A Herero on the Origins of War (1907)

Abstract

A Herero who had converted to Christianity explains the revolt, as related by a missionary of the United Evangelical Mission (VEM) in Wuppertal, on November 8, 1907.

Source

The war came from very small things and need not have come. First it was the “Stuurmann” [merchants] with their terrible usury and arbitrary, violent collection. For 1 sh of debt they wanted 5 sh after a year and for 1 L [pound] after 12 months 5 L of interest, and whoever would not or could not pay, they persecuted and tormented. Then it was the brandy that made the people bad and unscrupulous. If someone drinks, it is all the same to him what he does. But the worst evil, which has caused much bad blood and strife, is the rape of our women by whites. Some men have been shot dead [like dogs] when they refused to give up their wives and daughters and threatened to defend them with weapons. If such things had not happened, war would not have come, but it broke out during such rapes. It was there all at once, and there was no stopping it, everyone took revenge, and it was as if there was no sanity left among the masses.

Source of original German text: Missionar Joh. Neitz, Die Herero betreffend. Reise zu Sameuel Herero, 8.11.1907, Archiv der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission Wuppertal: A/k 5. Zitiert nach Horst Gründer, *„da und dort ein junges Deutschland gründen.“ Rassismus, Kolonien und kolonialer Gedanke von 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*. Munich, 1999, p. 153.

Translation: Insa Kummer

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