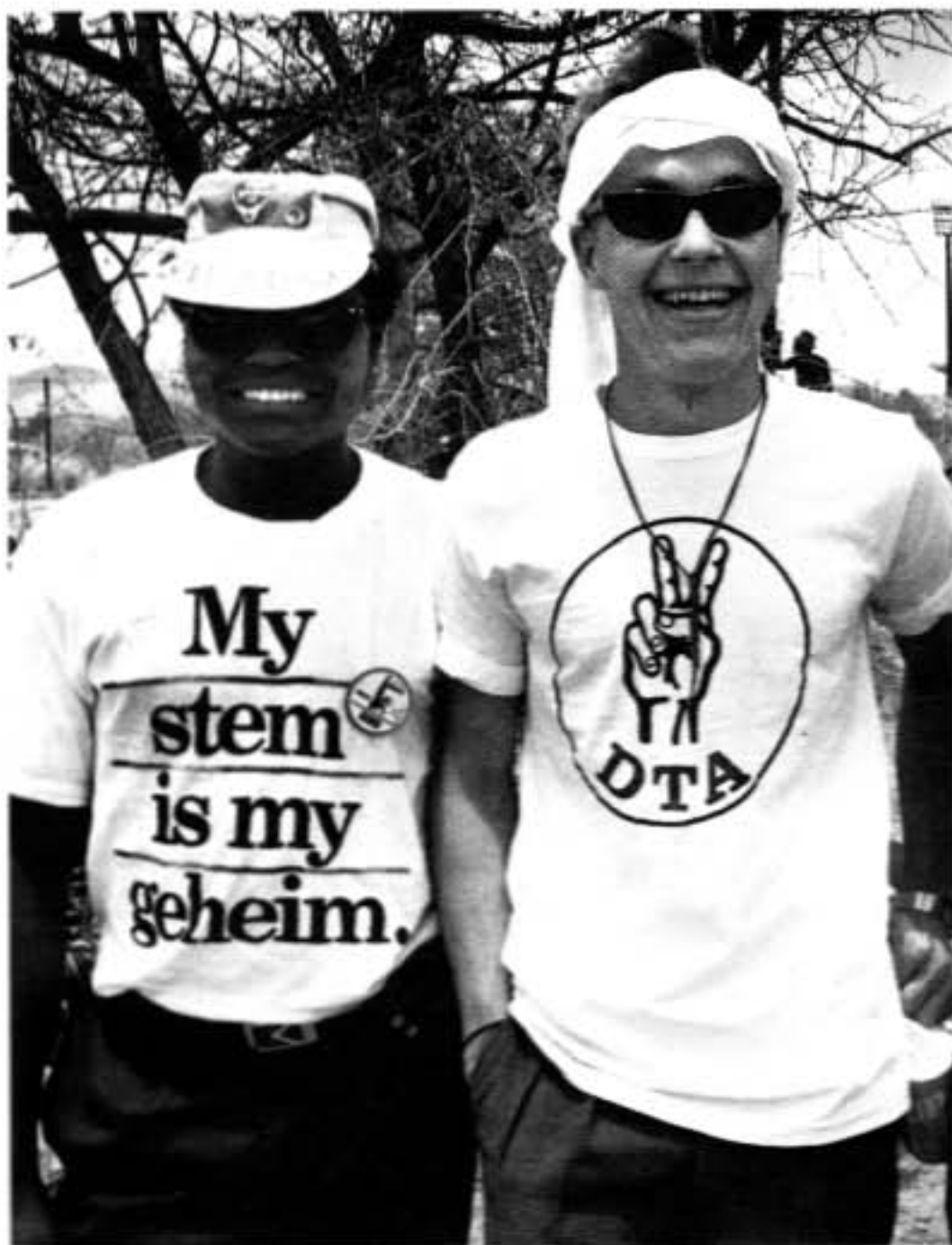


election in Namibia

some comfort in the fact that the election process in Namibia was substantially peaceful and – as was later certified by the UN special representative Martti Ahtisaari – also free and fair. The almost festive mood that prevailed in Windhoek and Katutura during the election week might come as a surprise to white South Africans who dread the day of an ANC take-over. Even more surprising might be the fact that the party mood transcended party lines with both DTA and Swapo supporters apparently being swept away in the euphoria.

In Keetmanshoop, a town situated near the South African border, we spoke to conservative white farmers of the district. It was clear that they were the ones who really felt threatened by the decolonisation of the territory. They were deeply suspicious of Swapo and talked about all the intimidation taking place "up north". They nevertheless stated that they were prepared to wait and see what the new government has in store for them. They were all prepared to at least give the new government a chance before casting their eyes to their southern neighbour.

Some of the well-educated



Rubbing shoulders in the street . . . A Swapo and DTA supporter during election week in Namibia.

whites who live in Windhoek were more cynical about the election. A well-to-do medical doctor told us that the election was "the greatest non-event in the history of Namibia". "In the end," he said, "one tends to vote for the party with the least unattractive white in it."

RETURNING to South Africa after a stimulating few days in "the last colony in Africa", the irony of the friendliness and the peacefulness of the election after 20 years of civil war does not escape one. Then one realises that the election may be a non-event in a way not thought of by the cynical doctor in Windhoek. For there are lessons to be learnt from the Namibian experience. And one of them may be that we in South Africa should become involved in a humanising struggle for liberation by opting for a country in which we could have non-racial, free and fair elections and social transformation by means other than violence and coercion; by means other than a civil war.

Ian Liebenberg is Director of Research with Idasa; Daniël Malan is a post-graduate student in political philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch.

orations

proximately 5 000 members who had been demobilised were the ones who were tired of the war. But many of them enjoyed the business and they were amongst those who had found their way into the SWA Police.

They also claimed that many of the demobilised troops had "lost" their weapons. Three hundred Koevoet troops were also Awol at the time of demobilisation, according to Untag figures. The delegation encountered deep suspicions about the likelihood of such inefficiencies in a crack unit like Koevoet.

This fear is heightened by current disputes with the South African Administrator-General, Mr Louis Pienaar. Ms Irish said that people they met were unhappy about Mr Pienaar, for years the implementor of South African policy in Namibia, projecting his office as an independent Namibian administration during the independence process.

The message being brought home by the fact-finding mission was that South Africans need to learn from the Namibian 435 process. Most importantly that whatever political settlement we end up with, it is a South African product designed for South Africa. The fundamental weakness of Resolution 435 is that it is a product of the UN designed to meet its international responsibility. Namibians have not shaped the process in terms of which they will need to build their nation in the future.

Gary Cullen is Regional Co-ordinator of Idasa in Natal.

Foreigners voted in droves

By Gary Cullen

WHITE South Africans who travelled to Namibia in their thousands to vote in the territory's first election were able to exploit the clause in Resolution 435 designed to ensure that refugees and their descendants are entitled to vote.

Prior to the election Swapo officials said that while some people covered by the clause had fought for independence and the right to vote, the majority have spent their whole voting lives opposing free and fair elections, whether in South Africa or in Namibia.

In order to vote a person had to be born in Namibia or be descendent from such a person. Present, or intended future place of residence was not a requirement. This drew between 10 000 and 12 000 South African residents into the election, the vast majority of them having no intention of living in the country, but who were happy to take advantage of the many charter flights laid on to ferry voters.

The voting contingent was also strengthened by seconded members of the administration and security forces who could vote if they had spent a continuous period of four years in the territory and pledged their intention to remain in Namibia. There is, however, little to bind them to their pledge now that the votes are cast.

In the opinion of a West German Untag member, Namibia should qualify for the Guinness Book of Records as the country in which the greatest proportion of foreigners have ever been permitted to vote in an election.