

Independence Soul Searching

ON March 21 1990 a new nation was born. Citizens in this new nation stood tall with pride at the lowering of the flag of the Republic of South Africa and when this new nation's flag was hoisted.

They said to one another the old saying of the Negroes in America, "We have overcome". They said to one another, "We are victorious" and then they made a pledge: "Never shall we allow Apartheid and discrimination to take place in this country again", and everybody then joined in unity and said, "Let freedom reign, let peace reign, let unity reign." This country is Namibia.

However, something then went terribly wrong and the aspirations of many and their dreams have become only illusion and myth instead of reality.

As we go back and look back at Namibia's nine years of independence I cannot do otherwise than feel a sense of being a failure as a Namibian. This is because at our independence we said to one another that we have everything under control; indeed, we were told by our leaders, "We have been in the international

community long enough not to repeat the mistakes made by others."

Laudably our leaders introduced the policy of national reconciliation. Yes, we adopted a constitution that has become a role model not only in Africa but indeed in the world at large. However, something just went wrong and nine years later Namibia has lost its identity as a nation.

I know that speech after speech will be given by our leaders during our independence celebrations over the weekend and we will be told that everything is just fine. This is like Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian writer, writing in the early days of Nigerian independence. He said "we all have been in the rain together until yesterday, we have not been indoors enough but when our Masters left we barricaded ourselves and from within we sought to pursue everyone so that all arguments must cease and that all people must speak with one voice."

Fellow Namibians, it is a sad reality that the Swapo government that promised so much has totally failed in fulfilling those promises. Those

who were in exile have barricaded themselves with all the wealth that Namibia has and today while the majority of Namibians are faced with poverty, many of them have become millionaires. Yes, there will be those of you who, while reading this letter will say, can this guy not be happy for once on Independence Day?

Brothers and sisters, my conscience dictates to me that I cannot be happy and celebrate our independence while:

- * The majority of our people are suffering under severe poverty.

- * The Government has failed in addressing the ever increasing rate of unemployment.

- * The Swapo Party has betrayed history by amending the constitution for a third term for Nujoma. The Swapo Party has shown that they are not fit to govern this country.

- * The Swapo government despite the search for national reconciliation is promoting one tribe above the others.

How then, brothers and sisters, can one celebrate independence if this remains the status quo?

As we celebrate our independence we must be

ready as a nation to take stock of the mistakes of the past, so that we can enter the future with confidence. This is so because those of us who spearheaded the liberation struggle to this logical conclusion are not necessarily the heroes, but I believe those who laid the foundation are real heroes.

Namibians and the current Swapo government have not yet married one another. The truth is this lies in the fact that what Namibians want and what Swapo can offer are two different things. At the 9th independence celebrations Namibians must start with a soul searching exercise. Indeed we must ask ourselves whether Swapo is still fit to rule this country and if not what is the alternative?

It is sad, however, that many of us remain ignorant of what is really happening in this country. As long as we benefit from the system we are persuading everybody to say that everything is okay. However, the reality is that everything is not right.

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