

Gurirab replies

I THOUGHT I should write a brief explanatory note in connection with Mr Andrew Perrin's article on page 5 in The Namibian of November 15 1991. I am requesting you to see to it that this letter is published in your newspaper.

Mr Perrin apparently did not have the appreciation of the mix of the audience I was addressing at the Annual Southern African Universities So-

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cial Sciences Conference and therefore misrepresented some of what I had to say, particularly about the present state of democracy in Namibia and a possible onslaught on it, from either the far right or from Swapo's traditional supporters.

My point about democracy, which was addressed to a section of the audience, had to do with a linkage that certain major Western countries are now insisting on, such as multi-party democracy, human rights and market economy as a new type of conditionality for giving development aid. Elsewhere and in our country, I have been saying that all these requirements are fully in place and functioning in Namibia, yet the consistency and levels of aid to our country leave much to be desired. So much on this point.

Mr Andrew Perrin, in his article entitled 'University Conference Wraps Up', reports that I "acknowledged growing public discontent with the Swapo Government". Far from it! And, for that matter, it did not talk about any public discontent.

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What I said in my speech, which I had stated on many occasions before, is that if Namibian democracy is not assisted with sustained and substantial economic and financial aid, there is a likelihood that Swapo's traditional constituencies such as the unions, youth and ex-combatants will become disenchanted with the Government. The gap in social disparities rather than narrowing would continue widening. In a nutshell, while our democracy is functioning and growing, it still remains a fragile experiment.

Democracy and development go hand-in-hand; but the necessary pre-condition a country must have is a situation of peace and stability. This we have in Namibia, and the Government is determined to carry on with development efforts on this basis.

I was talking about what could happen, and not what is happening.

THEO-BEN GURIRAB
MINISTER, FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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*** Note: Other participants at the seminar have indicated that the substance of our report on your speech was correct, and the particular quote to which you refer came at a point when you diverted from your written text. Your intention was probably not to lump together the trade unions (and Nanso which you mentioned by name) and the right-wing as respective 'threats' to the Government, but a number of participants (including trade unionists) were annoyed by this reference. - Ed.**

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