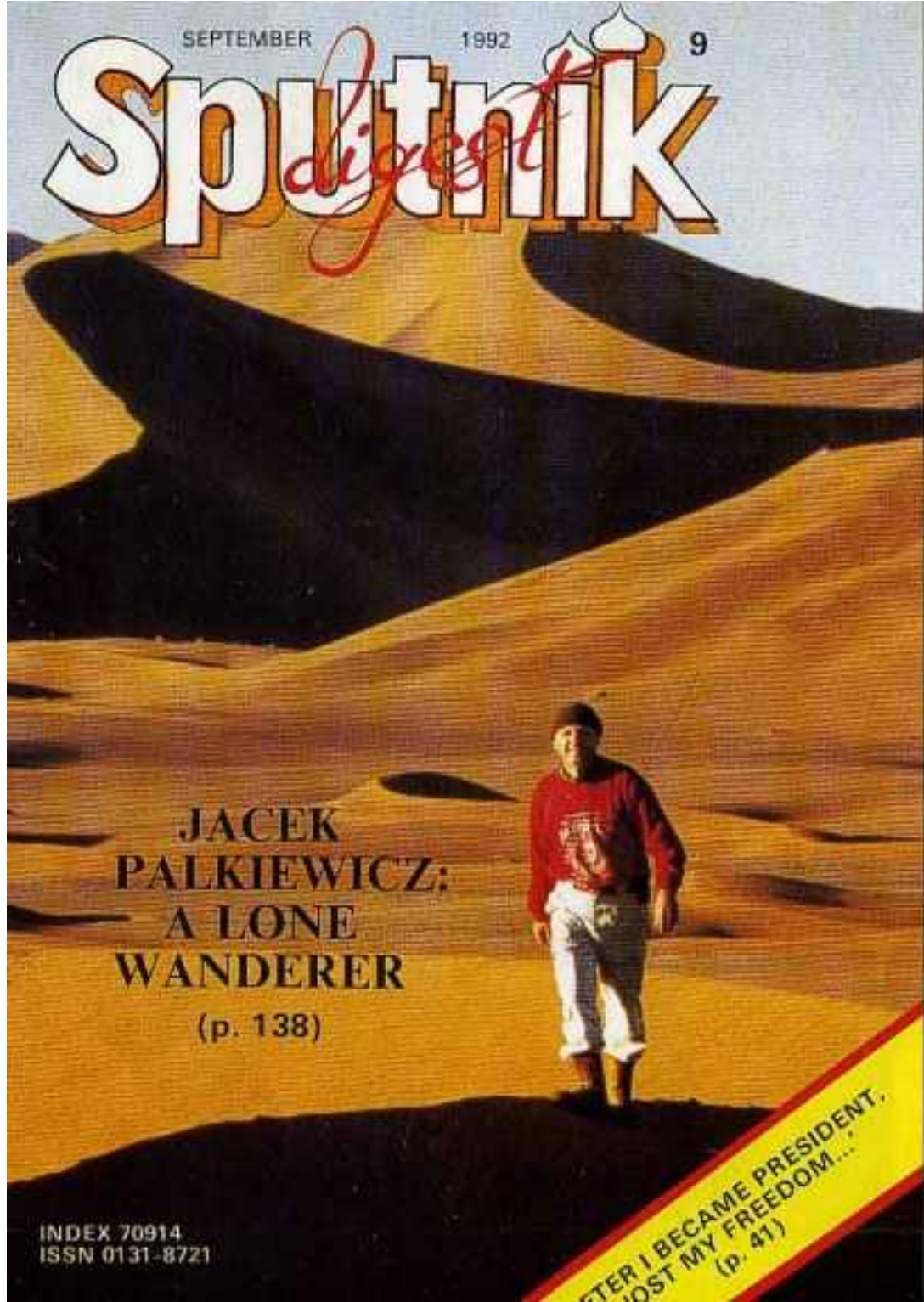


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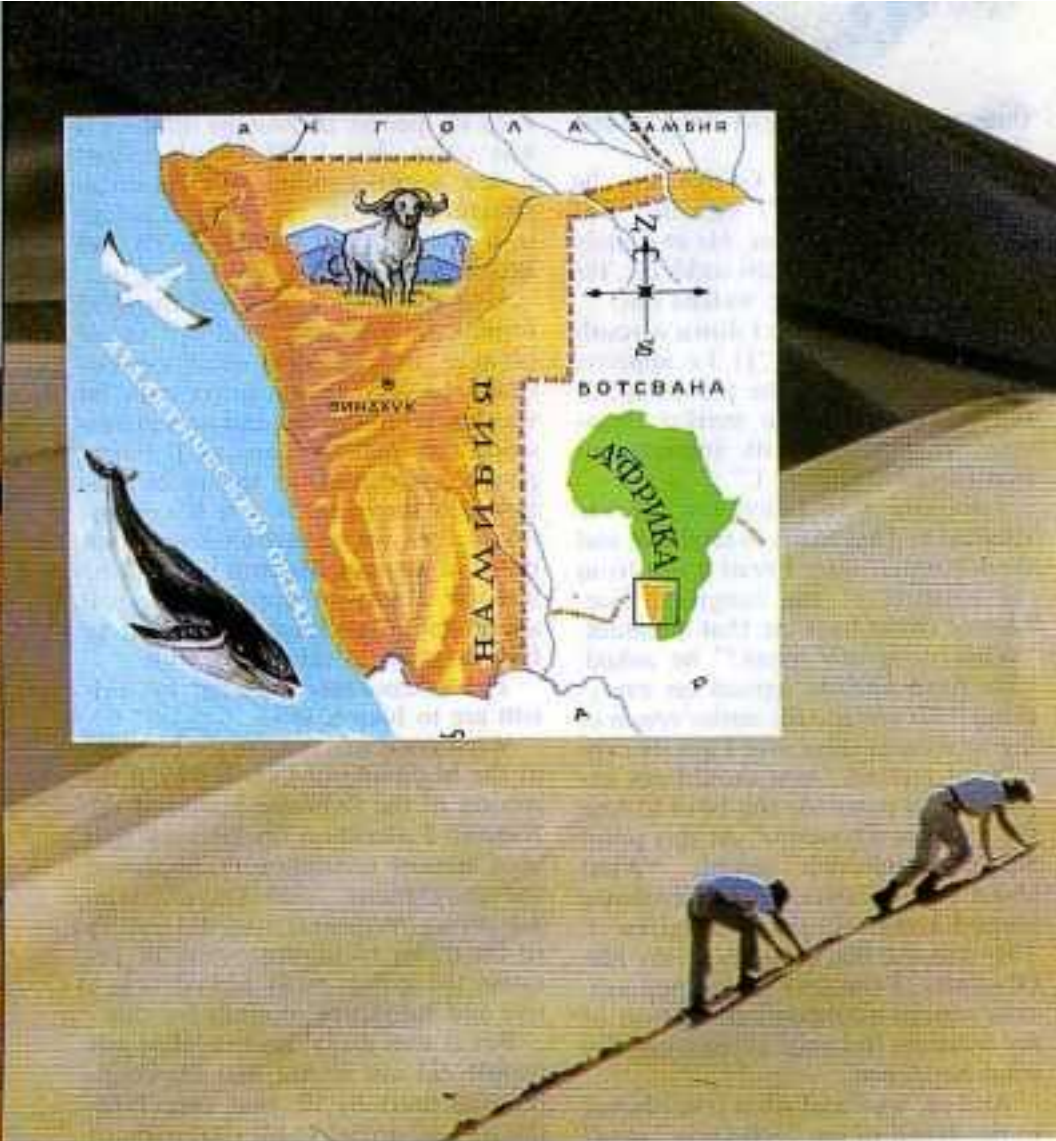


**JACEK
PALKIEWICZ:
A LONE
WANDERER**

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**...TER I BECAME PRESIDENT,
...OST MY FREEDOM...
(p. 41)**



IN THE COUNTRY OF ETERNAL FOGS

by Jacek PALKIEWICZ

Photo by the author

Drawing by Kira ULANOVA

Windhoek, Namibia's capital, with broad streets, noiseless cars, the plate-glass of supermarkets and cafes, is more like a provincial American town, where diamond-green grass glistens in the gardens, where numerous bright flowers grow in flower-beds and, most surprising, heat waves never occur, because the city is 1,650 metres above sea level. Only when you raise your eyes to the sky, do you realize that you are in Africa.

Out of town you come across the wretched thatched huts of Ovambo nomad herdsman, who still wear their skirts of goat skins and speak in the local dialect. White people live in isolation on big farms where houses are screened by the trees from the scorching sun. But you begin to feel the hot breath of the Black Continent in the savanna, with its sun-scorched grass, near solitary acacias half covered with vast nests of birds.

The coast is grim and forbidding. The ocean brings cold waves to the steep banks. Frequent fogs and the innumerable shipwrecks caused by them earned the ill fame of a coast of skeletons. To this day the waves roll over the rusting ship wrecks, and cast out bones of seals, whales and big violet shells. The surf line is traced with soft white foam. It is the plankton providing food for the fish and big lobsters.

There is such a big crop of whale bones that in Swakopmund and Walvis Bay they are used to make fences. The sand has unusually different colours. It may be of a rose-lilac colour in places where waves for centuries ground down amethyst rocks, golden

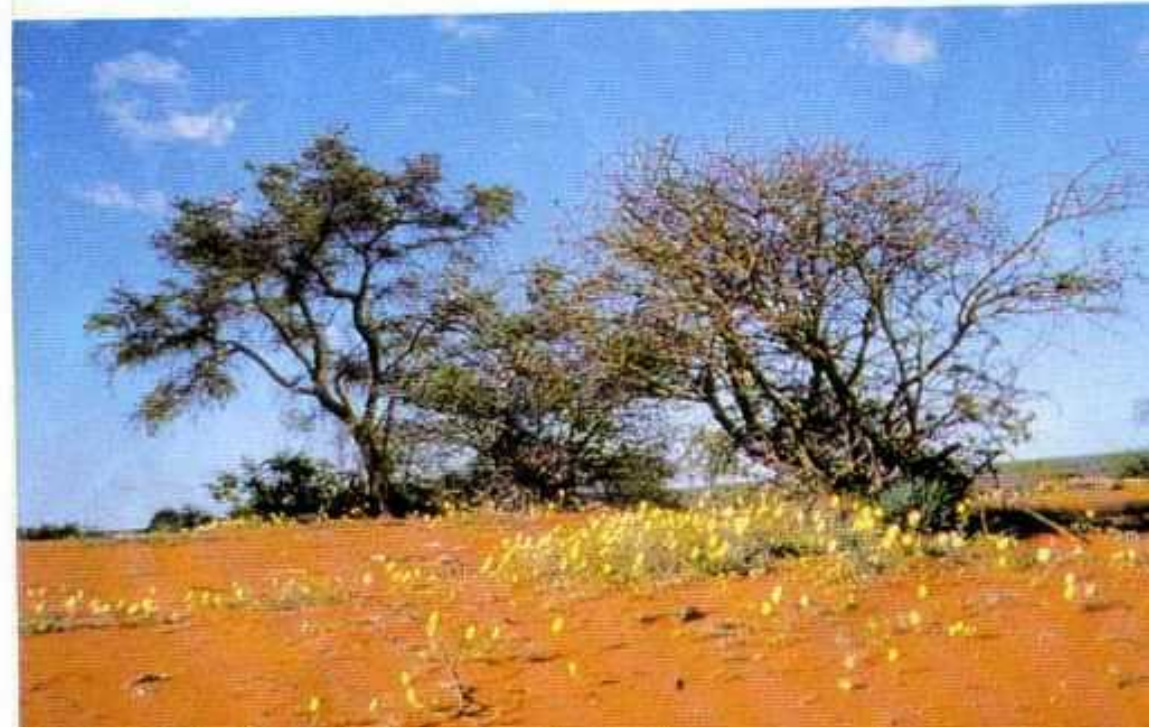
in the dunes descending to the very coastline, dark and even black where the waves come in contact with granite and basalt rocks and, finally, crystal-clear nearby quartzite fields.

You look forward to the coming of the night as a great relief. The air becomes fresh, the sultry sun retreats, the stars stretching to the horizon emit mild light, and the South Cross seems to be close at hand. The temperature of the air drops sharply and you cannot get warm even in a sleeping bag. You fall to sleep rocked by the night stillness and day's impressions. The next day brings new meetings and adventures.

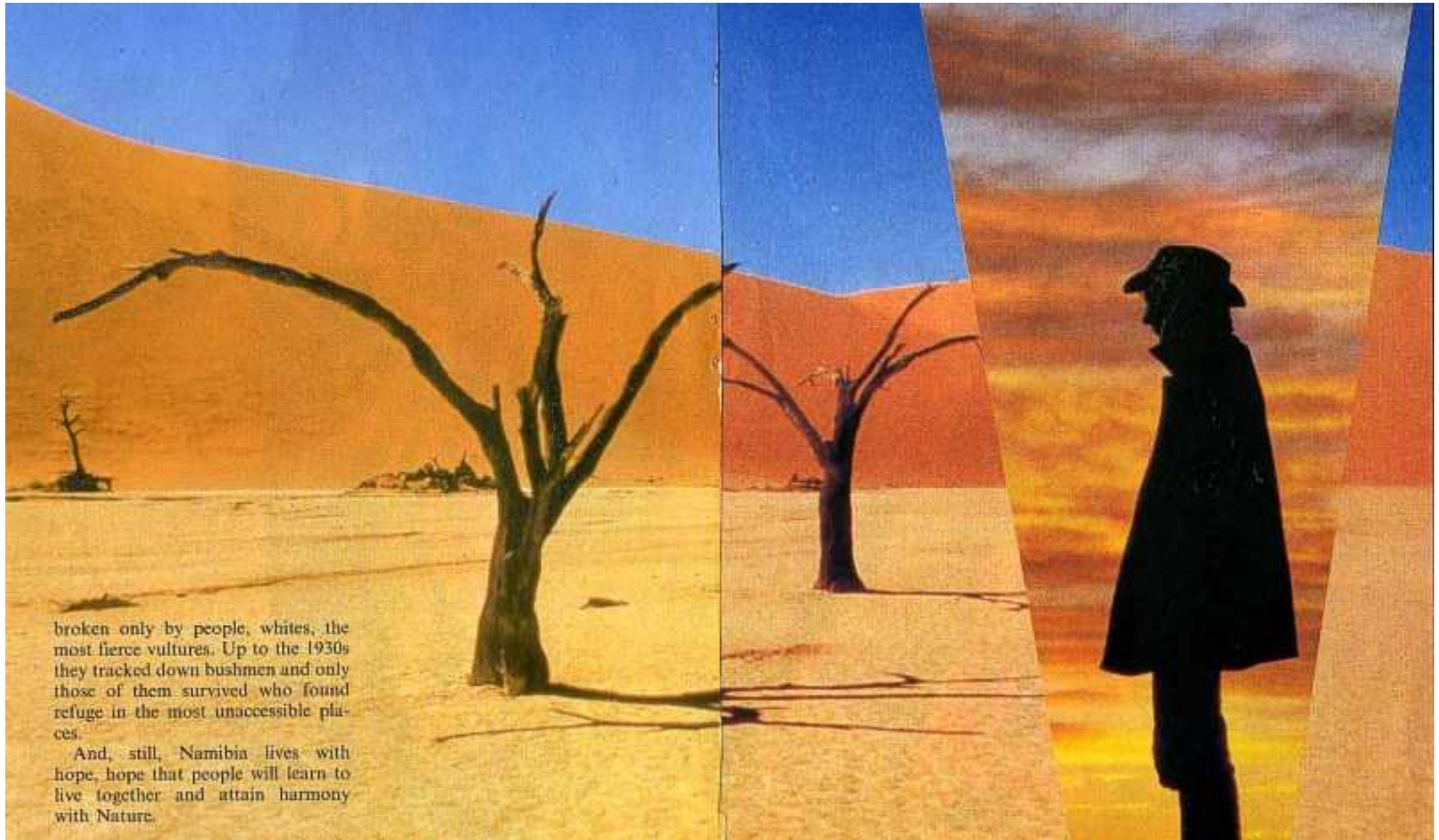
During the trip we met Herero women. To this day they wear the clothes of the first German colonist

women who lived on those lands: long skirts and narrow blouses with long sleeves, and their heads are crowned with turbans the ends of which are wound around the forehead in a broad tight band. At the beginning of the century 80,000 Hereros rebelled against German domination and the confiscation of the best lands. But it ended dismally for the local people—65,000 Hereros out of 80,000 were killed. The powers that be prefer not to mention this slaughter.

The Etosh national park is one of the biggest in Africa. Dozens of species of the ungulate, beasts of prey and rodents romp, jump, crawl and hide on its territory as big as Switzerland...The natural rhythm of life is



Namibia is a wondrous country. Although it is three times bigger than Italy in area, its population is small—just 1,200,000. To get a full picture of this state in the south of Africa, on the Atlantic coast, you must cross it by landrover. Roads gradually become hardly visible in the dry grass and ultimately disappear, giving way to mountains or savanna.



broken only by people, whites, the most fierce vultures. Up to the 1930s they tracked down bushmen and only those of them survived who found refuge in the most inaccessible places.

And, still, Namibia lives with hope, hope that people will learn to live together and attain harmony with Nature.