

Discursive traces of genocide in Johannes Spiecker's travel diary (1905-1907)

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Abstract

In his role as inspector for the Rhenish Missionary Society (RMG), Johannes Spiecker (1856–1920) traveled from 1905–1907 through the Cape Colony and through German South West Africa. During this voyage, he wrote a diary that merits attention in regard to Spiecker's role in the conflict, and to the observations and discussions he reports. This contribution examines the diary with regard to the RMG's efforts at pacification, Spiecker's reports from the concentration camps, the question of the sexual exploitation of the prisoners, the political opinions of Governor von Lindequist and other influential colonial personages, and the military strategy of the Schutztruppe. A specific focus is on new information regarding the genocide question. Spiecker documents two separate incidents where German officers openly speak about the extermination of whole tribes as a possible goal of the German military strategy. This contribution proposes to take the statements of the officers as indicators of what might be called the 'discursive normality' of genocide. In a methodological perspective, the presence and content of discourses, in specific historical situations and on specific topics, should be regarded as complementary evidence in questions where factual evidence is scarce. Discourse analysis, as developed in sociology and linguistics, thus becomes a promising method of historical science, if it is used in combination with historical and source-critical methods.

Johannes Spiecker's overlooked travel diary

From 1905 to 1907, Johannes Carl Wilhelm Spiecker (1856–1920) traveled as an inspector for the Rhenish Missionary Society (RMG) to Africa.¹ The goal of this 'inspection journey' was to visit all of the mission's stations in the British Cape Colony and in German South West Africa, to discuss problems, check the bookkeeping, help with strategic decisions such as building projects or the relocation of missionaries, and report back to the directorate (called the 'Deputation') at the RMG's headquarters in

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¹ Johannes Spiecker, *Afrika-Tagebuch*, 1905–1907, typescript, 2 vols., Archive of the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission (VEM), Wuppertal, Germany, Archive number RMG 3.346.

Barmen. Spiecker had lengthy discussions with colonial and military officials, and made private visits to settler families, chieftains, and elders of the Christian community. He undertook duties such as preaching, inspecting the schools, and visiting parish council meetings. Beside all this, Spiecker wrote a diary of over 2000 pages recounting his activities and experiences. In spite of its length, the diary is a highly compressed account of literally every day, often highlighting dozens of activities, encounters, and observations for each day, but omitting background information; it is only intended for a small circle of insiders: the Deputation in Barmen, Spiecker's wife Johanna, and himself.

Johannes Spiecker was born on 29 March 1856 in Boppard on the Rhine. The family had a Pietist background and for several generations had produced pastors, but also some merchants; it can be regarded as fairly typical of the Protestant bourgeoisie which formed the power base for the German Kaiserreich. After his father's death in 1869, Spiecker lived for some years in a boarding school near the Lower Rhine. He developed many interests, but suffered chronic headaches and insomnia all his life; the latter problem is often mentioned in the diary (e.g. 132 [11 Nov. 1905]).² Early in his life he developed mercantile and mathematical interests, but later decided to study theology.

Spiecker began his studies in Tübingen, where he became a member of the non-fencing fraternity Wingolf and came in contact with modern Bible studies and Bible criticism; he graduated in Bonn. He took up his first rectorate position in 1883 in Herchen (in the Rhineland), where he oversaw the construction of a new church. On 24 Aug. 1884, he married Johanna Wetschky; in 1885 the couple moved to Barmen, where Johannes Spiecker became a teacher at the missionary seminary in the Barmen headquarters of the Rhenish Mission, probably inspired by his brother, Friedrich Albert Spiecker, a merchant who had played an important role in the establishment of the RMG's commercial activities in the colonies.³

From 1896 until 1903, Johannes acted as *Hausvater* (administrator) of the *Missionshaus* (the mission house, the headquarters of the Rhenish Mission in Barmen), where he was responsible for the seminary, where 30 to 40 mission pupils received their education. He lived with his family in the mission house.⁴ In 1903, Spiecker became 'second inspector' and took over the responsibility for the Africa and Borneo departments

² All references to the diary (Johannes Spiecker, *Afrika-Tagebuch*, 1905–1907, typescript, 2 vols., Archive of the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission (VEM), Wuppertal, Germany, Archive number RMG 3.346) in this article are given in an abbreviated form, consisting of the manuscript page number (here: 132), which is also noted in the typescript, and the date of the entry in the international format 'day month year' (here: 11 Nov. 1905).

³ Cf. Jochen-Christoph Kaiser, "Friedrich Albert Spiecker (1854–1936) – Eine Karriere zwischen Großindustrie und freiem Protestantismus", in: Theodor Strohm and Jörg Thierfelder, (eds.), *Diakonie im Deutschen Kaiserreich (1871–1918). Neuere Beiträge aus der diakoniegeschichtlichen Forschung*, Heidelberg, Heidelberger Verlags-Anstalt, 1995: 105-144.

⁴ The information in this paragraph comes mostly from the family memories of Elisabeth Siefkes née Spiecker (13 Feb. 1905–8 Nov. 2002), Johannes Spiecker's youngest child, and the grandmother of the author of this article (Elisabeth Siefkes, *Erinnerungen an die Familie Spiecker*, unpublished family memoir, digitized, 1993).

of the Rhenish Mission. A first inspection journey through the Cape Colony and German South West Africa was cut short when another inspector of the Rhenish Mission, August Schreiber, who had been responsible for the Sumatra mission, died in March 1903. A further thorough inspection journey was therefore deemed to be necessary, and took place from October 1905 to March 1907. While Spiecker had been accompanied by a secretary on the first inspection journey, he traveled alone on the second, and wrote the diary as an account of his travels and a memory aid, primarily for private use.

At this time, three German protestant missionary societies were active in Africa: The *Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft* (Rhenish Missionary Society), also known by its shorter name *Rheinische Mission*, the *Brüdergemeinde* (also called *Herrnhuter Mission*), and the *Berliner Mission*. In German South West Africa, most of the mission stations belonged to the Rhenish Mission; the other protestant missions played a very minor role, and the Catholic mission, which had only received the state approval needed for missionary work in the late 1880s (after the end of the so-called 'Kulturkampf', the decades-long power struggle between the Roman Catholic church and the Kaiserreich), had only managed to establish a few stations. The Rhenish Mission was thus the dominant missionary force in German South West Africa. Furthermore, since it had been active for decades before the proclamation of the so-called *Schutzgebiet* which de facto established German colonial rule in 1884 (two influential early missionaries, Franz Kleinschmidt and Carl Hugo Hahn, arrived in 1842), the Rhenish Mission held a good position in relations with the colonial government. They had established friendly relations with most tribes as well as with many settler families, they held ownership claims to large land areas surrounding the mission stations (often donated by tribal chieftains), and many of their missionaries had knowledge of native languages and cultures. The Rhenish Mission should thus be regarded as a strong political power in the young colony. At the time of Spiecker's second inspection journey, the war of the Nama and Herero against the German occupation was taking place in which the Rhenish Mission played a decisive role.⁵

Spiecker's task consisted in visiting and controlling the mission stations. Since a letter took months by ship, many decisions had to be made locally, but nonetheless the Deputation of the Rhenish Mission insisted on full control with regard to finances and strategically important decisions (e.g. buildings, land purchases, etc.). Decisions made in Barmen were often already outdated when they arrived at their destination. Spiecker's task was therefore not only to control matters and get first-hand information (as 'inspection' might seem to imply), but to actively help with problems and assist with important decisions.

Spiecker's diary begins on 11 October 1905, the day of his departure from Barmen, and ends on 24 January 1907 in Wupperthal in the Cape Colony; Spiecker probably

⁵ Cf. for the history of this war Horst Drechsler, *Südwestafrika unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft. Der Kampf der Herero und Nama gegen den deutschen Imperialismus (1884–1915)*, Berlin (Ost), Akademie, 1966. Translated into English as: *Let Us Die Fighting. The Struggle of the Herero and Nama against German Imperialism (1884–1915)*, London, Zed, 1980; Andreas H. Bühler, *Der Namaaufstand gegen die deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Namibia von 1904–1913*. Frankfurt/Main, IKO, 2003.

continued to write, but the last pages are missing. It can be assumed that from that point he no longer sent them by mail, but took them with him in his luggage, and that they then failed to find their way to the other pages after his return. Spiecker returned with the British ship *RMS Briton* (Union-Castle Line) that left Cape Town on 6 March 1907 and reached Southampton on 23 March, and Barmen on 28 March 1907.⁶

The manuscript consists of 2050 pages, numbered from 1 to 2085 (1485–1519 are missing). In the 1970s, a typewritten version in three copies was produced by Spiecker's youngest daughter, Elisabeth Siefkes. This typescript consists of ca. 700 pages without pagination in two bound volumes.⁷ The manuscript is entitled *Mein Tagebuch* (My Diary), demonstrating that Spiecker clearly intended it as a personal travelogue. Spiecker sent the diary pages in batches to his wife in Barmen, who (after reading them) took them to the *Missionshaus* in Bremen, headquarters of the Rhenish Mission, where they were likely read by the Deputation. This explains why the diary never takes on an entirely private character. Nonetheless, the diary is very different in structure and content from the official *Visitationsberichte* (visitation reports) which Spiecker sent to the Deputation in Barmen. These include various reports on specific stations,⁸ as well as a general visitation report that was published after his return.⁹ Whereas in his visitation reports, Spiecker focuses on the situation of the Rhenish Mission and orders the material thematically, in his diary, he notes down the events for every day, including many encounters with colonial officials, settlers, chieftains, and other 'natives', with a surprising level of detail (including many indirect citations). Furthermore, he speaks his mind much more openly, including many evaluations and judgments of individuals, groups, and policies.

Whereas the published visitation report has been repeatedly cited in examinations of Spiecker's role during the Herero-Nama war, the diary has long been practically overlooked with the exception of Spiecker-Salazar.¹⁰ This neglect might in part be due to its great length, where information on one topic (such as the situation in the concentration camps) is highly dispersed. The diary has recently been published, including a detailed introduction that is available online.¹¹ The published version is abbreviated with a view

⁶ Siefkes, *Erinnerungen*: 28.

⁷ One copy of this typescript (is accessible in the *Archiv der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission* (VEM), department *Archive of the Rhenish Mission*, Aktennummer RMG 3.346, in Wuppertal, Germany. The other two copies are in private ownership.

⁸ E.g. the visitation report on the station Swakopmund, written on 25–29 Aug. and 12 Sept. 1906 (Johannes Spiecker, "Visitationsbericht über Swakopmund", 1906, Archive of the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission (VEM), Wuppertal, Germany, Archive number C/h 45: Swakopmund).

⁹ Johannes Spiecker, *Die Rheinische Mission im Hereroland. Zugleich Visitationsbericht des Missionsinspektors Pastor Spiecker*, Barmen, Verlag des Missionshauses, 1907.

¹⁰ Marlies Spiecker-Salazar, "Mission und Kolonialherrschaft aus der Sicht eines Missionsinspektors: Das Tagebuch der Afrikareise von Pfarrer Johannes Spiecker, 1905 – 1907", in: Wilfried Wagner, (ed.), *Kolonien und Missionen*, Münster, Lit, 1994: 426-439.

¹¹ Martin Siefkes and Lisa Kopelmann, (eds.), *Johannes Spiecker – Mein Tagebuch: Erfahrungen eines deutschen Missionars in Südwestafrika 1905-1907*, Berlin, Simon Verlag für Bibliothekswissen, 2012;

towards readability, but contains the most important passages.¹² A thorough evaluation of the diary from the perspectives of discourse analysis, historical research, and post-colonial studies can be found in Siefkes.¹³

The pacification efforts of the Rhenish Missionary Society

By the time Spiecker arrived in German South West Africa, the main uprisings of the Nama and Herero had already been quelled by the colony's military in 1904. In this war, the so-called Schutztruppe, the colony's military under the command of Lothar von Trotha, had been reinforced by additional troops from Germany. Whereas the Nama had traditionally been a sedentary agrarian tribe, the traditional Herero lifestyle as nomad stock breeders made it easy for them to flee their settlements, which had often developed around mission stations and next to settler-founded cities. They had withdrawn to remote mountainous areas, where they knew the territory, could hide, and wage an asymmetric guerilla war against the Germans. Part of the Nama population had hidden in a similar manner (for example in the Karas mountains). This in turn made it practically impossible for the Schutztruppe, which had been overtaken by Oberst Berthold von Deimling after von Trotha resigned in November 1905, to put them down and to 'secure' these remote areas.¹⁴

In response to this dilemma, the Rhenish Missionary Society established two provisional *Sammelstellen* (collecting points) for the Herero: one in Omburo, led by the missionary August Kuhlmann, and one in Otjihaenena, led by the missionary Willy Diehl (who lived in Okahandja). From these points, the RMG sent native messengers (members of those Christian congregations that had not rebelled) to entice the insurgents and fugitives to return from the mountains. From Omburo and Otjihaenena, the Herero were collected by the military and brought to the concentration camps in Swakopmund, in Karibib, and on the Haifischinsel (Shark Island) near Lüderitzbucht, including women and children. Spiecker was well aware that this 'service' of the mission might decide the conflict:

[6 Mar. 1906] Thousands of Herero are still supposed to be sitting in the big and widely branching Erongo mountains, which we had on our right side all the

Martin Siefkes, "Einführung", in: *ibid.*: 7-38. <http://siefkes.de/dokumente/Siefkes_Einführung_Tagebuch_Spiecker.pdf> [retrieved 18 Nov. 2014].

¹² Due to demands of the publisher, the abbreviations could not be marked in the published version; it is therefore recommended to either cite the manuscript or typescript version (available in the VEM headquarters), or to contact the author of this article, who has access to the typescript version, for verification of citations (<http://siefkes.de/en/contact>). The author wishes to thank Dr. Frauke Siefkes (Kiel), Annemarie Spiecker (Heidelberg), Liselotte Langen (Dortmund), who owns the manuscript of the diary, for information on the Spiecker family, as well as Wolfgang Apelt (Archiv- und Museumsstiftung Wuppertal) for information on the RMG, and Kate Maxwell (Agder) and Christian Siefkes (Berlin) for many helpful suggestions and corrections to the text of this article.

¹³ Martin Siefkes, *Sprache, Glaube und Macht. Die Aufzeichnungen des Johannes Spiecker in Deutsch-Südwestafrika zur Zeit des Herero-Nama-Aufstands*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013. <http://siefkes.de/dokumente/Siefkes_Sprache_Glaube_und_Macht.pdf> [retrieved 18 Nov. 2014].

¹⁴ Spiecker has more than one lengthy discussion with Deimling, e.g. on 10 Nov. 1906 and 21 Nov. 1906.

time. If our mission, or rather the people (Christians) we send, do not fetch them, it will take the government years to deal with these gangs, if they ever manage to finish with them. (678)¹⁵

Later, he mentions numbers for the Karas mountains which are located to the south of Keetmanshoop: "6000 soldiers stand against 300 rebels and cannot do anything."¹⁶ (1647 [8 Nov. 1906]) The reason for the Rhenish Mission's success lay in their reputation with the Nama and Herero, who had known them for decades. The majority of them were Christians, and even those few who had not converted respected the missionaries, who had worked in Africa for generations. They waged war against the government, the settlers, and the merchants, but not against the mission. This becomes obvious when Spiecker travels from Berseba to Keetmanshoop through the insurgent territories and is assured by Oberleutnant Fromm of the Schutztruppe that he will not be hurt by the natives:

[8 Nov. 1906] We currently travel directly through insurgent territory, but we seemingly have nothing to fear. The Oberleutnant [first lieutenant] offered us military protection yesterday, but immediately said: my soldiers will probably just endanger you. The natives won't hurt you. He even supposed that a messenger would go to the rebels to inform them, so that they would stay out of sight. (1647)¹⁷

During his travels, Spiecker is regularly received by government officials and seems to be taken very seriously, as evinced by an episode in Windhuk, when he manages to get Alfred, the son of the chieftain Zacharias of Otjosazu, out of prison simply by asking the governor. In an unpleasant development for Spiecker, it turns out that Alfred had confessed to a murder, but nonetheless was set free on the basis of Spiecker's demand (927-9 [10/11 May 1906]).

In lengthy discussions with Governor von Lindequist, Spiecker uses the pacification efforts of the Rhenish Mission as leverage for demanding better treatment of the natives (including a plea for allowing inter-racial marriages, a topic on which most Rhenish missionaries differed from his opinion), but also for demanding ownership rights for disputed mission property:

[31 Mar. 1906] Finally towards one o'clock, the Governor said: Has now nothing been forgotten, and then took his leave in the most cordial way and expressed his warm appreciation for the mission's cooperation. The successes in Omburo and Otjihaenena seem to have impressed him, furthermore he

¹⁵ These and all following citations are taken from the typescript (with the German text provided in the footnotes) and translated by me (M.S.). Original manuscript page numbers (as noted in the typescript version, which has no separate pagination) are given in round brackets. "In dem großen und weit verzweigten Erongogebirge, das wir immer in der Ferne zur Rechten hatten, sollen noch tausende von Herero sitzen. Wenn unsere Mission resp. die von ihnen gesandten Leute (Christen) sie nicht holen, hat die Regierung noch Jahre mit diesen Banden zu tun, wenn sie überhaupt je mit ihnen fertig wird."

¹⁶ "6000 Soldaten stehen etwa 300 Rebellen gegenüber und können nichts machen."

¹⁷ "Wir fahren jetzt so recht durch das Aufstandsgebiet, aber wir haben wohl nichts zu fürchten. Der Oberleutnant [Fromm] bot uns gestern militairischen Schutz an, sagte aber gleich, meine Soldaten werden Sie wahrscheinlich nur in Gefahr bringen. Ihnen tun die Eingeborenen nichts. Er meinte sogar, es gehe gewiß ein Bote zu den Rebellen, so daß die Bescheid wüßten und sich gar nicht sehen ließen."

seems to be convinced that we gladly oblige him. In the consultation, he willingly assented that the collecting points in Omburo und Otjihaenena should be continued, but he wished for a further collecting point in the north near Waterberg. I told him that Brother Lang, when he arrives, might be able to take that over. Furthermore, the Governor was accommodating in regard to the property in Swakopmund, so that we can exchange it for another. [...] As regards the question of the women's and girls' examinations which I brought up, the Governor showed complete understanding towards my wishes and promised to consider the matter, which, however, he regarded as quite difficult. [...] The farm [Ondongandji] has been granted to us by the head of the district of Okahandja as mission property, but the Regierungsrat¹⁸ called this a mistake. At this point, I intentionally raised my voice and said that I decidedly hoped for a speedy and favorable resolution of this matter. Since the mission did such great services for the government, saving it millions in expenses, it could expect a more friendly treatment. And indeed, the Governor avowed fulfillment of my wishes. [...] Then I thoroughly discussed the interdiction of interracial marriages and asked for its abolishment. The Governor showed again sympathy, but opined that such marriages should not be encouraged by lawful sanction. I fear that for the time being, we will not achieve anything in this matter. (791-4)¹⁹

Spiecker is well aware that many of the natives enticed by the mission to give themselves up will die in the concentration camps:

[7 Feb. 1906] The people come with Kuhlmann's messengers, which he has very skillfully selected, and who trust him unconditionally. However, it saddens Kuhlmann's heart to think of these people's future; he cannot keep them here

¹⁸ Hans Tecklenburg served as Vice Governor and had shortly before issued an interdiction of inter-racial marriages to the registrar's offices (cf. Birthe Kundrus, "Rezension von: Frank Becker (ed.), Rassenmisch-ehen – Mischlinge – Rassentrennung. Zur Politik der Rasse im deutschen Kolonialreich", *Archiv für Sozial-geschichte online*, 2005, <<http://library.fes.de/fulltext/afs/htmrez/80679.html>> [retrieved 18 Nov. 2014]). Tecklenburg is present during the whole meeting and opposes most of Spiecker's demands, who contradicts him often and seriously (791). Three weeks before, Spiecker had already judged Tecklenburg to be a major opponent ("Hauptgegner") of the RMG (691 [8 Mar. 1906]).

¹⁹ "Der Gouverneur sagte zum Schluss gegen 1 Uhr: Ist nun auch nichts vergessen und verabschiedete sich dann in der herzlichsten Weise und sprach sehr warm seine Anerkennung für die Mitarbeit der Mission aus. Die Erfolge in Omburo und Otjihaenena haben ihm offenbar imponiert, ferner steht er augenscheinlich unter dem Eindruck, daß wir ihm gerne entgegenkommen. Er gab bei der Besprechung zunächst gerne zu, daß die Sammelstellen in Omburo und Otjihaenena bestehen bleiben sollten, nur wünschte er, daß im Norden bei Waterberg noch eine Sammelstelle errichtet werde. Ich sagte ihm, daß eventuell Bruder Lang nach seiner Ankunft diese übernehmen könnte. Auch in Bezug auf das Grundstück in Swakopmund war der Gouverneur entgegenkommend, so daß wir dasselbe gegen ein anderes austauschen können. [...] In der Frage der Untersuchung von Frauen und Mädchen, die ich besprach, zeigte der Gouverneur volles Verständnis für meine Wünsche und versprach auch die Sache zu erwägen, doch sei sie recht schwierig. [...] Die Farm [Ondongandji] ist uns durch den Distriktschef von Okahandja als Missionseigentum zugesprochen. Aber der Regierungsrat bezeichnete dies als einen Irrtum. Da wurde ich mit Absicht lebhaft und sagte, ich hoffe bestimmt auf baldige günstige Erledigung dieser Angelegenheit. Die Mission leiste der Regierung so große Dienste und erspare ihr Millionen und könne da eine freundlichere Behandlung erwarten. Der Gouverneur stellte dann auch Erfüllung meiner Wünsche in Aussicht. [...] Dann besprach ich eingehend das Verbot der Rassenmischehen und bat um Aufhebung desselben. Der Gouverneur zeigte auch hier Verständnis, meinte aber, man dürfe solche Ehen nicht fördern durch gesetzliche Sanktionierung. Ich fürchte, daß wir in der Sache zunächst nichts erreichen."

for long since there is not enough food. They are brought to Omaruru and then on to Karibib and Swakopmund, where many of them will die. [...] If only the Governor would arrange for good treatment of these people, as he has promised. With him, the influence of the military, the settlers, and the Romans [Catholics] seem to prove highly corruptive. (612-3)²⁰

What could “skillfully selected” mean in this context? Probably, they were well-respected persons known to the insurgents, such as elders of the community. The fact that they are sent by the Christian missionary, not the government, gives their demand a civilian nature, and implied a fair treatment. However, the bad conditions in the prison camps, the forced labor, and especially the deportation of the Herero towards the south and the coast, where the climate was much harder than in their traditional settlement areas, without provision of adequate housing or even clothing, prove to be deadly. During their long march towards the southwest, and even during forced labor, the prisoners are often put into chains. Spiecker notes: “In Epukiro, chains for shackling the prisoners were abundant, whereas even the most necessary foodstuffs for the prisoners were lacking” (542 [24 Jan 1906]),²¹ but it seems that the chains in Epukiro were not in use, at least during Spiecker’s visit.

“Where many of them will die”: Insights into the concentration camps

The primary goal of Spiecker’s journey is the so-called ‘visitation’ of the Rhenish Mission’s stations in the British Cape Colony and in German South West Africa. The situation of the prisoners, however, is a major concern for Spiecker. Before he even arrives in Africa, on the ship “Kenilworth castle” from London to Cape Town, he meets the new Governor of German South West Africa, Friedrich von Lindequist. He immediately discusses the concentration camps, which are located near Lüderitzbucht (on Shark Island), in Karibib, and in Swakopmund:

[16 Oct. 1905] After breakfast, I had a longer negotiation or rather discussion with the Governor. I gave him a copy of Kuhlmann’s letter about his visit to Lüderitzbucht, but asked him to keep it private, since I would otherwise have to revise it. He promised me this very readily, but asked to keep the report for his information. A detailed consultation followed. He wants to look after the prisoners in Lüderitzbucht and arrange for humane treatment. Similarly, he wants to speak with Brother Vedder in Swakopmund about how to improve the situation of the Herero prisoners. To my request not to send any women and children to Swakopmund, he only partly assented. With some reason, he pointed out that the men would not endure it without their families. However, he wants to ensure that the widowed women and orphaned children are removed from Swakopmund.

²⁰ “Die Leute kommen mit Kuhlmanns Boten, die der sehr geschickt ausgewählt hat, u. die ihm unbedingt vertrauen. Kuhlmann ist aber das Herz schwer im Gedanken an die Zukunft der Leute, da er sie nicht lange hier behalten kann, weil es an Lebensmitteln fehlt. Sie werden dann nach Omaruru und von da nach Karibib und Swakopmund gesandt, wo viele sterben werden. [...] Wenn nur der Gouverneur für gute Behandlung der Leute seinem Versprechen gemäß sorgt. Bei ihm scheinen sich in sehr verderblicher Weise die Einflüsse des Militärs, der Ansiedler und der Römischen geltend zu machen.”

²¹ “In Epukiro waren in der Tat reichlich Ketten als Fesseln für die Gefangenen, dagegen fehlte es an den nötigsten Lebensmitteln für die Gefangenen.”

Furthermore, the Herero prisoners should only be brought to Swakopmund, as far as they are needed there, when they have recovered and regained physical strength. Thus, at least in part a proposal seems to be accepted which I have repeatedly stated, namely, to establish a kind of reservation in Omburo or in Otjihaenena for the Herero prisoners in need of recovery. I have the impression that Governor von Lindequist is animated by the best intentions, and that our being together on this ship will not be entirely without meaning. (22-24)²²

Thus, Spiecker's long-term intention seems to be to keep the Herero near the 'gathering places', and to stop deportation to the camps.²³ Three days later, Spiecker asks the Governor again:

[19 Oct. 1905] This morning, I asked the Governor if he had read Kuhlmann's report. He answered in the affirmative and later remarked that actually only one thing was questionable, that the sergeant had shot the woman. Of course I objected that the whole situation of the prisoners was very sad. Specifically, I pointed out that the peace negotiation would be futile, if the situation of the prisoners were not improved. He then again promised to look after the prisoners in Lüderitzbucht, and to read Kuhlmann's report again prior to that. (36)²⁴

These citations show that Spiecker's concern with the prisoners' fate is connected with the reports of the missionary August Kuhlmann, who was in charge of the 'collection

²² "Nach dem Frühstück hatte ich eine längere, jedenfalls nicht unwichtige Verhandlung resp. Unterredung mit dem Gouverneur. Ich gab ihm eine Abschrift des Briefes von Kuhlmann über dessen Besuch in Lüderitzbucht, bat ihn aber dieses als vertraulich anzusehen, da ich sonst den Bericht überarbeiten müsse. Das versprach er mir sehr gerne, wünschte aber den Bericht zu seiner Information behalten zu dürfen. Daran schloss sich eine eingehende Besprechung. Er will sich in Lüderitzbucht nach den Gefangenen umsehen und dafür sorgen, daß sie menschlich behandelt werden. Ebenso will er in Swakopmund mit Bruder Vedder verhandeln, wie die Lage der Hererogefangenen besser gestaltet werden könne. Auf meine Bitte, keine Frauen und Kinder nach Swakopmund zu senden, ging er nur teilweise ein. Er meinte nicht mit Unrecht, daß die Männer ohne Familie das nicht aushalten würden. Dagegen will er dafür sorgen, daß die verwitweten Frauen und die Kinder, die verwaist sind, von Swakopmund entfernt werden. Auch sollen die gefangenen Herero erst dann nach Swakopmund, so weit sie dort nötig sind, gebracht werden, wenn sie sich erholt haben und körperlich gekräftigt sind. Damit ist wenigstens ein Teil des von mir wiederholt vorgetragenen Vorschlags eine Art Reservat in Omburo oder Otjihaenena für die erholungsbedürftigen Hererogefangenen einzurichten, angenommen. Ich habe den Eindruck, daß Gouverneur von Lindequist von den besten Absichten beseelt ist und daß auch unserer Zusammensein auf dem Schiff nicht ganz bedeutungslos sein wird."

²³ Kuhlmann and Spiecker refer to the pacification process as *gathering* ("sammeln"); it has been proposed that this reflects a strange pastoral attitude towards these pacification efforts: "Prior to the Herero surrender, [Kuhlmann] called the Herero 'a fleeing flock,' reminiscent of the biblical language describing the disciples who abandoned Jesus in Gethsemane. Once they surrendered, they became 'the gathered,' reminiscent of *ekklesia*, the biblical word for 'church' with a literal meaning of 'the called-out ones.'" (Glen Ryland, "Stories and Mission Apologetics: The Rhenish Mission from Wars and Genocide to the Nazi Revolution, 1904–1936", *Symposia*, 5, 2013: 17-32 [19]).

²⁴ "Heute Morgen frage ich den Gouverneur, ob er den Bericht von Kuhlmann über Lüderitzbucht gelesen habe. Er bejahte die Frage und meinte dann im Weiteren, daß eigentlich doch nur eine Sache bedenklich sei, daß der Sergeant das Weib erschossen habe. Natürlich sagte ich ihm, daß doch die ganze Lage der Gefangenen sehr traurig sei. Vor allem machte ich ihn darauf aufmerksam, daß die Friedensvermittlung aussichtslos sein werde, wenn die Lage der Gefangenen nicht verbessert würde. Er versprach dann auch wieder, sich in Lüderitzbucht nach den Gefangenen umzusehen und vorher den Bericht Kuhmanns noch einmal zu lesen."

place' in Omburo from 1905 to 1907. Kuhlmann had written a letter describing his visit to the Lüderitzbucht concentration camp; this letter is given to the Governor by Spiecker on 16 October 1905. As Frigga Tiletschke points out, August Kuhlman's role in drawing attention to the deadly conditions in the camps has long been undervalued.²⁵ Kuhlmann wrote repeatedly to the mission headquarters in Barmen, and described the situation in the camps in clear and uncompromising tones. Spiecker cites Kuhlmann repeatedly in the context of the situation in the camps and seems to take his report very seriously, but he is intent that it should not be circulated. Does he fear that the accusations of 'native-friendliness' towards the mission would be bolstered by Kuhlmann's criticism?

Tiletschke compares the efforts of August Kuhlmann with those of Heinrich Vedder, who was stationed in Swakopmund and acted as chaplain in the concentration camp:

Vedder's criticism of the cruelties was not directed against brutality and violence as such, but only against acts not legitimised by the state, such as sadism, arbitrariness and immorality committed by individuals. [...] Although he strove to achieve quasi "lawful" conditions in the concentration camps and in regard to the forced labor, he repeatedly expressed his sympathy for the German authorities [...]. Vedder speaks only of "natives", "Hereros" or "Namas", only higher German officers and officials are mentioned by name. In contrast, Kuhlmann always allows us to meet the Herero as individual characters with names and a personal history.²⁶

Heinrich Vedder went on to become an influential personality in the Rhenish Mission; in 1937, he became *Präses* (head) of the South West African mission church, and he published a number of influential works. In the Third Reich, Vedder argued openly for racist notions;²⁷ from 1950 to 1958, he represented the Namibian native population in the South African senate, where he defended the Apartheid system. Tiletschke proposes that, in contrast to Vedder's successful career, the more critical positions which Kuhlmann expressed in his letters, as well as in a book he wrote after his return to Germany on the history of the war, remained without larger influence in the Rhenish Mission.²⁸

²⁵ Frigga Tiletschke, "Empörung gegen Gott oder gerechter Befreiungskampf? Missionare zwischen Untertanengeist und Solidarität am Beispiel von Heinrich Vedder und August Kuhlmann". Presentation at the symposium *Kolonialismus und Mission. Zur Ambivalenz der deutschen Missionsgeschichte in Namibia*, 7 Feb. 2005, typescript, Berlin, 2005, 11 pages.

²⁶ Ibid.: 6f. "Vedders Kritik an den verübten Grausamkeiten richtete sich nicht gegen Brutalität und Gewalttätigkeit als solche, sondern nur gegen nicht staatlich legitimierten Sadismus, Willkür und Sittenlosigkeit Einzelner. [...] Bei allen Bemühungen Vedders sozusagen "rechtsstaatliche" Zustände in den Konzentrationslagern und bei der Zwangsarbeit zu schaffen, äußerte er immer wieder Verständnis für die deutschen Behörden [...]. Vedder spricht ausschließlich von "Eingeborenen", "Hereros" oder "Namas", als Personen mit Namen sichtbar werden nur die deutschen übergeordneten Offiziere und Beamte. Bei Kuhlmann hingegen begegnen uns auch die Herero stets als individuelle Persönlichkeiten mit Namen und persönlicher Geschichte."

²⁷ Cf. Tiletschke, "Empörung": 8f.

²⁸ August Kuhlmann, *Auf Adlers Flügeln*, 2 vols., Barmen, Verlag des Missionshauses, 1911.

On the ship to Cape Town, Governor von Lindequist had been accompanied by Captain von Heydebreck, with whom he has lengthy discussions. One month later, on a visit to Kapstadt, Spiecker meets him again:

[17 Nov. 1905] I asked Hauptmann von Heydebreck to give my regards to the Governor, and to let him know that the situation of the prisoners in Lüderitzbucht is much better now, as a report from Bernsmann tells me. (172)²⁹

At the time of writing this entry, Spiecker had not yet been to Lüderitzbucht; he was still visiting the Rhenish Mission's stations in the Cape Colony, as part of his inspecting schedule, and relying solely on the judgment of Bernsmann who is stationed in Otjimbingue, hundreds of kilometers to the north. When Spiecker arrives in Lüderitzbucht on 8 January 1906, the missionary Emil Laaf, who had recently been stationed in Lüderitzbucht, paints a very different picture: "Brother Laaf gives a quite dark account of the conditions in Lüderitzbucht." (463)³⁰

As we have seen, an important focus in Spiecker's previous discussions with the Governor had been the situation in the concentration camps. The message to von Heydebreck is therefore surprising, especially since he had clearly described von Heydebreck's beliefs regarding the general inferiority of black people in previous entries.³¹ Is Spiecker not aware that this message undermines all his previous efforts, as it dispenses the Governor from taking action, and that it is unadvisable to trust it to von Heydebreck, who will probably have little compassion with the fate of the prisoners? In reading his diary, one gets the impression that Spiecker is highly committed to his work, but somewhat overscrupulous: He feels the need to immediately inform the Governor of Bernsmann's message, instead of waiting and looking for himself.

The hypothesis of Tilettschke that Kuhlmann was the harshest critic of the concentration camps in the Rhenish Mission seems to be borne out when we read Spiecker's entry on his visit to the prison camp in Swakopmund.

[27 Aug. 1906] The Herero in the prisoners' wharf are very well provisioned, and it is no longer allowed to beat them for no reason. They have to work, but have sufficient free time. This has made some of them boisterous; they easily get impertinent and talk back. [...] The moral conditions are especially appalling. Although there are many more women than men, the latter cannot get women, since the girls and women find it convenient and justified to be free and to be paid one mark for intercourse with a man. (1287-8)³²

²⁹ "Dem Hauptmann von Heydebreck konnte ich dann mit Empfehlungen an den Gouverneur noch bestellen, daß die Lage der Gefangenen in Lüderitzbucht sich nach dem Bericht Bernsmanns doch wesentlich gebessert habe."

³⁰ "Bruder Laaf sieht die ganzen Verhältnisse in Lüderitzbucht in recht dunklem Licht." – Laaf had already written on 5 October 1905 to the Rhenish Mission in Barmen, estimating a death toll of 50 people per week for the Shark Island concentration camp (Bundesarchiv Berlin, RKA Nr. 2140, Bl. 18).

³¹ Cf. the section on "Ultra-radical views" below.

³² "Die Herero in der Gefangenenwerft werden sehr gut gepflegt und dürfen jetzt auch nicht mehr ohne weiteres geschlagen werden. Sie müssen arbeiten, haben aber hinreichend freie Zeit. Manche werden dadurch übermütig und leicht frech und geben Widerworte. [...] Ganz schrecklich sind die sittlichen Zustände. Obwohl viel mehr Frauen als Männer da sind, können die letzteren keine Frauen bekommen, da es die

This description gives the impression of a cold view hampered by a focus on Christian morality.

From Swakopmund, Spiecker travels directly to Lüderitzbucht. On the day of his arrival, he visits the concentration camp on Shark Island near Lüderitzbucht:

[31 Aug. 1906] The Herero prisoners who are permanently housed there are comparatively well accommodated. However, 200-300 Herero prisoners, whom I had already seen on the Aline Woermann [the ship with which he had arrived the same day], had just arrived. They had simply been placed outside in the cold wind. They were mostly supplied with blankets and hunkered around fires, but were freezing very much and had to spend the night there. These people are acquainted with much and don't feel the inconveniences of the weather as we do, but nonetheless it hurt me that there was no better care. They came from Omaruru and Otjosongombe, i.e. from our collecting places. I have spoken with some of them. Naturally, due to the ways of our natives, it wasn't possible to find out how they felt, but they repeatedly said that they were very cold. (1308f)³³

The passage combines formulations of compassion and of distancing. Every time Spiecker becomes aware of aspects that seem to put in question the legitimacy of the prison camp ("simply been placed outside", "freezing very much"), he seems to find a counter-argument that abates his horror at the situation. The claim "These people are acquainted with much and don't feel the inconveniences of the weather as we do" abrogates the so-called *regula aurea* of practical ethics that was influential in Christian ethics, which proposes that one should treat others as one would like to be treated oneself. Importantly, Spiecker achieves this by "othering" the natives (in the sense of Gayatri Spivak): He is well aware that Europeans left freezing in cold wind for a whole night would fall ill, which under the given conditions is practically a death sentence, in view of his own previous assessment that "almost all" the sick prisoners die (763; cf. below). Spiecker seems to tell himself that this need not be the case for the natives, who are much hardier than the Germans.

He feels hurt by the lack of care, for which he finds a curious way of expression: "daß nicht besser gesorgt war" (that there was no better care) is an unusual syntactic construction, which neither names the subject nor the object of the care. Spiecker avoids saying "that we [the Germans] didn't care better for them (the Herero prisoners)". By naming neither the actors nor the victims, Spiecker reduces what he witnesses to an

Mädchen und Frauen bequem und richtiger finden frei zu sein und sich für den Verkehr mit dem Mann mit einer Mark bezahlen zu lassen."

³³ "Die dort dauernd domicilierten Hererogefangenen sind verhältnismäßig gut untergebracht. Es waren aber noch 200-300 Hererogefangene gerade angekommen, die ich auf der Aline Woermann schon gesehen hatte. Die Leute wurden bei dem kalten Winde einfach im Freien untergebracht. Sie waren mit Decken ziemlich versehen und hockten um Feuer herum, froren aber sehr und mußten die Nacht dort zubringen. Die Leute sind ja an viel gewöhnt und empfinden die Unbilden des Wetters nicht so wie wir, aber es hat mich doch geschmerzt, daß nicht besser gesorgt war. Sie kamen von Omaruru und Otjosongombe, also von unseren Sammelstellen. Mit manchen von ihnen habe ich gesprochen. Natürlich war es bei der Art unserer Eingeborenen nicht möglich herauszufinden, wie sie sich fühlten, nur sagten sie immer wieder, daß sie sehr frören."

impersonal situation of insufficient care. When he opines that it is impossible to find out how 'our natives' feel, he glosses over the hierarchy in this situation, where the prisoners – dependent on the benevolence of their guards for their survival – might not dare to complain openly.

The next day, Spiecker visits a *Wert* [wharf] where Herero departed from the north live; though Spiecker doesn't mention it, they are obviously prisoners, guarded by a *Unteroffizier* [corporal] and subjected to forced labor. Many of them are sick:

[1 Sept. 1906] In the afternoon, together with Brother Laaf and the native assistant Heinrich Uroroa, I made a visit to the wharf located near the beach. In my opinion, the care for the sick, currently numbering about 160, is very good. [...] Although they are well cared for, there are on average 4 deaths each day. Today, 5 people had died, whose bodies lay covered before the hospital. The unfamiliar harsh climate, the changed living conditions, and for some also the hard work, bring illness and death. The misery of these people moved me deeply, and it pained me to be powerless against it. The corporal opined that the old people would gradually die off, while the youth would acclimatize and thrive here. I will speak with the Governor about the situation of these people, but he can hardly do much. He is already under heavy attack due to his friendliness towards the natives and the mission. (1311-2)³⁴

Importantly, Spiecker notes that the natives who had been 'collected' by the Rhenish Mission at their so-called 'collecting points' Omaruru and Otjosongombe are brought to Shark Island; that is, they are treated as if they were prisoners of war captured during fighting (which is in itself highly problematic, since at least some of them were civilians including women and children who had never participated in any fighting, but rather who had fled into the mountains when the fighting started). The Rhenish Mission, however, intended with their 'collecting' activities to appease the conflict, as we saw above; they sent messengers to the Herero insurgents, enticing them to return from their hiding places in the mountains.

Spiecker seems to know of the high death rates in the concentration camps and most of the prisoners' wharfs. In Karibib, he remarks on Brother Elger's hospital: "While almost all the sick people in the prisoners' kraals and wharfs die, in Elger's hospital, only 20 % have died, most of whom had been brought in too late." (763-4)³⁵ This was the most basic of improvised hospitals, where most of the patients had to lie on sacks. Spiecker's

³⁴ "Nachmittags machte ich zunächst mit Br. Laaf und Heinrich Uroroa, dem eingeborenen Gehülften, Besuch auf der hier in der Nähe am Seestrand gelegenen Werft. Die Fürsorge für die zurzeit etwa 160 Kranken in den Lazaretten ist meines Erachtens sehr gut. [...] Trotz der guten Fürsorge sterben im Durchschnitt 4 Personen täglich. Heute waren 5 gestorben, deren Leichen vor dem Lazarett zugedeckt lagen. Das ungewohnte rauhe Klima, die veränderte Lebensweise, bei einigen auch die harte Arbeit bringen Krankheit und Tod. Der Jammer dieser Leute ging mir sehr zu Herzen, und es war mir schmerzlich demselben ohnmächtig gegenüber zu stehen. Der Unteroffizier meinte, die älteren Personen würden allmählich hinsterven, während die Jugend sich ans Klima gewöhnen und hier gedeihen werde. Mit dem Gouverneur werde ich über die Lage der Leute sprechen, doch kann er schwerlich viel tun. Er wird schon sehr angegriffen wegen seiner Eingeborenen- und Missionsfreundlichkeit."

³⁵ "Während die Kranken in den Gefangenenkraalen und Werften so zu sagen alle sterben, sind in Elgers Lazarett nur 20 % gestorben, die meist zu spät gebracht wurden."

testimony thus allows the inference that even the most primitive care for the sick might have saved thousands of lives. The high success rate is thus achieved through basic care, sufficient food, and protection from the cold and wind. In Omaruru, Spiecker had previously visited the prisoners' kraal (597-8 [4 Feb. 1906]); his entry describes the horrible condition of many of the inmates. He preaches to them; interestingly, he mentions that in this and an earlier service for the natives, a few white visitors were present, whom he judges to be spies or informers. That Spiecker regards this as possible is a sign of the strained relations between the mission and the government (or the white settler population).

Another measure that Spiecker wants to prevent (he repeatedly discusses this with the Governor, e.g. on 31 March and 10 May 1906) is the medical examination of all native women for venereal diseases. Spiecker remarks on the effects of this measure in the Swakopmund prison camp:

[5 Sept. 1906] Unfortunately, the splendid Major Friedrich has resigned as commander. His successor, a captain, issued as the order of the day: The native women wearing yellow bandages are sick! Beware of them, soldiers. One doesn't even think anymore about preventing the indecent contact of the soldiers with the native women, but only tries to protect them from infections. This is a sad state of affairs. We had to tell the natives that the examination is conducted in their best interests. Now it becomes nearly too obvious why and in whose interest it is conducted. (1326)³⁶

The examinations of women and girls for venereal diseases had been ordered by the colonial government (739), took place in public, and seems to have been a general measure not limited to prisoners: In Karibib, Spiecker is asked by a native teacher for a letter of protection for his wife and mother to avoid the examination (703-4 [10 Mar. 1906]). The women that are found to be sick are marked by a yellow bandage that they have to wear in public. Apart from the concentration camps and the arguably genocidal tactics, this is a further aspect of German policies during the Herero-Nama war that can be said to prefigure certain aspects of National Socialism, where Jews were marked with the yellow *Judenstern* (Jewish badge).

On 17 November 1906, during the conference in Keetmanshoop, Spiecker is informed (by Brother Fenchel, who presides over the Nama mission, in his annual report) that the imprisoned women "were forced into a sinful life", meaning they are systematically raped. Spiecker answers: "If this is the case, then we have to speak up against these crimes" but then accuses the women of often consenting in the "sin" and lying about

³⁶ "Leider hat der treffliche Major Friedrich die Kommandantur niedergelegt. Sein Nachfolger, ein Hauptmann, gab als Tagesbefehl aus: Die eingeborenen Weiber mit gelber Binde sind krank! Hütet Euch vor denen, Soldaten. Man denkt gar nicht mehr daran den unsittlichen Verkehr mit den eingeborenen Frauen seitens der Soldaten zu hindern, sucht sie nur vor Ansteckung zu schützen. Das sind traurige Zustände. Wir sollten den Eingeborenen sagen, die Untersuchung geschehe in ihrem Interesse. Jetzt wird es fast zu deutlich, warum resp. in wessen Interesse sie geschieht."

it;³⁷ with this highly paternalistic interpretation of the situation in the camps, he avoids the necessity of further action.

The function of the general medical examination for venereal diseases, and its connection with the facilitation of sexual exploitation in the concentration camps, is another overlooked aspect of the war, and should be made a priority of future research.

“Ultra-radical views”: Discourses on inferiority and oppression

German colonial discourse of that time did not try to hide the fact that *Eingeborene* (natives) were not colonial citizens, but rather were an important resource of, and at the same time a permanent risk to, the colony. Thus, the special term *Eingeborenenpolitik* was used to characterize how to best govern the natives.

Even before reaching Africa, on the ship traveling towards Cape Town, Spiecker has lengthy discussions with the Governor of German South West Africa, von Lindequist, and Captain Joachim von Heydebreck, who belonged to von Lindequist's staff and later became commander of the Schutztruppe (from 1912 to 1914).

[19 Oct. 1905] Today, I also gave the report of the native commission of South Africa to the Governor.³⁸ Just now, he sat for some time next to me reading it, but showed by different utterances that he does not have a very friendly disposition towards the natives. Indeed, he will now have to move away from the allegedly too friendly, “weak” policy towards one that deals more strictly with the natives. Let's hope that God gives him the clear insight that the welfare of the colony depends upon the welfare of the natives. Captain von Heydebreck asked me this morning [...]: “Do you think that the black Africans can ever reach the height of our education?” I said: “Yes, but it may take centuries yet.” Naturally, he thinks this entirely impossible and apparently doesn't wish it either. He will not admit in any way that Christianity has been an essential factor in the education of the European peoples to the height of today's culture. (37-8)³⁹

Although both Spiecker and von Heydebreck believe in European superiority, the consequences of their positions are notably different: Whereas Spiecker believes in

³⁷ “die gefangenen Frauen würden zu einem Sündenleben gezwungen”; “Wenn das der Fall ist, dann müssen wir gegen solche Verbrechen auftreten”.

³⁸ SANAP, *Report of the South African Native Affairs Commission*, Cape Town, Cape Times Limited, 1905. <<https://archive.org/details/southafricannati00sout>> [retrieved 18 Nov. 2014].

³⁹ “Heute gab ich dem Gouverneur auch den Report der Eingeborenen-Kommission (native commission) von Südafrika. Er saß soeben längere Zeit neben mir und las darin, zeigte aber auch durch verschiedene Äußerungen, daß er keine allzu freundliche Gesinnung gegenüber den Eingeborenen hat. Er muß ja jetzt auch gegenüber der den Eingeborenen angeblich zu freundlichen, “schwachen” Politik eine andere festere einschlagen. Der Herr gebe ihm rechtzeitig die klare Erkenntnis, daß vom Wohl der Eingeborenen das Wohl der Kolonie abhängt. Der Hauptmann von Heydebreck fragte mich heute Morgen [...]: “Glauben Sie, daß die schwarzen Afrikaner je zur Höhe unserer Bildung kommen werden?” Ich sagte: “Ja, aber es kann vielleicht noch Jahrhunderte dauern.” Er hält das natürlich für ganz unmöglich und wünscht es offenbar auch nicht. Daß das Christentum ein wesentlicher Faktor bei der Erziehung der europäischen Völker zur Höhe der heutigen Kultur gewesen ist, gibt er in keiner Weise zu.”

educating the natives and promoting their welfare, on which, he argues, the welfare of the colony (including the white population) depends, von Heydebreck's racist position implies that any effort in this direction would be wasted.

In Keetmanshoop, Spiecker argues with another colonialist:

On the other side of the table sat [...] Dr. Merensky, the son of my friend, the Berlin mission inspector. As he developed his ultra-radical views in favor of oppressing the natives, saying among other things that every farmer should exercise police powers over them, I felt obliged to contradict him. A very lively discussion ensued, wherein various officers participated, and in which I limited myself to pointing out that a policy of pure oppression would lead to the greatest calamity for the colonizing power. (1718-9; 18 Nov. 1906)⁴⁰

Spiecker's interlocutor is probably Hans Merensky (16 Mar. 1871 – 21 Oct. 1952), whose father Alexander Merensky had been an inspector of the Berlin Missionary Society. Hans Merensky traveled extensively in South Africa and also in South West Africa. Since Alexander Merensky had other children, further information about Hans Merensky's travels in November 1906 is needed for an unequivocal identification. It should be noted, however, that Hans Merensky held the title "Dr." which he received at the Technical University of Berlin before he went to Africa in 1904, and is known to have visited South West Africa frequently; he and his siblings were born in Transvaal (today in the northeast of South Africa). It is thus unlikely that Spiecker would have met another son of Alexander Merensky in 1907 in Keetmanshoop who also held a doctor's degree.

Hans Merensky worked as a geologist and prospector and later became enormously rich due to the mineral resources (platinum and diamond mines) he prospected, and acquired shares in. Today, Hans Merensky is uncritically hailed by Wikipedia as a "conservationist and philanthropist."⁴¹ The "Hans Merensky Library" at the University of Pretoria is named in his honor, as are a nature reserve and a golf course. In 2004, a German three-hour (two-part) TV drama was produced that tells Merensky's life as that of an adventurous and courageous "white African",⁴² in a form that romanticizes the colonial reality and the exploitation of Africa's natural resources through European-led mineral companies.

Thus, Merensky's proposal of an "ultra-radical" oppression policy has to be framed in the same discourses that seem to have determined his later career.⁴³ When he argues for total domination, he regards the native population as a resource to be exploited by the Europeans. When Spiecker counters that a "policy of pure oppression" would be

⁴⁰ "Mir gegenüber saß [...] Dr. Merensky, der Sohn des mir befreundeten Berliner Missionsinspektors. Als dieser seine ultraradikalen Eingeborenenunterdrückungsansichten entwickelte und unter anderem sagte, jeder Farmer müsse Polizeigewalt über die Eingeborenen haben, hielt ich es für meine Pflicht ihm zu widersprechen. Es entspann sich eine sehr lebhaft Diskussions, an der sich verschiedene Officiere beteiligten, in der ich mich darauf beschränkte hervorzuheben, daß eine reine Unterdrückungspolitik das größte Unheil für die kolonisierende Macht herbeiführe."

⁴¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Merensky> [retrieved 18 Nov. 2014].

⁴² "Der weiße Afrikaner" (2004), directed by Martin Enlen.

⁴³ The author wishes to thank Kate Maxwell for this important point.

detrimental for the colonizing power, he adheres to the logic of this discourse: his answer excludes the perspective of the colonized population, and implies that a certain degree of oppression might be acceptable or even useful.

Spiecker's account draws into question the image of Merensky constructed by the *Hans Merensky Trust*, uncritical media, and the German public which still accepts films such as "Der weiße Afrikaner". It should prompt further research into the role Hans Merensky and his family played in the colonial system.

An unknown peacekeeping mission?

As a part of his extensive visitation tour, Spiecker also traveled to 'Ovamboland', the Ovambo territories in the north of German South West Africa. Although Ovamboland belonged to the area that had been granted by Great Britain to Germany in the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty (Helgoland-Sansibar-Vertrag, 1 July 1890), the Ovambo did not sign any *Schutzverträge* (protection treaties) with the Germans until 1908 and were therefore still officially autonomous. Spiecker started from Outjo on 25 June 1906, traveling via the German military station Okaukuejo to Olukonda in Ovamboland. He visited Ontananga, Ondangua (= Ondangwa), Namakunde, Omupanda, Ondjiva, Oniipa, Omulonga, and Onajena, and returned to Outjo on 16 August 1906.

Most stations in Ovamboland were manned by Finnish missionaries, who had been working there since 1870. The Rhenish Mission had good relations with the 'Finnish Brothers', and had for some time planned to expand their mission into Ovamboland;⁴⁴ however, at the time of Spiecker's travels, there were few stations for him to 'inspect'. In fact, the diary seems to indicate that Spiecker's primary reason for the planned *Ovamboreise* was in order to keep the peace between the Germans and the Ovambo. Since the Ovambo attack on Namutoni Fort on 28 January 1904, the Schutztruppe had seriously contemplated a campaign against the Ovambo, even though only one German soldier had been wounded in that attack. Spiecker reports that the Schutztruppe was preparing for this campaign: "The northern areas apparently receive extensive provisions. The officers certainly still reckon with the Ovambo campaign." (986 [8 June 1906])⁴⁵

In Outjo, Spiecker speaks with the district chief, Captain von Wangenheim:

[11 June 1906] Like all officers, he showed a lively interest in my journey into Ovamboland and remarked that I could render great services to the Fatherland, if I could bring [the Ovambo chieftain] Nechale to reason. Whether I can achieve something in this regard is very questionable. I have to try, not only for the

⁴⁴ Cf. Peter Heinrich Brincker, *Unsere Ovambo-Mission sowie Land, Leute, Religion, Sitten, Gebräuche, Sprache usw. der Ovakuánjama-Ovámbo, nach Mitteilungen unserer Ovambo-Missionare zusammengestellt*, Barmen, Missionshaus, 1900.

⁴⁵ "Der Norden wird offenbar stark verproviantiert. Die Offiziere rechnen jedenfalls noch mit dem Ovambofeldzug."

sake of the Fatherland, but also of the Ovambo and especially of the mission.
(993)⁴⁶

Three weeks earlier, in Otjiwarongo, Spiecker had had to make the final decision on the Ovambo journey, after he had reached the end of the Otavibahn, which was then under construction. From here on, he would have to take the ox wagon, a slow means of transport, and he knew that the journey would be fraught with risks for his fragile health:

[22 May 1906] From here I begin my journey over Gaub and Outjo into Ovamboland [...]. Based on a decision taken by the Deputation, I prepared the journey and risked all the costs. After my serious illness in Okobahe, where I seem to have been near death, I had been advised by some to abandon the journey into Ovamboland. Likewise from Barmen, appeals to not risk my health unnecessarily arrived at the last minute. [...] It's not entirely impossible that, with the help of the Finnish Brothers, I can determine Nechale to pay an atonement fee to the German government. In this case, I could do a great service to the German Fatherland and the mission. (949)⁴⁷

The discussion with Nechale, however, doesn't take the course that Spiecker had hoped for:

[6 Aug. 1906] After the first greetings and after he had received our presents – tobacco and a jacket from me –, I asked him if he didn't want to make peace with the Germans. He answered me: Who owns the land? He energetically refused every demand in this direction. Even when I asked him if he didn't wish for more missions, he said: I don't prevent them, but I don't call for them either. The Christians are just as bad as the others. Personally, he was friendly. He is a poor, deluded man. He is paralyzed and cannot walk, and otherwise sick as well. He seems to fear the punishment of the Germans, but he's too proud to humiliate himself and to ask for peace. I have now done my duty to him, and am happy to have been there. Now I can report to the Governor how things stand, and will ask him not to begin a war because of such a man. [...] Possibly Nechale could be punished without provoking a conflict with the other chieftains. However, they will not extradite him, and even less his subjects, who do no love, but fear him. A chieftain is a hallowed, untouchable personality. (1211f)⁴⁸

⁴⁶ "Wie alle Offiziere interessierte er sich lebhaft für meine Reise ins Amboland und meinte, ich könne mich um das Vaterland sehr verdient machen, wenn ich den Nechale zur Vernunft brächte. Ob ich in dieser Hinsicht etwas erreiche, ist ja sehr fraglich. Versuchen muss ich es, nicht nur um des Vaterlandes, sondern auch um der Ovambo und besonders um der Mission willen."

⁴⁷ "Von hier aus trete ich also meine Reise über Gaub und Outjo nach dem Ovamboland an [...]. Auf Grund eines Deputationsbeschlusses, habe ich die Reise vorbereitet und alle Unkosten daran gewagt. Nachdem ich in Okobahe so schwer erkrankt und wohl dem Tode nahe war, wurden Stimmen laut, die anrieten, die Reise nach dem Ovamboland aufzugeben. Auch aus Barmen kamen in letzter Stunde noch Mahnungen, doch ja nicht meine Gesundheit unnötig aufs Spiel zu setzen. [...] Ganz ausgeschlossen ist es nicht, daß es mir mit Hilfe der Finnischen Brüder gelingt den Nechale zu bestimmen ein Sühnegeld an die deutsche Regierung zu zahlen. In diesem Fall könnte ich dem deutschen Vaterland und der Mission einen großen Dienst tun."

⁴⁸ "Nach den ersten Begrüßungen und nachdem er unsere Geschenke Tabak und von mir eine Jacke entgegengenommen hatte, fragte ich ihn, ob er nicht mit den Deutschen Frieden machen wollte. Er antwortete: Wem gehört denn das Land? Energisch wies er jedes Ansinnen nach dieser Seite ab. Sogar als ich ihn fragte, ob er denn nicht mehr Missionen wünsche, sagte er: Ich hindere sie nicht, aber ich rufe sie auch nicht. Die Christen sind gerade so schlecht wie die anderen. Persönlich war er freundlich. Er ist ein armer verblendeter Mensch. Gehen kann er nicht, da er gelähmt ist und auch sonst ist er krank. Offenbar fürchtet

Spiecker's reports leave little doubt that the military leaders of the Schutztruppe were preparing to wage an additional war against the Ovambo. Nechale was deemed to be responsible for the murder of a settler called Jordan two decades before, in 1886. To punish Nechale was probably only a pretext for gaining control over the rich Ovambo territories. However, the costs of the war against the Herero and Nama were high; in fact, they strained the finances of the German Empire and led to a dissolution of the *Reichstag* after it had blocked further financial support, followed by the so-called *Hottentottenwahlen*.⁴⁹ Under these conditions, the Schutztruppe never began the coveted Ovambo campaign, and Nechale might well have secured some degree of freedom for his people through his steadfast refusal to bargain with the colonial government. Whereas other tribes and communities that had signed *Schutzverträge* (protection treaties) with the Germans, and had thus officially acknowledged their authority, were mostly expropriated from all their land after the insurgencies had been quelled in 1907, the Germans had no legal hold over the Ovambo.⁵⁰

Furthermore, Nechale's suspicions with regard to the Christian missions were likely justified: Although the missionaries themselves probably didn't intend it, the colonial government regarded their work in Ovamboland primarily as a means of furthering German influence, with the aim of final submission under German rule.⁵¹ Spiecker notes that Nechale doesn't allow an extension of the small mission station in Onajena: "He fears that the mission station might become the base for an enemy attack. He seems not to have a clear conscience." (1213 [6 Aug. 1906])⁵² This interpretation can only be judged as patriarchal arrogance, since it implies that Nechale could have nothing to fear if his conscience were clear; at the same time, Spiecker is well aware that the Germans are preparing for an attack on him (986).

Spiecker also met with the Ovambo chieftains Nakoto (1101-7 [16 July 1906]), Nande (1115-6 [18 July 1906]), Hamalua (1157-8 [27 July 1906]), and Kamonde (1214 [7 Aug. 1906]). During his next meeting with the Governor von Lindequist in Karibib, Spiecker decidedly counsels against a campaign into Ovamboland:

er die Strafe der Deutschen, ist aber zu stolz sich zu demütigen und um Frieden zu bitten. Ich habe ihm gegenüber meine Pflicht nun getan und freue mich auch dort gewesen zu sein. Nun kann ich dem Gouverneur berichten, wie es steht und werde ihn bitten doch um eines solchen Menschen willen keinen Krieg zu beginnen. [...] Eventuell ist es auch möglich Nechale zu bestrafen, ohne mit den anderen Häuptlingen in Konflikt zu kommen. Diese werden ihn aber nicht ausliefern, noch weniger seine Untertanen, die ihn nicht lieben, sondern fürchten. Ein Häuptling ist eine geheiligte, unantastbare Persönlichkeit."

⁴⁹ Bühler, *Namaaufstand*: 329-336.

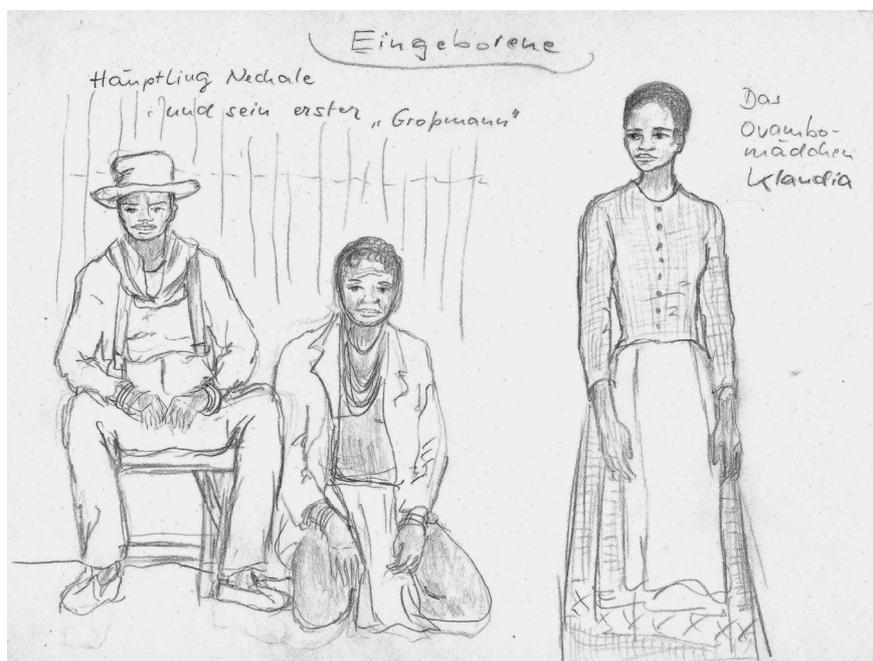
⁵⁰ Helmuth Stoecker, (ed.), *Drang nach Afrika. Die deutsche koloniale Expansionspolitik und Herrschaft in Afrika von den Anfängen bis zum Verlust der Kolonien*. 2., revised edition, Berlin, Akademie, 1991: 121.

⁵¹ Horst Gründer, *Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus. Eine politische Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen während der deutschen Kolonialzeit (1884–1914) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Afrikas und Chinas*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 1982: 131.

⁵² "Er befürchtet, die Missionsstation möchte einmal zum Stützpunkt eines feindlichen Angriffes dienen. Offenbar hat er kein gutes Gewissen."

[4 Oct. 1906] I specifically stressed that a campaign against Nechale would be entirely pointless and foolish. Once again, I felt very happy there that I made the journey into Ovamboland. The Governor receives so many dishonest reports from merchants and might still have been pressured to make the campaign into Ovamboland. Now I hardly think that he will undertake it in the foreseeable future. Thus it is always a joy to contribute to peace. (1472)⁵³

Figure 1: The Ovambo chieftain Nechale (left) and other Ovambo. (Drawing by Uta Siefkes for the typescript version, seemingly after photos taken on the journey that might still exist, but have not been traced.)



In Kub, a large military station on Fish River about halfway between Rehoboth und Gibeon, Spiecker meets some German officers. He holds a sermon, and is invited to dinner:

[20 Oct. 1906] At 7 o'clock we ate dinner in the casino. After the meal we sat on the veranda and I had to speak about Ovamboland. Naturally, all the officers are from the outset in favor of a campaign into Ovamboland against Nechale. As for quite a few others, I explained the pros and cons to them and had the

⁵³ "Ganz besonders habe ich betont, daß ein Zug gegen Nechale ganz zwecklos und töricht sei. Ich habe mich da noch einmal sehr gefreut, daß ich die Reise nach Amboland gemacht habe. Der Gouverneur erhält von Händlern so viele verlogene Berichte und wäre vielleicht doch noch zu einem Zug nach Amboland gedrängt worden. Ich glaube jetzt kaum, daß er ihn in absehbarer Zeit unternehmen wird. Es ist aber immer eine Freude zum Frieden beizutragen."

impression that they thought about the matter. Notably I pointed out that such a campaign would be entirely futile at present. (1550-1)⁵⁴

It is interesting to note that Spiecker flexibly adapts his argumentation to his discussion partners. Other diary entries show that he is entirely opposed to the campaign, but in order to be heard in a military discourse situation, he cannot argue that peacekeeping is an end in itself, and thus enters in a rationalist weighting of the “pros and cons” of an Ovamboland campaign.

Military fantasies: ‘Cleaning’ the land of its people

Some evidence suggests that the strategy and the military goals of the Schutztruppe became more radical during the war. The initial goal seems to have been the total military victory over the Herero:

The German attack on the Herero at Waterberg was an attack on very nearly the whole of Herero society [...]. Civilians were, however, not the actual target of the attack. Only after the unsuccessful attempt to totally crush the Herero at Waterberg did the German forces resort to a war of extermination against the whole of the Herero.⁵⁵

Spiecker arrived in German South West Africa more than a year after the events at Waterberg, on 8 January 1906. His observations shed some light on the military strategy of the Schutztruppe in the later part of the war, when the German troupes had to contend with the result of their early victories: a vague resistance of dispersed enemy combatants whose tactics consisted of ambushes and quick raids. Discussions with militaries reported by Spiecker indicate a widespread lack of distinction between Herero fighters and civilians. In one case, he notes that the military intends to “clean” the land of non-sedentary Herero:

[2 Apr. 1906] In the afternoon, I visited First Lieutenant von Mühlenfels and Major Märker, the leaders of the military here [in Windhuk]. I had very detailed discussions with them both about the collection work in Omburo und Otjihaenena. They acknowledged the successes of the mission, but wanted to support the work of the missionaries through the sending of military patrols against Herero wharfs with an inimical disposition. I strongly urged them to refrain from this. [...] In any case, they want to employ military patrols to clean the land of roaming Herero. I repeatedly pronounced my hope that this would

⁵⁴ “Um 7 Uhr aßen wir im Kasino zu Abend. Nach Tisch saßen wir auf der Veranda und ich mußte vom Amboland erzählen. Die Offiziere sind natürlich von vorneherein alle für einen Kriegszug nach dem Amboland gegen Nechale. Ich legte ihnen, wie schon so manchen anderen das Für und Wider da und hatte den Eindruck, daß sie über die Sache nachdachten. Vor allem mache ich immer wieder darauf aufmerksam, daß ein solcher Zug zur Zeit ganz zwecklos ist.”

⁵⁵ Henrik Lundtofte, “‘I believe that the nation as such must be annihilated...’ The Radicalization of the German Suppression of the Herero Rising in 1904”, in: Steven L.B. Jensen, (ed.), *Genocide. Cases, Comparisons and Contemporary Debates*, Kopenhagen, Danish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 2003: 15-53 (43).

be achieved in a peaceful manner, and that the military would not have to intervene again. (805)⁵⁶

The military headquarters in Windhuk wanted to send the military against 'enemy wharfs', i.e. against native settlements that were deemed a potential threat; furthermore, they intended to clear the land from all "roaming" Herero that hadn't been captured. At a later meeting with the Governor, Spiecker discusses these measures with von Lindequist:

[10 May 1906] The Governor doesn't want the military patrols to intervene, and wants to put a stop to or reject assaults and rash acts by the military authorities. In this respect, he obviously underestimates the passive resistance of the officers to this work. (925)⁵⁷

Many diary entries show that the officers are quite outspoken in their discussions with Spiecker, whereas the Governor repeatedly promises to improve the situation of the prisoners and to prevent brutal acts by the military. This might have contributed to Spiecker's interpretation that the military resists the Governor's intentions. Von Lindequist, however, is an experienced diplomat who enters into extensive discussions with Spiecker without really committing himself; this becomes clear in Spiecker's entry on the lengthy meeting from which the last citation was taken:

[10 May 1906] The Governor received us in his familiar amiable manner. [...] With the Governor I discussed the collecting work in Omburo and Otjihaenena. He's very happy about it and tries to support it in every way. He promised to fulfill all the wishes of Brother Diehl that I reported to him. [...] I took the opportunity to discuss various grievances, which he promised to remedy. For the native convicts (criminals), better cells shall be provided. Serious measures will be taken against the abuse of natives, and so on. With particular earnest, I discussed the ordered examinations of the women. I did not receive a binding promise to change the situation, but grievances shall be addressed. He wants to seriously oppose the drinking of the Rehoboth Basters and entirely, or as much as possible, limit the issuing of permits. He will be pleased to approve the donation of the ground for a church etc., likewise the donation of a farm. He feels very sympathetic to the installation of an institution for the half-white children in Hoachanas. He plans to recognize our ownership of the place. [...] He wants to grant the ownership titles for the unregistered mission property, but says that he's not able to do it just yet. In Otjihaenena and Omburo he intends to maybe establish native reservations. (925-6)⁵⁸

⁵⁶ "Nachmittags besuchte ich den Oberstleutnant von Mühlenfels und den Major Märker, die Leiter des hiesigen Militärwesens. Mit beiden hatte ich sehr eingehende Besprechungen über die Sammelarbeit in Omburo und Otjihaenena. Sie erkannten die Erfolge der Mission an, wünschten aber die Arbeit der Missionare durch Aussendung von Militairpatrouillen gegen feindlich gesinnte Hererowerfte zu unterstützen. Ich bat dringend davon abzusehen. [...] Im September wollen sie aber jedenfalls das Land von herumstreichenden Herero säubern durch Militairpatrouillen. Ich sprach immer wieder die Hoffnung aus, daß dies auf friedlichem Wege würde erreicht werden, und daß das Militair nicht mehr eingreifen brauche."

⁵⁷ "Ein Eingreifen der Militairpatrouillen wünscht der Gouverneur nicht und will Übergriffe und Unbedachtsamkeiten der Militairbehörde entschieden abstellen oder zurückweisen. In dieser Hinsicht unterschätzt er offenbar den passiven Widerstand, den die Offiziere dieser Arbeit entgegensetzen."

⁵⁸ "Der Gouverneur empfing uns in seiner bekannten liebenswürdigen Art. [...] Beim Gouverneur besprach ich die Sammelarbeit in Omburo und Otjihaenena. Er freut sich derselben sehr und ist bemüht sie in jeder

The long list of wishes presented by Spiecker is met with general benevolence, but few specific promises. Spiecker reports the meeting with his usual painstaking accuracy, noting each point he brought forward and the answers he received, seemingly with a dwindling feeling of success: Initially he stresses the Governor's courteous manner. More and more reservations creep into the answers he has to report. The strangely twisted syntax of the last sentence of this lengthy passage, where Spiecker's conscientiousness, as if in an afterthought, forces him to include a *maybe* ("vielleicht") near the end of the sentence, could be interpreted as involuntary witness to the difference between what Spiecker *wanted* to hear, and what he has to admit he *did* hear, in his discussion with the most powerful man in the colony.

Even if Spiecker probably overrates his influence on the Governor, it cannot be doubted that his commitment to the Herero and Nama is serious; it brings him into occasional conflict with more conservative Rhenish missionaries:

[5 Apr. 1906] With Brother Blecher [in Rehoboth] I had a somewhat disagreeable run-in due to his political views. He insists a little too much on his Germanness, and forgets how little our dear German countrymen, particularly in this country, have shown themselves in the best light. [...] For him, it is self-evident that the Namaqua and Herero only receive what their deeds have earned them. About this I clashed with the Brother, who is usually so sweet-natured, more fiercely than I would have liked. (861)⁵⁹

The passage attests to the difference between Spiecker's position and that of the more conservative missionaries. Whereas some protested to the authorities (such as Kuhlmann, who was closely involved with the pacification effort of the mission and probably felt personally responsible), many missionaries didn't feel that the natives were treated unreasonably harshly.

Weise zu unterstützen. Alle Wünsche des Br. Diehl, die ich ihm vortrug, versprach er zu erfüllen. [...] Bei der Gelegenheit sprach ich über mancherlei Mißstände, die er abzustellen versprach. Für die eingeborenen Strafgefangenen (Verbrecher) sollen bessere Zellen besorgt werden. Gegen Mißhandlung Eingeborener soll ernstlich vorgegangen werden und dergl. mehr. Besonders ernstlich besprach ich noch einmal die angeordnete Untersuchung der Frauen [auf Geschlechtskrankheiten]. Ein bindendes Versprechen die Lage zu ändern erhielt ich nicht, doch sollen Mißstände abgestellt werden. Der Trinkerei der Rehobother Bastards will der Gouverneur mit Ernst entgegenreten und das Ausgeben von permits (Erlaubnisscheinen) ganz oder möglichst beschränken. Die Schenkung des Grundes für Kirche etc. will er gerne genehmigen, ebenso die Schenkung einer Farm. Die Errichtung einer Anstalt für halbweiße Kinder in Hoachanas ist dem Gouverneur sehr sympathisch. Unseren Besitz an dem Platze will er anerkennen. [...] Die Besitztitel für das nicht eingetragene Missionseigentum will er gerne geben, doch sei er jetzt noch nicht dazu im Stande. In Otjihaenena und Omburo gedenkt er Eingeborenenreservate vielleicht einzurichten."

⁵⁹ "Mit Br. Blecher hatte ich einen etwas unangenehmen Zusammenstoß wegen seiner politischen Anschauungen. Er pocht mir etwas sehr auf sein Deutschtum und vergißt, wie wenig sich gerade hier im Lande die lieben deutschen Landsleute im besten Lichte gezeigt haben. [...] Daß die Namaqua und Herero nur empfangen, was ihre Taten wert sind, ist ihm selbstverständlich. Hierüber kam ich mit dem sonst so lieben Bruder heftiger an einander als mir lieb war."

The discursive normality of genocide

Many officers of the Schutztruppe proposed a harsh policy against the native population. After his visit to the prison camp on Shark Island, Spiecker visits Leutnant Wagenführ, vice captain of the military post in Lüderitzbucht. He asks him to provide provisional quarters for the newly arrived prisoners. But he quickly realizes that Wagenführ has a very different agenda:

[1 Sept. 1906] Chief lieutenant Wagenführ [...] came out of the interior and reported that once again, a much higher number of armed natives showed themselves in the south and on the Baiweg [the road from Swakopmund to Windhuk]. "We'll never get to the end, as long as this pampering of the natives continues," he said, approximately. He thought that the insurgents recruited themselves out of people escaped from the prison camps. I tried to convince him that this was impossible. He listened to my wishes in regard to the prisoners on Shark Island and said that they had complained about the people sent to them being useless. (1301-2)⁶⁰

We can only infer what Spiecker had said; he had probably pointed out that many prisoners were sick and dying. Wagenführ reacts in a telling way: He re-interprets Spiecker's pleas in the context of the forced labor the prisoners on Shark Island were used for.

What is meant when the conditions in the camps, where prisoners die in large numbers from untreated sicknesses, poor living conditions, and forced labor, are called "pampering" by Wagenführ? If the prison camps, where men, women and children of the Herero were indiscriminately detained, only produce new insurgents, what might be done?

In Hoachanas, Spiecker learns about the goals of some of the Schutztruppe officers:

[22 Apr. 1906] The officers staying here and their companions had lunch together with us here in the mission building. They were quite amiable and comfortable. [...] As one of them said, he deemed the annihilation of the Hottentots⁶¹ to be our duty, I naturally contradicted him very energetically and said among other things: Such a thought is opposed to such a degree to any Christian moral sentiments that I would have to use too strong words to denounce it, and therefore prefer to remain silent. He gave in then and said that, from a moral perspective, this course of action would not be permitted. (885-6)⁶²

⁶⁰ "Oberleutnant Wagenführ [...] kam aus dem Inneren und berichtete, daß wieder viel mehr bewaffnete Eingeborene im Süden und auf dem Baiweg sich zeigten: "Wir kommen nie zum Ende, solange diese Verhättschelung der Eingeborenen andauert", so ungefähr sagte er. Er meinte die Aufständischen rekrutierten sich aus solchen, die aus den Gefangenenlagern entflohen seien. Ich suchte ihm darzutun, daß das unmöglich sei. Meine Wünsche inbezug auf die Gefangenen auf der Haifischinsel hörte er an und sagte, sie hätten schon sich darüber beschwert, daß man ihnen unbrauchbare Leute sende!"

⁶¹ 'Hottentots' is a derogatory term for the Nama, cf., e.g., the use in Hassert, where 'Hottentots' is used alongside 'Nama' (Kurst Hassert, *Deutschlands Kolonien*. Leipzig: Dr. Seele & Co, 1899).

⁶² "Zu Mittag aßen die hier weilenden Officiere und ihr Anhang mit uns zusammen hier im Missionshaus. Sie waren recht nett und gemütlich. [...] Als einer derselben sagte, er halte die Vernichtung der Hottentotten für unsere Pflicht, widersprach ihm ihm natürlich sehr energisch und sagte ihm unter anderem: Ein solcher

The officer gives in, but only in regard to a “moral perspective”; he seems not to notice that the proposed extermination of a whole people might be *juristically* relevant. In fact, it should have been obvious for all participants of this discussion that the officer had proposed the systematic mass murder of civilians, the greatest conceivable crime in any functioning legal system; thus, the maximum penalty (in the German Empire this was the death penalty, which was handed out for crimes below the level of even a single murder) would be applicable.⁶³

This informal exchange thus makes it clear that the officers of the Schutztruppe operate in a climate of impunity: The officer seems to assume that the Schutztruppe could implement the destruction of a whole people without being charged by a German court. This assumption was certainly correct: Even Lothar von Trotha was not charged after his return to Germany in November 1905, but rather decorated with the Prussian order *Pour le mérite*, although he had made his intention to exterminate the Herero generally known;⁶⁴ even the RMG was informed about this intention by von Trotha himself, as Spiecker notes in his diary:

[24 Jan. 1906] An article of the Trierer Landzeitung was read out, which von Trotha had given to Brother Eich and which clearly expressed that von Trotha intended the complete annihilation of the Herero. (542)⁶⁵

On the other hand, the same officers in Hoachanas seem to be well aware that the Herero and Nama are mostly trying to spare civilians:⁶⁶

[22 Apr. 1906] Interestingly, the officers at lunch told us that the murder of Brother Holzapfel had been carried out, against the express will of the old

Gedanke widerspreche in solchem Maße jedem christlich-sittlichen Empfinden, daß ich zu starke Worte gebrauchen müßte, um ihn zu brandmarken und deshalb lieber schweigen wolle. Er lenkte dann auch ein und meinte, vom sittlichen Standpunkt aus sei ein solches Vorgehen unerlaubt.”

⁶³ It has also been argued that by 1904, customary international law and international treaties were already applicable to the German colonial warfare in Africa; cf. Rachel J. Anderson, “Redressing Colonial Genocide: The Hereros’ Cause of Action Against Germany”. *Scholarly Works*, Paper 288, 2005. <<http://scholars.law.unlv.edu/facpub/288>> [retrieved 9 March 2015].

⁶⁴ Christoph Kamissek proposes that von Trotha’s previous military career and colonial experiences in Poland, German East Africa, and China contributed to his policy of extreme military violence in German South West Africa (Christoph Kamissek, “‘Ich kenne genug Stämme in Afrika’. Lothar von Trotha – eine imperiale Biographie im Offizierkorps des deutschen Kaiserreiches”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 40 (1), 2014: 67-93).

⁶⁵ “Ein Artikel aus der Trierer Landeszeitung wurde verlesen, den von Trotha Bruder Eich übergeben hatte und aus dem deutlich hervorging, daß von Trotha die gänzliche Vernichtung der Herero auf seine Fahne geschrieben hatte.” Eich is the *Präsident* (chairman) of the Herero mission of the RMG. Hinrich Schneider-Waterberg dates the article in question on 26 December 1904 (Hinrich R. Schneider-Waterberg, “Entrümpelung der von Trothaschen Proklamation aus dem Jahr 1904”, Extended version of an article published in the Namibian daily newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung* on 13 Nov. 2004, 2004: 12. <<http://www.traditionsverband.de/download/pdf/entruempelung.pdf>> [retrieved 18 Nov. 2014].

⁶⁶ Cf. Spiecker-Salazar, “Mission und Kolonialherrschaft”: 428, 433.

Hendrik Witbooi, by some cutthroats. That the farmers should be murdered had not been Hendrik's will, either. (886-7)⁶⁷

Thus, at least some of the murders cited for the German public as proof of the insurgents' brutality, had been executed by individuals without permission by their military leader. This runs contrary to the myths perpetuated of bloodthirsty insurgents which were used to show their allegedly uncivilized nature, for example by von Trotha (543 [24 Jan. 1906]).

On his sea voyage from Lüderitzbucht back towards Swakopmund, Spiecker once again enters into discussion with a group of officers:

[3 Sept. 1906] A young lieutenant said: We have to finish the war in the south by promising everything to the Bondels [Bondelswart] land, cattle, and whatever they want. As soon as we have them, we hang them all. I said: "Where is German fidelity then?" So what, every means is right against these people. We have to get the better of them, after all. Nearly everyone thinks in this way here. Another [officer] stressed, with Nietzsche, that here on Earth the right of the strongest prevails. The will of the strong is the law for the weak. Do you really believe, one of them said confidentially to me, that justice reigns here on Earth? I said: I have never believed that, but a just God presides over this Earth and always leads justice to a final victory. The more ruthlessly the strong man uses his power, the deeper and more terrible will be his fall. (1321-2)⁶⁸

Spiecker counters at first with a patriotic concept ("German fidelity"), which he assumes will make an impression on German officers. When his objection is met with cynicism, he falls back to his own area of expertise, and reverts to religious arguments.

Spiecker's diary thus reports two clear-cut proposals of genocide by Schutztruppe officers (i.e. by men with some power of decision, not simple soldiers), who were at that time waging war against the tribes of the Herero, Nama, and Bondelswarts. In both cases, these proposals are uttered with surprising openness in the presence of civilians and missionaries, and in civilian settings: on a ship, and – even more surprisingly – during a lunch invitation at the mission station.⁶⁹ Both incidences cannot be regarded as

⁶⁷ "Übrigens war mir interessant am Mittag, daß die Officiere erzählten, die Ermordung des Br. Holzapfel sei entgegen den ausdrücklichen Willen des alten Hendrik Witbooi von einigen Mordbuben vollzogen worden. Es sei auch nicht Hendriks Willen gewesen, daß die Farmer sollten ermordet werden."

⁶⁸ "Ein junger Leutnant meinte: Man muß den Krieg im Süden dadurch beendigen, daß man den Bondels alles verspricht: Land, Vieh und was sie wollen. Haben wir sie dann, dann hängen wir sie alle. Ich sagte: "Wo bleibt da die deutsche Treue?" Ach, was, diesen Leuten gegenüber ist jedes Mittel recht. Wir müssen sie doch unterkriegen. So denkt man hier fast allgemein. Ein anderer betonte mit Nietzsche, daß hier auf Erden das Recht des Stärkeren gelte. Der Wille des Starken sei das Gesetz für den Schwachen. Glauben Sie denn wirklich noch, sagte einer vertraulich zu mir, daß hier auf Erden Gerechtigkeit herrscht? Ich antwortete: Das habe ich nie geglaubt, aber ein gerechter Gott waltet über dieser Erde und führt die Gerechtigkeit zuletzt immer wieder doch zum Siege. Je mehr der Starke rücksichtslos seine Macht geltend macht, um so tiefer und schrecklicher ist nachher sein Fall."

⁶⁹ The open discussion of genocidal intentions evident from Spiecker's diary has been noted previously, and on the basis of other sources: "Unlike the organisers of the Holocaust who tried to hide the 'final solution' behind a smoke-screen of bureaucratic newspeak, the Germans in Namibia were almost naively open about their intentions." (Tilman Dederig, "The German-Herero War of 1904: Revisionism of Genocide or Imaginary Historiography?", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19 (1), 1993: 80-88 [83]).

exceptions, especially considering that Spiecker seldom speaks with groups of officers in informal settings; rather, they point towards what might be called the discourse normality of genocide. The reality of a war far away from significant political or public control, fought by a country which instilled hardness as a virtue in every male youth (and even more so in soldiers), and with the majority of the settlers in favor of oppression, engendered a thinking that trespassed all bounds of judicial or ethical limits.

Although it is undisputed that von Trotha's killing order, and military tactics between August and October 1904 as documented in the so-called *Generalstabswerk*,⁷⁰ led to a murderous war against the Herero, the question of genocide is still debated in Namibian studies, partly for the reason that the definition of 'genocide' presupposes not only a specific *outcome*, even when it is due to cruelty or murderous acts, but also the *intention* to destroy a whole people.⁷¹

It is therefore of the highest importance that Spiecker's diary presents ample evidence that the will to destroy whole native tribes was present in the Schutztruppe, and had in fact become so widespread and self-evident that officers uttered it repeatedly in the presence of missionaries. It is also interesting to note that these proposals were not made in regard to the Herero, but to the Nama and to the Bondelswart. The relevant entries thus allow the following inferences:

⁷⁰ Cf. Großer Generalstab, Kriegsgeschichtliche Abteilung I, (ed.), *Die Kämpfe der deutschen Truppe in Südwestafrika, vol. 1, Der Feldzug gegen die Herero*, Berlin, Mittler & Sohn, 1906.

⁷¹ For different positions on the genocide question see Benjamin Whitaker, Benjamin, *Revised and Updated Report on the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, E/CN.4/Sub.2/416/1985/6, 2 July 1985, New York, United Nations, 1985; Brigitte Lau, "Uncertain Certainties. The Herero-German War of 1904", *Mibagus*, 2, 1989: 4-8; Gesine Krüger, *Kriegsbewältigung und Geschichtsbewußtsein. Realität, Deutung und Verarbeitung des deutschen Kolonialkriegs in Namibia 1904 bis 1907*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999; Maria Fisch, "Zum 'Genozid' an den Herero", *Zwischen Waterberg und Sandfeld. Befunde und Berichte zur Deutschen Kolonialgeschichte*, 1, 2001: 25-41; Schneider-Waterberg, "Enrümpelung"; Hans-Joachim von Leesen, "Der Herero-Aufstand von 1904. Ein Kolonialkrieg, kein Völkermord", *Deutsche Militärzeitschrift*, 40, July/August, 2004: 30-35; Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005; Andreas Eckl, "*S' ist ein übles Land hier*". *Zur Historiographie eines umstrittenen Kolonialkrieges. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen aus dem Herero-Krieg in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1904 von Georg Hillebrecht und Franz Ritter von Epp*, Köln, Köppe, 2005; idem, "The Herero Genocide of 1904: Source-Critical and Methodological Considerations", *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 3, 2008: 31-61; and the contributions in Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller, (eds.), *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Der Kolonialkrieg (1904–1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen*, Berlin, Links, 2003, and Henning Melber, (ed.), *Genozid und Gedenken. Namibisch-deutsche Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Frankfurt/Main, Brandes & Apsel, 2005. The origin of the debate is often attributed to Horst Drechsler, *Südwestafrika*, but in fact Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term 'genocide' in 1943 and wrote the Convention against Genocide adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, already described the German warfare as a "policy of deliberate extermination" one or two decades earlier (Lemkin n.d.: 50; cited in Dominik J. Schaller, "Genocide in Colonial South-West Africa. The German War against the Herero and Nama, 1904–1907", in: Samuel Totten and Robert K. Hitchcock, (eds.), *Genocide of Indigenous Peoples*, New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction, 2011: 37-60 [38]).

- (i) Destruction of whole tribes was a widespread idea among the members of the Schutztruppe, to such a degree that it was not deemed to be a sensitive topic and was openly discussed in the presence of civilians;
- (ii) genocide was not considered by the Schutztruppe to be illegal and liable to prosecution under applicable German law (which would certainly have preempted discussion with a high-ranking Christian missionary who was known to be soon returning to Germany);
- (iii) the concept of genocide had taken on a discursive normality to such a degree that Spiecker's interlocutors were either unaware of how offensive it would be to him (a high-ranking official of the Rhenish Mission, which had recently been criticized harshly for its 'native friendliness',⁷² or were sure that his knowledge of their opinions could not hurt them.

Conclusions

The diary of Johannes Spiecker received little attention in Namibian studies until its publication in 2012. Although the basic facts of Spiecker's travels were known, a thorough evaluation of the diary leads to important insights into Spiecker's role, as well as into the political influence of the Rhenish Missionary Society, during the Herero-Nama war and genocide. In comparison with much-cited sources such as Spiecker's published visitation report, August Kuhlmann's writings, and Heinrich Vedder's letters, the diary offers extensive additional information, and allows the correction of a number of assumptions about the RMG's role.⁷³ After his return to Germany, Johannes Spiecker became a long-standing and influential director of the Rhenish Missionary Society (from 1908 until his death in 1920). In comparison with other, similar diaries of inspection journeys (such as the travel diary of Theodor Hermann Wangemann, who traveled in 1866–1867 as mission inspector of the Berlin Mission through South Africa), Spiecker can be regarded as a more considerate contemporary voice from the colonial side.⁷⁴

Spiecker took an active role in regard to various political questions. In a number of lengthy discussions with the Governor von Lindequist, he presented evidence (such as Kuhlmann's report from the concentration camp in Lüderitzbucht) of the mistreatment of prisoners, argued for a better treatment of the native population, and spoke out against the "cleaning" by military patrols of any Herero still roaming the land. Perhaps most surprisingly, Spiecker actively involved himself in the prevention of an Ovambo campaign, after witnessing preparations for it by the Schutztruppe.⁷⁵

⁷² E.g. Conrad Rust, *Krieg und Frieden im Hererolande. Aufzeichnungen aus dem Kriegsjahre 1904*, Leipzig, Kittler, 1905; Paul Samassa, *Das neue Südafrika*, Berlin, Schwetschke, 1905.

⁷³ Siefkes, *Sprache*: 174-176.

⁷⁴ Hermann Theodor Wangemann, *Ein Reise-Jahr in Südafrika. Ausführliches Tagebuch über eine in den Jahren 1866 und 1867 ausgeführte Inspektionsreise durch die Missions-Stationen der Berliner-Missions-Gesellschaft*, Berlin, Verlag des Missionshauses, 1868. Cf. Siefkes, *Sprache*: 76f.

⁷⁵ That the campaign was in an advanced state of planning can be inferred by the fact that it was announced by "well-informed sources" (probably government officials) in at least one German newspaper

Spiecker tried energetically to secure 'mission farms' in discussions with the Governor, whereas he claimed the exact opposite in his official visitation report.⁷⁶ Spiecker's published report, which has been cited as source for Spiecker's and the RMG's positions in this question as well as other matters, has therefore to be regarded as unreliable.⁷⁷

In light of the genocide question, two entries from April and September 1906 are of specific importance, wherein Spiecker reports on two distinct encounters where officers of the Schutztruppe, the German colonial army that waged the war against the Herero and Nama, openly propose the annihilation of whole tribes.

With regards to methodology, this article proposes to accept what might be called 'discursive evidence' in a supplementary role to primary evidence regarding historical events. The archives of the Schutztruppe were destroyed during the Second World War, and other material is relatively scarce.⁷⁸ Thus, direct proofs of intentions connected with the German strategy are not generally available. This raises the question of whether the military strategy against the Herero was indeed aimed at their destruction, or if genocidal intentions were limited to Lothar von Trotha and Alfred von Schlieffen who uttered them in public. These questions are also relevant for the evaluation of the continuing war after von Trotha's resignation in November 1905.

Analyzing discursive structures that were present in specific historic situations, and using them – with due care – as indicators of sentiment and behavioral patterns, allows us draw inferences on the plausibility of certain behaviors or intentions, at times and in locations when no direct proof is available. In the evaluation of discursive evidence, the context and interpersonal relations of the reported communicative situations have to be considered: Thus, for the two analyzed passages on genocide, the functions and status of speakers and listeners, and the communicative context (e.g. a lunch invitation to a mission station, as opposed to situations of military camaraderie where 'rough talk' about destroying the enemy would be common) have to be taken into account. Under these conditions, the information in Spiecker's diary becomes relevant for the evaluation of genocidal intentions connected with the German strategy against the Herero. Proponents of the hypothesis that the destruction of a large part of the Herero people was unintentional, and thus did not constitute a genocide by the Germans against the Herero, would have to explain how unmitigated proposals of genocide could have been a discourse normality less than two years later, as Spiecker's diary demonstrates.

(cf. Freiburger Zeitung, "Vom Herero-Aufstand. Zur Lage in Südwestafrika wird dem Lokalanzeiger von wohlunterrichteter Seite geschrieben", *Freiburger Zeitung*, 13 Sept. 1904, page 1. <<http://www.freiburg-postkolonial.de/Seiten/FreiburgerZeitung1904-09-13.htm>> [retrieved 18 Nov. 2014].

⁷⁶ Spiecker, *Rheinische Mission*: 71.

⁷⁷ Lothar Engel, *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus im deutschen Protestantismus in Namibia 1907 bis 1945. Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Mission und Kirche im ehemaligen Kolonial- und Mandatsgebiet Südwestafrika*, Bern, Lang, 1976: 43.

⁷⁸ Eckl, "Herero Genocide": 33f.

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