

NAMIBIA:—

THE UNILATERAL DECEMBER ELECTION, AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE:

by Bryan O'Linn

The unilateral December 1978 election for a Constituent Assembly and to choose "leaders" which was conceived and manipulated by the S.A. Government, the Administrator General and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (D.T.A.) will go down in the history of this country as a face saving device and an exercise in futility, but nevertheless an exercise which obstructed a settlement of the Namibia question and endangered the future of the country and all its people.

We can only hope that it will be the last demonstration of brinkmanship by the S.A. government in the affairs of Namibia and the last desperate attempt of the S.A. government, its agents and its dependents in Namibia to evade reality.

It is true that approximately 80% of the registered voters in fact voted and that approximately 82% of those voters were in favour of the D.T.A. The D.T.A., primarily, with the assistance of the S.A. government and all its institutions, some of the ultra-conservative political parties in Germany and some big business in S.A. and Namibia, has developed into a powerful, efficient and influential political force in Namibia.

Although its present image is that of a multi-racial movement, the dominant party in the alliance, namely the Republican party under the leadership of Mr D. F. Mudge, is exclusive to whites. The constitution proposed by the D.T.A. for an independent Namibia provides for the abolition of petty apartheid but the foundation would be massive, rigid enforced race and ethnic classification, and the vote to be exercised by the individual only within his ethnic group. Furthermore, the D.T.A. subscribes to the principle of consensus or **one group one veto** in the Central Government, which is totally impractical and unacceptable in the circumstances of Namibia where some groups constitute 1-5% of the population and others 10-45%.

In contrast to the D.T.A., the approach of the N.N.F. is a truly non-racial democracy with a heavy emphasis on fundamental human rights. The main problem of the N.N.F. is the lack of finance.

The voting pattern in this election will not be repeated in the envisaged election under United Nations supervision in which SWAPO (D) and the N.N.F. will participate and SWAPO (N) will probably participate.

Some of the reasons can be shortly stated:

1. The December election process was not **free and fair** in any sense of the term. When I say process, I deliberately include the conditions created over decades and particularly the actions and influences preceding the election itself.

All the institutions created by the Government over a long period were inspanned to get the required result, namely a high poll and a poll boosting the confidence of the D.T.A.

Foremost in the fray was the Adm. Gen. himself, descending into the political arena and literally leading his troops. The S.A.B.C., broadcasting in all the native languages, was allowed to suppress totally the views of those parties who were against the election and of course, the independent Press was bought out a year previously and played the rôle assigned to them by their D.T.A. bosses. But this was not enough in government sponsored publicity and communication services. The Adm. Gen. created a Government institution to replace the Department of Information called the Namibia/SWA Information Service. This department published and distributed thousands of pamphlets with the assistance of the S.A. Defence Force exhorting people to vote, saying that **"a vote is a vote against chaos, anarchy, and terrorism."** Even the department of Posts and Telegraphs placed a stamp on each postal piece with the words **"to vote is your duty"**.

All the black and brown ethnic governments and/or councils did their duty as usual. Fleets of government vehicles, inter alia that allocated to the so-called Owambo government and purchased mainly by taxpayers money from outside Owambo, were made available to the D.T.A. to bring voters to the polls.

Intimidation, undue influence, even in some cases bribery and corruption, some blatant, some more subtle, was the order of the day.

Millions of Rand have been spent on the D.T.A. campaign and the source of these massive funds is still unknown, although the suspicion grows daily that the S.A. Government has channelled big sums to the D.T.A., using a modus operandi similar to that disclosed in the Information scandal in the R.S.A. The Bureau of State Security (BOSS) has for a long time been visible in the politics of this country, but took a particularly strong interest in the affairs of the Turnhalle and subsequently, until this day in the affairs of the D.T.A.

2. In the election under U.N. supervision, the S.A. Government and all its organs will not be in the same position to advance the cause of their protégé.
3. A proper period will be available for campaigning under conditions approaching the ideal of fairness to a much greater extent.
4. The main contestants will not only be members of the Turnhalle Family, namely AKTUR and D.T.A. but will include the N.N.F., SWAPO (D) and probably SWAPO (N) Political prisoners, including very important personalities, will be released and thousands of political exiles and refugees enabled to return and to participate fully in the election process. The funds of SWAPO (N) will match that of the D.T.A., whereas the NNF and SWAPO(D) will hopefully also have more funds available than in the past.

The N.N.F. did not participate in the December election, inter alia because it was abundantly clear to it that the conditions for fair elections would not be established, the election would not lead to peace, certainty and prosperity as claimed but to the contrary and that S.A. would be compelled to consent to elections under U.N. supervision immediately after the December election.

Great progress has been made since the futile December election towards implementation of the Western proposals and the Security Council resolutions 431 and 435, but formidable obstacles remain. SWAPO (N) the D.T.A. and the Adm. Gen. may not have exhausted their bags of tricks.

The latest example of bungling is the astonishing attempt by the Adm. Gen. to give his baby, the Constituent Assembly, a new lease of life and respectability, by declaring how important the Assembly is and how it will be indispensable to him as an arm of government, even until independence and even after election of a real Constituent Assembly in the U.N. supervised elections envisaged for September 1978.

It is clear that the Prime Minister of S.A. was forced to intervene immediately and to repudiate Adm. Gen., His Excellency, Mr Justice Steyn.

The Constituent Assembly and the S.A. Government practically wrote the death notice of the present Constituent Assembly when it decided in December 1978 under extreme pressure from within and without, that the price for a U.D.I. in Namibia was too high and agreed to co-operate in the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978, which resolution included the following paragraph: **"6 The Security Council declares that all unilateral measures taken by the illegal administration in Namibia in relation to the electoral process, including unilateral registration of voters, or transfer of power, in contravention of Security Council Resolutions 385 (76) 431 (78) and this resolution are null and void."**

The clear implication of South Africa's acceptance of Security Council Resolution 435 is that the present Constituent Assembly will be **dissolved** at the latest when the transition period begins, i.e. the beginning of actual implementation of Resolution 435.

Furthermore, the continuation of the present Constituent Assembly in any shape or form after the beginning of the transition period, would frustrate the basic aim of elections fair to all the participants, because the present one will be entrenched.

It would also be an anomaly to have a Constituent Assembly which cannot perform its main function, i.e. of writing a constitution and which was elected for that purpose.

To say as the Adm. Gen. does that the present Assembly could co-exist with the real Constituent Assembly even after the latter Assembly has been duly elected in terms of Resolution 435, is the limit of absurdity.

The main parties at present represented in the Constituent Assembly, are certainly expected to take part in the forthcoming election in terms of Res. 435. They will either be elected or defeated in the forthcoming election.

To the extent that they are elected in the U.N. supervised election, they will sit in the real Constituent Assembly. If defeated, not even the Adm. Gen. could proceed with the argument that they are true leaders and/or representatives of the people. How then could the Adm. Gen. justify an Assembly for the defeated? It seems that the Adm. Gen. is willing and determined to perpetuate a myth of his own making.

The present approach of the S.A. Government to co-operate in the implementation of Resolution 435 of 1978, is realistic and wise and should be welcomed.

Paradise as promised by the D.T.A. in the December election, has not been achieved and will not be achieved by an election under U.N. supervision in terms of resolution 435.

But it is a step in the right direction with no visible alternative. It is our last opportunity to achieve an internationally recognized settlement and the only hope to achieve relative peace, security, prosperity and a non-racial democracy. It will be disastrous to squander this opportunity. □