German ambassador peeves Pohamba

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RELATIONS between Namibia and Germany appear strained after President Hifikepunye Pohamba reportedly had a fall out with the German Ambassador to Namibia Egon Kochanke at State House at the end of last year.

The Windhoek Observer learnt that the usually calm and cordial President Pohamba became irritated with the German ambassador and their tête-à-tête on that day ended on a sour note.

The newspaper could not reach Kochanke for comment on Thursday because he was reportedly out of office.

Prime Minister Hifikepunye Pohamba confirmed the incident and said although he was not present at that meeting, he learnt that the insensitive and arrogant behaviour of Kochanke offended the president.

Speaking exclusively to the Windhoek Observer this week, the premier said he did not have the full details of what transpired during the meeting.

"I do not know exactly what happened, perhaps there was a situation of someone being insensitive. Something must have happened," he said.

"As a diplomat you have to understand the mood in the country where you are. The atrocities committed by Germans are a concern not only to the communities directly affected, but to the entire Namibia. These were tragic events and as an ambassador one should have that sense.

Resentment has been simmering close to the surface between Namibian authorities and the German Ambassador, since the Namibian delegation travelled to Germany last year October to repatriate the skulls of Namibians killed during the German colonial occupation.

The German government gave the delegation that travelled to collect 20 of the thousands of heads that were shipped off to Berlin - for the totally barbaric aim of proving the inferiority of the defeated Africans through dubious medical experiments - a cold reception.

“Our people were not treated well. I went there (Germany) last year in March and I told the Foreign Affairs minister of the importance of a dignified exchange of the remains,” Angula slammed the German government for its half-hearted approach towards the reparations issue.

“German are insensitive and petty,” he said.

Next month the Director-General for African Affairs in the German Federal Foreign Office Walter Lindner will discuss a broad range of themes regarding Namibian-German bilateral relations, Scholz said.

Scholz however, ignored responding to other questions sent via email such as Germany’s stance on reparations or its view on the current relationship with Namibia.

Despite the snub of the delegation in Germany and the lack of protocol, Angula says he is ready to receive the German emissary in February.

"Two wrongs don’t make a right," he commented.

Various traditional leaders and their respective communities remain aggrieved by the German Government’s lukewarm approach to the issue.

They demand that the Europeans must show 'genuine remorse' for the atrocities committed against their ancestors and pay reparations.

"If you are a gentleman and if you have wrestled someone, it is your responsibility to correct it... without being forced to do it by anyone," the Prime Minister added.

Namibia/German relations still another?

In August 2004, Heidemarie Wieckez-Zeul, the German Minister for Cooperation offered a public apology for her country’s actions in Namibia during a ceremony held at Ohangwena near the Waterberg, on 15 August 2004, to mark the 100th Annversary of the 1904-1907 uprising against German colonial rule.

Wieckez-Zeul used the Lord’s Prayer to ask for forgiveness for the crimes the Germans committed against the Heren, Nam, and other Namibian people.

"We Germans accept our historic and moral responsibility and the guilt incurred by Germans at that time. The atrocities committed at that time would have been termed genocide. Everything I have said was an apology from the German government," she was quoted saying at the time.

"As things evolved the Government believed that the Germans realised their wrongs and to start the process of healing and reconciliation...that’s what we assumed...restorative justice," Angula said.

According to the Prime Minister a time will come when the Government will take a decisive stand on these issues.