

Chapter Eighteen

NAMIBIA

Introduction

THE FEELINGS of discontent and the subsequent activities by the Namibians aimed at their attaining full independence and self-determination continue to put Namibia in the world map. The Namibians have, through the past years, shown how ready they are to struggle for what is by birth theirs. The situation, which has attracted international focus, offers little comfort to those commissioned to settle the territory's disputes by looking into what they call a 'possible settlement'. And it cannot be denied that, in the process, Namibian blacks have created history which will go down in the annals of the United Nations and the South African Government as one of the most challenging situations ever to confront them.

Multi-racial Advisory Council for S.W.A.

(a) *Negotiations by the Prime Minister for the formation of Council:* The formation of the multi-racial advisory council by the Prime Minister, was the outcome of the talks he held in Pretoria with Dr Escher on 30 October, 1972, and the agreement thereupon reached concerning the S.W.A. issue.

The Council, the Minister announced in the house of Assembly, would be representative of all the various regions and regional governments or authorities in the territory and would be personally headed by him. Basically it would function as a body through which the leaders of the different peoples of S.W.A. would have an opportunity to discuss matters

of common interest to them as well as act on an advisory capacity to the Prime Minister on all matters pertaining to the territory.

The Prime Minister maintained that this would assist the government in facilitating its concept of self-determination and independence so that as the Council becomes more experienced and effective it should progressively become an instrument for the development of co-operation and understanding among the inhabitants of Namibia as a whole.

Commissioner General's Responsibility

Mr Jannie De Wet, S.W.A.'s Commissioner General of the indigenous peoples, was assigned the duty of forwarding names (to the Prime Minister) of African candidates willing to serve on the proposed multi-racial Advisory Council. He toured northern homelands explaining the goals of the Advisory Council and confidently predicted that he would get names of delegates from each group. Outstanding were the names of Kaokoveld representatives and of the majority Herero group led by Chief Clemens Kapuuo who rejected the Advisory Council. In the final analysis, the full list of delegates consisted of persons from the following groups:

1. Whites: Mr Dirk Mudge and Mr Eben van Zyl, both Nationalist Executive Committee members.
2. Coloureds: Mr A.J.F. Kloppers, leader of the Federal Party and President of Swancum and Mr David Bezuidenhout.
3. Rehoboth Baster: Mr Martinuf Olivier and Mr Hans Diergaardt, a member of the baster Council.
4. Ovambos: Chief Councillor Filimon Elifas and Pastor Ndjoba, both of the Ovambo Legislative Assembly.
5. Kavangos: Mr Alex Kidumo, a member of the Legislative Assembly; and Headman L. Hakusenbe.
6. Damaras: Chief Justus Garoeb and Councillor Andreas Tja-Tjamai of the Embryo Damara Homeland Council.
7. Hereros: Mr David Tjatjita and Munyuku Nquvauva.
8. Tswanas: Mr D. Mokalabatho.
9. Bushmen: Mr Sonewa.

Evidence points to the fact that membership in the Council was loaded with government homeland leaders. The Commissioner General's final responsibility with regard to this list, was to submit it before March 9 to the Prime Minister's office for approval.

(b) Reactions to the Formation of an Advisory Council

South Africa: Mr Vorster's appointment of an Advisory Council for S.W.A. became an affair of high political significance for South Africa. It

certainly received impressive support in the ranks of United Party members who declared that it boosted their Federal policy and was thus seen by them as a major step in the direction of a federation.

A number of Parliamentarians indicated that the Advisory Council could, in fact, be a model for South Africa as there was a 'need for top level consultations between the races' (*Sunday Tribune*, 23/2/73).

South West Africa: Contrary reactions were observed in S.W.A. particularly among the majority of Black Namibians whose strong feelings were voiced through Black political bodies such as Swapo, Swanu, Demkop, Nudo and the Herero Chiefs' Council. Most outspoken and opposed to the Advisory Council was the National Convention of S.W.A. a joint all-Black political body which claims to represent the political aspirations of an overwhelming majority of Namibians.

These Black Nationalists were outright opposed to the Advisory Council, on the grounds that it would entrench and perpetuate South Africa's control over the territory. They were greatly opposed to the division of the indigenous people of Namibia into ethnic groups and, accordingly, called for these people to present a united front and reject the establishment of such a plan denounced by some of the Black leaders as 'the greatest fraud by the illegal South African Government' (*Rand Daily Mail*, 1/3/73).

Believing as it did that the South Africa's mandate in S.W.A. terminated some years ago, the Convention maintained that South Africa's right in determining Namibian's affairs was outright invalid.

By way of substantiation, the Convention sent a letter of protest to Dr Waldheim demanding that on the grounds of the ruling of the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, South Africa's activities in Namibia be terminated forthwith.

As far as the Convention was concerned the Council was composed of 'stooges' and 'puppets' who could not truly liberate them from the oppressive South African system.

The tension-enveloped discontents resulted in several riots and clashes with police. Rioting by migrant workers broke out in the township of Katutura (in Windhoek) when Dr Romanus Kampungu, a member of the Legislative Assembly, spoke in favour of the Advisory Council. He was denounced as a 'white man's dog' and shouted down as a government stooge. Police came to his protection when the workers attempted stone-throwing. It is further reported that the rioters burnt all the compound records of the Windhoek Native Affairs Department. Police detained a large number of the workers and some faced charges of being in Windhoek illegally. Further possible charges such as malicious damage to property, incitement and riotous behaviour were envisaged, provided ample evidence was collected.

Attack on Selection of Council Members

Criticism on the criterion for the selection of Advisory Council members was levelled at Mr Vorster by Mr Brian O'Linn, an advocate and a leading United Party member in Windhoek. He intimated that Mr Vorster's criterion for the credibility and integrity of members was judged in terms of his own 'white man's' assessment of such qualities, which factor prejudiced any criterion forwarded that was contrary to his. He argued that if the government was intent on leading the entire territory to independence and self-determination, it should have considered not only its supporters but also its opponents (both black and white). Presenting his complaint in a five point dimension he further argued that:

1. Chief Clemens Kapuuo, the Herero leader with most support, was ignored.
2. Arbitrary rejection was meted out to Swapo, Swanu and the National Convention (all of them Black Nationalists movements and anti-government parties).
3. The 60 000 Damara who live outside the homeland were ignored and their council members were chosen from the minority who live in the homeland.
4. In Ovambo, where there is no freedom of speech or political activity, and 'where the present leadership is kept in power by dictatorial measures and mighty government support', representatives were chosen from the ruling hierarchy alone.
5. The coloured member was appointed without the slightest sign from the 29 000 coloureds that they accepted him.

In conclusion he mentioned that there was obvious and deliberate exclusion of Blacks who are more politically conscious than most of the homeland leaders.

United Nations Security Council

Mr Vorster's plan of an Advisory Council for Namibia was unacceptable to the UN Security Council even though Dr Escher in his previous talks with the South African premier, was agreeable to such a scheme. The United Nations Security Council regarded the execution of such a plan as an act of defiance against itself since it does not recognise Mr Vorster's authority in South West Africa. Their sharp and reproofing reaction was embodied in a strongly worded cable which called on the 'illegal South African regime' to immediately disband the body which was not representative of majority opinion.

The Advisory Council is seen by African members of the UN as an extension of the South African Government's Bantustan policy aimed at

fragmenting the territory to assure its permanent control of it.

In the face of the tension building in the UN, an appointment of a top level Commissioner for S.W.A. was contemplated though it was foreseen that such an appointment would only precipitate conditions when it comes to administering the territory.

(c) *Launching of the Advisory Council by Prime Minister*

Black Political Rally: described by the Press as 'the biggest in S.W.A.'s history' was called by the National Convention in protest of the launching of the multi-racial Advisory Council in a week's time.

The football field of the Katutura township was packed with more than 3 000 Africans to share and express the anti-South African sentiments. The goal was to call for a united front against the government's separate development plans.

The rally was headed by members from Black Nationalist groups, viz., Swapo, Swanu, the Baster, Herero, Damara and Nama organisations. Main speakers were Mr David Merero, Swapo's chairman; Chief Clemens Kapuuo of the Hereros and Mr Gerson Veil, Swanu's vice-president.

Amidst shouts of 'Freedom' and 'Namibia' and raised clenched fists in the black power salute, the speakers fervently declared that they wanted S.W.A. not as a fragmentation but a unitary state. Comparing the racist South African Government with Hitler's regime, Mr Merero put it to the people that the choice was theirs whether they wished for true independence or continued suppression by the South African regime.

This was indeed a rally effusive with political identity and patriotism and, as Chief Kapuuo claimed, laid a foundation for the future government of S.W.A.

The meeting was orderly without any incidents save for the usual presence of uniformed police and white security policemen.

Prime Minister's Consultations with Council Members: Despite the tension-riddled state of the territory, the Prime Minister proceeded with holding consultations with the Advisory Council leaders. This first meeting was held in Windhoek on 23 February, 1973, at the Police Divisional Headquarters. Strict security precautions were taken to protect the Prime Minister and members of the Council.

Also attending the meeting as observers were senior government officials in the Secretaries for Bantu Administration and for Coloured relations, the Commissioner General for the indigenous peoples of S.W.A., and the Chief Commissioners of various homelands.

According to the Prime Minister, the main purpose of the meeting was for contact which would enable different Council members to get to know each other. Whatever transpired in the meeting was kept secret. So that the public was deprived the privilege of knowing the real substance of the

talks—except the Prime Minister's post-consultation 'warnings' to those who boycotted the Council to send delegates to future meetings. He maintained that everybody at the meeting had had an opportunity to express his views. He stressed too that the participants were not stooges of his department.

Inter alia, he pointed out that delegates reaffirmed their belief in the policy and that they had met in the interest of promoting the interests of the peoples of S.W.A. This, he believed, was substantiated by the fact that he had repeatedly told Parliament and the public at large, that Namibians were the only people who could decide on their future (*Natal Mercury*, 24/3/73). He announced too that he had appointed a full-time representative of his department to deal mainly with the affairs of the Advisory Council. The appointed representative (Mr Billy Marais) therefore, was to assume duties on 1 April.

Further Geneva Talks over S.W.A.

Further talks about Namibia were held in Geneva by South Africa's Foreign Minister, Dr Hilgard Muller, and the Secretary General of the UN, Dr Kurt Waldheim.

Certain presumptions were made about the otherwise secret shrouded talks which invariably had serious implications for continued dialogue between S.A. and UN over S.W.A. Dr Waldheim's report due to be submitted to the Security Council by 30 April, 1973, will be the deciding factor for a continued dialogue.

Because nothing was being said about the talks by either side, it made it difficult to give any assessment on the progress made towards the granting of self-determination and independence for Namibia.

It seemed, however, that Mr Vorster's present plan, whose motives are contrary to the resolution taken by the UN Security Council (on 6 December 1972, to the effect that independence should be granted to Namibia as a whole) would not be accepted by the African bloc of the U.N. This latter view was confirmed by the Ivory Coast delegate to the Oslo Conference (on apartheid and colonialism) who called for the immediate termination of the dialogue.

Implementation of Separate Development Policy in Ovambo

As Dr Waldheim was preparing to present his report on Namibia to the Security Council of the UN the South African Government declared Ovambo a Homeland on 1/5/73. It was Pretoria's contention that self-government was designed to give political and administrative experience to the indigenous people as a preparation to ultimate self-determination and independence. The government envisaged that it would not take longer than 10 years for the population to reach the situation of being able to

exercise its rights to self-determination. The setting of a target date has been criticised by several observers as likely to have a pressurising effect on the population, which could lead to change of events. It was for this reason that Dr Waldheim felt the government should be more open-handed with the people of the territory so as to put them in the proper perspective as regards their political future.

Elections, the first ever to be held in Ovambo, were scheduled for August. The legislative assembly was to be reconstituted—two fifths of the members being elected and three-fifths appointed. The present executive council would become a cabinet and Ovambo was to get its own flag and anthem. It is reported too, that self-rule would empower Ovambo to make laws and to amend or repeal South African laws and S.W.A.'s ordinances.

The inception of self-rule in Ovambo met with strong Black opposition. They denounced it as a policy of fragmentation. This sentiment was registered by a group of placard-bearing demonstrators, mainly supporters of Demkop and Swapo political organisations. Mr Johenna Nangutuuala, Mr Andreas Nuukwawo and Mr John Otto, met Chief Filemon Elifas (Chief Councillor of Ovambo) at the Chief Minister's office in Ondangwa, to protest against the Ovambo self-rule. The pleas, however, were firmly rejected by him.

The demonstrations were followed by arrests of the above named, three top oppositions leaders under *the quasi-emergency proclamation R17* which forbids the holding of public meetings without the permission of officials. The leaders were detained in a Grootfontein prison situated outside the homeland, before standing trial on 18 May. Overall, about ten arrests were made under the new regulation in force.

The Ovambo Government was regarded by others as being indirectly responsible for the arrests by imposing conditions in the homeland which restricted the activities of opposing parties. According to the Ovambo Government's constitution, political parties were required to apply for registration and, as Kornelius Ndjoba, Minister of Education and Culture put it, 'parties would be refused registration if their constitution did not 'reflect the interests of Ovambo' (*Star*, 10/5/73).

A sharp criticism of police arrests and detentions came from Mr David Merero, an executive member of the National Convention, who claimed that the arrests of opposition leaders was a direct contradiction of assurances contained in the Prime Minister's memorandum to the Security Council. Inter alia, that the government is 'prepared to allow all political parties in the territory 'full and free' participation in the process leading to independence' (*Rand Daily Mail*, 8/5/73).