

ANDIMBA TOIVO YA TOIVO

By *Ben Turok*

New Agenda wishes to add our voice to mourn the passing of Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo, one of the founders of the new state of Namibia. We have a special reason for remembering him as he came to Cape Town as a migrant worker in the early 1950s where he soon made contact with members of the Modern Youth Society, a nonracial organization of young people in broad support of the aims of the liberation movement.

Toivo Ya Toivo was new to some of the issues being debated there but he was ever avid to join in private discussions, thereby making friendships that lasted long afterwards. In later years when he was in the Namibian government he often remarked that his contacts in Cape Town provided a solid foundation for his later deeper involvement in the struggle.

When he was in Cape Town the country was going through a deep period of crisis with the defiance campaign and much increased activity by the Special Branch who were increasingly vigilant against any sign of opposition. Toivo Ya Toivo had to be very discreet in his contacts with the South African movement but he was deeply interested in everything going on.

In 1960 he founded the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) which led the struggle for Namibian independence. He was arrested in 1966 with 31 comrades and tried under the Terrorism Act of 1967. He spent many years on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela and his comrades. He gained infamy during his incarceration for



Toivo Ya Toivo

refusing to submit to authority, once even striking a warder who had assaulted him. His refusal to submit to authority earned him numerous stays in solitary confinement. He was eventually released from prison in 1984.



Following his release from prison Toivo Ya Toivo went into exile and continued his commitment to the struggle against Apartheid and South Africa's occupation of Namibia. After Namibia gained its independence, Toivo Ya Toivo dedicated his energies to improving the country as Minister of Mines and Energy from 1990 to 1999, as Minister of Labour from 1999 to 2002 and as Minister of Police and Correctional Services from 2002 until his retirement in 2006.

Toivo Ya Toivo was more than just a political figure he was also a devout family man. He leaves behind his wife Vicki, his twin daughters Nashikoto and Mutaleni, his adopted sons Philemon and Isaack, and numerous relatives who cared for him deeply.

We mark his contribution to the history of our region and honour his dedication. **NA**