Reports from Commission Observers stationed in Ovamboland

Wednesday, 8 November 1989

Slightly under thirty percent of the registered electorate successfully voted yesterday, the first day of the five day voting period. This turnout seemed to indicate that all went smoothly, but this is not the case.

The Legal Assistance Centre reports from Rundu that more than a hundred Angolans have been forced at gunpoint by UNITA forces across the Kavango River and told to vote for the DTA. Also in Rundu, a small group of SWAPO supporters have been arrested for election offenses and told they will not be released until the election is over. NADEL lawyers are trying to get bail set and the individuals released so that they may vote.

One or more disinformation campaigns have been conducted. On Monday and Tuesday a plane released flyers over Oshakati and the surrounding areas. The flyers purported to be from the SWAPO election directorate, and encouraged SWAPO members to vote only on Thursday and Friday. SWAPO denied that they had distributed the flyers and encouraged voters to vote early. Supposedly, SWAPOL is investigating the incident, but nothing has been found. Another leaflet distributed widely in the North and in both Katutura and the Klein Windhoek areas, purported to be from SWAPO. It was addressed confidentially to PLAN fighters, and told them that they would not receive their promised compensation, and will receive R6,000 at a place that will be disclosed in the future. It also included a promise that "you'll hold key positions in the rest of the government."

There have been serious problems with overcrowding at the polling stations; in one instance a child was killed when the infant was pushed from the mother's arms.

The AG has been urging the local press and the political parties to discourage people from travelling out to the airport to vote. A polling point was set up there,
according to the AG, specifically to accommodate those who are coming to vote from abroad. According to the AG's spokesman, Mr. Roux, "these people travel an hour, sometimes two, by plane and some of them pay for half or all of their airfare, we are trying our best to accommodate them, but these busloads brought in make it very difficult." Yesterday, at one point, there were two lines, one for South Africans and one for Namibians. Today the AG's electoral people tried another method. Before the next plane from South Africa was due, those driving to the airport were not allowed in the gate to the parking lot. The obvious intention was to let the South Africans line up first, then let everyone in. Two lawyers, one from NADEL, and one from the LAC, negotiated with the polling officials and those remaining outside the gate were allowed in just as the plane landed. Unfortunately, three busloads of voters had turned around and returned to town before this change in the admission procedure.

The LAC and NADEL lawyers at Walvis Bay and Swakopmund report no serious delays at the border post for voters. One employer of a large number of migrant Namibian workers is allowing day shift workers a day to vote but the night shift workers must vote on their own time and are subject to disciplinary measures if they are late. Another employer is giving employees two hours to vote, which is just about enough time to make the round trip into Swakopmund. For most of yesterday there were about 1,500 people waiting.

We are not sure what other employers throughout the country are doing, but will inquire.

Almost all of the polling stations stayed open last night until everyone who was in line at 7 p.m. cast his or her ballot. The tendered ballot, according to a number of reports, is not being misused. We have not heard of any serious cases of intimidation.

**Tuesday, November 7, 1989**

First day of polling went better than we expected. We covered primarily larger population centers in Ovamboland. The procedure was not as slow as we had anticipated. Most polling site officials were processing voters at one per minute to two minutes. Overuse of the tendered ballot process did not materialize on the first day. If this continues and the situation elsewhere is similar, they may not have to extend the 5 day voting period. We have witnessed no violence or significant intimidation at this point.