A Scene from the Fight against the Hereros (1907)

Abstract

Hörbilder [audio dramas] were scripted drama scenes with added sound effects and emerged after the invention of sound recording technology. A precursor to radio plays, these *Hörbilder* were recorded on wax cylinders and distributed as entertainment media. Historical events were popular topics for audio dramas, including wars and battles in which German troops had supposedly proven their proficiency and valor. This recording from 1905 depicts a fictional scene from the war that began in 1904 in the colony of German Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia) between the German colonial forces and the Herero and Nama, who had risen in a rebellion. This short scene depicts the disciplined actions of a German troop unit during the fighting, whose military drill is contrasted with that of the "Herero gangs." In reality, under the command of Lothar von Trotha, the colonial war escalated into a genocidal campaign of extermination that claimed the lives of between one-third and two-thirds of the Herero population before the war ended in 1907.

Source

Scene from the battle with the Hereros. Original reading by Georg Barsch. Edison Record.

[Signal]

"Halt! Lower your guns! What's going on?"

"Report from the front: 600 meters ahead, enemy Herero gangs are approaching. We came under fire from approximately 150 rifles. The Hereros are lying on a hill covered with dense thorn bushes, well concealed. Private Walter's left upper arm has been shot through. No other casualties."

"Good. Stand at attention! Rifles ready! Company column – form up! 1st and 2nd platoons, march! You will join the [unintelligible] unit giving cover. [unintelligible]

"500 meters, 600 meters. Rifles: 150. Slow fire."

[Gunfire].

"Plant your rifles!"

[Signal]

Source: Hörbild: *Szene aus dem Kampf mit den Hereros*, narrator: Georg Barsch, 1907. Stiftung Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv

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Recommended Citation: A Scene from the Fight against the Hereros (1907), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:audio-5136> [September 12, 2026].