

# Namibia: The Mounties' Challenge

The closely-watched elections in Namibia produced the anticipated SWAPO majority, but not a two-thirds majority in the new House of Assembly. One hurdle, at least in the painful decolonization process has been cleared. The road to formal independence, April 1, 1990, remains hazardous and complex, with the UN still confronting an enormous challenge.

Even before Namibians went to the polls November 6, the 1,000 police monitors of the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) were reinforced by 100 RCMP officers, bringing the Canadian presence to 420 out of UNTAG's total strength of about 6,000. As Canada was also one of the Contact Group of five Western powers which negotiated the original plan for ending South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia, its identification with the fate of the 'UN Plan' is strong and certainly more visible than that of any other of the Contact Group states.

The risk of disaster, however, is dauntingly real. The Namibian operation lacks at least two of the seven conditions for success laid down in the UN Secretary-General's 1989 Report: a workable mandate and the co-operation of the parties in conflict. The mandate, to say the least, is weak, especially in being almost silent about what would happen after the election of the Constituent Assembly. The Plan focused mainly on troop withdrawal and demobilization by SWAPO and South Africa and on the conditions for free and fair elections. It said virtually nothing about the transfer of power to the people of Namibia: the objective laid down in UN Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978.

South Africa attempted to influence the electoral processes, and is not likely, given past behavior, to stop meddling in Namibia. But the UN has a difficult job, since its mandate is to observe and report, not to intervene — until Independence Day, the UN Plan leaves authority in the hands of the South African-appointed Administrator General, Louis Pienaar. The need to assert a consistently anti-racist, pro-democratic position will be an interesting test of the quality and outlook of each of the 23 different national forces involved — including the Mounties.

After the elections, they now find themselves in a new and much riskier situation. South Africa wanted out of the war in Angola, and the price was to leave Namibia as well. That does not mean South Africa will accept whatever government the Namibians elect. On the contrary, it spent millions of Rand trying to deny SWAPO a two-thirds majority in the Constituent Assembly. It has also taken care to maintain its de facto control over the 18,000-strong army, effectively resisted the disbanding of Koevoet provided for in the Plan, and ensured the extensive distribution of weapons to private individuals opposed to SWAPO. We can now expect South Africa to try to exploit the UN Plan's silence on the election aftermath and

to use its influence on most of the anti-SWAPO parties, and its administrative control of the state machinery, to try to prevent SWAPO from reconstructing the state and the security forces so as to make its sovereignty effective.

Failing this, and assuming SWAPO holds together, there is always the alternative mapped out in Mozambique, where South Africa has long waged a war of destabilization by proxy, in spite of its formal undertaking at Nkomati in 1984 to stop doing so. If South Africa is unable to circumscribe SWAPO, we should not be surprised to see it resorting to other means, from supporting a secessionist movement in Caprivi to encouraging riots or even mutinies in the armed forces. The Mounties should saddle up for a rough ride.

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## Clark's Viewpoint

Having contributed to Namibia's transition to independence from South Africa, Canada will remain 'active in addressing the country's development needs.' This is External Affairs Minister Joe Clark's response to a report on Namibia by four MPs who observed voter registration for the UN-supervised elections. The report by Progressive Conservatives Walter McLean and Marie Gibeau, Liberal Bob Speller and New Democrat Bill Blaikie recommended continued Canadian involvement. It also says that to minimize voter intimidation, the Koevoet counterinsurgency force, slated for disbandment under Security Council resolutions 435 and 640, should be 'confined to base and effectively monitored until the election', at which time it should be retrained.

Shortly after polls closed, UN Special Representative Martti Ahtisaari declared that 'the voting process had been free and fair.' An estimated 98% of voters had cast ballots and while final figures were not available, it appeared that SWAPO, with strong support in its Ovamboland stronghold, would be in a position to form the government. The opposition Democratic Turnhalle Alliance had led the polls until results from Ovamboland turned the tide and seemed to give SWAPO about 55% of the vote and 41 of the 72 seats in the new House of Assembly. The outcome, however, leaves Namibia politically divided and SWAPO Leader Sam Nujoma short of the 67% of the vote and 48 seats needed to control the constitutional process. SWAPO will try first for support from the United Democratic Front, which took four seats, even though the UDF's price will include a full-scale inquiry into allegations of SWAPO mistreatment of detainees during its 23-year war with South Africa — a price which Nujoma, understandably, will be reluctant to pay.