THIS WEEK IN NAMIBIA
March 19 – 23, 1990

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

1. **Free at last!** A state of joy and general euphoria infused Namibia in the last days before independence. New flags lined the streets of Windhoek, with images in colored lights in town and on the road in from the airport. Old friends greeted each other with tears and laughter and hugged in the streets. Windhoek hotels and restaurants were filled beyond capacity, as was the Windhoek airport; planes bringing VIPs were forced to discharge their passengers and then park as far away as Grootfontein, Gaborone, or even Johannesburg. Over 100 heads of state, foreign ministers and other dignitaries were present. It was, however, Nelson Mandela, who was the center of attention wherever he went.

   The official celebrations in Windhoek reached their climax at midnight on the Tuesday eve of independence but continued through the week to an outdoor thanksgiving service Thursday morning. All during the week there was a profusion of cultural events, including photo and art displays, music by famous groups from all over Africa and elsewhere, and spontaneous demonstrations, particularly by ANC supporters who flocked to the celebration from South Africa.

   The transfer of power took place in Independence Stadium at the edge of Windhoek. The ceremonies began with a precision drill by newly uniformed and drilled Namibian soldiers, who were reviewed by President-elect Nujoma before he mounted to the podium. UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar spoke first, lauding the spirit of negotiation that had brought about Namibia's independence. He was followed by South African State President de Klerk, who made a short dignified speech, in which he stated that "the season of violence has passed for Namibia and for the whole of southern Africa." However, he disappointed all
the Namibians who had heard the rumor that he would announce the return of Walvis Bay in his "abdication" speech.

At that point, the South African flag was lowered. President Nujoma spoke, paying tribute as he commenced to the "tens of thousands of Namibian patriots [who] laid down their lives, shed their precious blood, suffered imprisonment and a difficult life in exile." (This opening appeared to answer the anxious query raised by the independent newspaper, The Namibian, whether the policy of reconciliation would preclude giving public tribute to SWAPO combatants.) The evening concluded with a fireworks display.

The next morning members of the National Assembly and other government officials were sworn in at a brief session of the National Assembly. They then repaired to a reviewing stand in the center of Windhoek, before which passed a grand parade that had started not long after dawn in Katutura, the black township. There were bands, women's groups, floats of all sorts, and the seemingly tireless schoolchildren strutting down Kaiserstrasse in imaginative costumes. (Sadly, many of these children, who were so well drilled in marching, came from schools without a single book in the school library.) In addition to patriotic themes, there were groups calling for preservation of the rhino, extolling flower power, and promoting a variety of other causes. In the afternoon there was a celebration in Independence Stadium, followed by a state dinner hosted by President Nujoma for 700 guests.

2. **Situation in the north** Northern Namibia continues to suffer from the aftereffects of two decades of war. Land mines and other unexploded weapons continue to injure and kill. Despite efforts of the Australian UNTAG contingent and South Africa Defence Force (SADF) special minesweeping units, it is estimated that there still are some 4,000 unexploded devices in 10 minefields near former bases, which the new Namibian Government will have to clear. In addition, the commander of the Australian contingent has pointed out that loose weapons -- from grenades to mortar bombs -- litter the north. Some are so old and deteriorated that they are likely to explode at the slightest touch.

Another danger arises from the continuing revenge raids against SWAPO supporters in the north in which numerous people have been beaten up or killed. Members of the new government state that the attacks are perpetuated by unreconciled Koevoet and South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) members who have joined UNTA. This situation is complicated by the influx of weak and sick Angolans fleeing a three-year drought in Huila Province, where numerous people have died of starvation. In addition to these refugees, there are also some 5,000 Angolans at Delta camp in the western Caprivi who are a cause of considerable
concern to the new Namibian Government. The western Caprivi was a closed area under the South Africa occupation and no one knows who the Angolans there are.

3. Interim security arrangements It is reported that the incoming Namibian Government requested six governments that had contributed military or police contingents to UNTAG to allow them to remain in the country temporarily until the New Namibian army could be adequately trained. Several countries have contributed police contingents for three months. The Kenyan Government announced that its military contingent, supplemented by specialists, nearly 1,000 soldiers, would remain temporarily to fill the "power vacuum" created by the withdrawal of UNTAG troops. The Kenyans will also assist British experts, including the crack Gurkha Regiment, in training the new Namibian army composed of former SWAPO and SWATF soldiers.

Originally there had been talk of requesting the UN to extend its mandate for three months to protect Namibian security. However, it was feared that such a request would renew the "divisive debate" of early 1989 as to the size and cost of the UNTAG military component and "open old wounds." The Kenyan operation will be underwritten entirely by the Kenyan Government, not the UN.

The decision to retain the Kenyan troops was promptly criticized by Moses Katjiuongua, leader of the National Patriotic Front (NPF), who opposed the "unilateral invitation to huge members [sic] of foreign troops to remain here...." Mr. Werner Mamungwe, central committee member of the Workers Revolutionary Party, called for debate in the new Parliament.

The incoming government's concern may have been heightened by the walk-out of some former SWATF members from the embryonic Namibian army training base at Suiderhof. They demanded the same pay they had received from South Africa while serving in SWATF—and more than the other members of their unit who were ex-SWAPO combatants. Their claim was rejected by Peter Mushishange, Defense Minister-designate, who appealed for unity and reminded all soldiers that they were members of a national army, on an equal basis, without privilege. Mushishange pointed out that SWAPO soldiers had not received any mustering out pay, as SWATF soldiers had. Indeed, a serious problem for the new government will be reintegrating into Namibian society the many former PLAN soldiers who will not be members of the new army. Their number reportedly includes at least 5,000 female SWAPO soldiers.

4. Foreign relations Even before independence the future Namibian Government had, for all intents and purposes, made certain foreign policy decisions. It will participate, as a full member along with Angola, Cuba, and South Africa, in the Joint Military Monitoring Commission, which operates in Angola. In its
last meeting before Namibian independence the Commission expressed its general satisfaction with the peace process in both Namibia and Angola.

The government-in-waiting has also decided to join the Commonwealth. Despite the fact that this move was widely anticipated, Mr. Moses Katjiuongua, leader of the NPF, predicted that such "unilateral" decisions on foreign policy matters "could prove to be an area of controversy between the Government and opposition parties."

The government is currently reevaluating membership in the Lome Convention as a result of a dispute on the beef quota for Namibia. The Namibians hope for a quota of at least 12,000 tons, which was unofficially promised; at the present the EEC is talking about a mere 3,000 tons. Beef exportation is a major source of revenue for Namibia after minerals.

5. Economic future for Namibia - international assistance for Namibia Namibia has come to independence with great potential but also many immediate problems that demand financial and technical assistance. The current forecast of bilateral and multilateral assistance for the new state, apparently for this year, by nine donors comes to $148.3 million. (This includes only $500,000 sought by the Bush administration for this year.) Anticipated contributions by another thirteen governments and international institutions are hoped to bring the total to around $280 million. This total is one third less than the U.S. administration is seeking in aid to Nicaragua this year and less than one-half the amount it has asked for Panama. Most of the donors have pledged their funds for one or more of a dozen specific sectors of concentration, led by education, health and fishing. Significantly, no donor selected housing, which is a major problem for the new state.

This is the last issue of "This Week in Namibia." The Windhoek office of the Southern Africa Project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law closed on Monday, 26 March. In the future, occasional papers will be published to cover developments in Namibia of special interest. Our best wishes to the people and the new nation of Namibia and our thanks to our readers.