

Germany Sitting on Time Bomb – Kazenambo

By Charles Tjatindi



Deputy Minister Kazenambo

OKAHANDJA – The Deputy Minister of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development, Kazenambo, says while Government acknowledges and respects the plea of the Ovaherero people for German reparations, it also has a moral obligation to protect the descendants of those that had committed atrocities against the Ovaherero people, in the interest of the rule of law.

In a strongly worded statement at the recent 85th annual commemoration of the Red Flag here, Kazenambo expressed concern over the pace at which the German govern-

ment is reacting to settling issues pertaining to reparations or the call for dialogue on the issue. He said the German government's stance does little to ease the pain of the Ovaherero descendants whose ancestors were almost annihilated by German colonial

occupation. "A hungry man cannot be stopped by diplomacy if he wants to vent his frustrations. People do not eat diplomacy. They want back what is rightfully theirs," he said.

Kazenambo noted that even though the paradigm shift is now changing towards unity of purpose between the German perpetrators and the Ovaherero people, it is also time to confront challenges and make Germany acknowledge the deeds committed against the Ovaherero and Nama people.

"Wealth was acquired at the barrel of a gun in this country by German colonial forces at that time, something which unfortunately still has a

bearing on the means and ways of life for most Namibians today. We call on the German government to read the mood and act now, as they are sitting on a time bomb," he said.

Choosing to abstain from political speeches, the Ovaherero Paramount Chief Kuaima Riruako called on all Ovaherero to unite for a common purpose, and abstain from unnecessary tension amongst themselves.

"We should guard against jealousy and disunity as the enemy will be standing aside laughing at us while taking on each other for selfish gains. This country belongs to all of us, therefore we should try to live in peace with one another," he said.

As is custom, a traditional priest led the delegation of Ovaherero and other members of the public to the gravesites of fallen ancestors at dawn last Sunday, where they pleaded with them for good fortunes, rain and good health for all.

Traditional cultural cavalry and infantry troops with an interesting blend of warrior songs added splendour to the day. The colourful bright red, green and white attire worn by women, who joined to march to the gravesites from the Red Flag Commando perfectly complemented each other, setting the tone for the day.

Samuel Maharero attended a local Lutheran

school, where he was seen as a potential priest. When his father died in 1890, he gained the chieftainship in the area of Okahandja.

Initially, he maintained fairly good relations with the German colonial administration under Theodor Leutwein. However, increasing problems involving attacks by the Germans, economic difficulties and pests, and the use of Herero land for railroads strained the relations.

Maharero secretly planned a revolt with other chiefs against the German presence. Initial attacks that began on January 12, 1904, were successful and involved the killing of several Germans. Leutwein was replaced as

military leader by Ithah von Trotha, who brought 15 000 troops and created a bounty of 5 000 marks for the capture of Maharero. The Ovaherero fighters were destroyed at the battle of Waterberg, or Ohamakari on August 11, 1904. Those who survived were driven into the Kalahari desert.

Maharero succeeded to lead some of his people into the British Bechuanaland Protectorate (today Botswana).

He remained leader of the exiled Ovaherero until his death in 1923. On August 23, 1923, his remains were returned to Okahandja and were ceremoniously re-buried, culminating in the annual commemoration.

More Voices Rise for Return of Skulls

By Charles Tjatindi

OKAHANDJA – The Ovaherero supreme chief Alfons Maharero has joined other chiefs that have called on Government to enter into discussions with its German counterpart to facilitate the repatriation of ancestral remains, so that they can be reburied here.

In a statement delivered at the weekend's 85th commemoration of the Red Flag Day, which marks the re-burial of the remains of Chief Samuel Maharero, the usually soft-spoken Chief minced no words in calling for repatriation of the remains. Maharero noted that the healing process between affected Namibian communities and Germany will not be complete without the return of the skulls.

The German government proved to us that they remain intransigent when it comes to fair play with regard to atrocities which they committed during the war of 1904 to 1907 and the subsequent suffering of our people. Therefore, our Government should take the necessary steps to make sure that our nationals are accorded rest in their motherland, and should not be paraded in museums, said Maharero.

The Chief also called on Government to initiate a deliberate strategy of empowering resettled nationals, with reference to those resettled in Ganyu and Etseb Block in the Otjozondjupa Region, after being repatriated from Botswana. He said in light of soaring food and commodity prices, it becomes vital for Government to empower these people with means to produce their own food.

Maharero said resettlement programmes should be guided by clear policies and not "lip service". He also announced at the occasion that he intends to lead a chieftain delegation to Germany to sensitise the German government about the seriousness for a meaningful dialogue – with a clear purpose of restorative justice, healing and lasting reconciliation. Maharero noted that no lasting reconciliation is possible without meaningful dialogue.

"We respect the fact that the matter is in the hands of the two parliaments, but the process towards meaningful and serious dialogue is still remote. Therefore, we cannot sit idle but will continue to sensitise and remind both governments of this unfinished business," he said.

The Chairman of the Ovaherero General Committee (OGC), Tjupa

Munjanjue, expressed similar sentiments on the return of skulls, underscoring the moral importance of repatriating the skulls of Ovaherero and Nama ancestors to Namibia for re-burial.

Munjanjue said the skulls do not belong to the German government, and its failure to return the skulls without a formal request from the Namibian Government spells an open invitation for the latter government to do so.

The skulls, according to the OGC chairperson, were meant for research, conducted by a certain Eugene Fischer more than a century ago. The research, New Era learnt, was meant to prove to the world that descendants of white people are more superior to those of black people. The skulls are in two German universities.

Whatever the outcome of the

research on the skulls, that research must be already done by now, and must only be collecting dust somewhere in Germany. We want those skulls back. They do not belong to Germany," noted Munjanjue.

The OGC also called for the findings of the report to be published after verification by an independent convention of international scientists.

"We want the results of such reports to be verified and published so that we know for sure if Eugene Fischer's initial findings are anything to go by. In our opinion, it is in fact supposed to be the skulls of Hitler and his entire Nazi, and the likes of Theodor Leutwein, and Von Trotha that were supposed to be psychologically analysed and checked for normalcy. Surely, normal people would not have done what they did," said Munjanjue.