
NAMIBIA SHALL BE FREE

INTRODUCTION

The struggle for a democratic republic in Namibia has reached unprecedented heights. The full implementation of resolution 435 will surely lead to the attainment of national self-determination and sovereignty for the Namibian people. A number of factors came into play to change the alignment of political forces in favour of democracy and national liberation. This resulted in the Pretoria government being suddenly prepared to negotiate a process that will lead to free and fair democratic elections.

The aim of this article is to uncover and explain the processes and factors that had a bearing on Pretoria's sudden change. In doing this, an examination of the following points will be made:-

- 1. Namibia as mandated territory.**
- 2. The role of the masses in the struggle as led by SWAPO.**
- 3. Regional balance of forces.**
- 4. The deepening crisis inside South Africa.**
- 5. Will Namibia's independence mark the end of Colonialism in Africa?**
- 6. Solidarity with SWAPO.**

In conclusion, the article shows that it is the defeat of the SADF at Cuito Cuanavale which paved the way for the independence process in Namibia. The combined effect of the forces ranged against apartheid colonialism weakened the enemy forces. It is not "reasonable" diplomacy on the part of Pretoria and her imperialist allies which suddenly changed hearts in favour of independence in Namibia.

1. NAMIBIA AS A MANDATED TERRITORY

It is only in recent times that the principle of self-determination of peoples has been recognised as applicable to people other than the states of Europe and a very small group of Asian, South American and African states (e.g., Ethiopia and Liberia). The principle found partial, but inconsistent, expression, even in Europe, because international affairs until after the First World War were governed by the rule that "might was right". It is on the basis of this principle that Africa was carved up at the Congress of Berlin in 1885 and various areas allocated to various imperialist powers.

The territory that we now know as Namibia was first colonised by the Germans in 1883. They occupied the territory in the face of powerful tribal resistance. German firepower, based on a relatively advanced economic system, was too great to withstand. The Germans perpetrated massacres almost unprecedented in the already bloody history of colonialism.

During the First World War, Namibia was captured by the Union Defence Force, acting on behalf of Britain. At that time the principle of self-determination was being raised in a powerful form in the international arena. The 1917 October revolution in Russia made this principle one of the cornerstones of its policy. In terms of that principle, the state of Finland was allowed to secede from Russia (it was not yet the USSR) and various unequal treaties with Asian states, entered into by the Tsar, were annulled.

The Bolsheviks called for the principle of self-determination to be universally applicable and for a total ban on the use of force in international relations. Annexation of territory, they argued, was illegal. Partly to blunt the impact of these views, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States also advanced a plea for self-determination. It was clear, however, that while Britain and other imperialist countries were content with the rhetoric, they were not prepared to see their empires dissolved.

It is out of this situation that the mandate system, applied to Namibia (then known as South West Africa), was introduced. One of the principles of self-determination that was accepted, however reluctantly, at the Versailles peace talks was that the territories belonging to the defeated powers would not, as happened previously, simply be annexed by the victors. But the powers were not at that stage prepared to entertain the idea of independence for these territories.

The mandate system, applied to a variety of territories in Asia and Africa, was described as a “sacred trust of civilization” in the text of the treaty. Lenin, however depicted it as “legalised robbery”. The territory was handed over to South Africa to administer, on behalf of Britain. The territory was not the property of either Britain or South Africa, but one enjoying a special international status, with the administering powers supposedly responsible to the international community.

In subsequent years the South African state tried at various moments to annex the territory, but that was always refused by the League of Nations and the United Nations. When the National Party came to power, after the formation of the UN, they launched a more aggressive effort aimed at annexation. This failed and led to a series of requests for advisory opinions from the International Court of Justice. These opinions held that South Africa had no right to annex the territory.

In the meanwhile, SA introduced its apartheid laws fully into the territory, in the face of a great deal of international criticism. This led to a case initiated by Liberia and Ethiopia, against the South African government, declaring its mode of applying the mandate illegal. In the course of very long proceedings, the case became very formalistic and the composition of the court changed, due to deaths of judges and other factors. In the end, they rendered a decision that amounted to saying that they had no jurisdiction, partly contradicting an earlier decision of the court. This led SWAPO to take up arms in 1966.

The African, Asian (who now were numerous) and Socialist states were outraged by the decision and the General Assembly decided to revoke the Mandate, i.e., take it away from South Africa, and declared SA's continued

occupation to be illegal. This view was confirmed by a 1970 Advisory opinion of the International court (reconstituted with a broader representation), which held that SA's continued occupation was illegal and that the international community had a duty to bring this illegal situation to an end.

2. NAMIBIA WILL BE FREE, BECAUSE OF THE HEROIC STRUGGLES OF THE NAMIBIAN PEOPLE LED BY SWAPO

What the commercial press and the bourgeoisie's analysts have sought to do, in analysing the forces that came into play to make independence possible, is to exclude the contribution of the Namibian people. This view undermines the history of heroic struggle waged by Namibians under the leadership of SWAPO.

Ever since, the Germans colonised Namibia in 1883, Namibians have never submitted to the enemy. The struggle for national liberation did not cease when the South African racists took over Namibia. Namibia's history is the history of resistance to colonialism and exploitation. The product of these struggles was the formation of SWAPO in 1960.

The combination of mass mobilisation and armed struggle weakened the SADF and SA's capacity to continue with the war. Over the last ten years, labour, student and church organisations increased the mobilisation and organisation of the people for democratic transformation. PLAN's military battle continued to deliver powerful blows to the racist army. SWAPO's international campaign to isolate SA was part of the overall offensive to destroy apartheid colonialism and replace it with a non-racial, unitary and democratic Namibia.

The Namibian people should therefore see the coming independence as their victory. It is the fruits of selfless sacrifices made by oppressed Namibians, who wanted freedom in their life time.

We salute these finest sons and daughters of Namibia who sacrificed their lives at great cost for the liberation of Namibia.

This analysis does not exclude other factors which combined to force the South African regime to negotiations. Here a note should be made of the changing regional balance of forces and the contribution of the Angolan people, the Cuban international forces, the OAU and the Socialist system. Were it not for the selfless support of these forces, independence would still remain a distant possibility.

3a. REGIONAL BALANCE OF FORCES

The late 70's and 80's have been years of increasing isolation for the apartheid state. From 1974, the countries of Southern Africa got their independence. In quick succession, Mozambique, Angola and later Zimbabwe attained their independence. Over the years, SA has sought to limit the impact of its encirclement.

It has used various methods aimed at robbing these states of the fruits of independence and intimidating them to stop supporting Namibia and SA's struggles. As a result, none of the neighbouring frontline states have known peace nor had the chance to act free of South African aggression.

This continued extension of apartheid domination over the region has meant that the peoples of the frontline states have a common interest with our people and the people of Namibia in eliminating apartheid colonialism.

For 14 years, the Angolan people in particular have shed much blood. The independence of Namibia will free them from war. It is the Angolan people who shouldered the responsibility of fighting the SADF and UNITA.

The Angolan armed forces were the first in Africa to engage the SADF in conventional warfare. The region united in battle against the common enemy demonstrates internationalism of the highest order.

3b. FROM CUITO CUANAVALA TO WINDHOEK !

From the middle of 1987, the regional balance of forces began to swing in favour of the forces of democracy and progress. SA's imperialist ambitions were being blown to pieces by the relentless efforts of FAPLA - CUBAN forces. SA sent 3 000 troops into southern Angola to save Savimbi from a humiliating defeat.

In the face of invading South African forces, Dos Santos called on the Cuban crack units for help. 10 000 members of these units were sent by Comrade Fidel Castro. In a matter of days, the nose of the SADF was bloodied. The defeat of the SADF at Cuito Cuanavale had both international and national effect. The Cuban - FAPLA forces translated the American slogan, of making the world a safe place for democracy, from a hypocritical imperialist phrase into a reality.

SA's humiliating defeat at Cuito Cuanavale must be seen against the backdrop of its years of aggression towards independent states. For years SA's military machine seemed invincible. South Africa had always practised its "tried and tested quick-strike approach". This always resulted in limited loss of its own troops and maximum destruction of the people in the region. South Africa dominated the air space.

This placed SA's racist forces at an advantage. The development of sophisticated war machinery in Angola changed the equation in favour of FAPLA and PLAN forces. Angola had just developed young pilots recently trained in the Soviet Union. Thus the strategic initiative was no longer determined by South Africa's military strength.

4. PRETORIA IS IN DEEP CRISIS !

South Africa is deeply engulfed by a crisis which is the worst of its kind in South Africa's history. It cannot extricate itself from this crisis without talking to the ANC.

The result of such negotiations should be the democratic transformation of the political and economic structures of our country. This crisis is political, economic and ideological. It is political, in that it cannot mobilise consent for its racist colonialist policies.

Its political structures have collapsed in disarray. The tri-cameral parliament and black local authorities have been rendered unworkable. The elections of October 1988 dealt a final blow to the constitutional schemes of the racist regime.

Presently, there is a widening gap between the Nats and their collaborators. The bantustans are riddled with corruption and scandals. The Nats cannot mobilise the "Volk" as one collective entity. There is dissension within the ranks of the Nats. This fluid situation has opened up possibilities for the further isolation of the Nats. They have no political will and vision. They have come to a deadend !

5. IS NAMIBIA AFRICA'S LAST COLONY?

The commercial press and imperialist forces have said that Namibia will be Africa's last colony. The oppressed and exploited people of SA do not agree with this view. Our perspective is informed by understanding that the oppressed and exploited masses of our country, together with colonised Namibians, have for some time been ruled by the same colonial power. It is the same apartheid colonialism that has denied black people in SA and Namibia full rights. It has denied both communities national self-determination. The same regime has insisted on fragmenting the oppressed of these two countries into tribal entities.

Whilst Namibia is a colony of South Africa, in a classic sense, black SA is a colony of a special type for white SA. The South African masses together with the Namibian people are facing a common enemy. The struggle for national self-determination in SA is integrally connected with the

independence struggle of Namibia. The winning of national independence by the people of Namibia represents a qualitative change in our struggle. It widens the horizons of freedom and brings the possibilities of democratic transformation in SA closer.

PRETORIA GET OUT OF WALVIS BAY !!

Namibia is one country and Walvis Bay is part of Namibia. It is Namibia's only deep-sea fishing port. The South African government and the multinational companies exploit the national resources of Namibia. The Namibians are not benefiting from the wealth created by Walvis Bay. SA's insistence on having Walvis Bay under its control is part of its imperialist ambitions. In case SA's puppet groups fail to win in the democratic elections, it wants to use Walvis Bay for counter-revolutionary purposes. Elements of Koevoet will remain long after the elections. We, the people of SA, should demand that SA should completely move out of Namibia.

A SWAPO VICTORY IS OUR VICTORY !

5. SOLIDARITY WITH SWAPO !

The common experience of living under the same colonial power places a responsibility on the people of SA to demonstrate internationalism by working towards a SWAPO victory in the coming elections. The MDM (i.e., COSATU and UDF affiliates) and the ANC have called for solidarity with the people of Namibia. We must look at different ways of giving assistance. A SWAPO victory will open vistas for our own liberation.

COSATU's affiliates have taken the lead in setting up solidarity committees. The Wits region of COSATU has set up a committee to look at ways of helping the Namibian people. This work of solidarity should move into other

sectors of the MDM. It should be a collective responsibility of the MDM to organise our people. We should integrate this work into our political campaigns.

The work of solidarity may involve, among other things:-

- 1. Popularisation of the cause of Namibia.**
- 2. Drawing the links between the two struggles.**
- 3. Organising material support for SWAPO, e.g., making T-shirts and giving material assistance.**

SA and big business are pumping millions of rands into puppet and reactionary political parties for election campaigning. The onus is on us to undermine these efforts.

Conclusion:

From the above, it becomes clear that the cumulative effects of the forces fighting apartheid colonialism and aggression contributed heavily towards setting in process independence in Namibia and peace in Angola. This process has positive effects on the oppressed masses of South Africa. Our task is to deepen the crisis for this state. In engaging the enemy we must at the same time throw our support behind SWAPO in the coming elections.

**A SWAPO VICTORY IS
A BLOW AGAINST APARTHEID !!**

**A SWAPO VICTORY IS
A STEP TOWARDS PEACE IN THE REGION !!
FORWARD TO NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE !**

QUESTIONS

- a. Why did SWAPO resort to armed struggle in 1966?**
- b. What factors came together to create conditions favouring Namibian independence?**
- c. Why was the SADF defeat at Cuito Cuanavale a deciding factor in creating conditions favourable to Namibian independence?**
- d. "A SWAPO victory is our victory"**
Why is this slogan true?
In what way can we help SWAPO to win a victory?