

MONITOR Microscope

A Close-Up Look At Third World Events... And What They Could Mean To You

An Opposing View of Conditions in South West Africa/Namibia

There are many misconceptions about the internal political developments in Namibia/South West Africa. There are those who refuse to accept the truth about the strides the Namibian people have made under the leadership of the Democratic Turnhall Alliance (DTA), the majority-governing political coalition of the territory.

In order to dispel these misconceptions, we would like to target some of these major fallacies leading to misinformation regarding Namibia.

First, the often referred to belief that blacks do not have the right to vote is totally incorrect. Namibia has a black majority rule government as a result of the 1978 election. In this election 91% of all eligible voters (those over 18 years of age) were registered to vote and 73% of those registered cast their votes in the first election held on the basis of "one man, one vote."

Not only do blacks have the right and ability to vote but they dominate the present governmental authority, the Council of Ministers, as well as the National Assembly. In the Council of Ministers, 10 positions are held by blacks and two by whites. The same percentages hold in the National Assembly—45 blacks and 5 whites.

Second, it is often heard that the richest and most fertile land has been appropriated by the white population leaving only the barren and non-productive land to the native ethnic groups. Nothing could be further from the truth. The richest and the only part of Namibia that receives enough rainfall to do some row cropping is in the northern portion along the Angolan border known as Owamboland. This area, which covers 12.85 million acres and supports 500,000 people, is totally occupied by the Owambo people. The entire area of Namibia south of Owamboland receives very inadequate

**In December 1981, MONITOR Microscope published an account of Namibia as it moves toward independence. Certain of the statements contained appeared to be controversial. This article gives the opposing view for the information of the readers.*



The members of the duly elected Council of Ministers of Namibia. Standing l. to r.: G. Kasche, G. Tibinyane, H.J. von Hase, P. Limbo and G. Sivhute. Seated l. to r.: D. Luipert, E.H.L. Christy, B.J. Africa, D. Mudge (Chairman), K. Riruako, T. Imbili and J. Julius.



Karakul sheep and herdsman in southern Namibia.

rainfall for any farming except the raising of cattle and sheep and this must be done in very careful fashion, usually one animal for every 10 to 20 acres of ground. The fact is, therefore, that the black population of Namibia is in control of the most productive part of the country for farming purposes.

Third, it is often stated that black people in Namibia are not allowed to purchase and own real estate. This also is totally in error since the right of ownership to property is protected under legislation passed by the National Assembly and anyone in the country, no matter what his

or her ethnic origin, may buy and own property in any location.

In addition, those areas that were originally occupied by black ethnic groups are controlled totally by a council elected in a democratic fashion by the people themselves. They may admit or reject whomever they wish, and therefore, in practice these lands are reserved for blacks.

Fourth, the most frequently applied misconception to the country is that South African applied apartheid still exists. First it should be understood that all

executive authority was transferred by the South African government to the National Assembly of Namibia on April 1, 1982 and that this authority is fully used on a daily basis by the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers to rule the country.

On the subject of apartheid and for those interested in assuring themselves that it no longer exists should turn their attention to the "Official Gazette" of South West Africa of Wednesday, July 11, 1979 and specifically to Public Law No. 3 of that document entitled "Abolishment of Racial Discrimination Act, 1979." There follows in this Act two and one half pages of definition of every kind of discrimination that could possibly be thought of and finally the section that makes such acts an offense punishable by law in the following words:

"4. (1) Any person who contravenes any provision of section 3 shall be guilty of an offense and be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding 300 rand or imprisonment for a period not exceeding 3 months."

Fifth, contrary to some misconception, there is no martial law imposed on Namibia by anyone at the present time. It is true that in the very northern part of the country in Owamboland and near the border with Angola, certain rules have been established in order to protect the people from the terrorist raids conducted by SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) agents who cross the border, usually at night and in small bands. Two of these measures are: (1) a curfew during the hours of darkness which is imposed strictly to protect the local inhabitants from the marauding bands of terrorists; (2) before anyone can move around on the roads of Owamboland, they are "swept" by the military forces which means that heavy vehicles pushing large rollers travel all roads commencing at daybreak in order to explode any land mines placed during the night by the terrorists. Such measures as these could hardly be referred to as martial law which would be a total suspension of the court system and all local authority which is not the case in Owamboland.

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