

MARCH 1989**OBSTACLES TO FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN NAMIBIA**

UN Resolution 435, which provides for free and fair elections in Namibia, will be implemented on 1 April. A Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and a UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) are responsible for the supervision and control of this process. However, there appear to be a number of obstacles to genuinely fair elections.

PROBLEMS WITH RESOLUTION 435

Resolution 435 is very much a compromise position from the perspective of the Namibian people. It was preceded by Security Council Resolution 385 of 1976, which called for SA's **immediate** withdrawal from the territory, and its **re-
placement** by an interim UN administration through the transition period to independence. When SA rejected this plan, the Western members of the Security Council watered it down and proposed an alternative that became Resolution 435. This provides for the complete withdrawal of SA only **after** the elections. It allows the SWA Administrator General (AG), and his civilian officials and police, to govern Namibia during the transition period and to run the election.

The result is that the possibility of SA interference in the election is greater than would have been the case under Resolution 385, and that the independence process will now be administered by the SWA authorities responsible for the introduction and implementation of discriminatory and repressive legislation in Namibia. (The bias of the AG was indicated in November last year when he called for the formation of a political front in order to challenge the "SWAPO threat" at the polls (Namibian, 11.11.88)).

Resolution 435 also compromises on the status of Walvis Bay. Although the Security Council has demanded its reintegration into Namibia (Resolution 432 of 1978), Resolution 435 implicitly accepts SA's continued control of the town after independence. This will have serious implications as Walvis Bay is of great economic and strategic-military importance as the only deep-water port in the country. The SADF is likely to maintain its large military base there (City Press, 11.09.88). It has even been suggested that SA may 'withdraw' some of its troops in Namibia only as far as Walvis Bay (Star, 15.11.1988).

The Security Council recently decided to reduce the military component of UNTAG from the 7 500 troops envisaged by Resolution 435 to 4 650. UNTAG's responsibility is to monitor the disbanding and withdrawal of SA controlled troops, which have increased from 40 000 to over 100 000 since the Resolution was passed.

SOUTH AFRICAN INTERFERENCE IN THE PROCESS

For several months the SADF has been electioneering against SWAPO, particularly in rural areas (Namibian, 28.12.88, 4.11.88, 25.11.88). The AG and SWATF are encouraging anti-SWAPO black groups to form election alliances (Namibian, 11.11.88, 18.11.88). The Namibian regularly reports security force harassment of SWAPO, including detentions and banning of meetings.



In March 1989 SWAPO successfully applied to the Windhoek Supreme Court to prevent SWATF and SWAPOL from unlawfully interfering with its election campaign; it was alleged by former members of Koevoet that the counter-insurgency police unit had not been disbanded, as claimed, but was determined to prevent SWAPO from coming to power (Weekly Mail, 17.03.89).

SWAPO claims that SA is giving Namibian identity cards to Angolan rebels so that they can vote in the elections, and is attempting to set up an MNR-type counter-revolutionary force to destabilize the election process and an independent Namibia (Cape Times, 31.1. 89).

SWATF was still calling-up conscripted Namibians for military service in early 1989. Since Resolution 435 envisages the dismantling of SWATF before 1 July, many Namibians see this move as an act of bad faith by SA.

In respect of the Resolution 435 provision that all political prisoners and detainees should be released prior to elections, the SWA authorities have stated that there are "absolutely no political prisoners" in Namibia. They regard SWAPO convicted prisoners, and even some detainees, as common law criminals (Weekly Mail, 3.3.89).

While General Malan has stated that Pretoria will abide by Resolution 435, he has stressed that it will maintain its opposition to SWAPO rule while he and the military "have any say in the matter". He added: "It was always our policy to keep Marxism and 'people's democracy' from our front door. We will not turn from this path" (City Press, 11.09.88).

CONSERVATIVE RESISTANCE TO RESOLUTION 435

The majority of white Namibians appear to be totally resistant to the implementation of Resolution 435. The National Party of SWA held an election on 1 March for the White Legislative Assembly (although this will be dissolved on 1 April). The AWB has organised well-attended meetings at which whites were called on to take up arms against those supporting Resolution 435 (Namibian, 4.11.88). There are also reports of vigilante groups in rural areas arming themselves for the elections (Namibian, 28.10.88).

PRETORIA'S CONCERNS

Pretoria's chief concerns relate to alleged SWAPO intimidation and to United Nations 'bias'. This latter point arises from the fact that the UN has long declared SWAPO the "sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people". However, it should be noted that the UN has stated its support for SWAPO will automatically fall away once Resolution 435 is implemented, that the Resolution calls for **free and fair elections**, and that SA has been consulted on the composition of UNTAG. The decision to acknowledge SWAPO as the authentic representative of the Namibian people was taken by the General Assembly and not the Security Council, which is responsible for the transition to independence. Furthermore, it is SA and not the UN that has a long history of attempting to prevent or undermine the democratic process in other countries.

ISSUED BY THE NAMIBIA INFORMATION GROUP, CAPE DEMOCRATS, P.O BOX 21, SALT RIVER, 7925