to Chief Native Commissioner, 18 August 1949.

National Party government began to implement apartheid in Namibia. Popular resentment kept rising. In 1959, authorities repressed protests against the destruction of Windhoek's Old Location, killing 11 people. In the aftermath of the shootings, many members of the nascent nationalist organisations South West Africa National Union (SWANU) and South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) fled into exile.<sup>75</sup>

But the referendum also became a catalyst for change. In 1946, Frederick Maharero, the oldest son of Samuel Maharero and an exiled veteran of the 1904–1908 war, asked Chief Tshekedi Khama of Bechuanaland to invite the Anglican priest Michael Scott to the British protectorate. Maharero was dismayed by warnings from his homeland about the threat of incorporation.<sup>76</sup> Khama played an important role in mobilising opposition to the referendum.<sup>77</sup> Scott had become deeply involved in causes for social justice in South Africa.<sup>78</sup> When the Reverend met Maharero in Mafeking on 14 July 1947, the Chief explained that he wanted to see him 'because that Government [of South Africa] adopts the same oppressive policy towards the Native people as the Germans'.<sup>79</sup> Thus, it was the concerns of Maharero and local leaders that brought Scott to Namibia.<sup>80</sup>

At Mafeking, Maharero, Khama and Scott drafted the first Namibian petition to the UN. Scott then took the draft to Namibia to consult local headmen and conduct extensive historical interviews.<sup>81</sup> Clemens Kapuuu, the future Paramount Chief, and Berthold Himimuine, the principal of St. Barnabas Secondary School, arranged interviews and acted as interpreters.<sup>82</sup> Scott was struck by the immediacy that the German past had retained. On the road to Aminuis, Theophilus Katjuonga, a member of Hosea Kutako's Chief's Council, stopped at the spot where the Herero-German war had reportedly begun:

There all knelt down and Theophilus said a prayer for the blessing of God and of their forefathers on the journey and upon the undertaking upon which we were setting out. After the prayer he took a handful of earth and each took some in his mouth and spat it out.<sup>83</sup>

Herero leaders thus framed resistance against incorporation by remembering the 1904–1908 war. From Gibeon to Aminuis, 47 Nama and Herero leaders signed the petition. The South Africans barred the signatories from sending their own representatives to the UN, requiring Scott to act as sole representative in their stead. With the help of the Indian delegation, he managed to circulate the petition among delegates just in time for that year's General Assembly at Lake Success near New York.<sup>84</sup>

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75 See P.H. Katjavivi, *A History of Resistance in Namibia* (London, James Currey, 1988), pp. 47–9.

76 M. Scott, *A Time to Speak* (Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1958).

77 M. Crowder, 'Tshekedi Khama, Smuts, and South West Africa', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 25, 1 (1987), pp. 25–42.

78 A. Yates and L. Chester, *The Troublemaker: Michael Scott and His Lonely Struggle against Injustice* (Johannesburg, STE, 2006); C. Saunders, 'Michael Scott and Namibia', *African Historical Review*, 39, 2 (2007), pp. 25–40.

79 Bodleian Library, Oxford (BDL) MSS Afr. s 1681 148 5, 1, Record of a meeting with Frederick Maharero, Paramount Chief and other representatives in Bechuanaland, Mafeking, 14 July 1947, p. 2.

80 The current head of the Maharero royal house, perhaps unsurprisingly, also emphasises Frederick's role. Interview with Chief Tjiṅaani Maharero, Windhoek, 18 March 2019. This is not to diminish Khama's or Scott's assistance in opposing incorporation. See Crowder, 'Tshekedi', pp. 26–7; Saunders, 'Michael Scott and Namibia', p. 29.

81 See BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 148 5, 1, Southwest Africans' Appeal to the United Nations. Record of interviews and petitions with certain Southwest African tribesmen, brought to the United Nations by the Reverend Michael G. Scott, 1947, pp. 1–28, 1.

82 Interview by the author with Zedekia Ngavirue, Windhoek, 20 February 2019.

83 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 148 5, 1, Southwest Africans' Appeal to the United Nations, p. 11.

84 Scott, *Time to Speak*. Scott's submissions became the UN General Assembly documents A/C.4/95, A/C.4/96, and A/C.4/97.

The petition represented a multi-layered record of memory. Scott contributed his research in drafting it.<sup>85</sup> One of the documents he drew on was a South African report on the referendum, which included Hosea Kutako's rejoinder to the Administrator regarding incorporation. According to Kutako, the Germans had also promised to form 'a Union' with the Herero. Because they 'broke their promise', he demanded that impartial witnesses arbitrate the matter of incorporation.<sup>86</sup> Citing the *Blue Book*, the petition's introduction included accounts of war-time atrocities drawn from the memoirs of German soldiers. Chiefs Hosea Kutako and Nikanor Hoveka, the petition's main signatories, framed these accounts of their people dying from thirst, exhaustion and executions as 'the sufferings of our people during the carrying out of the extermination order'.<sup>87</sup>

The exchange of memories and knowledge lay at the heart of Namibian petitioners' work with Scott. Although recent analyses have underlined that UN petitioning aided Namibian resistance against South African rule, none has examined the ways in which memory making affected this process.<sup>88</sup> Kutako regularly requested information on UN proceedings, but also sent Scott further material to use in the campaign. In turn, Scott and his assistant Mary Benson constantly supplied local headmen with information.<sup>89</sup> Scott's dynamic dissemination of Herero memories among UN delegates unnerved Bernardus Fourie, the South African Permanent Representative to the UN, who lamented that it produced 'considerable concern about the welfare of the Hereros'.<sup>90</sup> Apart from rallying delegations to the Namibian cause, Scott convened the nucleus of an international support network.<sup>91</sup> He also sought Raphael Lemkin's advice on lobbying the UN and encouraged him to include Namibia as a case study in his work.<sup>92</sup>

This exchange of knowledge reverberated in southern Africa. Scott's work with Kutako inspired the young Mburumba Kerina, who became the first Herero petitioner to the UN, to seek higher education abroad.<sup>93</sup> Kerina was born Erich Getzen in Tsumeb and hailed from a Herero-German family. Because of his mixed heritage, he was classified as coloured under South African race laws and had access to better education.<sup>94</sup> While studying for his high school diploma at the Wilberforce Institute in the Transvaal, Getzen contacted Scott about obtaining a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom.<sup>95</sup> To Getzen, the root of the Hereros' plight lay in their loss of land and exile as a result of 'the war between the Hereros and the Germans for protection'.<sup>96</sup> Scott welcomed Getzen's initiative but recommended he

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85 A/C.4/96, pp. 177–9.

86 Question of South West Africa. Communications Received by the Secretary General: letter from the Reverend Michael Scott transmitting petitions from inhabitants of South West Africa, A/C.4/96, 26 September 1947, p. 180.

87 A/C.4/96, pp. 179, 185.

88 Hogan, 'Transnational Resistance', pp. 366–75; Morgan, 'A Global Struggle', pp. 72–4; M. McCullers, 'Lines in the Sand: The Global Politics of Local Development in Apartheid-Era Namibia, 1950–1980' (PhD thesis, Emory University, 2012), pp. 39, 49–52.

89 See, for instance, BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 155, Freda Troup to John P. Fletcher, 11 September 1950, p. 9; see also BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 160, Michael Scott to Hosea Kutako, 15 November 1953, p. 3.

90 NAN SWAA 2544 604 v1, B. L. Fourie, Memorandum Southwest Africa, 10 August 1948, p. 6.

91 See, for example, BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 152 11, Getrude Baer to Carlos P. Romulo, President UN General Assembly, 2 December 1949, p. 9; United Nations Archives, New York (UNA) S-0441-653 132/1/04, Paul Robeson, Max Yargan, Memorandum on the Issue of South-West Africa, 28 September 1947; UNA S-0441-655 132/1/04, Roger Baldwin to Byron Price, Acting UN Secretary General, 27 July 1949.

92 F. Troup, *In Face of Fear: Michael Scott's Challenge to South Africa* (London, Faber and Faber, 1950), p. 193. BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 148 4, Michael Scott to Raphael Lemkin, 31 December 1947, p. 37.

93 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 158 11, Erich W. Getzen to Michael Scott, 19 January 1951, p. 2. On Kerina, see D. Henrichsen, 'Multicultural Lives, Defiance and Liberation Politics in Namibia: The Getzen-Kerina Family History', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

94 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 163 6, Hosea Kutako to Michael Scott, 19 December 1955, p. 3.

95 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 158 11, Erich W. Getzen to Michael Scott, 11 December 1950, p. 15.

96 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 158 11, Erich W. Getzen to Michael Scott, 1 February 1951, pp. 9–10.

should finish school before thinking about studying abroad.<sup>97</sup> Getzen was undeterred and obtained a scholarship at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.<sup>98</sup> Lincoln was at the forefront of teaching African students to become the first-generation leaders of their countries.<sup>99</sup> In early 1953, Getzen arrived in New York and started to call himself by the Herero name Mburumba Kerina, exulting that he was now free from South African censorship and could work to end imperialism.<sup>100</sup>

Kerina's subsequent lobbying at the UN highlights how the memories of the 1904–1908 war and the Shoah became intertwined. According to Kerina, Scott introduced him to Raphael Lemkin, who asked Kerina to help distribute pamphlets that called on national governments to criminalise genocide. According to Kerina, Lemkin explained: 'One day maybe if we do succeed, your people will also benefit from ... this convention and our efforts about helping the United Nations to strengthen the Genocide Convention'. In retrospect, Kerina admitted that he 'did not understand quite fully what he really meant' at the time.<sup>101</sup> Scott also introduced Kerina to the German exile and linguist Dora Nichtenhauser, who had worked with the International Socialist Militant League and the Emergency Rescue Committee in assisting artists, intellectuals and socialists to flee Nazi-occupied Europe.<sup>102</sup> While Kerina was teaching at Brooklyn College in the 1960s, Nichtenhauser helped him translate articles into German for publication in the German and Namibian press. Together with East German historian Horst Drechsler, who wrote the first critical German-language history of German rule in Namibia, she also translated archival documents for Kerina, including von Trotha's extermination order.<sup>103</sup>

Kerina incorporated this knowledge into his statements. In 1956, during his first oral hearing before the General Assembly's Fourth Committee, which oversaw matters of decolonisation, he explained that during the 1904–1908 war 'the white immigrants had stolen [the Hereros'] land, driven them into the desert, deprived them of their cattle, violated their women and children, starved them and shot them mercilessly'.<sup>104</sup> In April 1957, in a letter to the 'Chairman' of the 'Asian-African Group' (neither of which were formally constituted entities), he suggested that the UN should invoke the Genocide Convention to force South Africa to comply with the stipulations of trusteeship.<sup>105</sup> Presumably, he hoped that the Union could be found in violation of trusteeship rules based on its protection of land dispossessed during the 1904–1908 war.

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97 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 158 11, Michael Scott to Erich W. Getzen, 27 August 1951, p. 20.

98 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 158 11, Erich W. Getzen to Michael Scott, 21 May 1951, pp. 27–8; Henrichsen, 'Multicultural Lives'.

99 W.J. Urban, *Black Scholar: Horace Mann Bond, 1904–1972* (Athens, GA, University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 146–67; H.M. Bond, *Education for Freedom: A History of Lincoln University, Pennsylvania* (Lincoln, Lincoln University, 1976).

100 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 158 11, Erich Getzen to Michael Scott, 4 February 1953, p. 53.

101 Interview with Mburumba Kerina, Windhoek, 17 December 2018.

102 A. Klein, *Flüchtlingspolitik und Flüchtlingshilfe 1940–1942: Varian Fry und die Komitees zur Rettung politisch Verfolgter in New York und Marseille* (Munich, Metropol, 2007), p. 163. Around this time, Nichtenhauser worked as a German language instructor at Hunter College. See College of the City of New York, *Announcement of Courses* (New York, 1943), p. 18.

103 Interview with Mburumba Kerina, Windhoek, 17 December 2018; BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 172 12, Translations by Dora Nichtenhauser, pp. 1–35; H. Drechsler, *Südwestafrika unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft. Der Kampf der Herero und Nama gegen den deutschen Imperialismus 1884–1915* (Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1966). Although Nichtenhauser translated for Kerina, he did not explicitly name her in our interview. It is also possible that he referred to Gertrude Baer, the UN representative of the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*.

104 United Nations General Assembly, 11th Session, Fourth Committee, 571st Meeting, Tuesday, 11 December 1956, Question of South West Africa: Report of the Committee on South West Africa. Hearing of Petitioners, A/C.4/SR.571, p. 107.

105 UNA S-0443-0061-9786, Mburumba ua'Kerina (Getzen) to the Chairman, Asian-African Group, United Nations, 20 April 1957.

Other petitioners followed, including the president of SWANU, Jariretundu Kozonguizi, and Zedekia Ngavirue, Namibia's future lead negotiator of the 'reconciliation agreement'.<sup>106</sup> Their invocations of German rule differed from the evidence reproduced in the *Blue Book* and the negotiations with South African officials. The petitioners belonged to a generation that was born and grew up after the German surrender. Rather than offer eyewitness testimony, they relied on analogy, the *Blue Book* and tangible legacies to describe the lingering effects of the first colonial occupation. In 1959, Kozonguizi claimed that contemporary nationalist parties derived from the Herero and Nama war, when Namibians had first united across ethnic boundaries.<sup>107</sup> Increasing South African repression reminded Kerina 'of the dark days of 1904–1905, when the people of South West Africa had been decimated by the German colonialists'.<sup>108</sup> In 1958, Phakalane Keharanyo Nikodemus, the grandson of Mbanderu Chief Kahimemua Nguvauva, who was executed by the Germans in 1896, petitioned the UN from Bechuanaland to lament that South Africa prevented the return of thousands of Herero refugees who had been displaced by the Germans.<sup>109</sup>

Apart from UN petitions, exiles produced memories and historical knowledge through ties of Afro-Asian solidarity. On 20 August 1960, the audience of Radio Beijing encountered the unfamiliar voice of Jariretundu Kozonguizi, who was visiting the city as part of a larger SWANU delegation. Such visits reflected the widespread prestige of the People's Republic among anti-colonial movements after its self-proclaimed victory in Korea.<sup>110</sup> For China, recognition from parties such as SWANU legitimised Communist rule, strengthened its claim for exclusive representation in the UN and propagated the glory of Chairman Mao abroad.<sup>111</sup>

Kozonguizi's speech marked the first time that Namibian petitioners publicly connected the war of 1904–1908 to the Shoah. The SWANU president argued that the genocide represented merely one example in the long genealogy of fascism in Germany. This genealogy purportedly began with 'that arch-fascist ... iron man, Bismarck', who initiated the scramble for Africa. Although African 'armies of liberation' resisted the scramble, they were unable to ward off German colonialists, who 'waged a war of extermination' in Namibia. Citing the casualty estimates of the *Blue Book*, Kozonguizi then likened the genocide's destruction to that of the Shoah: 'This extermination resulted in the reduction of one of the national groups there from 100,000 to only 15,000. Of the same savage magnitude known to us was the attempt to eliminate the Jews in Germany'.<sup>112</sup> Kozonguizi went on to rail against the American dollar, which kept Africa and Latin America in

106 On Kozonguizi's previous activism see Hogan, 'Transnational Resistance', pp. 343–53.

107 UN General Assembly, 14th Session, Fourth Committee, 911th Meeting, 15 October 1959: Report of the Committee on South West Africa, A/C.4/SR.911, p. 141.

108 UN General Assembly, 16th Session, Fourth Committee, 1217th Meeting, 20 November 1961: Report of the Committee on South West Africa, A/C.4/SR.1217, p. 377.

109 See, for instance, UNA S-0443-0061-9786, Petition by Chief Phakalane Kaharanjo to Secretary, Committee on SWA, 9 November 1958. Nikodemus did not specifically refer to the refugees as Mbanderu.

110 On this appeal, see A. Hutchison, *China's African Revolution* (London, Hutchinson, 1975); R.T. Frazier, *The East Is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2015); A.C. Cook, *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014); J. Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (New York, Knopf, 2019).

111 Hutchison, *China's African Revolution*, pp. 241, 246; Lovell, *Maoism*, pp. 192–3, 273–5. There is no definitive history of Radio Beijing's international broadcasts. On the social history of radio in Communist China see A.P.L. Liu, *Radio Broadcasting in Communist China* (Cambridge, MA, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1964); J.N. Alekna, 'Reunified Through Radio: Media Technology, and Politics in Modern China 1923–1958' (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2020); J. Li, 'Revolutionary Echoes: Radios and Loudspeakers in the Mao Era', *Twentieth-Century China*, 45, 1 (2020), pp. 25–45.

112 UNA S-0443-0060-9781, Radio Broadcast of Jariretundu Kozonguizi, Radio Beijing, 28 August 1960.

subjugation while propping up ‘the feeble French forces in Algeria’. Finally, he criticised the UN for failing to free Namibia after 14 years of petitioning.<sup>113</sup>

Kozonguizi’s speech, which the South African security services transcribed, caused a diplomatic stir. Bernardus Fourie, South Africa’s representative to the UN, complained to the chairman of the Fourth Committee.<sup>114</sup> Kozonguizi was forced to clarify that he made the statement as a private individual but refused to retract its essence.<sup>115</sup> SWAPO’s leadership rejected the speech.<sup>116</sup> Hosea Kutako also distanced himself, stressing that ‘[w]e realize that the United Nations is making a great effort to release us from the oppression of the Union of South Africa’.<sup>117</sup> Kozonguizi’s broadcast cemented the recent split between the Herero Chief’s Council and SWANU leaders, who no longer accepted the former’s claim to political leadership. The speech also demonstrates that there was no clear-cut relationship between invoking colonial occupation and garnering international support. As Lauren Dobell has shown, SWANU initially proved more adept at building local support and garnering recognition abroad. Kozonguizi’s speech marked the beginning of his party’s relative decline compared to SWAPO, which became more successful in combining UN petitioning with support from the Soviet Union.<sup>118</sup>

For exiles, activist and academic conferences provided another forum to record history. Kerina was invited to give lectures as early as 1953.<sup>119</sup> In April 1963, Howard University hosted the ‘Southern Africa in Transition’ conference sponsored by the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC).<sup>120</sup> Kerina’s paper explained that the Germans occupied Namibia only against fierce opposition, which culminated in the war of 1904–1908.<sup>121</sup> Kozonguizi, who also attended, claimed that the war of 1904–1908 had been one for the ‘independence’ of Namas and Hereros, which was only decided by the extermination order: ‘Von Trotha in his Vernichtungsbefehl (Extermination Order) said that no Herero-man, woman, child or suckling babe, - was to receive mercy or quarter:- ‘Kill everyone [sic] of them and take no prisoners’, he declared.<sup>122</sup> Three years later, Zedekia Ngavirue presented an analysis of land alienation since German times at a conference at Oxford University, arguing that the South African administration had preserved the dispossession of Herero land perpetrated by the Germans.<sup>123</sup>

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113 *Ibid.*

114 UNA S-0443-0062-0098, Bernardus Fourie to Dr. Adnan M. Pachachi, 20 October 1960.

115 UNA S-0443-0062-0098, Jariretundu Kozonguizi to the Chairman [of the Fourth Committee] and Secretary-General, 7 October 1960.

116 Emmett, *Popular Resistance*, p. 323.

117 UNA S-0443-0062-0098, Hosea Kutako to Secretary-General, 29 September 1960.

118 L. Dobell, *Swapo’s Struggle for Namibia, 1960–1991: War by Other Means* (Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998), pp. 32–6; for a close-up of the ideological tensions within nationalist parties, see C.A. Williams, ‘Education in Exile: International Scholarships, Cold War Politics, and Conflicts among SWAPO Members in Tanzania, 1961–1968’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 1 (2017), pp. 125–41.

119 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 158 6, Erich Getzen to Michael Scott, 4 February 1953, p. 53.

120 On AMSAC see L. Geerlings, ‘Performances in the Theatre of the Cold War: The American Society of African Culture and the 1961 Lagos Festival’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 16, 1 (2018), pp. 1–19; H. Wilford, ‘The American Society of African Culture: The CIA and Transnational Networks of African Diaspora Intellectuals in the Cold War’, in L. van Dongen, S. Roulin and G. Scott-Smith (eds.), *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War: Agents, Activities, and Networks* (Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 23–34.

121 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 173 11 1963, 2, Mburumba Kerina, ‘South West Africa – Past, Present and Future’, Southern Africa in Transition Conference Howard University, 11–13 April 1963, p. 3.

122 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 173 11 1963, 2, Jariretundu Kozonguizi, ‘The Historical and Legal Status of South West Africa’, Southern Africa in Transition Conference Howard University, 11–13 April 1963, p. 4.

123 BDL MSS Afr. s 1681 179 1, Z. Ngavirue, ‘The Land Theft’, International Conference on South West Africa, 23–26 March 1966, Oxford Union, Oxford, pp. 1–4. The paper was later published as Z. Ngavirue, ‘The Land Theft’, in R. Segal and R. First (eds.), *South West Africa: Travesty of Trust; the Expert Papers and Findings of the International Conference on South West Africa, Oxford, 23–26 March 1966* (London, Deutsch, 1967), pp. 179–88.

The petitioners' conference papers preceded the publication of the first two major critical histories of German rule in Namibia by several years.<sup>124</sup> But as Kerina's contacts to Horst Drechsler indicate, their production was a collaborative effort that transcended (post-) colonial boundaries, entangling vernacular memories and archival knowledge. Between 1967 and 1972, Helmuth Stoecker, who wrote one of the first syntheses on German imperialism, helped Zedekia Ngavirue to access the East German archives in Potsdam for his Oxford PhD thesis, making the Namibian one of the first external researchers to be granted access to the records of the German colonial department.<sup>125</sup>

This collaborative memory work yielded tangible results. Namibian UN petitions convinced delegates that German rule was the root of the Hereros' continued exile. In 1959 and 1960, the General Assembly's Committee on South West Africa, which was created in 1953 to provide a direct channel to the UN for Namibian petitioners, affirmed that the Herero lived in Bechuanaland because of von Trotha's extermination order and called on South Africa to make land available for their resettlement.<sup>126</sup> In 1962, the Committee stated that the 15,000 Herero in Bechuanaland 'had found refuge [there] during the German administration of South West Africa after the issuance of an order for the extermination of all Hereros'. Quoting the *Blue Book*, the report asserted that the Herero had been reduced from '80,000 or 90,000 in 1904 ... to a total of 15,130 in 1911'.<sup>127</sup>

## Limits of Entanglement

But as Kozonguizi's outburst in Beijing suggests, lobbying an international organisation of sovereign states proved harder than pressuring South African officials. The case brought by Ethiopia and Liberia against South Africa at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) between 1960 and 1966 serves as a case in point. As the only two African members of the erstwhile League of Nations, Ethiopia and Liberia contended that apartheid violated stipulations of the mandate and the League's covenant. Citing US President Woodrow Wilson, their initial observations stressed that the purpose of the mandates system had been to avoid abuses such those that had occurred under German rule.<sup>128</sup> But when it came to determine the legal nature of the mandate, judges relied on a South African historian who merely acknowledged the 'well-known German Native wars'.<sup>129</sup> The South African counter memorandum made no mention of the extermination order.<sup>130</sup> Instead, it claimed that colonialism had saved the territory's peoples from mutual extermination.<sup>131</sup> In this way, the South African government

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124 Drechsler, *Südwestafrika*; H. Bley, *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894–1914* (Hamburg, Leibniz, 1968); for an analysis of East and West German historiography on Namibia, see C. Bürger, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte(n). Der Genozid in Namibia und die Geschichtsschreibung der DDR und BRD* (Bielefeld, transcript Verlag, 2017).

125 Interview with Zedekia Ngavirue, Windhoek, 20 February 2019. H. Stoecker, *Drang nach Afrika: Die koloniale Expansionspolitik und Herrschaft des deutschen Imperialismus in Afrika von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 2. Weltkrieges* (Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1977).

126 UN General Assembly, 14th Session, Report of the Committee on South West Africa, Supplement No. 12 (A/4191), New York: 1959, p. 20; UN General Assembly, 15th Session, Report of the Committee on South West Africa, Supplement No. 12 (A/4464) (New York, 1960), p. 39. On the Committee, see Hogan, 'Transnational Resistance', pp. 297–8.

127 UN General Assembly, Report of the Committee on South West Africa concerning the Implementation of General Assembly Resolutions 1568 (XV) and 1596 (XV), Supplement No. 12A (A/4926) (New York, 1962), p. 7.

128 International Court of Justice (ICJ), Observations of the Governments of Ethiopia and Liberia, 1 March 1962, p. 458.

129 ICJ, Pleadings, Oral Arguments, Documents. South West Africa Cases (Ethiopia v. South Africa; Liberia v. South Africa) XI (The Hague, 1966), pp. 70–1, 309.

130 ICJ, Pleadings, Oral Arguments, Documents. South West Africa Cases (Ethiopia v. South Africa; Liberia v. South Africa) II (The Hague, 1966), pp. 374–6.

131 ICJ, Pleadings, South West Africa Cases, II, pp. 327 Fn3, 333, 358, 407.

echoed the view of former missionary Heinrich Vedder, who at the time was considered the foremost authority on Namibia's precolonial history.<sup>132</sup>

The South Africans' inversion of the charge of extermination reacted to opponents of both apartheid and Portuguese colonialism who compared white-minority rule in Africa to Nazi Germany.<sup>133</sup> These competing charges suggest that mnemonic entanglements do not necessarily yield 'new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice'.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, in apartheid South Africa, remembering the Shoah led to a politically reactionary rapprochement between Jews and Afrikaners.<sup>135</sup> The strategies of advocates of decolonisation and the fraught South African response prevented a wider acknowledgement of Herero memories in the international sphere. So did rivalries among petitioners. After Kozonguizi's speech, Kerina sought to distinguish himself as leader of the liberation struggle, frequently alienating other petitioners.<sup>136</sup> Ultimately, the purpose of petitions was ending white-minority rule, not commemorating the past. The same holds for SWAPO propaganda that presented the war of 1904–1908 as the mythical cauldron of nationalist resistance.<sup>137</sup>

Within Namibia, petitioning accentuated growing political divides over chiefly power and ethnic identification.<sup>138</sup> After appealing to the UN, Nikodemus returned to Namibia with South African support and was elected chief of the Mbanderu as Munjuku II. The South Africans sought to position him as a counterweight to the bothersome Hosea Kutako.<sup>139</sup> In the following years, councillors associated with Munyuku defended their chief's alleged support for apartheid against criticism from Hosea Kutako's camp in correspondence with and petitions to the Committee on South West Africa.<sup>140</sup> For the Mbanderu, one motive to assert their autonomy in this way lay in lingering grievances about Samuel Maharero's complicity in the execution of Chief Kahimemua in 1896.<sup>141</sup> UN petitioning thereby became one arena in which the Mbanderu and Herero negotiated not only political allegiance under apartheid, but also the politics of memory of the first colonial occupation.

Conflicts over alignment with the apartheid state and history further intensified after the beginning of the armed struggle.<sup>142</sup> The zero-sum logic of white domination limited dialogue among Namibians about the history of colonisation. This was underlined in August 1964, when Clemens Kapuuu, then Hosea Kutako's secretary, published a press release in the *Windhoek Advertiser*, colonial Namibia's leading English-language newspaper, in which he criticised the annual commemoration of the Battle of Waterberg by local German

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132 Vedder's view has been refuted by B. Lau, "'Thank God the Germans came': Vedder and Namibian Historiography", in A. Heywood (ed.), *Brigitte Lau. History and Historiography* (Windhoek, Discourse/MSORP, 1995), pp. 1–16.

133 R. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2012); J. Morgan, 'A Challenge to the System: The South West Africa Question and the United Nations Trusteeship Council', in Eggers, Pearson, and Almada e Santos, *United Nations*, pp. 40–60; on the Portuguese case, see B. C. Reis, 'Portugal and the UN: A Rogue State Resisting the Norm of Decolonization (1956–1974)', *Portuguese Studies*, 29, 2 (2013), pp. 251–76. More research is required to understand this trope in anti-colonial thought.

134 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, p. 5.

135 S. Gilbert, 'Jews and the Racial State: Legacies of the Holocaust in Apartheid South Africa, 1945–60', *Jewish Social Studies*, 16, 3 (2010), pp. 32–64; on Jewish life in Namibia see Windhoek Hebrew Congregation (ed.), *Jewish Life in South West Africa/Namibia: A History* (Windhoek, Windhoek Hebrew Congregation, 2014).

136 Henrichsen, 'Multicultural Lives'.

137 Gewalt, 'Herero Genocide', pp. 295–8.

138 McCullers, 'Local Drama'.

139 On Nikodemus see J.A. Müller, *'The Inevitable Pipeline into Exile': Botswana's Role in the Namibian Liberation Struggle* (Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012), pp. 89–91.

140 UNA S-0443-0062-0098, Chief Munjuku II Councillors Edward Ndjoze, Kamue Tjzongoro and Aaron Tjatindi to the Secretary of the Committee on South West Africa, New York, 9 March 1962.

141 On the history of these grievances and their impact, see McCullers, 'Lines in the Sand', pp. 86–123.

142 L. Bolliger, 'Chiefs, Terror, and Propaganda: The Motivations of Namibian Loyalists to Fight in South Africa's Security Forces, 1975–1989', *South African Historical Journal*, 70, 1 (2018), pp. 124–51.

veterans. The battle, on 11 August 1904, marked the climax in Germany's war against the Herero. Calling on Germans to desist from celebrating its 50th anniversary, Kapuuo asserted that 'there is little difference between the extermination order of General von Trotha and the extermination of Jews by Adolf Hitler'. He reminded his readers that the battle 'was followed by the infamous extermination order of General von Trotha, which extremely reduced the Herero population'. Rather than celebrating this legacy, Kapuuo urged Germans to extol their contribution to the development of the country since they 'did valuable work in South West Africa such as the erection of churches, railways and mines'.<sup>143</sup>

The comparison caused a storm of protest. The chairman of Windhoek's German war veterans, Carl Schrader, denied that an extermination order had ever existed.<sup>144</sup> Historians have tended to focus on the consequences of the press release as the supposedly first comparison of the two genocides. Larissa Förster pointed out that the controversy paved the way to joint, albeit 'apolitical', Herero-German commemorations in the 1980s.<sup>145</sup> To Jan-Bart Gewald, the press release encapsulated the secretary's ambition to lead the Chief's Council.<sup>146</sup> As this article has made clear, however, the press release was neither the first nor the only time Herero thought about 1904–1908 in terms of the Shoah. Rather, the comparison reflected the entanglement of Herero memory making since the First World War. It thus formed part of a strategy of Herero leaders to initiate conversations about the legacies of German colonialism both within and outside of Namibia to advance decolonisation.

Soon after the press release, the attempt to reach a peaceful solution to the Namibia question was overtaken by events. In July 1966, the ICJ ruled that it ultimately had no authority to settle the dispute between the UN and South Africa. One month later, South African forces attacked a camp of SWAPO's military wing at Omugulugwombashe, marking the beginning of armed insurrection. Meanwhile, German Namibians continued to deny the extent of the damage wrought by the 1904–1908 war. What made the statements of Kapuuo and others significant in this context was not their comparison with the Shoah per se. Rather, they reflected an awareness that achieving self-determination depended on a reckoning with Namibia's multi-layered history of colonialism. Although this reckoning had to wait until after independence – and is indeed still ongoing – the work of UN petitioners ensured that what had happened was put on the record.

## Conclusion

In the half-century after 1915, the Herero transformed invocations of German colonialism into a political language that helped them wrest concessions from subsequent rulers, demand self-determination and pursue particularistic interests under continued white-minority rule. By making memories about the first colonial occupation, they influenced the emergence of modern Namibian political discourse. This influence extended to comparisons between the Herero and Nama genocide and the Shoah. This article has traced the resulting entanglement of memories of mass violence through the memory work of Herero politicians, UN petitioners and exiles. Their recalls of German colonialism before South African native commissioners, fellow Namibians and an international audience highlight the ways in which Africans made memories of the colonial encounter on local, regional and international levels.

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143 'Hereros oppose Waterberg Celebrations', *Windhoek Advertiser*, 29 July 1964, p. 1.

144 'Germans Accuse Kapuuo of Making "political capital"', *Windhoek Advertiser*, 30 July 1964, p. 2.

145 Förster, *Erinnerungslandschaften*, pp. 204–17.

146 Gewald, 'Imperial Germany', p. 69.

By highlighting the changing vocabulary that survivors of 1904–1908 and their descendants used to talk about what had occurred, this article has also excavated some of the rhetorical antecedents of contemporary Namibian restorative justice campaigns. Together with Herero demands for lost land and better infrastructure in the interwar period, these antecedents contribute to a history of restorative justice in Africa that attends not only to the emergence of formal reparation claims after independence but also to the evolving registers in which Africans thought about the history and impact of colonisation before the end of colonial rule. In this way, the development of Herero memory politics draws attention to the protracted nature of decolonisation. Although the expiration of German rule was not tantamount to the end of Namibia's colonial occupation, it provided the Herero with a register to challenge subsequent rulers and debate the meaning of the colonial encounter. The ways in which the South African administration reminded the Herero of its colonial predecessor underline that the work of decolonisation has required continuous memory work.

## **Acknowledgements**

I dedicate this article to Alexander Jarimbovandu Kaputu, Mburumba Kerina and Zedekia Ngavirue, who passed away on 10 March, 14 June and 25 June 2021, respectively. Raul Katjizeu and Lorence Tjonga provided excellent research assistance. The generous criticism of the anonymous *JSAS* reviewers helped me to refine my argument. I am also grateful to the following groups and individuals for their feedback: participants of the 9th Flying University at Sogang University, 25–30 August 2019, Seoul; the Global History Collaborative Summer School, University of Tokyo, 7 September 2019; the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies Graduate Seminar, 8 September 2021; the 8th Namibia Research Day, University of Basel, 2 October 2021; Emmanuel Kreike, Jacob Dlamini, A. Dirk Moses and Dag Henrichsen.

FABIAN KRAUTWALD

*Postgraduate Research Associate, Department of History, Princeton University, 129 Dickinson Hall, Princeton, New Jersey 08544, USA. Email: [fabiank@princeton.edu](mailto:fabiank@princeton.edu)*

## **ORCID**

Fabian Krautwald  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7780-8388>

