

## The internment camp 'Klein-Danzig' in Windhoek 1939–1941

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### *Abstract*

*The internment camp 'Klein-Danzig' in Windhoek was in existence during the first years of the Second World War between 1939 and 1941. Its overall capacity rose from 70 up to 200 men. Mainly based on a solid corpus of camp records which include a wide range of documents such as disciplinary files of internees, blue prints for the barracks or even dentist's files, a detailed picture of the organization, social structure and all-day life in the Windhoek camp is given. The main focus of the article lies on the description of the internees' disobedience and insubordination which finally led to the shut-down of the camp in 1941. A short summary of the history of the German speaking minority in South West Africa between the World Wars serves to put the internment camp into historical context.*

### Introduction

The internment of the German minority in South West Africa during World War II, the so called 'Kamp-Zeit', has received little attention in academic writing so far. However, the 'Kamp-Zeit' played a crucial role in the constitution of a distinct *Südwester* identity. German speaking Namibians remember this time as stolen lifetime, as martyrdom for the fatherland, but also as a time of great companionship. The national-socialist tendencies of the time tend to be overlooked.<sup>1</sup> The large camps in South Africa, Baviaanspoort and Andalusia, are documented. The camp in Windhoek, which existed between 1939 and 1941, has been almost completely forgotten.

This paper depicts the Windhoek camp, its organization, everyday life and social structure. It focuses particularly on the disobedience and insubordination of the internees, which led to the closing of the camp. The almost complete camp records, which are to be found in the National Archives in Windhoek (SWAA) served as the main source for this work. The records, which have been evaluated for the very first time, include a wide range of documents, such as disciplinary files of the internees, blue prints for the barracks, dentist's files. This solid corpus of sources makes it possible to draw a detailed picture of the Windhoek camp.

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus H. Rüdiger, *Die Namibia-Deutschen : Geschichte einer Nationalität im Werden*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1993: 30.

The internment in general and, in the Windhoek camp in particular, has attracted little academic attention so far. The most extensive work to date covering the German minority was written by Martin Eberhardt in 2007.<sup>2</sup> His benchmark assignment covers developments from World War I until 1965. The internment receives relatively sparse attention in his book and the focus is more on the camps in South Africa. Stefan Manz and Tilman Dederling recently published an outstanding article on internment of Germans in South Africa during World War I. Although this article covers a different period of time, the similarities are striking.<sup>3</sup> For a more general approach on camps in 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Bettina Kramer's and Alan Greiner's volume.<sup>4</sup>

Werner Bertelsmann, a law professor based in Namibia, covered a similar period to Eberhardt, but focused mainly on juridical questions. Little attention was paid to the internment.<sup>5</sup> *Von Kampwitwen und -Waisen* is a book by Volker Gretschel.<sup>6</sup> Gretschel examined the other side of internment by interviewing wives of internees. Although his perspective is a fresh one, his work completely lacks critical analysis. Very short summaries can be found in the books of Klaus Rüdiger and Mathias Oldhaver, who follow a sociological approach.<sup>7</sup> Marion Wallace's *History of Namibia* is extremely vague on internment.<sup>8</sup> Kurt Kock, a former internee, released a collection of essays by fellow internees. Kock's book is important for the reconstruction of everyday life, but has a strong revisionist undertone.<sup>9</sup>

In the first section of this paper, the history of the German minority between the wars is outlined to explain how large-scale internment came about. In the second section, there is a description of the organization and administration of the camp. The third section depicts the everyday life of the internees, under the headings nutrition, medical services and leisure time. The fourth section focuses on the insubordination of the internees

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Eberhardt, *Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Apartheid: Die deutsche Bevölkerungsgruppe Südwestafrikas 1915–1965*, Berlin, LIT, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Stefan Manz and Tilman Dederling, "'Enemy Aliens' in Wartime: Civil Internment in South Africa during World War I", *South African Historical Journal*, 68, 2016: 536-556.

<sup>4</sup> Bettina Greiner and Alan Kramer, (eds.), *Die Welt der Lager. Zur 'Erfolgsgeschichte' einer Institution*, Hamburg, Hamburger Edition, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Werner Bertelsmann, *Die deutsche Sprachgruppe Südwestafrikas in Politik und Recht seit 1915*, Windhoek, Meinert, 1979.

<sup>6</sup> Hans-Volker Gretschel, *Von Kampwitwen und -Waisen: Berichte aus den Internierungsjahren in Südwestafrika 1939–1946*, Windhoek/Göttingen, Hess, 2009. Farm internees, the majority of them women, were not allowed to leave the area of their farms.

<sup>7</sup> Rüdiger, *Namibia-Deutschen*; Mathias Oldhaver, *Die deutschsprachige Bevölkerungsgruppe in Namibia: Ihre Bedeutung als Faktor in den deutsch-namibischen Beziehungen*, Hamburg, Kovac, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Marion Wallace, with John Kinahan, *Geschichte Namibias. Von den Anfängen bis 1990*, Frankfurt, M., Brandes & Apsel, 2015: 374 (originally published as *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990*, London, Hurst, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Kurt Kock, (ed.), *Erinnerungen an die Internierungszeit (1939–1946) und zeitgeschichtliche Ergänzungen. Berichte, Erzählungen, Fotos und Zeichnungen von Kameraden, die dabei waren*, Windhuk, Selbstverlag Andalusia, 1975.

towards the camp authorities and includes examples of such behaviour. The fifth section outlines the process of closing down the camp and its transformation from an internment to a transition camp. The conclusion includes possible prospects of further research.

## History of the German speaking minority until 1939

As set out in the Versailles Treaty, the former German colony became a mandate territory of South Africa. Pretoria's long term aim was to integrate the territory into the Union. Boer immigration which was promoted by South Africa quickly led to conflict with the established Germans, who saw the South Africans as an occupying force.<sup>10</sup> In 1921, the German share of the 'white' population was roughly 40%.<sup>11</sup> Since they were aliens, they did not enjoy full rights as citizens. The London agreement of 1923 provided only a temporary solution. It allowed the naturalization of Germans.<sup>12</sup>

The majority of Germans opted for naturalization, but there was hardly any real integration. The Germans were keen to maintain their identity. Most of them condemned the London treaty as treachery by 'Berlin democrats' and a defeat, and saw it as a first step in backing away from German claims to the colony.<sup>13</sup> The image of Weimar among the German settlers had not been good anyway, and the London agreement damaged it further.

On the other hand, there was an almost mythical devotion to the *Kaiserreich*. Even boy scouts, gymnastics groups and music societies commemorated Hindenburg and the colonial army, the *Schutztruppe*.<sup>14</sup> Politics in general and democracy in particular caused unnecessary rifts in the German community, which was already under threat from Boers and Africans.<sup>15</sup> Looking for political compromise was considered something 'un-German'.<sup>16</sup> With democratization impending in the mandated territory, the *Deutsche Bund* (DB) was formed in 1924.<sup>17</sup> Entry criteria were a vague commitment to *Deutschtum* (Germanhood) and knowledge of the German language. As the DB was a strictly ethnic association it attracted only few people from outside the German minority. Even pro-German Boers were often repelled by such nationalism.<sup>18</sup> By the end of the 1920s, the

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<sup>10</sup> Christo Botha, "The politics of land settlement in Namibia, 1890–1960, *South African Historical Journal*, 42, 2000: 232-276 (239f.). The majority of the Boers who immigrated to South West were poor laborers, a 'white proletariat'. There were also around 300 Angola-Boer families, who owned virtually nothing.

<sup>11</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus*: 66.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.: 33ff. Pretoria pledged, not to conscript Germans in any wars against Germany, while Berlin promised, to recommend naturalization to all Germans in South West.

<sup>13</sup> Bertelsmann, *Sprachgruppe*: 38f.

<sup>14</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus*: 124.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.: 163.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.: 198.

<sup>17</sup> Bertelsmann, *Sprachgruppe*: 46f.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.: 187.

conflict between Germans and the administration had escalated. The rise of the NSDAP in the former colony fuelled the conflict and isolated the Germans completely.

The history of national-socialism in South West officially started with the foundation of an *Ortsgruppe* (location group) in 1932.<sup>19</sup> Hitler's seizure of power was welcomed warmly, since it meant the end of unpopular Weimar.<sup>20</sup> There was hope that a colonial revision could come about. After *Gleichschaltung* (consolidation of institutional powers) brought the DB into its fold in 1934, the NSDAP began to act more publicly. Lüderitzbucht saw a boycott of Jewish stores and serious threats against the local rabbi.<sup>21</sup> The boy scouts adapted the uniforms and banners of the *Hitlerjugend* (HJ, Hitler Youth) and renamed themselves.<sup>22</sup> In June of 1934, a 'Youth Day' took place in Windhoek. Around 1,000 youngsters from South Africa and South West paraded through the city. This provocation was the last straw for the authorities. The administrator banned NSDAP and HJ from the mandated territory, seeing them as tools of a foreign power that sought to instigate unrest among the Germans and endanger the peace.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the ban, the NSDAP remained intact and active and did not lose its influence on the DB.<sup>24</sup> The number of members rose from 631 to 1,127 between 1933 and 1937. Relative to the size of the German community, this was a high level of mobilization.<sup>25</sup> Party members infiltrated the DB step by step. In 1936, the party again began acting openly through the DB, for example by organizing commemorations of the failed Beer Hall Putsch or by sending out conscription orders.<sup>26</sup> The boy scouts reorganized too and took over other youth clubs. Clandestine HJ-activities continued.<sup>27</sup>

The unbroken will of the Germans and their refusal to compromise was a provocation to the administration. In April 1937, the Administrator issued decree 51. This decree facilitated the expulsion of foreign aliens, and made it possible to criminalise the taking of oaths of allegiance to foreign nations by associations and political organizations.<sup>28</sup> The decree marked a peak in the struggle between the German population and South Africa. It ended any hopes of a negotiated settlement. In order to circumvent the ban, the DB was dissolved by its own members in June 1937.<sup>29</sup> While support for Nazism was

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<sup>19</sup> Bertelsmann, *Sprachgruppe* : 57.

<sup>20</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus* : 225.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.: 267f.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.: 248.

<sup>23</sup> Bertelsmann, *Sprachgruppe* : 61; Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus* : 272, 277.

<sup>24</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus* : 283; Rüdiger, *Namibia-Deutschen* : 14.

<sup>25</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus* : 350.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.: 290 f. Germany supported reservists returning for training to the *Reich*. The German consulate in Windhoek executed physical examinations and issued penalties, if people did not report. When the war broke out, there were almost 500 young *Süd-Wester* in Germany. Cf. Bertelsmann, *Sprachgruppe* : 66.

<sup>27</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus* : 293.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.: 308-314.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.: 316.

not unanimous among the German population open resistance was rare. The fear of being ostracised by the German community led to a sort of 'inner emigration'. Open criticism could result in public and economic isolation – a tough fate in such a small community.<sup>30</sup>

The tension in Europe was also felt in the mandated territory. Pretoria dissolved the local South West police forces in April 1939 and stationed there instead 500 South African police officers, among them a paramilitary Mobile Police Squadron.<sup>31</sup> This was intended to be a clear signal; the government was prepared to meet any uprising with force. The last independent German newspaper fell under Nazi control in July.<sup>32</sup> The final outbreak of war put South Africa in a difficult position, with a potential 'fifth column inside' its own borders. Thus, the National Emergency Regulations came into effect.<sup>33</sup> They allowed local magistrates to apply for the internment of naturalized and non-naturalized citizens.<sup>34</sup> The first internments took place on 18th September 1939.<sup>35</sup> Since the internees were not common criminals, the administration made great efforts to ensure they were treated correctly.<sup>36</sup>

By the end of 1939, the number of internees grew to 77. At the end of March 1940, there were 96.<sup>37</sup> In December 1939, internees lost their voting rights.<sup>38</sup> With the German military successes in France the Germans in South West became bolder, and the authorities responded with mass internments. These affected the majority of German men. The arrival of a 'Grey Minna' often meant the beginning of a period of internment.<sup>39</sup> Police had records of those who were openly Nazis, but they also relied on anonymous denunciations from within the German community.<sup>40</sup> The Windhoek camp was not able to cope with such numbers.<sup>41</sup> In a cloak and dagger operation the first internees were transferred to South Africa on 28 June 1940. They were sent to the Andalusia camp

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.: 373.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.: 344; all squadron members had a police and a military rank.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.: 396.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.: 409.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> S. Zemke, "Die Internierungen in Südwestafrika und das Lager 'Klein Danzig' bei Windhoek", in: Kurt Kock, (ed.), *Erinnerungen an die Internierungszeit (1939–1946) und zeitgeschichtliche Ergänzungen. Berichte, Erzählungen, Fotos und Zeichnungen von Kameraden, die dabei waren*, Windhuk, Selbstverlag Andalusia, 1975: 43-50 (43).

<sup>36</sup> National Archives of Namibia (NAN), SWAA 2599, A820/6. Treatment of Internees at the Time of their Arrest. Usually, policemen and internees knew each other well and were sometimes even neighbours. This led to some strange incidents. In one case, a policeman accompanied an internee in his gaol for the night. In another, an internee was allowed to dine in a hotel.

<sup>37</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus*: 410. All in all, there have been just three releases.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.; SWAA 2828 A820/2, 24.10.1939. Interviews with Internees. A CCO von Sec. SWA.

<sup>39</sup> Gretschel, *Kampwitwen*: 12. 'Grey Minna' was the nickname for police cars.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.: 27, 74.

<sup>41</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus*: 411.

close to Jan Kermdorp, which was still under construction. Windhoek served as a transition camp until February 1941.

## Organization and structure of the camp

The old wireless station which became the camp lay outside the city borders of Windhoek, close to the railway to Rehoboth and the rivers Gamman and Arrebbush. At the time of the internment, it consisted of two main and several supply buildings. Previously, it had served as barracks of the SA Police Mobile Squadron.<sup>42</sup> This paramilitary unit was made up of about 90 men and provided the camp guards.<sup>43</sup> The smaller main building, the guards' barracks, could house 22 men (commandant, three sergeants and 18 men). It can be assumed that the rest of the squadron was stationed outside and rotated frequently.

The larger main building housed the internees. It was basically a great hall with a two-level annexe. Both buildings were fenced separately. The area of the guards-building also incorporated the quarters of the African workers. The guards had their own kitchen, mess hall, office, barbers and sutler shop. Both main buildings were, in addition to their separate fences, surrounded by a large outer fence. In this area, the recreation and sports grounds were located, as well as the water reservoir.

The great hall of the internee building had been divided with movable walls: A sleeping area with 36 beds and a mess/recreation room. The ground floor of the annexe housed the kitchen and the lavatory. The first floor contained four more beds and the library. Due to the steadily rising number of internees, the main building was soon overcrowded. Makeshift tents were pitched, until, in May 1940, the fences were extended and several small barracks added. The overall capacity rose from 70 up to 200 men. Compared to the Union camps, Windhoek was small.

The camp was given several names. The South Africans usually used 'Internment Camp in the Old Wireless Station', or 'Internment Camp Windhoek', sometimes 'Concentration Camp' too. The internees tended to use nicknames like 'Hotel Smuts' or 'Sanatorium'. 'Klein Danzig' is rarely found among the sources. This nickname is used almost exclusively in Kurt Kock's anthology.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/4, 29.11.1939. Rationing: Internees WH. An Dep. Com. von J.A. Noppe, Subinspector, SA Police Mobile Squadron. This explains the good condition of the buildings.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., SWAA 2826, A820/2, 20.11.1940. Escape of Internee: H.M. Wagner. An Sec. SWA von Dep. Com.

<sup>44</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, no date. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12.1939-11.04.1940).

Fig. 1: Wireless station still in operation.



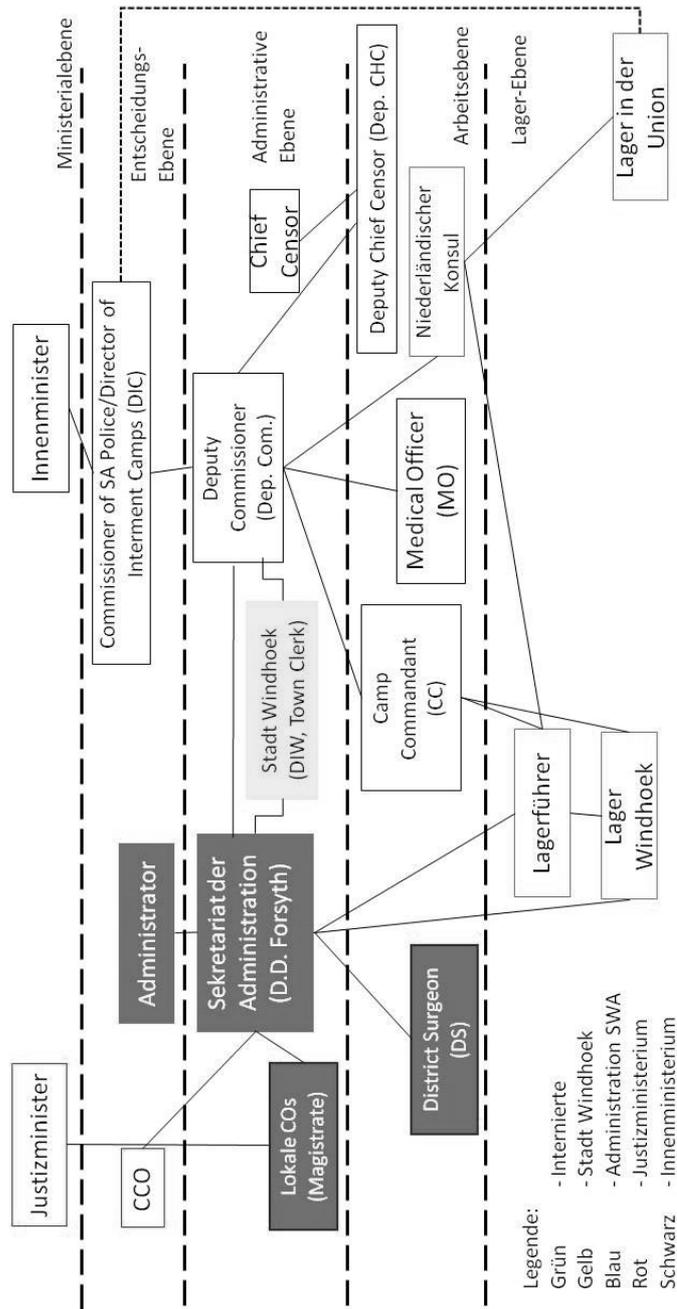
Source: National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek wireless station, buildings and masts, No. 02293, no date. Photographer: Swakopmunder Buchhandlung.

Fig. 2: Main buildings of the wireless station: Future accommodation for policemen (left) and for internees (right).



Source: National Archives of Namibia, Buildings at the Wireless Station Windhoek, 08087, 1920. Photographer: Victor Botha.

Fig. 3: Organization chart of the camp administration



The internees were allowed to elect a *Lagerführer* (camp headman) and deputy, who represented the internees to the commandant. The headman was responsible for discipline and cleanliness.<sup>45</sup> The lawyer Hans Hirsekorn from Lüderitzbucht became the first *Lagerführer* and proved a very daring representative. Hardly a day went by without a complaint or a plea from Hirsekorn to the authorities.<sup>46</sup> The *Lagerführer* also had the privilege of directly consulting the administration without the permission of the commandant. Despite his demanding attitude, Hirsekorn was not ousted by the South Africans. Although he was a devout nationalist, he had not joined the NSDAP and was trusted to enforce discipline and contain the most extreme Nazis.<sup>47</sup>

The Dutch consul Dr. Daubenton was the neutral link between Berlin and Pretoria in all questions concerning internment. After the attack on the Netherlands, he was replaced by the Spanish envoy Yguall.<sup>48</sup> Daubenton enjoyed great popularity among the internees, since he sympathized with them and sometimes supported their demands.

The commandant, a lieutenant/sub-inspector (later on a captain) of the Mobile Police Squadron, was in charge of the daily administration of the camp with the aid of *Lagerführer*. He was also responsible for supervision. He was subordinated to the Deputy Commissioner of the South African Police (Dep. Com.), Lieutenant-Colonel Johnston, superior officer to all South African police units in the mandated territory. He was supported in advisory positions by a Medical Officer (MO), who was in charge of all issues concerning camp hygiene, medical supply and care, and a censor. The Deputy Chief Censor (Dep. CHC), a major, monitored all letters arriving and leaving the camp. He reported also to the Chief Censor in Cape Town.

The Administrator was head of the administration, although most of the day-to-day work was done by his deputy D.D. Forsyth, the Secretary of South West Africa (SWA). Forsyth was authorized to make changes to the camp regulations and to order punishment, in accordance with the Dep. Com. He also processed the requests for leave or for visitors, examined complaints, and coordinated building projects with the city of Windhoek, in particular with the Town Clerk and the Director of Works (DIW). The Secretary's office was the hub connecting the various actors; the ministries, the police, Dr. Daubenton and the internees. He was also superior to the District Surgeon (DS), who attended the local prison in peacetime and whose responsibility had also been extended to the internment camp. In theory, he treated the internees, but they all preferred treatment at their own expense by German doctors in the city.

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<sup>45</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 16.10.1939. Concentration Camp WH. Camp Orders No. 1 Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 1939.

<sup>46</sup> SWAA 2827, A821/9, 19.07.1940. Liste der im Internierungslager zurückgebliebenen und abgeholteten Sachen. Dt.

<sup>47</sup> Zemke, "Internierungen": 44; SWAA 2829, A821/20, 26.06.1940. An DIC von Sec. SWA Forsyth.

<sup>48</sup> SWAA 2829, A821/22, 25.08.1940. Telegram. An Minister for External Affairs, Pretoria von IRK Genf; 13.09.1940. Confidential. ICs: Official Representative: IRC. An DIC von CCO. Kopie an Sec. SWA.

When war broke out, the Ministry of Justice appointed the magistrates as local Control Officers (CO). They were subordinated to the Chief Control Officer, who reported to the Ministry of Justice. A request for internment from the COs had to be confirmed by the CCO. The local police carried out the arrest. If the Secretary of South West Africa wanted to change the camp regulations, the CCO had to agree.<sup>49</sup>

The founding of the camp was a complicated process which required difficult negotiations. The Windhoek city authorities refused to accept the financial responsibility, though the camp stood on city ground. To get around this the police rented the area for one pound a year.<sup>50</sup> The development of the infrastructure, which included providing water and electricity, and building a paved road to the camp, was financed by the city. Nutrition, running costs and building projects inside the camp were funded from the South African police budget, after the local police had been replaced.<sup>51</sup> The Ministry of Justice bore the costs of medical treatment.<sup>52</sup>

The police were obliged to pay most of the expenses without having any say in deciding what was to be spent. This was the task of the administration and the CCO. The Police Commissioner had to agree to all expenditure exceeding 10 pounds; more or less a power of veto. This had fatal consequences in terms of decision-making, since the Commissioner of Police was eager to defend his budget against the demands of the camp administration, where he had no influence on the claims made.

The cooperation among the various stakeholders was wholly inadequate. The involvement of two ministries (Interior and Justice), the strange mode of financing, the cumbersome official channels, the special judicial status of the mandated territory and personal animosity caused tremendous delays. In particular, the police questioned almost every request made by CCO and administration. A request by the Commandant usually had to pass Sec. SWA, Dep. Com., CCO, Commissioner and sometimes the ministries in South Africa. Even simple requests took two weeks and more to reach the decision-makers – in spite of telegraphy and express letters.<sup>53</sup>

Cooperation deteriorated over the duration of the internment. In June 1940, Forsyth asked Johnston to ignore his direct superior, the Commissioner, and ask the Minister of Interior directly, to avoid interruptions in questions of budget.<sup>54</sup> Just one week later, Forsyth offered his resignation, frustrated by the constant interventions which under-

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<sup>49</sup> SWAA 2826, A821/1, 28.09.1939. Rules Concentration Camp.

<sup>50</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/14, 07.11.1939. Old Wireless Station Site: IC. An Sec. SWA von Town Clerk.

<sup>51</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 22.12.1939. Hospitalization of Internees: Old Wireless Station IC WH. An CCO von Sec. SWA Forsyth.

<sup>52</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/19, Allowance: Internees. An Dep. Com. von Chief Deputy Commissioner Baston.

<sup>53</sup> A striking example for these delays is an urgent request by the internees, dating 30<sup>th</sup> November 1939, to acquire another cool box, to prevent food from decaying, since summer was coming. The commissioner agreed two months later, on 30<sup>th</sup> January. There were further delays before the box arrived. Cf. SWAA 2828, A821/14, 30.11.1939. IC. An Sec. SWA von Dep. Com.; 05.12.1939. An Sec. SWA von DIW; 30.01.1940 RE: IC. An DIW von Sec. SWA Nesor.

<sup>54</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/4, 13.06.1940. IC: Diet Scale. An Dep. Com. von Sec. SWA Forsyth.

mined his authority. In this letter, he complained bitterly that the internees saw him as a laughing stock due to the enormous delays in every official issue.<sup>55</sup> Since Forsyth remained in office until the shut-down of the camp in February 1941, his letter seems to have had a certain impact, but it also highlighted the deterioration of the internal relations among the authorities.

Compared to the camps in the South African Union, the administration of the camp in the mandated territory involved many different actors. The result was enormous friction.

## Everyday life

A day in the camp was defined by the camp regulations. Internees could not be forced to work, whereas PoWs could. Wake-Up bell sounded at 07:00, roll call occurred 30 minutes later. Breakfast was taken at 08:00, followed by laundry and postal service. Camp inspections took place at 10:00 to check cleanliness. Lunch was at 13:00 and teatime at 10:30 and 15:30. Outside of these times the internees had free time inside the barracks. From 16:00 to 18:00, internees were allowed outside and could do sports. After supper, at 18:00, the internees conducted the 'Internees March' along the fence, until this was banned by the authorities. The evening roll call took place at 19:30, following which the barracks was secured for the night. Taps were at 22:00. The intervening time was known as 'news hour', when the internees informed each other about current events.<sup>56</sup> Their sources were censored newspapers and letters.<sup>57</sup> Provost Fröhlich ministered service on Sundays, which was poorly attended; only a third of the internees participated on a regular basis.<sup>58</sup>

Table 1: The daily rations per capita<sup>59</sup>

Breakfast	57g Oats, 28g Sugar, 14g Coffee, 170g Bread
Lunch	Circa 28g Meat, 227g Potatoes, 28g Coffee, Sugar and Fat
Supper	14g Tea, 28g Sugar, 57g Jelly/Cheese, 170g Bread, 28g Butter, 28g Salt
Weekly rations of the kitchen	57g Flour 14g Curry, 57g Rice, 57g Beans, daily 250ml Milk

<sup>55</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/19. 24.06.1940. Cash Allowance to Internees. An Commissioner of SA Police von Sec. SWA.

<sup>56</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, no date. Daily Routine Concentration Camp WH.

<sup>57</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/10, 09.01.1940. Censorship. Correspondence Suspected to Require Special Attention. Von H.A. Marggraff, IC WH 05.01.1940 an Mr. K. Noske, Waaihoek, WH. von Dep. CHC.

<sup>58</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12-1939-11.04.1940). Camp Arrangements.

<sup>59</sup> Table referring to: SWAA 2827 A820/4, no date. Diet. Scale. All numbers rounded, original in ounces. 1 Ounce= 28.35g.

The food provisions in Windhoek were excellent as the relatives of the internees also provided substantial support. The internees' rations were the same as those of the members of the Mobile Police Squadron. The police quartermaster provided the supplies as indicated in table 1 above.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to this, the local support committee and the women's club asked local bakers and hotels for contributions. They added 9 kg of bread, 4.5 kg of meat, as well as coffee and tea to the daily rations. On the basis of 61 internees at the end of September 1939, there would have been the following amount of food daily:

Table 2: The daily amount of food<sup>61</sup>

Food	Amount	Food	Amount
Meat	25 kg	Salt	1.8 kg
Oats	3.5 kg	Coffee	2.5 kg
Sugar	5.1 kg	Potatoes	14 kg
Jelly	7 Jars	Local vegetables	14 kg
Bread	31 kg	Lard	1.4 kg
Tea	0.5 kg		

According to §23 of the camp regulations, the consumption of beer was allowed, but only a litre a day and at mealtimes.<sup>62</sup> The internees made good use of this privilege: In May 1940, circa 100 internees consumed 2754 litres of beer.<sup>63</sup> Since it was prohibited to send alcohol in parcels into the camp,<sup>64</sup> the internees had to find other ways to satisfy their desire for alcoholic drinks. The internees set up a small bar in their kitchen, where they consumed whiskey and brandy.<sup>65</sup> It has to be assumed that the internees bought it illegally at their own expense. The camp commandant tolerated this tacitly.<sup>66</sup>

Due to the lack of medical equipment and adequate rooms, the internees were allowed to use medical infrastructure outside the camp until May 1940, when several incidents (mostly contact with local population) led to a ban, of which the internees disapproved strongly. The camps in South Africa stood under police and military authority and were able to use the medical infrastructures of those institutions. The case in South West was

<sup>60</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/4, 25.09.1939. Telegram. An Director of Prisons, von Sec. SWA Viljoen; SWAA 2827, A820/4, 07.10.1939. An Accountant von Sec. SWA Nesper.

<sup>61</sup> Table referring to: SWAA2827, A820/4, 26.09.1939. Daily Rations for 61 Men. Approved by DIC.

<sup>62</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 16.10.1939. Concentration Camp WH. Camp orders No. 1.

<sup>63</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, Supplementary Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC, Covering the Period 12.04.40–26.06.1940 (Transfer of Internees to Ganspan, P.O. Andalusia).

<sup>64</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/16, 18.11.1939. An Sec. SWA Forsyth von Martha Müller, Farm Steenbokvlagte, Okahandja.

<sup>65</sup> Zemke, "Erinnerungen": 44.

<sup>66</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/13, 20.11.1939. Material: IC. An CC von DIC.

more complicated.<sup>67</sup> During the first month of the internment, internees were treated in Windhoek General Hospital. The District Surgeon Dr. Bowkett visited the camp once a week and in emergencies. Whose responsibility the costs were remained unclear. The administration requested that the Ministry of Health bear the costs. The minister rejected this.<sup>68</sup> In order to reduce the burden on its budget, the administration allowed the internees to be treated at their own expense, also allowing them to choose where to be treated.

In terms of supervision this step backfired on the administration. Every internee chose to be treated at his own expense in German facilities. To prevent contact with the local population and nursing staff, at least five policemen were needed to supervise one internee. As the majority of policemen did not speak German fluently, it was impossible to implement the ban on contact.<sup>69</sup> The situation was similar for dental treatment. The internees chose, without a single exception, the German dentist Dr. Leitner.<sup>70</sup> If an internee was too poor to afford this treatment, he received financial support from his co-internees.<sup>71</sup>

The construction of a sick bay inside the camp, to minimize the internees' contact with the outside world, took a very long time.<sup>72</sup> The only suitable room seemed to be the carpentry workshop, the use of which caused unrest among the internees. In addition to this, the Commissioner and the Ministry of Health took a very long time to clarify who was responsible for the construction costs of 50 Pounds.<sup>73</sup> The sick bay never became fully operational anyway, since it lacked medicines, additional beds and sanitary arrangements.<sup>74</sup> The problem of medical treatment outside the camp was not solved. To sum it up, the medical supply in the Windhoek Camp was satisfactory. There were neither epidemics nor symptoms of the typical deficiencies associated with prison life.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> H. Herre, "Erinnerungen an die Lagerzeit in Andalusia", in: Kurt Kock, (ed.), *Erinnerungen an die Internierungszeit (1939–1946) und zeitgeschichtliche Ergänzungen. Berichte, Erzählungen, Fotos und Zeichnungen von Kameraden, die dabei waren*, Windhuk, Selbstverlag Andalusia, 1975: 51-108 (53); SWAA 2827, A820/6, Telegram. Hospitalization. An Sec. SWA von CCO.

<sup>68</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 26.09.1939. Telegram. An CCO von Sec. SWA Viljoen; SWAA 2827, A820/6, 04.10.1939. Telegram. An Sec. SWA von CCO

<sup>69</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 07.12.1939. Confidential. Hospital Treatment: Internees. An Sec. SWA von Dep. Com.

<sup>70</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/3, 11.12.1939. Dental Treatment; SWAA 2827, A820/6, 01.12.1939. Dental Treatment of Enemy Subjects at WH IC. An Dep. Com. von Commissioner SA Police; SWAA 2827, A820/6, 09.12.1939. Dental Treatment of Enemy Subjects at WH IC. An CCO von Dep. Com.

<sup>71</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 03.03.1940. Dental Treatment: Internees. An Dep. Com. von CC.

<sup>72</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 01.11.1939. IC WH. An Commissioner SA Police von Sec. SWA Forsth.

<sup>73</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, IC. An MO von Sec. SWA Neser, Kopien an DIW und Dep. Com.

<sup>74</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 13.12.1939. Confidential IC: Sick Bay. An Sec. SWA von MO; SWAA 2827, A820/6, 13.06.1940. Re: Medical Care of Internees. An CC von Hirsekorn.

<sup>75</sup> The only death occurred when an internee named Klein died in the aftermath of an appendix operation. Cf. SWAA 2827, A820/6, 04.12.1939. Internee: W. Klein. An CCO von Sec. SWA Forsyth.

As long as they observed the camp regulations, the internees were free to organize their day. The men killed time with various activities. Besides sports, art and carpentry, most internees used their time to further their education. A lot of letters to relatives began with the lines “I would have written earlier, but I had no time”<sup>76</sup>.

In the first weeks of the internment, the internees erected a makeshift fistball pitch.<sup>77</sup> The expansion of the outer camp fence in April 1940 allowed the addition of fields for soccer, tennis and tennikoit, as well as a table tennis table.<sup>78</sup> In the further course of the internment, several teams were formed and competed for the camp championship in their respective sports.<sup>79</sup> Runners ran their laps along the camp fences, while gymnasts exercised on parallel bars – a gift from the Windhoek gymnastics club.<sup>80</sup> A list of sports equipment left over later suggests that cricket, chess, weightlifting, boxing and discus were also popular.<sup>81</sup>

Internees had plenty of time to master musical instruments.<sup>82</sup> There are also reports of communal singing in the evening after the doors were locked.<sup>83</sup> The small library upstairs in the annexe grew and grew throughout the months, mainly through contributions from the local support committee and from relatives. By the time of the camp was finally shut down the library counted circa 800 books.<sup>84</sup> Since the internees were expecting a short war, no formal ‘camp-university’ was set up in the Windhoek camp, unlike in Andalusia or Baviaanspoort. However, a lot of internees were interested in learning. Informal classes started quickly. Besides languages like English, Afrikaans, Russian, Italian and Otjiherero, there were several agricultural classes, for the many farmers among the internees. There were also lectures on literature, astronomy, native affairs and travel reports.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, no date. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12.1939-11.04.1940).

<sup>77</sup> Anonym, “Kamp und Kampf: Sport im Internierungslager. Erinnerungen einiger Aktivitäten”, in: Kurt Kock, (ed.), *Erinnerungen an die Internierungszeit (1939–1946) und zeitgeschichtliche Ergänzungen. Berichte, Erzählungen, Fotos und Zeichnungen von Kameraden, die dabei waren*, Windhuk, Selbstverlag Andalusia, 1975: 123-130 (123).

<sup>78</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/14, 18.04.1940. Accomodation: IC WH. An Commissioner of SA Police von Dep. Com. Kopie an Sec. SWA; SWAA 2829, A821/25, 08.02.1941. Deutscher Frauenverein: Claim for Return of Property Lent to IC. An Dep. Com. von Cpt. Smith, Officer Commanding Mobile Squadron. Kopie an Sec. SWA.

<sup>79</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, no date. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12.1939-11.04.1940).

<sup>80</sup> SWAA 2826, A821/2, 01.12.1939. An Sec. SWA von A. Herrle.

<sup>81</sup> SWAA 2827, A821/9, no date. Liste der im Internierungslager zurückgebliebenen und abgeholten Sachen. Dt.

<sup>82</sup> SWAA 2827, A821/9, 16.08.1940. Re: Internees’ Property: Musical Instruments. An Dep. Com. von Sub-Inspector; *ibid.*, 19.07.1940. Liste der im Internierungslager zurückgebliebenen und abgeholten Sachen. Dt.

<sup>83</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, 29.03.1940. An Dep. CO SWA von Dep. CHC.

<sup>84</sup> SWAA 2827, A821/9, no date. Hilfsausschuss Property in the IC WH.

<sup>85</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, no date. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12.1939-11.04.1940).

Carpentry was the most popular leisure-time activity. The camp contained a small carpentry workshop that was used permanently. Guided by qualified internees, one third of the internees did woodwork, starting with small items like toys or cigar boxes. Some internees asked their relatives to send them tools, at their own expense.<sup>86</sup> Later on, the internees were able to meet the camp's own demands for furniture such as tables and chairs.<sup>87</sup> The furniture surplus was so high that the internees started selling their products to the local population.<sup>88</sup> Strictly speaking, this sale was illegal, but it was tolerated by the authorities. The administration considered carpentry an important tool in appeasing the internees and securing peace within the fences, although it angered the Secretary of South West Africa that the internees deducted their material costs from the camp's budget.<sup>89</sup>

At first, the internment only affected a small part of the German minority. The cultural and social life remained intact. Only two weeks after the camp was set up, a support committee was formed among the German community which began to organize additional food supplies and other convenience goods, such as crockery.<sup>90</sup> The German clubs also played their part in supporting the internees. For example, the sources tell of two concerts by a local quintet in the camp and before Christmas, the Liedertafel gathered outside to sing Christmas carols to the internees.<sup>91</sup>

The Christmas picnic on the morning of 25 December, which was initiated by the Dutch consul, proved to be a special highlight for the internees. After service, the internees were allowed to see their wives and children for tea and cake and to exchange presents.<sup>92</sup> Generally speaking, visits from relatives were highpoints in the internees' lives. In the early days of the camp, one hour per week visiting time was allowed.<sup>93</sup> Business partners also took advantage of this opportunity. The unannounced internment of a boss, shareholder or clerk posed serious challenges for many enterprises.<sup>94</sup> Farmers' wives who suddenly found themselves in charge farms without having the necessary know-how came to get their husband's advice.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/13, 02.11.1939. Material: IC. An Sec. SWA von CC.

<sup>87</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/13, 08.03.1940. Carpenters Shop for Internees: IC. An Sec. SWA von Dep. Com.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/13, 08.02.1940. IC: WH. An Commissioner of SA Police von Sec. SWA. Kopie an Dep. Com.

<sup>90</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/16, 27.09.1939. An Sec. SWA von John Meinert.

<sup>91</sup> SWAA 2826, A821/2, no date. Vorschlag für ein Konzert im Internierungslager am Sonntag 17.03.1940, 10.30 vormittags; SWAA 2826, A821/2, 15.12.1939. An Sec. SWA von Vorsitzender Liedertafel.

<sup>92</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/2, 15.12.1939. An Dep. Com. von Sec. SWA Forsyth; SWAA 2826, A820/2, Entertainments: IC. An CO SA Police WH von Subinspector; SWAA 2826, A820/2, 06.03.1940. An Sec. SWA von Dr. Daubenton.

<sup>93</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/2, 28.09.1939. An CC IC WH von Personal Clerk Viljoen.

<sup>94</sup> SWAA 2826, A821/2, 12.02.1940. An General-Officer IC WH von J.A. Nienhaus, Omaruru; SWAA 2826, A820/2, 22.02.1940. Confidential. An Dep. Com. von Shar & Bloch.

<sup>95</sup> Gretschel's book puts great emphasis on the issues these women had to face.

In theory these visits were supervised by a guard whose task was to ensure that only private or business topics were discussed. Since up until early 1940 there was only one policeman who was fluent in German, it was not possible to supervise all visits.<sup>96</sup> With the frequent violations of the regulations the camp-authorities abandoned their courteous and accommodating policy. With the approval of the Ministry of Justice and the CCO, the commandant prohibited visits completely on 2 January 1940. Medical emergencies were the only exception,<sup>97</sup> personal affairs such as birthdays or baptisms were not sufficient anymore.<sup>98</sup> The authorities did make exceptions in especially hard cases, such as that of the internee Bornheimer, who lost three children in a car accident and was granted leave for Christmas to see his wife.<sup>99</sup>

Although the internees lived behind barbed wire, the contact between them and the world outside, their relatives and the inhabitants of Windhoek was close. They were well supported to by the support committee and local clubs and had relatively close contact with their relatives, through visits or letters. They also left the camp occasionally, on leave or for medical treatment. The camp authorities struggled to enforce regulations and limitations. The internees may have been incarcerated, but they were not isolated

## Internees and subversive activities

Although the camp records are almost complete, they lack an ongoing account of numbers, age, martial status, attitude and profession. It is only possible to look at exemplary lists, which provide valuable information. Before Christmas 1939, there were 76 internees in the camp. 60 were married, 16 single. Almost half of them, 36, were farmers, 20 were artisans, employees and merchants. With the exception of Hans Hirsborn, there were no graduates. The average age was 35. Only five internees had received military training in Germany;<sup>100</sup> compared to the numbers of internees with military training during internments in World War I,<sup>101</sup> this was a surprisingly low number.

According to the police report, the farmers were the most fanatical and dangerous group. Almost all internees held leading positions in their local NSDAP-sections. It is interesting to look on the judicial status of the internees. After several waves of naturalization, which an immigrant had to refuse explicitly, non-naturalized *Reichsdeutsche* (German citizen living within the German Reich) made up only 10% of the German minority in South West Africa. However, there were 35 *Reichsdeutsche* and 37

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<sup>96</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/2, 06.11.1939. Visitors to Internees. An Sec. SWA von Office of CO SA Police WH.

<sup>97</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/2, 22.12.1939. ICS. An CCO von Sec. SWA Forsyth; SWAA 2826, A820/2, 23.12.1939. Telegram. An Forsyth von Hirsborn; Anhang, S. V.

<sup>98</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/2, no date. An Landesprobst K.F. Höflich von Sec. SWA. Dt.

<sup>99</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/2, 08.12.1939. An Sec. SWA Forsyth von Fr. Bornheimer; SWAA 2826, A820/2, no date. An Fr. Bornheimer von D.D. Forsyth.

<sup>100</sup> SWAA 2598, A820/3, 20.12.1939. Urgent. Nominal Roll of Internees: IC WH. An Dep. Com. von Sec. SWA.

<sup>101</sup> Manz and Tilman, "Enemy Aliens": 8.

naturalized Germans in the camp.<sup>102</sup> From the administration's point of view, the refusal to accept naturalization made *Reichsdeutsche* very suspicious. Up until the beginning of mass-internments in summer 1940, the 'typical' internee in the Windhoek camp was in his mid-thirties, married, a farmer or an employee, non-naturalized and a Nazi sympathizer. In particular the 'first crew' of the camp, which was deported on 25 June 1940, became radicalized in the early years of the war.

It has to be stated that pro-Nazi attitudes were acceptable among the internees. This seems confusing, since national-socialism and *Südwest* identity were diametrically opposed to each other on many levels. The German minority saw itself still as a community of pioneers and individualists. It was difficult for most of them to accept the *Führer* concept. This problem did not originate from a democratic understanding, but more or less from geographical isolation, stubbornness and a "tendency towards arrogance", as is described in an internal party account.<sup>103</sup> Germany's half-hearted attempts to regain the former colonies and the promotion of "Lebensraum im Osten" instead hindered the acceptance of Nazism.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand side, the ideology of white supremacy fitted well into the *Südwest* worldview, since it advocated the inferiority of Africans.<sup>105</sup>

Older scholarship promoted the idea that national-socialism in South West was primarily supported by the youth, the poor and unemployed and immigrants who arrived after 1933, so all in all just a small portion of the German minority. Recent studies have proved this not to have been the case. The German minority was not seduced and led astray by a small NS-elite, like Kurt Kock tried to demonstrate.<sup>106</sup> The opposite thesis is not true either. Oldhaver's claim that 90-95 % of the Germans were staunch Nazis lacks any source-based evidence.<sup>107</sup> Eberhardt has shown recently that the leading positions in the local NSDAP were distributed equally among rich and poor, old and young and established and freshly immigrated Germans.<sup>108</sup> The focus in local remembering culture still lies on the self-perception as victims, who suffered through internment. It tends to be forgotten that there had ever been any national-socialism at all, which hampers analysis of the past.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> SWAA 2598, A820/3, 20.12.1939. Urgent. Nominal Roll of Internees: IC WH. An Dep. Com. von Sec. SWA.

<sup>103</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus*: 370.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*: 321.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*: 376 ff.

<sup>106</sup> Rolf Kock, "Zeitgeschichte", in: idem, (ed.), *Erinnerungen an die Internierungszeit (1939–1946) und zeitgeschichtliche Ergänzungen. Berichte, Erzählungen, Fotos und Zeichnungen von Kameraden, die dabei waren*, Windhuk, Selbstverlag Andalusia, 1975: 13-40.

<sup>107</sup> Oldhaver, *Bevölkerungsgruppe*: 50.

<sup>108</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus*: 347.

<sup>109</sup> Rüdiger, *Namibia-Deutschen*: 22 f.

The previously mentioned obstinacy of the internees was expressed in word and deed, in actions and letters, in ignoring the rules and demonstrations of self-confidence. The longer the internment lasted, the more disobedient the internees became, as the following examples show.

On the 'Internee's March', the internees sang traditional folk and marching songs, but also Nazi songs such as the marching song of the Legion Condor, "Es zittern die morschen Knochen" or "Brüder in Zechen und Gruben".<sup>110</sup> As the city was not far away the march very soon began to attract visitors who watched from beyond the fence. The behaviour of these visitors became more and more aggressive and nationalistic, so that the camp authorities prohibited the march on 2 January and established an exclusion zone around the camp.<sup>111</sup>

The internees conducted the evening roll call by themselves and were similarly provocative. Usually, retired major von Kühne held a short speech and finished with the Hitler salute.<sup>112</sup> The salute was common among the internees and it was especially used to provoke the guards. As was the case with the singing of Nazi songs or posting of pictures of the *Führer* it was not forbidden in the Union camps, so the commandant of the Windhoek Camp had no legal grounds for banning it.<sup>113</sup> "Heil Hitler!" was the usual complimentary close of an internee's letter.<sup>114</sup>

The pro-Nazi pronouncements became more and more direct as the Wehrmacht moved from one victory to the next and the self-perception of the internees changed. At the beginning of the internment, they saw themselves as innocent victims and worried mainly about their personal future, but as the war progressed politics became more and more important. Hostility towards the camp authorities grew, even towards the lower police ranks. Being almost exclusively Boers, the guards had gained a reputation of being fair and pro-German at the beginning of the internment.<sup>115</sup> The civil administration had a bad image from the start, as the internees blamed them for the internment and sensed Anglo-Saxon perfidy.

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<sup>110</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/10, 21.12.1939. Confident. IC: Songs Sung by Internees when Marching. An Sec. SWA von Inspector, i.A. Dep. Com. Lyric excerpt of the last song mentioned: "Hitler ist unser Führer / ihm lohnt nicht goldener Gold [sic] / der von den jüdischen Thronen / vor seine Füße rollt / Einst kommt der Tag der Rache / einmal da werden wir frei / Schaffendes Deutschland erwache / brich deine Ketten entzwei! [...] Hitler sind treu wir ergeben / treu bis in den Tod / Hitler wird uns führen / einst aus dieser Not."

<sup>111</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/15, 18.01.1940. Censorship. Mrs. Grethe Ahrens am 15.01.1940 an Will Ahrens, IC WH. Von Dep. CHC.

<sup>112</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/10, 09.01.1940. Censorship. Correspondence Suspected to Require Special Attention. Von H.A. Marggraff, IC WH, am 05.01.1940 an Mr. K. Noske, Waaihoek, WH. Von Dep. CHC

<sup>113</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/10, 12.04.1940. ICs. An Sec. SWA von CCO.

<sup>114</sup> E.g.: SWAA 2827, A820/5, 23.11.1939. An Miss Rosemarie Kronsbein von Kurt Kock.

<sup>115</sup> Internee Hans Marggraff wrote: "We are treated decently. And enmity between ourselves and the Boers has never existed. We and our guards take internment as an unalterable fact, of which neither we nor they are guilty." Cf. SWAA 2827, A820/5, no date. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12.1939-11.04.1940).

The internee's letters often contained sentences such as: "The enemy will pay. The Führer will take care of that".<sup>116</sup> As the war went on, these threats became more common. When the French surrender failed to end the war the mood among the men became more intense. The radicalization was not only a male affair; the internees' women turned out to be even more radical than their men, according to the censor. Mrs Fischer's letters are exemplary. She sent her husband a 'black list' of neighbours and shop owners, who were failing to display a suitably national-socialist attitude or were even sceptical about Nazism, so that these persons could be punished after Germany had won the war.<sup>117</sup>

The narrative of martyrdom, of suffering for Germany became more frequent as well. Some internees hoped to be rewarded for the hardships after the war.<sup>118</sup> Evidence shows some cases, where men became internees voluntarily, i.e. they displayed their hostility in public in order to be interned and join their fellow countrymen. From May, censorship was ignored completely. Internee Pretsch for example, wrote his wife copious letters about their common future as landlords in the yet to be conquered eastern part of Europe.<sup>119</sup> His fellow internee Hans Keil proclaimed Hitler to be the greatest German of all times and that being German was equal to being a national-socialist. Otto Hartung expressed his desire for the days to come, in which South West would be German again, meaning exclusively German.<sup>120</sup>

The longer the war went on, the more troublesome the internees became. The events of 27 January 1940 illustrate this. It was the Kaiser's birthday and the internees demanded that they be allowed to celebrate it. On the same day, the CCO visited the camp for an inspection. The internees had managed to decorate the great hall of their barrack over and over with swastika-banners and Hitler portraits, unnoticed by the guards. When the commandant entered the barrack together with the CCO, he was deeply embarrassed by the scene. The guards had to force the internees at gunpoint to remove these 'decorations'.<sup>121</sup> Nazi-symbols were banned after that.

Written words were another form of resistance. Internees wrote anti-Semitic and anti-Boer poems like "England verrecke!" National-socialist literature quickly found its way into the camp library and was read by a great number of readers.<sup>122</sup> Although officially permitted, they were concealed as other books, wrapped in unsuspecting book-jackets.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5. Supplementary Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC, Covering the Period 12.04.40-26.06.1940 (Transfer of Internees to Ganspan, P.O. Andalusia).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, no date. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12.1939-11.04.1940).

<sup>120</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5. Supplementary Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC, Covering the Period 12.04.40-.26.06.1940 (Transfer of Internees to Ganspan, P.O. Andalusia).

<sup>121</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/10, 09.02.1940. Confidential. Exhibition of Swastikas and Other Enemy Insignia at IC. An Dep. Com. von CC; SWAA 2828, A821/10, 12.02.1940. Bekanntmachung, Dt., E., Afrikaans.

<sup>122</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, 23.12.1939. Admission of Books on the WH IC. An CCO von Sec. SWA Forsyth.

Since the censor was chronically overworked and did not manage to sort all of these books out.

Unlike in Andalusia, no NSDAP group was founded in the camp. *Lagerführer* Hirsekorn remained largely unchallenged in his position. Although he was not a party member, he was a stout nationalist and tolerated the Nazi attitudes and actions of his fellow internees. Internees, who were neutral or critical towards national-socialism, became isolated. Some letters state that these fellow internees were visited by “the Holy Ghost” – a euphemism for nocturnal beatings.<sup>123</sup> The old Windhoek crew behaved the same way in Andalusia. Jews and “Misters” had to be sent to other camps, mostly Koffiefontein, to protect them from the other internees.<sup>124</sup>

Politics and ideology played a major role indeed among the internees even if former internees such as Kock sought to trivialize them. Not every internee was a Nazi, but since the borders between nationalism, Germanhood and Nazism were not clearly defined, it has to be stated that the majority of internees were sympathizers.

Away from politics, the internees began to behave more assertively in everyday matters too. Nutrition was a daily source of complaints. As the internees enjoyed the same provisions as the guards, the commandant was perplexed by the complaints. Indeed, the guards complained to their commandant, that the Germans were acting purely out of malice. The guards claimed that the internees received parcels of garlic, bacon, liver sausage, eggs and all sorts of canned food and that they hoarded the already adequate rations provided by the police. The Germans, in their view, enjoyed far better nutrition than the guards.<sup>125</sup> The only reason they described the meals so unfavourably in their letters home was to ensure a constant supply of more fancy food.

The attitude of the internees towards authorities was similar regarding the postal service. A common way of avoiding censorship was to pass letters during visits. It was an effective method, as the guards were not very alert and knew little German.<sup>126</sup> Internees did not have to pay postage. This made the attempts to reduce the amount of post more difficult.<sup>127</sup> After visits were banned, letters became the most important link to the outside world. Letters were ideal for passing on forbidden information. To achieve

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<sup>123</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/10. Censorship Suspected to Require Special Attention. Von Fritz Kade, IC WH am 19.07.1940 in D. an Herr und Frau Jakob Diehl, Girib. Von Dep. CHC. Kopien an Dep. Com. Chief Censor, Cape Town und Director of Intelligence, Pretoria.

<sup>124</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5. Correspondence Suspected to Require Special Attention. W. Zimmer, IC Andalusia, am 01.09.1940 an Familie Zimmer, Swakopmund. Von Dep. CHC an Dep. Com., Director of Intelligence und Chief Censor. Dt. Since the focus of this paper lies on Windhoek, the other camps Koffiefontein, Leeuwkop, Andalusia and Baviaanspoort will only be covered briefly. In spite of that, the National Archives in Windhoek still holds extensive records about these camps. They may not be as complete as the Windhoek files, but form a solid base for further research.

<sup>125</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/4, 10.11.1939. Rations: Internees: WH. An CO SA Police von Quartermaster Sergeant W. Allen.

<sup>126</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/10, 06.11.1939. An CC von Forsyth.

<sup>127</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/18, no date. Free Raillage of Parcels to and from Internees. Von Sec. SWA.

this, the writers developed different methods of cipher. Letters were underlined or perforated to communicate a second, hidden message.<sup>128</sup>

Other writers used flowery and metaphorical diction. A letter in the style of Karl May is a good example of this. Mr. Krousbein wrote to an internee, that Manitou [Hitler] told the Indians [Germans] by secret whisper of the night [radio] to keep up faith and spirit. The Ostrich-hunters [air force] have returned with many scalps [kills] to the hunting grounds of the apaches [Germany].<sup>129</sup> Other letters speak of Uncle Dolf and little Josi [Hitler and Goebbels] whose visit [speech] cheered everyone up.<sup>130</sup>

It was an easy task for the censor to break these 'codes'. Some of them were not intercepted so that the flow of information could be monitored. The predominant topic of these secret messages was the course of the war. Most farms kept their radios, though this has been prohibited by the administration.<sup>131</sup> The main source of information was the long-distance broadcaster Zeesen which was based in Germany.<sup>132</sup> The internees also had a secret radio, but it received South African broadcasts only. Despite intense searches, the guards were never able to find it, much to the amusement of the internees. They kept mentioning the radio in their letters to provoke the censor.<sup>133</sup>

The internees were well aware of the censorship. When they began to expect a German victory in the war, they were even less concerned about the censor. A striking example for this attitude is the "censor poem".<sup>134</sup> One internee mocked the censor in a poem that he hid in a book and that he was sure the censor would find.

The efficacy of the censorship declined sharply due to the censor's excessive workload. He was expected to cope with a huge amount of post. The censor was also responsible for translating 80-120 letters a day and checking all parcels, packets and books arriving or leaving the camp.<sup>135</sup> The entire camp ignored the regulations concerning postal restrictions. Theoretically, an internee was allowed two one-sided sheets of paper per week.<sup>136</sup> The lawyer Hans Hirsekorn maintained the business of his law firm for a long

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<sup>128</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, 23.12.1939. IC: Attempt at Evading Censorship. An Dep. CO SWA WH von Dep. CHC; SWAA 2827, A820/5, 04.06.1940. Censorship Correspondence Suspected to Require Special Attention. Von "Spatz" (Miss Ilse Eckert?) am 30.05.1940 an Paul Glöditzsch. Dt. Von Dep. CHC. Kopien an Dep. Com., Director of Intelligence und Chief Censor.

<sup>129</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, 11.09.1940. Annexure to U.C. 10: DA/197 Report on German letters Addressed to Internees. Von Dep. CHC.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Eberhardt, *Nationalsozialismus*: 420.

<sup>133</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, no date. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12.1939-11.04.1940).

<sup>134</sup> SWAA 2827, A 821/8, 11.06.1940. An Dep. CO SWA von Dep. CHC.

<sup>135</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5. Censorship of Camp Correspondence. 28th September to 31th October, 1939. An Sec. SWA von Censor.

<sup>136</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, 28.10.1939. An Sec. SWA von CC.

time from inside the camp.<sup>137</sup> Internee Kempel tried to do the same with his enterprise. Between 18 September and 3 October 1939, he sent 349 letters and received 178.<sup>138</sup> His friend internee Neuhaus copied their idea and demanded that his letters should not be read by the censor, to safeguard his company secrets.<sup>139</sup>

The vast amount of material requiring the censor's attention resulted in delays of up to two weeks. The camp authorities did little to enforce the regulations with measures such as the suspension of postal services. Other possible punishments were cancellations of visits or giving internees additional cleaning duties.<sup>140</sup> Camp regulations meant that commandant's hands were tied. Solitary confinement could not be enforced, since there were no single cells, and because the internees were not criminals they could not be transferred to regular prisons.<sup>141</sup> Additional cleaning duties were not seen as a serious measure since the internees had a lot of free time and the camp was always neat and clean. Cancellations of visits or postal privileges were annoying. However, the administration rarely enforced these measures in order to avoid provoking the internees.

The internees reacted angrily to an attempt to curtail their privileges when seeking medical treatment. The administration declared on 22 May that every internee would be treated in the General Hospital in the future and that District Surgeon Dr. Bowkett would be the only doctor they could see. The dentist Dr. Leitner was instructed that he could only treat the internees inside the camp.<sup>142</sup> These measures almost caused a mutiny among the internees. Dr. Bowkett became the scapegoat and was deemed incompetent. Several internees swore affidavits, in which they described alleged malpractice by Bowkett. Dr. Fleischer, an interned German doctor supported these claims.<sup>143</sup> In addition, the internees complained that the sick bay was unfit for use and that there was no mobile dentistry equipment.

The internees called a 'treatment strike' on 20 June 1940. They refused any further treatment by Bowkett ("would rather die than consult him") and demanded the reinstatement of their old privilege of choice.<sup>144</sup> They threatened the commandant himself saying that he would pay for all damages arising from the strike (after Germany had won the war and regained South West).<sup>145</sup> Hirsekorn, in his function as *Lagerführer*, added

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<sup>137</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, 20.12.1939. An Dep. CO WH von Dep. CHC.

<sup>138</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/2. Urgent. Correspondence of Internees. An CCO von D.D. Forsyth.

<sup>139</sup> SWA 2827, A820/5, 03.05.1940. An Dep. Com. von Dep. CHC.

<sup>140</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/10. Verfahrensprotokoll. Verfahren gegen Heinemann. Von CC.

<sup>141</sup> SWAA 2826, A820/2. 25.09.1939. Telegram. An Minister of Justice, Pretoria, von Sec. SWA Viljoen. In Baviaanspoort which was under the jurisdiction of DIC, sanctions were stricter. The regulations allowed up to 14 days of special labour, up to 10 days arrest or 21 days of isolation or fines. Cf. SWAA 2826, A820/2, 19.09.1939. Baviaanspoort IC. Rules for Internees. Approved C.F. Steyn, Minister of Justice.

<sup>142</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 10.04.1940. An Sec. SWA von [Assistant Secretary] Viljoen.

<sup>143</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 13.06.1940. Re: Medical Care of Internees. An CC von Hirsekorn. One of the main charges against Bowkett was his alleged lack of interest in Germans.

<sup>144</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 27.07.1940. Medical officer: IC. An Sec. SWA von Dep. Com.

<sup>145</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 24.06.1940. Re: Treatment of Eyes of Mr. Haerlen. An CC von Hirsekorn.

that he could not guarantee peace and restraint among the internees, should their demands not be met – an unconcealed threat.<sup>146</sup> The deportation of the original internees six days later ended the litany of complaints. The newly arriving internees were treated in the General Hospital and by Dr. Bowkett.<sup>147</sup> One can assume that the ‘treatment-strike’ was not really based on doubts about Bowkett’s competence, but was rather a political action to regain privileges and show the strength and cohesion of the internees

The internees’ resistance to the authorities grew not only over political matters but also in everyday life. Fuelled by the close contact to the world outside the fence, the internees started issuing direct threats and taking deliberate actions. Police and administration were finally convinced that maintaining a camp in Windhoek or anywhere else in South West would lead to a rebellion sooner or later. The combination of overcrowding and the internees’ rebelliousness eventually led to the decision to shut the Windhoek Camp down.

### **Closure: the camp after 28 June 1940**

At dawn on 26 June, the internees were awoken by guards with fixed bayonets. The commandant read out a short announcement of their transfer to a camp in South Africa.<sup>148</sup> There was no opportunity to take leave of families. Their relatives were not officially informed of this relocation but learned of it from the press.<sup>149</sup> The train arrived two days later.<sup>150</sup> The Windhoek camp was converted into a transitional camp. The camp closure was not a carefully planned operation but rather an emergency measure.

Forsyth had complained to the commissioner as early as December 1939, when the camp only housed 70 internees, that the maximum capacity would soon be reached.<sup>151</sup> The commissioner opposed the any expansion at first, especially the building of new huts. He did not give his final consent until February.<sup>152</sup> The actual building process took another two months to begin and the first huts were not completed until August.<sup>153</sup> The overall costs, including costs for new power-lines and lavatories, came to 1,500 Pounds – a considerable sum, which could lead one to the assumption that the Windhoek camp was not to be abandoned soon.

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<sup>146</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 13.06.1940. Re: Medical Care of Internees. An CC von Hirsekorn.

<sup>147</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/6, 27.07.1940. Medical Officer: IC. An Sec. SWA von Dep. Com.

<sup>148</sup> Zemke, “Internierungen”: 44.

<sup>149</sup> SWAA 2829, A821/20, Blanko. Von Sec. SWA Forsyth. Dt.

<sup>150</sup> Zemke, “Internierungen”: 45 f.

<sup>151</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/14, 15.12.1939. IC WH: Additional Sleeping Accomodations. An Commissioner of SA Police von Sec. SWA Forsyth.

<sup>152</sup> SWAA 2828, A821/14, 29.02.1940. Memorandum and Points Raised at a Discussion which Took Place at the IC on the 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1940. Von Assistant Secretary Nesor.

<sup>153</sup> SWAA 2828, SWAA 2828, A821/14, 18.04.1940. Accomodation: IC WH. An Commissioner of SA Police von Dep. Com. Kopie an Sec. SWA; SWAA 2828 A821/14 14.09.1940 Copy. Von MO.

Forsyth himself only received word of the transfer two weeks in advance, on 14 June.<sup>154</sup> This rather short notice means that the closure had been decided at higher level earlier. It seems plausible that the original intention was to shut down the camp as quickly as possible so that the area could once again be used as a police barracks.<sup>155</sup> The police unit itself had already begun the decommissioning.<sup>156</sup> The remaining internees who had only recently been detained were expecting to be transferred promptly to Andalusia.<sup>157</sup> The administration intervened a week before the planned closure. The influx of new internees, due to the mass internments, made the maintenance of Windhoek as a transitional camp, at least in a skeletal function, inevitable.<sup>158</sup> The camps in the Union were still a long way from being fully ready for occupation, which caused further delays – another indicator of the ad hoc nature of the closure of Windhoek.

The major issues surrounding the transport to South Africa were the great distances, the underdeveloped railroad network and bureaucratic delays in registering the internees. The administration was taken by surprise by the challenge of interning more than 1,300 men at short notice.<sup>159</sup> The relocation took place very slowly, especially from August onwards, because the South African camps were already filled to capacity. This resulted in a dramatic rise in numbers at Windhoek Camp; at the beginning of September 1940, there were 200 internees, by the end of the month 250.<sup>160</sup> Thus the internment had to stop as there was simply no place to hold the internees anymore.<sup>161</sup>

Compared to the records on the original 'crew' of internees, the state of source material on the new internees is very sparse. Besides lists of arrivals and departures, there is hardly anything to be found about everyday life or organization. This is probably because the period of incarceration was so short. Despite the ongoing mass-internments, the percentage of non-naturalized citizens, the so called *Reichsdeutschen*, was quite high, especially compared to their relatively low share of the German population. A list dating from 21 September records 150 internees in Windhoek Camp: 6 Union citizens, 46 naturalized citizens and 98 *Reichsdeutsche*.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> SWAA 2829, A821/20, 14.06.1940. Telegram. An Director of Prisons von Sec. SWA Forsyth.

<sup>155</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/4, 04.07.1940. Telegram. An DIC von Sec. SWA Viljoen.

<sup>156</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/4, 08.08.1940. Re: IC. Kitchen Arrangements. An Dep. Com. von Sec. SWA.

<sup>157</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/4, 06.08.1940. IC: Kitchen Arrangements. An Dep. Com. von Sec. SWA.

<sup>158</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/4, 26.08.1940. Confidential. IC: Kitchen Arrangements. An Dep. Com. von Sec. SWA Forsyth.

<sup>159</sup> SWAA 2829, A821/20, no date. Internment: SWA. An CCO von Sec. SWA Forsyth. Kopie an DIC.

<sup>160</sup> SWAA 2829, A821/20, 03.09.1940. Transfer of Internees from WH to Andalusia. An CCO von Sec. SWA Forsyth. Kopie an DIC; SWAA 2829, A821/20. Confidential. Transfer of Internees from WH to Andalusia. An Sec. SWA von Dep. Com. The sudden rise seems to be linked with the shut-down of Tsumeb mine.

<sup>161</sup> SWAA 2829, A821/20, 09.10.1940. Confidential. Internment: SWA. An Sec. SWA von CCO.

<sup>162</sup> SWAA 2598, A820/3, 21.09.1940. Internees in WH IC on 21.09.1940.

Figure 3: Number of internees arriving in South Africa<sup>163</sup>

<b>Arrival in South Africa</b>	28.06.40	05.07.40	23.07.40	06.08.40	01.11.40	15.11.40
Number of internees	200 (199)	159	150	5 Italians	101	100
<b>Arrival in South Africa</b>	29.11.40	20.12.40	25.12.40	05.01.41	16.01.41	
Number of internees	100	100	60	37	9	

The camp was finally shut down between 4 and 19 February 1941.<sup>164</sup> The vast majority of suspicious or potentially dangerous Germans had already been deported to South Africa. A headcount recorded 1,263 internees from South West Africa in Union camps on 14 March 1941.<sup>165</sup> Windhoek had fulfilled its purpose.

The decommissioning of the Windhoek Camp took a lot longer than expected. The relocation of internees was a reaction to the course of the war and the rising assertiveness of the internees, who were being held very close to the rest of the German minority. The fear of possible risings was the main driver in making this decision. The haphazard nature of the operation is seen in the enormous problems involved in transporting the internees to and accommodating them in South Africa.

## Conclusion

The outbreak of the Second World War had a direct impact on the German minority in South West Africa. The main reason for the internment was the strained relations between the German population and the South African administration. The spread of national-socialism in South West Africa caused relations to deteriorate rapidly. In the first days of the war, those who openly supported Nazism became the first internees. The German success in the course of war led to mass-internments from May 1940. The special judicial and organizational regulations in the mandated territory resulted in administrative chaos. The tangled and overlapping structures in decision-making led to a lumbering and unresponsive organization. The internees were remarkably adept at convincing the administration to meet their demands, either by threats or pleas.

<sup>163</sup> Table referring to SWAA2829, A821/20. Transfer from Internees from SWA to Union. From February 1941, there was a direct transfer to South Africa. During the transport of 28 June, a fatal accident occurred. Cf. SWAA 2829, A821/20, 26.06.1940. An DIC von Sec. SWA Forsyth. Dt.

<sup>164</sup> SWAA 2829, A821/25, 04.02.1941. Deutscher Frauenverein: Claim for Returns of Property Lent to IC. An Dep. Com. von Sec. SWA Slarke; SWAA 2829, A821/20, 06.02.1941. Confidential. Internments SWA. Transfer to Union. An CCO von Dep. CCO Forsyth.

<sup>165</sup> SWAA 2829, A821/20. Internees from SWA. An Commissioner von DIC. Kopie an Dep. com.

The Windhoek Camp was extraordinary in many ways: Its food supply was supplemented by opulent food parcels from outside. The internees were allowed to be treated by German doctors at their own expense. There was an abundance of leisure time activities. Despite their frequent complaints and their martyr-attitude, most of the men in the camp were perfectly aware of their privileged, non-belligerent situation; as one of the internees wrote home: "We lack nothing here - except freedom."<sup>166</sup>

Of course, their personal freedom was strictly regulated, but the contact with the world outside was closer than one would expect in an internment camp. The visiting times were very liberal (for the first months) and postal contact was more than frequent. Furthermore, leave of absence, the aid committee and the possibility of visiting Windhoek for medical treatment were further bonds between the camp and the German community.

The majority of internees sympathised with the national-socialists. During the early years of the war, while the German military campaign was successful, this attitude became more and more pronounced. The result of this radicalization was an aggressive attitude towards the South African authorities, which reacted defensively and hesitantly. This assertiveness was seen in the hoisting of swastikas on the Kaiser's birthday or the widespread use of the Nazi salute. Besides such acts of political defiance, the internees also started to disregard camp rules, by ignoring the postal restrictions for example.

The increasingly hostile behaviour of the internees, together with the overcrowding of the Windhoek Camp, led to the transfer of the "first internee crew" to South Africa. Although the administration planned to shut the camp down as soon as possible, the mass-internments on the one hand, and the bureaucratic shortcomings on the other, meant that it remained open as a transit camp until February 1941. 'Klein-Danzig' was indeed a special camp: Administered by disunited men, inhabited by self-confident men, guarded by intimidated men and supported by the spared rest.

This paper is merely a step in the right direction in researching and casting light on internment in Southern Africa. There is a wealth of opportunity for more research. Academic research on the both large South African camps Baviaanspoort and Andalusia remains desideratum as well as research on Koffiefontein and Leuwnkopp. Since there are, to my knowledge, no fundamental works on these camps, a comparative perspective would be of great value. In a broader context of World War II and the German minority, an account of the role of *Südwest* in the Wehrmacht has yet to be written.

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<sup>166</sup> SWAA 2827, A820/5, no date. Report on Censorship of Correspondence to and from WH IC (11.12.1939-11.04.1940).

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