

The free, fair and festive

The bright blue, red and green placard on the front door of a small match-box house in Katurura township outside Windhoek proclaimed the political allegiances of its inhabitants: "Swapo is the people - the people are Swapo."

The owner of the small house is a young woman who worked as an attorney in London before being imprisoned in one of the ill-famed Swapo "hell camps". Today she is a more passionate supporter of Swapo than ever before. "Swapo made mistakes," she says, "but that was during the war. Swapo remains the only liberation movement in the country."

Accompanied by Danie Botha, one of the 42 Swapo members elected to the constitutional assembly, we met some of the attorney's friends, among them a survivor of the Cassinga massacre and a woman who for three years was a Plan fighter in the north. We encountered a surprising lack of bitterness from these Namibians who, after 20 years of war, said they now long only for peace and freedom.

During election week, one was struck by contrasts in Namibia and constantly reminded of the dehumanisation brought about by the bush war - and more specifically civil war. We heard of the countless atrocities perpetrated by the colonial regime and its representatives that drape a bloody cloud over Namibia's history of liberation. But it is also well known that the oppressors were not the only guilty party. Swapo too detained infiltrators and spies and as some of these people were apparently imprisoned innocently it served as a

Contrast and irony

By Ian Liebenberg and Daniël Malan

powerful reminder that in a civil war nobody's hands are clean. Dehumanisation - as a result of war - is an ever-present threat.

At school we were taught that all members of Swapo were "terrorists" and that we should go and fight them on the border. But at polling booths in Windhoek we saw white and black people - DTA and Swapo supporters - standing in the same queues, patiently waiting to vote for the party of their choice. In the streets of Katurura we were greeted with thousands and thousands of colourful Swapo flags countered by thousands of DTA placards instantly recognisable because of their familiar victory salute. In the streets Swapo supporters rubbed shoulders with their DTA opponents.

One couldn't help but wonder why the war had to drag on for 20 years before the inhabitants of this former colony could exercise one of the most fundamental human rights - the right to vote.

Namibians showed the world that a multi-party non-racial, free and fair elec-

tion was possible. To us that pointed to an important and hopeful possibility - that one should work for this in South Africa as well. But we were also plagued by the counter-side of this coin: Would South Africa also have to go further down the road of military action and a destructive civil war before we could have our version of non-racial, free and fair elections?

The irony of this was not lost on South African observers as it is generally accepted that the current process in Namibia is, in many ways, a prelude to what is inevitably going to happen in South Africa. The extent to which extra-parliamentary forces inside South Africa are forcing the government to shift its position (as seen with the release of ANC leaders) reflects the way in which South Africa was compelled to allow the freeing of the political process in Namibia. Given the outcome of the election in Namibia, it becomes clear that the extra-parliamentary forces are going to play a key role in the democratisation of our country.

The final election results could, of course, be interpreted differently by different people. The fact that more than 97 percent of the registered voters eventually participated in the elections, had some journalists concluding that democracy was the real winner. Watching the professional and mostly very efficient United Nations personnel bustling around Windhoek in their white lorries and Golfs, one couldn't help but admire the way in which they handled the sometimes explosive situation.

For whites in South Africa there must lie

Unease after the cele

By Gary Cullen

THERE was an atmosphere of celebration in Namibia. Supporters of rival parties went about their daily business in political T-shirts and flew party flags from almost every township house. Yet behind the festival appearance of the elections, Namibians were worried.

This was the view of Ms Jenny Irish, a member of the Durban Youth Congress who was part of a fact-finding mission to Namibia prior to the elections. On their return some members of the delegation, consisting of representatives from white Mass Democratic Movement affiliates countrywide, addressed a report-back meeting arranged by Idasa in Durban. The group visited the south of the country and Windhoek and travelled extensively in the north, speaking to people from the churches, Untag, Swapo and the DTA.

Fellow delegate from the Durban Democratic Association Ms Jackie Leach, spoke of the contrast in atmosphere between the south which is relaxed and the north which is seized by the tension of a bitter and recently suspended war. In this region it seemed obvious that Swapo had won the political battle through the course of the war. By contrast the south, which witnessed one of history's most vicious pacification campaigns around the turn of the century in which some 70 percent of the Nama and Herero people were annihilated, is stronger DTA territory.

The overall impression of the delegation was a feeling of unease about whether the process between the elections and the eventual independence would be successful.

The Constituent Assembly is set the task of agreeing on a constitution by 1 April 1990. Resolution 435 makes provision to extend the transitional period beyond that date. However, there is widespread concern that the United Nations may pull out unilaterally on 1 April. The massive cost of the Untag operation, estimated at some R5-million a day, places tremendous pressure on Mr Ahtisaari to get out at the first deadline, come what may.

There is also dissatisfaction about the limited role of Untag in that it is purely a monitoring force and not there to keep the peace. Swapo members in particular feel vulnerable.

They are concerned about three possible sources of destabilising violence. Least mentioned was militant ultra-right whites who have stated their determination to fight. The second threat emanates from South Africa in the form of Unita troops who are allegedly now being based at Upington, a stones throw from the southern border where the terrain is sparsely inhabited and where Swapo support is the least substantial.

The biggest threat, according to Ms Irish, comes from former Koevoet members whom they met in the bars of Oshakati. Their outlook was expressed by one of their T-shirts: "Our business is War . . . and business is Good!" These men are adamant that they will be fighting on. They had said that the half of Koevoet's ap-

election in Namibia

some comfort in the fact that the election process in Namibia was substantially peaceful and – as was later certified by the UN special representative Martti Ahtisaari – also free and fair. The almost festive mood that prevailed in Windhoek and Katutura during the election week might come as a surprise to white South Africans who dread the day of an ANC take-over. Even more surprising might be the fact that the party mood transcended party lines with both DTA and Swapo supporters apparently being swept away in the euphoria.

In Keetmanshoop, a town situated near the South African border, we spoke to conservative white farmers of the district. It was clear that they were the ones who really felt threatened by the decolonisation of the territory. They were deeply suspicious of Swapo and talked about all the intimidation taking place "up north". They nevertheless stated that they were prepared to wait and see what the new government has in store for them. They were all prepared to at least give the new government a chance before casting their eyes to their southern neighbour.

Some of the well-educated



Rubbing shoulders in the street . . . A Swapo and DTA supporter during election week in Namibia.

whites who live in Windhoek were more cynical about the election. A well-to-do medical doctor told us that the election was "the greatest non-event in the history of Namibia". "In the end," he said, "one tends to vote for the party with the least unattractive white in it."

RETURNING to South Africa after a stimulating few days in "the last colony in Africa", the irony of the friendliness and the peacefulness of the election after 20 years of civil war does not escape one. Then one realises that the election may be a non-event in a way not thought of by the cynical doctor in Windhoek. For there are lessons to be learnt from the Namibian experience. And one of them may be that we in South Africa should become involved in a humanising struggle for liberation by opting for a country in which we could have non-racial, free and fair elections and social transformation by means other than violence and coercion; by means other than a civil war.

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proximately 5 000 members who had been demobilised were the ones who were tired of the war. But many of them enjoyed the business and they were amongst those who had found their way into the SWA Police.

They also claimed that many of the demobilised troops had "lost" their weapons. Three hundred Koevoet troops were also Awol at the time of demobilisation, according to Untag figures. The delegation encountered deep suspicions about the likelihood of such inefficiencies in a crack unit like Koevoet.

This fear is heightened by current disputes with the South African Administrator-General, Mr Louis Pienaar. Ms Irish said that people they met were unhappy about Mr Pienaar, for years the implementor of South African policy in Namibia, projecting his office as an independent Namibian administration during the independence process.

The message being brought home by the fact-finding mission was that South Africans need to learn from the Namibian 435 process. Most importantly that whatever political settlement we end up with, it is a South African product designed for South Africa. The fundamental weakness of Resolution 435 is that it is a product of the UN designed to meet its international responsibility. Namibians have not shaped the process in terms of which they will need to build their nation in the future.

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Foreigners voted in droves

By Gary Cullen

WHITE South Africans who travelled to Namibia in their thousands to vote in the territory's first election were able to exploit the clause in Resolution 435 designed to ensure that refugees and their descendants are entitled to vote.

Prior to the election Swapo officials said that while some people covered by the clause had fought for independence and the right to vote, the majority have spent their whole voting lives opposing free and fair elections, whether in South Africa or in Namibia.

In order to vote a person had to be born in Namibia or be descendent from such a person. Present, or intended future place of residence was not a requirement. This drew between 10 000 and 12 000 South African residents into the election, the vast majority of them having no intention of living in the country, but who were happy to take advantage of the many charter flights laid on to ferry voters.

The voting contingent was also strengthened by seconded members of the administration and security forces who could vote if they had spent a continuous period of four years in the territory and pledged their intention to remain in Namibia. There is, however, little to bind them to their pledge now that the votes are cast.

In the opinion of a West German Untag member, Namibia should qualify for the Guinness Book of Records as the country in which the greatest proportion of foreigners have ever been permitted to vote in an election.