1. Elections

From November 7-11, Namibians voted for a constituent assembly which will draft and adopt the country's constitution and lead the country to independence. By noon on November 14 the election results were clear. SWAPO had tallied 57.4% of the national vote, not including 96,281 tendered ballots which still have to be counted. DTA had gained 165,230 votes or approximately 28.58%. Although SWAPO failed to get the two-third majority necessary to control the constitution-writing process, the indisputable conclusion is that SWAPO has won.

Jubilant crowds poured out into the streets of Windhoek, waving SWAPO flags, singing liberation songs, honking horns and cheering. Katutura, the so-called black township, erupted into a spontaneous festival. Similar reports are coming in from all over the country.

The election itself was impressive. Teams of multinational U.N. peacekeepers and civil servants staffed the polls alongside their South African counterparts. The polling sites, sprinkled throughout this vast and sparsely populated land: from shops in populated areas to primary schools, churches and tents in areas so remote they can only be reached by four-wheel drive vehicles or helicopter. Thousands of Namibians gathered at polling sites as early as 5 a.m. Many walked ten or more miles, and waited in line for hours in 120 degree heat and a blazing sun; pregnant women with babies on their backs, men and women of 80 and 90 years, people who were blind or so infirm and crippled that they had to be carried on the backs of friends and relatives. Sixty percent of the voters are illiterate. For perhaps as many as 40 percent, when they marked an X by the name of their chosen party on the ballot, it was the first time they held a writing instrument in their lives.
In general, observers felt that the polling went smoothly, that violence was limited and that all who wished to vote were able to do so. Official figures showed that over 96% of the eligible voters cast their ballots.

There were, however, some discordant notes: In the Kavango groups of DTA supporters, carrying sjamboks and sticks, beat up SWAPO supporters, some of whom were seriously injured. At Omega station in Western Caprivi, one individual took one voter after another into the polling booth and marked his ballot by placing the voter's thumbprint on it although the voters were neither disabled nor had they asked for help. It was explained that he was especially nominated by the camp population to do that. This occurred in UNTAG's presence despite objections from local and international observers. Reportedly, SWAPO party agents were forcibly denied entry to the base by unknown assailants. The Administrator General (AG) and UNTAG officials presiding over the Omega process were later recalled.

At the Windhoek airport polling station South Africans flying in to vote jumped to the head of the queue so they could get back in their planes and fly home quickly without having to stand in line with blacks. Some Namibians were actually turned away from the polling station so that the South Africans could be accommodated. In Walvis Bay drivers of two buses hired by SWAPO to take local inhabitants to Swakopmund to vote were fined R100 each for not having "a South African permit to carry passengers."

In Ovamboland one SWAPO supporter was stabbed to death and another severely beaten by DTA supporters. Elsewhere, there was an attempt made to steal seven sealed ballot boxes at closing time. The most pervasive problem in the district, however, was widespread shortages of supplies -- ballots, ballot boxes, fluorescent ink, etc. -- that caused some 30 polling stations to close down for periods of from several hours to more than one day. The fact that such shortages occurred only in the area of maximum support for SWAPO led one observer group to ask whether the shortages were deliberate rather than accidental.

It is reported that a few workers, including some domestics, were fired for taking time off to vote or for taking more than the allotted two hours - inevitable in the case of workers who had to walk miles to the nearest polling station.

Some problems in counting have also been reported. A number of ballot boxes containing tendered ballots arrived at the Windhoek central counting site with broken seals or no seals at all. UNTAG officials dismissed the irregularities as human errors on the part of UNTAG election monitors in the field. They attempted to assure party representatives that the ballot boxes had not been tampered with.

2. Constituent Assembly Proclamation

After weeks of wrangling (see This Week Oct. 22-29), the Special Representative (SR) and AG agreed on a proclamation which was issued on November 3.
In general, the proclamation appears to incorporate the SR's positions on key issues: the Assembly, not the AG, will determine its own procedures, select its own staff, and elect its own President (the leader of the largest party acts in this capacity until the election). The AG's proposed definition of Namibia, which would have excluded Walvis Bay, has been scrapped. The Assembly alone determines when the constitution will come into effect, and it establishes the government in terms of the constitution. The constitution is not subject to veto or judicial review. The 1982 "constitutional principles," agreed to by SWAPO, are not included in the text of the proclamation to the dismay of some, but not all, political parties. But a provision has been included which requires that the constitution will be adopted as a whole by a two-thirds majority, as provided in the "principles."

Although the parties were required to submit lists of candidates (in order of preference) for the Assembly, the Proclamation makes it clear that seats "belong" to the parties: "a member [of the Assembly] shall vacate his seat if he no longer represents the registered party...by which he was nominated..." It is widely speculated that this provision will make negotiations for the approval of the constitution more difficult if no party obtains a two-thirds majority.

The Assembly is to be convened one week after certification of the election results.

3. South West Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SWABC) "Impartiality"

Namibia Peace Plan 435, an independent organization of supporters of the United Nations "settlement process" not aligned with any political party, has just issued a third report on SWABC, Namibia's state-controlled TV and radio monopoly, based on programs broadcast from October 10-25. Its overall conclusion is that not only has SWABC not altered its journalistic policy since the first two (critical) reports, but it has displayed more disregard for its avowed policy of impartiality during the most recent sample period.

The report noted that SWABC obviously favors the AG, and to a lesser extent, South Africa and the nine other parties opposing SWAPO. It promotes "certain economic policies at the expense of others" and generally favors the status quo. "Its reporting on SWAPO is overwhelmingly negative."

The report blames SWAPO for much of the negative publicity, however, in that it failed to take a "more proactive approach to SWABC."

Near the end of the report is a very disturbing warning: "Insofar as most breaches of impartiality during the period were to the detriment of SWAPO and/or UNTAG, our findings are not inconsistent with the effects of a concerted plan to discredit the settlement process and polarize the Namibian population with a view to the stabilization of a future independent Namibia."
4. Disbandment of Koevoet

According to the SG's report to the Security Council, dated November 3, 1,207 Koevoet police from Ovamboland and 418 from Opuwo (Kaokoveld) and Rundu (Kavango) were finally disbanded under "careful monitoring" by UNTAG during the last days of October. He also reported that their command structures were "dismantled." These actions should have been completed by May 15, 1989.

As a practical matter, the effect of disbandment has, unfortunately, been to release Koevoet members from the limited supervision exercised earlier when they were confined to base during daylight hours. Indeed, immediately after being disbanded, Koevoet members in Rundu, who blamed UNTAG and SWAPO for the loss of their jobs, marched on SWAPO headquarters, armed with pangas and pistols, beat up pro-SWAPO bystanders, and ordered householders to remove SWAPO flags from their roofs. Since many Koevoet (and South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF)) members are working as DTA organizers under their former officers, not DTA executives, the dismantling of the command structure is more apparent than real.

UNTAG officials have admitted that they do not know how many weapons the disbanded Koevoet members may have retained since there is no record of how many were issued in the past.

5. South West Africa Police (SWAPOL) Recruitment

As reported last week, the AG has begun a 2,000 strong police recruitment to compensate for alleged security risks engendered by the Koevoet disbandment.

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