

With copies.
Michael Scott.

28.3.1

S O U T H W E S T A F R I C A .

PRESS STATEMENT - 22nd October, 1948.

Replying to a request that the Prime Minister should, during his visit to South West Africa, receive a deputation consisting of Hereros and others who last year petitioned the United Nations, the Secretary for External Affairs has stated in a letter to the Reverend Michael Scott, "The Union Government do not consider themselves accountable to the United Nations' Organisation, to the Government of the United Kingdom or to the British Commonwealth in respect of their administration of the territory of South West Africa, and therefore cannot look with favour upon the proposal that a delegation of the Herero people should visit Europe for the purpose of making representations along the lines suggested".

Since the Prime Minister was unable to receive a deputation himself of Herero spokesmen and the Reverend Michael Scott whom they asked to assist them in making their representations to the United Nations, a memorandum was sent to the Prime Minister with a covering letter signed by Hosea Kutako, the senior Herero Chief in South West Africa, and eight others.

The memorandum asks for the restoration of the Herero lands and for the reunification and rehabilitation of their tribe. It states that "Despite the many problems and disputes which confront the United Nations after their victory, we trust that our voices may yet be heard and that the wrongs which have been done to us may be rectified".

The memorandum "appeals to the Union Government to comply with the twice repeated wish of a two-thirds majority of the United Nations that a Trusteeship Agreement for the territory should now be submitted" believing the trusteeship system to be "an impartial instrument for bringing peace and justice amongst those sections of the South West Africa population which formerly were enemies".

The Secretary for External Affairs had intimated in his letter to Mr Scott that "It is not possible to recognise the possession by you of a status to represent the Herero or any other tribe in the territory, or that could justify your being received if and when a delegation should present itself".

The covering letter to the Secretary for External Affairs states that "since there appears to have been some misunderstanding in the press with regard to the Reverend Michael Scott acting on our behalf, we should like to reaffirm that we did ask him to make representations for us at the United Nations and that we have authorised him to continue making representations on our behalf".

Copy.

The Secretary
to the Prime Minister,
Government Buildings,
Windhoek, S.W.Africa.

Windhoek Location.

21st October, 1948.

Your Honour.

We regret very much that it is not possible for the Prime Minister to receive a deputation from the Herero people and others who petitioned the United Nations, also that it would not be possible for the Reverend Michael Scott whom we have asked to assist us in making our representations to

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be present at any discussion that might take place with you regarding our petition.

Since we should not like to discuss the matter of our representations to the United Nations without the Reverend Michael Scott being present, and since the Prime Minister is unable to receive our deputation, we are therefore respectfully sending you herewith a memorandum which we would ask you to be kind enough to convey to the Prime Minister.

Since there appears to have been some misunderstanding in the press with regard to the Rev. Michael Scott acting on our behalf, we should like to reaffirm that we did ask him to make these representations for us at the United Nations and that we have authorised him to continue making representations on our behalf.

Yours very respectfully,
Signed: Hosea Kutako Senior Herero Chief
and eight other Herero spokesmen.

To
The Right Honourable Dr D.F. Malan,
Government Buildings,
Windhoek, S.W. Africa.

Your Honour.

We have respectfully asked your permission to approach you in order to place before you our request that permission may be granted for the chosen spokesmen of our tribe to proceed overseas to express our views regarding the future of our people both to the British Commonwealth Relations Department of the British Government and to the United Nations Organisation in the form of a verbal petition.

The views which we desire that our spokesmen should have an opportunity of expressing to those who are concerned may be summarised in the following points :-

It is the desire of our people that our tribe should be reunited and our tribal organisation re-established on the lands which were traditionally ours before we were deprived of them by force and stealth. When the German nation which had come amongst us as evangelists and traders made war upon us our men, women and children were pursued into the desert and destroyed by the thousand until our tribe was decimated. There are to this day more than fifteen thousand of our people still living in exile in British Bechuanaland whither they had fled across the Kalahari taking with them our Chief Frederick Mahareru on whose behalf the British Government has recently been in correspondence with the Union Government regarding the possibility of his return with his fellow tribesmen to South West Africa.

It has always been the faith and prayer of the Herero people that our tribe will one day be reunited and our traditional lands of which we were dispossessed by the Germans will be restored. We believe that this will be a necessary step in the rehabilitation and recovery of our people from the grievous wrongs which we have suffered, and that it will come about in God's good time and with the growth and strengthening of the human conscience.

Certain Government Commissions and even officials at the present time have condemned the Hereros as a people who have become degenerate in both morals and physical and mental attributes, accusing us even of apathy and despair to the

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point of racial self-destruction.

If there is truth in the assertions that more of our people are dying than are being born annually (see report of S.W.A. Commission and Administrations's report to the United Nations 1946) we can only appeal to the conscience of the civilised world not to apportion blame for the consequences of oppression but to assist us now in finding the remedy which we seek in order to bring about the fundamental restoration of our people.

Our prayers and our faith will endure as they have endured throughout the period in which three wars have brought sorrow and ruin upon the German nation and have failed also to bring about the restoration of the Herero people who were the first victims in Africa of the illusion of the German people that "Might is Right".

Despite the many problems and disputes which confront the United Nations after their victory we trust that our voices may yet be heard and that the wrongs which have been done to us may be rectified. Last year we made our petition to the United Nations that this country being a mandate of the former League of Nations, should now be brought under the United Nations Trusteeship system, believing this to be an impartial instrument for bringing peace and justice amongst those various sections in South West Africa both European and non-European which formerly were enemies, the German, the British and the Afrikaners, the Hereros, the Hottentots and Berg Damaras, all of whom must now find a way to live in peace and goodwill based upon justice.

Through you, Sir, we would appeal to the Union Government to comply with the twice repeated wish of a two-thirds majority of the United Nations that a trusteeship agreement for the territory should now be submitted for the approval of the General Assembly at its present session. We trust that any proposal regarding the restoration of our lands may be submitted to the United Nations and included in the terms of such a trusteeship agreement.

At present the African people whether in S.W.A. or in the Union of South Africa, have no absolute rights in land, rights that is to say which cannot be abrogated by others at their will, and it is this which has formed the subject of comment by the drafting committee of the Trusteeship Council in its draft report to the present session of the Assembly.

In paragraph 2 ii dealing with indigenous land rights the committee "expresses apprehension at this indication that the Union Government has not seen fit to restore the traditional land rights which were taken away from the indigenous inhabitants under the German regime. The Council for want of a fuller explanation is concerned lest this policy may have been the cause of long standing hardship to the indigenous population". Document T/209, page 5.

In paragraph 3 a, the opinion is expressed that "any arbitrary division of the indigenous inhabitants and their allocation to fixed areas is not conducive to their general advancement and that the system of confining indigenous inhabitants to "native reserves" is to be deplored in principle. The Council considers that by a revision of its policy the Union Government should be able to gradually eliminate whatever reasons might at present explain the existence of such reserves and of the restrictions on residence and movement.

In paragraph iv of page 5 the report "notes that various parts of the Herero tribe which was broken up by the Germans...

Germans, are accommodated in eight different reserves and that one of the reasons why it has been impossible to reunite the tribe in a single area, according to the replies given by the Union Government, is the fact that no area large enough to accommodate a whole tribe in the Police zone could be made available unless private rights of occupation were violated which was out of the question. "T/175, page 222". The Council considers that the degree to which land has been alienated is a factor in keeping the Herero physically divided, and that the interests of this tribe constitute an additional reason why the whole question of land distribution should be re-examined by the Union Government".

In this connection we must recall that during the period of the mandate many thousands of square miles of land have been allocated to white settlers from outside South West Africa (five hundred families were brought from Angola against the advice of the local authorities). Yet it is claimed that there is insufficient land to provide for the reunification of the Herero tribe or to "absorb Chief Frederick Mahereru and his followers".

The land which had been offered to us recently in separate areas was considered by those who inspected it to be too unhealthy and too unproductive for settled human occupation and sustenance.

Political Rights.

The Native inhabitants of South West Africa remain after thirty years of mandatory administration by South Africa without any form of elected representation in the House of Assembly or Executive Council.

It has been claimed that the Native inhabitants are insufficiently qualified to be taken into consideration. "If then one considers the backwardness of the indigenous population it becomes clear that there is no reasonable expectation of their acquiring those mental moral and civic qualities which would justify their being seriously taken into consideration before a time so remote as hardly to merit present consideration". Such was the conclusion of Mr Justice van Zyl's Commission in 1935.

Such a conclusion is hard to reconcile with the conduct of a referendum amongst the Native people in 1946 at which it was claimed the overwhelming majority of the Native inhabitants were in favour of the incorporation of the territory into the Union. But the fact that the Native inhabitants have no elected representation in Parliament would seem to reinforce the opinion of the van Zyl Commission that as the mandate was conceived in the interests of these people (the Native inhabitants) it was clearly intended that their future should not be mortgaged by any disposition of the territory, while the mass of the population still labours under the very incapacity which justified the institution of the mandate". The Commission had previously laid down that the mandate intended "that the indigenous people should be placed under tutelage and that safeguards in their interest should be maintained so long as they were not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world".

All these considerations of the Trusteeship Council and the South West African Commission of Mr Justice van Zyl support our appeal that the status and constitution of the territory should continue to be that of a mandate or trust rather than that it should be absorbed in the Union where it is now proposed that existing political rights of Natives should even be curtailed rather than extended.

In...

In South West Africa whatever can be said regarding the qualifications of the Native inhabitants for consultation it is clear that they (the Native inhabitants) have suffered from the consequences of the lack of political representation. There is evidence of this not only in their position in relation to the land but in their generally backward economic and social circumstances, the deplorably low wage levels that prevail even as contrasted with South African standards and in the slum conditions prevailing in the locations. Yet the African population being ten times as great as the European contributes much to the general prosperity through its labour and through taxation and tariffs.

Such are some of the grounds of our appeal to the consciences of the civilised nations of the world expressed through the United Nations. We have nominated the following members of our tribe to act as our spokesmen :-

Festus Kandjo, Stephanus Hoveka, Alfred Katjimuine,
Philippus Tjapaka, Simeon Hoveka.

We respectfully ask you to give favourable consideration to our appeal believing that that peace and goodwill which we all desire and which is the desire of all nations will be brought nearer to realisation in this land of racial differences by allowing our appeal to be heard for justice and for a constitutional system of trusteeship to be established whereby all races can look forward with confidence and hope of fulfilment for the right aspirations of all sections.

Dated 20th October 1948, Windhoek, South West Africa.

Signed

Interpreter, B. Himmuine.

Hosea Kutako Senior Herero Chief in SWA and eight others.

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