

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 103

“Colonialism Without Bloodshed”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

By 1914, Germany had four colonies in Africa, which was an expression of a German effort to assert themselves around the globe. Germans at the time called this policy *Weltpolitik*, which literally means “world politics,” although a better translation might be “global policy.”

For Germans, *Weltpolitik* meant asserting German influence everywhere on the planet. As early as September 1914, by analogy, some in Germany were referring to the Great War as *der Weltkrieg*, the “world war.”

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 103. Colonialism without Bloodshed.

Today, I want to talk about German Southwest Africa. This is the land that today we call Namibia. It is on the Atlantic coast of Africa, north of South Africa and south of what we today call Angola. In 1914, Angola was usually called Portuguese West Africa.

We talked about the history of the Cape Colony all the way back in episode 10, but briefly, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to sail around southern Africa, and they began to create small outposts at convenient points where ships could stop over on their way to Asia and back to Europe again. That would explain Portuguese West Africa and Portuguese East Africa, but it was the Dutch, for some reason, who were the first to settle the southern tip of Africa, at the Cape of Good Hope as a layover point for their own ships. Why it was the Dutch and not the Portuguese, even though the Portuguese had a 150-year head start on the Dutch, I’m not clear on, although it likely has something to do with the Eighty Years’ War, during which Portugal and the Netherlands were on opposite sides and the Dutch were grabbing Portuguese territories all over the place. I do know that the Cape Colony came under British control during the Napoleonic Wars.

As late as the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th century, European control over Africa was mostly limited to the coastlines. It was only over the course of the 19th century that technological

advances made it feasible for the Europeans to explore and assert control over the African interior. But at this point you might look at a map and wonder how it was that the Portuguese claimed the coast up in Angola and the British controlled the coast down in the Cape Colony, but the region in between was left alone for so long. Perhaps if I tell you that this stretch of coastline was known to Portuguese mariners as “the Gates of Hell” and to British mariners as “the Skeleton Coast” and that the natives of the interior called it “The Land God Made in Anger,” that may help give you the picture. We’re talking desert here. The Namib Desert.

But technology, you know? Technology is making places previously regarded as uninhabitable more inhabitable all the time. And the farther south you go along this coast, the more temperate the climate gets. As you get near the Orange River, which will eventually be the border between Cape Colony and German Southwest Africa, the climate is cooler, although still dry, and there are sea birds, including gannets, cormorants, and African penguins. Do you know what you get when you combine sea birds and a dry climate? You get guano.

Guano is the accumulated dried excrement of seabirds. In some island locations where seabirds are the dominant animal, huge deposits of guano that have accumulated over centuries are available. Ah, but why would anyone want that, you ask? Well, it makes excellent fertilizer that can support intensive agriculture. In the early twentieth century, artificial chemical fertilizers would replace guano, but in the 19th century, it was sought after stuff. One of the places it was sought after was Germany, where agriculture became increasingly dependent on guano imports. I mentioned back in episode 94 that Germany and Chile had close relations. I didn’t say why, but part of the answer is that Germany purchased a lot of Chilean guano, which was a major export at the time.

Chile, like Southwest Africa, has a desert coastline, you see. The “desert” part of this formulation is important, because you collect guano at places with dry desert conditions. Rain leaches the nutrients out of the guano, so you want to collect your guano from a very dry place.

Enter Adolph Lüderitz, a failed German tobacco merchant, who married into a wealthy family, and, having blown one family fortune on tobacco, tried to blow his wife’s fortune investing in Africa. He eventually hit on a place in the future Southwest Africa known to the Portuguese as Angra Pequena, meaning “little cove.” It had a suitable harbor and guano deposits nearby, so Lüderitz bought up the lands around it from the locals, who, in fine colonial tradition, didn’t understand the contracts and had no idea how much land Lüderitz was actually buying from them. The contracts were dodgy and were known to be dodgy even in Germany, where some folks took to calling Lüderitz “Lügenfritz,” a play on his name that you might translate as “the liar dude.”

In 1882, Lüderitz established a trading post at Angra Pequena, which he modestly named Lüderitz, and he asked the German government for protection. The German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, was cool to the idea at first, but by 1884 he had had his change of heart regarding

African colonies and was ready to embrace the idea. The Berlin Conference established the borders of Southwest Africa, and part of the deal was that the British Cape Colony would have control over the guano-rich Penguin Islands, a chain of islands that run along the coast of Southwest Africa, as well as an enclave around Walvis Bay. The Penguin Islands and Walvis Bay would be controlled by the Cape Colony, then by South Africa, and eventually would be ceded to the independent state of Namibia in 1994.

But otherwise, Southwest Africa would be German territory. In keeping with his skepticism about colonies, Bismarck preferred to see them developed with private money instead of public money. Let the merchants who are planning to get rich off of this territory spend their own money developing it. A very sensible position, I think.

Adolf Lüderitz drowned in the Orange River while exploring it in 1886, and the company controlling the colony would appoint a man named Heinrich Göring to administer it for a time. And yes, he will eventually have a son named Hermann, why do you ask? Although at this time, Hermann is nothing more than a gleam in his father's eye. I'm sure we'll talk more about young Hermann later on, in another hundred episodes or so.

By 1890, the private company that owned the colony had gone bust, and the German government was at last forced to take on Southwest Africa as a crown colony. Not that they minded; Bismarck was retired and *Weltpolitik* was by now the order of the day. That same year, Germany and Britain agreed to a treaty that transferred control of Zanzibar, off the coast of German East Africa, to Britain, in exchange for Heligoland, the small archipelago off the North Sea coast of Germany, which had been a possession of the British crown since the days when the royal family had been ruling Hanover, and also for the Caprivi Strip. That's that arm of territory that extends east from the northeast corner of Southwest Africa, if you can follow all that. The strip was named after the then-German chancellor, and it was a valuable addition to the territory of German Southwest Africa because it gives access to the Zambezi River, which leads to the east coast of Africa. It's also the only part of Southwest Africa that gets a decent amount of rain.

The colony company and the German government both had tried to encourage emigration to Southwest Africa, and it would be the only German colonial holding that got a significant number of German settlers. There was large scale German emigration to the New World in the 19th century, more than seven million Germans altogether, which explains such American customs as hot dogs, hamburgers, Christmas trees and kindergarten, but the German government would have preferred those people to migrate to German-controlled territory.

Not that that worked very well. There are places in the interior of Southwest Africa where farming is possible, and there was some diamond and copper to be mined, so the colony did receive some white settlers, but nothing like the seven million that went to the New World. At the dawn of the twentieth century, there were about 200,000 native Africans living in Southwest Africa, alongside about 3,000 Germans, 1,500 Afrikaners, and a handful of British settlers.

[music: *Funeral March*]

When the German government took control of Southwest Africa in 1890, theoretically it ruled all the territory within the borders drawn at the Berlin Conference, but in fact controlled only the coast. In the eastern region of Southwest Africa, where it borders on the British Cape Colony and Bechuanaland, lies the Kalahari Desert, a region out of German reach. In between these two deserts, though, lies the Great Plateau, an elevated region in the center of the territory. This region gets more rainfall, as the prevailing winds from the Atlantic Ocean flow over the plateau and the air chills. While still arid, there are grasslands there, and this is where most of the indigenous people of Southwest Africa live, supporting themselves by grazing cattle. In the north are found the Herero people, and in the south, near the Orange River, the Nama people.

In the 19th century, the Nama people were sometimes referred to by Europeans as Hottentots, a name given them by the Afrikaners. In the 21st century, “Hottentot” is considered derogatory, so you won’t be hearing the term here, but you will see it in 19th century sources. As the British extended their Cape Colony rule northward, they encountered the Nama on the south side of the Orange River. The British used Nama soldiers as auxiliaries in their many Frontier Wars against the Xhosa people farther east, and the Nama acquired a reputation as tough soldiers and gifted marksmen. Unfortunately for the Nama, even as the British were relying on them in their wars against the Xhosa, they were appropriating Nama grazing lands for white settlers to build farms and the dispossessed Nama were being forced to work as landless laborers on lands they used to farm for themselves.

Nama resentment boiled over in 1850, during the latest war against the Xhosa, when the Nama switched sides. After the war, the chastened Cape Colony government gave the Nama enhanced voting rights, but as the 19th century wore on and the Xhosa threat receded and a new breed of imperialist like Cecil Rhodes began arriving in South Africa, new limits were put on Nama voting rights and white farmers seized more Nama land. Back in episode 10, I mentioned that in the British Parliament, Lord Salisbury remarked in an Irish Home Rule debate that the Irish were no more capable of self-government than were the Hottentots. Sad to say, this was at a time when the Nama were actually *losing* their political rights.

And by the way, African-Americans were also losing political rights at this same time. Coincidence or trend?

I mention all this because by the 1880s, when the Germans were down on the coast, staking their claim to Southwest Africa, on the central plateau the Herero of the north and the Nama of the south were fighting a war over grazing rights. Now, I can’t find a source that confirms this, but I strongly suspect the war was sparked by Nama migrating across the Orange River from the Cape Colony in search of new pasture lands to replace the lands that white settlers were occupying, and the increased population of people and cattle on the Central Highlands led to this armed conflict.

The Herero had the better pasture land, up in the north, but the Nama had modern rifles and more military experience. But then along came the Germans. The Germans brought missionaries and trade, and especially trade in modern weapons, which the Herero needed for their war against the Nama. Sometimes these weapons were sold to the Herero by the missionaries themselves.

And all the Germans wanted in return was for the Herero to sign a treaty, guaranteeing the German missionaries and traders access to Herero lands and German protection. That sounded pretty good to Maherero, the chief of the Herero, so he signed.

The head of the Nama people at this time was a man named Hendrik Witbooi. Witbooi had been born in the Cape Colony and educated by Lutheran missionaries before migrating to the Great Plateau, where, by 1890, he had overcome a number of rivals to become the leader of the Nama people, or, as he styled himself, the King of Great Namaqualand. He refused to sign a treaty with the Germans. Whether that was because he didn't want to give up the war against the Herero, or whether his experiences in the Cape Colony led him to distrust Europeans, or all of the above, I'll leave to you to decide.

But whatever the reason, his decision was deemed unacceptable to the new Commissioner for Southwest Africa, Curt von François. François was the son of a Prussian general of French ancestry, and if the name sounds familiar, that's because he was the older brother of Hermann von François, who played an important role during the Russian campaign in East Prussia in 1914, which we talked about in episode 87.

On April 12, 1893, François led a unit of about 250 German soldiers on a surprise punitive raid on King Hendrik's capital, shelling it with artillery. About ninety Nama women and children were killed. Hendrik himself and his soldiers escaped and began a guerilla war against the Germans. François, meanwhile, was subject to international criticism for his indiscriminate shelling of innocent African women and children, which, it turns out, shocked the consciences of many in the Western world, even in 1893. Berlin felt obliged to replace him as Commissioner of Southwest Africa with another army officer, Theodor Leutwein, a year later.

Leutwein ruled with a lighter touch. He described his administrative style as "colonialism without bloodshed." Leutwein was able to negotiate a peace agreement with Hendrik. The Nama would agree to give up their cattle raiding and their war against the Herero, but in return were allowed considerable autonomy.

Leutwein would serve as Commissioner for ten years, from 1894 to 1904, and he would manage to keep a three-way peace in Southwest Africa between Germans and Herero and Nama with careful diplomacy, admittedly backed up by the German military. Leutwein had had to use force to put down occasional outbreaks of African resistance, but for the most part, things went smoothly. For his efforts, Leutwein was derided by German settlers as too generous to the Africans.

And within the Herero and Nama communities, resentments against the Germans were building. German settlers were beginning to put up European-style farms on the Central Plateau. Railroads were being built, which interfered with traditional cattle pasturing. Hendrik Witbooi had seen it all before, in the Cape Colony. He knew full well what this was leading to. He wrote letters to the Herero leaders, warning them that the differences between Nama and Herero were nothing compared to the impending clash between both their communities and the Germans.

Meanwhile, in Herero country, Maherero had died in 1890, shortly after signing the treaty with the Germans. This led to a succession crisis, which absorbed the attention of the elite Hereros, and Hendrik Witbooi's pleas to unite against the Germans were largely ignored. Maherero had left behind several sons who now jockeyed for leadership of the Herero. The winner of this contest, Samuel Maherero, had been educated by Lutheran missionaries and was a convert to Lutheranism. That automatically made him the favorite of the missionaries, and he sought broader German support by also ratifying the treaty his father had signed. Samuel was able to garner German support and leverage it into succeeding his father as the ruler—or at least the spokesperson—for the Herero. A telling sign of the value of his German support is that two of Samuel Maherero's rivals, including his half-brother Nikodemus, ended up in front of German firing squads.

But in 1897, the Herero world turned upside down. That was the year when *rinderpest* reached the Central Plateau. *Rinderpest* is German for “cattle plague.” It's a viral disease of cattle, well-known in Europe and Asia, but previously unknown in Africa. The human disease measles is a mutation of the *rinderpest* virus. Europeans brought *rinderpest* to Africa in the late 19th century. Among African cattle, which had no natural resistance, it was almost universally fatal.

In a matter of months, over 200,000 Herero cattle died. At a stroke, the Herero people lost both their livelihoods and their most important food source. They began to starve. Poor nutrition brought a host of human diseases, such as typhoid. Desperate Herero sold their lands and possessions to the Germans to pay for food, and flocked to missions to pray for the Christian God to relieve their suffering.

It looked like divine intervention to the Germans, too. The proud Herero were suddenly humbled, ready and even eager to take their new place in the German order: cheap labor for German farmers or for the German administration.

The dark side of this new order was that Herero were now legally second-class citizens in their own country. The Germans they now worked for had no qualms about calling them monkeys or animals to their faces. Floggings and rapes were commonplace. Even murders of Herero went unpunished.

The laying of new rail lines and telegraph lines attracted new settlers. The German government encouraged military and civil service retirees to stake claims in Southwest Africa. Leutwein looked the situation over in 1903. The lofty promises of the 19th century were, he said, forced

upon Germany by its weak position at the time. In the new century, well, he now said, “colonization is always inhumane.”

By 1904, the desperate and angry Herero had had enough. Samuel Maherero himself was reluctant, but yielded to the demands of his people and organized simultaneous attacks on German farms and settlements that began on January 12. About a hundred and fifty German men were killed. Some, the ones with reputations for cruelty to Africans, were tortured. Maherero ordered that German women, children, and missionaries be spared, along with all white people of other nationalities.

Theodor Leutwein was shocked. He could think of no explanation for this sudden Herero uprising other than some outburst of irrational race hatred. Colonial authorities appealed to Berlin for help.

Well, the German government freaked out at stories of marauding Africans torturing and killing good Germans for no apparent reason, and it won't surprise you if I tell you that the man who freaked out the most was the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II. Well-connected friends and family of the settlers in Southwest Africa had the Kaiser's ear, and they gave him an earful about that namby pamby, Theodor Leutwein.

This was now a military matter, or so the Kaiser concluded, and so he turned to the military Chief of Staff who was then our old friend Alfred von Schlieffen, he of the Schlieffen Plan. Schlieffen and the Kaiser agreed on General Lothar von Trotha. The Kaiser ordered him to end the uprising “by fair means or foul.”

Trotha and 14,000 German soldiers were sent to Southwest Africa. In the meantime, Leutwein tried to put down the uprising on his own with the 3,000 soldiers at his disposal, but they weren't enough. German soldiers and settlers alike took out their frustrations by killing any Herero they could find. An appalled Leutwein tried to argue that the colony could not succeed without the Herero and their cattle, but he had lost control of his own troops.

Trotha arrived in June. He spent two months shipping 1,500 soldiers and their equipment along the rail line from the coast to the plateau, where Samuel Maherero had gathered about 5,000 of his soldiers and tens of thousands of Herero civilians, at a place called Waterberg, or Water Mountain. It was the farthest point east where water was still available, that is to say, as far removed from the Germans as it was possible to get.

Maherero's motives here are unclear. The simplest explanation is that he thought the Herero had proved their point, that they were no longer willing to tolerate their ill-treatment and that the Germans would now be forced to negotiate with them. If so, he badly misjudged the Germans. The Germans came with modern artillery pieces and Maxim guns, and were in no mood for talk.

The resulting Battle of Waterberg was a decisive German victory. Herero casualties are unknown, but must have numbered in the thousands. Thousands more were taken prisoner, and the rest of the Herero fled east, into the Kalahari Desert. It's not clear whether it was by accident or by design that Trotha had forced thousands of men, women, children, horses, and cattle into some of the most unforgiving land in the world, but he was pleased with the outcome. German soldiers were stationed at the edge of the desert with orders to shoot any Herero who tried to return. In October, Trotha issued this statement:

I, the great general of the German soldiers, send this letter to the Herero. The Herero are German subjects no longer. They have killed, stolen, cut off the ears and other parts of the body of wounded soldiers, and now are too cowardly to want to fight any longer. I announce to the people that whoever hands me one of the chiefs shall receive 1,000 marks, and 5,000 marks for Samuel Maherero. The Herero nation must now leave the country. If it refuses, I shall compel it to do so with the cannon. Any Herero found inside the German frontier, with or without a gun or cattle, will be executed. I shall spare neither women nor children. I shall give the order to drive them away and fire on them. Such are my words to the Herero people.

About 5,000 of the Herero, including Samuel Maherero, survived the trek east across the desert to Bechuanaland, where the British granted them asylum.

Samuel Maherero had called upon the now 85ish-year old Hendrik Witbooi and the Nama people to support the Herero uprising. The Nama were reluctant at first. Their relations with the Germans were smoother. Nama weren't being called baboons; their daughters weren't being raped. And Witbooi still resented how the Herero had spurned his call to rise up against the Germans ten years ago, when it would have been much easier. But after the Battle of Waterberg, Witbooi had seen enough. The Nama joined in the uprising.

But the Germans were by now too strong. Trotha turned his army on the Nama, and the result was the same. Tens of thousands of Nama killed or driven into the desert, with German soldiers stationed to make sure the refugees couldn't come back. Witbooi himself fell in combat, cut down by a German bullet.

Eventually, the outcry in the Reichstag was enough to force the Kaiser's hand. In December, Trotha was ordered to begin to accept Herero and Nama surrenders.

The surviving Herero and Nama who were taken prisoner were sent to concentration camps where there was little food and water and no medical care. Prisoners were used as forced labor. German doctors performed medical experiments, both on African cadavers and on living prisoners. The combination of disease, malnutrition, and cruelty took the lives of more than half of the prisoners. No one knows for certain, because no good records were kept, but it is believed

that perhaps half of the Nama and three-quarters of the Herero died between 1904 and 1908, and the survivors reduced to sickness and misery.

[music: *Funeral March*]

We haven't had the opportunity yet on this podcast to discuss in detail the Portuguese territories in Africa. That's too big a topic to broach right now, so I'm going to save it for a future episode, but for now let me just mention that Portuguese control of what we today call Angola and Mozambique was in the early twentieth century just barely tolerated by her colonial neighbors. In the two years leading up to the Great War, Britain and Germany had been in secret talks about dividing up Portugal's African holdings between themselves.

The Great War put an end to those talks, but not to German designs on the Portuguese holdings. Surprisingly, when the war began, German forces in Southwest Africa mobilized not only along the southern border with South Africa but also along the northern border with Angola. Despite Portuguese neutrality, German units began moving into southern Angola in October 1914. By December, the Germans held significant stretches of territory in southern Angola and were arming the local Africans who opposed Portuguese rule. The Portuguese eventually mustered enough force in the region to drive out the Germans by July 1915, although it took them longer to suppress the African resistance whom the Germans had armed.

But it would not be the Portuguese who end German rule in Southwest Africa. It would be the South Africans. When we last checked in with South Africa, the four colonies of the region, the Orange River, Transvaal, Natal, and Cape Colonies had been united into a British dominion called the Union of South Africa. The Boers of South Africa had lost their bid to remain independent of British rule in the Boer Wars (episodes 10-12), but after the creation of the Union in 1910, Boers controlled most of the government of the new state, having won at the ballot box what they had lost on the battlefield.

More radical Boers continued to chafe under British rule, but there were also many Afrikaner moderates who were content to live in an autonomous and largely Afrikaner-controlled South Africa formally within the British Empire. One such moderate was Louis Botha. Botha just missed getting mentioned in the Boer War episodes. He had been an officer during the war and had held a command at the Battle of Spion Kop. He participated in the guerilla war against the British and represented the Boers at the peace talks. In 1907, when the British granted Transvaal self-government, Botha became its prime minister, and in 1910, he became the first prime minister of the Union of South Africa.

Botha and his political ally, Jan Smuts, another war hero and a minister in the Botha government, formed the South African Party in 1911. Both men were popular figures in South Africa, popular with Afrikaners for their role as war heroes, and popular among the English-speaking South Africans for their conciliatory attitude after the war, although needless to say, the more radical Boers saw them as sellouts.

The new South African state had formed its own military, the Union Defence Force. When the Great War broke out, the British government and the Botha government in South Africa entered into discussions about the military situation in South Africa, and specifically, whether South Africa needed help defending itself. The South African PM assured the British that the Union Defence Force was up to the job alone and South Africa did not need her Imperial garrison. Well, that was all the British needed to hear. This was during those early, frantic days of episode 86 when the Allies needed every soldier they could get, so the Imperial troops were withdrawn to Europe, leaving South Africa on her own.

By early September, with the situation on the Western Front stabilized at last, the British government inquired whether the Union Defence Force was capable of invading and seizing German Southwest Africa. Botha told them it was, and agreed to undertake an invasion of the German territory. As South African troops moved to the border and prepared for the invasion, however, some bitter-ender veterans of the Boer War, including officers in the new Union Defence Force, objected to South Africa making war on the Germans for the benefit of the British. After all, the Germans had supported Boer independence, while the British had penned Boer civilians in concentration camps. Why should patriotic Boers want to fight the Germans? Indeed, some must have been thinking that perhaps now was the time to ally with the Germans and expel the British from South Africa.

On September 15, the Commandant-General of the Union Defence Force, another Boer War veteran named Christiaan Frederick Beyers resigned his commission in protest against the idea. That evening, Beyers and Koos de la Rey, the Boer commander whom we met back in episode 11, were in a car, headed for a meeting of military officers.

What the meeting was about and what happened next are in dispute to this day. Beyers would later claim that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss and encourage mass resignations of military officers to protest war against Germany, following the lead of the British officers in Ireland who threatened to resign rather than use force against Northern Irish Unionists who opposed Home Rule. Others suspected that a mutiny was in the works.

In any case, the car reached a police roadblock. Roadblocks had been set up to catch the Foster Gang, a notorious band of criminals who had robbed a post office two days earlier. Again, what happened at the roadblock is in dispute. What is not in dispute is that a policeman fired shots at the car, and one of the bullets killed Koos de la Rey. The police said the car refused to stop and ran the roadblock. Bitter-enders claimed the government had deliberately killed him.

One of the UDF commanders on the border took this situation into open rebellion. General Manie Maritz declared South African independence from Britain, formed a provisional government and allied with Germany. Other commanders joined in, including Beyers and Christiaan de Wet, another name you will recognize from the Boer War episodes and whom we

last met re-enacting his dramatic escapes from the British in front of a paying audience at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis.

The rebels attracted about 12,000 fighters altogether and were able to steal ammunition and supplies from the government. But against them were over 30,000 soldiers of the Union Defence Force, a majority of whom were Afrikaners themselves. The bulk of the rebel forces were defeated in October. General Maritz fled across the border and sought sanctuary from the Germans. General de Wet fled into Bechuanaland but was tracked down and captured by Afrikaner soldiers on December 1, reportedly telling them, "Thank God it was not an Englishman who captured me." General Beyers drowned in the Vaal River while attempting to escape the UDF on December 8.

By early 1915, the northern Cape Province was secure, and the UDF ready to engage the Germans. The Germans attempted a pre-emptive strike across the Orange River on February 4, but the South Africans held them to their own side of the river.

Some South African units did cross the river and attack north, but the main attack would be by sea. Two invasion forces were created. The northern one, commanded by Prime Minister Botha himself, traveled by sea to the South African enclave at Walvis Bay, in the middle of the Southwest African coastline. From there they seized the German port at Swakopmund, just across the border. With the ports secure, the South Africans could travel east along the rail line into the interior, with reinforcements and resupply by sea and rail. The southern force, commanded by Jan Smuts, landed at Lüderitz and likewise advanced east.

The German authorities in Southwest Africa had only about 3,000 regulars and perhaps twice that number of settler militia fighters with which to oppose the much larger South African force. They fought a well-executed campaign of delay. The South Africans were on the Central Plateau by May, taking the capital, Windhoek, on May 5, and cutting the colony in half. Smuts' forces cleared out the south while Botha advanced north.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese had reinforced and had driven the last Germans out of Angola by July 7. Two days later, the Germans surrendered to the South Africans. The story goes that when the German commander, Victor Franke, handed over command of his 2,200 remaining regulars, Botha objected, thinking it was a trick. The South Africans had estimated the enemy numbers at 15,000. Franke told him, "If we had 15,000 men, you wouldn't be here."

And so ended German rule in Southwest Africa. The government of South Africa took control of the territory. Jan Smuts would be sent along to fight the Germans in German East Africa, but that is a tale for another episode.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thank you for listening. I'd also like to thank Jonathan for making a donation to the show, and thanks to Julie for becoming a patron. If you'd like to become a patron, or make a one-time donation, visit the website,

historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the Patreon or PayPal buttons. And while you're there, leave a comment and let me know what you thought of today's show.

I'm still behind in my research, I have to confess. The holidays weren't as good for providing work time as I had hoped they'd be, surprise, so here's what I've decided to do. For the next few months, I'm going to go on a schedule of three weeks on, and one week off. I hope that will get me some extra time without making you, my listeners, wait too long between episodes. We'll try this for a while and see if it does the trick. I've just completed a run of three episodes, so I'll take next week off, and be back with another block of three episodes after that. And so, I hope you'll join me in two weeks' time, on the *History of the Twentieth Century*, as we return to the United States to recount the latest racial outrage and examine a milestone in the development of motion pictures. Guess what? It's the same story. The Birth of a Nation, in two weeks' time, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. The mass killings of the Herero and the Nama by the German military in 1904 echo uncomfortably through twentieth-century history. It's not just the murder, although that was bad enough. It was the removal of people deemed inferior so that Germans could settle their land, the use of concentration camps, starvation, forced labor. It was the cold-blooded medical experiments, performed both on African corpses and on living African prisoners. And it was the systematic extermination of an entire people.

Those of you who have read ahead in the history of the twentieth century know that all these horrors are but a terrible foretaste of things to come.

After South Africa captured Southwest Africa, the British government began to highlight mistreatment of the Africans by the Germans as part of a campaign to stir up world opinion against returning Germany's colonies to her after the war, but once the disposition of German colonies was settled, the killings of the Herero and the Nama were no longer discussed.

But they were not forgotten, and the topic began to be raised again by the 1980s. By this time, the word "genocide" was in use, and it began to be applied to the killings in Southwest Africa. In the 21st century, historians have begun to draw connections between these crimes and the crimes of the Second World War. The genocide of the Herero and the Nama is in our day sometimes referred to as "Germany's first genocide," or in similar terms, and is analyzed as a precursor to the coming ideology of national socialism.

In 2004, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Waterberg, a German cabinet minister speaking in Windhoek apologized and expressed grief and remorse on behalf of the German people. The German government has declined to discuss compensation to descendants of survivors of the genocide, although it does give economic aid to the nation of Namibia. In 2007, the Trotha family apologized for the acts of their ancestor. The German government has been reluctant to apply the word "genocide" to these killings, but in 2016, acknowledged that the term was appropriate.

Descendents of the survivors continue to press the German government for financial compensation.

[music: Closing Theme]

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