THIS WEEK IN NAMIBIA
Week of September 3 - 10, 1989

(A weekly report filed by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Southern Africa Project Staff in Namibia.)

1. **Anton Lubowski Assassinated**  On September 12, Anton Lubowski, a top SWAPO official, was assassinated as he got out of his car to open the gate leading to his house. He died instantly. Police say the weapon was an AK47 assault rifle, fired by a gunman who fled in a red Volkswagen Golf driven by another man. Lubowski, the treasurer of the National Union of Namibian Workers, Namibia's largest trade union organization, was one of SWAPO's leading legal advisers. Lubowski joined SWAPO in 1984, the first white born in Namibia to do so. Two weeks before Lubowski's death, he, David Smuts, a human rights lawyer, and Gwen Lister, editor of The Namibian, all received death threats. The Administrator General said of the killing, "It cannot be condemned too strongly." He said police had put roadblocks around Windhoek in an effort to track down the vehicle used.

2. **General Comments**  UNTAG's limited monitoring role with regard to the SWA Police was sharply criticized this week after SWAPOL opened fire with rubber bullets on SW Breweries workers in the presence of two UNTAG police monitors. The police reportedly fired 30 rounds of rubber ammunition into a crowd of approximately 40 SWB workers, part of a group of 197 employees who were recently dismissed after a protest strike over the dismissal of one of their colleagues. Nine workers were injured in the clash and three detained. The workers, who gathered outside the Brewery to collect wages due following their mass dismissal, were forcibly disbursed by police reportedly for holding an "illegal gathering" under the terms of the controversial Public Gathering Act, AG 23 of 1989. While the Special Representative raised concerns over potentially "excessive use of force" by SWAPOL, UNTAG reiterated that they can only monitor police activities and are not able to enforce the law. Local labor and political groups condemned the UN's inaction at the scene, reiterated their call for repeal of AG 23 and demanded the unconditional reinstatement of all the dismissed workers.
Additional concerns regarding UNTAG's limited police monitoring role were raised after a SWAPO supporter and teacher, Mr. S.D. Hanse, was fatally wounded by SWAPOL in the presence of UNTAG monitors on September 4. Sharply divergent accounts of the incident have emerged from police and community members. SWAPOL charges that a police constable fired four warning shots at fleeing suspects and was stabbed from behind by a civilian, after which the police opened fire on the crowd and Mr. Hanse was killed. Community members allege that the Constable was never stabbed and only fired the four warning shots after Mr. Hanse was killed. Both groups report that UNTAG was present at the shooting scene. No official comment has been issued by UNTAG, but community and church leaders have again expressed concern over UNTAG's seeming incapacity to intervene effectively in such critical situations.

UNTAG has also been frustrated in its efforts to monitor those elements of SWAPOL which formerly served in the counter-insurgency unit Koevoet. These forces were allegedly confined to base by the AG as of August 21, though the Security Council subsequently called for their total disbandment under the terms of 435 (Security Council Resolution 640). Current negotiations between UNTAG and the AG's office do not indicate that disbandment is likely to occur, but UNTAG is pushing for Koevoet's confinement seven days a week, 24 hours a day in bases outside the north. Whether UNTAG will succeed in these negotiations remains to be seen. In the meantime, Koevoet elements continue to operate in the north and reports persist of fully operational Koevoet bases, particularly in Kavango. One UNTAG regional director was recently quoted in the London Guardian as saying that "Koevoet, General Dreyer and Casspirs are linked forever in people's minds here. If things are to change and people are to believe they have changed, all three will have to go."

3. Code of Conduct In an attempt to curb mounting political violence, UNTAG succeeded in negotiating an electoral code of conduct with nine of Namibia's major political parties. The code will be released Tuesday, September 12. Two weeks of negotiation resulted in a 15 point code which calls for an end to violence and intimidation, a prohibition on carrying weapons, advance public notice about places and times for meetings, avoidance of scheduling conflicts for meetings, and respect for property of political parties. The code provides for regular meetings of the parties with UNTAG to discuss any on-going problems and for a mechanism by which the code's provisions will be communicated to the various constituencies.

Reportedly, the final code contains no enforcement mechanism. However, sources in the north already report a reduction in incidents of political violence following regional code of conduct discussions two weeks ago. In addition, General Hans
Dreyer, Koevoet founder and current chief of police in northern Namibia, pledged to a SWAPO delegation concerned about escalating political violence that police would take action against all those guilty of intimidation and also would make every effort to prevent DTA members from carrying arms in public.

In a separate but related development, thirteen political parties met with the South West African Broadcasting Corporation on Monday to discuss the formation of a liaison committee between the parties and the company. SWABC, which maintains a government-controlled monopoly over radio and television in Namibia, has been the subject of much controversy over systematic editorial bias of its coverage. The committee will address the concerns and suggestions of the political parties and will consist of one or two representatives of each political party. Following the first meeting, SWABC agreed to grant the political parties one minute each on the evening of September 12 and beginning September 13, ten minutes a day reportedly will be available for the presentation of views by the various parties.

4. UNTAG/UNHCR Mission to Angola and Zambia

With the likely close of registration period five days away, questions are mounting regarding the progress of the UNTAG/UNHCR visit to Angola and Zambia to determine the whereabouts of alleged SWAPO detainees. If additional detainees are discovered, they will need to be returned to Namibia to register. UNTAG spokesperson Fred Eckhard, while sensitive to this time pressure, continues to describe the fact-finding mission as "open ended" and refuses to disclose details until the delegation's return. The UN mission is presently in Luanda and will proceed to Zambia sometime later this week.

In the meantime, the Parents' Committee and other groups claiming to represent the alleged detainees continue to protest the composition of the UN investigatory team and to reject the mission's credibility. They charge that UNTAG's exclusion of the Parents' Committee and ex-detainees, and the International Committee of the Red Cross's decision not to participate in the mission, amounts to "a mockery," and demonstrates a pro-SWAPO bias. UNTAG, however, views the question of political prisoners as the responsibility solely of the Special Representative and has stated that it does not require the presence of private groups to enhance its credibility. The Parents' Committee and others have stated that they will not be satisfied until the fate of every one of the missing persons is accounted for.

Attempts by the Council of Churches in Namibia to promote reconciliation between all internal parties continue, but are bogged down in the election campaign's highly polarized political atmosphere. A recent CCN emergency meeting on the question of intimidation, for example, deteriorated into accusations and counter-accusations concerning the question of SWAPO detainees.
The ensuing commotion, during which one SWAPO delegate walked out of the meeting, left little room for beginning the process of reconciliation. While the CCN privately expressed some disappointment over the parties' apparent unwillingness to put aside their competing political agendas in the interest of national reconciliation, they pledged to continue their efforts. The CCN has itself, however, been accused of being biased in favor of SWAPO and is rejected by some parties as a legitimate mediator.

Voter Registration As Namibia's voter registration campaign approaches its final week, SWAPO officials have addressed urgent appeals to the Chief Registration Officer Visser for an extension of the September 15 registration deadline. The request emanates from continuing SWAPO claims of "massive irregularities" in the registration process, principally in Ovamboland. These complaints revolve around two central issues: 1) claims that significant numbers of voters have not been registered and 2) charges that thousands of registration cards were improperly completed, thus raising the possibility the prospective voters could be turned away at the polls.

The first claim has thus far proven impossible to substantiate. SWAPO's northern headquarters in Oshakati has been unable to provide registration officials with any specific data on villages where there are unregistered people. UNTAG's registration "sweepteam," which began operating on August 14, have been canvassing the region for unregistered voters and during their first three weeks registered a total of 2,768 people. Consultations with all parties in the area, however, indicate no present demand for registration past the September 15 closing date.

SWAPO's second, more substantial, charge has raised some serious concerns. Reportedly, a sizeable number of registration cards contain what UNTAG calls "technical errors." Typical problems are: misspelling of names and villages, inaccurate recording of passport or ID numbers, failure to officially endorse (i.e. stamp) registration cards and blurred thumbprints. UNTAG registration officials in Oshakati report that 8,000 improperly completed registration cards were returned to them last week for correction. That figure, however, may not represent all possible faulty cards, as the processing of duplicate cards has at times lagged as far behind as 100,000 cards.

SWAPO's main concern is whether errors on registration cards will result in voter disqualification in November. On July 14, UNTAG election director Hisham Omayad stated that, on the basis of agreement worked out with their South African counterparts, no voter would be prevented from voting because of "a mistake made by a registration officer." In fact, at the time it was said that the only items on the registration card deemed indispensible for voting were: 1) the applicant's signature or thumbprint and 2) the signature of the registration officer. Whatever the
terms, this agreement has never been confirmed in writing and SWAPO and other parties are reluctant to have the registration period end without such a written commitment.

South African registration officials, meanwhile, are apparently reluctant to declare an amnesty on improperly filed registration cards, a move being urged by UNTAG. Such a move would pose practical problems, such as the need to produce lists of pardoned applicants which would then be checked on polling day. Instead, the South African officials are requesting that UNTAG effectively re-register as many as possible of the applicants whose cards are faulty by September 15. What remains unclear at the moment is whether or not the registration deadline will be extended, at the very least to ensure that improperly completed registration cards are corrected.

6. Registration of Political Parties

The registration of political parties as provided for by AG 43, 1989 is scheduled to take place Tuesday, September 12, from 9 - 11 a.m. Those parties who are expected to register include the United Democratic Front, the Namibian National Front, the National Patriotic Front, the Federal Convention of Namibia, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, SWAPO of Namibia, SWAPO-Democrats, the Namibia National Democratic Party, Action Christian National (includes the National Party of Namibia), Namibian Christian Democratic Party and Christians for Democratic Action.

7. Sam Nujoma's return

SWAPO President Sam Nujoma is scheduled to return to Namibia on September 14, just one day short of the scheduled close of the voter registration period. SWAPO Election Director Hage Geingob stated that Mr. Nujoma, after 30 years in political exile, is coming home to stay. Thousands of Namibians are expected to gather at the Windhoek airport to welcome the returning President in what is expected to be one of the largest popular turnouts in Namibian history. The arrival of the President was announced in the first edition of SWAPO's bi-weekly official newspaper, Namibia Today, which was released on September 9.

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