

Garoeb, History & Human Rights

BECAUSE of the high regard the BWS (Breaking the Wall of Silence) has for family of the late Moses Garoeb, we decided to reserve our comment on his life until after the funeral. Garoeb was given a full state funeral with a 21-gun salute, preceded by a public holiday. Flags flew at half mast for 8 days. A memorial service was held at Parliament Gardens. BWS followed the events with great interest.

History has a special place for any person who has been given a special responsibility at a given time. The yardstick being used is how that person has related to human rights. Garoeb was given a key position of administrative secretary of Swapo in exile, which he occupied for 18 years. The period between 1977 and 1989 can best be described as the era of terror and fear amongst Namibians in exile. Upon his return to Namibia, he was given a key position of Swapo Secretary General. When Namibian history puts Garoeb in his proper place in its annals, it will seriously take the details of the two periods into account.

After all the nice words have been said and all formal statements have had their day, the crucial question has still to be asked. "Where shall history rightfully place Moses Garoeb when the whole truth is told of how Namibians have lived in exile, particularly in Zambia and Angola, and when issues of honesty and human rights are taken into account?"

Moses Garoeb was brutally frank and frankly brutal, contradictory, a demagogue who sought fulfilment in hurting feelings and hate speeches. In 1977 during the so called Shipanga Crisis in Zambia, Garoeb went to Mboroma concentration camp and succeeded to lure hundreds of the dissident combatants back to Swapo, many of whom had disappeared soon thereafter. Under his administration Swapo had eliminated hundreds of its followers in Angola and kept others in the dungeons without even the host Government suspecting anything, let alone the international community. When the world Lutherans had started to raise some probing questions, they were politely invited to Angola and smartly taken around in the surrounding bushes of Kwanza-Sul and Lubango. When they returned to Geneva, they took it upon themselves to tell the world that it was all South African propaganda that Swapo was detaining its own followers in Angola.

In fact political leaders are expected to lead a clean and

exemplary private life and Garoeb had not been a good role model in this regard.

When the UN Resolution 435 was about to be implemented, with the demand that both South Africa and Swapo should first release their captives, Garoeb went quickly to Lubango, gathered the detainees from the different dungeons and threatened that if they would reveal that they were detained by Swapo, Swapo would deal with them in Namibia. At the same occasion he "promised" them that they would carry the stigma of being called South African spies for the rest of their lives.

Last year when some Namibians had started to organise themselves into BWS to bring into the open the dark side of our independence struggle, Garoeb called upon Swapo members countrywide to prepare for "civil war".

In life Garoeb had carried a lot of secret information crucial to BWS work. It seems he has gone to his grave with this information locked up in his heart. For the sake of history, BWS is eagerly interested to hear what Garoeb had said about the whole detainee saga during his last days of life. BWS had expected that he might invite some of the Lubango dungeon survivors to his sick bed but this seems not to have happened.

We all know that it was a gross political blunder and sheer shortsightedness when last year Garoeb tried to publicly belittle the Council of Churches in Namibia. It was really moving to see that during the funeral service his body was consecrated and committed back to dust by the man he once so scornfully characterised as a "non-entity". However, in the context of truth, reconciliation and peace, Garoeb had left us with a very important theological question: "What will you do if I tell you that I had killed your brother?" He asked this question last year when he was addressing the striking workers in Okahandja. In essence, Garoeb was asking, "What will happen if Namibia is exposed to the harsh truth regarding Swapo atrocities in exile?" BWS' answer to this question is that truth, repentance, confession and restitution are the only sure foundation for genuine reconciliation and durable peace.

BWS wishes Garoeb's soul will rest in eternal peace!!

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