

Comrade Ben Amathila,
Secretary for Economic Affairs,
SWAPO,
Luanda, Angola.
and
c/o Comrade Harg Geingob,
UNIN, Lusaka, Zambia

RHG/sh

22nd February 1983

Dear Ben,

State Farms, etc.

As we both realize there is a problem here. The historical, personnel and ecological environments are not on our side. On the other hand the option of no large state run agricultural units is virtually impossible (involving either a) keeping all European owners/managers or b) turning most of large scale units back to pre-colonial herding or c) turning most units over to workers with hopes pure auto-gestion would have a 90% success rate versus perhaps 25-33% in rural Algeria). Perhaps it would help to itemize some probably agreed factual points (or problems) to see what conclusions they push us toward:

1. Management is central to physical (current output), financial (cash flow) and sustainability (ecosystem preservation and improvement) efficiency in large agricultural enterprises - public, communal or private;
2. A substantial part of management expertise is gained "on the job" and "on the job in a similar context" (ie "on the job" ranching experience in Patagonia or Soviet Asia or Australia is not as immediately effective as in Botswana let alone Namibia);
3. SWAPO has, at present, virtually no trained cadres with any kind of large scale agricultural management experience;
4. At independence it can have:
 - a. a handful with training plus some (limited) "on the job" experience outside Namibia;
 - b. a larger (how large is unclear), of experienced "semi-managers" with "on the job" experience" but limited (or no) overall managerial experience or formal training from the existing units;
 - c. some selected expatriates with "on the job experience" plus training outside Namibia;
 - d. some existing settler managers - whether as hired managers, interim owner/managers or whatever.
5. There are perhaps 5,500-7,000 fairly large units:
 - a. 4,000-5,000 basic ranches;

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- b. 1,500-1,750 (usually mixed farming, eg Otavi-Tsumeb and river "deltas"; irrigated as at Hardap) units;
 - c. 50 special cases (eg ENOC ranches, Tsumeb and CDM fruit/vegetable farms).
6. In addition to direct management the large scale sector relies heavily on backup technical, planning and ancilliary services:
- a. land use and water supply/use planning;
 - b. pasture management, preservation, improvement advice;
 - c. veterinary services;
 - d. marketing (inputs and products) services.

Without these it would collapse very quickly even given present management.

7. To keep these services running SWAPO at independence can hope to have:
- a. a handful of cadres with training and limited "on the job" experience outside Namibia;
 - b. the core of African personnel in present services with some quick upgrading courses (but base level very low);
 - c. perhaps the majority of present European technical staff to the extent these are "Südwesters" not pure expatriates and can be convinced that for several years they can keep present economic terms and conditions (Germans are probably critical here both in the sense of those of German ancestry in the services and of German government backup/encouragement of them to stay at least for five years);
 - d. a few expatriates with training/"on the job experience" outside Namibia.
8. In respect to both managers and back up staff there will be -at best- severe shortages and a need to juggle what one has to avert a series of micro (unit and area) collapses and an overall sectoral crisis leading to breakdown.
9. Superimposed on this will be three more structural changes:
- a. reuniting of ranch worker families (desirable but imposing housing and service costs);
 - b. departure of some workers to towns (not very desirable but inevitable and not, in Namibian context, stoppable by fiat or force);
 - c. dismantling of racist and reduction of authoritarian elements in large unit operating systems (which are very hard to make participatory albeit less so to humanize).
10. Three more changes should be begun as policy goals:
- a. building up spot irrigation (unit fruit, vegetables, staple roots or grain and - where feasible - fruit/vegetable marketable surpluses) fairly generally (family reuniting, technical advice, some worker say in decisions - especially on 'secondary' activities, prices less skewed to meat and pelts should be enough to start this);
 - b. more substantial structural shifts to mixed farming where ecologically viable (eg Otavi Highlands, around Tsumeb, perhaps in known pockets

- elsewhere) to produce urban - Southern (ie south of Rehoboth no short term staple food self sufficiency is practicable) - Northern (at least for a time North - except perhaps Caprivi and Okavango valley sub-areas - will remain a food deficit area) oriented surplus. (Basically a question of technical advice, some managerial retraining, new pricing and procurement system);
- c. a parallel exercise to "b" for dairy products (I think in 'Herero Reserve', Otjiwarongo, Okahandja, Windhoek, Gobabis areas which - I believe - were core of old 1960s marketed dairy production) by the same means.
11. At the same time longer term irrigation planning needs to be sorted out beginning with getting data:
- a. what can be done at Mariental (how bad is salination? how cureable?) and what scope is there for parallel dam based schemes?
- b. what can (ecologically, technically and politically) be done in the area around Warmbad and Karasburg? (How poor is the soil? Is it really worse than at Upington? What are technical problems to pumping from Orange? Dams on Fish, etc? Can this approach work while RSA claims border on north bank not Thalweg?)
- c. where can water from Kunene and Okavango (and Kwando/Linyati, Zambezi?) best be used? How much at what cost will be available after (increased by population shifts) urban-mining demand?
- d. related to "c" what makes sense in "oshana country" and in area immediately to south of it? Here it is vital to study before acting. The geology is that of a thin brittle hardpan over a salt lake. Deep channels, heavy machinery, even deep ploughing could break hardpan and turn "oshana country" into a new, wetter Etosha Pan. Much more water put through present system might waterlog or lead to serious (irreversible?) salination. We must stand still until we know what it is safe to try even if it means rural income support and grain import costs. It would be very easy to turn the whole of "oshana country" into a salt pan/salt marsh desert and any policy with a substantial risk of "achieving" that catastrophic result must be rejected.
12. And back to state farms and managers.
- a. there will be state farms perforce, abandoned large units with no Namibian 'semi-manager' able to organise work force into a viable co-operative (or work team, or commune or communal village or auto gestion unit) even with backup services and advice;
- b. there will be more such units than fully competent managers;
- c. the load on managers will be increased because backup services will not be as strong as they were in mid-late 1970s;
- d. the first duty of a manager is to hold the production and worker unit together as an operating entity;
- e. this may mean rapid shifts to mixed and dairy farming (see 10, b,c) but only where technical problems are fairly limited and we have backing advice - input - procurement services in place;
- f. the whole situation will at best be 'semi-managed chaos'. To add a tier of new large scale units or of random instructions to change output mix will push this situation over the edge into total chaos.

13. Whether one manager can manage 2 or 3 present large units I do not know. If there are experienced African 'semi-managers' on each (and a bookkeeper - physical record keeper for the group) probably yes.
14. But I would advise against consolidating physical or financial rewards (or returns to workers) at any early stage. That is likely, in practice, to worsen their quality and make relating results to concrete physical units impossible. It will also be a new barrier to participation. Ranch labour teams can - with education - comprehend the unit in which they work and how decisions/actions affect it; broadening that comprehension to a trio of separate units (with workforces they do not personally know well - or at all) will be much harder.
15. Back to building up some "in service" experience for SWAPO cadres under not too dissimilar conditions:
 - a. Tanzania - Basuto Wheat Scheme. Mechanized, large scale (20-30,000 tonnes). Arid, variable rainfall highlands. Canadian management. Limited participation - decent labour relations. May be relevant to grain in - say - Ottau Highlands.
 - b. Tanzania - A 'Chinese' rice scheme - medium scale (3-5,000 tonnes I think), irrigated from rivers by diversion or pumping - ie not based on major dams. Rainfall varies with scheme, higher than Namibian. Some participation but substantially hierarchical management. Could be relevant to Okavango, Caprivi or Mariental (Hardap).
 - c. Tanzania - ranching - a. Kongwa - a relatively successful, high grade beef ranch. Larger (I think) than most Namibian ranches. Dry area but greater carrying capacity per hectare than Namibia. Some participation but substantially hierarchical management. b. Kitulo - a mixed cattle/sheep operation. Highlands (Southern) but wet enough to be weak ecological fit. Included as only working state (parastatal) sheep ranch I know of!
 - d. Zambia - ranching. Believe 2 or 3 state cattle ranches are successes. Inquiries in Lusaka should identify.
 - e. Zambia - dairying. Supposedly there is a successful state ranch dairy herd. Worth inquiries to locate if it exists as I know of no others.
 - f. Tanzania - dairy scheme - Mara. A collection scheme with state collection/processing (ie parastatal) from smallholders. Very serious problems because of distances among producers and low volume per producer. But it does collect and process moderate volume. Its problems make it of relevance as well as partial success especially in respect to encouraging dairying based on say - 'Herero Reserve.'
 - g. Botswana - cattle procurement/meat packing - Lobatse (Botswana Meat Commission is - I think - the parastatal's name). Here how it procures cattle (largely via intermediaries or larger ranchers bringing in but - I believe - some direct "up country" buying) and how it relates to large and small growers are what I have in mind. But also best place in service training likely to be available in similar conditions for packing plant managerial trainees.
16. I've listed seven options and I fear 14-21 trainees (1 to 3 a place - I'd advise 2 or 3 as these units, except "g" are isolated so that 2 or 3 are better to give each other some "home base" like that at YMCA at Dar does for Dar based

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trainees whatever institution they work in). Note - we need to place in units not "large agricultural units" unspecified. Some Tanzanian (and I believe some Zambian) ranches and large farms are horror stories. I've listed ones I have reason to believe are at least partial successes for Tanzania (Botswana) and where to look for similar ones in Zambia.

Hope this is of some help. I'm mailing to you in Lusaka and Luanda and a copy to Hidipo in hopes at least one will reach speedily.

We spoke on Nationhood studies/drafts. Any help you can give in getting copies to UNIN (contact point Professor Aulakh) will be valuable. New York is either unable (largely) or reluctant (on drafts) to help. Energy, Water (z), Telecommunications (z), TNC's, Fishing (Rothschild FAO draft), Health are the most critical of which we know at UNIN but do not seem to have a copy.

I spoke briefly with Hidipo on whether UNIN has any non-Nationhood (extra-nationhood) studies of direct use. He doubted it. However, anything on trade unions and workers groups since the 1976 Programme (especially articulation of goals, ideas on structure, immediate changes sought) would be useful to provide a frame within which (wage) workers and peasants/household participation chapters are written. (I fear without a frame we may try to do your work and set out political goals of participation and/or do a treatise on theory of participation a la the somewhat curious and not very successful UNIN participation paper now in draft).

See you in Lusaka.

Cordially,



Copy: Hidipo Hamutenya