

Abstract

Pekka Peltola, Dr. Soc.Sc. University of Helsinki

Picking the international pieces of struggle: Finnish support to the liberation struggle in Namibia and Mozambique.

A strong national identity is a very important asset for any nation. All nations are based on a common understanding of their past. The past, however, is not uniform or linear, but consists of many interacting developments, often producing conflicting trends. It is a task of governments and politicians to simplify history, to make it easily understood by citizens. This necessarily leads to oversimplification, sometimes dogmatic, interpretation of what has happened. The task of the researchers is to provide more sophisticated understanding of history, based on a multitude of facts. The task of national archives is to collect and preserve, to conserve for long time, essential facts. The main point is the authenticity of records and information, their provenance and evidential value. In addition, the archives should be easily accessed, available for research. This means, among other things, microfilming and/or digital form. New technologies mean new problems not always easily solved in Europe and especially in Africa.

The Finnish Committee for Archives of Anti-colonial Resistance and Liberation Struggle (AACRLS Finland) was established formally in 2004 as a part of Namibian effort to save the history of their struggle for independence. The work in Finland had actually started already some years before. The Committee consists of members of the Friendship Society, National Libraries and Archives, Trade Unions, Church and Universities, which all participated in solidarity actions during the struggle between 1960-1990. Together with a multitude of NGO's they spent tens of millions US dollars in support of the long but victorious struggle. Collecting key documents, films, diaries and interviews of the activists gives Namibian and other researchers a possibility to look into an area of important activity which today does not count in the writing of history. The formal part of the work is now over and the collected results will be delivered to the National Archives of Namibia December 7 in Windhoek.

Although the role of Finland was not as impressive in supporting Mozambican struggle, the Finnish-Mozambique Friendship Society has started a similar project in cooperation with Mozambique National Archives. We intend to collect the relevant material, archive it in digital form, and to produce a publication about the effort between 1960-1980.

