

Letters to the Editor



Coup or no coup

IS that really the question?

At one time I believed very strongly that whoever is responsible for the Times of Namibia editorially, has some sort of death-wish. I could just not believe that anybody with a sane mind could write or allow such rubbish to be written as appears in the political columns of the Times. I even went to the extent of accepting, which I still do, that that person went out of his way to provoke the government into acting against the Times' brand of journalism - thus creating a 'martyr' out of him/her. How long

the democratic government will tolerate being belittled and called all sorts of names, is the question in the minds of so many Namibians, and let me assure the Times and DTA that they are many.

I think now that the Times is certain that there is no action that will be taken; there are even times when it reverts to naked racism in its description of 'black' African countries, while reference to South Africa creates the impression of a docile dog creeping with its tail between its legs in front of its master. Lest I deviate, let me return to the issue I am writing about.

The belief that whatever deliberately negative remarks or unfounded

accusations are made against the government will force it to collapse, borders on insanity. Boasting about bringing down the government single-handedly with such reports shock the imagination of any human being. It is with this in mind that I read of the 'Evidence on Namibian coup' in the October 5 edition of the Times.

The said newspaper reports extensively on evidence given by Josef Kleynhans, who told the court that some people tried to recruit him for a 'coup' against the government. The concept that it is only armies capable of staging coups, as repeatedly said by the Times, is so ridiculous, but their attempt to create the impression

that the arms theft was only a minor 'adventure', is, I feel an attempt to downplay the seriousness of the crime. The thieves will finally, in the eyes of the Times, be nothing more than 'youths in search of adventure'.

I hate to think what would have happened if such a theft took place in the previous dispensation and if the 'adventurers' were black and not white.

This comes after weeks of speculation in the same newspaper as to whether there was really a coup plot in Namibia or not. It is interesting, to say the least, that this newspaper should now have a headline report on the coup. One wonders about this paper's sense of journalistic ethics, for in the past couple of weeks it decried the coup story which was broken by The Namibian as a 'figment' of that paper's imagination.

Now the Times of Namibia will probably become the champion against the coup. It seems to be trendy for the Times to, on the one hand, deny the existence of a coup and on the other to be the first to report on evidence given about it.

Whether one calls it an intended coup or not, is purely academic. In

fact, the academic masturbation about coup or no coup does not impress the majority of Namibians. Let us look at the facts: numerous arms were stolen, surely not to play 'cowboys and crooks', but to cause irreparable harm. The aim was surely to create havoc in Namibia.

Now the opposition papers can call it what they want, can even give dissertations about 'classical' concepts of coups, but we, the Namibians, know the arms were stolen to disrupt our hardwon independence and democracy.

The same newspaper accused Swapo of gunning down Anton Lubowski and later was in the forefront in reporting CCB activities and its responsibility for his assassination.

It would seem, therefore, that the aim of the newspaper is to smear, to create suspicion, to portray chaos where there is peace, tranquility, stability and a functioning democracy. One wonders about the motives of the Times and thus the official opposition. It looks as though their aim is to undermine Namibia's

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democratically elected government.

Let me conclude by reminding the Times and like-minded newspapers: A free press? Sure. But that free press should have a responsibility. If the press cannot define it for themselves, then maybe the government should do it for them. What is needed is a code of journalistic ethics or something to define the parameters of responsible journalism in Namibia.

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Note: We agree with your last paragraph. A code of ethics for journalists is a necessity, and work will begin on this soon. - Ed.