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Storm over the Transvaal

(Pretoria, Protea Boekhuis, 2015, 416 pp. ISBN: 9781-48530-414-2)

TV Bulpin

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The old Transvaal of the 1880's was a varied and excitable land upon which the sun shed its rays each morning. The great gold rush to the Kaap Valley was in full swing. Each day seemed to see some fresh event or commotion, and Paul Kruger's South African Republic was steadily changing. New trails were being tramped into the wilderness; new towns and villages all echoing the sound of man and the restless activity of the gold diggers.

From all over the world, the influx of fortune-seekers came (Bulpin 2015:9).

Ná die slag van Majuba, die beëindiging van die die Eerste Anglo-Boereoorlog en die vredesonderhandelinge van Maart 1881, is daar inderdaad 'n nuwe hoofstuk in die geskiedenis van die *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) ingelei. Protea Boekhuis se heruitgawe van T.V. Bulpin se *Storm over the Transvaal*, sestig jaar na die eerste uitgawe, is 'n welkome toevoeging tot 'n hedendaagse beskouing van die tydperk wat so kardinaal was in die vorming van die Suid-Afrika van vandag. Bulpin, wat in 1999 oorlede is, is ook die outeur van bekende werke soos *Islands in a Forgotten Sea*, *The Ivory Trail*, *Lost Trails of the Lowveld*, *Natal and the Zulu Country* en *The Hunter is Death* (almal deur Protea heruitgegee vanaf 2010). *Storm over the Transvaal* kan beskou word as 'n klassieke geskiedkundige werk. Alhoewel die term "geskiedkundige werk"

dikwels baie swaar akademiese konnotasies het, skryf Bulpin *Storm over the Transvaal* in 'n baie ligter, amper 'geselstrant' styl. Dit beteken egter nie dat die werk afgeskeep is nie.

Een vraag wat met die herpublisering van Bulpin se werk geopper kan word, is die relevansie vandag van 'n werk wat 60 jaar terug vir die eerste keer verskyn het. Die vraag kan moontlik binne twee kontekste beantwoord word. Ten eerste kan daar bespiegel word oor hoe *Storm over the Transvaal*, geskryf deur 'n Engelssprekende uit Natal, in 1955 ontvang is. Dit is natuurlik skaars sewe jaar na die Nasionale Party in Suid-Afrika aan bewind gekom het en die vooropstelling van Afrikaans en spesifiek dan Afrikaner-helde soos Paul Kruger het hoogty gevier. Bulpin skroom egter nie om kaalvuis beide die goeie en slegte van 'n breë groep lede van die 1880s en vorentoe uit te wys nie—van Paul Kruger en Piet Joubert, tot die Swazi-koning Mbadeni en van die eerste Mujaji reënkoninginne. Die publikasie kon dus dalk nie orals goed binne die dominerende politieke en sosiale tydgees ontvang gewees het nie. Presies hierdie blootlegging van historiese figure hou vir ons in die hede die relevansie van Bulpin se werk in. Klink die volgende dalk vandag bekend:

A contentious issue was the fact that many of the senior government officials were taking active part in business. Several of the big mining company had at least one government official on their boards (Bulpin 2015: 140).

Of dalk:

Another complaint concerned Johannesburg's water supply. The town had outgrown each successive water supply scheme so fast that about all the householders could expect was a coffee-coloured mixture of mud and liquid... (Bulpin 2015:197).

Wat van:

Kruger and his Volksraad had little real appreciation of this fundamental nature of a court. Kruger, particularly, had a genius for tripping up on his own laws like a man who stretches wires across a dark room to catch an intruder and then charges through himself without a light (Bulpin 2015:361).

Alhoewel *Storm over the Transvaal* dalk moeilik as 'n vinnige naslaanwerk kan gebruik word is die geskiedkundige bydrae van hierdie publikasie onontbeerlik. Dit kan gestel word dat Bulpin se werk in die hedendaagse historiese ruimte van uiterste belang is. Met *Storm over the Transvaal* word sonder skroom 'n gehele beeld gegee oor die moderne onstaansgeskiedenis van die noorde van Suid-Afrika gegee. Dit is uiters belangrik in tye waar

Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis van voor af misbruik word vir politieke en sosiale doeleindes.

Kaiser Wilhelm II's genocide: The Hereros versus the General and the settlers

(Cape Town, UCT Press, 2011, 288 pp., illustrations, index, bibliography. ISBN: 9781-91989-547-5)

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In search of the events within German South West Africa (GSWA) as the only German colony where settlement was actually attempted, this book shows that the slaughters which took place in colonial times were not due to the decisions taken by a rogue general but that he was merely fulfilling the aims and desires of Germany's pro-imperial agenda. In this book, Sarkin advocates that the Herero genocide is closely linked to Germany's late entry into the so called "scramble for Africa", which led a ruthless pursuit by colonial powers to acquire numerous colonies all over the world within a short period of time using any means available. Sarkin argues that the Herero Genocide was a campaign of racial extinction and a collective sentence by the German government against the Herero people.

Jeremy Sarkin is chairperson of the United Nation's working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances, and is at presently a distinguished visiting professor of Law at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. He is also an Attorney of the High Court of South Africa and of the State of New York. With vast research experience this book marks Sarkin's second study on GSWA's genocide by the Germans. In *Colonial Genocide and Reparations Claims in the 21st Century: The Socio-Legal Context of Claims under International Law by the Herero against Germany for Genocide in Namibia, 1904-1908* Sarkin illustrated the theoretical and legal practicality of the Herero's claim as well as the political and legal significance of genocide reparations. According

to Sarkin the history of the Herero genocide remains a key issue for many genocide histories around the world, partly because of the fact that German policy does not acknowledge paying reparations for the Herero genocide in contrast with its long-standing Holocaust reparations policy. The Herero case bears not only on transitional justice issues throughout Africa, but also on legal issues elsewhere in the world where reparations for colonial injustices have been called for.

However this book criticizes the apology rendered by the descendants of the Von Trotha family to the monarchy of the Herero. Sarkin's analysis is extremely critical of Germany's genocide of the Herero in GSWA. He gives accounts of how the genocide unfolded from the colonial point of view to explaining the inhuman deeds of the German army. Though the book is prone to deliver the military perspectives with features of social history, Sarkin devotes his attention to the views of race, racial identity and racial supremacy sparked by the pseudo-scientific racism and social Darwinism nevertheless fuelled by colonialism of the period. With illustrations and tabulated statistics of land ownership he draws the reader's attention towards the cruelty of the colonial system overseen by a German general. The book is professionally indexed, footnoted and with an appropriate conclusion fragmented in points of his argument.

This book presents new proof of genocide concerning conflicts in GSWA (Namibia). Sarkin researched and accomplishes the extent to which Emperor Wilhelm II knowledgeably supported and endorsed an order of extermination of between 60 000 and 100 000 Herero and some 10 000 plus Nama, persecuted by General Lothar von Trotha who was the commander of the colonial troops by then. By these statements Sarkin tries to support his claim that Von Trotha's orders was not due to his heartlessness, but rather a conscious and deliberate decision mandated by German army headquarters with the knowledge of the highest levels of military command and government. This is new indication that does not exist on research done by Gewald, Hull and Zimmerer, whose arguments are mainly about military culture.

Germany's genocide of the Herero is relatively relevant and contentious GSWA history portraying activities of non-humanitarianism. Sarkin leaves no stone unturned with regard to the genocide and a bias can be identified towards the plight of the Herero's that makes it close to impossible for him to end with an objective conclusion on the genocide. He is more concerned about financial reparation of the genocide than psychological, which raises

eyebrows. Perhaps his law background has pivotally influenced this research. Main sources are indicated in the bibliography to be of a secondary nature and it is obvious that Sarkin depended on the translations of German Imperial documents and other primary sources. Even so, the view of the German government, public and colonial government is still missing in his work.

Though Sarkin clearly explains that in evil deeds there are three perspectives, those of the perpetrators, of the victims and of onlookers, he merely directs his attention to the perpetrator's wrong doings. His reports on the Kaiser's involvement in the Herero massacre, his selection of views about Wilhelm II seem to relate to his statement that "Kaiser met with Von Trotha and could personally have ordered him to carry out the genocide on the Herero". However, there is no evidence that he did. The book appears to portray Von Trotha as a cruel heartless commander emphasising his racial hate of the Herero where he even denied women and children drinking water. Nevertheless the book has scholarly wealth with good illustrations and acknowledgement of reviewed sources, the book emphasizes several unsettled issues, expectantly it's a long expected inspiration for further historical research. Sarkin creates a decent hypothesis, though he is more litigating than scholastic or historical, however the book perceives the slaughtering from couple of new viewpoints.