

critical summer of 1914 cruising the fjords of Norway.

A chapter is given over to German colonial ambitions in Africa and Asia, but Hoyer's main concern is the way colonialism affected German internal politics rather than those who suffered under it. Exploits in far-flung lands were wildly popular among the public, despite the outrage of left-wing politicians at news of German atrocities.

Hoyer sidesteps the contemporary 'decolonisation' debate, which is in full swing in Germany. In May, Angela's Merkel's government acknowledged that the massacres of the Nama and Herero people in German South West Africa (today's Namibia) were genocidal. Within Germany, debate on streets named after colonialists and on the return of human remains and looted artwork to other African countries has become intense.

The Stanford historian Steven Press tackles the subject of Germany's colonial empire head on in *Blood and Diamonds*. His thoroughly readable study of German

diamond mining and trading in German South West Africa gets into the nitty-gritty of this shambolic, ill-fated colony. It's a tale of con men, stock market bubbles and dodgy landgrabs from indigenous Africans. The cast of unsavoury characters includes Adolf Lüderitz, a businessman who set up shop in a harbour on the barren Namibian coast – soon dubbed Lüderitz Bay – in the 1880s. The place was so dry that fresh water had to be shipped from Cape Town five hundred miles away. Lüderitz pleaded for military assistance from Berlin when he couldn't defend his operation from the locals. Bismarck reluctantly sent troops and German state colonialism was born. Then there's Zacharias Lewala, a black railway construction worker from the Cape who in 1908 identified the first large concentration of diamonds in the colony, and August Stauch, an engineer who capitalised on Lewala's find to become an instant millionaire. Bernhard Dernburg, the self-important state secretary charged with turning a profit in the colonies, was seen by the Kaiser as the 'second coming of Cecil Rhodes'.

German South West Africa was a drain on the government's coffers until Lewala's discovery. The stones soon flooded the world market. Smaller than those from South Africa, the diamonds were ideal for the engagement rings that had become an essential part of courtship in the United States – a poignant example of how burgeoning consumerism was enmeshed with colonial economies. Press offers ample evidence linking German genocidal violence with the push to exploit the land for precious jewels. These were 'blood diamonds' decades before the term was coined. After the First World War, the colony fell under the control of South Africa. Unsurprisingly, racist treatment of indigenous people and deceitful business practices continued until, if not after, Namibian independence in 1990.

In some ways, the brutality of the Germans during the diamond rush differed little from the colonial behaviour of other Europeans. The same goes for German public indifference to the suffering of Africans. No, there really isn't much to celebrate about the 150th anniversary of the Second Reich.

In 2005 Charles Chadwick published simultaneously a series of four novels entitled *It's All Right Now*. The novels were incomplete and this is their fifth and final part. They tell the story of an ordinary man, an accountant, who is left by his wife and children and goes to live, first in Suffolk, then in north London and a seaside town. The novels portray a wealth of characters and provide an abundant panorama of English life over a period of about forty years. In his last years, now living in sheltered accommodation, Ripple writes about his schooldays, family, national service along with aspects of his more recent past.

It's All Right Now was widely acclaimed. **Jonathan Safran Foer** said 'this novel is huge, in size, ambition, intelligence and heart' and **David Gates** wrote in *Newsweek* that it was 'exhilarating ... brilliant ... radically original'.

The fifth and final volume is self-contained and is only available on Amazon.

TOM RIPPLE: THE LAST YEARS

The fifth and final novel of
IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW



CHARLES
CHADWICK