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First Place

*The Extent and Effects of German-Boer Collaboration During the
First World War: A Comprehensive and Chronological Analysis*

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Introduction

Perceptions of shared ethnic heritage have long served as a basis for the development of political and cultural relationships throughout the history of the international system. Wars have been fought, countries have been formed and nations have been liberated through the active cooperation of ethnic entities who view each other more so as part of their same identity rather than the "other." Just as the Russian Empire, acting as the protectors of Pan-Slavism, would come to the aid of their Slavic Serbian brothers as the First World War erupted in 1914,¹ so too would the German Empire rush to support their Germanic descendants in Southern Africa. The Boer Rebellion of 1914 would see the culmination of a reciprocal ethnic relationship (having evolved from a foundation of ethno-linguistic ties) manifest itself in a pragmatic military and political alliance during the First World War. As the most fiercely

¹ Geoffrey Wawro, *A Mad Catastrophe: The Outbreak of World War I and the Collapse of the Habsburg Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), p. 51.

combative portion of the South-West Africa campaign,² the Boer Rebellion embodied the culmination of both imperial rivalry and Social-Darwinian doctrine in early twentieth-century international politics, serving simultaneously as an exhibit for the truly global dimensions of the First World War.

The Boer Rebellion was at its core a colonial war of independence. Descendants of Dutch, German and French settlers, the Boer people of the Union of South Africa sought to regain the independence of the Boer Republics from the British Empire. The British Empire had annexed the Transvaal and the Orange Free State as a result of the Boer War (1899-1902) and ethnic tensions between the Afrikaans-speaking Boers and English-speaking British colonists were becoming increasingly contentious. As the First World War broke out in Europe, nationalistic factions of Boers allied themselves with the neighboring German Empire in German South-West Africa in order to expel British influence from the Southern African subcontinent. The Germans had in turn come to think of the Boers not only as an offshoot of their ethnic family tree but also as a force to be utilized for their own ends in the First World War. Further complicating the situation was the fact that the Prime Minister of the Union, Louis Botha, and the Union's Minister of Defence, General Jan Smuts, both refused to rebel alongside their fellow Boers and instead opted to actively suppress the uprising. This left the Union's Boer population divided between those who chose to rebel and those who remained loyal to the British Empire, as many of the highest-ranking Boer officers within the Union's armed forces began to take arms against the Union Jack. The rebellion was, in the end, unsuccessful, but this fascinating case of coordination, cooperation and collaboration between the Germans and the Boers would remarkably influence both the course of the First World War in Southern Africa and the persistent survival of one of the German Empire's most important colonies.

The Boer Rebellion was a relatively obscure and comparatively lesser-studied peripheral conflict of the First World War. Published literature on the rebellion is quite scarce and the majority of the scholarship on the subject is contemporary, most notably in the form of official British accounts of the conflict, published evidence from the rebellion's trial, and memoirs of those most heavily involved in the insurrection. The recent literature that covers the rebellion is generally inadequate and tends to place the

² Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 91.

uprising in the wider context of the South-West Africa campaign. A quite limited selection of comprehensive secondary works on the rebellion can be found in English and Afrikaans, and literature in the German language is particularly scarce. However, of all the under-studied aspects of the Boer Rebellion, a marked absence of a comprehensive analysis of the collaboration between the Germans and the Boers is notable. Furthermore, much of the literature that does indeed touch on the collaborative elements commonly employ sources that are exclusively in the language in which the literature is written.

Accordingly, much of what has been written about the Boer Rebellion is quite partial to the aggregate historiography and as such, historical falsities have persisted. In examining a wide range of the available English, Afrikaans and German primary documents, I hope to construct a comprehensive account of German-Boer collaboration during the First World War. By analyzing historical evidence from each of the three major languages of the belligerents, I will demonstrate both the extent and the effects of German-Boer collaboration during this time period.

The German connection to the Boer Rebellion is often portrayed as a loosely organized, uncommitted, and fruitless effort, but as I will demonstrate, the reality diverges sharply from these assumptions. I will argue that German-Boer collaboration during the First World War was remarkably extensive, emanating from the citizens and foot soldiers of both German South-West Africa and the Union of South Africa through to the highest-ranking military officials of the Union and the German emperor himself. Additionally, I will argue that German-Boer collaboration was a decisive factor in the continuation of the rebellion after General Koos De La Rey's death, to the German victory at the Battle of Sandfontein and ultimately to the prolonged existence of German South-West Africa as a colony of the German Empire for an additional five months. I will begin by introducing the history of the German-Boer relationship before commencing a chronological analysis of German-Boer collaboration before and during the First World War from both perspectives. By producing a chronological examination of the collaborative efforts that took place between June 1913 and February 1915, this essay aims to provide an elaborate reinterpretation of one of South Africa's most contentious historical events.

The History of German-Boer Relations

The genesis of German-Boer political relations can understandably be located during the era of colonial expansion in Africa and the national unification efforts in Central and Southern Europe. As a response to the growing projection of British influence in the Cape Colony (from where they had migrated less than thirty years earlier), the Boers requested both the official recognition of the Republic of the Transvaal and the establishment of diplomatic relations with Prussia in 1867. They repeated the request after the founding of the new German Empire in 1871, to no avail. The Germans had yet to establish their own colony in southwestern Africa and the rich gold deposits of the Transvaal had not been discovered at this time.³ More important, however, was the promotion of German-Boer racial affinities led by the well-known German travel writer Ernst von Weber less than a decade later.

In the background of the growing popularity of eugenic and Social-Darwinian thinking in Europe, Ernst von Weber made an important contribution to the birth of German-Boer relations in 1879 with his article titled "Deutschlands Interessen in Südost-Afrika" in the first volume of the *Geographische Nachrichten für Welthandel und Volkswirtschaft* geography journal. Having come in contact with the Boers while owning a diamond mine in Southern Africa in the years prior to the publication,⁴ Weber wrote in his highly-influential article:

In South East Africa we Germans have quite a peculiar interest for here dwell a splendid race of people allied to us by speech and habits. The Boers... there are the descendants of former Dutch settlers; and they are; as I most emphatically maintain, our kinsmen and brethren; so-called Low-Germans to be sure, but none the less of right Teutonic blood... and one may speak of a nation of Afrikaanders or Low-German Africans, which forms one sympathetic race from Table Mountain to the Limpopo. This is a fact which would be of great importance in any possible future rising of the Boers having for its object the formation of a Dutch African confederation... For the sake of sure and certain protection from the greed

³ Keith M. Wilson, *The International Impact of the Boer War* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 26.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

of annexation of the hateful English Government, the Boers would gladly have placed themselves under the German Government in the form of two protected states, with as far as possible their own free self-government.⁵

Unbeknownst to Weber at the time, his words would not only irreversibly affect German-Boer perceptions of each other, but they would also serve as a strikingly accurate foreshadowing of the Boer Rebellion of 1914, decades before the first shots of both the Boer War of 1899-1902 and the First World War had even been fired. Weber's article fit the late nineteenth-century paradigmatic narrative of ethnocentricity and combined aspects of the Anglo-German antagonism of the time to solidify his outreach of ethno-lingual and racial brotherhood. So important was Weber's article to the developing relationship between the Boers and the Germans that W.S. Rayner and W.W. O'Shaughnessy felt compelled, in their 1916 book *How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West*, to refer to Weber's article as an essential component to the development of German colonial consciousness towards Southern Africa, marking the article as having been "very insidious" for its attempt at establishing links between the two racial entities.⁶ Keith M. Wilson asserts in his book *The International Impact of the Boer War* that after Weber's article was published "it would no longer be possible to omit the racial factor from the discussion about colonies."

Though not nearly as deliberate as Weber's rhetoric might suggest, similar strands of ethnic identification were taking place in the still-forming identity of the Boers. In 1883 a booklet titled *The History of the Afrikaans Race from 1688 to 1882* was published in the second Boer Republic of the Orange Free State. The author, C.P. Bezuidenhout, drew parallels between the Afrikaner (synonymous with Boer) people and the Jews of the Old Testament, stating: "just as Israel of old in Egypt was planted as a vine in Canaan and protected, so also our nation, this people who came from Holland, France and Germany and were by God's Providence planted in Africa, may be

⁵ J.J. Collyer, *The Campaign in German Southwest Africa, 1914-15* (London: Imperial War Museum Department of Printed Books, 1937), pp. 5-6. Originally published in Ernst von Weber, *Geographische Nachrichten für Welthandel und Volkswirtschaft*, Vol. 1. (Berlin: Bureau des Vereins, 1879), pp. 259- 264.

⁶ W.S. Rayner and W.W. O'Shaughnessy, *How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West: A Full Record of the Campaign from Official Information by Reuter's Special War Correspondents Who Accompanied the Forces sent by the Government of the Union of South Africa* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1916), p. 11.

preserved."⁷ This passage demonstrates a conscious identification with Germany as one of the original birthplaces of the ethnic Afrikaner, and this would serve as a driving element behind the Boer's own ethnic narrative in the immediate years following the publication of Weber's article.

In the following year, the racially-loaded term "Teutonic" would resurface in German discourse describing the Boers. Famous German historian Heinrich von Treitschke labeled the developing culture in Southern Africa as distinctly Teutonic, claiming in 1884 that "it would be no more than a natural turn of events if racially related Germany should some day in some manner become responsible for the protection of the Teutonic population of Southern Africa, inheriting the legacy of the British in a neglected colony."⁸ Adherence to this perceived Teutonic brotherhood would persist in both hemispheres, as the influential founder of the Afrikaner National Party General G. B. M. Hertzog continued well into the twentieth-century to maintain that he saw the Germans "as the Boers' 'fellow Teutons.'"⁹ While such emphatic discussions continued to take place among the intellectual and colonial circles in German society, one aspect of these affinities seems to have permeated to the highest level of Imperial Germany's governance.

Developed by Johann Jakob Sturz and further proposed by Bernhard Schwarz, the idea of establishing "in collaboration with the Boers... a 'German India'"¹⁰ super-colony in Southern Africa to rival the British Raj in India would fall on the receptive ears of Kaiser Wilhelm II.¹¹ The super-colony was to entail all of the territories held by the British, Portuguese, French and Belgian empires in Southern Africa while a small area around Swaziland and the British Colony of Natal was to be set aside exclusively for an independent Boer republic.¹² While such extravagant colonial ambitions never materialized, this episode in prospective German colonialism demonstrates both the

⁷ F.A. Van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner nationalism, 1868-1881*, Translated by F. R. Metrowich (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1961), p. 192.

⁸ Wilson, *The International Impact of the Boer War*, p. 25.

⁹ Edward Paice, *Tip and Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), p. 126.

¹⁰ Wilson, *The International Impact of the Boer War*, pp. 25-27.

¹¹ Adam Cruise, *Louis Botha's War: The Campaign in German Southwest Africa, 1914-1915* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2015), p. 14.

¹² Ibid.

universality of pro-Boer German sentiments in the late nineteenth century and the exceptionality of the developing German-Boer relationship. Moreover, these plans help to contextualize the Kaiser's decision, a couple of decades later in 1914, to guarantee the independence of a South African Republic in the event of a Boer rebellion.¹³

As the economy of the South African Republic (interchangeably known as the Transvaal) grew exponentially in the latter half of the 1880s, a German-Boer treaty of friendship was concluded on 22 January 1885.¹⁴ The discovery of the world's largest gold deposit at Witwatersrand the following year cemented official relations between Imperial Germany and the Transvaal, finally presenting the Germans with a financially feasible opportunity to support and collaborate with their ethnically similar exclave. German economic advisers, political advisers, and investors poured into the Transvaal, where the German share of foreign capital investment would reach a substantial twenty percent.¹⁵ Within a decade of the discovery at Witwatersrand, over 5,000 Germans had taken up residence in the Transvaal,¹⁶ while the proliferation of official diplomacy culminated in the Transvaal's President Paul Kruger claiming in a speech in January 1895 that the relationship between Germany and the Transvaal was akin to that of parent and child.¹⁷ This effort was, however, to be taken even further a mere twelve months later when Kaiser Wilhelm II sent the infamous Kruger Telegram.

In December 1895, an armed British invasion of the Transvaal known as the Jameson Raid was orchestrated by the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes as a means of instigating an uprising of British mine workers in the Transvaal. After the raid failed, Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a personal telegram of congratulations to Kruger for having successfully maintained the independence of the Transvaal by repelling the British provocation.¹⁸ The Kruger Telegram marked the zenith of German-Boer relations in the pre-Boer War period and reinvigorated the already substantial imperial rivalry between the German and British camps. In Germany, the ethnocentric political organization known as the Pan-German League rallied to the aid of the Boers, arousing public

¹³ Pieter De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy: Negotiations with German South West During 1913* (Pretoria: Wallachs Ltd, 1915), p. 13.

¹⁴ Wilson, *The International Impact of the Boer War*, p. 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Denis Judd, and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War: A History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 51.

¹⁷ Wilson, *The International Impact of the Boer War*, p. 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

hysteria over the matter by claiming: "The Boers are German in blood... in language, in national character, and in all the rest of their ethnicity... In South Africa too we have ethnic German territory... as genuine as in Flanders or Holstein."¹⁹ In Britain, anti-Germanism proliferated as the Kruger Telegram was publically received as a direct German provocation deep inside the British Empire's sphere of influence.²⁰

With nearly every indication – short of an official alliance – pointing towards German military intervention in the event of war between the British Empire and the Transvaal, *Realpolitik* in German foreign policy prevailed over both the Kaiser's lust for imperial competition and the public's pro-Boer sympathies. The Kaiser had until March 1897 maintained exceptionally high levels of troop strength in the German military in order to ensure effective armed aid to the Boers in the event of a war against Britain in the Transvaal.²¹ But a treaty concluded between the British and German empires on 30 August 1898 would see any official aspirations of a German-Boer alliance completely disintegrate. Based on the hypothetical dissolution of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, the treaty institutionalized German and British spheres of influence in Africa, guaranteeing German non-interference in Southern Africa in exchange for future British non-interference in the south of Angola and north of Mozambique.²²

The treaty effectively reversed the parent-child design of the German-Boer relationship that was nearly two decades in the making, dismantling one of the final obstacles to British hegemony in South Africa and extinguishing official German support for the Boers for the next sixteen years. The German Empire had chosen prospective colonial gains and *détente* with the British Empire over its highly-publicized paternal and racial affiliations with the Transvaal. Instrumental in the outcome of the treaty, Friederich von Holstein tellingly claimed: "In the South African question we must take care that the phrase about our having left our racial brothers the Boers in the lurch does not become common coin."²³

¹⁹ Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 64.

²⁰ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (Indianapolis: Cardinal, 1979), p. 30.

²¹ Wilson, *The International Impact of the Boer War*, p. 28.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

²³ Wilson, *The International Impact of the Boer War*, p. 31.

Although the official foreign policy of the Kaiser and the imperial German government retracted from the "South African question," pro-Boer sentiment remained and even escalated among large segments of the German population, especially after the outbreak of the Boer War. In 1900, Chief of the German Greater General Staff Helmut von Moltke considered the prospect of linking an invasion of the British Cape Colony with an uprising of the Cape Boers in the event of a war in Europe.²⁴ This plan contained stark similarities to the outbreak of the First World War and the Boer Rebellion of 1914: it included a German-Boer alliance operating in concert with a Boer uprising, all in the event of a major war in Europe. The plan not only demonstrates significant foresight on the part of the German military staff, but it also places the Boer Rebellion of 1914 in the wider context of historical continuities between the Germans and the Boers.

More significant, however, was the incredible response from the German public to the conflict in South Africa. Channeling the "general sympathy for the... brother-nation of Boers" and the popular outrage at British imperial aggression, the Pan-German League organized massive rallies in support of the Boer cause.²⁵ Hundreds of thousands of Germans attended these rallies and over 500,000 Marks was raised for the Boers by the Pan-German League in their "Boer Collection" throughout the war.²⁶ Though Roger Chickering is quick to note in his book, *We Men Who Feel Most German*, that most Germans who attended the rallies did so more as an expression of anti-British protest than out of a sense of "ethnic community among Germans and Boers,"²⁷ the sheer numbers of rally attendees added significant pressure to the government's policy of neutrality in the Boer War and allowed the policy-critical Pan-German League to reach its pre-First World War peak membership.²⁸ Nevertheless, as the Boer War came to its unavoidable end in May 1902, so too did the German enthusiasm for maintaining strong ties with the Boers. Though some Boers emigrated to German South-West Africa to escape British rule in the Transvaal and Orange Free State after the war's

²⁴ James Stejskal, *The Horns of the Beast: The Swakop River Campaign and World War I in South-West Africa, 1914-15* (Solihull: Helion & Company Ltd., 2014), p. 50.

²⁵ Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German*, p. 64.

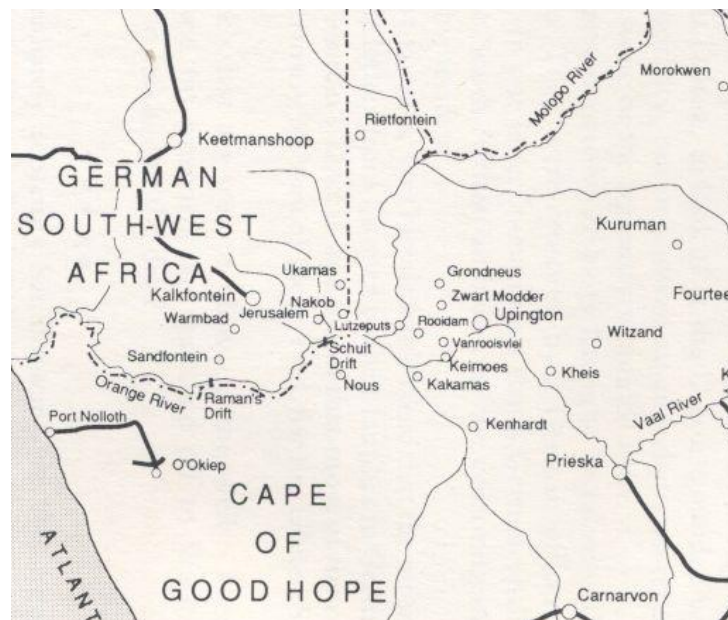
²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German*, pp. 65-66.

conclusion,²⁹ the end of the Boer War spelled the effective solution to the "South African question" for both the German government and public for the next twelve years. Apart from the unproven claims that German *Schutztruppe* (colonial German military forces) officers had instigated the Ferreira Raid of 1906, which saw a contingent of Transvaal Boers raid the Cape Colony from German South-West Africa in an attempt to trigger a Boer uprising (similarly to the Jameson Raid),³⁰ German-Boer political machinations would indelibly remain silent until the clouds of war gathered once again. International imperial politics had largely catalyzed both the proliferation and suspension of the German-Boer relationship up until the turn of the century, and by 1914, the conditions in the international system were once again ripe for a convergence of interests.

Pre-War Collaboration



Source: "Kakamas: Recon Abteilung von Hadeln." *The Soldier's Burden*. Accessed April 1, 2017. <http://www.trenchfighter.com/40029/150601.html>.

²⁹ Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 63.

³⁰ Tilman Dederling, "The Ferreira Raid of 1906: Boers, Britons and Germans in Southern Africa in the Aftermath of the South African War," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000): pp. 43-59, 52.

Shortly after the pivotal Anglo-German treaty of 1898 was signed, British High Commissioner of the Cape Colony Lord Milner exclaimed that the treaty "formally and for ever eliminates Germany as a political influence in the Transvaal."³¹ The Boer War came to a close less than four years later and discourse on German-Boer racial affinities declined, but Anglo-German antagonisms remained and continued to deepen towards impending war. Similarly, and certainly more vocally, Anglo-Boer antagonisms persisted in South Africa most significantly among those Boers who had been *bittereinders* – those who fought to the "bitter end" of the war during the guerilla stage that lasted from September 1900 to May 1902.³² The *bittereinders* were scornful of British imperialism for having subordinated Boer independence for the second time in less than a century with the annexation of the once sovereign Boer Republics and for the inhumane wartime policies carried out by Lord Kitchener.³³ Over 27,000 Boer women and children had died after being interned in British concentration camps (approximately ten percent of the entire Boer population in the Boer Republics at the time),³⁴ and the British scorched-earth policy had ravaged the countryside.³⁵ During the peace negotiations at Vereeniging in 1902, many *bittereinders* were allegedly convinced to surrender based on the promise that Boer independence would one day be regained as a result of British entanglement in a European war, a promise made by fellow *bittereinder* Louis Botha – the man responsible for the successful *suppression* of the Boer Rebellion twelve years later.³⁶

Of the *bittereinders* who remained most vehemently anti-British after the Boer War was Salomon Gerhardus "Manie" Maritz, the central figure in the rebellion and the German-Boer collaboration therein. Tellingly, the Boer Rebellion is synonymously known as the Maritz Rebellion. Maritz had moved to German South-West Africa after the war where he aided the Germans during the Herero Wars, managing transportation in the colony,³⁷ coincidentally forging "extremely cordial" relationships with commanders

³¹ Wilson, *The International Impact of the Boer War*, pp. 29-30.

³² Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 11.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Gregor Cuthbertson, A. M. Grundlingh, and Mary-Lynn Suttie, *Writing a Wider War: Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War, 1899-1902* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), p. 19.

³⁵ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

³⁷ Leo Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion and the Policy of the Government with Regard to its Suppression* (London: H. M. Stationery Off., Darling and Son, Ltd., 1915), p. 8.

of the German *Schutztruppe*.³⁸ The *Schutztruppe* were essentially the colonial military forces of the German Empire and they served as the primary military organization of the German war effort in Africa. Maritz later returned to South Africa and joined the newly formed Union Defence Force before attending the Military Training School, subsequently being appointed command of the military district in the north-western region of the Cape Province in January 1913.³⁹ The Union Defence Force had just recently been instituted in 1912 as an all-South African replacement of the British imperial garrison that had been stationed in South Africa for an entire decade following the end of the Boer War.⁴⁰ Upon the outbreak of the First World War in Europe, Maritz was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel and was tasked to command the border between the Union of South Africa and German South-West Africa near Upington, all on the recommendation of fellow rebel ringleader General Christian Frederick Beyers.⁴¹ It was from this region that Maritz would make the final preparations for the Boer Rebellion and where he would execute the international portion of the rebellion in close coordination with the Germans.

Reports about precisely when the Boers first contacted the Germans to make preparations for the rebellion are wildly inconsistent in both contemporary and recent scholarship on the subject. Most contentious seems to be the question of whether or not the Boers (specifically Maritz and Beyers) had been in contact with German authorities prior to Maritz's appointment to the north-west region of the Cape Province in January 1913. Philip J. Sampson places the date in 1912 in his 1914 book, *The Capture of De Wet*,⁴² Rayner and O'Shaughnessy place their earliest date at 1913 in their 1916 book, *How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West*,⁴³ and Leo Fouché simply states that it occurred "before January, 1913" in his 1915 book, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*.⁴⁴ The more recent scholarship displays a similar lack of consensus: in the 2014 book, *The Horns of the Beast*, James Stejskal claims "the Germans had been in loose contact with a

³⁸ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 32.

³⁹ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 3.

⁴¹ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 8.

⁴² Philip J. Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet: The South African Rebellion, 1914* (London: E. Arnold, 1915), p. 71.

⁴³ Rayner and O'Shaughnessy, *How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West*, p. 13.

⁴⁴ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 9.

number of pro-German Boers since at least 1910,"⁴⁵ In the 1991 book, *Urgent Imperial Service*, Gerald L'Ange contends that Maritz "had been negotiating with Germans since 1912,"⁴⁶ and Hew Strachan claims in his 2004 book, *The First World War in Africa*, that Maritz was "alleged to have been negotiating with the Germans since 1912."⁴⁷

In investigating the opening of German-Boer negotiations, three specific sources provide significant evidence in accurately pinpointing the commencement of collaboration. Maritz's memoir, *My Lewe en Strewe*, the last Governor of German South-West Africa Dr. Theodor von Seitz's memoir, *Südafrika im Weltkriege*, and an official statement from Pieter De Wet in 1915 (a key accomplice of Maritz), help clear the chronological discrepancy. Maritz himself establishes the earliest negotiations between the Boers and Germans as 1913,⁴⁸ and Pieter De Wet identifies that the specific month was June.⁴⁹ Von Seitz's memoir aid in debunking claims of pre-war German financial support for the rebellion, but this correlation with the chronology of events will be discussed in detail shortly. In utilizing these three sources, a critical re-visiting of the published scholarship can aid in demonstrating why such discrepancies emerged in the first place, and it can help to determine the actual starting point of German-Boer collaboration in the First World War.

Firstly, Sampson and Fouché's claims both rely on the testimonies of witnesses who were simply told by Maritz himself that he had "arranged with the Germans for the last three years"⁵⁰ or that "negotiations had been proceeding for the past two or three years."⁵¹ The vague nature of these statements and the environment in which these exchanges between Maritz and the witnesses occurred (i.e. during a time when Maritz was looking to win over support for the rebellion), point towards a higher probability that the reality of the situation may have been distorted. The indecisive "two or three years" statement points to a general uncertainty, while Maritz's motive in inflating his level of support from the Germans would likely have been an attempt to persuade

⁴⁵ Stejskal, *The Horns of the Beast*, p. 51.

⁴⁶ Gerald L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service: South African forces in German South West Africa, 1914-1915* (Rivonia: Ashanti Pub., 1991), p. 42.

⁴⁷ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 85; My emphasis added.

⁴⁸ Salomon Gerhardus Maritz, *My Lewe en Strewe* (Johannesburg: L - Jhb., 1938), p. 72. All translations from this source are mine.

⁴⁹ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

undecided Boers to the side of the rebellion. The three-year figure of planning would certainly have been more persuasive than Maritz's real figure of fourteen months. After declaring open rebellion in October 1914, Maritz would falsely boast that the Germans had placed "unlimited quantities of small arms, ammunition and money" at his disposal,⁵² a ploy that was certainly designed to inflate the actual strength of his rebellious military force. Although this speculation is not conclusive, the likelihood of this reality will become clearer in light of the evidence provided over the next few paragraphs.

Sampson attempts to legitimize his claims by asserting that the figure of three years would have coincided with Beyers' visit to the German Kaiser in 1912.⁵³ However, Maritz's memoir provide a definitive challenge to this. Beyers had travelled to Germany in 1912 to attend German military maneuvers, but when asked by Maritz in 1914 if he had made any arrangements with the Kaiser regarding the rebellion, Beyers said that he had not.⁵⁴ Tellingly, Maritz's reaction was one of displeasure, declaring "I have done more than you then, I am negotiating with the German government in German Southwest over weapons and ammunition, money and what else we need,"⁵⁵ which was certainly the case by 1914. If Beyers had returned from Germany less than two years before the rebellion having entered into negotiations with the Kaiser (now a personal friend of his), it is highly unlikely that he would have done so without having informed his fellow ringleader and any negotiations at any time with the Kaiser would surely have been considered more substantial than Maritz's own efforts in German South-West Africa.

The recent literature on the subject presents an equally perplexing case. While each of the sources listed contain statements pertaining to the beginning of German-Boer collaboration, not a single one cites the original source of the evidence. The omission of citations seems odd as it presents the evidence as if it were generally accepted knowledge. This may be a result of the statements made in the contemporary publications or a result of Sarah Millin's influential 1936 book *General Smuts*. In her discussion of Maritz and the rebellion, Millin makes a statement found nowhere else,

⁵² Ibid., p. 26.

⁵³ Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 71.

⁵⁴ Maritz, *My Leve en Strewe*, p. 62.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

claiming that "Even before January 1913 he [Maritz] had come to an understanding with the Germans and a hundred thousand marks had been placed at his disposal for his work, and also he might draw, Governor von Seitz suggested, on the five thousand pounds the German Government had in a bank in Cape Town."⁵⁶ This passage is extremely significant to the historiography of the German-Boer connection in the First World War, for its provocative claims instigated a direct personal response from Maritz in his own memoir.

Mrs. Millin claims... that I had negotiated with the German government as early as 1912 and that there were thousands of pounds deposited in the bank in Cape Town at my disposal. This is disgustingly untrue. Before 1913 I was commander of the police at Piet Retief; and only after the military training course in Bloemfontein (1913) was I appointed as Lieutenant-Colonel in the northwest. Then I alone wrote a letter to Mr. G. Voigts.⁵⁷

Maritz's adamant denial, specifically in regard to the allegation of German money in Cape Town, is supported by Governor von Seitz's memoir. Even though von Seitz's memoir was published sixteen years before Millin's book, he contends that

The assertion, which had been repeated several times on the enemy's side, that I had already... before the war... prepared the uprising is not true. Unfortunately, our financial resources were so low that we could not give the rebels any support with money to a significant extent... only a small amount of paper money and even less gold.⁵⁸

Written after the conclusion of the First World War, it is highly unlikely that either Maritz or von Seitz would have had any motive to provide false claims regarding their involvement in the rebellion, let alone dedicate entire passages in their memoirs purely to support a false narrative. Von Seitz's refutation may also suggest that Millin's claims could have been a product of British propaganda or rumor, already being perpetuated by the time von Seitz wrote his memoir and accepted as fact by the time Millin wrote her book in 1936. While von Seitz's memoir confirms the inaccuracy of Millin's

⁵⁶ Sarah Gertrude Millin, *General Smuts* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1936), p. 310.

⁵⁷ Maritz, *My Lewe en Strewe*, p. 72.

⁵⁸ Theodor von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkriege* (Berlin: A G Berlin, 1920), p. 35; all translations from this source are mine.

monetary claim, Pieter De Wet's official statement provides evidence that German-Boer negotiations did not begin until June 1913.

The "letter to Mr. G Voigts" that Maritz refers to was the first communication to have initiated German-Boer collaboration in the First World War. Maritz's memoir and the 1915 statement by Pieter De Wet describe the event in detail. De Wet was a Boer who had moved to German South-West Africa in 1905 and became a naturalized German subject in April 1914.⁵⁹ He met Maritz in South Africa (known then as the Union of South Africa) at Prieska around the beginning of June 1913 to discuss, for the first time, the possibility of acquiring German support in the event of a Boer uprising.⁶⁰ De Wet describes the encounter in his statement,

Maritz one night said to me... "we have a plan, should there be war one day in Europe... and they [Beyers] have now placed me here to try and find out whether we can get in touch with the Germans so that they can provide us with arms... Now, have the Germans many guns and rifles in G.S.W.?" I said that I did not know... but that he should try to get into touch with influential persons in G.S.W. We finally decided that I should see the Governor after my return, and ask him whether he could send Gustav Voigts, a person of importance and highly thought of by the Government, on a visit to the Union for the purpose of getting into touch with Maritz... in June, 1913, I went to Gustav Voigts. He said to me, "Peter, I shall go and see the Governor at once, and communicate him your message from Maritz." Sometime thereafter Voigts told me that he had written letter to Maritz "Your wish will be realized."⁶¹

This chronology of events is confirmed in Maritz's memoir. Maritz asserts that he had sent a letter from Prieska with De Wet to Voigts, requesting that Voigts ask Governor von Seitz whether the German Empire would support the Boers in an armed struggle for independence from the British Empire.⁶² Maritz too confirms that he "received an answer [from Voigts]... that our wishes would come true."⁶³ Maritz adds, "there we left

⁵⁹ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁶² Maritz, *My Leve en Strewe*, p. 62.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

and forgot the situation. It was peace-time and there wasn't the slightest thought of an uprising yet."⁶⁴

Far from Millin's claims of pre-1913 collaboration, Maritz had only first requested future assistance from the Germans in June 1913 and even then it was in the form of an extraordinarily loose assurance. Had Maritz come to a military and financial understanding with the Germans before January 1913, as Millin and others suggest, Maritz's meeting with De Wet and correspondence with Voigts would have been completely unnecessary and needlessly self-endangering. Furthermore, Maritz reveals in his memoir that he had been tasked by the other Boer ringleaders to establish contact with the Germans only after the military training course in Bloemfontein and after the opportunity presented itself with his posting to the northwest in January 1913.⁶⁵ Whether the dissemination of the idea that German-Boer collaboration was initiated before 1913 was a product of intentional British propaganda intended to smear a traitorous Maritz in the years following the First World War or if it was simply a rumor that – left unchecked – had developed into accepted historical fact remains a mystery. Evidence from Maritz, von Seitz and De Wet – those most directly involved in the situation – can convincingly prove, however, that German-Boer collaboration did not commence until June 1913.

The Beginning of the First World War

The First World War Erupts in Europe

Following Voigts' response to Maritz, no further correspondence would be carried out between the Germans and the Boers until after the First World War had officially broken out in Europe on 28 July 1914. Maritz had received the promise of support from the Germans for the Boer cause and now that the German Empire was officially at war, the Germans themselves sought out an alliance with the Boers to be deployed in the interests of their own cause. On 2 August 1914, Chief of the German General Staff Helmuth von Moltke issued a directive to the Foreign Ministry regarding possible methods that could be implemented as a means of diverting the British war effort away from Europe: "Attempts must be made to ignite an uprising in India with

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

England as our enemy. The same is to be done in Egypt and in the South-African dominions."⁶⁶ As a result, Governor von Seitz and the commanding officer of the *Schutztruppe*, Lieutenant-Colonel Joachim von Heydebreck, met to discuss the military situation in German South-West Africa, and von Seitz issued the order for mobilization on 6 August 1914.⁶⁷ The order established the *Schutztruppe's* operational framework going forward:

1. Attacks will be made only in response to enemy attacks on German territory.
2. The defense of German South-West Africa will rely on:
 - a) The elimination of threat from the indigenous population
 - b) The imprisonment of non-German doubtful persons
 - c) The strengthening of the conventional defensive structure of German territory
 - d) Establishing links with South Africa's enemies of England.⁶⁸

Von Seitz and von Heydebreck had recognized early on that the offensive military initiative was on the Union Defence Force and not the meager *Schutztruppe* force that remained in the colony after the German Empire's own efforts of colonial suppression during the Herero Wars (1904-1908). German military strength in South-West Africa had markedly declined after 1912, when the *Schutztruppe* unit strength was decreased from more than 14,000 to less than 2,000 in order to alleviate a major strain on the German Empire's financial resources.⁶⁹ Mobilization had indeed strengthened German forces to a more formidable 4,800 troops but this still paled in comparison to the 10,000 Permanent Force members and 25,000 Active Citizen Force volunteers that the Union

⁶⁶ Nr. 662 Der Chef des Generalstabs der Armee an das Auswärtige Amt, 2. August 1914 - *Die Deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegeausbruch 1914*, [https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Nr. 662 Der Chef des Generalstabs der Armee an das Ausw%C3%A4rtige Amt, 2. August 1914](https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Nr._662_Der_Chef_des_Generalstabs_der_Armee_an_das_Ausw%C3%A4rtige_Amt,_2._August_1914) (Accessed 10 March 2017); my translation.

⁶⁷ Stejskal, *The Horns of the Beast*, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁸ Hans von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest 1914/15* (Berlin: Safari-Verlag G.m.b.H., 1923), p. 10; all translations from this source are mine.

⁶⁹ Stejskal, *The Horns of the Beast*, p. 50.

Defence Force could muster.⁷⁰ With the *Schutztruppe* vastly outnumbered, von Seitz believed that the survival of German South-West Africa would be reliant on a Boer uprising within the borders of the Union. Von Seitz notes in his memoir: "In the long run, we could not keep the colony against the Union's supremacy unless there was either assistance from outside or a successful uprising broke out in the Union itself."⁷¹ Von Heydebreck on the other hand was at first quite skeptical of the military value of a Boer rebellion, von Seitz recalls, citing the impracticalities of joint military action and the possibility of friction between the commanding elements.⁷² Von Seitz was, however, able to dissuade von Heydebreck from this reluctance by suggesting that the Boers would at the very least be able to provide temporary cover for the Germans' eastern flank,⁷³ a reality that would prove to be decisive less than two months later at the Battle of Sandfontein.

Dr. Hans von Oelhafen's official account of the South-West Africa campaign, titled *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, provides further details regarding this determination to collaborate with the Boers from the German perspective. In discussing the Afrikaner National Party's well-known political opposition to a Union invasion of German South-West Africa, von Oelhafen remarks:

it is known that the commander... Maritz... was a keen advocate of the old freedom of the Boers. It was then necessary to win this man, and to establish a bridge between the German government and the... [Union's Boer] generals Hertzog, Beyers, De la Rey, and Christian De Wet. They had to be enlightened that Germany was not only to be close to the independence of the Boers, but rather to take an active part in the liberation of South Africa from the English yoke.⁷⁴

Von Oelhafen's account demonstrates both the centrality of the Boer Rebellion to the German war strategy in Southern Africa and the pragmatic reciprocity that characterized much of the the developing German-Boer alliance. The Germans believed that it was necessary to win over Maritz, and they sought to establish official

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷¹ Von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkriege*, p. 29.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁴ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 32.

communication with the anti-British Boer elements within the Union, as per the order of mobilization. General Hertzog's National Party had detested the prospect of betraying their old moral allies from the Boer War,⁷⁵ revealing a point of continuity in the German-Boer connection in Boer consciousness. Recognized by the Germans upon the outbreak of war, these residual affinities were to be utilized for pragmatic military cooperation to meet both parties' objectives. Just as Maritz had sought out a guarantee of German material support before the war, Governor von Seitz now instructed Max Teinert (a personal friend of Maritz's living in German South-West Africa) in August 1914 to establish personal contact with Maritz at once.⁷⁶ The rebellious Boers were to be used as a proxy force in the defense of German South-West Africa, while the German Empire was to be used as the arsenal of independence for the restoration of the sovereign Boer Republics.

The Situation in the Union of South Africa

Save for a few skirmishes along the border, the first major battle between German and Union forces was not to take place until 26 September 1914; the rebellion had commenced only after 15 September 1914 and the public declaration of the rebellion would not come until 9 October 1914. In the meantime, the domestic preconditions for the rebellion were fomenting within the Boer ranks of the Union's armed forces. The most contentious issue among the whole of the white South African population was the government's decision on 10 August to organize an invasion of German South-West Africa. London had requested on 7 August that the Union Defence Force capture the harbors and wireless stations in German South-West Africa in order to nullify German naval presence in the South Atlantic and to sever the colony's lines of communication with Berlin.⁷⁷ While an invasion had the potential to realize these specific military objectives, Britain had also recognized the long-term benefits that a British South-West Africa would bring to her empire; namely a more secure and increasingly inseparable British colonial dominion in Southern Africa.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 81.

⁷⁶ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 5.

⁷⁷ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, pp. 63-64.

Large portions of the Boer population, however, viewed this course of action as inherently disgraceful and categorically unnecessary. Anxieties over the probability of having to take up arms against fellow Boers living in German South-West Africa and resolute protest against becoming "the agents of British imperialism" escalated throughout the Boer community.⁷⁹ The fervent opposition to the invasion from some of the Union's highest ranking Boer generals was promptly discounted by the Union government under Prime Minister Louis Botha and General Jan Smuts (both former *bittereinders* during the Boer War). As a result, both the plans and the leadership of the rebellion were established on 14 August 1914 after the commandants meeting in Pretoria. The prospective positions of the rebel ringleaders in the newly independent Boer Republics were to be: General Beyers as the president of the provisional government, General Koos De la Rey as the commandant-general of the defense forces, General Christiaan De Wet as the head of the Orange Free State and Maritz as the head of the Cape.⁸⁰ Another notable figure was the commander of the Union Defence Force training camp at Potchefstroom Major Jan Christoffel Kemp, who would later prove to be instrumental to the continuance of the rebellion.⁸¹ Maritz, who had attended the commandants meeting, was then tasked by Beyers to return to the border to establish official contact with the government of German South-West Africa in preparation for 15 September 1914 – the day upon which the rebellion was planned to begin.⁸²

Interests Converge

The following period of collaboration was characterized by a series of personal exchanges between Maritz, his accomplices in German South-West Africa and the Union, and Governor von Seitz and Lieutenant-Colonel von Heydebreck. Sometime around the middle of August 1914, Max Teinert met with Pieter De Wet in Windhuk, the capital of German South-West Africa. Teinert informed De Wet of the German governor's specific instructions to establish personal contact with Maritz and requested that De Wet join him on his journey southwards. When they arrived at Warmbad, Teinert remained in German territory while De Wet crossed the border with a forged

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸⁰ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 70.

⁸¹ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 42.

⁸² T. R. H. Davenport, "The South African Rebellion, 1914," *The English Historical Review* 78, no. 306 (1963): pp. 73-94, 80.

document of Union citizenship signed by the German magistrate at Warmbad.⁸³ Upon his arrival at Kakamas, De Wet met Piet Joubert (another accomplice of Maritz) and there they discussed the developing circumstances with Maritz on 24 August.⁸⁴ Maritz informed them of the Union's invasion plans and the dissent among the Boer generals, inquiring as to whether or not Voigts' assurances were grounded and if the Germans had rifles and ammunition allocated for the Boers.⁸⁵ Unable to provide a definitive answer, De Wet accompanied Maritz over the border to German South-West Africa where Maritz telephoned Teinert from a German police post on the pretense that he was sorting out a recent border skirmish that had erupted at Schuitdrift days earlier.⁸⁶

Teinert's response exceeded what Maritz had hoped for after his initial contact with the Germans in 1913; the German government promised to supply Maritz with sufficient quantities of both heavy and light artillery for the rebellion.⁸⁷ Though Teinert's guarantee strangely omits Maritz's original stipulation of receiving a stockpile of rifles and ammunition; further agreements were made that Teinert and De Wet were to return to Windhuk to ascertain from von Seitz if German artillerists could be supplied to the Boers, and von Seitz and Beyers were to meet between 7 and 15 September close to the border to negotiate an official German-Boer treaty.⁸⁸

The following day De Wet and Teinert met with von Seitz and von Heydebreck in Windhuk. Von Seitz agreed to meet Beyers and promised to "assist the Boers as far as possible with artillery and small arms,"⁸⁹ but in the meantime, von Heydebreck's mistrust of Maritz's intentions stymied any immediate mobilization of support.⁹⁰ The beginning of the Union Defence Force's invasion of German South-West Africa and the outbreak of the Boer Rebellion itself was still weeks away and time was still yet to pressure von Heydebreck into immediate action.

⁸³ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 5-6.

⁸⁴ Davenport, "The South African Rebellion," p. 83.

⁸⁵ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 7.

⁸⁶ Davenport, "The South African Rebellion," p. 83.

⁸⁷ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹⁰ Davenport, "The South African Rebellion," p. 84.

The Formation of the Südafrikanische Freikorps

Maritz and the leaders of the rebellion were to wait two weeks for the meeting between von Seitz and Beyers to take place. The Boers did little more within the Union during this period to prepare for the coming month. In German South-West Africa, however, one of the most significant components of German-Boer collaboration was beginning to take shape. Shortly following the meeting in Windhuk, Pieter De Wet informed his brother Andries De Wet about exactly what had transpired in the previous weeks in preparation for the rebellion.⁹¹ Having recognized the apparent opportunity that a rebellion could afford the Boer people, Andries approached von Seitz and requested that the Germans allow him to raise a volunteer auxiliary corps composed exclusively of Boers living in German South-West Africa to assist the coming rebellion on the frontlines.⁹² The governor eagerly approved Andries De Wet's proposal and the *Südafrikanische Freikorps* was founded on 8 September 1914.⁹³

Historians have paid little attention to the particular details of the *Freikorps* in the recent literature on the rebellion, which generally only mentions the unique military unit in passing or with little more detail than found above. Von Oelhafen's *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, however, provides specific information from the German perspective, which contributes considerably to the historical knowledge regarding the specifics of this German-controlled Boer unit. Firstly, the district administrator of Grootfontein, Berenga von Zastrow, was assigned to the *Freikorps* as an assistant commander in order to signify that the corps was part of the German forces. Notably, von Oelhafen attributes much of the longevity of the German-Boer relationship during the rebellion to the diplomatic capabilities of von Zastrow.⁹⁴ It is likely that von Zastrow's promotion to assistant commander may have also acted as the German government's balance to the Boer leadership of Andries De Wet. Von Zastrow's placement in the higher military ranks also represents one of the various levels within the chain of command of the *Freikorps* in which the Boers and Germans operated in conjunction with each other.

Secondly, von Oelhafen describes the attire allotted to the *Freikorps*: the officer's were provided with uniforms similar to those worn by the *Landespolizei* (German South-

⁹¹ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 11.

⁹² Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 31.

⁹³ Von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkriege*, 35 and Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 31.

⁹⁴ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 31.

West Africa's police force) and those holding a rank below officer were assigned *Schutztruppe* uniforms without shoulder cords and with white buttons instead of the regular metal buttons.⁹⁵ The *Freikorps* was therefore visibly barely distinguishable from a regular *Schutztruppe* formation, an oversight that would play directly into the hands of Union propaganda after a *Freikorps* raid into Union territory at Nakob in mid-September was interpreted as an aggressive assault from the *Schutztruppe*, further justifying the Union's decision to invade German South-West Africa.⁹⁶

Lastly, von Oelhafen's account strikingly reveals that the composition of the *Südafrikanische Freikorps* was not exclusively Boer. Andries De Wet had issued a recruitment manifesto for the *Freikorps* throughout German South-West Africa and when the troop strength was tallied the corps consisted of approximately one hundred Boers and an unexpected twenty-five Germans – many of whom had been declared physically unfit for the *Schutztruppe*.⁹⁷ This revelation further displays the depth of German-Boer military integration during the First World War in Southern Africa. Because these Germans had joined the cavalry ranks of the *Freikorps*, the formation of the corps exposes a level of collaboration beyond the generally accepted narrative that German artillerymen were the only non-Boers to fight alongside the anti-British Boer factions. In early October, the *Freikorps* would cross the border to join Maritz in the Union with only ninety-eight men,⁹⁸ and while it is unclear how many Germans remained amongst their ranks, it can be certain that they at least took part in the prior *Freikorps* actions and deployments at Nakob and at the Battle of Sandfontein.

In addition to permitting the raising of the *Freikorps*, von Seitz attached an (aforementioned) artillery battery to the corps. The *Schutztruppe* artillery battery under Lieutenant Walter Hausding consisted of four 7.7 cm *Feldkanone* FK 96 a/A field guns and two 37mm "pom-pom" automatic cannons (referred to as light artillery or machine guns by the Germans) with a sizable eighty-man German contingent to operate them.⁹⁹ Von Seitz also made promises of financial assistance to the *Freikorps*. While the entirety

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Freddie MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle* (Johannesburg: L&S, 1949), p. 38; all translations from this source are mine.

⁹⁷ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 31.

⁹⁸ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 11.

⁹⁹ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 11; Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 31.

of the *Freikorps* still fell under German command, the Haussding Battery answered directly to the Boer commander Andries De Wet.¹⁰⁰

The Boer Rebellion Begins

The meeting between von Seitz and Beyers, where an official German-Boer treaty was to be signed, never occurred. Von Seitz recounts in his memoir that Beyers had personally requested that they meet to conclude the treaty on 12 September in Ukamas, but upon the governor's arrival on 11 September, the line of communication to the Boers had been interrupted. Fearing that he would get caught in an unexpected Union raid over the border, von Seitz promptly returned north.¹⁰¹ Maritz had even telegraphed Beyers on 10 September insisting he come to the border, but to no avail.¹⁰² 12 September was the day that the Union parliament officially approved the invasion of German South-West Africa, which at this point Beyers was still to command,¹⁰³ and his absence would most likely have been an obvious indication of his intentions to rebel. Instead, Beyers opted to wait until the planned date of 15 September to make a move.

The opening plan of the rebellion was simple: Beyers and Kemp were both to resign from the Union Defence Force in the morning. Next, Beyers and De la Rey were to drive north from Johannesburg to meet Kemp and his large contingent of rebels at Potchefstroom in the early hours of 16 September before Beyers continued towards the border to connect with Maritz and then the Germans.¹⁰⁴ Events in Europe, particularly the fact that the German armies were closing in on Paris, which "seemed doomed to fall within a week or a two,"¹⁰⁵ doubtlessly encouraged the rebels. However, as the plans were unfolding disaster struck in Johannesburg, when Beyers and De la Rey failed to stop at a police roadblock that had been set up to find a criminal gang on the loose. De la Rey was subsequently shot and killed by a Johannesburg policeman who had

¹⁰⁰ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 11-12.

¹⁰¹ Von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkriege*, p. 30-31.

¹⁰² Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 95.

¹⁰³ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁴ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 17; L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 42; Davenport, "The South African Rebellion," p. 85.

¹⁰⁵ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 15.

mistaken the two for gang members.¹⁰⁶ The death of De la Rey brought the entire mechanism of the rebellion to a sudden halt. In the immediate aftermath, both Kemp and Beyers believed that the golden opportunity for rebellion had passed.¹⁰⁷ Kemp, Beyers and Maritz all let 15 September pass without acting, and open rebellion was indefinitely postponed. Were it not for Maritz's collaboration with the Germans, the rebellion, and especially Kemp's role in it, could have easily fizzled in the atmosphere of Union-wide depression that followed the death of the great Boer general.

While the decision by Kemp, Beyers and Christiaan De Wet to revive the rebellion in October 1914 was certainly affected by Maritz's own decision to proclaim open rebellion and by the hostile reaction of Boers who believed the Union government had orchestrated De la Rey's death,¹⁰⁸ I will argue that the arrangements Maritz made with the German Empire played at the very least an equally crucial part in the continuation of the rebellion. A few days after De la Rey's death Kemp learned that Beyers had not been arrested and that the killing of De la Rey had indeed been an accident. Realizing that Maritz's position remained uncompromised, Kemp completely changed his mind about the probability of still carrying out a successful rebellion. Fouché's *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion* quotes Kemp confiding to a friend: "Thank God, we've still got Manie Maritz on the Orange River."¹⁰⁹ Kemp's statement may appear to be a minute detail, but it actually reveals a critical facet of the rebellion that can explain much of what would occur in the following months. It reveals the perception of one of the rebellion's key instigators and catalysts at the most decisive point in time: when the entire prospect of carrying out the rebellion was being called into question. The geographical specification of Maritz being "on the Orange River" suggests that his proximity to the Germans and the support he secured from them was vital, if not decisive, in Kemp's decision not to abandon the independence movement. The far-reaching effects of German-Boer collaboration can thus be identified as one of the necessary conditions for the continuation of the rebellion in the aftermath of De la Rey's death and as a key factor in shaping the events of the South-West Africa campaign.

¹⁰⁶ Davenport, "The South African Rebellion," p. 85; Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 71.

¹⁰⁷ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 71.

¹⁰⁸ Millin, *General Smuts*, p. 315.

¹⁰⁹ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 20.

The Battle of Sandfontein

Shortly preceding the dramatic events in the Transvaal, a Union Defence Force contingent under General Henry Lukin crossed into German South-West Africa and seized the police blockhouse at Ramansdrift, effectively initiating the controversial invasion.¹¹⁰ As a response to the invasion and in anticipation of the start of the rebellion, von Seitz made a proclamation on 15 September establishing the pro-Boer and anti-British German position on the war by reaching out directly to the Boers of the Union:

To the Boer People of South Africa. Whereas the British troops have attacked the German police station at Ramansdrift and have come over the German border thus bringing the war to South Africa: I expressly declare hereby that the Germans carry no war against the Boer people of South Africa. On the other hand I declare that we Germans shall repel the attack of the British troops at all points and by all means and carry to its conclusion the war against the British and against the British only.¹¹¹

Lukin's first major objective was the seizure of Warmbad. In order to do so, the wells of Sandfontein would need to be secured to supply his troops with water while traversing the unforgiving Kalahari Desert.¹¹² Collusion between Maritz and von Heydebreck made sure, however, that Sandfontein remained in the hands of the German Empire.

Doubtlessly aware of the potential rebellion that was brewing within the ranks of the Union Defence Force, General Jan Smuts decided a test of Maritz's loyalty was necessary. Smuts telegraphed Maritz (still commander of the Active Citizen Force garrison in the Upington area known as B Force) requesting that he move his troops into German territory near Schuitdrift in support of Lukin's drive toward Warmbad. Maritz (still hoping to keep his rebellious plans concealed) refused to follow the order, citing inadequate troop training and supplies and personally admitting that he would rather resign than cross the border as a belligerent.¹¹³ While Maritz's schemes were

¹¹⁰ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 21.

¹¹¹ J.J. Collyer, *The Campaign in German Southwest Africa, 1914-15* (London: Imperial War Museum Department of Printed Books, 1937), p. 23.

¹¹² L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 23.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

becoming increasingly more obvious to the Union government in late September, his isolated position in the northern Cape surely protected him from immediate dismissal. Nonetheless, the fact that Maritz had refused to take part in the invasion meant that Lukin's forces were charging headlong into German South-West Africa without the protection of an eastern flank.

Furthermore, Maritz had actually shared the details of the Union's invasion plans with von Heydebreck, enabling the Germans to encircle a contingent of 300 Union Defence Force soldiers under Lieutenant-Colonel Reginald Grant with a 2000-strong *Schutztruppe* force including four artillery batteries at Sandfontein.¹¹⁴ By the end of the battle, twelve Union soldiers had been killed and forty had been wounded.¹¹⁵ Maritz himself had been fully aware of the German counter-attack even before the Union government was informed.¹¹⁶ With the *Freikorps* accompanying the *Schutztruppe* as advisors for the region,¹¹⁷ the Germans were able to inflict a devastating defeat on the Union forces, one that would ultimately prompt a retreat from German South-West Africa and a complete re-evaluation of the Union's invasion plans.¹¹⁸

According to various historical analyses, Maritz's role (both in his refusal to obey the order to invade and in his sharing of intelligence with the Germans) had either a substantial or even a decisive impact on the outcome of the Battle of Sandfontein. Adam Cruise argues that "If anyone is to blame for the reversal, it is Maritz: for failing to lend support to Lukin and for his complicity with the Germans."¹¹⁹ Similarly, Ian Van Der Waag, counts good intelligence and cooperation from Maritz as two of the four conditions that enabled von Heydebreck to concentrate such a large force at Sandfontein.¹²⁰ Contemporary British and German publications echo these sentiments. In his *Report on the Outbreak of Rebellion*, Fouché argues that "The responsibility for this

¹¹⁴ Ian Van Der Waag, "The Battle of Sandfontein, 26 September 1914: South African military reform and the German South-West Africa campaign, 1914–1915," *First World War Studies* 4, no. 2 (2013): pp. 141-65, 150-151.

¹¹⁵ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 36.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹¹⁷ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, p. 41.

¹¹⁸ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 51.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Van Der Waag, "The Battle of Sandfontein," p. 150.

[defeat] must probably be laid at the door of Maritz."¹²¹ General Lukin himself placed the blame for the defeat squarely on the lack of support from B Force,¹²² and von Oelhafen contends that "The hostile attitude of General Maritz and his division... was of great influence [to the victory at Sandfontein]."¹²³

Von Oelhafen's contemporary description of the German perspective provides more breadth for analysis, as he seems to suggest that the rebellious Boers' complicity in the German victory at Sandfontein was even deeper than others suspected. He alludes to the possibility that Beyers had advised Lukin to advance on Warmbad because he knew it favored an encirclement by German forces.¹²⁴ While this has not been conclusively proven in the recent literature, such an assertion is certainly plausible. Beyers had been the commander of the Active Citizen Force during the planning phase of the invasion, a position that would have certainly enabled him to heavily influence the final strategic considerations. L'Ange argues that "All the information that the Government possessed had been given to Beyers, all its plans had been discussed with him and his advice had largely been followed. The plan now being followed was essentially that recommended by Beyers at the officers' conference."¹²⁵ Beyers had been organizing the rebellion with Maritz since at least 1913, tasking Maritz with negotiating with the Germans and personally placing him in the military district on the border to do so. All of this suggests that he had planned to resign all along and further supports the idea that he had intentionally mislead Lukin in ways that brought about his demise.

With the cooperation and collaboration of Maritz and (probably) Beyers, the Germans were able to deploy a force that amounted to virtually the entire strength of their regular and most highly-trained *Schutztruppe* force in German South-West Africa at Sandfontein,¹²⁶ far out numbering their British counterparts. Though Union confidence in Maritz's loyalty was completely shattered after Sandfontein,¹²⁷ he had been able to coordinate with the Germans covertly, allowing him to maintain control of

¹²¹ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 21.

¹²² Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 70.

¹²³ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 43.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

¹²⁵ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 44.

¹²⁶ Van Der Waag, "The Battle of Sandfontein," pp. 145-150.

¹²⁷ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 51.

B Force long enough to critically influence the outcome of the largest engagement in the South-West Africa campaign to date. His covert coordination in the battle directly strengthened the German military force while directly weakening that of the Union. Therefore, German-Boer collaboration was an instrumental, if not wholly decisive factor to the German victory at the Battle of Sandfontein. Combined with the coinciding Allied reversals in Europe, the German victory at Sandfontein "tipped the scales for many Dutch-speakers still uncertain about whether to support the rebellion,"¹²⁸ thus directly contributing to the growth and continuation of the rebellion. It is also essential to note that the major effects of German-Boer collaboration thus far explored, that of its decisiveness in both the continuation of the rebellion at two separate stages and the outcome of the Battle of Sandfontein, had all occurred before the rebellion was even officially proclaimed in October 1914.

Maritz Decides to Act

After Maritz had expressly refused the orders from General Smuts to support the Union's drive on Warmbad, Colonel Coenraad Brits was appointed as the replacement commander for B Force. After receiving news from his spies on 2 October that Brits and a large Union force was on their way to depose and arrest Maritz, the Boer commander mobilized his camp at Upington and marched the formation towards the border – under the pretense that he was belatedly following Smuts' original orders.¹²⁹ On 4 October, B Force arrived and made camp close to the border at Van Rooyens Vlei, and on 6 October Maritz and his accomplice Piet Joubert left the camp supposedly in search of nearby sources of water. In reality, Maritz and Joubert were on their way to the border to make the final political and military arrangements with the Germans before openly proclaiming the rebellion to the Union troops (almost entirely comprised of Boers) under his command.¹³⁰ They were greeted by Andries De Wet and taken to Ukamas where von Heydebreck and von Seitz's government representative Beringa

¹²⁸ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 53.

¹²⁹ Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 83.

¹³⁰ Maritz, *My Lewe en Strewe*, p. 145.

von Zastrow were eagerly awaiting their arrival.¹³¹ On the following day, German-Boer collaboration would shift from its clandestine origins towards an officially recognized military-diplomatic agreement.

The Official Military and Political Negotiations at Ukamas – 7 October 1914

On 7 October, Maritz finally met personally with von Heydebreck and von Zastrow. While on trial in the aftermath of the rebellion, Pieter De Wet provided details of both von Heydebreck's mistrust of Maritz and the personal exchange between the two. De Wet remarks that von Heydebreck's most pressing ambivalence in aiding the Boers was simply bearing the responsibility in the event that the Boers turned the guns they had been supplied on the German suppliers themselves.¹³² After Maritz directly requested material support from von Heydebreck in person, the German officer replied: "Maritz, you are a British officer really, and therefore our enemy at the present time. You cannot expect me to supply you with rifles and guns in view of that fact." De Wet claims that Maritz simply replied: "If you do not trust me you should take me prisoner then. If you consider me an enemy, arrest me."¹³³ Maritz then presented a telegram exchange between himself and Smuts that proved the authenticity of his dissent.¹³⁴ This was apparently enough to convince von Heydebreck of Maritz's credibility; he acquiesced to the demands of the Boer leader. The two arranged that the *Freikorps* (with the Haussding Battery attached) would be put under Maritz's command as soon as he went into open rebellion on the condition that if anything went wrong the artillery pieces would be returned immediately to German South-West Africa.¹³⁵ Maritz had failed in the end to acquire the stockpile of rifles and ammunition he had initially set out to gain, but the approximately 180-man-strong (ninety-eight Boers and eighty Germans)¹³⁶ force with heavy and light artillery included would have been considered far more valuable to the military strength of the rebellion. Maritz's inaction in late

¹³¹ *Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of and Circumstances Relating to the Recent Rebellion in South Africa. Minutes of Evidence. December, 1916*, U.G. 42-'16 (Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers, 1916), p. 1.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹³⁴ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 50.

¹³⁵ *Judicial Commission of Inquiry*, p. 76.

¹³⁶ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 11.

September had decisive implications on the battlefield at Sandfontein, and the military initiative was now in the hands of the Germans and their anti-British auxiliaries. *Freikorps bittereinder* Freddie MacDonald would later write in his memoir that von Heydebreck's tone changed sharply after meeting with Maritz, the German commander allegedly having claimed that he would see to it personally that the freedom of South Africa from British rule would be one of the conditions of peace – even in the event of a German surrender.¹³⁷

It was at this very same meeting that the official German-Boer treaty was signed between Maritz and von Zastrow. When von Seitz returned north after Beyers had failed to meet him near the border, the Governor of German South-West Africa provided von Zastrow (who was attached to the *Freikorps*) with written authority to act as his representative, enabling von Zastrow to legally enter into a treaty with the Boers.¹³⁸

Prior to the signing of the treaty, one of the most contentious issues among the Boer population in the Union was the question of Imperial German policy toward a Boer rebellion. The German government had yet to establish an official and public position on the prospect of a rebellion and many Boers remained skeptical that the return of their sovereignty would even be recognized by the German Empire following a German victory in Southern Africa.¹³⁹ While they were near the border awaiting Beyers's arrival, Maritz urged von Seitz to cable Kaiser Wilhelm II in Berlin to ask whether the German Empire would recognize the independent Boer Republics in the event of a successful rebellion.¹⁴⁰ The Kaiser replied enthusiastically: "Not only will I recognize the independence of South Africa, but I shall even guarantee it, provided the people rise at once in rebellion."¹⁴¹ This assurance from the German Empire's highest authority opened the way for an official treaty and undoubtedly encouraged an upsurge of support for the rebellion once it openly revealed itself two days later. The depth of German collaboration with the Boers now extended from the colonial citizen-subject of German South-West Africa through the military and the governmental ranks

¹³⁷ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, p. 40.

¹³⁸ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 15.

¹³⁹ Von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkriege*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁰ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 13.

¹⁴¹ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 13 and L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 89.

all the way to the emperor himself. By October 1914, the German-Boer relationship that had begun to develop thirty-five years earlier along ethno-lingual lines had, as a result of practical military considerations, finally produced an official military alliance between the German Empire and the Boers of South Africa.

The official German-Boer treaty signed by Maritz and von Zastrow contained the following declarations:

1. General S. G. Maritz has declared the independence of South Africa and commenced war against England.
2. The Governor of German South-West Africa acknowledges all African Forces which operate against England as belligerent forces, and they will... support the war against England.
3. In the event of British South Africa being declared independent, either partially or as a whole, the Imperial Governor of German South-West Africa will take all possible measures to get the State or those States acknowledged as such by the German Empire as soon as possible, and bring them under the terms of the general conclusion of peace.
4. In consideration of such assistance the newly formed State or States will have no objection to the German Government taking possession of Walfisch Bay and the islands opposite German South-West Africa.
5. The centre of the Orange River will in future form the boundaries between German South-West Africa and the Cape Province.
6. The German Empire will have no objection to the above-named States taking possession of Delagoa Bay.
7. If the rebellion fails, the rebels who enter German territory will be recognized as German subjects, and be treated as such.¹⁴²

Open Rebellion

¹⁴² Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 88.

The Freikorps and Maritz in the Union

Maritz returned to Van Rooyens Vlei and on 9 October, he finally declared the rebellion. Maritz promptly assembled his men and read out the German-Boer treaty he had just returned from signing, declaring both the independence of South Africa and war on the British Empire.¹⁴³ Prior to delivering his infamous speech, Maritz ordered some of his most loyal men to seize the four machine guns of the English machine gun unit of B Force.¹⁴⁴ He allowed each member of B Force one minute to decide whether or not to join the rebellion and immediately disarmed those who refused.¹⁴⁵ Though the exact numbers vary from source to source, it would seem that a maximum of 240 of the approximately 1000 men under Maritz refused to rebel. Major Ben Bouwer, a Union loyalist under Maritz at the time reported that sixty loyalist officers and men were disarmed and taken as prisoners of war before being marched towards German South-West Africa to be handed over to the *Schutztruppe*.¹⁴⁶ Gerald L'Ange's *Urgent Imperial Service* states that in addition to the sixty prisoners of war, 180 loyalist Boers refused to rebel but were simply disarmed and released.¹⁴⁷ This distinction between prisoners of war and the loyalist Boers who were released, along with the fact that the English machine gun unit was part of those taken prisoner,¹⁴⁸ suggests that Maritz likely separated the Union loyalists in his camp along ethno-lingual lines, but further research would be necessary to conclusively verify this assumption.

Maritz now had a force of approximately 750 to 800 Boers under his command and would soon be joined by the *Freikorps* at Van Rooyens Vlei. In the meantime, Maritz had elevated himself to the rank of General,¹⁴⁹ a status that was dually recognized by the Germans.¹⁵⁰ Hew Strachan convincingly explains the primary motivations of those who chose to rebel under Maritz. He claims that "Most rebels saw their action in a Boer tradition of 'armed protest' against a government policy of which they disapproved.

¹⁴³ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 54.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁵ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 58.

¹⁴⁶ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁷ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 56.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁰ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 26.

Their motivations embraced opposition to conscription, resistance to the invasion of South-West Africa, and a sense of betrayal by Botha and Smuts."¹⁵¹

On 10 October, the *Freikorps* and the Hausding Battery joined Maritz, increasing the strength of his force to nearly 1000 men. They flew the Imperial German flag side by side with the old *Vierkleur* Transvaal Republican flag.¹⁵² That the Hausding Battery and the German uniform-wearing *Freikorps* joined Maritz's rebels in Union territory directly contradicts James Stejskal's blanket assertion that "Seitz had ordered that no German troops would cross the border."¹⁵³ In fact, the governor had attached the Hausding Battery to the *Freikorps* knowing that they would take part in the rebellion inside the Union.¹⁵⁴ That same day, Prime Minister Botha received a telegram from Major Bower (who had been allowed to return to Upington to communicate with the Union government) which detailed an ultimatum from Maritz. Maritz threatened to attack Union towns across the frontier if Herzog, Christiaan De Wet, Beyers, Kemp and a certain Muller were not allowed to meet Maritz at his headquarters.¹⁵⁵ The following day, General Smuts declared martial law in the Union, "thus definitively moving from voluntarism to conscription for the recruitment of the defence force and so forcing Boers to decide where they stood," Strachan explains.¹⁵⁶ As a result of Maritz's open declaration of rebellion and Smuts' declaration of martial law, Beyers, Christiaan De Wet and Kemp renewed contact with each other on 13 October, subsequently calling for full rebellion less than a week later on 19 October.¹⁵⁷

Gerald L'Ange posits that the "news of Maritz's uprising... only two weeks after the defeat of the Union forces at Sandfontein was enough to ignite rebellion in the Transvaal and the Free State."¹⁵⁸ Maritz's ability to gather a significant rebel force and the Union defeat at Sandfontein had both come as direct products of German-Boer collaboration, which provides further evidence that coordination between the two entities was decisive for the continuation and intensification of the Boer Rebellion.

¹⁵¹ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 72.

¹⁵² Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 90.

¹⁵³ Stejskal, *The Horns of the Beast*, p. 57.

¹⁵⁴ De Wet, *The Maritz Conspiracy*, p. 11; Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 31.

¹⁵⁵ Fouché, *Report on the Outbreak of the Rebellion*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁶ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 71.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁸ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 59.

Throughout the course of the rebellion, approximately 11,400 Boers would rise up in an attempt to liberate South Africa from British imperialism, a figure that accounted for around one percent of the total white population in South Africa in 1914.¹⁵⁹

Into Battle: The Battle of Keimoes – 22 October 1914

At the 7 October meeting that produced the German-Boer treaty, Maritz had agreed to von Heydebreck's demands for an immediate attack on Upington following the declaration of open rebellion.¹⁶⁰ Instead, however, Maritz decided to delay his attack until he received word from Beyers and Christiaan De Wet regarding their plans.¹⁶¹ In the meantime, Maritz and his force of Boers, German South-West African Boers and Germans retired to Kakamas in the Cape Province near the border, a position that the officers of the *Schutztruppe* considered to be wholly unacceptable in light of Maritz's previous promises of an immediate offensive.¹⁶² After two entire weeks of, as von Oelhafen quips, "disastrous hesitation," Maritz finally marched his force towards the town of Keimoes on 22 October.¹⁶³ Keimoes was the last obstacle before reaching Upington, and it housed a Union force of only 120 to 150 men (depending on the source) under Captain Leipoldt. This was expected to be a mere speed bump for Maritz's thousand-man army.¹⁶⁴

At 5:30 a.m. on the morning of 22 October, a mixed force of German *Schutztruppe* and South African Boers entered into combat together for the first during the First World War when the Haussding Battery's artillery opened fire on Union defensive positions in Keimoes.¹⁶⁵ Likely displaying their respective national biases, von Oelhafen's German account claims that the Union troops at Keimoes were forced to

¹⁵⁹ Sandra Swart, "The 'Five Shilling Rebellion': Rural White Male Anxiety and the 1914 Boer Rebellion," *South African Historical Journal* 56, no. 1 (2006): pp. 88-102, 90.

¹⁶⁰ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 50.

¹⁶¹ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 57.

¹⁶² Tim Couzens, *Battles of South Africa* (Claremont: New Africa Books, 2004), p. 200.

¹⁶³ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 52.

¹⁶⁴ Von Oelhafen, (*Ibid.*, p. 52) and Rayner and O'Shaughnessy (*How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West*, p. 153) both claim it was 120, while Sampson (*The Capture of De Wet*) cites a number of 150,

¹⁶⁵ Rayner and O'Shaughnessy, *How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West*, p. 153.

retreat on account of their lack of artillery,¹⁶⁶ while Sampson and O'Shaughnessy's British accounts maintain that the Union troops were "gallantly" and "in most gallant fashion" able to hold out in Keimoes until Union reinforcements arrived.¹⁶⁷ Regardless of Leipoldt's troops' actions, a force of 200 mounted riflemen from the Natal Light Horse regiment under Major Watt and 200 mounted riflemen from the Imperial Light Horse regiment under Major Panchaud arrived at Keimoes from Upington and quickly turned the tide of the battle.¹⁶⁸ Von Oelhafen describes the Hausssding Battery as having "suddenly received violent flank fire" when the Union reinforcements threatened to encircle the entire Boer-German force.¹⁶⁹ After receiving a bullet to the knee-cap, a wounded Maritz aborted the assault on Keimoes and ordered a full-scale retreat to Kakamas,¹⁷⁰ his artillery-equipped thousand-man army having lost their first genuine battle to a Union loyalist force of only 550.¹⁷¹

During the rout, Union forces were able capture a handful of German-Boer prisoners including four officers, one of whom was the German Count von Schwerin.¹⁷² This fact alone debunks Stejskal's claim that "no German troops would cross the border."¹⁷³ Following the defeat at Keimoes, a smaller contingent of Maritz's troops marched on the towns of Calvinia and Carnarvon in hopes of inciting a popular uprising among the towns' Boer population,¹⁷⁴ but a Union force under Colonel Van Deventer intercepted the force and took many prisoners, of whom a few were German officers.¹⁷⁵ Maritz's B Force commander replacement Colonel Brits and his Union troops pursued the retreating rebels to Kakamas and forced Maritz and the rest of his men to retreat back over the border to Jerusalem in German South-West Africa on 24 October.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁶ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwes*t, p. 52.

¹⁶⁷ Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 110; Rayner and O'Shaughnessy, *How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West*, p. 153.

¹⁶⁸ Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 110.

¹⁶⁹ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwes*t, p. 52.

¹⁷⁰ Rayner and O'Shaughnessy, *How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West*, 153.

¹⁷¹ Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 110.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Stejskal, *Horns of the Beast*, p. 57.

¹⁷⁴ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 57-58.

¹⁷⁵ Sampson, *The Capture of De Wet*, p. 111.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The Battle of Keimoes was by all accounts a complete disaster for Maritz specifically and for the Boer Rebellion generally. Maritz's wound effectively eliminated his military influence on the rebellion in the Union for two months, and he would not carry out another major offensive until late December 1914.¹⁷⁷ Worse yet was the fact that only around 600 men – what was left of the *Freikorps* and Hausssding Battery included – remained under his command after Keimoes, meaning that he had lost forty percent of his military strength to desertion, capture, or Union bullets.¹⁷⁸ The German-Boer defeat at Keimoes can thus be considered one of the decisive events leading to the stagnation and demise of Maritz's portion of the rebellion; the assault not only failed to acquire ground in the Union but resulted in a full-scale retreat from South African territory that completely nullified Maritz's initial numerical advantage.

The rebel's defeat at Keimoes, however, was not exclusively the result of the Union reinforcements' superior battlefield performance. An examination of the accounts from both German and Boer perspectives, in the form of von Oelhafen's book and *Freikorps bittereinder* Freddie MacDonald's memoir, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, reveals that the origins of the rebel defeat lie squarely at the feet of Maritz and his decisions in the weeks preceding the offensive. According to MacDonald and von Oelhafen, von Heydebreck had advocated at the 7 October meeting for an immediate joint action of *Schutztruppe*, the *Freikorps* and the Boer rebels to push deep into Union territory with the Boer contingent leading the way in order to gain the support of uncertain Boer factions. MacDonald claims that von Heydebreck only considered invading the Union with the collaboration of the Boers because the reception of an exclusively German force would have rallied undecided Boers to the loyalist camp.¹⁷⁹ Von Heydebreck had even offered to place upwards of one thousand German soldiers at Maritz's disposal in the form of the Franke Regiment under von Heydebreck's eventual successor Colonel Victor Franke, but this and von Heydebreck's invasion plan proposal was flatly rejected by Maritz.¹⁸⁰ This primary evidence from both von Oelhafen and MacDonald directly contradicts Hew Strachan's claim that "von Heydebreck...

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, p. 64.

¹⁷⁹ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, p. 56.

¹⁸⁰ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 50; MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, pp. 55-56.

shied away from the problems of direct co-operation in the field,"¹⁸¹ since the commander of the *Schutztruppe* was in fact the most adamant advocate for this type of joint action. Strachan's assertion may be a result of having only consulted German-language primary documents, providing him with only a partial image of von Heydebreck. While Strachan does list von Oelhafen as a source from which his assertion stems, his citation only includes the earlier pages of *Der Feldzug in Südwest* and fails to take into account von Heydebreck's adamant proposals of joint action that are presented later in the book.¹⁸²

Maritz rationalized his rejection of von Heydebreck's offer by continuing to maintain that the presence of Germans among his forces would be used by the Union as propaganda to convince the Boer population that the rebels would sell off an independent South Africa to the German Empire as a colonial possession.¹⁸³ While Maritz's concern was indeed legitimate, it was completely illogical when considering specific aspects of his order of battle going into the Keimoes offensive. It is first of all important to point out that the entire Haussding Battery attached to the *Freikorps* was indeed comprised of Germans soldiers in *Schutztruppe* uniform. Even though artillery detachments generally operated behind the frontlines and thus out of the sight of civilians, the battery was still an integral component of Maritz's force. Secondly, the *Freikorps* that did operate in the sight of civilians were clothed in German uniforms that were virtually indistinguishable from those of the *Schutztruppe*, and it is almost certain that a handful of the *Freikorps* troops were in fact Germans and not expatriated Boers. The ethno-lingual bond between the Germans and the Boers does not seem to have been strong enough, in this case, to dissuade many Boer civilians from their preconceptions of European imperialism.

Von Oelhafen also points to Maritz's unwarranted two-week delay of the Keimoes offensive as having been vital to the German-Boer defeat. Upon analysis of the battle, von Oelhafen posits: "The assumption that Maritz had suffered a defeat at Keimoes as a result of his long hesitation, and of an attack which had been undertaken with inadequate forces, was soon confirmed."¹⁸⁴ This claim is substantiated by the fact

¹⁸¹ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 75.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, p. 56; Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 50.

¹⁸⁴ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 52.

that this hesitation allowed the Union to reinforce Upington with the 200-strong contingent from the Natal Light Horse regiment, which would play a pivotal role in the comprehensive routing of German-Boer forces.¹⁸⁵ Accordingly, von Oelhafen blames the "all-too-cautious" Maritz for having decisively impeded his own rebellion by rejecting an immediate full-scale joint-invasion, especially in light of the recent momentum gained by the German victory at Sandfontein and the possibility of linking the rebellion with the unfolding uprisings in the Transvaal and Orange Free State.¹⁸⁶ MacDonald claims that a vast majority of the men under Maritz simply could not understand why he refused the help of thousands of German soldiers,¹⁸⁷ and this severe lack of sound military judgment could certainly have influenced those who decided to desert from the rebellion after the defeat at Keimoes. Von Oelhafen convincingly asserts that an assault on and seizure of Upington would likely have succeeded if Maritz had accepted von Heydebreck's offer of extra troops and immediately carried out his offensive after the *Freikorps* had been handed over to him.¹⁸⁸ German-Boer collaboration had up until this point been essential to the Boer Rebellion, but it seems that at this crucial point in time Maritz's illogical rejection of collaborative commitment may have irreversibly influenced the course of the First World War in Southern Africa.

The Rebellion in the Transvaal and Orange Free State

While Maritz and his substantially depleted rebel force licked their wounds at their new headquarters in Jerusalem, full-scale rebellion was erupting in the Transvaal under Beyers and Kemp and in the Orange Free State under Christiaan De Wet. On 26 October, Prime Minister Botha took personal command of the Union's military operations to suppress the rebellion. Botha and Smuts' loyalty to the British Empire took many Boers by surprise, especially in light of the fact that the two had both been *bittereinders* during the Boer War. Freddie MacDonald recounts in his memoir that upon hearing of the decision by Botha and Smuts to remain loyal, MacDonald declared to Maritz: "No, this cannot be true[!]"¹⁸⁹ Beyers, De Wet and Kemp still made attempts to

¹⁸⁵ Rayner and O'Shaughnessy, *How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West*, p. 153.

¹⁸⁶ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 105.

¹⁸⁷ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, p. 64.

¹⁸⁸ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁹ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, p. 21.

persuade Botha to rebel even after they renewed contact with each other on 13 October.¹⁹⁰ Adam Cruise argues, however, that the Prime Minister had already made his decision on the matter as early as 4 August 1914, almost immediately after he had been notified of Britain's declaration of war.¹⁹¹ Botha's own philosophy in regard to the future of South Africa was based heavily on a policy of reconciliation between the English and Afrikaner populations, a policy which he and Smuts believed would be the determining factor to the eventual (and peaceful) independence of South Africa.¹⁹² Furthermore, Botha's persisting personal anti-German sentiments (stemming from the Kaiser's refusal to provide the Boers with active military support during the Boer War) and the prospect of gaining German South-West African territory for the Union itself under his leadership further influenced his decision to remain loyal to the British Empire.¹⁹³

Botha had rejected Britain's offer to supply an Australian detachment for the counter-insurgency,¹⁹⁴ instead opting to structure his 30,000-strong Union force with 20,000 loyalist Boers for "the sake of national unity."¹⁹⁵ Botha recognized the hostility that he would have provoke if the suppression of the rebellion appeared to be another imperial endeavor of the British Empire and attempted to reconfigure the character of the conflagration to resemble more of a civil war than a colonial suppression of an independence movement.

Despite the Union having mobilized 30,000 men in October, the initial stages of the rebellion in the Transvaal and especially in the Orange Free State were quite successful for the rebels. Within a week of Botha taking personal command of the Union Defence Force the vast majority of the Orange Free State was in the hands of Christiaan De Wet and his rebel force of 1,200 and by 11 November De Wet had rallied a substantial 4,000 men to his command.¹⁹⁶ On 12 November, however, Botha's forces caught up to De Wet's encampment in the Mushroom Valley, encircling the camp and capturing 3,000 rebels. De Wet and one hundred of his rebels were able to escape the encirclement but were caught three weeks later on 2 December in Bechuanaland en

¹⁹⁰ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 71.

¹⁹¹ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 1.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 2-12.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-15

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁹⁵ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 53

¹⁹⁶ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 59 and L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 66.

route to German South-West Africa to rendezvous with Maritz.¹⁹⁷ The Boer Rebellion in the Orange Free State was no more.

The case of the Boer Rebellion in the Transvaal was one of tragedy and resilience. Under hot pursuit from loyalist forces, it was decided that Kemp and 800 rebels would ride north to link up with Maritz and return to the Transvaal with German rifles and ammunition. In the meantime, Beyers and 1,200 rebels rode south to the Orange Free State in an effort to link up with De Wet.¹⁹⁸ After repeated clashes with Union patrols in the Orange Free State, however, Beyers' force dwindled and on 8 December he met his demise at the Vaal River, having drowned while fleeing loyalist bullets.¹⁹⁹ The rebellion had by this time resulted in nothing short of an unmitigated disaster for the Boers, but unaware in the meantime of Christiaan De Wet and Beyers' fate, Maritz and Kemp pushed forward with their struggle for the independence of the Boer Republics.

On the Border with Maritz in November 1914

Both contemporary and more recent accounts of the Boer Rebellion generally describe Maritz and his rebels as having been "waiting sedately in the German colony" during November 1914.²⁰⁰ Yet once again von Oelhafen's German account provides details that are often overlooked, specifically in the English literature on the subject. During November the Germans incorporated two rebel Boer patrols into individual *Schutztruppe* regiments and the rest of the Boer rebels took an active part in securing German South-West Africa's border defenses in the area of Nakab and Stolzenfels.²⁰¹ A seemingly minute detail, the incorporation of Boer rebels into regular *Schutztruppe* formations actually demonstrates a hitherto unexplored dimension of the German-Boer collaborative efforts, as combatants from both Boer and German groups were now serving alongside each other: the *Schutztruppe* artilleryists with Maritz's Boer contingents and now South African Boers with regular *Schutztruppe* contingents.

¹⁹⁷ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, pp. 68-69.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁹ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 73.

²⁰⁰ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 64.

²⁰¹ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, pp. 51-54.

Maritz and the rebels were joined by fifty German soldiers under Lieutenant Friedrich Freiherr von Hadeln and their combined safe-guarding of German South-West Africa's southern border allowed the *Schutztruppe* to deploy much of their remaining strength to oppose Union advances near Luderitzbucht on the western coast of the colony.²⁰² Leadership of the *Freikorps* was transferred to expat Boer Stoffel Schoeman and along with (the later memoirist) Freddie MacDonald, the *Freikorps* carried out covert patrols over the Union border. These patrols, acting also as spy and intelligence gathering missions were carried out solely by the *Freikorps* and von Oelhafen, referring by name to Schoeman and MacDonald, later commended the patrols as having been "in all respects so admirable."²⁰³ Maritz utilized these missions to directly inform the Germans of Union Defence Force movements inside South African territory and the *Schutztruppe* were able to plan their defense accordingly.²⁰⁴

In a notable effort to sow discontent among the Union troops on the coast of German South-West Africa, Lieutenant Alexander von Scheele employed one of the three aircraft in the *Schutztruppe's* possession to drop one hundred leaflet copies of Maritz's rebellion proclamation into Union camps near Rotkuppe.²⁰⁵ Having been carried out on 21 November, the leaflet drop generally coincided with De Wet and Beyers's rapid advances, when the chances of a successful rebellion were at their highest, in turn creating an opportunity for the Germans to persuade more loyalist Boer elements among the Union forces to switch sides. On his second fly-over of the camp on the same day, Scheele also dropped improvised bombs on the camp. This primitive sortie is not only another demonstration of the depth that Boer-German collaboration had reached by this time, but it was also, as L'Ange points out, "the first recorded use of an aircraft for an offensive military purpose as distinct from reconnaissance in the sub-continent [of Southern Africa]."²⁰⁶ The first instance of aerial warfare "perhaps... [in] all [of] Africa,"²⁰⁷ directly coincided with an attempt by the Germans to further aid their Boer allies.

²⁰² Ibid., pp. 48-54.

²⁰³ Ibid., pp. 49-57.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

²⁰⁵ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 67.

²⁰⁶ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 117.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

Major Kemp Arrives and the Final Offensive Commences

In late November, Major Kemp and only 500 of his original 800 men stumbled across the border of German South-West Africa after a grueling and thought-to-be-impossible 700-mile month-long trek through the Kalahari Desert.²⁰⁸ Governor von Seitz recounts that a report that detailed both Kemp's arrival on German territory and the still-unfolding rebellion in the Transvaal and Orange Free State arrived in Windhuk on 29 November.²⁰⁹ Von Seitz then departed southwards for Keetmanshoop, where he was to attend a meeting with the rebel leadership and meet Martiz in person for the first time. On 5 December, Maritz, Kemp, Abraham Bezuidenhout, Adam Boschoff and Pieter De Wet met with von Seitz to discuss the current material and military situation.²¹⁰ Here von Seitz agreed to further provide the Boers with rifles, ammunition and food for a new and immediate offensive on Upington. Unaware of both Chrisitaan De Wet's recent capture and the virtual destruction of Beyers' rebel force, von Seitz recounts in his memoir: "The prospects of success of the uprising seemed decidedly favorable at the time, especially as we hoped that the [German Navy's] East Asian Squadron would come from the coast of South America to South Africa, where, according to our calculations, it would arrive about mid-December."²¹¹

In the days following the meeting, Kemp's rebel contingent was re-armed and re-equipped by the Germans, allowing for the strength of the Boer formation (along with the *Freikorps*) to once again exceed a thousand men.²¹² On 19 December, while Maritz and Kemp gathered their forces near the border at Stolzenfels for the upcoming offensive, a column of 300 Union troops attacked the Boer's defensive outposts. The assault was successfully repelled and it became clear that the loyalist formation at Nous would have to be dealt with before the advance on Upington.²¹³ The Hausding Battery was thus ferried over the Orange River on 21 December and with the help of excellent reconnaissance, the Boers were able to surround the Union camp. At 4:00 a.m. the Hausding Battery opened fire on the camp and the Boers began their assault, catching

²⁰⁸ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 63.

²⁰⁹ Von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkriege*, p. 34.

²¹⁰ Maritz, *My Lewe en Strewe*, p. 72.

²¹¹ Von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkriege*, p. 34.

²¹² L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 75.

²¹³ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, pp. 95-96.

the 900 loyalists under Major Breede completely by surprise and sending the formation fleeing towards Kakamas. Nous was under Boer control by 7:00 a.m. while Maritz and Kemp pursued the fleeing column until 3:00 p.m., allegedly "until their horses had collapsed."²¹⁴

The German-Boer victory at Nous was one of the few genuine successes of battlefield cooperation between the Boers and Imperial Germany. The Boer casualties were minimal: zero killed and only seven wounded (all from the *Freikorps*), while the Union suffered two killed, two wounded, and 132 captured (including eight officers). A machine gun, 10,000 cartridges, sixty horses and 2100 cattle were also taken by the Boers.²¹⁵ The Battle of Nous also showcased the combat effectiveness of German soldiers fighting under Maritz. The two automatic cannons of the Haussding Battery saw direct combat for the first time during the battle and von Oelhafen claimed "lieutenant d. Res. Gaedtke and three [German] corporals took part in the battle with special distinction, taking an officer and twelve men prisoner."²¹⁶

The Boer-German triumph at Nous did not, however, amount to a significant strategic victory. After all, Nous held very little strategic value, and following a disagreement between Maritz and Kemp on what was to be done next, it was decided that the German-Boer force would return to German South-West Africa to launch the assault on Upington in January.²¹⁷ Maritz realized after the Battle of Nous that the Boers could not rely on the diminishing German supplies for much longer, increasing the necessity for the offensive on Upington that he had for months been claiming the Boers would undertake.²¹⁸ Victor Franke, the new commander-in-chief of the *Schutztruppe* after von Heydebreck's untimely death in November, had issued an order that stated the Boers could not be guaranteed a supply of armaments or food rations from the Germans after 1 February 1915, further necessitating a shift to self-sufficiency for the Boers.²¹⁹ 31 December saw the Haussding Battery turned over to newly-trained Boer artilleryists under Major Smith as Haussding himself was recalled to erect a coastal

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 97.

²¹⁵ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 97.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, pp. 73-74.

²¹⁸ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 98.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

battery at Walfischbai. A German intelligence officer, Lieutenant-General Kuntze was also assigned to Maritz's officer staff.²²⁰

The Battle of Upington – 24 January 1915

By January 1915, a Boer assault on Upington had become imperative to the survival of German South-West Africa as a colony of the German Empire. Union forces were advancing inland from Luderitzbucht, and the Tschaukaib area (fifty kilometers east of Luderitzbucht) was under Union control by the dawn of 1915. The railway to the heart of German South-West Africa would soon be successfully rebuilt by the loyalists and as such, a German-Boer attack on Upington could delay the impending threat by forcing the Union to redeploy some of its military strength to defend the Union itself.²²¹ The Boers began their advance on Upington on 13 January, successfully assaulting a loyalist camp at Lutzeputz (near Cnydas) on 18 January, killing twelve, wounding four and taking 170 prisoners.²²² Although it was statistically a major victory for the Boers, newspapers recovered from the battlefield informed Maritz and Kemp of the death of Beyers and the capture of De Wet.²²³ L'Ange describes the revelation that the rebellion was in a state of "virtual collapse" as having been a major psychological blow to the Boers, devastating the morale of the Boer force just days before the rebellion's paramount engagement.²²⁴

The stark and immediate realization that his precious rebellion and dreams of an independent South Africa had disintegrated beyond his control prompted Maritz to inquire in a letter to the loyalist commander in Upington, Colonel Jacob Van Deventer, about possible surrender terms. However, after five days without a reply from Van Deventer, Maritz made the call and led the last major force of rebel Boers into their final major battle on 24 January. L'Ange argues that Maritz's "puzzling behavior" in still attacking Upington after seeking surrender terms was less a result of his impatience with Van Deventer's response and rather because "Maritz was forced into the attack by

²²⁰ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, pp. 74.

²²¹ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 75.

²²² Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 74.

²²³ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 76.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

the Germans, to whom he was now deeply indebted and who were growing impatient with the lack of rewards for their support for him."²²⁵ This suggestion is supported not only by the fact that Boer pressure on Upington was pivotal to the German Empire's overall military strategy for the survival of German South-West Africa, but also because a joint *Schutztruppe*-Boer attack on Ramansdrift was agreed upon by Maritz and was planned to take place directly following the supposed Boer capture of Upington.²²⁶ It was thus imperative for the rebels to push on with their offensive on Upington before the *Schutztruppe* in the border area could make their own move. The Boer Rebellion would thus end in a battle produced by the the now-coercive partnership between the Germans and the Boers.

Regardless of Maritz's motivations, the Boers began their assault on Upington on 24 January with approximately 1,000 men, the Haussding Battery (commanded by the Boers but likely still manned to a certain extent by the Germans) that consisted of the four 7.7 cm field guns and two automatic cannons, and two machine guns (most likely Maxims).²²⁷ As the Haussding Battery and its Cape Field Artillery Union counterpart pummeled the town, the Boers assaulted Upington with a major mounted charge only to be quickly dispersed and forced from the town by the numerically superior defensive loyalist force.²²⁸ The Boers lost twelve men killed, twenty-three wounded and ninety-seven captured. L'Ange mentions that most of the Boers captured were wearing German uniforms,²²⁹ further demonstrating the vanity of Maritz's reservations in rejecting the active *Schutztruppe* support which he had been repeatedly offered. Freddie MacDonald recalls that after the defeat at Upington, the Boers reiterated their displeasure with Maritz as they had after the defeat at Keimoes three months earlier. At the Boer camp outside Upington the disillusioned men claimed: "It is a shame that we did not accept the Germans' offer...two-to-three-thousand German soldiers would have been able to help us immensely today."²³⁰

During the Battle of Upington, *Schutztruppe* Major Hermann Ritter and his 400-strong mounted column were supposed to simultaneously attack Steinkopf. Upon

²²⁵ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 76.

²²⁶ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 98.

²²⁷ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 79.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²³⁰ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, pp. 123-124.

hearing of the Boer reversal, however, Ritter opted for an attack on Kakamas in the Union but this was successfully repelled by loyalist forces as well.²³¹ In his 2015 book *Louis Botha's War*, Adam Cruise characterizes Ritter's attack on Kakamas as "the Germans' eventual entry to the rebellion," claiming that "It was the first and last time South Africa was invaded."²³² L'Ange also asserts that the attack on Kakamas was "the only German attack *in any strength* across the South African border during the First World War."²³³ These statements, as this essay has conclusively proven, are factually incorrect. Since its conception, representatives of the German Empire had been an integral component of the rebellion's mechanism, and the Germans' "eventual entry to the rebellion" had come as early as August 1914 and not in late January 1915. To claim that the attack on Kakamas was the "first and last time" that a German force had come over the border "in any strength" is even more misleading. The Hausding Battery, an artillery battery operated exclusively by the German *Schutztruppe* for the entirety of Maritz's engagements in 1914, had fought inside Union territory multiple times (see Battle of Keimoes and Battle of Nous) and the *Freikorps*, which had been created under the Imperial German military and comprised of many naturalized German subjects, had fought at every major Boer battle inside the Union as well. The *Freikorps* had even acted as the vanguard unit of Maritz's force, having sustained an overwhelmingly disproportionate number of the Boer casualties.²³⁴ Such misrepresentations of the history of the Boer Rebellion and the South-West Africa campaign serve to necessitate the comprehensive account of German-Boer collaboration presented in this essay, as it provides an essential reinterpretation of the First World War's lesser studied episodes.

The night following the battle of Upington, Maritz again wrote to Van Deventer proposing a conference to discuss surrender terms. Held outside of Upington on 30 January, the conference saw the surrender of Kemp and the vast majority of the remaining rebels, effectively bringing the Boer Rebellion to its conclusive end.²³⁵ Maritz and the rest of the *Freikorps*, on the other hand, returned to German South-West Africa on 4 February, having, as von Seitz recounts, brought back the artillery of the

²³¹ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 82.

²³² Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, pp. 66-67.

²³³ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 83; my emphasis added.

²³⁴ Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 102.

²³⁵ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 82.

Hausding Battery to the Germans "in a loyal manner."²³⁶ The defeated Maritz was castigated by Major Ritter who refused to speak to the Boer commander and even advocated for Maritz's court martial.²³⁷ Upon hearing of his defeat at Upington, von Seitz summoned Maritz to Windhuk so that they could speak personally.²³⁸ Maritz would then spend the remainder of the First World War in Portuguese West Africa (modern day Angola) where he was monitored closely by British intelligence.²³⁹ Maritz returned to South Africa in 1923 after living in exile in Portugal and Spain following the war.²⁴⁰ Upon his return, Maritz was tried for treason and sentenced to three years in prison, but he was released a year later after G. B. M. Hertzog became the Prime Minister of the Union in 1924.²⁴¹

As for the *Freikorps*, the unit was officially dissolved on 19 February 1915, but von Oelhafen maintains that Boer volunteers kept fighting in regular *Schutztruppe* formations as late as 4 April.²⁴² As the dust of the rebellion settled the casualties of the German-Boer struggle were tallied. Strachan asserts that the Union's loyalist forces sustained casualties numbering 101 killed and wounded for the approximately 30,000 engaged, while the Boer rebels suffered 124 killed and 229 wounded for the 10,000 engaged.²⁴³ L'Ange, on the other hand, claims the loyalists suffered 131 killed and 272 wounded, while the Boers lost 190 killed and around 400 wounded.²⁴⁴ Regardless of this discrepancy, it is notable that the Union sustained more casualties in suppressing the Boer Rebellion than in the entirety of the following campaign against German South-West Africa, which would see the colony fall under the British flag.²⁴⁵ In April 1915, the German magazine *Der Tag* lamented: "We expected that British India would rise. We expected trouble in Ireland. We expected a triumphal rebellion in South Africa."²⁴⁶ The

²³⁶ Von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkrieg*, p. 35; Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, p. 102 and Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 74.

²³⁷ MacDonald, *Agter Die Skerms Met Die Rebelle*, p. 128.

²³⁸ *Judicial Commission of Inquiry*, p. 79.

²³⁹ Kent Federowich, "Sleeping with the Lion? The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–15," *South African Historical Journal* 49, no. 1 (2003): p. 90.

²⁴⁰ Cruise, *Louis Botha's War*, p. 71; L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 85.

²⁴¹ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 86.

²⁴² Von Oelhafen, *Der Feldzug in Südwest*, pp. 119-129.

²⁴³ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 73.

²⁴⁴ L'Ange, *Urgent Imperial Service*, p. 84.

²⁴⁵ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 91.

²⁴⁶ Millin, *General Smuts*, p. 311.

Western Front in Europe had by this time ground down to a halt and the German Empire's early-war initiatives of distracting the British war effort had proven no match for history's largest imperial entity.

Conclusion

With the Boer Rebellion suppressed, the Union was able to deploy 43,000 men to German South-West Africa to force the colony's capitulation.²⁴⁷ Vastly outnumbered, the German objective was fixated on the retention of a sufficient portion of German South-West Africa's territory (taking place primarily in the north) so as to uphold the German Empire's claim to the colony at the final peace negotiations of the war.²⁴⁸ At the risk of oversimplifying the remainder of the South-West Africa campaign, I will conclude by stating that the overwhelming numerical superiority of Botha's forces would eventually force the ever-diminishing *Schutztruppe* force, along with von Seitz and Franke, to retreat to Otavi in northern German South-West Africa where they would ultimately surrender on 9 July 1915.²⁴⁹ As the latest addition to the British Empire, German South-West Africa would become a South African mandate under the League of Nations in 1919 and remain a de-facto province of South Africa until its eventual independence as Namibia in 1990.

A final assessment of the effects of German-Boer collaboration during the South-West Africa campaign brings to light perhaps its most important contribution. Governor von Seitz writes in his memoir: "the insurrection remains a great success for us because it delayed the attack by the Union forces on the colony for months."²⁵⁰ In hindsight, the Boer Rebellion may appear to have been a lost cause (after the death of De La Rey and the mustering of only 11,400 rebels) with ultimately little effect on the eventual outcome of the South-West Africa campaign. The Union maintained numerical and material superiority over the *Schutztruppe* and the Boer rebels at every stage of the conflict and were set to be victorious by virtually every military measure. As has been established, however, the continuation and spread of the rebellion after De La Rey's

²⁴⁷ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, p. 82.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

²⁵⁰ Von Seitz, *Südafrika im Weltkriege*, p. 38.

death and the German victory at Sandfontein came as a direct result of German-Boer collaboration. The continuation and proliferation of the rebellion forced Botha to delay the full-scale invasion of German South-West Africa by a substantial five months. Thus it can be concluded that German-Boer collaboration during the First World War played an indispensable role in the slightly prolonged survival of German South-West Africa as a colony of the German Empire until July of 1915.

The case of German-Boer collaboration during the First World War represents an extraordinary tale of how a romanticized racial brotherhood between two ethnic entities converged on the basis of practical interests in war. This was a collaboration based originally on traditional ethno-linguistic ties and a common British enemy but in practice the collaboration can be characterized as a pragmatic marriage of convenience. Though the Germans were indeed widely considered by the Boers to be the lesser of two evils between the two rival empires, it was the German willingness to supply the Boer struggle militarily – and not solely their mutual ethnic identification – that allied the Germans and Boers during the First World War. This melding of ethno-linguistic tradition and military pragmatism is essential to the understanding of nationalist Boer history, but it also remains a valuable example of the *Realpolitik*-influenced political nature of the German Empire. Ties between the Afrikaner and German people would not, however, come to an indefinite close with the final shots at Upington. Collaboration during the First World War would serve as a basis of continuity from the original relationship formed during the Boer War, manifesting itself in the anti-British pro-German *Ossewabrandwag* paramilitary organization during the Second World War. Although the Afrikaner organization never made a declaration of independence or attempted a full-scale rebellion, the *Ossewabrandwag's Stormjaers* did take an active part in attempts to sabotage the British war effort by way of attacking the Union Defence Force's infrastructure through acts such as bombings and the telegraph wire cutting.²⁵¹

This essay has set out to demonstrate both the extent and effects of German-Boer collaboration in one of the First World War's lesser studied theatres of war. Contrary to how it is generally characterized in both the contemporary and recent literature, German-Boer collaboration went far beyond either simply being a standard political agreement between the German Empire and the prospective Boer Republics or an

²⁵¹ Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience (1910-1967)* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 129.

armament-supply agreement between Maritz and von Seitz. German soldiers had fought and died alongside their Boer allies just as Boer rebels had fought and died alongside their German allies. German collaboration with the Boers extended from the *Schutztruppe* foot soldier through the administrative government of German South-West Africa to Kaiser Wilhelm II himself. Boer collaboration with the Germans extended from the armed Boer volunteer through to the highest-ranking military officials of the Union of South Africa. What had begun in June 1913 as a conspiratorial request of assurance from Maritz (a high-ranking Union military officer) to Gustav Voigts (a civilian of German South-West Africa) had by October 1914 expanded to include a guarantee of independence from the German Empire's highest authority. The first historical case of aerial warfare on the African continent is even tinged with collaborative efforts. It can thus be concluded that German-Boer collaboration during the First World War represents the highest level of cooperation between the two entities in their respective histories.

The effects of German-Boer collaboration on the South-West Africa campaign's history can be summarized as follows: Firstly, Maritz's negotiations and agreements with the Germans crucially influence the decision by the rebellion's leadership to go forward with the uprising after De La Rey's death. At the rebellion's most fragile moment, when the rebellion's leadership was most likely to abort the entire endeavor, the assurance of German-supplied weapons decisively influenced rebel ringleaders (specifically Kemp) to continue on. Secondly, Maritz's covert intelligence sharing with the *Schutztruppe* and his subsequent inaction during the Battle of Sandfontein were both instrumental to the largest German victory in the South-West Africa campaign. The coordination between Maritz and the Germans directly aided the *Schutztruppe's* concentration of forces and the encirclement of Lukin's column at Sandfontein, simultaneously leaving the Union's invasion force without an eastern flank. The implications of the German victory at Sandfontein were even more significant, as it served not only to solidify the continuation of the rebellion but vastly expand it as well. Lastly, the very continued existence of German South-West Africa in 1915 was made possible by the effects of collaboration in sustaining the rebellion. In providing a comprehensive chronicle of the cooperative machinations between the German Empire and the Boer rebels during the First World War, this reinterpretation of the Boer Rebellion and the opening stages of the South-West Africa campaign brings light to

both the historiography and overall impact of this fascinating and an often overlooked chapter in military history.

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