

THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF THE RDP LIST AND PAN-AFRICANISM

INTRODUCTION

Are personal attacks, libel cases and gloating in home-based political parties profitable to democracy? In the balancing act of the RDP list, will loyalty count or is it about new blood and novices of the 'johnnies and Jane come-lately'? Is the RDP's list really balanced and shaming 'those who tried to characterise the RDP as a Kwanyama party'? In celebrating the centenary of one of the founding fathers of Pan-Africanism Kwame Nkrumah, what lesson do we draw from his philosophy?

I have no doubt that these elections will be about consistency, credibility, continuity and competences. Politicians should concentrate on mainstreaming their election manifestos to appeal to voters and balance their election lists to prove that they are not tribal parties. I doubt very much if some can do that trapezes act of balancing their list because if they do that means 'vicious intra-party fights' and defections of their 'founder members' who are ready to jump ship at the slightest chance of perceived 'discrimination'. I will come to the issue of mainstreaming our manifestos next time. Let us try to answer our questions by looking at the Alpha and Omega of the RDP's list (I) before we touch on Pan-Africanism (II).

I-THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF THE RDP 'BALANCED' LIST

With the much anticipated electoral college of RDP I expected the editor of 'telling it as it is' Gwen Lister to comment on the 'rock and hard place' of the RDP President with his seven candidates list. Ms Lister wrote then about President Pohamba's 'balancing act' of his list that "It is going to be a tough and unviable call for President...vis-à-vis his...choices for the parliamentary list at the...Electoral College...it is obviously my hope that in his balancing act, his choices will be made on merit, rather than on trying to placate various branches of the...party, but this still doesn't make things easier for him when he sifts through the names and decides whether old loyalties count more than new blood..."

Idem for HH, I was just eager to see how he does his balancing act. It seems in this case, new blood counted more than old loyalties even of those who stick close to him through thick and thin. Let's just hope this move will not boomerang in the long run. All in all, there is no alternative with a plan B and a shadow cabinet of competent leaders except what the Namibian reported as "the top 16 has eight political novices- even the party Vice President... (And) Vice SG..."

The RDP Information secretary Mr. Nambinga, who gave up his parliamentary seat, is further down the list at 14, Heita at 18, Haufiku at 21, Hendjala at 24, former NANTU SG Miriam Hamutenya at 26, former ECN Director Kanime at 34, Mbangula at 37 following Lapaka at 36, former ambassador Kaukungua at 52 followed by Nghinamwaami at 53, Festus Naholo at 65, Kashume at 68. Instead, the former MP of German origin comes after the top four, probably to lure the German community vote, followed by Kandindima Nehova and Peter Naholo at six and seven respectively. And I thought 'loyalty' counts? And whatever happened to the much talked about 'mass exodus' from the top leader-



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ship of SWAPO? Is that 'the new vision and direction' or just a strategy to relegate members of 'the secretariat' to bottom positions to appeal to other ethnic group?

I thought the 'youth vote' was crucial but instead the 'youth SG' is at 27 and the 'marginalised community' Francis Basson comes at 28 and Ilonga Maleachi at a dismal 56. I just wonder where is the much talked about 'youth and women' on that list except those down the list.

Despite talks of "Eastern Owambos and Ndongas being instrumental in the formation... (Of RDP I guess) and calls for the 'Tanga group' to remain united" there only appears the lonely SG Nyamu in the top ten and no other in the top 20.

Despite also talks of shaming "...those who tried to characterise the RDP as a Kwanyama party", members from one ethnic group are seen at numbers 6,7,13,14,15,18,21,23,24,25,26,32,33,34,36,37,42,43,45,47,50,52,53,57,58,59,60,61,64,65,68,70,71,72, that is half of the list or more! What is more, the whole 'secretariat' is made up of people from the same group with the exception of the former DTA MP Kamburona.

It seems the list took the advice of "de-Ovambonization" from Mr. Ya Nangolo, as he used his newly coined word in the Namibian political rhetoric's, not to inundate the list with the secretariat that is saturated with lieutenants from the same ethnic group or else this is cosmetically done to attract voters from other groups and meant to give a picture of a party that has a following nation wide. The truth of the matter is; the beginning and the end (the alpha and omega) of the RDP list is from the 'not wanted' Group (by whom and why, it was never revealed).

In essence, the list is balanced with 'new blood of Johnnies and Jane come lately novices' to borrow again from the Namibian reporters and right activists who are called, together with the church, to "stand firm and reject the politics of violence" and one wonders what violence except the one displayed by those who were once fighting for a tree or took the desperate measure of the door-to-door campaigning strategy against the will of the owners.

In terms of making a mark, the list may have achieved its objective to appeal to the German community but certainly not in terms of taking over government in these elections, otherwise why would the Head of the party top the National Assembly list if he was so assured of victory and why would a team of inexperienced novices take over government without an alternative Plan B and a shadow cabinet? No wonder some are talking about top four to seven even when the reporters are exaggerating with 'top 16'.

I think it pays to be 55 on the Ruling Party's list with chances of being given 'executive protection'

and a 'call' back to parliament rather than being 72 on other lists with no chances of making it to parliament. It goes to show that hesitating and wavering with double loyalty between two 'masters' is not good, I, therefore, applaud President Pohamba's call to those who were misled to return.

Mind you, this is not just simple conjecture of 'factional thinking...devoid of all rational-objective criteria...compromising its nascent voice of autonomy with a total assimilation of power and reason...undermining its credibility...with absolutist politics from the logic of the loved ones vs. the logic of cruelty' as alluded by my confrere Hengari but articulating issues, both in substance and in form, in a manner that is both consistent and prophetically which bodes well for the social construction of issues and the consolidation of our democracy. In fact, my confrere Hengari reminds me so much of me when I came from France and met my friend Glen who took out that snobbish attitude out of me and introduced me to Pan-Africanism.

II-Pan-Africanism

As a die-hard Pan-Africanist, I just cannot forget the birth of one of the greatest Pan-Africanist, Kwame Nkrumah. Our very own Pan-Africanist, The Founding Father, Sam Nujoma recently reminded us of the cunning methods of Neo-colonialism and Globalizations as one of the many shapes and colours of Imperialism and foreign domination.

Indeed, Nkrumah wrote in his book 'Neo-colonialism: The last stage of Imperialism' that "Neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means...(using) foreign capital...for the exploitation...of the less developed parts of the world...(increasing) rather than (decreasing) the gap between the rich and the poor...(and) lurking behind...are the...tentacles of the Wall street octopus...with the Pentagon and various intelligence services...It is (thus) necessary to study, understand, expose and actively combat neo-colonialism in whatever guise it may appear...(whether) in the economic field, but also in the political, religious, ideological and cultural spheres." This is what the Founding Father was reminding us about with what happened in Zimbabwe and recently with EPA.

My Friend Glen from the Caribbean Island of Saint-Lucia in the west-Indies, who introduced me to Pan-Africanism while I was fresh from school, was right about the imperialist plans and strategies and warned me to remain vigilant, to be the voice of all Africans 'at home and in the Diaspora' and expose the evil practices of the neo-colonial agenda even when it is done under the guise of the soft gloves of 'democracy, human rights, churches, Printed media and New Political Parties' peddled with neo-colonial agendas even by our own brothers and sisters to make it sound credible.

Thanks to Glen, I was blind but now I can see literally and figuratively. I remember, boasting that I came from France and travelled in Europe and wanted to become an ambassador and I will change the world by articulating our views at the UN. He just laughed me off and taught me to first know who am I

and to renew my mind from 'a slave mentality' and a brainwashed mindset with all its dependency syndrome and inferiority complex. After an intensive detox by reading a collection of books from all the Pan-Africanists and black authors all over the world, including unpublished books and photos, the Pan-Africanist spirit was born in me and I remember having a vision of me wanting to come back home and singing that old revolutionary song:

"Nande mu tu hongolole, fye otwa itavela muSema, shaashi oye twa mona tete nosaba yaye meke, fye eedalele d'Africa, twa dalelwa muAfrica hatu dalele moAfrica, Africa - Namibia" "Even if you try to deceive us, we believe in Sam Nujoma, because he is the one we saw first with his gun in his hand, we are Africans, born and bred in Africa and will bear our children and die Africans, Africans - Namibians". When I told him about my dream, he said "now you are ready and you can see, go open the eyes of those who are still blind".

Thanks to our leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and our very own Founding father Sam Nujoma, we are now free physically, spiritually and mentally and now seek our economic emancipation for ourselves and our children. The nagging point, however, is; do we have strategically and coherent foreign and economic policies in place or just different

national interests as pertinently pointed out on the occasion of Nkrumah's centenary organised by Pacon? The speaker and seasoned diplomat Dr. Ben Gurirab reminded us, at the same event, to guard against implementing foreign manufactured ideas as we did with the packaged agreement of the western countries and are now stuck with the land issue and many 'negotiated settlements' favouring the previously advantaged. He also spoke about 'the renaissance and omega plan' of Mbeki and the Senegalese President, later merged into NAI and when marketed and sold at Davos to the G8 leaders it came back baptised NEPAD.

We are employing Peace Corps in our mahangu fields all the way from Britain, USA and Japan speaking our languages and learning our culture better than us. It seems our own people cannot do a better job so they are relegated to second class citizens in their own backyard and fired supposedly in the name of ETSIP and is funny how we go at length to seek bursaries for our people, sent them to Cuba, France and else where yet when they come back, we cannot employ them. We become xenophobic with our own Zimbabwean brothers and create artificial Tran frontier refugees. It is indeed, our mindset and that of our leaders that should change.

Some of us have travelled exten-

sively and speak three international languages spoken at UN and AU and despite being armed with international relations and law; you just cannot get a place in the Ministry of Foreign affairs while our governments are using foreign consultants and experts paid a lot of money from government coffers even when we cannot pay our own people for the job done and employ 'special advisor' at three different points.

Thanks to Glen, I remain a 'Pan-Africanist and patriotically stubborn' exposing the lies and distortion about our people. Beside, being from the copper town, once a bustling beehive of activities and a potpourri of all ethnic groups, it is just impossible to become an unrepentant tribalist since we went to school with Hereros, Namas, Damaras, Tswanas and Kavangos.

I, therefore, applaud the 'nationalhood initiative' by the ICT Minister Kaapanda and I just hope it entails inculcating a different mindset and allow people to define themselves and be reminded of who they are, where they come from and where we are heading to, as one people, one nation, one leader. Those who cannot be led by others, they cannot lead either. Leadership is about sacrifice and humility like that of "Osagyefo" (redeemer) as Nkrumah was nicknamed by his people.

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Kindergarten Politics and Obfuscating Discourse: A Lethal Combination

The hullabaloo around the donation worth 2.5 million Nam dollars of campaign materials donated to the SWAPO party by the Oshikango-based Fatima Plastic Manufacturing company needs to be further debated and the reactions to it eventually be exposed for what they really seem to be all about! The hysterical reactions from the opposition parties, specifically the APP and RDP smacked more of a political jealousy and even disturbing elements of xenophobia, especially in the case of the APP reaction, as reported in the various Namibian media, than of a genuine concern for political corruption.

Something in those reactions appeared to me to be morally convoluted, that is why I decided to make it a point to do a bit of research on the whole saga and the following are some of my preliminary findings and personal observations. Like the editor of The Namibian wrote in her political perspective column of 23 September 2009: "there is a need for some clarity around the issue of foreign funding/donation" to political parties in Namibia. I am hoping to contribute to the process of clarification on this issue. The issue appears to be serious enough, since some very strong political language was used to describe the donation, such as a "bribe", "political interference", that allegedly would contribute to a situation whereby there will be an "uneven playing field", etc.

Now, can the facts and truth of the case help us in clarifying this matter? The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines, a donation as "something charitable that is given to somebody, especially a sum of money", a donation can also be understood as a "gift", while a bribe is defined as "an inducement given or offered in an attempt to bribe or dishonestly persuade someone to act in one's favor by a payment or other inducement". Clearly, intentions and motivations do play a role in how one construes a donation and a bribe. The law can also help us understand what can be defined as bribe and a donation. The simple difference between the two would be that giving and accepting a donation is generally a legal and moral thing to do, while offering and accepting a bribe is an illegal and immoral thing to do. The two are, thus, not one and the same thing!

In terms of law, apparently in Namibia, "the Electoral Act does not necessarily prohibit parties from accepting outside funding...", so wrote the editor of The Namibian in her political perspective column of 23 September 2009, however, arguing that such funding needs to be declared. It was acknowledged in the same column that Swapo accepted the donation in public view and it was even reported in The Namibian of 16 September 2009 that "the company was approached by Pohamba's son and Ondobe constituency Councilor Mandume Pohamba for a donation". From the report, it was crystal clear that this was a successful fundraising drive by the Ondobe Constituency and the report did not in any suggest that it was the company that simply decided to give the donation to the SWAPO party, but the donation was sought, offered and then publicly handed over to Pohamba by the company's Managing Director, Muhammad Saed...". But, judging from the opposition parties and some of their blind supporters' reactions, one would have thought that the situation was the other way round, hence the foul cries of bribery and unfairness! Truth, please!

The other obfuscating element to this whole thing is the much abused charge of "uneven playing field", which incidentally happened to be the main concern of the political perspective of The Namibian newspaper's editor, in the same column referred to earlier. Clearly, if one works hard to achieve one's goals and objectives, it cannot be expected that the other person who is not working as hard or more will be able to play on the same leveled plain field! One cannot simply wait for donations to be sought by others and then expect the donation seeker(s) to share the fruit of their hard work with you, even worse, with one's rivalries and opponents! Has any of the complaining political parties ever 'shared' their donations with SWAPO or even with each others before? Where is this even done anywhere in the world? What is more mindboggling is the convoluted response of the RDP, who condemned the donation as a bribe and then turn around that they would also love to get the same thing! I mean, what kind of politics is this, if not kindergarten politics! I thought, if the thing is a

bribe, it is a bribe and then, the law should take its natural course, but here the RDP man had the following to say "if they have money to give SWAPO, then they must (sic) give money to all political parties", so reported The Namibian of 17 September 2009. This is clearly a morally inconsistent and jealousy position to take on this issue. Why would RDP want to take the "bribe"?

The other concern is the xenophobic reactions of the APP to the donation. It appeared more that the real problem was not the donation, but the amount given to a wrong party!

The APP was reported to have reacted as follows, "it is incomprehensible for Pakistanis business community hailing from a region unstable as theirs to poke their noses into a stable and peaceful political atmosphere as Namibia for reason only known to them".

But, this is the same business community that has been reported to have also made some serious humanitarian donations to the Namibian communities in the Ohangwena region during the flood season of last 2008. The same company was reported in The Namibian of 12 March 2008 to have volunteered to build a bridge at the Engela hospital with other Pakistani businessmen, which the same community appreciated very much! Was that also a kind of a 'bribe' or 'foreign social interference'?

The Namibian of 16 September 2009 also reported that the same business people have established a welfare organization that has "donated desks, chairs, computers and school uniforms to several schools as well as cash to football clubs". This looks and sounds like a schizophrenic way of treating foreign business community, one time they are wanted foreign investors, the next they simply become "foreigners", especially if they fail to service you. My feeling is that if the same donation was given to other political parties, especially the ones that have made the most political noises about it they would have simply celebrated it as "international assistance" or something nice to that effect! Politicians and their supporters also need to be more honest and fair with the public, as well, we are not stupid. In the meantime, I am looking forward to a day, when the opposition parties will share their donations with the ruling party or at least, amongst each others! Happy and peaceful electioneering!

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