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THE NAMIBIAN LIBERATION STRUGGLE

- the black cause and white obligation

by :

Prof. Gerhard Töttemeyer
Department of Political Science
University of Transkei
UMTATA
Southern Africa

Namibia

I The Black cause :

Before evaluating the ongoing national liberation struggle with all its consequences it should be stressed that Swapo as the most important Namibian liberation movement did not emerge as a result of external influences and actions - as many of its adversaries want to believe - but as a result of the internal situation : the contradictions created by the presence of an alien (colonial) force, its allocation of values and benefits, which has been rejected vehemently and continuously by Swapo and other liberating forces in Namibia. It is now for a number of years that the Namibian liberation forces have taken up the attitude that, to be revolutionary in an undemocratic system, is the best strategy for total freedom.

The national liberation struggle in which Swapo has intensively become involved for the last twenty years is based on the assumption that every people has the indefeasible right to control its own destiny freely and to strive for full national independence and a free society. It is an ongoing struggle against any form of dependency, oppression, exploitation and inequality.

Over years the national liberation struggle has become revolutionary because the South African imposed system has proved to be unsatisfying and unacceptable. It has not met the demands, ideas and aims of the majority of the population as a free election under international supervision will convincingly prove.

Amilcar Cabral quite correctly states that "African revolution means the transformation of our present life in the direction of progress"¹ and this according to the progressive forces in Namibia has not convincingly and satisfactorily been executed by South Africa. Swapo is convinced that it had therefore no other option than to revolutionise.

Very often the question is being asked whether Swapo is fighting for the physical liberation of Namibia only without making adequate provision for the period thereafter. This is a wrong assumption.

The liberation struggle has many features and stages. The first phase which is marked by an identification process with the black cause and the liberation of the mind, is becoming something belonging to the past in Namibia. It has been one of the most important initial phases of the liberation process when the importance of black identity and consciousness was stressed.

One can concur with Mazrui's observation that Africans are not necessarily the most brutalised of peoples, but they are almost certainly the most humiliated in modern history.²

Black consciousness was meant to help to free the black Namibian from a slave mentality, from social and psychological degradation and from a conditioned servile and inferiority complex. In this process he had to re-discover the humanity, dignity and integrity of himself. Black consciousness emphasised the equality of men ^{and black people} pleaded for unity and solidarity with the fellow oppressed and enticed people to participate fearlessly in the struggle for national liberation, justice, and peace. *Black consciousness was meant to be a vehicle for total liberation.*

A national consciousness had to be developed to overarch and cut through entrenched ethnic differences. A new spiritual home had to be shaped for a new identity which should be free of oppression and humiliation. In this process black theology, with Z Kameeta as its most important spokesman, became instrumental to find a new humanity through suffering. Christianity in Namibia had to undergo the change from a theology of submission to a theology of liberation. The black churches in Namibia identified themselves - and they continue to do it - intensively with the suffering of the black man and contributed to the activation of the liberation process while at the same time preaching reconciliation.

This important phase in the liberation process should not be underrated in its functional value. It has served a very important purpose and succeeded. The black man became conscious of his predicament and it showed him a way how to escape from the situation. It demanded *while black consciousness moved beyond the plans of mere black consciousness into the class struggle* commitment and involvement. *^* This initial phase in the liberation struggle led to the next phase, the physical liberation process.

The present military involvement of Swapo is, however, only another phase in the total liberation process and definitely not an end in itself. After a successful physical liberation process the next stage is set : National reconstruction which will be dominated by a fight against underdevelopment, illiteracy, poverty and any form of discrimination in all walks of life. Consequently this phase will be marked by a determination to secure full independence, sovereignty, equality, freedom and peaceful co-existence, in total : progressive development and a free society.

Swapo is presently engaged in a twofold strategy : a centrifugal and a centripetal strategy. The centrifugal strategy concentrates on a liberation process from the centre (urban areas) to the peripheries (rural areas) and involves internal forces while the centripetal strategy concentrates on a movement from the border to the centre, involving predominantly Namibian forces outside the country.

Presently the centrifugal process is meant to be a peaceful ideological liberation process while the centripetal process involves a military cum ideological liberation process. Both processes are, however, complementary to one another.

While Swapo is fighting on the northern border and predominantly in Ovamboland against South African and allied forces, it is also engaged in a fight against the present political dispensation in Namibia which has for its continuation to rely on the support and protection of South Africa.

It is common knowledge that the DTA leaders are worried and even terrified by the idea that they could be swept away by Swapo as a revolutionary force. It is doubtful whether they can match the ideologically trained forces of Swapo. The DTA leaders fear also for their political positions, their material benefits and their physical well-being. Another difference between DTA and Swapo leaders is quite obvious : DTA leaders have been elected (in a questionable and not internationally supervised election) or appointed to their present positions to participate in a South African endorsed dispensation.

They are not participants in a revolutionary struggle but voluntary executors of an imposed system.

Swapo leaders, on the other hand, and ^{some of the participants} leaders have been exposed to continuous harrassment and repressions for not supporting the present dispensation and for their desire to replace it with something totally different. The leaders of these movements have earned their positions because they are totally committed to their cause and not for financial benefits. Their willingness to sacrifice, their driving patriotism and their preparedness to die for their cause is overwhelmingly strong and has earned them respect in the Namibian population.

For them the fact of militating and radicalising is not simply taking part in politics but "it is choosing the only means whereby they can pass from the status of an animal to that of a human being". (Fanon)

As Fanon rightly says :

"Such men will show within the limits of the activities for which they are responsible a spirit of initiative, courage and a sense of the importance of the struggle which mark them out almost automatically as targets for colonialist repression. Arrested, condemned, tortured, finally amnestied, they use their time in prison to clarify their ideas and strengthen their determination"³

Members of presently dissenting political parties and movements, such as Swapo and the ^{contending parties of the} NNF, are absolutely convinced of the righteousness of their cause and destiny. They are prepared to accept the consequences of their convictions. Some of their members will increasingly be put under pressure, will be harrassed, put into jail or expelled from their areas of activity, but this will only harden and radicalise their attitude but not change them. Some will be forced to leave the centres of their political engagement and activity, leave the country or retreat to the rural areas.

The latter possibility may have a beneficial result as it may help to politicise and conscientise the rural population. This could help to bridge the gap between the urbanised and rural population.

The black population of Namibia can according to political outlook and socio-economic status convincingly be divided into several categories. The following classification can help to identify the most important "Zielgruppen" which the progressive forces of Namibia will try to win for their cause :

The peasantry, and workers class, living predominantly on farms, in urban areas and in the so-called ethnic territories. This group can become the dominant revolutionary force as it represents the most populous, disadvantaged and dissatisfied section of the population.

The revolutionary lower middle class, It is committed to the liberation struggle. The lower middle class consists mainly of unqualified or semi-qualified people in a number of auxiliary professions.

The moderate lower middle class which is heavily committed to the cause of the DTA and prepared to operate on ethnic lines.

The undecided lower middle class. This is a non-committed group and has not made up its mind whether to support the DTA/National Assembly or the liberation ~~movement~~. *This may be due to* ~~could be fear, selfishness or opportunism.~~

The professional, moderate middle class which is represented by qualified professional people, being predominantly regular wage-earners. This class is not committed to a revolutionary struggle and satisfied with what it has achieved materially. The members of this class are inclined to support moderate parties and the present political dispensation.

The professional, progressive middle class. It is committed to national liberation, if necessary by revolutionary means ("the revolutionary intellectuals"). Many teachers, clergymen, doctors, nurses, lawyers and some governmental officials belong to this group.

The upper middle class which consists of a very few people such as church leaders, governmental officials in the higher echelon, academics, military officers and alike. Their political attitude and ideological commitment stretches from a moderate, conservative outlook to a radical and progressive attitudes. The number of people belonging to this category is so small that it is not justified to divide this group into a moderate and a progressive upper middle class.

The question should now be asked whether common interests exist between the urbanised political activists and the rural people? It would be wrong to misjudge or underestimate the intensity of the political

feelings of the rural population which most probably only needs to be articulated and activated. It can be assumed that there is not much difference between the political longings and feelings of the political activists from the urban areas and the rural population. Both want to be liberated, in all probability for the same reason.

The rural population is intensively concerned about two issues : to be freed from a quasi status of serfdom and to be handed back land which is presently owned by whites and which belonged to their forefathers. If these two fundamental issues are not timeously and satisfactorily solved, the rural population may increasingly become restless and can eventually become one of the most important driving, supporting and involved forces in the total liberation struggle.

It is conceivable that an unsatisfied rural population may eventually overwhelmingly support Swapo.

Its sympathy will increasingly be with those Namibians who are prepared to risk and sacrifice their lives for a future which is hoped to be more rewarding than the present situation. The more Swapo fighters are harrassed and killed the more the sympathy and identification with the cause of Swapo will grow.

If the rural population is purposely and intensively made conscious of its real situation (eg underdevelopment, exploitation, discrimination etc) and an authentic liberation movement can offer a better future (improved conditions) and a more acceptable programme than that of the DTA, then the conviction will grow that it is worthwhile to support the liberation process. It may then be that Swapo will become the most trusted liberation movement to fight for progressiveness, peace and equality. It will be expected from Swapo to attend to burning Namibian issues such as land reform, development of peasant agriculture, creation of employment opportunities, re-assessment of (multi-national) mining companies and overall social development.

One important deduction which thus can be made is that the peasantry in Namibia can become the population group with the greatest interest in the ongoing liberation struggle. It is, as indicated, not only the most

populous group in Namibia but also the most exploited and disadvantaged section of the population and therefore fertile breeding ground for active discontent.

The DTA and the National Assembly are seemingly not concerned about this situation. They still try to create the impression that they do not feel endangered physically and fundamentally. Both do not doubt the strength of their invented system and the borrowed instruments to protect and defend this system. They should, however, keep in mind that "revolutionary situations often occur when progress is being made, but not fast enough to overtake expectations".⁴

As long as the uncertainty of the present unsatisfactory state of affairs - South Africa still being the most important initiator and protector of developments in Namibia - continues, the national cause as propagated by liberation movement such as Swapo will continue to flourish and progress. Swapo will continue to prove that it is much more convincing, dynamic and progressive in its approach and drive than the DTA and other ^{reactionary} conservative forces. If the demands ^{of Swapo} are, however, not accommodated or met satisfactorily and timeously, eventually the unfortunate, but still avoidable, stage may be reached when the art of politics is simply and increasingly, to use Fanon's words, "transformed into the art of war; the political militant is the rebel. To fight the war and to take part in politics : the two things become one and the same".⁵ This is still an undesired stage by the majority of the population as its longing for a peaceful settlement is still overriding.

If the DTA - or for that matter the National Assembly - continues with its present socio-economic, political and military policy, this policy will eventually turn out to be counter-productive and may become instrumental in increasing and intensifying the national liberation struggle. Such a development is then destined to contribute to a process of unification and reconciliation of all the progressive forces. Still existing divergent interests will then become insignificant in the total liberation process.

People will be encouraged to participate in a process of solidarisation and to foster the common cause. A precondition is, however, that a clear programme is devised which can match the unpopular DTA Government and prove its ineffectiveness.

Will the introduction of a socialist system be advantageous to the Namibian society? This is a question which cannot be answered adequately yet. It can, however, be expected that if a socialist system is applied it will regulate intensively to bring about the new order.

It may be acceptable to the society as long as it is implemented by a representative and freely elected government and furthermore that the socialist system to be invented is more beneficial to the total population than the presently applied capitalistic system.

The introduction of a socialist system will undoubtedly challenge present prescriptions of attitudes and behaviour. It should, however, be kept in mind that socialism does not represent an inflexible and rigid dogma but tends to be rather flexible in content and approach, without losing track of its basic principles. Most recently the developments in Zimbabwe, but also in other African countries, have proved this assumption convincingly. They had to adapt to local conditions, circumstances, political awareness and demands.

What has happened in these African countries may find its analogous development in Namibia. In all African liberation movements, a struggle has occurred between dogmatic minded ideologists and pragmatic minded instrumentalists or technocrats. The former group is more idealistic in its approach and even more radical and fanatic. It wants to bring about a revolutionary process which should be pursued without any delay and with all the consequences, such as temporary economic, political and social instability, involved. The latter group is more moderate and patient in its approach, probably more realistic and adaptable, playing for time, but without betraying the cause.

Both approaches are represented in Swapo. It is not predictable yet

which of the two approaches will eventually dominate in Swapo should it win a freely contested election in Namibia. The assumption is that Swapo will win such an election and that it will opt for the pragmatic approach.

Present indications are that the liberation struggle will not be easy and also prolonged if an internationally recognised settlement cannot be found soon. Many more in Namibia may then opt for increased militancy in an effort to enforce the wanted solution in the territory.

It seems that the struggle has to go through all its stages, however unwanted this is for the overall development process in Namibia. Seemingly it has to continue till everybody realises that it would be in the best interest of the total Namibian population to find an agreeable solution which must recognise the sovereignty and the rightful engagement of all the political forces in Namibia and this *may even* include the DTA - if it can prove substantial support in the population.

Delaying tactics in the deliberation process between South Africa and the United Nations and *the* concessions ^{no of any} made by the National Assembly - *which reflect* [^] no fundamental change - will only intensify the liberation struggle. Eventually most of these concessions will have little bearing on the essential issue that of total liberation which has developed into a determined and self-fulfilling process.

Concessions always carry a price and the National Assembly is very well aware of this. The price would be too high for the liberation forces if proposed changes imply continuous subordination and agreement to an unwanted and imposed development. Recent developments have secured the members of the National Assembly certain benefits, such as a good and regular income and a good position in party ranks or in the present legislative, administrative and executive apparatus. A greater involvement in the national, regional and local decision-making process has been granted. A process of advanced developments in a number of fields and sectors of public life is intended. However, the concessions made thus far and the intended programmes are insufficient and not fundamental enough to be credible and convincing.

Furthermore - and of this the black population is very conscious - the reliance on South Africa remains presently unaltered which is seen as a position of servitude to the former mandatory and still supervising power. This remains unacceptable to the majority of the Namibian population.

In any event, Namibia's future cannot be best served by a committed reliance on any outside forces or alternatively to replace one dependency with another one. The policy of an independent Namibia should be one of non-alignment. It would serve the interests and development of Namibia, especially in the immediate after-independence period best, if it would not become involved in ideological disputes and conflicts which characterises the international scenery.

Namibia's decisions should completely be her own and not reflect those of others whatever ideological, strategic and economic interests they may have in the territory. If a free Namibia decides on a socialist system it would therefore be in the best interest of all Namibians not to link such a decision up with any outside power or interest. The most important commitment remains a free and complete independent Namibia.

II The white obligation

Has the white man a future in Namibia and how adaptable is he? Has he *not* learned the lesson of Zimbabwe, to do too little too late? Will history repeat itself in Namibia compared with what happened during the independence process in other African countries when white settler communities refused to give up power and control without violence? *Is it possible to strike a balance between white fears and black aspirations?*

Black political leaders and their followers are closely observing and evaluating the attitude and the role of the whites in the present transitional phase towards independence in Namibia. It can with fair accuracy be stated that the future role and credibility of the whites will to a large extent be determined by their current attitudes and actions. The whites should keep in mind that allegiance, friendship

and trust cannot be bought, especially when dignity is denied.

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It is a wrong assumption that the blacks fight the whites in Namibia. What they actually fight is the present system which has predominantly benefited the whites and which should be changed according to the needs and longings of the majority of the population and not satisfy only a part of it.

What Namibia definitely cannot afford now or in the future is a white reactionary backlash and by this contributing to the destruction of any credibility which whites still may enjoy. The existing credibility gap between black and white is widening and has reached an alarming and annoying stage.

An equally wrong assumption among some whites is that the blacks are immature and not qualified enough for national self-government. Apart from the fact that such an assumption would be a testimony of an insufficient educational programme in the past and of a failure to engage blacks in the national decision-making process, little is known in the Namibian white population of the enormous and still untapped reservoir of black Namibians who have left the country in the past and have qualified themselves in many professions. Zimbabwe is presently a very good example of the scores of qualified black Zimbabweans ^{who have returned} to their country.

There is another issue which needs a reassessment by the whites in Namibia. The whites have to accept -- although it may distort the ideological views and preconceptions of a number of them -- that ethnicities are not homogeneous in cultural values and political orientations and that other avenues exist than to devise a political dispensation based on ethnic diversities. Ethnicity has in the past not only been treated monocausally by the white government to give a moral basis to the policy of separateness but it has also been overstressed and misused as a divisive instrument. This makes the resistance in the black population of Namibia against the DTA and the second tier government so understandable.

Through the predominant monocausal application the concept ethnicity has been deprived of its inherent cultural dynamics. It became also overexposed. The South African Government has in its application of a policy of separate development made misuse of ethnicity as a cultural concept by politicising it to justify the political application thereof. Separate development as a political process was intended to stimulate the development of ethnic group consciousness and to make it an exclusive process. It has widened ethnic cleavages.

This policy of divisive ethnocentrism and ethnic separateness has been rejected by the blacks. The resistance among this population group against any form of continuation of it, how covert or camouflaged it may be, is overwhelmingly strong and justifiable. The black Namibians feel that such a policy which in the past has predominantly benefited the whites and kept the blacks in a state of subservience may if it is continued, even in an adapted form, do so also in the future. A policy of ethnocentrism is identified by the blacks with a policy of oppression and black exploitation, a state from which the black Namibians want to be liberated. This longing of liberation from a development process which has been based on ethnic lines has become a compelling force in the desire for a national inclusive process, a process of national unity and togetherness.

The whites should also realise that it is important for the black liberation process in Namibia to overcome a number of inequalities and discrepancies in the present society, such as economic inequalities (eg land distribution, working conditions, equal pay for equal work), educational inequalities (better facilities and higher capital spending on education for whites than for blacks), ethnic inequalities (as fostered by the policy of separate development), culture discrepancies (eg between a rural and urban culture, between a westernised and traditional culture) and probably others.

It would be a rewarding undertaking if the whites in Namibia would help to eliminate the existing distrust between the majority of blacks and whites. This could be best done not by contributing to an increase of

inequalities and discrepancies but rather to play down and eliminate areas of possible conflict and mistrust. This presupposes inter alia the loosening of geographical and political bonds with South Africa and to participate actively in the reconciliation process. Furthermore a commitment and an identification with the longings and the cause of the majority of the blacks becomes a prerequisite. From the whites is expected to leave the shelter of privileges and protection which they have enjoyed in the past. Exclusiveness and self-imposed isolation on the side of the whites are two equally important features they should discard.

The strongest attitude among whites against the present and probably future development process is discernable among workers (railway, post and other governmental enterprises), farmers and governmental officials, while the professional groups, most probably with the exclusion of most of the Afrikaner clerics, tend to be more realistic and liberally inclined in their outlook, although real progressiveness is lacking. Only few whites in Namibia would at this stage be prepared to support a social democratic or democratic socialist order which is intended by black liberation movements such as Swapo and the ^{considerable number of} ₁ NNF. *parties of the*

It would be most dangerous for the credibility of the whites and their future role in Namibia if they would decide to remain a white monolithic block. Through this they would contribute to racial strife. It should be remembered that the Republican Party, the National Party and the Herstigte Nasionale Party, are still exclusively white parties. It is a misnomer and a fallacy to refer to these parties as ethnic parties as they represent the whites and not ethnic groups such as Germans, Afrikaners, English, Portuguese and Jews in Namibia.

One should be fair : it would be as wrong to assume that all whites are in their political outlooks and convictions the same as all blacks are the same. The white population group in Namibia is not an undifferentiated political whole. Not all whites think politically alike. A number do sympathise and identify themselves with the national liberation struggle and the aims of political movements in Namibia such as Swapo and the ^{considerable number of} ₁ NNF. *parties of the*

Of course if the liberation struggle by the black movements is intended to be fought purely on racial lines and issues then it would be most difficult for the whites to join and commit themselves actively. If, however, race prejudices do no longer exist in the ranks of the black progressive forces, which is to be believed, then the time is opportune for the black political movements in Namibia to welcome everyone in their ranks irrespective of race, colour or creed, to take part in the devising of a new political dispensation. This requires open commitment on the side of the whites and a welcoming hand from the blacks.

No guarantee can be given whether black majority rule in Namibia will be more humane although this is hoped for, but it can be expected to be less racist. The whites feel insecure and what they need is assurance of them being welcome. It is a process of reversed roles. If the whites are welcome, then it is up to them to come openly to the fore - irrespective of the consequences - and join progressive political organisations such as Swapo. Such a process could become a strong counter-action to the process in which the DTA is engaged in and which proceeds on ethnic and racial lines.

Eventually Namibia has to move into a new era when political convictions and support are no longer based on or determined by race or ethnic allegiances but by ideological commitment which will cut across all ethnicities. Such a development is desirable to help to eradicate the divisive past, break down paternalistic attitudes and to pursue instead real brotherhood and comradeship.

It can convincingly be stated that although the whites have all the military might at their disposal, they are actually on the defensive. Deep down they know that they can prolong the military struggle but never win it. They should not deceive themselves. One cannot escape the situation and the set course of the predetermined outcome of the liberation process. Furthermore, the whites will always remain a minority group within a black majority which eventually will dominate the new government. Whether the whites in Namibia will become an active part of the political dispensation will be determined to a very

large extent by their role, attitude and commitments in the present pre-independence era and not by opportunism in the post independence era.

Escapism on the white side, not being willing to face the realities and at the same time to continue within a framework of wishful thinking, means deceiving oneself. What is important at this stage is to replace fear by trust in the black fellow countryman and to become actively involved in a white re-education process.

The programmes of the most prominent black political movements in Namibia state quite emphatically and categorically that a new society shall come into being in which there will be only Namibians. The whites are therefore still not excluded from participating in the establishment of a new society. But their engagement in the liberation struggle is wanted now. *whites should make every effort to become part of the solution and not to remain part of the problem.* A forced and imposed change of heart in the post-independence era will lose much of its credibility and vigour.

This change of heart, which should not be coupled with ulterior motives, will not be easy for many whites. A number may even harden their attitude and some will resist any change in their present privileged position although it may be forced on them. It is doubtful whether these whites will be acceptable and feel themselves at home in ~~the~~^{an} new dispensation and whether they can therefore remain in Namibia. They could become much of a hindrance and even an embarrassment in the unification and nation-building process which is marked by a rediscovery of the African personality, freed from the bonds of subservience.

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