

Namibia

Nujoma: No Reason to Trust South Africa

Speaking before the United Nations General Assembly on October 18, SWAPO President Sam Nujoma presented a strong and uncompromising statement on the question of negotiated independence for Namibia.

Explicit in his address was SWAPO's skepticism about the potential for a negotiated settlement, which leave it no alternative but to escalate the armed struggle.

"In spite of the now well-publicized diplomatic move by the Five Western members of the United Nations Security Council, i.e. the United States of America, Britain, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Canada, towards a negotiated settlement to the Namibian problem, the situation in Namibia has not changed for the better," he emphasized.

"When observed from a distance, this situation seems to be moving in the direction of a negotiated resolution of the conflict. However, upon a close examination, one discovers that Pretoria is not genuinely prepared to relinquish her oppressive and illegal occupation of our country."

Vorster Holds On

To back this up, he cited numerous examples of actions taken by the South African government to entrench its hold over the territory. These include the all-white referendum held on May 17 this year; the moves to turn Namibia into a confederation of eleven Bantustans which carry out the spirit of the Turnhalle Constitutional talks even though they have been officially ended by the South African government; the training of tribal armies; the annexation of Walvis Bay in August and the continued arrests, trials and heavy sentences—including a hanging—imposed by the South African government against SWAPO militants.

These acts served to confirm SWAPO's view that South Africa has no serious intention of letting go in Namibia, said Nujoma, and explained why SWAPO did not enter the negotiations with high hopes for the out-



Sam Nujoma, President of SWAPO

come. However, operating on the principle that "negotiations are also a form of struggle," SWAPO had agreed to "take the risk of accepting their [the five Western powers'] offer to serve as a contact group between the South African regime and SWAPO."

At that time the organization expressed its doubts based on the long history of failed efforts in this regard. "We have been taken for a ride, not once but many times in the past," Nujoma said. "We told them too that as major trade partners to South Africa they are in a powerful position to oblige Pretoria to relinquish her illegal occupation," but this very fact means that the interests of SWAPO and of the "Five" were not the same. "We told them," he continued, "that they have, up until now, sided in our country with colonialism, racism and exploitation . . . conditions [which gave] birth to SWAPO."

According to Nujoma, SWAPO agrees to elections in the territory on condition that the South African armed forces are withdrawn and that all Namibian political prisoners are

released. He argued eloquently against the view, to which even some of SWAPO's friends subscribe, that the movement's refusal to go forward with elections is linked to its uncertainty about popular support inside Namibia.

"Consciously or unconsciously those who make such insinuations are in fact asking us to commit national suicide."

Inhibiting Free Elections

The South African army and police "constitute both a physical and psychological inhibition to prevent hundreds of thousands of the Namibian people from ever being able to express their genuine political positions. Many of these people would simply not believe that they would not be arrested, detained, tortured or expelled from their jobs the following morning if one day they choose to identify themselves with SWAPO activities.

It is hardly surprising that South Africa's refusal to withdraw its troops is seen by SWAPO as a major stumbling block in the path towards a negotiated independence. SWAPO would not accept the continued presence of South African troops in Namibia, but it was prepared to accept the presence of a United Nations peace-keeping force. Such a force should arrive in Namibia prior to the election campaign, and would serve to insure genuine popular participation in the election process.

Peace-keeping Force

The question of the peace-keeping force was taken up two days later when *Southern Africa* interviewed President Nujoma at his New York hotel. In a relaxed and cordial atmosphere, the bearded SWAPO leader explained why his liberation movement held a position different from that of the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front on the potential role of a UN force. The Front was opposed to any intervention by a UN force in Zimbabwe. While colonialism exists in both countries, he said the situation in Namibia is slightly different because it is under UN trusteeship. "The United Nations still has a responsibility towards the Namibian

people. It is for this reason that we believe that a peaceful solution can only be found if the UN plays a positive role by effectively taking over the administration as well as effectively controlling the country as a whole with its peace-keeping force."

There are as yet no guidelines set by the United Nations for the composition of the peace-keeping force. According to a source in the United Nations this will ultimately be determined by the Security Council but probably only after much behind the scenes politicking and with the acceptance of SWAPO and South Africa. The source stressed that nothing more than very informal talks and speculations have begun around the subject because there seems so little chance that South Africa will accept this aspect of the proposals.

Building Bantustans

Nujoma underscored SWAPO's doubts about Pretoria's intentions in his interview with *Southern Africa*. "There is no doubt that the Vorster fascist regime is not sincere. It is trying to find ways and means of undoing SWAPO and putting SWAPO in a disadvantaged position."

He pointed out—both in his speech and in the interview—that the bantustanization of Namibia was going ahead, and is one of the most concrete ways in which South Africa is trying to entrench itself in the territory. "The racist regime of South Africa," he said

in the interview, "intends to impose a neo-colonial solution in Namibia through a declaration of 'tribal' mini-states which will be manipulated and controlled directly from Pretoria, and through which the multi-national corporations and other foreign companies will continue to exploit Namibian mineral wealth while the Namibians continue to suffer from hunger, disease and ignorance."

Nujoma reminded the General Assembly that "while the world was being told that Pretoria has agreed to scrap the Turnhalle plan for the bantustanization of Namibia, South Africa inaugurated the so-called Nama Legislative Council on July 19, 1977." Immediately thereafter South Africa proclaimed the establishment of the Damara Legislative Council on July 28 and plans are underway for the establishment of a Rehoboth Legislative Council.

The projected thirteen bantustans will each have their own 'tribal army,' trained to fight against SWAPO. Training is now "going on in full swing. . . . This building-up of tribal armies is also intended to set the stage for a civil war in Namibia, thereby providing a pretext for Pretoria to re-occupy Namibia even after independence."

While in New York, a SWAPO delegation held meetings with the Western powers. These meetings were to be followed by further consultations between the "Big Five" and Vorster.

Both at the private meetings and before the General Assembly, President Nujoma reiterated SWAPO's willingness to continue negotiations, but only on the organization's own terms. He also called on the General Assembly to censure South Africa on its continued attempts to entrench its hold on Namibia. Ultimately, he pointed out, it was the armed struggle that would be the decisive factor in gaining independence. "In the absence of genuine peaceful solutions," Nujoma stressed to *Southern Africa*, SWAPO of Namibia has no other alternative but to continue the armed liberation struggle as well as the political mass mobilization in opposition to the illegal occupation of the illegal Vorster regime."

"SWAPO guerrilla forces are operating physically in three regions: northwestern, northern and eastern, as well as expanding our military operations towards the central and southern regions," he told *Southern Africa*. "Also, we have successfully politicized the masses of the people throughout the country from east to west, north to south," and although South Africa has responded with increased repression, this has not weakened SWAPO. Fighting against the military strength of South Africa was difficult, the SWAPO President admitted, but "we have to redouble our efforts to make things difficult for the racist regime of South Africa to operate." □