

The Worker: Namibia's proletarian newsletter

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Two articles on the national question

Replies to Questions from Erik Hane by *Erica Beukes*

And

“One Namibia One Nation” by *Hewat Beukes*

Replies to Questions from Erik Hane by *Erica Beukes*

Dear Erik

I am sorry for not responding to your request/questions earlier. Our visit in Germany and Scotland was good ...

Your questions:

1. Are the German Colonial period and the genocide still present in your mind and in the mind of the Nama people?

– Yes, my grandmother used to tell us as children that her

mother or grandmother perished in the Kalahari desert, when they fled from Aroab.

2. Do all the people know about it, especially the younger ones amongst you?

Not all the people know the full extent, some regard it only as part of history. Those who lived with their grandparents had a better chance to know.

3. How do you think about the genocide?

It had a great impact on the composition of our country's population. We are now a minority.

4. How do you deal with it?

We feel deprived of our ancestors who would have had a greater impact on what is happening now, especially culturally.

5. Do the German colonial period and the genocide still affect today's life of the Nama?

Yes, tragically so. They are disowned, deprived of human dignity disorganised and unable to cope with the challenges of modern society, i.e. poverty, alcoholism etc.

6. Do you still see consequences for you?

I feel powerless at times, a much greater force/organisation needs to step in to have an impact that is a structural intervention. The working people will need to organise themselves politically to intervene.

7. How is your relationship with Germany in general and at the moment?

The German State is maintaining the same policies as it had a hundred years ago in that it assists this corrupt and decadent state to maintain its all pervasive corruption and oppressive administration. Its agencies are assisting the decadent judiciary for example to maintain the colonial legal system and to suppress the bill of fundamental rights. In this way the continuing and worsening effects of the German State's dispossession and atrocities are intensified multi-fold.

8. How do you think Germany should or have to deal with the shared past?

The present German State cannot solve the problem, it is the problem together with its bilateral relations with the

Namibian government (and for that matter an illegitimate state that has been rigging elections since its inception). The German People must align with the Namibian People to support the latter's political struggle.

9. Is there need for reconciliation?

We need contact and co-operation with the German people to ensure that the atrocities perpetrated by the German state never happen again. No reconciliation is needed between the Namibian People and the German People. As for German imperialism, it is irreconcilable with the Namibian people.

10. Are there possibilities for reconciliation between Germany and the Nama?

There should be contact, exchange, interaction between the German people and the Nama people. The German working people did not do harm to the Namibian People. We will not contribute to the imperialist and opportunist crime to hold the German People and for that matter the German working people at ransom for the crimes of a class state. They were victims of the German State too. The graves of German soldiers from Rehoboth throughout the south show that the German State used children of 17,18,19,20 and early twenties to fight their wars of greed and dominance, to increase their ability to oppress and exploit their 'own' people.). The German and Namibian peoples must establish co-operation to shackle the ability of their respective states to commit crimes against humanity under secrecy, which they continue to do in Namibia.

11. Do you and your people have any demands and claims against Germany?

Yes, claims against the German's state. The main claim is that we need our land back and to stop its interventionist politics in Namibia.

12. Are there different opinions amongst the Nama clans?

Not fundamental.

13. How is your relationship with the Namibian Government regarding the genocide?

This Government is decadent and has still to answer on the whereabouts of our people tortured, jailed and killed in

exile. Many are unaccounted for. It rules without mandate and with the assistance of amongst others the German State. The estimated N\$7 billion which the German State granted purportedly for development and "special initiative" to the "affected" peoples have not even reached the 'unaffected' peoples, but went straight into the pockets of the presidents and a small clique around them. The German State is well aware of this, but takes the money that it gives as bribery. (The 7 billion in itself is patronage and a measly amount for the untold wealth it has expropriated. Nevertheless, it could have gone a long way to uplift the community and their self-respect.)

14. Do the Nama communities have access to the debate and do they feel represented?

No. It is only gaining momentum now. A working class community of 400 families has seized their own land for homes in Keetmanshoop and is the first well-organised leadership to conduct the struggle to repossess themselves. They are debating the full programme of the Nama restitution struggle.

15. How do you see the future of the Nama people regarding these issues?

They should through organisation lay claim to repatriations demands from German's state and actively seek cooperation with the German people. This struggle is necessary to re-establish a proper leadership to eventually repossess their property here in Namibia, both corporeal and cultural (their aesthetics).

Greetings

Erica Beukes

"One Namibia One Nation"

By HEWAT BEUKES

Over the past year or so we have had what its participants call a debate on socialism, tribalism, coloureds, culture, the national question, reparations and so on in "The Namibian".

This group of proclaimed socialists seems to be seeking to become the mouthpiece for the populist slogans of the SWAPO, in particular "One Namibia. One Nation". This slogan is frozen, a given tenet to which the people shall subscribe just as they were forced to subscribe to Stalinist precepts such as, "The Party is everything, the individual nothing", and "the People is SWAPO and SWAPO is the People" during the liberation struggle. Tie to it "the Sole and Authentic Representative of the Namibian People" and you have the full set of Commandments to which the people shall subscribe if they do not wish to be labelled as tribalists, or reactionaries, although the latter lost its meaning long before independence due to irony. The former never had any meaning until now when the "socialists" are trying to elevate it as an indictment against the struggles of individual groups.

I have thought long on whether I should respond or not. Given the present struggles of a number of groups on many issues which I consider crucial I believe it is necessary.

Leaving aside the serious misrepresentations on, amongst others, what Lenin had said on the national question, I will simply reserve my comments for now on their insistence that "One Namibia, One Nation" was and is the correct slogan for Namibia.

Let me begin by saying that I believe a socialism which has no consonance with the actual history of peoples cannot be a proper socialist theory.

The slogan "One Namibia One Nation" linked with "The People is SWAPO and SWAPO is the People" (note the singular tense) was brandished shortly after SWAPO was declared "Sole and Authentic Representative of the Namibian People" by the United Nations, the "Five Western Powers" and the "Communist" countries in the beginning of 1971.

On 13 November 1970 the various groups including SWANU, SWAPO, NUDO, The Herero, Nama, Baster and Damara nations had formed the National Convention in Rehoboth as a united front to fight for independence. The said declaration was clearly to disrupt

the Namibian peoples' attempt at a united front. It was a clear declaration against the right to self-determination of the Namibian People.

After the General Strike in 1971/72 against the terrible Contract Labour System, and public floggings resulting thereafter, four thousand youth fled the country and swelled the ranks of external SWAPO.

In 1974, the paramount chief of the Hereros, Chief Clemens Kapuuu travelled abroad to meet with the United Nations, and member states. He was rebuffed as being unrepresentative. In 1975, Chief Kapuuu broke from the National Convention, which then formed the Namibia National Convention (NNC). The UN immediately reiterated SWAPO's 'Sole Authenticity'.

During this period the SWAPO Youth League and Peoples Liberation Army (PLAN) was in an intense fight against the SWAPO leadership in which they had formed an "Anti-Corruption Committee" to investigate why weapons, food, medicines and clothes donated by groups and governments for the 'armed struggle' were diverted by the leadership for business and UNITA. Fighters were dying of hunger while warehouses were stacked to the roofs with donated provisions.

This group's leadership expressed themselves clearly against the "Sole Authenticity" of SWAPO on the basis that it was not representative of a Namibian nation.

By 1976, on the reported insistence of Henry Kissinger and the intervention of Kaunda of Zambia and Nyerere of Tanzania, thousands of youths and fighters were liquidated politically and physically. In 1978, a day before the Cassinga massacre the so-called dissidents kept at camps in Zambia were brought to Cassinga dressed in soldiers' uniforms, but without weapons. They were massacred by South African forces the next day. Thus a whole generation of political fighters was defeated.

A system of terror was then instituted by the SWAPO leadership from 1978 to 1989, when Namibia was declared independent. People were arrested on charges of being spies, kept in holes in the ground where many died from hunger and malnutrition;

regularly culled by firing squad and thrown off a mountain cliff in southern Angola to make space for new prisoners, while parading under the farce of "scientific socialism".

From 1984 to 1990, parents and relatives of the victims exposed the atrocious farce and caricature of freedom and revolution. On 1 April 1989, the SWAPO leadership sent more than 500 PLAN fighters to be massacred by South African forces misinforming them these had withdrawn and that the United Nations Peace Keepers were in control of the North of Namibia. This was a stupid and psychopathic miscalculation to draw sympathy for SWAPO whose credibility had collapsed due to the action of the relatives. The relatives had in fact paid put to the credibility of the international churches, the symbiotic relation between Imperialism and Stalinism in particular, and also the latter's subservience to imperialism. It affirmed in bloody script the correctness of Trotsky's theses on the relation of Stalinist counter revolution and Imperialism, from his analyses of the failures of the German communists against Hitler to the Spanish Civil War. It paid put to the Post World War II theories revising Marxism as a pure science of history. It affirmed Trotsky's analyses that the productive forces was not only stagnating but had become rotten.

Thus, "One Namibia, One Nation" was manufactured in a crucible filled with the blood of Namibian young people, an entire generation. Instead of imperialism breaking up pre-capitalist social relations it tied itself to the most decadent, moribund sections of society, the tribal hierarchy, just as it had tied itself to religious fundamentalists worldwide. I believe this is the clearest indicator that the productive forces are rotting.

Namibia is a microcosm of the fact that since the advent of imperialism it has not broken up property and social relations in favour of indigenous peoples in South America, Asia and Africa. It has instead used those relations in the most perverted forms to put primordial political species in charge in favour of imperialist property relations.

Namibia is important in the sense that here peoples'

organisation against imperialism's pre-emption of the right of nations to self determination took its clearest form.

Despite this national tragedy, a group of what I consider petit bourgeois theorists (if one can call them that) try to create an ideology for a group of caretakers in this Namibian state. These caretakers stop all but short from addressing their corporate bosses as "Ja Baas" or "Bwana".

But these "yes bossers" have brought this country to the brink of tribal war.

The so-called legislature is dysfunctional, the so-called Executive is dysfunctional, the Judiciary is a cesspool of corruption, the hub of corporate rule of this country.

Our puritan "socialists" call this process "One Namibia, One nation".

Nay, they insist that Namibians rise to the call of "One Namibia, One Nation" while each have paid in blood for its institution.

Namibians will unite as a nation – in particular as a working people – in the process of coming to understand their history of catastrophes including the present one in the context of imperialism. (The same goes for the world's working classes) Socialists endeavouring to lead this working class theoretically may not cowardly navigate their theories (moral preachings) around the crimes committed against this nation, and for that matter a nation which has always stared its fate squarely in the eye, and met its tormentors blow for blow.

The 'debates' in "The Namibian" on issues of socialism are pathetic distortions of Marxist thought in my opinion. They ignore the fact that a group of petty criminals have been foisted on the Namibian nation and that the scale of extraction from this country is obscene. They instead blame victims of tribalism for tribalism. That's how absurd the 'debates' have become.

The declared socialists ignore the glaring fact that the imperialists and capitalists have turned this country into no-man's land and its people are dangling over the precipice.

This is typical petit bourgeois. They have disrupted the

Marxist movement worldwide since 1990 in the most unaccountable and treacherous manner. They now seek to hand the working class in the colonies bound hand-and-foot to colonial ruling classes.

Draft Unified Programme of the Namibian Working People

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Our programme will be titled the Unified Programme of the Namibian Working People to take political power.

Our objective is to consolidate and strengthen the socialist movement in this country through a Unified Demand of the nation engendering the following two tasks:

1. Rebuilding the working class's basic organisations, the trade unions and civic organisations, and,
2. Consolidating and strengthening the socialist movement in this country through rallying the working people around a Unified Demand of the nation.

The Unified Demand comprises the transitional demands of the working class, individual demands of the various national groupings (peasants) and the general demands of the nation. These constituent (individual) demands will be more significant, more empowering and all-embracing as they will be different facets of the same National Demand. They will be unifying and not distinctive, as separate demands tend to be.

Organisation of the Socialist Social Movement.

It was resolved in a meeting in February 2013 by Workers International members, the Forum of the Future, the NAMRIGHTS and individuals to call on the various working class groups we are working with and other groups fighting on individual

issues to unite in a social movement. The necessity to form it as and call it socialist was unanimously agreed.

The groups we are working with are:

The former Goldfields South Africa (TCL) miners and mineworkers;

Members of the teachers' strike committee.

The Southern Peoples Allegiance.

Women and youth groups.

The Mboroma Camp Committee.

Housing and homeless groups.

Poor peasants in the struggle for reparations and land.

Fundamental rights groups.

The leadership of this movement will initially be comprised of representatives of each group in a national committee. This committee will begin the centralisation of the movement by propagating and organising around the Unified Demand and Programme. The leadership is formed on the principle that the working class leadership is independent and leads the poor peasantry and articulates the land and national issues in correspondence with working class interest.

It will assist the poor peasantry to organise independently and to develop appropriate demands wherever they endeavour to do so such as in the current land struggles, land seizures and demands.

The Unified Demand

The following demands amongst others constitute a summary of demands informing the propaganda and organisational work of the SSM.

1. In general it is true that the capitalists seek to load off their intensifying woes and their falling profits onto the working class these days by labour rental and waning benefits and wages. However, in Namibia profits are maximised by the legacy of apartheid and by a new servile caste of officials which sell for example US\$80 billion worth of mineral reserves for a million dollar kick-back or give it away free through their courts to international firms. It is guessed that fishing companies make 800% profit. Banks run uncontrolled

scams such as housing loan schemes. Companies, banks and mines do not go bust in Namibia. Rio Tinto Zinc declared in 1980 that it had long-term uranium contracts until 2025 and it would not be affected by periodic slumps in demand as were others. Since independence it periodically threatens to close shop due to unrealistic workers' demands and the world economic situation.

The national government does not know nor endeavour to know the extent of the extraction of mineral reserves and fish and the GNP and GDP.

Thus, the SSM demands a public inquiry into the natural and national resources of the country and the opening of books of all mines, corporations and business in general.

2. Nationalisation of oil and gas.

3. The working class seeks immediate measures for full employment with a living wage. Such a programme of allocating quotas of employment to the various branches of industry and commerce to fill, public works, renationalisation of rail and road transport services, postal services for expansion of employment and work security, and collective and co-operative farming, shall be financed through levies on large scale mining and industry.

4. The derogation of labour rights through a corruption and derogation of labour supervisory state mechanism through the changes in labour legislation and employment of semi-literates shall be reversed by the establishment of workers councils in each town and city.

5. Education will be reviewed to remove it from the control from Cambridge and to put it under national control through the various communities.

6. The SSM encourages and assists workers to organise to remove their trade union functionaries who are stifling each struggle and assisting the derogation of rights and conditions by the capitalists. The trade union experience at Marikana should caution against short-cuts of forming new unions instead of fighting for the expulsion of corrupt and reactionary leaderships. However in mergers with the state and

the old unions such as at Marikana the only way may be to substitute the union for new organisations.

National question and the Contract Labour System

The SSM spearheads the conceptualisation and formalisation of demands of national groups/nations into a comprehensive coherent demand for national self-determination and in the process uniting the working class. (Recent experience has amply illustrated that the peasant leadership comprised by the tribal chiefs is unable to formulate consequential demands and create appropriate strategies in their demands and struggles for land and reparations against the incumbent regime directed and assisted by the German Government.)

7. SSM supports unconditionally the demand for War Reparations by the Herero and Nama groups. However, it puts forward a more comprehensive demand centring on the land and properties (corporeal (movable and immovable), and incorporeal) within Namibia which had been expropriated or engendered and on which untold wealth is continued to be produced with the labour of the expropriated. Moreover, our demand is not for war reparations alone, but for restitution of property expropriated by Imperial Germany from 1884 to 1915. It forms a significant part of the land issue and is based on the demand for socialisation of land without compensation. The demand serves further as a propaganda tool to focus on Germany's imperialist role and relations in Namibia to maintain colonial bondage and to shackle all and any development tending towards the material and social emancipation and development of the Namibian nation. With it, it tends to publicly highlight imperialist relations generally as it has already achieved with sections of both the Namibian and German peoples.

8. A similar demand against South African colonialism as the above by national groups in particular the Nama, the San, the Damara and the Baster.

9. A demand for restitution of the abuse under the contract labour system which has displaced whole communities from especially Ovamboland and Kavangoland to southern Namibia where independence released the administration from the

responsibility of provision of proper shelter, food, healthcare and employment. The compounds had been imploded and the masses of contract labour ejected into cities of squatter camps where they are left to their own devices for survival, and where they continue to serve the objectives of the contract labour system, but without its liabilities and responsibilities. Farm labourers both contractual and traditional are ejected from commercial farms where the latter had for generations created the wealth on these farms and had served the landlords with kith and kin in production, maintaining and serving the households. The vast majority are unemployed. The demand for provision of permanent proper shelter, free food, healthcare and permanent employment issues against the self-same mines, corporate commercial and industrial concerns, commercial farms or their successors and the State. Failure to meet the demand must be met with confiscation, compensation and socialisation.

10. The demand for return of Namibian remains from Germany killed during the wars of extermination and shipped to Germany is extended to the Angolan, Zambian and Tanzanian States and the SWAPO for the remains of Namibians killed by themselves and by the SWAPO leadership in exile until 1990.

11. The institution of a public inquiry into the period of 1962 to 1990 into the abuse and extermination of political fighters and refugees for a full report on the circumstances and causes of the treacherous period in the life of the Namibian nation.

12. A demand to the same instances for accounting of the unaccounted missing persons. This is a continuing crime against the Namibian nation whose resolution is intimately linked to the struggle against the obscenities and abuses of the imperialists and the abuses of their surrogates.

13. The high profile international publication and propaganda around the last four demands are absolutely necessary as part of a concerted effort to preclude the revisiting of the continual, extreme and punctuated tragedies perpetrated on a resistant people by imperialism.

Most of the above demands are at least partially articulated as single issues by particular groups.

Through the Unified Demand and Programme we will unify the nation.

The inaugural meeting of the SSM will be on 12 October 2013