

Multipartyism Disappoints ...

A LOT has been said about multi-party democracy and the need for a strong opposition, especially in Namibia. It is thus worthwhile to consider a few important issues in this regard.

Worldwide, but particularly in Africa, history has shown that, unfortunately, most new parties are fueled more by personal ambition and by hatred of the incumbent leadership than by a proper analysis of the real structural issues.

Such parties thrive especially during economic hardships. Examples are plentiful, but for the sake of brevity, only two will do for now:

* The Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) in Zambia, was a loose alliance of

strange bedfellows whose only claim to fame was hatred for Kaunda and UNIP. The MMD capitalised on the economic hardships to oust Kaunda and propel themselves to power. Now that the MMD are incumbents, and noting that they too can now be unseated easily because the economic maladies did not disappear despite their earlier promises to the contrary, by the same Kaunda they ousted, they decide to pre-empt the electoral battle by declaring him persona non grata.

* In the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin was shouting from the rooftops about the new free market system he was going to introduce. Almost ten years later Russia is in

its deepest economic crisis; they have moved from being a super power to being the world's largest and most sophisticated beggar.

One may ask 'but what has this got to do with Namibia?'. Well, everything. Namibia got its independence on the morrow of the new monopolar world dominated by the USA. The Western countries first regarded themselves as midwives of Namibia's independence, now they have gone further and granted themselves the rights of a parent! They forgot the Namibian Government has a mind of its own. Swapo set out to create a Namibia entirely in its own image and to re-integrate it into mother Africa.

To top it all, Swapo is seen to love the things that Westerners hate, and vice versa:

* Swapo started opposing homosexuality, like Mugabe. In the West homosexuality is a fashion statement.

* They started to be vocally pro-Africa.

* They started to amend the Constitution to allow for a third presidential term. The West fumed, even though in Germany Helmut Kohl was running for his fourth, wrong, fifth term. The UK still does not have a written constitution while ours is in cyberspace.

* Worst of all, Namibia defied America by sending troops to the DRC, again with Mugabe.

* Now Namibia is opposing Nato's killing spree in Yugoslavia.

So Namibia must be punished. But how? There is no economic crisis, no military instability. On the contrary, there is peace and stability, in fact too much of it! How about creating a 'virtual crisis'. Yet the influential newspapers write about corruption, self-aggrandisement, megalomania etc. Let there be headlines about deaths in the Congo, instability in Zimbabwe, about a resurgent Unita, fictitious human rights abuses in Namibia. In short, target the middle class and create in them a hunger for change.

There is plenty of money in the Western world for any projects or activities that purport to protect and promote democracy, human rights and environment. So any of you guys can create a party, just make sure words like democracy and human rights feature strongly.

So, will the new parties in Namibia make an

impact? Well, time will tell. We must, however, remember that ruling parties develop enviable strategies to remain in power and because there is no real crisis in Namibia apart from the virtual paper crisis it is much simpler for the ruling party to counteract any 'euphoria' created by the new party.

The 1999/2000 budget can be regarded as the opening shots for the ruling party. Even the staunchest critics of government are at a loss for words. The problem of Plan fighters, which the new party wanted to ride on, seems to be tackled once and for all. There is a tax breeze for everybody, and both labour and corporate citizens are all happy, including the fact that they were consulted!

Swapo will now fire more shots: His Excellency donated N\$5 000 to kick start a fund for the aged; he even danced with senior citizens and was praised lavishly by the WHO regional director for Africa.

* The government donated the cultural house to the OvaHerero;

* The Presidential Commission on Education will table its report in September and implementation can only enhance the image of the government;

* The gender policy was unanimously adopted in parliament and Namibia has in any case been hailed as a torchbearer for women's emancipation;

* the government can arrange the troops withdrawn from the DRC after security peace in Kinshasa and the western corridor;

* the National Youth Service will be launched soon;

* the Government can now intensify the land reform programme.

Virtually all the things the government needs to do to stay in power can be done well before the elections.

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Note: This letter has been shortened. - Ed

... And So Do Liberation Movements

WHY is it that liberation movements, whenever they come into power over Africa, turn out to be quite a disappointment after a period of time?

During the struggle and after independence, the expectations of the masses run very high. Leaders are regarded as heroes who would deliver the long-awaited freedom and socio-economic upliftment.

But after some time these expectations turn into disappointment. They are disappointed in the leadership, in the ground for lazy, unaccountable, non-transparent, undemocratic, irresponsible, complacent and intolerant leadership.

These negative characteristics were transplanted directly on to the government of Namibia when the exiled leaders took over power in the country. It is understandable that these leaders, now in their advanced years, cannot change their attitude. They can