

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAND REFORM AND THE LAND QUESTION .

National Archives
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THE HERERO VIEW

BY

Dr. Kuaima Riruako,
Paramount Chief of the Herero.
The Herero Royal House.

Mr Chairman,
The Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia,
Members of the Cabinet,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Esteemed Delegates and Community Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr Chairman,

The Herero Royal House, on behalf of the living and the dead of the Herero nation and on my own behalf as the King of all the Herero, I would like to express my sincere thanks and my appreciation to you,

and through you to the young Republic of Namibia, for convening this historic National Conference on Land Reform and the Land Question.

Mr Chairman,

Members of the Conference,

Our modern world is full of history books about Namibia and its people. And this consultation for its success should never miss the point of the special suffering of the Herero and Nama, who lost their land and property in the fight "to-die-fighting" until the national independence of Namibia.

In fact, the Damara and the Bushmen were also deprived of their portions of land. Therefore, Mr Chairman, this National Meeting is reminding me, the Herero people and the Herero Royal House of the fierce battle 107 years ago -- a bitter and bloody struggle of my people in defence of their land and dignity.

We, the Herero people of Namibia, were our own and only masters of Hereroland. And, we fought alone against the forces of German colonialism. Finally in the aftermath of the war, we end up

expropriated of our land and livestock by the enemies of the Herero.

The war lords of colonialism outlawed the Herero people from their soil and I quote:

"The Herero people will have to leave the country. Otherwise I shall force them to do so by means of guns. Within the German boundaries, every Herero, whether found armed or unarmed, with or without cattle will be shot. I shall not accept anymore women and children. I shall drive them back to their people -- otherwise I shall order shots to be fired at them. These are my words to the Herero people." Close Quote.

Mr Chairman, Members of the Conference,

Those words of the German General Von Trotha were put into action. The result was the horrible genocide of more than 86 000 Herero in this country. Some of them, more than a thousand heads of family and their dependants fled to the neighbouring Botswana which was at that time known as British Bechuanaland. And from the remaining 15 130 Herero people in the concentration camps, only about 7 448 survived.

We, the Herero people in this country are aware of the sinful conduct of some members of the Namibian community who continue to rejoice in the genocide of my people and who came up with skillful plans to occupy or to take away the remaining land portions of original

Hereroland which was then still in our domain and not yet recognised by all enemies of Hereroland as our immovable property.

Mr Chairman,

Members of the Conference,

Despite the many conspiracies against the Herero people and despite the valuable contribution of the Herero to the history of Namibia, the Herero people under the leadership of the late and great Paramount Chief Hosea Kutako, took the Namibian case further to the corners of the world and petitioned the United Nations.

At home we pursued, alone, the political policy of national unity. Successfully, the Herero people brought together and mobilized the oppressed masses of Namibia as well as the oppressing class into true brothers and sisters to come together and discuss their differences peacefully. Without that, the people of Namibia would not have achieved what they have achieved today, namely democracy in Namibia.

But, Mr Chairman, the acknowledgement that we as Herero received by doing good to others, was and is the alienation of our history and the adamant refusal of all to recognise our right to our land, including Windhoek; this refusal was from the year 1890 to the present under the

SWAPO regime.

Today, I would like to warn the world, Africa, the Churches and our Government that the Herero are still prepared to sacrifice for their land and dignity, no matter what the other quarters decide. As usual we will abide by our conscience and the precious blood shed by our forefathers in the battles for the defence and security of this country.

Certainly, our confiscated movable and immovable property became the starting wealth of all regimes in Namibia including the present Government of Namibia which has inherited that colonial and apartheid proprietorship.

More of what we did not expect, is the fact that at the very initial stage of this Government, letters were sent to various traditional leaders all over Namibia requesting the deployment of returning Ovambo into all communal areas of Namibia and again, some Churches were misused as cheap instruments of such tribal hegemonic deployment. Note: I do not say these letters were sent by the Government.

What the present Government is aspiring to, as far as the conference on land reform is concerned, constitute already a threat to peace and true national reconciliation. It is in itself a new declaration of war against

my people.

Mr Chairman, such early unreasonable and deliberate provocations on the land reform issue and the land question will certainly end up into a bloody war of destruction without a winner.

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished participants to the Conference,

For quite some time, organised propagandist made their turns almost through all communal areas, misinforming the Namibian people, that the commercial farms will be confiscated at will, if this Conference do decide that.

The Herero Royal House would like to caution against such dreams which deliberately exploit the constitutional ignorance of the Namibian communal farmers in general and the black workers in particular.

We all know very well that the rights "to protection from arbitrary deprivation of private property without just compensation," was included in the 1982 Constitutional Principles and Guidelines to which the ruling party, SWAPO, had agreed to, before independence.

At the first Sitting of the Constituent Assembly of Namibia at the Tintenpalast in Windhoek on the 21st of November 1989, SWAPO

moved that the Constituent Assembly adopt the 1982 Principles. And it was accepted by all parties.

Mr Chairman,
Participants to the Conference,

Presently, we, the Herero, are now left with two options as to the land reform and the land question in Namibia.

They are as follows:

- 1. The return of our stolen holy land;**
- 2. The just compensation from the German Government.**

But, the Herero Royal House and the entire leadership of the Herero people opted in favour of compensation from the German Government in order to promote the spirit of peaceful co-existence between the Herero and Germans in Namibia as well as between the Herero and other Whites who occupy Hereroland. Such just compensation, Mr Chairman, will not bring back the lives of those who perished in the genocide, but may to a certain extent help heal the wounds of the victims of the Herero holocaust, their land and their

livestock.

Therefore, we appeal again to our countrymen and the international community to advise the German Government to meet the demands of the Herero people as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the light of the Herero history and experience, the Herero Royal House would like to recommend the following to this Conference, and through this Conference to the Government of the Republic of Namibia:

- 1. The immediate recognition of the right to ownership of communal lands by their communal farmers throughout Namibia, including Rehoboth;**
- 2. The complete commercialization of all communal lands and the creation of economically viable and productive ranches;**
- 3. The creation of infrastructures of all communal areas and the improvement of cultivation areas according to their agricultural potential in order to feed Namibia and our**

neighbours;

4. In the implementation of the principle of Affirmative Action by the Government concerning the commercial farms, the first priority should be given to the people who lost their land and/or who were deprived of their land in that specific area during the colonial area.

5. The acquisition of farms should remain subject to the ordinary market principle of willing-seller-willing-buyer, taking cognizance of the original owners of the area before the colonial period and its history of land dispossession.

6. The creation of credit opportunities for all farmers of Namibia by/through an autonomous body, to be subsidized by the Government of the Republic of Namibia, irrespective of their political affiliation;

7. The institution of low interest loans to disadvantaged farmers of Namibia in the spirit of resettlement schemes.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, I would like to add a more detailed contribution to this Conference in the enclosed annexure which are

being made available to you and the Conference.

May this Conference address itself to the reality of our historical backgrounds.

Thank you,

Dr Kuaima Riruako

Paramount Chief of the Herero

Windhoek

June 25, 1991