In 1904, the indigenous Herero people of German South West Africa (now Namibia) rebelled against their German occupiers. In the following four years, the German army retaliated, killing between 60,000 and 100,000 Herero people, one of the worst atrocities ever. The history of the Herero genocide bears not only on transitional justice issues throughout Africa, but also on legal issues elsewhere in the world where reparations for colonial injustices have been called for.

This book explores the events within the context of German South West Africa (GSWA) as the only German colony where settlement was actually attempted. The study contends that the genocide was not the work of one rogue general or the practices of the military, but that it was inexorably propelled by Germany’s national goals at the time. The book will argue that the Herero genocide was linked to Germany’s late entry into the colonial race, which led it to acquire multiple colonies all over the world frenetically within a very short period, using any means available, including ruthlessness. The seminal influence of the German view of race, racial identity and racial superiority on the unfolding events cannot be overlooked. This book shows how the Germans, in their attempts to confirm their belief that their race was superior, were preoccupied with race identification and the origins of races. It also examines the Kaiser’s role. This study recounts the reasons why the Kaiser likely issued the order and why proof of this has not emerged before now. The book reveals his history of violence and the ordering of brutal actions, even against his own citizens.

Questions relating to human rights are very much in the news, yet genocides in Africa are understudied, especially those that occurred during colonial times. The history of the Herero genocide has been examined by very few writers and almost no-one in Africa. Sarkin’s book deals with the issues from an entirely different point of view and proposes new understandings from an alternative position. It provides a lot of new information not previously dealt with in the little literature there is on the subject.

Contents Include:

Chapter 1. AETIOLOGY OF A GENOCIDE
land and cattle during and after the war; Interracialism, mixed race German citizens and alcoholism; Teaching the “natives” a lesson and promoting Germany’s image

Chapter 2. IMPLEMENTING THE GENOCIDE: ANNIHILATING "THE AFRICAN TRIBES WITH STREAMS OF BLOOD AND STREAMS OF GOLD": IMPLEMENTING THE GENOCIDE

German brutalities before 1904; 1904 and beyond: The intent, the order and the extermination of the Herero; The intended meaning of “vernichten”: A political or military strategy, or call for genocide? The number of Herero killed in the genocide; when did the genocide begin? Was the killing of women and children specifically sought?

Chapter 3. DID THE KAISER ORDER THE GENOCIDE?
The Kaiser’s personality; The debate about the role of the Kaiser – decision-maker or shadow emperor? The Kaiser and the military; The Kaiser’s record of brutality; The role of the Kaiser in the colonies; The Kaiser and GSWA; Did the Kaiser appoint Von Trotha? Why Von Trotha was chosen; Was Von Trotha given a specific genocide order? Would Von Trotha have kept the order secret? The role of German law in keeping the order secret; Military culture; Praise and support

Of Interest and Benefit to:

Undergraduates and postgraduates, and all those interested in human rights, history, comparative and historical law, as well as colonialism, Africa, historical human rights violations, German and Namibian history, reparations, etc.