

BETWEEN THE HOLY FIRE AND THE FIRES OF HELL: THE ABSURD CHOICE OF THE WHITE TRIBE OF AFRICA

*Nico Horn*¹

Faculty of Law, University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia

Abstract

A comparison between the two colonial wars at the beginning of the 20th century underlines the fact that European colonial praxis involved a strange dichotomy between a brutal hunger for power and money, on the one hand, and a pietistic belief in Europe's God-given calling to bring civilisation to the *barbarians*.

The fact that the rulers of the Boer republics happened to be white and of European descent made no difference to the colonial power, either to their superior attitude or to their self-proclaimed right to organise and order Africa as they saw fit.

The German war machine conducted a war very similar to that waged by the British Crown's troops during the South African War.

Comparing the history of the Afrikaners with the sad experience of the Hereros and Namas between 1904 and 1907, it remains a mystery that the *white tribe of Africa* never felt any solidarity with the indigenous people of Namibia. They never saw a similarity between their own suffering and the devastated lives of the indigenous people. And to see the Hereros and Namas as allies in the battle against a common enemy, European colonialism, did not cross their minds.

¹ Researcher for the Pentecostal Project at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

In 1922, when a popular uprising occurred amongst the Bondelswarts in the south of South West Africa, the South African government – then led by the Boer general Jan Smuts – viciously suppressed the uprising by bombing the Bondelswart town of Waterberg and killing several unarmed civilians, among them women and children.

The Afrikaner had gone full circle. The once respected resistance fighters had not only been co-opted into the structures of their former masters, they had become oppressors themselves.

SECTION 1: PRESCRIPT

1.1 Introduction

The scene: A history conference in Windhoek¹ one hundred years after the Herero genocide.² Those present were academics from Namibia (mainly white), Europe and North America and a small band of angry children of the survivors of the genocide.³

The survivors' descendants were not ordinary academics. Their papers were filled with life: anger, crude emotions, oral history and deep appreciation of their parents and grandparents who had made that history.⁴

The oral history reminded me of my own story. My grandmother, Johanna de Bruin née Fouche, survived the Brandfort concentration camp set up under the scorched earth programme of Lord Milner and colonial secretary Chamberlain during the South African War.⁵

The scorched earth programme included the total destruction of the Boer farms and the removal of all women and children from the farms to the now notorious concentration camps.

On 16 June 1900 Lieutenant-General Roberts, who succeeded General Buller as chief commander in South Africa before the second

British offensive, gave the order for all Boer farms to be set alight, including houses, food on the land and livestock.⁶ General Christiaan de Wet's farm was burnt down that same day.⁷

The women, children and old men were taken to so-called concentration camps in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. My grandmother was in the concentration camp for almost three years and witnessed the death of three of her brothers and sisters.⁸ More than 30 000 women, children and elderly people died in the camps in less than two years.⁹

Grandma's husband Hennie de Bruin, who died when my mother was still a child, fought against the British forces as a *penkop*.¹⁰ At the end of the war, my great-grandfather Fouche was deported to St Helena. The women could not rebuild the razed farm in the Wepener district and the Fouches lost their land.

The British concentration camps, only the second such phenomenon in modern history,¹¹ were ill-equipped and badly administered and the women and children rounded up for the camps were only allowed to take the bare necessities with them. Like General Valeriano Weyler in Cuba, Kitchener had a military motive: he wanted to deprive the Boers on commando of the food and shelter provided by the women at home. Especially for children under the age of five the camps were a death sentence, and only a small minority between the ages of five and ten survived.

The methods of war used against the Boers, and especially against the civilian population, caused an outcry in Europe. Even the opposition British Liberal Party leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannermann, stated in 1901 that war is no longer war when it is carried out by methods of barbarism as in South Africa.¹²

The Dutch Mennonite minister F C Fleischer, in a sermon preached in September 1901 at a Christian conference on peace, expressed the disgust felt by many Europeans:

Who can imagine how the morning sun, symbol of Truth and Happiness, was greeted today in the refugee camps

of South Africa? O Sunshine, they have longed for you in the calm of a sleepless night. And yet they fear you, the 100 000 old men, women and children, crowded into cold, shivering damp and dark tents where the helpless young cannot be properly cared for and cry in vain for food.

... We address the proud Government on the banks of the silver Thames and our eyes are filled with sorrow and reproach and we say: ... For God's sake! What right have you to carry on this war as you do?¹³

When Emily Hobhouse, an English sympathiser of the Boers, returned to England after a visit to the concentration camps, she vigorously campaigned on behalf of the devastated Boer women and children. Thanks to Hobhouse and other pro-Boer campaigners, the situation improved towards the end of 1901. It nevertheless could not prevent the deaths of more than 22 000 children and some 5 000 women.¹⁴ Add to this the 14 000 black civilians who died in the camps, and the figure for civilian deaths rises to 41 000 as compared to 5 000 deaths of Boer soldiers.

We grew up with stories of the brave Boers who kept an army bigger than the whole population of the two Boer republics at bay for three years in the *veld*. A photo of Grandpa, his brother and his father on commando greeted us in the lounge of Grandma's house.

Yet I do not feel the anger of Yvette Abrahams as I write this. On the contrary. At the history conference, although I grew up as an Afrikaner and the son of a World War II South African veteran and never had ideological or spiritual ties with the southern African German-speaking community, I experienced a deep feeling of shared guilt for the fate of the Herero people.

Granted, there were flashes in my youth when I felt something of Ms Abrahams's pride and anger. Like the night in 1970 when my history teacher asked me to present a small gift to the survivors of the hell camps (as the concentration camps were known), or the day in my young adulthood when I read a poem that Grandma wrote in the camp. But those experiences were few and far between.

When we played rugby against prestigious Afrikaner schools, I felt a lot of anger that I wanted to release against the Calvinists who looked down on their fellow tribesmen. But my coaches never managed to stir up the same feelings with Boer War sentiments when we played against English schools.

1.2 Reflection

There are several reasons why the Boer War never became a major driving force in my life.

First, my father was a *Bloedsap*.¹⁵ He deeply believed that Afrikaner and English-speaking South African have become one nation. And then, we were not Calvinists. We belonged to a Pentecostal sect.

My mother's church and my father's politics made us outsiders in the Afrikaner mainstream. Many "true" Afrikaners did not see us as fellow Afrikaners, although Afrikaans was our mother tongue.

Consequently the Anglo Boer War remained beautiful stories that Grandma told in the warm kitchen on cold winter nights. The people who felt strongly about that war, were also the ideologues of a racist, immoral and oppressive system. I reserved my anger for my own people – the children of the brave, suffering Boers.

When I eventually developed my own political conscience, I became deeply disturbed by the way in which the *super*-Afrikaners used history for their own narrow-minded political ideology. What amazed me was the fact that the oppressed could turn into oppressors within one generation. With the same arrogance with which British historians to this day deny the claim of genocide, blaming the Boers for their own fate,¹⁶ apartheid ideologists could boast of the fact that 600 000 coloureds and Indians were uprooted to create *decent, separate residential areas for our people*.¹⁷ The *backward, uncultured bloody Boers* became the *Herrenvolk!* And my own despised

Pentecostal sect, despite its history of pacifism and non-racialism, happily joined the hallelujah chorus of the apostles of apartheid.¹⁸

As a result, the Anglo Boer War played an even smaller role in my adult life. When I pastored a church in Krugersdorp, South Africa in the middle eighties, I could see the faithful Afrikaners from my house as they met every first Sunday in December to commemorate the beginning of the Anglo Boer War. For me the bearded men in khaki clothes were remnants of a bygone time.

SECTION 2: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 The Boers after the war

For many Boers, life under British rule was unthinkable. And the suffering women were in the forefront of resistance to the bitter end.¹⁹ The *vrouwe* were deeply offended by the so-called *Hendsoppers* and *Joiners* – Boer troops who either surrendered to the British (*Hendsoppers*) or left the Boer commandos and joined the British for various reasons, mainly because they perceived the ongoing war to be futile (*Joiners*). The *Hendsoppers*, who were kept in the camps with the children and women, were scorned and humiliated by the women.²⁰

In the second quarter of 1902, even the *Bittereinders* realised that their firm faith in a just God who would not allow the British to win an immoral war was beginning to crumble. It became clear that the republican forces did not have the infrastructure or human resources to oppose the biggest British force ever to fight a war outside Europe. And 5 000 *Joiners* (more than a quarter of all Boer soldiers) were fighting under the Union Jack by the beginning of 1902.²¹

Britain made some concessions to convince the Boers to accept the proffered terms of surrender. The most important of these dealt with the position of blacks in a new dispensation. The suffering of blacks during the South African War received little attention until the last ten or fifteen years of the twentieth century.

However, Giliomee estimates that as many as 40 000 blacks participated in the war as drivers, chefs, guards, etc. An estimated 14 000 thousand black civilians, mainly farm labourers, died in separate concentration camps set up by Kitchener.²²

Before the war, blacks were excluded from the political arena in the Boer republics; in the Cape Colony and Natal they had a limited franchise based on the level of education. During the war Britain promised a new dispensation in southern Africa, where civilisation rather than race would be the deciding factor in obtaining civil rights.

During the peace negotiations with Generals Jan Smuts and Louis Botha, Lord Milner broke that promise in order to promote reconciliation between Boers and Brits. It was left to the Boers to decide on franchise for blacks after they had received self-government.²³

One searches in vain in the post-war speeches and writings of Boer leaders for any sign of solidarity with the deserted black population of the former republics. Their suffering in the concentration camps – for no other reason than their loyalty to the Boers on the farms – was hardly noticed. Since the Boer pioneers had by then been in Africa for more than two hundred years, one would expect an African solidarity against the colonial power that caused such immeasurable suffering to both the Afrikaner and the black communities.

But the liberal Botha and Smuts had their own vision of building a united white nation. The possibility of a post-colonial rainbow nation apparently never crossed their minds. In this they were supported by their former arch-enemy, Lord Milner.

2.2 A united white South Africa

During the negotiations preceding the unification of the four South African colonies, two liberal Afrikaners from the Cape Colony, F S Malan and Jan Hofmeyr (known as *Onze Jan*), warned against the exclusion of blacks from a new political dispensation.²⁴ Hofmeyr was intensely aware of the dangers of leaving 80 percent of the

population without political rights, while Malan took a moral position, emphasising the pain and suffering of oppression.

Malan represented the Afrikaner Bond, the political party of the Afrikaners, at the National Convention that led to the Union of South Africa. Looking back at the two wars and the painful trek from the Cape to the northern frontiers that his republican compatriots had engaged in, he noted that it had taken whites a hundred years of tears and strife to reach unification. In an almost prophetic utterance he predicted that if blacks were left out of the new dispensation, the country was set for another struggle of tears and suffering.²⁵

The English liberal John X Merriman supported the Afrikaners. However, the two Transvaal war heroes, Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, opposed them. Botha threatened to leave the Convention if the franchise for blacks was approved, since he had no mandate to accept it. While Botha accepted that the issue would have to be considered in the future, Smuts rejected the idea of black political rights and opted to leave the issue for future generations to deal with.²⁶

It is ironic that the so-called liberal Boer generals had so little sympathy with their black compatriots and that they were so enthusiastically supported by the liberal English-speaking community and, even more so, by the loyal British imperialists, the so-called jingoes.²⁷ The British Liberal government, despite the expectations that they aroused during the South African War, was unwilling to interfere in any way that would disturb the newfound unity and reconciliation between Boer and Brit.

The future founder and leader of the National Party (which was to transform racial politics into a quasi-religion in South Africa and Namibia), General J B M Hertzog, played an insignificant part in the franchise debate. He was more concerned about the position of the Dutch and Afrikaans languages in the Union.²⁸

Hertzog, more than any other Boer general, had the temperament to create a rainbow nation. Although only 33 years old when the war broke out, he was already a judge on the Orange Free State bench

and a confidant of President M T Steyn. He held a doctorate in law from a Dutch university.

Hertzog, like Botha and Smuts a *Bittereinder*, was never comfortable with the idea of the Union being part of the British Commonwealth. He left the governing South African Party (a party led by Boer generals) in 1914 in protest against South African involvement in World War I on the side of England. In 1939 his political career as prime minister ended when a motion by Smuts to enter World War II, again on the side of Britain and its allies, defeated his stand for neutrality.

Despite his belief in the segregation model which the Americans used in their relationship with their first nations, Hertzog made no secret of his view that whites were morally obliged to heed black political aspirations. He did not believe in Black inferiority, was convinced that there was little difference between black and white and that blacks would quickly catch up with the level of white education. Then only the colour of the skin would divide them. Hertzog saw the franchise for blacks as something that whites in the former republics could not deny without violating their conscience.²⁹

Since Hertzog – unlike his colleagues, especially Smuts and Botha – had a deep distrust of the British colonial power, the idea of a unified white country did not hold any attraction for him. Neither was he impressed with Smuts's holism and the role Smuts saw for South Africa in the British Empire. Hertzog concentrated on the Afrikaner *volk* (nation) and its wellbeing. His distrust of capital and big business made him the ideal partner for the black workers who, like the poor whites, suffered from the slack health and safety regulations and poor salaries of the big mining houses.³⁰

However, Hertzog never became the leader of a more inclusive South African nation. He opted instead to improve the conditions of his own impoverished people, often at the expense of the powerless black communities.

Hertzog introduced the Native Lands Bill in Parliament as minister of native affairs. Though he was no longer a minister when the Act was

promulgated, he paved the way for D F Malan and H F Verwoerd, the post-World War II Nationalist prime ministers, to perfect the oppressive apartheid ideology. The Native Land Act restricted black farmers and traditional communities to 6 percent of the agricultural land in the country. His creation of reserves laid the foundation for the apartheid homelands.

Afrikaner leadership after unification was an opportunity lost. Instead of creating a multi-cultural, non-racist, anti-colonial African country, the oppressed-turned-powerful became the oppressor of its closest allies, the black workers.

Race, or more specifically colour, was made the determining factor of political alliances and development in southern Africa. It took Afrikaners little less than the hundred years predicted by F S Malan to reconcile with their black compatriots and accept what Hertzog had foreseen as early as 1922: that whites could only maintain power over the majority of the people at the price of their own conscience.

SECTION 3: THE AFRIKANERS IN DEUTSCH SÜDWEST ARIKA

The actions of the Afrikaners³¹ in Namibia during the 1904 war and thereafter do not befit a people which survived the most immoral war ever fought by the British Empire. The attitudes displayed then were in line with their later arrogance rather than with the brokenness and devastation of a nation almost destroyed. Some Afrikaners from the Cape were recruited by the German colonial authorities and fought side by side with the German troops in the 1904 war.³²

The Boers who came to Deutsch Südwest Afrika before the Herero War were either *Dorslandtrekkers*,³³ people who worked for the German colonial administration, or individuals who left the Cape colony or the two Boer republics for various reasons. Some came merely as adventurers exploring the frontiers of Africa, others left the colonies in search of a place where they could be free from the expanding British Empire. Yet others came for financial reasons.

Many of the Afrikaners or Boers who came to Deutsch Südwest Afrika before World War I were *trekboere* leaving South Africa in search of new frontiers. Botha observes that their relationship with

the Germans was subordinate at best. The general perception saw the Boers as a somewhat backward, *pre-industrial, pre-Enlightenment people, with an inbred aptitude for the rural-based trekboer lifestyle.*³⁴

Governor Leutwein did not want the Boers to occupy Namibia in large numbers after their defeat in the Anglo Boer War. Believing that this posed a threat to German culture, he started a policy of assimilation, hoping to change them into African Germans.³⁵

The Germans also found it somewhat difficult to distinguish between Boers and Basters. According to Botha, the Boers and Basters looked so alike that the Germans doubted the racial purity of the Boers.³⁶ But it was more than their physical appearance that confused the Germans.³⁷ They also spoke the same language, shared a similar community lifestyle and were deeply religious Calvinists.³⁸

Even after 1904 the Germans did not accept the Boers as equals, partly because of their dubious racial background but also because of their subordinate role in the German administration and their lifestyle and worldview.

The Afrikaners' dependence on the German administration, and the fact that Germany was sympathetic towards the Boer republics during the Anglo Boer War, were possibly reasons why some Afrikaners joined the German forces in 1904.

Impossible as it may sound, we find little of the solidarity of struggle or suffering between the Boers and the suffering Namas and Hereros.

SECTION 4: COMPARING THE TWO PEOPLES

4.1 The South African War and the German War

A comparison between the two colonial wars at the beginning of the 20th century underlines the fact that European colonial praxis in-

volved a strange dichotomy between a brutal hunger for power and money on the one hand and a pietistic belief in Europe's God-given calling to bring civilisation to the *barbarians*.

The fact that the rulers of the Boer republics happened to be white and of European descent made no difference to the colonial power, either to their superior attitude or to their self-proclaimed right to organise and order Africa as they saw fit.

British propaganda before and during the war ensured that the Boers – both soldiers and civilians – were seen as dangerous, barbaric savages who deserved whatever suffering was inflicted on them by advanced Europe. The Boers were portrayed as dirty and violent, hypocrites and assassins of the English.³⁹

The German portrayal of the Hereros was no different. They, not the colonial power, were the problem in the region. And the white settlers needed protection against these savages.

The Boers in northern South Africa and the Hereros in Namibia knew exactly what the real reasons for war were: the gold deposits on the Witwatersrand and the diamonds of the Orange Free State, and the outstretched farmlands of semi-arid Namibia.

Lord Milner and the Unionist government in Whitehall pretended that the reasons for war were moral issues: the franchise rights of His Majesty's subjects in the Transvaal Republic. But when the Free State statesman, President M T Steyn, convened a meeting in Bloemfontein to settle these issues, Milner was unrepentant. He not only wanted all *Uitlanders* (foreigners) to have the franchise almost immediately, he also demanded that the republic surrender its sovereignty to the Crown.⁴⁰

German proponents of the colonisation of Namibia, especially the missionaries and mission societies, seldom discussed the wellbeing of the indigenous Namibians. The early missionaries claimed Damaraland as the moral possession of the German fatherland, since the Rhenish Mission had invested large amounts of money in it

and the graves of fallen missionaries were there.⁴¹ Some missionaries even supported colonialism for emigration purposes.⁴²

The 1904 war, unlike the South African war, was started by an already defeated and subjected Herero nation. However, the harsh oppression of the indigenous people had left them with a bleak future as second-class people in their motherland.⁴³ In addition, the Germans – after the shock of the Herero War – wanted Hendrik Witbooi to disarm all his men, an act that would have destroyed his sovereignty. Kruger's response to Milner could easily have been the response of Maharero and Hendrik Witbooi: *It is our country you want.*⁴⁴

The German war machine conducted a war very similar to that of Her Majesty's troops four years earlier. When the moderate Leutwein did not manage to subject Maharero and his army immediately, the radical General Von Trotha replaced him.

Von Trotha was the Kitchener of the Herero War. Like Kitchener, he wanted a speedy result. But his methods and strategies were even more brutal than those of Kitchener and Roberts.⁴⁵ While Kitchener still had a military objective in burning the Boer farms (to cut off the commandos' food resources, just as the Boers sabotaged trains to destroy the rations of the British troops) and taking their women and children to concentration camps (to eliminate the commandos' support structures), Von Trotha had a much more direct objective: either the removal of all Hereros from Namibia or their total destruction as a nation.

The suffering of civilian Boers and Hereros in concentration camps was a new phenomenon in colonial war, practised only once before.⁴⁶ Giliomee comments on the concentration camps of the last century:

Almost all the concentration camps in the twentieth century had one thing in common: People were put in camps, not for what they did, but for what they were.⁴⁷

The British could still *claim* that they did not expect or foresee the immense suffering of the Boer women and children in the camps or,

like Lord Roberts, blame the unhygienic lifestyle of the Boers for their fate. These excuses are, however, not available to General von Trotha. Firstly, the German people had had great sympathy for the fate of the Boers during the South African War. The story of the British concentration camps was widely publicised and criticised in Germany. Yet they duplicated them in Namibia.

Despite all the similarities between the suffering of the Hereros in Namibia at German colonial hands and that of *the white tribe of Africa* under British rule in South Africa, there is one big difference that eventually determined the rise of the Afrikaners on the one hand and the continued suffering and oppression of the Hereros on the other. The Afrikaners regained the two most important elements of their sovereignty after the war, namely political power and land, whereas the Hereros not only lost their sovereignty but never regained land or cattle lost in the war.

Milner was determined to make the Afrikaner a partner in post-war British South Africa. Even at the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging, Boer generals like Louis Botha and Jan Smuts already came to the fore as prominent political leaders. They shared Milner's dream of a white South Africa – an important factor for the purposes of this paper.

While the Hereros remained powerless and abandoned to their fate in Namibia and present-day Botswana, the Boers in Transvaal and the other provinces prepared themselves for power. Two prominent Boer generals, Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, dedicated themselves to the construction of a new South African nation built on reconciliation and cooperation.

From the outset, blacks were not part of the Botha/Smuts plan. And Milner was happy to break his promises to blacks in the Cape Colony for the sake of a unified white state in Southern Africa. When the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, Louis Botha became prime minister and Jan Smuts a prominent member of his cabinet.

4.2 The identification of race

The early Boer settlers had a lot in common with the traditional communities in Namibia. Initially very few of them were landowners. Like the Hereros after the war, they were predominantly landless nomadic farmers, hunters and transport drivers of the German and Portuguese colonial powers.⁴⁸

After more than two centuries in Africa, they no longer considered themselves to be Europeans; neither did the German settlers see them as such.⁴⁹ And they were without any political power. The dream of the Dorslandtrekkers – of finding a new frontier where they could rule themselves and be free of the colonial yoke of England – was frustrated by German and Portuguese colonisation.

The Boer settlers had a deep distrust of the colonial powers, especially Britain. A large number of the settlers left South Africa in the 19th century as so-called Voortrekkers. The Portuguese proved to be even more unaccommodating than the Germans.⁵⁰ The impoverished Dorslandtrekkers finally settled in Namibia in 1929, crossing the Cunene River in ox wagons.⁵¹

Namibia was the subject of a bitter clash between Prime Minister Louis Botha and General Smuts on the one hand and other former Boer generals on the other. When Germany and the United Kingdom declared war in 1914, Botha and Smuts decided to support England. By then both Botha and Smuts were fully committed not only to South Africa but to the British Empire. South Africa sent troops both to Europe, to participate in the war effort, and to Namibia to occupy the country, which they did in 1915.

When Colonel Manie Maritz (a former officer in the Boer armies and commanding officer of the Union troops in the Northern Cape at the outbreak of the war in 1914) refused to attack the German forces in South West Africa, an abortive armed uprising started under the leadership of Maritz and several Boer generals.⁵² Maritz eventually crossed the Orange River and joined the German forces.

In South Africa some of the Boer generals, among them Christiaan de Wet (a war hero and Bittereinder from the Free State), Manie Maritz and C F Beyers led the rebellion. Koos De la Rey, another

bittereinder, was accidentally shot and killed while waiting for the notorious Foster gang⁵³ on his way to consult with Beyers in Pretoria. De Wet, Maritz, and other rebels were captured and sentenced to prison.

The two biggest reformed churches, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk), both had strong ties with the Boer republics and with Afrikaner culture and aspirations. For them, consequently, the ethical question of World War I was not participation in the war. The South African Reformed churches are not pacifist and believe in the just war theory. But the rebellion presented the theological challenge of a just revolution.

Durand and Smit point out that although the rebellion did not meet the criteria set by Calvin for a just revolt against the government, the Reformed churches cautiously supported the rebellion and its leaders.⁵⁴ The indigenous people of Namibia, however, were neither consulted, nor did any debate include their position or the effect of a European war on them.

Both the Boer generals and the Afrikaner churches dealt with the rebellion as a white Afrikaner conflict based on historical loyalties. The Boer generals refused to defend the interests of the colonial power which had smashed the two Boer republics only thirteen years earlier. Former Free State president M T Steyn echoed the sentiments of many Afrikaners when he complained that the South African forces were mobilised against Germany, a country sympathetic to the Boer cause during the war.

Never did I think that any government, and least of all an Afrikaner government, would use the children of the concentration camps against the (German) nation.⁵⁵

The reference to the concentration camps is ironic in the light of Germany's own concentration camp policy during the war against the Hereros. While one can understand the anti-British sentiments of the rebels, it remains a mystery why they supported the German colonial power so uncritically. One searches in vain for any condemnation of Herero suffering in German concentration camps or any solidarity

with a people who, like the Afrikaners, suffered immensely under the harsh oppression of European colonial powers.

Comparing the history of the Afrikaners with the sad experience of the Hereros and Namas between 1904 and 1907, it remains illogical that the white tribe of Africa never felt any solidarity with the indigenous people of Namibia. They never saw themselves and their own suffering in the devastated lives of these people and never saw the Hereros and Namas as allies in the battle against a common enemy, European colonialism.

After the South African occupation of Namibia in 1915, there were indications that the South Africans wanted to create better relationships with the indigenous people. The now deeply distrusted Blue Book, issued by the South African authorities, exposed German atrocities and condemned the treatment of the indigenous people.

However, Botha notes that the Blue Book, like many similar pamphlets and papers dating from the same period, was driven by political propaganda and political agendas rather than moral conviction.⁵⁶

One thing stood between the Afrikaners and their potential allies and comrades in suffering: race.

In South Africa, colour became increasingly important after 1910. The dream of a white country in Africa gained momentum in the run-up to the formation of the Union of South Africa. As we have seen, Giliomee observes that only two liberal Cape Dutch Afrikaners, F S du Toit and J H Hofmeyr, supported some form of franchise for blacks and so-called coloureds.⁵⁷

It is not surprising that Boers and Basters in Namibia eventually went their separate ways despite the similarity of their cultures, worldviews and lifestyles. The founding of the National Party by Afrikaners under the leadership of Free State Boer general B J M Hertzog drove a wedge between two close allies and cultural cousins: the coloureds, or Cape Afrikaners as they called themselves,⁵⁸ and the white Afrikaners.

While Hertzog believed that the two groups belonged together politically and economically, he preached an absurd policy of social segregation.⁵⁹ It was this exclusivist racist thinking that eventually led to the ideological madness of apartheid in 1948. In Namibia it prevented a coalition of anti-colonial forces.

4.3 The betrayal of history: Oppressed turned oppressor

The role of the Afrikaners after the occupation of Namibia in 1915, and especially after Namibia became a League of Nations Mandate after the war, was somewhat predictable. Namibia, or South West Africa as it was to be known, became an extension of South Africa and all its racial experiments. Eventually apartheid was implemented in South West Africa despite the fact that it never served the interests and future wellbeing of the local people.

Silvester comments that the South African occupation was marked by an effort to categorise people into ethnic categories.⁶⁰ This categorisation was imperative for the development of a race-based society.

When race became the determining factor in society, even old enmities were replaced by categories of colour. White rather than German, Boer or Brit became a category *vis-à-vis* the black ethnic groups. And the colonial mindset and attitude were taken over by the new government in Windhoek.

In 1922 when a popular uprising occurred among the Bondelswarts in the south of Namibia, the South African government, then led by Boer general Jan Smuts, viciously suppressed the uprising by bombing their towns and killing some unarmed civilians, among them women and children.⁶¹

The Afrikaners had gone full circle. The once respected resistance fighters had not only been co-opted into the structures of their former masters, they became oppressors themselves. And the violent oppression of the Bondelswarts was only the beginning. It was to take another 68 years before Namibia was eventually free, and four

more years after that before all the people of South Africa could participate in the social and political life of the country.

SECTION 5: POSTSCRIPT

Why don't my generation and I feel the same hurt as the Hereros when I think of the concentration camp at Brandfort in the Free State where my grandmother buried her brothers and sisters? And why are we not angry when we think of the injustices of the Anglo Boer War? Before the history conference in Windhoek, I seldom thought about it. We, the children of apartheid, the kids who grew up in the 1950's and 1960's, find it difficult to see our ancestors as the honourable freedom fighters they once were. Their pictures are blurred by the next generation, who implemented a programme and policy directed against the black people of southern Africa. Instead of heroes and honourable men, we see the next generation – who abandoned their anti-colonial stance, exchanged their birthright in Africa for a mess of pottage, rejected the holy fire and found a different heat close to the fires of hell.

WORKS CONSULTED

Abrahams, Y 2004. They tried to kill us, but we survived and now we are here to tell the stories. Unpublished paper presented at the conference 1904-2004: Decontaminating the Namibian Past, organised by the Department of History, University of Namibia, August 2004.

Binge, H (Director), Pretorius, F (Research Co-ordinator) 2001. *Verskroeiende aarde (Scorched earth)*. Documentary film aired on Satellite Television stations, KykNET on July 31 at 8.30pm and as *Scorched earth* on M-Net on August 2 at 8.30pm.

Botha, A 2004. Discourses of hegemony, silence and identity: Relations between Germans, English and Afrikaners in colonial

Namibia. Unpublished paper presented at history conference, supra.

Callinicos, L 1982. *A people's history of South Africa*. Johannesburg: Ravan.

De Gruchy, J 1979. *The church struggle in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Phillip.

Durand, J & Smit, D 1987. *The Afrikaner churches on war and violence*, in Villa-Vicencio, C (ed.), *Theology and violence: The South African debate*. Johannesburg: Skotaville.

Fabri, F 1879. *Bedarf Deutschland der Kolonien?* Quoted in Ngavirue, Z, supra, 67.

Fischer, M 1964. *Tant Miem Fischer se Kampdagboek: Mei 1901 – Augustus 1902*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Fitzpatrick, J P 1932. *South African memories*. London: Cassel.

Giliomee, H 2003. *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Grundlingh, A 1979. *Die hendsoppers en joiners: Die rasional en verskynsel van verraad*. Pretoria: HAUM.

Hartmann, W 2003. Boers and Basters. Unpublished paper, quoted in Botha, supra.

Hays, P, Silvester, J, Wallace, M & Hartmann, W 1998. *Namibia under South African rule: Mobility and containment 1915-1946*. Oxford: James Curry & Windhoek: Out of Africa.

Heese, H 1984. *Groep sonder grense: Die rol en status van die gemengde bevolking aan die Kaap, 1652-1795*. Cape Town: Western Cape Institute for Historical Research.

- Hinz, M 2003. One hundred years later: Germany on trial in the USA – The Herero reparations claim for genocide. *Namibian Human Rights Online Journal*, 1(1).
- Hofmeyr, J 1913. *The life of Jan Hendrik (Onze Jan) Hofmeyr*. Cape Town: Van de Sandt De Villiers.
- Horn, N 1985. A refutation of the theology of Apartheid. Unpublished paper, delivered at the International Missionary Conference of the AFM, Lyndhurst, October.
- Horn, N 1985. The pains of Apartheid. Unpublished paper, delivered at the International Missionary Conference of the AFM, Lyndhurst, October.
- Horn, N 1985. A time for repentance. Unpublished paper, delivered at the International Missionary Conference of the AFM, Lyndhurst, October.
- Horn, N 1987. *AGS Quo Vadis?* in Horn, N & Louw, J (ed.), *Een kudde, een herder*. Kuilsrivier: Ekklesia Publishers.
- Horn, N 1990. Experience of the Spirit in Apartheid: The possibility of the rediscovery of the black roots of Pentecostalism for South African theology, in Jongeneel, J A B (ed.), *Experiences of the Spirit*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Horn, N 1992. South African Pentecostals and Apartheid: A short case study of the AFM, in Jongeneel, J A B (ed.), *Pentecost, mission and ecumenism: Essays on intercultural theology. Festschrift in honour of Prof W J Hollenweger*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Katjivena, E 2004. We die day by day. Unpublished paper presented at the conference 1904-2004 Decontaminating the Namibian Past, organised by the Department of History, University of Namibia, August.

- Le May, G 1965. *British Supremacy in South Africa, 1899-1907*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Methuen, A 1901. *Peace and war in South Africa*, quoted in Giliomee, supra, 254. London: Methuen.
- Nell, M 1962. *Generaal Hertzog: Beslaggewer van die Bantoebeleid*, quoted in Giliomee, supra, 302. Hertzog-annale, no 9.
- Ngavirue, Z [1972] 1997. *Political parties and interest groups in South West Africa (Namibia): A study of a plural society*. Basel: Schlettwein.
- O'Linn, B 2003. *Namibia: The sacred trust of civilization – ideal and reality*. Windhoek: Gamsberg MacMillan.
- Platzky, L & Walker, C 1985. *The surplus people*. Johannesburg: Ravan.
- Pretorius, F 2001. *Verskroeide aarde*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau.
- Sarkin, J 2004. The coming of age of claims for reparations for human rights abuses committed in the South. *SUR international Journal on Human Rights*, 67-126.
- Silvester, J, Wallace, M & Hays, P 1998. Trees never meet: Mobility and containment – an overview 1915-1946, in Hays, P (ed.), *Namibia under South African rule: Mobility and containment 1915-1946*. Oxford: James Curry & Windhoek: Out of Africa.
- Silvester, J 1998. Beasts, boundaries and buildings: The survival and creation of pastoral economies in southern Namibia 1915-1935, in Hays, P (ed.), *Namibia under South African rule: Mobility and containment 1915-1946*. Oxford: James Curry & Windhoek: Out of Africa.
- Theunissen, A 2004. Personal Interview with Andrew Theunissen, Windhoek, August.

Thompson, L 1961. *The unification of South Africa 1902-1910*.
Oxford: Clarendon.

Wellington, J 1967. *South West Africa and its human issues*. Oxford:
Clarendon.

ENDNOTES

