

High Treason: The trial of the Bondelzwarts *kaptein* and the politics of settler self-delusion

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Abstract

This paper concerns official “truth-seeking” about the Bondelzwarts Rebellion and its brutal suppression in 1922 by the South African administration in its newly-mandated territory of South West Africa. These events generated a number of official accounts, namely the administrator’s report, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry and subsequent debates in the South African parliament and the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. These inquisitorial modes of truth-seeking are contrasted with the adversarial juridical mode in the treason trial resulting from the Bondelzwarts Rebellion, all of which share a common core, a particularistic, explanatory framework of describing individual motives and actions, thereby tracing a chain of events that led to collective violence. Like other commissions investigating “racial violence” in this era, they argued that while “inferior races” might be causally implicated, such violence reflected the failure of individual colonial officials to convince the “natives” of the benefits of colonialism. Remarkably, the judgement in the Treason Trial is ignored in these official debates at establishing the “truth”. It is striking how key government players denied the emerging consensus of what occurred. Tavis and Aronson’s work on essentialism and cognitive dissonance is applied to understand this situation, suggesting the importance of self-delusion for understanding the workings of colonialism.

Keywords: Bondelzwarts Rebellion; Truth-seeking; Official reports; Commissions of inquiry; Court judgement; Self-delusion.

Introduction

In 1922 a series of violent events occurred which culminated when the administration in the newly-mandated territory of South West Africa sent a force of some 400 men to subdue a group of poorly armed people commonly called the Bondelzwarts, who lived near the arid southern border of what is now Namibia. The authorities used machine guns, cannons and aeroplanes, killing over a hundred and fifteen

¹ Prof. Gordon is also an extraordinary scholar of the University of the Free State.

men, women, and children, while government forces suffered two fatalities. While grievances concerning a variety of issues such as dog tax, cattle-branding, loss of land and war damage compensation had been festering for a long time, the actual physical action lasted less than two weeks ending with the death of the alleged military leader, Abraham Morris. Despite the reality that these so-called punitive expeditions were commonplace in the colonies of the era, the national and international publicity these particular events garnered was extraordinary in that it led to the first High Treason trial in Namibia: an important case for a number of reasons, not least for how it dismembered significant parts of the official narratives of what became known as the Bondelzwarts Rebellion.

In the South African parliament these developments unleashed a rancorous debate centred on the findings of a Commission of Inquiry which “crystaliz[ed]... the fundamental difference of opinion on native policy which divides, as by a yawning cleft, the white races of this country”.² At the newly-established League of Nations, under whose aegis South Africa administered the former German colony, it created one of the first international crises the League had to grapple with. As Pedersen puts it:³

Like a stone dropped into a pond, the Bondelzwarts affair sent ripples in every direction. It influenced South Africa's attitude towards the League and [its] reputation in the world; it drove the [Permanent Mandates] Commission to define its doctrine and practice; it shaped how the Commission viewed all other mandatory powers and how those powers responded.

The occurrences generated a slew of official efforts to establish the “truth” about what happened and why. Two weeks after the rebellion the mandate administrator, Gysbert Hofmeyr, released his version which was followed several months later by the official Report of the Commission of Inquiry which, after the parliamentary debate, was forwarded to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations for consideration. Finally, there was the High Treason trial of the Bondelzwarts *kaptein*, Chief Jacobus Christian in May/June 1923 which, despite being contemporaneous, is overlooked in settler and League of Nations debates as well as the scholarly appraisals of these events.⁴ Truth has many forms: in this article it is construed as an emergent, open-ended credible account shared by a number of sceptical observers concerning facts or actions which are indisputable and empirically verifiable.

2 I would like to thank Bernie Moore for ferreting out hard-to-find materials and stimulating conversations on Bondelzwarts matters. *Cape Times*, 11 April 1923. Presumably referring to the Afrikaners and English-speakers.

3 S Pedersen, *The guardians: The League of Nations and the crisis of empire* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 127.

4 AM Davey, *The Bondelzwarts affair: A study of the repercussions* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 1961); T Emmett, *Popular resistance and the roots of nationalism in Namibia* (Basel, P Schlettwein, 1999); R Freislich, *The last tribal war* (Cape Town, Struik, 1964); G Lewis, “The Bondelzwarts rebellion of 1922” (MA, Rhodes, 1977); and S Pedersen, *The guardians...*

Creating the official “truth”

Under international and national pressures, the South African premier, JC Smuts, who was respected worldwide as one of the founders of the League of Nations, tasked the newly-created Native Affairs Commission (NAC) to investigate and report on what the administrator termed a “rising”, the Commission of Inquiry labelled a “rebellion” and the League called an “affair”. On the other hand, the Anti-Slavery Society refused to use these terms because they legitimised the excessive and unwarranted use of force and preferred the term “massacre”. The Bondelzwarts simply refer to it as the “*Oorlog*” (war). These labels demonstrate how people define values and how events are described and analysed. Each categorisation implies a different version of what the compilers perceive to be “the truth”, the definitive description of what happened and its causes.

The first attempt at truth revelation was the *Report of the Administrator on the Bondelzwarts Rising, 1922* and was largely intended to exculpate his actions.⁵ The Bondelzwarts, he wrote, were “very warlike” and had “always” been described by Europeans as “very insolent.” He dismissed the ostensible reason for the “trouble” that they could not afford the dog taxes levied on them, since he claimed they possessed substantial livestock. Instead, he pointed to the return from the Cape of two Bondelzwarts leaders, Jacobus Christian and Abraham Morris who had gained prominence in their role as guerrilla leaders against German colonialism before fleeing in 1907 to escape retribution. In 1917 the Bondelzwarts had requested that Christian be allowed to return to be appointed *kaptein* (chief). Despite official refusal Christian had returned and was given a suspended sentence for bringing livestock and firearms illegally into the territory. However, he was allowed to remain. While not legally recognised as *kaptein* he was accepted by both followers and the authorities as de facto chief. However, the arrival in late April 1922 of Morris, renowned for his guerrilla exploits against the Germans in 1904-1907, exacerbated matters, especially when a group of Bondelzwarts people prevented the police from arresting him.

To Hofmeyr it was clear that Christian was skilfully evading all possibility of a peaceful settlement by refusing to deliver Morris to the authorities. “Nearly every responsible [white] person believed that a general rising was pending”, he averred, and thus a strong response was needed to reassure the settlers. The final insult was the “unnecessary gross indignity” suffered by the chief of police, Major van Coller and the Warmbad district magistrate, Fleck, who were subjected to an armed escort during negotiations with Christian. Later reports and confiscated correspondence, Hofmeyr claimed, confirmed that Christian was plotting and organising his people with the assistance of outside agitators like AAS LeFleur, of the Griqua Independence

5 South Africa, *Report of the administrator of South West Africa on the Bondelzwarts rising, 1922* (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1922).

Movement.⁶ Hofmeyr's prompt action by appointing himself commander-in-chief and calling for volunteers had averted a widespread uprising.

This version was followed the next year by the so-called "truth" as contained in the *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Rebellion of the Bondelzwarts*.⁷ This report was the product of the newly-established South African Native Affairs Commission. Members of the NAC included Senator AW Roberts, long involved in African education and principal of the South African Native College; CT Loram, a prominent figure in the formation of the liberal South African Institute of Race Relations, whose Columbia doctorate was published in 1917 as *The Education of the South African Native*; and General LAS Lemmer, a South African War veteran and member of parliament, chosen by Smuts for his "earthy common sense...as a counterweight to the academic sophistication of his two colleagues".⁸

The first witness the commission heard was JF Herbst, secretary for the territory, who was deeply involved in the suppression. Asked to provide specific instances of insolence, he responded that when the commission visited Warmbad the settlers there would provide many examples. He added that the Bondelzwarts "do not want to admit that the white man has any right to exercise the position of white man... we should put them out of the country where they cannot get into contact with the white man". The rebellion had taken the administration by surprise, because the Bondelzwarts had "deceived" officials. Conveniently, his statement ignored mention of the numerous attempts made by the Bondelzwarts to have their grievances addressed.⁹

In almost every phase of its inquiry and in its main conclusions the commission diverged with Lemmer dissenting. Roberts and Loram found that many people were living at the "extreme edge of destitution," and that farmers' labour needs could be alleviated by improving conditions of employment. The report was generally critical of the administration. One of the commission's chief concerns was black and white relations characterised by gross mistrust. This was attributed to many officials not possessing the qualities necessary for efficient administration. Lemmer took especial exception to this conclusion, claiming that such a wide recommendation was beyond the commission's reference and "resisted the inference... that the natives are not being treated as they should in a mandated Territory". To him, the mistrust between Bondelzwarts and police was not caused by police behaviour but by the character of the Bondelzwarts. They were "temperamentally lazy and lacking the stimuli to

6 A remarkable visionary, Le Fleur (1867-1941) was at that time trying to purchase farms in Namaqualand to establish a colony for people of colour.

7 South Africa, *Report of the commission appointed to enquire into the Rebellion of the Bondelzwarts* (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1923).

8 K Hancock, *Smuts: The fields of force, 1919-1950* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 93.

9 National Archives of Namibia (hereafter NAN), Windhoek, A.486, Vol. 3, "Evidence", pp. 5-6.

improve their situation”.¹⁰ The purpose of the dog tax, he averred, apparently was not to force them to take up farm work, but to protect the fauna. Lemmer felt that Hofmeyr had acted correctly and with due diligence.

Accompanying the commission’s report was a ten-page memorandum by Hofmeyr defending his actions. He felt condemned without trial:¹¹

But for the forbearance and tact of the authorities, who were well aware of the peculiar traits of the Hottentots – though the Commission did not think so – a clash of arms would long ago have resulted.

In parliament the report generated an acrimonious debate, with the opposition Labour Party calling the events a “blot on the escutcheon of South Africa” and dismissing Hofmeyr as a “prancing pro-consul”. Labour MP Arthur Barlow, accused the administration of destroying the embryonic self-government of the Bondelzwarts and claimed that the tactlessness of the police coupled with mismanagement and maladministration were the major causes of the imbroglio.¹²

Lemmer defended Hofmeyr’s actions. The sole cause of the bloodshed, he maintained, was Bondelzwarts pig-headedness. Hofmeyr had attempted peaceful negotiations but received only an insulting reply and subsequent invitations had been ignored. Smuts finally took the podium, claiming the debate reflected the soul of South Africa as it exposed the opposing viewpoints of the missionaries and the colonists. His response focused on two “salient facts”: First, Morris was feared by whites because his guerrilla activities against the Germans which had cost Germany over £30 million and he had never applied to return to SWA. It was strange that his return occurred simultaneously with the arming and concentration of the Bondelzwarts. Second, while Hofmeyr was moving his forces to the Bondelzwarts Reserve, Morris tried to attack Warmbad, but fortunately Hofmeyr managed to strike the first blow. The Bondelzwarts had no “substantial grievances”. After all, Smuts went on: “[They] are a native people with simple minds – they misunderstand things and exaggerate others, and in one way or another a whole psychology grows up in their minds which in the end brings forth rebellion”. He continued with a whiff of patriotism, that he was:¹³

...pained by the discussion which had put the facts out of focus. [It] ... would go to the outside world and would be read by people who did not know the circumstances and the local situation. The discussion ... and the charges raised would be used against them in other parts of the world by people who had not given one-tenth of the time or consideration to native affairs that we had ... [all of which elicited the conventional murmur of assent] Hear

10 South Africa, *Report of the Commission*..., p. 30.

11 South Africa, *Memorandum by the Administrator of South West Africa on the Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Rebellion of the Bondelzwarts* (UG, 16/’23), Cape Town, Government Printer, 1923), p. 1.

12 *Cape Times*, 22 May 1923.

13 *Cape Times*, 23 May 1923.

Hear!.

Smuts said that he was sending Major Herbst, the newly promoted to secretary for Native Affairs in South Africa, “who knows all the facts” to provide additional evidence, along with the commission’s report, to the League of Nations, for its 1923 session.

Creating the ‘international’ truth

At hearings conducted by the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC), Herbst presented a memorandum which claimed that both the Commission of Inquiry and the public had ignored one of the main causes of the incident, namely the refusal of the administration to recognise Christian as headman: “This was, without a doubt, a sore point with [Christian]”.¹⁴ He dismissed the PMC Report on the Bondelzwarts out of hand, labelling it as biased, inadequate, and unreliable because nobody in South Africa knew anything about the situation in South West Africa. This, despite Smuts’s insistence in parliament that the report was “a careful and painstaking investigation of the facts from all points of view”. Herbst rejected the report’s recommendation concerning revamping the system of native administration since the SWA administration had not been consulted. Moreover, in his view, such recommendations were beyond the commission’s remit. Queried whether a report based on incorrect information was misleading if forwarded without reservations to the PMC, Herbst simply avoided the question. Indeed, he proved singularly adept at evasion or “simply ignoring” questions, as when asked if Smuts would endorse his view that “natives” existed solely as a source of cheap labour, or when asked who had fired the first shots. He claimed, ambiguously, that Morris was on his way to Warmbad with armed men. On such issues, the PMC despite consisting of members with extensive colonial experience, did not press for clarification.¹⁵

Regarding recommendations that the Bondelzwarts be given some form of autonomy, Herbst asserted this was impractical because the Germans had “broken up” the “tribes” in the south. He ignored the fact that this did not apply to the Bondelzwarts who still had a traditional council and chief. “There had been no complaint” concerning the size of their reserve, which Herbst deemed sufficient as “they had the best land in that part of the country, but they certainly had asked for all the land recently occupied [indeed] the whole ambition of a native was to own stock. He wished for little more”.¹⁶ He dismissed even minor recommendations, such as transferring those officials involved in the affair, preferring to “let sleeping dogs lie”. Addressing one of

¹⁴ Oddly, Herbst had not raised this matter when giving evidence to the Commission of Inquiry.

¹⁵ Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC), *Report of the Bondelzwarts Rebellion*, A.47.1923, VI (Geneva, League of Nations, 1923), p. 125.

¹⁶ Contrast this with the observation of Denys Reitz, an influential friend of Smuts, who visited Warmbad in 1925. He “found it hard to understand how any human beings are able to exist in this sterile environment”. See D Reitz, *No Outspan* (London, Faber & Faber, 1942), p. 93.

the central concerns raised by the League of Nations on the possibility of restoring the economic situation of the Bondelzwarts, Herbst commented blithely that the need for humanitarian assistance was minimal and that the Bondelzwarts men should instead be encouraged to go out and seek work.¹⁷ While it was difficult to apportion the relative blameworthiness between Christian and Morris, he believed the “rising” was engineered in Warmbad district but plotters had turned to Morris, “as he had the necessary prestige”. Indigenes, he said, tended to “allow grievances to accumulate for a long time... brood over them, magnify them and become obsessed by them, so that it is difficult to say, when a rising takes place, what ... the exact cause [might be]”. Nevertheless, he concluded, the “actual cause” was the desire to be recognised as a chieftdom and to have Christian as their proper chief.¹⁸

The PMC Report found that there were three interlocking “first causes”. First, the prohibitive dog tax which had led to numerous prosecutions; second, the vagrancy proclamation which allowed for the arrest of any indigene found without a visible lawful means of subsistence, arbitrarily fixed at 10 head of cattle or 50 small-stock; and finally, the branding laws, which stipulated that while whites could keep their branding irons, indigenes had to have theirs secured by the administration.

Despite Herbst’s presentation, the PMC concluded that the overall cause of the Bondelzwarts incident was distrust between black and white and that Hofmeyr had exaggerated the gravity of the situation. It asserted that timely intervention by the administrator would have prevented the rebellion, the repression of which had been carried out with excessive severity. It was harshly critical of the Commission of Inquiry as being incomplete and of lacking authority. The administrator, as a civil servant, was condemned personally for conducting military operations, since such action:¹⁹

... excludes in the eyes of the natives the possibility of a supreme appeal to the highest authority, but also, as a consequence the Administrator is deprived of his capacity as an impartial critic and judge of the conduct of operations.

After reading a draft of the PMC Report to the Council of the League of Nations, Herbst, perhaps somewhat taken aback, requested another appearance as he had not considered the possibility of an adverse verdict. He then launched a strong plea that the administrator should not be severely criticised because this would lead to loss of standing amongst whites and indigenes and make the task of administration virtually impossible.

With the release of the report, the South African representative to the League, Sir Edgar Walton, attacked its findings roundly, using what were to become standard

17 PMC *Report of the Bondelzwarts...*, pp. 129-132.

18 PMC *Report of the Bondelzwarts...*, pp. 116-117; 125; 122.

19 PMC *Report of the Bondelzwarts...*, p. 5.

rhetoical devices in the South African armoury: the PMC had “failed altogether to realize the situation in South West Africa”. Statements claiming that settlers believed indigenes existed only to provide labour, revealed the blatant prejudices of the League of Nations which was ignoring:

...the obvious fact that in that development the native is being gradually civilized, and, indeed, that he can be civilized in no other way ... the maintenance of law and order is an essential preliminary to the inculcation of the principles of civilization.

Walton then proceeded to present a novel rationale for why Smuts had not endorsed the report: He did not want to prejudice the PMC’s findings! Walton claimed that the PMC report “will be resented by the whole of the white population of the territory, and its only effect on the native people will be to make them more difficult to manage and less amenable to civilizing forces”.²⁰

The Council’s resolution endorsed the PMC conclusion that the ultimate cause lay in the prevailing unstable conditions in which the native population found itself having been subject to harsh German rule and unsettled by the spectacle of war between two white opponents. This, it stated, “makes the lack of comprehension on both sides... deplorable”.²¹

All these narrative versions of the “truth” were presented and tailored with specific audiences in mind. The administrator’s report was largely aimed at parliament while the PMC’s report was clearly written with the League of Nations in mind. Surprisingly, in these various examinations and diatribes the judicial account in the court case where Kaptein Jacobus Christian was tried on a number of charges, has largely been overlooked even though it occurred before Herbst’s visit to Geneva.

The “judicial” truth revealed: *Rex vs Christian*

While the Commission of Inquiry functioned largely as an inquisitorial institution, the case in the High Court displayed a more adversarial character. The judicial “truth” was revealed in the written record of the Supreme Court case when Christian was tried for high treason in what was the first case of this nature in the territory. Like historians, jurists seek to establish the “true facts”, an activity enhanced by sworn testimony delivered in the presence of the public and subject to questioning by a trained lawyer. There are, however, limitations chiefly what the legal system regards

20 E Walton, *Comments of the accredited representative of the Union of South Africa on the Commission’s Report on the Bondelzwarts Rebellion* (Geneva, League of Nations, 1923), p. 2.

21 NAN, BTS, Correspondence 2/1/87, PMC Annexure LoN Resolution, Fifth Meeting, 13 December 1923. Earlier, in his response to the Official Report, Hofmeyr denied that “confusion” had resulted in the transition from German to South African rule because the administration had continued to enforce the German laws albeit more humanely and without the sjambok. See South Africa, *Memorandum...*, 1923, p. 8.

as permissible evidence. Courts gain truth, not from certainty but from agreement on the process of “momentary formulation”.²² While lawyers are not required to disclose the “full facts”, the “truth” in the guise of intent or motive, emerges in the contested space between the two adversaries. While far from impartial, the court plays an active role in evaluating evidence to establish truth “beyond reasonable doubt”.

When all is said and done, the court is relatively independent and its verdict is usually independent of the authority that established it. The judicial approach is particularly valuable because the Commission of Inquiry had no subpoena powers. It only “invited” the public to give evidence, did not require sworn testimony, took evidence in private (although sometimes in the presence of the police), and lacked specialised interrogative skills. The eleven charges against the *kaptein* were derived from evidence similar to that examined by the Commission of Inquiry, yet Christian was only found guilty on two comparatively minor charges.²³

Immediately after hostilities ended, Hofmeyr sent Detective Sergeant Pieterse to gather evidence of treason and Attorney-General Lennox Ward started preparing briefs. The Warmbad magistrate, Fleck, undertook preparatory examinations shortly after the Commission of Inquiry had conducted interviews in Warmbad and in the Reserve. Ward’s initial focus was on the appointment of military officers as evidence of intention to engage in rebellion. It was built upon testimony of the key Crown witness, the official headman, Timotheus Beukes, who had been granted immunity from prosecution. Fleck was instructed to find at least two witnesses to corroborate Beukes’s version of events. Whether this was a requirement in overt acts of high treason as Ward claimed, or simply distrust of indigenous witnesses and the realisation that Beukes himself was an unreliable witness, could not be established, but in all likelihood all three concerns played into Ward’s request and he also asked Fleck to assist Beukes in preparing his affidavit.²⁴

Pre-trial hearings were conducted until December 1922 and statements were taken from witnesses, most of whom were incarcerated. In these hearings-cum-interrogations, the accused, Jacobus Christian, was present and was allowed to question witnesses, but having no legal representation, rarely did so. All the affidavits were sworn before Fleck and witnessed by AJ Rossouw, the acting assistant magistrate, who doubled as public prosecutor in a number of cases involving the prisoners. The other attesting witness was Detective Sgt Pieterse. Whether their presence constituted intimidation was not addressed by the court. The Commission of Inquiry found clear evidence that prisoners had been flogged in goal, but “proper

22 L. Rosen, *Law as culture* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 129.

23 Material for this section is drawn largely from NAN, ATT 1-5-1, File JU.H. 25-516, “Cases arising out of the Bondelswarts uprising” and the court transcripts found in NAN, 13, SCW Criminal 1923: 25 1/1/13.

24 NAN, ATT 1-5-1, Chief Clerk to Magistrate, Warmbad, 14 July 1922.

proceedings” had been taken against the official responsible.²⁵ Much of the evidence replicates that given to the Commission of Inquiry.

Fleck eventually presented Ward with sworn affidavits and exhibits, mostly items of correspondence, which were used to indict Jacobus Christian, “a farmer residing in Guruchas”, along with three “ringleaders”, Maans Stephanus, leader of the Herero section in the reserve; Klaas Izaks, assistant commandant, councillor and foreman, and Stefanus Christian, a veld cornet, on nine charges, namely that Christian with their assistance engaged in:

- Usurpation of the Chieftaincy in that Christian “did in rebellious defiance...usurp and arrogate to himself” the office of chief.
- Organizing military forces and making military appointments, namely Commandant, Military Magistrate, Veld Cornets, Corporals & Wachtmeister.
- That they “did invite, assist, aid and abet” Morris, “a turbulent and evilly disposed member of the Bondelzwarts” to clandestinely enter with arms, ammunition, livestock and followers “to assist in waging war”.
- Conspiracy, namely “to conspire, consult, consent and agree to make war and rebellion”.
- Acting as commander-in-chief.
- Commandeering fire-arms, namely three rifles at Grootplaats, a Boer farm.
- Commandeering arms, namely a rifle and ammunition along with supplies at Driehoek from the quarters of the Reserve superintendent.
- Arresting and commandeering Christian Markus, a Malay residing in Kalkfontein, to join the rebellion.
- Bearing arms, levying and serving in war and rebellion, a charge divided into three parts dealing with being in command and participating in two military engagements.²⁶

Eventually charges were withdrawn against Maans Stephanus while Klaas Izak and Stefanus Christian were found guilty in separate trials of stealing firearms and participating in a battle, receiving sentences of two years imprisonment with hard labour.

Christian’s trial was held in the southern circuit of the Supreme Court in Keetmanshoop commencing on 21 May 1923 with judgment delivered on 4 June, while an extensive written explanation for the judgment was provided four days later. Presiding was the sole judge in the territory, Clement Gutsche assisted by two assessors. Despite Herbst’s earlier assurance to the Commission of Inquiry that Christian was wealthy enough to afford paid counsel, 27-year-old Adv. Israel Goldblatt represented him *pro deo*. Twenty-six witnesses were called and 44 exhibits

25 South Africa, *Report of the Commission...*, p. 32. This had led to Constable Swiegers being dismissed, although clearly it was Pieterse who instigated the beatings.

26 NAN, 13 SCW, Criminal 1923, 25 1/1.13.

were presented, the most significant being letters written by various Bondelzwarts. A surprising omission on the witness list was Detective Sgt Pieterse for reasons that will become apparent.

Gutsche found Christian not guilty on the first, third and fourth charges. During the proceedings Ward withdrew the second, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth charges. On the ninth charge he was found not guilty on the first part, namely of being in command of the rebels, but admitted to bearing arms.

In the reasons for his judgment the evidence of Father Isenring, who had not given testimony to the Commission of Enquiry, proved crucial. A Swiss-American he had been stationed in the Bondelzwarts Reserve from October 1919 to 1921 before being transferred to nearby Warmbad. This meant that of all the white witnesses, he had been there longest and was the most familiar with daily life in the reserve. Despite Christian belonging to the Rhenish congregation, Isenring knew him well, finding him to be honest, law-abiding trustworthy, reliable and respectful. As de facto chief, Christian had restrained the radical elements and assisted the administration where necessary, but he had lost his restraining influence with the arrival of Morris. In trying to deal with the issue of dog taxes, Christian had encouraged all inhabitants to bring their dogs to Guruchas to see if they could live without dogs, but soon they heard the clamour of the jackals “and the little that was left of the goats and sheep... were very much decimated in about a week”. Isenring had written to the administrative officials about this in 1921.²⁷

When asked what grievances he knew of, Isenring responded that although springbok were “without number, ... the Bondels were not [even] permitted [to do] as much as to drive them away”. The Bondelzwarts wanted guns to drive them away which would be a blessing as they were not allowed to hunt in their reserve, even with “stones or sticks”. He had written to the government requesting that residents be allowed to hunt as long as they did not use firearms, slings or traps, and [he] had personally raised the matter with Native Commissioner Manning, but to no effect. This, in Isenring’s opinion, was the “beginning of the trouble”.

Queried on whether he knew that the Bondelzwarts had written letters outlining their grievances to the administration, Isenring responded that he was not surprised as “no white people would stand such injuries”, yet he still proved obedient to the government. They had not paid dog tax because they simply had no money. When told that the police had claimed that 14 000 livestock had been captured at Guruchas, Isenring replied that

²⁷ As the Commission of Enquiry reported, this had resulted in Hofmeyr sending the native commissioner, Major Manning to investigate. Manning dismissed Isenring’s concerns as exaggerated and the product of an inexperienced American. However, Isenring was simply echoing a long line of complaints by Catholic clergy. In 1922, shortly before the uprising, Bishop Simon who had been in the region for over 30 years noted that of the various Catholic stations in his diocese, Gabis was by far the most poverty-stricken. See F Wehr, *Mission am Oranje* (Eichstätt, Franz Sales Verlag, 1994), pp. 304-306.

he found this inconceivable, because not all their stock was at Guruchas. He distrusted police statements, having first-hand knowledge of their misstatements concerning prisoners. Later, he admitted that he doubted the veracity of any police statement.²⁸

Isenring was present at the February 1921 meeting when the administrator met a number of inhabitants of the Bondelzwart Reserve to discuss their grievances, including a request to own rifles, and for Christian to be recognised as chief. Hofmeyr responded to these requests by saying that if firearms were needed for self-protection, residents should apply to the magistrate who would forward the request to him for his consideration. He also stated that he would consider recognising Christian's status subject to good conduct. This was interpreted by Christian, along with the Bondelzwarts, as a provisional appointment and thus Christian had invited a number of Bondelzwarts people from Kakamas to return and, heeding the administrator's call for more workers, said that they were prepared to accept employment.

Gutsche then turned to the letter written to LeFleur and signed by 51 Bondelzwarts. While missing the first page it was clearly a call for assistance in the hope that LeFleur would be able to have their concerns addressed in the South African parliament, because their negotiations with the SWA Administration had been frustratingly fruitless. Some of their grievances were then listed: they were no longer allowed to live on game, nor allowed to carry firearms and were burdened by the dog tax. Moreover, efforts to obtain redress from both the German and British governments for the heavy losses suffered during the First World War – when the Bondelzwarts were forcibly relocated to the north – had been singularly unsuccessful. Gutsche dismissed this document as evidence of a conspiracy. Similarly, he rejected the claim concerning the appointment of officials bearing military titles. These were not for the purposes of war but followed tradition for maintaining law and order within the community.

Regarding Morris's return, there was some correspondence about Morris wanting to attend a meeting of the royal lineage (he was Christian's cousin), but then Morris wrote in late April 1922 saying that he had been ejected from the Steinkopf Reserve and needed help in ferrying some weak people to the Bondelzwarts Reserve. When Magistrate Fleck heard rumours to this effect and that Morris had allegedly stolen firearms, he asked the Bondelzwarts foremen for information. They were unable to provide this, so he threatened them with arrest. Christian, however, wrote to the superintendent notifying him of Morris's arrival and Sgt van Niekerk, a "competent and determined police officer" according to the Commission of Inquiry,²⁹ accompanied by Constable Kraai, rode out to check if Morris and his party had the

28 With good reason: To take the evidence of Sgt Naudé who conducted the 1921 census of the reserve and claimed between 1 200 and 1 300 Bondels residents there, while H Blumhagen, cites official census figures of 533 residents [*Südafrika (Unter Einschluss von Südwestafrika)* (Hamburg: L.Friederichsen, 1921), p. 86].

29 South Africa, *Report of the Commission...*, p. 14.

necessary permits.

He met Morris, who surrendered his rifle, and then checked on the rest of the Morris party before returning to Guruchas where, as people were leaving Sunday church services, he announced that he was arresting Morris. This precipitated outrage but Christian calmed the situation by promising to deliver Morris to Warmbad. However, the next day he sent a letter claiming that Morris and his followers were unwilling to surrender. Van Niekerk's written response was unavailable but he claimed he asked under what terms Morris would surrender. After receiving no response, he attempted an arrest but was forcibly restrained by local Bondelzwarts. Van Niekerk denied threatening them with war, but it was clear that both van Niekerk and the audience were in a state of high excitement. Whatever words he used, it was obvious the Bondelzwarts believed the government was going to move against them with armed force.

Fleck reported these events to the administrator adding that the Bondelzwarts were assembling. He also wrote to Christian asking him to come to Warmbad but received no response. Major van Coller accompanied by eight men arrived subsequently at Kalkfontein, the railhead closest to the Bondelzwarts Reserve, to investigate the matter. Superintendent Noothout accordingly sent Christian a letter asking him to meet with van Coller. Kraai, the hapless messenger, was intercepted by an armed piquet who, after depriving him of horse and belt, escorted him to Christian who returned these items to Kraai. Christian responded to the invitation claiming he could not come as both he and his wife were ill.³⁰ Moreover, van Niekerk had promised that the community would be "destroyed" in a few days.

Hofmeyr subsequently instructed Noothout to visit Christian with a "reliable European" to inform him that the administration only wanted to arrest the law-breakers and would not kill or harm them, but at the same time he ordered a "sufficient" number of mounted volunteers to be sworn in. Noothout requested Msg Krolikowski, the prefect apostolic, to accompany him.³¹

Together they travelled to see Christian, and en-route were met and escorted by an armed picket, but were treated civilly. After discussions, Noothout drafted a letter, signed by Christian and Beukes, saying that if they delivered the wanted men, all would be "forgiven and forgotten". Two days later, van Coller again sent Krolikowski to offer Christian a safe conduct pass to attend the discussions. As this proved unsatisfactory, van Coller, Noothout and Krolikowski set out by car, but were met by a picket and were escorted to Christian where more than 200 Bondelzwarts

30 Probably with some merit, because Kraai described Christian as "lying on a bed" when they met. This in contrast with the views of Hofmeyr, Herbst and Ward that it was a deliberate strategy to play for time.

31 Krolikowski died in January 1923 and thus could not be called as a witness. South Africa, *Report of the Commission...*, p. 17.

were assembled. Here, van Collier summarised the telegram that Hofmeyr had sent authorising him to act in the administrator's name and demanded the men be delivered forthwith to be tried for their crimes, with clemency at the administrator's discretion, that all arms and ammunition be surrendered and that Christian and Beukes desist from obstructing the police. Failure to comply immediately would mean facing dire consequences, not only personally, but for all the Bondelzwarts. At the mention of surrendering their arms, according to van Collier there were "loud murmurings and many left the meeting". Van Collier requested a written response to the administrator's demands and an escort out from the meeting.

After requesting a day's delay to consult with the all the Bondelzwarts, Christian responded:³²

Please honoured sir, it is certainly hard to deliver property because it is certainly my property – the guns and the five men. The men have stolen nothing from any people and [as for] the gun Abraham Morris has surrendered [it] to Sergeant van Niekerk. Further I see, as Sergeant van Niekerk told me, the troops are concentrating in Warmbad and Kalkfontein.

Events then escalated into full-blown conflict. A brief engagement was followed two days later by fierce bombing, forcing the Bondelzwarts to withdraw to the vicinity of the Orange River. After hot pursuit, Morris was killed on 3 June and a few days later the Bondelzwarts surrendered.

Having summarised the events, Gutsche discussed the Crown's evidence which was based largely on Beukes's testimony. This evidence had to be treated with the greatest reserve and required the strongest corroboration because Beukes had the reputation of being a self-confessed perjurer, a traitor to both the administration and to his people, a heavy drinker, insulting on occasion, and sexually immoral. Turning to the first charge of usurpation, the judge ruled that "hostile intent" had not been proven and thus found him not guilty. While Christian was not legally recognised, the administration had accepted his *de facto* chieftainship and he had fulfilled chiefly duties. Regarding Christian's failure to assist Sgt van Niekerk, Gutsche recognised that, as witness Stephanus Christian (and Constable Kraai) claimed: "the Bondels were too strong for the captain",³³ and was thus found not guilty on the third charge.

Charges four and the first part of charge nine were connected by having the same intention, but the Crown had failed to prove Christian had engaged in a conspiracy. Charge five, that Christian had been the commander-in-chief was withdrawn because even Crown witnesses averred that military command rested with Morris

32 NAN 13, SCW 1923 Judgement typescript p. 8.

33 Gutsche might have added that as Christian was NOT officially recognised as chief by the administration, he had no legal obligation to help the administration. Indeed, the ethnographic evidence suggests that Bondelzwarts chiefs only had nominal power, placing their imprimatur on decisions made by the Council (see I Schapera, *Government and politics in tribal societies* (New York, Schocken, 1967)).

and Adam Pienaar, both of whom had been killed. On charges six and seven, related to the theft of firearms, Gutsche found that Christian had provided neither direct nor indirect assistance. The eighth charge, relating to the enforced recruitment of Christian Markus, caused a scandal, with Ward withdrawing it and requesting that the evidence be expunged. Furthermore, Gutsche condemned in “no uncertain terms” this “most lamentable and unworthy attempt to subvert the cause of Justice” by Sgt. Pieterse who was in charge of the investigation and had used coercion.³⁴

Finally, Christian admitted guilt to bearing arms against the government along with Izak and Stefanus Christian. In passing sentence, Gutsche pointed out that High Treason could lead to a death sentence and in SWA, where whites were few in number and lived in lonely places among large numbers of natives, Christian’s crime had to be taken seriously. There were however extenuating circumstances such as that of being the unrecognised hereditary chief “of what is left of your Tribe”. Instead, that office had been held by an unworthy person, Beukes. The Bondelzwarts people had suffered a great deal during the First World War and felt that their grievances were not being heard and that they had a legitimate right to be heard, but they were wrong to take up arms. It was not proven that Christian had led them to “their ruin”. On the contrary, there was evidence that he had forfeited his influence when he opposed the war, had treated officials with respect and opposed plunder for plunder’s sake. He was thus sentenced to five years imprisonment.

The aftermath of the Treason Trial

While Gutsche had effectively dismissed the administration’s case, Ward refused to accept the verdict, publishing an article the following year entitled, “The Bondelzwarts’ Rising: The real cause of rebellion and vindication of the administration”. Having read the Commission of Inquiry Report with great care, Ward reached the conclusion that there was:³⁵

...no doubt that the Bondelzwarts Revolt was deliberately conceived and engineered. The Administration acted, in my opinion, throughout with the greatest patience and forbearance [sic] in the face of, in certain instances, open insolence, to wit, the conduct meted out to Major van Coller upon the occasion of his visit to Haib...

Ward felt aggrieved and suggested that a brief comment was necessary “on the national characteristics of these people [who] in addition to being decadent, lazy and insolent to the Europeans... [were] unreliable, untruthful and devoid of ethical

34 When the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society raised this matter, they were told the issue had been dealt with appropriately, leaving out the back-story that the attorney-general had investigated the matter and found insufficient evidence to prosecute, but that as Pieterse was only a temporary employee his contract had been terminated (See NAN A388/1 Administrator to Prime Minister, 27 March 1924).

35 *Cape Times*, 4 Oct 1924.

principles".³⁶ He went on to opine that the evidence they had given to the Commission of Inquiry was in private, not given under oath or subject to cross-examination, so that the facts of the events had not been satisfactorily established. He claimed that native witnesses "were not only unreliable but capable of gross exaggeration". In his view the real cause of the events was not being obliged to pay dog taxes,³⁷ or the branding restrictions, but was resentment against the administration for not annulling the 1906 treaty. The Bondelzwarts, he charged, were reluctant to testify against their hereditary chief. He concluded that:³⁸

Jacobus Christian was acquitted on several of the counts...due to the fact that he was successful in escaping personal liability by placing the blame for the commission of the acts... upon the dead leaders, particularly Abraham Morris and Adam Pienaar.

Ward's diatribe brought a response from Goldblatt who found it both indiscrete and mischievous.³⁹ Taking Ward's prime example: the "unnecessary gross indignity" imposed on van Coller on his visit to Haib, Goldblatt referred to the court transcript where van Coller testified that their car was stopped by a shout from a single armed sentry and two other men, who then escorted them to Christian's residence where they were treated civilly throughout. On leaving, they had asked for, and been provided with, an unarmed person waving a white flag. Counsel then asked if it was safe to assume that the Bondelzwarts were expecting an attack and van Coller responded in the affirmative.⁴⁰ This version of events was confirmed by Noothout's evidence which explicitly denied the administrator's claim that van Coller had suffered "gross indignity" and confirmed that, on the contrary, everyone had been very civil.

Despite Ward's manifestly bigoted views, as revealed in the Bondelzwarts case, he later became solicitor-general of the Eastern Cape and then attorney-general of Natal before being appointed in 1933 as judge of the (Natal) Native Appeal Court, hardly a sinecure in the South African juridical hierarchy. The star crown witness, Beukes, as Justice Gutsche put it, "...now enjoys a sinecure as a warder in one of His Majesty's gaols, where, perchance, the accused..., by the irony of fate, may be compelled to expiate the crimes of which they have been convicted".⁴¹ His career soon ended when he was discharged for unsatisfactory service.

³⁶ *Cape Times*, 4 Oct 1924.

³⁷ In April 1921 dog taxes increased from 5/- to 20/- for the first dog and then increased progressively for additional dogs. But in April 1922 it was reduced to 10/- per dog. For an impoverished community where workers were paid between 10/- to 15/- per month this was an onerous burden.

³⁸ Faced with rising military costs the Germans were forced to treat with the Bondelzwarts guaranteeing them a small reserve and continuance of their form of traditional governance.

³⁹ Reprinted from the *Cape Times* in the *Windhoek Advertiser*, 24 Nov 1923.

⁴⁰ Echoing charges made by Hofmeyr, see South Africa, *Report of the administrator...*, p. 5.

⁴¹ *Windhoek Advertiser*, 16 Jun 1923.

Addressing the Permanent Mandates Commission in 1924, Hofmeyr boasted of his magnanimity in releasing and appointing Christian as a salaried headman. Behind this façade however is a backstory. At the end of March 1924, the Anti-Slavery Society appealed for clemency on behalf of Christian, which Hofmeyr had rejected, only to be instructed two weeks later by Smuts to release Christian as part of a general amnesty for all political prisoners in South Africa. This was to commemorate the (later cancelled) visit of the Prince of Wales.⁴² Was this a symbolic admission of guilt by the administration that it had erred? Certainly, it doused active interest in the Bondelzwarts people and the 1922 incident at the League of Nations.

The politics of self-delusion

In the process of “truth-seeking”, the nature of the questions and answers provided highlight certain features while suppressing others that could, arguably, be key factors in generating insight into the rebellion. When assigning blame, people are inclined to embed their accounts in recognisable stories “that neatly bundle together agency, responsibility, competence, and outcome”.⁴³ In drawing up the terms of reference for the Commission of Inquiry, Hofmeyr argued that the focus should be on the immediate causes as it was unproductive to examine the unpleasant history of German colonialism and that he should not be required to give evidence in public as this would prejudice his status among settlers and indigenes alike. The official terms of reference specified three aims: examining the causes of the rebellion and the way it was suppressed; the role of outside influences; and remedial suggestions. In sum, it was strikingly ahistorical and its foundational assumption, that the Bondelzwarts were happy until they were misled by outside agitators, is untenable.

The report listed “remote causes”, identified as relations with police, boundary disputes, dog tax, branding laws, changes in administrative policy, labour conditions and poverty, while the “immediate causes” focused on the arrival of Abraham Morris and his arrest.

For the most part, the Commission of Inquiry airbrushed Bondelzwarts grievances. Consider the evidence of Christian:⁴⁴

They had a long sense of grievance including many against the South African Occupation forces during the 1914 war, namely that their livestock, goats and sheep were appropriated without recompense. Moreover, the police simply entered their pontoks [simple shelters] and trampled [their] children. No receipts were issued as they were too busy chasing Germans. Police also took away youths aged 14-16. The final complaint was that during German times they were allowed to hunt game and now they were starving thus they

42 NAN, SWAA A388/44, “Release of Prisoners”, 12 April 1923.

43 C Tilly, *Credit and blame* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 34.

44 NAN, A 486, Vol. 3 “Evidence”, pp. 456-457.

requested the state to provide work or food.

Perhaps the most significant silence concerns land. As Beukes recalls:⁴⁵

I was present at the meeting of the Administrator at Gabis in 1921. The first complaint that was made was in regard to the overlapping of the ground at Plankieskop. Ou Willem Christian [the late nineteenth century chief] sold 150 farms to the South African Territories and the price was £150 per year. In 1903 the last payment was made – there is still money due. Then the German war came and the German Government promised to pay us... [During the South African invasion] the Union troops took our stock away. We sent petitions to the Administrator and to General Smuts asking for compensation...

The administration simply skirted this issue by having the surveyor-general confirm the boundaries of the Bondelzwarts Reserve as stipulated in the 1906 treaty, which is why the Bondelzwart people spoke of “tearing up” the treaty the administration proudly proclaimed it was respecting.

Nyhof, the Rhenish missionary, stationed in Warmbad from 1907, was not shy to tackle the South African Territories Company (SATCO), the syndicate that had obtained the concession of some 67 000 sq km of Bondelzwarts territory in 1889. The Bondelzwarts, he claimed, did not know the meaning of land sales and even in 1929 did not realise that they had lost their land through land sales. While the belief that they were only renting the land out, was “illogical”, it had led to the uprisings of 1903 and 1922. Even after the First World War they had tried unsuccessfully on several occasions to get money owed them from SATCO. “Without question these land concessions contributed to the sad Uprising”.⁴⁶ The Treaty of Ukamas of December 1906 signalled the end of the 1904-1907 war, while allowing for considerable political autonomy, had restricted them to a reserve consisting of four farms and totalling 1 711 square kilometres plus another 145 sq km outside Warmbad.

One can speculate that the administration and settlers did not want to raise the land heist because the overall policy in the mandate was to encourage white settlers, particularly poor Afrikaners, to farm. They would then “civilise” the indigenes through the “dignity of labour” while at the same time alleviate the pressing poor white problem in South Africa and provide a counterfoil for the large German settler population.

All these efforts at establishing “truth” share a common core, a particularistic, explanatory framework of describing individual motives and actions, thereby tracing

45 NAN, A 486 Vol. 3, “Evidence”, p. 479.

46 NAN, L.1073, Lemmer Collection, Hermann Nyhof, “Chronik von Warmbad” typescript, 1929), pp. 11-13.

a chain of events that led to collective violence. Keller makes the case that this *modus operandi* transcends the national political context and the micro-political character of each individual effort. Like other commissions investigating “racial violence” in this era they argue that while “inferior races” might be causally implicated, such violence reflects the failure of individual colonial officials to convince the “natives” of the benefits of colonialism.⁴⁷ In line with global trends, the majority view of the Commission of Inquiry and the PMC was that prime responsibility lay with officials rather than the Bondelzwarts, who were supposedly mentally and culturally inferior. This attribution of extreme ethnic essentialism dominates, especially among leaders such as Hofmeyr, Smuts, Lemmer, Herbst and Ward – to the extent that they felt that no administrative action could have prevented the violence.⁴⁸ Given this grounding in ethnic essentialism and the particularistic analysis of the events, the logic of the commission’s conclusion, that of the PMC and the court’s judgement, follow quite naturally.

It is striking how key officials engaged in self-justification when called to account and how they dressed up opinion as “fact”. Self-justification is more powerful than lying or excuses because it allows people to convince themselves that they are right and behaved correctly. Self-justification, as social psychologists Carol Tavis and Elliot Aronson suggest in *Mistakes were made (but not by me)* is fuelled by cognitive dissonance, a state of tension when one holds two inconsistent cognitions (ideas, attitudes, beliefs, opinions).⁴⁹ The more effort put into developing an idea, the more one tries to justify it in the face of contrary evidence through confirmation bias, the tendency to assess information in a specific way that confirms or supports one’s prior beliefs or values.

Tavis and Elliot argue that humans are hard-wired to seek consistency between what they do and how they perceive themselves by sorting information into categories – and these stereotypical beliefs shape the way facts are interpreted. By convincing themselves that Bondelzwarts were lazy, incompetent and insolent, settlers avoided feeling guilty about how they treated them while eschewing the feeling that they are prejudiced. This is well illustrated by Herbst’s evidence to the Commission of Inquiry.⁵⁰ Prejudice, often glossed as “conventional wisdom” is not necessarily true but is instead simple, convenient, comfortable and comforting.⁵¹ This naïve realism provides no incentive to examine disconfirming evidence. Observations and intuition without independent verification are unreliable guides on what happened. These prejudices are reinforced when key officials – as was the case of the close coterie

47 M Keller, “Commissioning legitimacy: The global logics of national violence commissions in the twentieth century”, *Politics & Society*, 37, 2009, pp. 352-396.

48 J Kurzweil, N Rapport and A Spiegel, “Encountering, explaining and refuting essentialism”, *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 43, 2020, pp. 65-81.

49 C Tavis and E Aronson, *Mistakes were made (but not by me)* (New York, Harcourt, 2007).

50 NAN, A.486 Evidence. Vol. 1, pp. 5-7.

51 A deeply ingrained racist stereotype. N Hudson, “‘Hottentots’ and the evolution of European racism”, *Journal of European Studies*, 34, 2004, pp. 308-332.

around Hofmeyr – lead to what Irving Janis calls “group-think”.⁵²

An obsession with self-justification can lead to mental blindness. Lemmer, Hofmeyr and Herbst argue strongly that the Commission’s Report had gone beyond its brief in discussing and making recommendations concerning “native policy”. Perhaps the subtle implications of that recommendation escaped them: A major cause of the catastrophe was precisely the territory’s native policy and how it was implemented.

Ward, for example, echoed settler sentiments when he claimed that the Bondelzwarts “are not only unreliable but are also capable of grossly exaggerating if not of wilfully distorting facts in order to achieve the object which they may have in view”.⁵³ Ironically, he had no qualms in ignoring the strong evidence presented in the official report. And as alluded to by Gutsche, a major cause of the tragedy were the exaggerated rumours spread by insecure white settlers. Recent work on colonialism in Namibia has highlighted the crucial role of fear and fantasy, and concomitant insecurity, in structuring relations between coloniser and colonised.⁵⁴ Settler and indigenous *Umwelt*, the social space around people, from within which signs for alarm can emerge, created the dominant ethos in settler colonies. Agamben calls this *état de siège* or besiegement.⁵⁵ Given that the record of Bondelzwarts resistance to German colonialism was still fresh in settler memory, the Warmbad District was a hyper-breeding ground for emotionally-charged exaggerated rumours.

Collins has argued that physical violence is enacted when there is a “forward panic” which “is a zone in time where the emotional impulses are overwhelming, above all because they are shared by everyone: by one’s supporters and fellow attackers, and in a reciprocal way, by the passive victims”.⁵⁶ It would have been beyond their “self-respect”, a term much favoured by Hofmeyr and Herbst in their testimonies, to admit to fear or panic as a motivating factor in their actions.

Even if Hofmeyr and his confreres “wanted” to be sympathetic to Bondelzwarts grievances, they were trapped by their primary audience who formed an exoskeleton for assigning blame: white settlers who, even before the rebellion, felt the time for negotiation had passed because they believed that the Bondelzwarts were simply biding their time and had already sent their women and children to the safety of the towns prior to looting the farms. Immediately after the rebellion they called for a Commission of Inquiry to examine not the uprising, but the disastrous administration of justice and how the Native Affairs Department and certain officials

52 I Janis, *Group think* (Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1982).

53 NAN, SWAA 1836, File A.388/1, Vol. 3, Attorney General, Windhoek to Administrator, SWA, 29 November 1923.

54 J-B Gewald, *Herero heroes* (Oxford, James Currey, 1999); R Gordon, “‘Hiding in full view’: The forgotten Bushman genocides in Namibia”, *Genocide Studies & Prevention*, 4, 2009, pp. 29-58; M Muschalek, *Violence as usual: Policing and the colonial state in German South West Africa* (Windhoek, UNAM Press, 2020).

55 G Agamben, *State of exception* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005).

56 R Collins, *Violence: A micro-sociological theory* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 121.

had encouraged such a brutally insolent attitude amongst indigenes.⁵⁷

Perhaps one could make the case that such delusions form the cornerstone of Namibian colonialism while at the same time being aware that we, as scholars, are also subject to such biases?

⁵⁷ "Onse Administrateur as veldheer", *Die Suid West*, 2 Jun 1922.