

SWAPO'S Objections Gain African Support

[AN] Speaking in Nigeria last week, the president of the South West African People's Organization of Namibia (SWAPO), Sam Nujoma, predicted that only intensified warfare "will convince South Africa and its allies that a peaceful settlement is necessary."

Nujoma got the backing of Nigerian President Shagari for SWAPO's position that the election proposal drawn up by the Western Contact Group is too cumbersome to ensure a free and fair vote in the disputed territory.

SWAPO's stance was also endorsed by the African front-line states — Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe — at their May 4 meeting in Dar es Salaam.

Defending the Western proposals, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker declared during a visit to the Ivory Coast last week that the proposed two-tier election plan is fair for all. Crocker went to the west African state after successive meetings in Geneva with South Africa's chief Namibia negotiator, Brand Fourie, and then with representatives from the other members of the Contact Group — Britain, Canada, France and West Germany. On May 17, the foreign ministers from the five issued a call "to accelerate the resolution of outstanding issues," following their meeting on the Namibia issue during a North Atlantic Treaty Organization session in Luxembourg.

Deep suspicions about the Contact Group's intentions apparently lie behind SWAPO's objections. The Namibian movement seems to have a particular distrust of the Reagan administration, which has forged a close relationship with the South African government during the past 16 months.

Here are major portions of the SWAPO statement outlining the group's reasons for rejecting the election proposal:

SWAPO Memorandum To The Western Five

Pretoria, no doubt understands that SWAPO will win if free, fair and honest elections are held in Namibia. Therefore, the apartheid regime is trying its best to prevent a SWAPO electoral victory. We are convinced that the idea of "one man one vote, one vote two counts" or "one man two votes," as it were, is contrived in order to create special circumstances under which SWAPO could be deprived of the chance of gaining two-thirds majority of the seats in the Constituent Assembly required to adopt Namibia's independence constitution. With SWAPO deprived of such two-thirds majority through specially contrived, and indeed, dishonest electoral method, Pretoria would have opportunity to use its political puppets to

start an endless debate on the constitution and, ultimately, to delay the granting of independence to Namibia.

This is why the South African rulers felt the need to resort to a complicated and totally unjustifiable electoral procedure. This procedure is clearly designed to ensure, on the one hand, guaranteed representation for the white minorities in the Constituent Assembly. This becomes clear when we consider the low 2% (instead of the standard 5%) ceiling or cut-off point [to qualify a party for representation in the assembly] which the Five have proposed. On the other hand, the choice of such an electoral double standard is aimed at giving Pretoria an opportunity to use and accentuate tribal or ethnic factors against SWAPO.

The Five have now put forth, in the latest proposal, Single Member Constituency as the preferred voting procedure. SWAPO has consistently pointed out that, desirable as it may be, the procedure of Single-Member Constituency would create its own problems. It is, for instance, clear that while it is possible to conduct elections without census being taken under Proportional Representation, Single-Member Constituency procedure will require complete census, under UN supervision, of the population, demarcation of the country into constituencies and, finally, registration of voters. Could it be possible to agree beforehand to this entire procedure having no notion whatsoever as to specifically how many people would be required, how and whether all that most important work can be fulfilled within the seven months stipulated in the UN Plan for UNTAG [UN Transition Assistance Group] operations? No responsible political organization, not SWAPO in any case, can give such a consent in advance. Yet, the discussions of the composition, size and deployment of UNTAG is postponed to "Phase Two".

The experience of the last six months has shown that the phased approach to the negotiations is being used to force SWAPO to, step by step, make concessions, sometimes irreversible ones, while South Africa is yielding practically nothing. Pretoria has as yet made no binding commitment to grant independence to Namibia.

Moreover, those who keep harping on about UN impartiality are insulting the intelligence of those UN Member States who have voted for General Assembly Resolution 3111 of December, 1973. They are also glossing over the fact that the real problem about lack of impartiality is South Africa which has more than 40,000 civil servants and police force in Namibia and has unilaterally turned Walvis Bay into a

huge military garrison. These South African civil servants and police are well-known for their open hostility toward SWAPO. Yet, they will have an important role to play in the administration of elections. Therefore, the fact is that the question of impartiality is not only a two-way street, but also that the onus is actually more on South Africa than the UN to demonstrate impartiality. Here, too, the issue of so-called confidence building cannot be

meaningfully dealt with in isolation from the adoption of electoral procedure, agreement on the size, composition, deployment of UNTAG personnel as well as agreement on the dates of the ceasefire and arrival of UNTAG in Namibia.

In our opinion, the most correct way of speeding up the negotiations is to consider seriously the constructive proposal of SWAPO on convening, under UN auspices, a new Geneva-type Conference in the

course of which suggestions of all parties that are involved in the whole complex of the Namibian settlement could be examined.

It is in the light of the foregoing that we, once again, appeal to the Five to seriously consider, as a matter of urgency, our proposal for the holding of a Geneva-type Conference to discuss and resolve all the outstanding issues, that is, all issues involved in the three phases.

In suggesting this, we proceed from the

assumption that the Five are correct in what they told us that, unlike in January 1981, South Africa is now ready to proceed with the implementation of the UN Plan for the independence of Namibia.

Thus, in short, we are appealing that the Western Five show their good will and give their necessary support to this constructive proposal of SWAPO.

SWAPO would like to know the Five's point of view on the essence of this proposal.

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