



TRIBUTE BY H. E. DR. SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING
PRESIDENT AND FATHER OF THE NAMIBIAN
NATION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE STATE
FUNERAL IN HONOUR OF THE LATE HONOURABLE
DR THEO-BEN GURIRAB

20 JULY 2018

PARLIAMENT GARDEN
WINDHOEK,
KHOMAS REGION

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(Reg No 8208)

Directors of Proceedings;
Madam Joan Guriras, the Children and the Entire Bereaved Family of the Late Comrade Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab;
Your Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Monica Geingos, First Lady;
Your Excellency Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, Former President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Penexupifo Pohamba, Former First Lady;
Your Excellency Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Mbumba;
Your Excellency, Dr Nickey Iyambo, Former Vice President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Iyambo;
Right Honourable, Dr Saara Kuugongelwa –Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia and Comrade Amadhila;
Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation and Retired Lieutenant General Ndaitwah;
Honourable Professor Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly and Madam Katjavivi;
Honourable Margaret Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council and Mr Williams;
Honourable Peter Shivute, Chief Justice and Judge Shivute;
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers;
Honourable Members of Parliament;
Comrade Sofia Shaningwa, Secretary General of SWAPO Party;
Honourable McHenry Venaani, Leader of the Official Opposition;
Honourable Laura McLeod Katjirua, Governor of Khomas Region and all Governors present;
Honourable Regional and Local Authorities Councillors present;
Your Worship Muesee Kazapua, the Mayor of the City of Windhoek and other mayors present;
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Distinguished Service Chiefs;
Esteemed Leaders of Traditional Authorities present here;
Esteemed Spiritual and Community Leaders;
Distinguished Veterans of the National Liberation Struggle;
Members of the Media;
Fellow Mourners:

It is with profound sorrow that we are gathered here today to pay our last respects to one of the gallant sons of Namibia and Father of the Namibian Diplomacy, the Late Honourable Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab.

After receiving a call from H. E. Dr. Hage Geingob that Comrade Gurirab was admitted in Hospital, I went to visit him on Thursday, 12 July and I was therefore deeply saddened to learn of his passing on Saturday, a day after my visit.

Despite the fact that we are burdened by the sorrow of his passing on, we however celebrate a life well spent of a father, a husband, a seasoned diplomat and statesman that our country has ever produced, and above all, one of the heroes of our Liberation Struggle.

Your Excellency;
Fellow Mourners:

Much was said in the eulogy and by the previous speakers on the life of the Late Comrade Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. Allow me simply to concentrate on how I know him.

Indeed, one cannot talk about the glorious history of SWAPO without mentioning the name Theo-Ben Gurirab. He had an abiding interest in and passion for the art and craft of diplomacy and international relations. This is a much broader concept than its simple application of maintaining diplomatic etiquette.

In International Relations, diplomacy is the art of conducting negotiations, forming alliances, discussing treaties and reaching agreements.

On a societal level, diplomacy simply refers to the art of managing and dealing with people successfully. In other words, it is an art of finding the right balance.

No one in Namibia embodied and personified that concept better than the Late Comrade Gurirab. Despite the defamatory statements against him to damage his reputation, he always maintained composure and harboured no ill-feelings because he understood the destructive power of hate and how it eats away at a person's heart.

Further, he was a skilful writer and negotiator as well as an eloquent speaker who was fond of reading books.

It was precisely against this background that SWAPO appointed him as part of the troika of Associate Representatives to the United Nations and the Americas while pursuing their studies from 1964 to 1972 together with the current President of our country, Dr. Hage Geingob and the late Comrade Hidipo Hamutenya.

Later, he was appointed to be our Chief Representative to the United Nations and as its Permanent Observer from 1972 to 1986 as well as SWAPO's Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1986 to 1989.

The Late Honourable Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab was a trusted and tested cadre I could reliably assign important tasks and would achieve the desired results. For this reason, I appointed him as our first Minister of Foreign Affairs after independence and subsequently as our second Prime Minister.

Thus, he was a genuine freedom fighter from humble beginnings whose contribution to Namibia's liberation struggle is without comparison as far as shuttle diplomacy is concerned.

Indeed, when SWAPO embarked on a three-pronged strategy comprising of mass political mobilization inside the country and that of the international community as well as the Armed Liberation Struggle, the late Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab distinguished himself on the diplomatic front by spearheading it.

The recognition of SWAPO as the Sole and Authentic representative of the Namibian people came about as a result of the efforts of our team of skilled negotiators led by the late Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab.

In addition, thanks to our team of skilled negotiators led by Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, SWAPO's political and diplomatic status grew from that of a petitioner on the side-lines of diplomacy to one of the participants in the international arena.

Most importantly, the high point of Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab's political and diplomatic career was the protracted negotiations that led to the implementation of the United Nations' (UN) Security Council's Resolution 435 of 1978.

Your Excellency;
Fellow Mourners:

I have just highlighted some of the milestones in the Late Comrade Dr Gurirab's political and diplomatic career, including when he served as our second Speaker of the National Assembly and one of the key drafters of our country's Constitution.

He later successfully led a team, as the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, that negotiated for three years for the re-integration of Walvis Bay and Offshore Islands into the Republic of Namibia in 1994. He has therefore served his country well and selflessly.

The Late Comrade Gurirab was equally an exemplary father to his children. I will therefore fail in my duties if I do not mention his life companion, Comrade Joan Guriras, who has been with him through thick and thin including when we were labelled as terrorists by the forces of imperialism.

In conclusion, allow me to thank the Government of the Republic of Namibia for according the Late Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab a Hero's Funeral befitting his heroic deeds and sacrifices as a recipient of the Namibian Order of the Sun First Class and other international awards.

Let us honour his memory by uniting in common purpose and by pledging that we will serve our people diligently as he did.

Although he is no more, he is not gone because he lives on in all our diplomats and in our foreign policy as its architect. Although he is no more, his revolutionary spirit and legacy will live on in each and every one of us and his name will be entered into Namibia's golden books of history to be remembered by present and future generations.

As we prepare to lay him to rest at the Heroes Acre, allow me, on behalf of the Nujoma family, the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle and indeed on my own behalf, to express our deep felt sympathies and sincere condolences to the widow, Comrade Joan Guriras, the children and grandchildren as well as to the entire bereaved family and comrades on the loss of the Late Comrade Theo-Ben Gurirab.

May we all be comforted and granted fortitude during this difficult time of mourning.

May His Soul Rest In Eternal Peace!
Farewell Comrade Ben Gurirab!