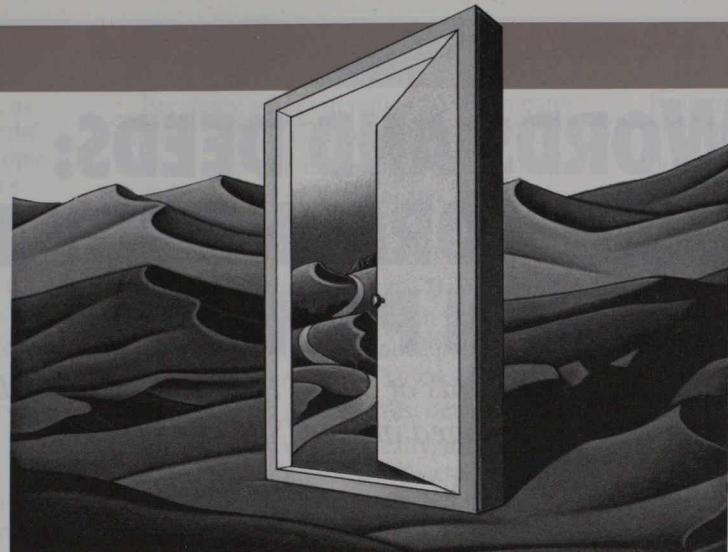


existing economy of mining and farming is not strong enough to take up the slack even though diamonds, uranium and copper make up a third of gross domestic product, eighty-five percent of export earnings and about half of government revenue. There is an unknown potential for a fishing industry but the existing infrastructure is located in the South African enclave of Walvis Bay, Namibia's best ocean port and still the subject of dispute between South Africa, which wants to keep it after independence, and the UN.

The SWAPO economic position paper released with the election platform promises a mixed economy with a strong emphasis on government participation. "The state will have ownership of a significant part of the country's economic resources," the document states. "No wholesale nationalization of the mines, land and other productive sectors is, however, envisaged in the foreseeable future."

The principal short-term positive effect of the transition to Namibian independence has been a measurable reduction in the regional conflicts that have beggared southern Africa in recent years. How long this can



last is only speculation, given the volatile state of South African politics.

Pretoria is reported to have nuclear weapons capability and has now embarked on a ballistic missile development programme. The country's white leaders have stated many times that they intend to retain their security apparatus as the mainstay of their position as the region's dominant power. The evident and most troublesome indication of this resolve is the upgrading and hardening of army and air force bases along South

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Africa's northern border with Botswana and Zimbabwe. Included in this buildup are some of the battle-tempered black units from the Namibian border war.

For its part Zimbabwe has escalated its defences against South Africa with the purchase of new MiG fighters from the USSR. It would be the penultimate tragedy for southern Africa if the final settlement of the Namibian question led only to ruinous confrontations along the Limpopo River similar to those that have blasted the Namibia-Angola border for the past ten years. □

## Transition in Namibia

### An Institute International Roundtable

■ On 6 and 7 July 1989, the Institute for Peace and Security held an international roundtable in Ottawa on the subject of the upcoming election in Namibia. Chaired by the Institute's Director, **Bernard Wood**, the roundtable was designed as an intensive briefing session, drawing on the training and experience of a number of participants. Video briefings sent from Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, lent a sense of immediacy to the proceedings. Among those making presentations either in person or by television were:

**Martti Ahtisaari**, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Namibia; **William Barton**, former Canadian ambassador to the UN; **Pierre Beaudet**, researcher with the Centre d'information et documentation sur le Mozambique et l'Afrique australe, Montreal; **Lord Chitnis**, of the Southern Africa Advanced Education Project, Oxford; **Michael Clough**, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York; **Joseph Diescho**, a scholar from Namibia, at Columbia

University, New York; **Colonel Don Ethell**, Director of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of National Defence, Ottawa; **Stephen Fanning**, head of the UNTAG civilian police monitoring unit, Windhoek; **Gordon Fairweather**, Chairman of the Immigration and Refugee Board and veteran election observer; **Marrack Goulding**, UN Under-Secretary for Special Political Affairs; **Neil Haffey**, head of the Canadian Observer Mission, Windhoek; **Gwen Lister**, editor of The Namibian, Windhoek; and **James Mutambirwa**, of the World Council of Churches.

The following is excerpted from the Institute summary report, *The Election Process in Namibia: An International Roundtable*. The full document (16 pages) is available from the Institute. The section presented here deals specifically with Namibia's and the UN's most immediate problem in the coming months: the complex business of carrying out free and fair elections.

### Election Day and Immediately After

■ During the transition period to independence, Namibia is being governed by South Africa through an Administrator-General (AG), Louis Pienaar. The UN Secretary-General appointed his Special Representative (SR), Martti Ahtisaari, to ensure that each stage of the electoral process in Namibia was free and fair. These two officials are called upon to work together to implement Resolution 435. The details of each stage in the electoral process must be satisfactory to both officials. The process is cumbersome.

There will be two UNTAG election officials and two UNTAG police personnel supervising each polling station. The ballots will probably carry the symbol of each political party so that both literate and illiterate voters can participate without difficulty. After casting a ballot, each voter will dip a finger into indelible ink so that he or she cannot vote more than once.

Having international observers present on election day is an important part of ensuring free and fair elections. One speaker had a detailed checklist of practical requirements for a proper vote. For example: Is there sufficient freedom of movement? Are uniform guidelines being followed by all election officials? Are the polling stations easy to find, even for illiterate voters? Is there an effective method for resolving disputes on the spot?

Other concerns were expressed: after the polls are closed, international observers must pronounce judgement on the fairness of the election before the votes are tallied so that their reports will be seen to be impartial. Participants were concerned with some of the proposals for tallying the ballots. Would not the comparison of the ballots with fingerprints on registration forms breach the secrecy of the vote? Would not the transport of all ballot boxes to Windhoek for counting increase the possibility of tampering?

It was suggested that the ballots should be quickly counted on the spot, and then moved in sealed boxes to the capital for a second count. Furthermore, the period between the time that the polls are closed and the time that the results are announced should be kept as short as possible. Most participants supported these suggestions as ways to reduce the chance for fraud.

One recommendation arising out of the Roundtable discussion was the creation of an Election Council comprising representatives of the AG, the SR, and each of the participating political parties. According to the Commonwealth Observers Group commenting on a similar body created for the elections in Zimbabwe, "it provided a vehicle through which complaints could be made" and difficulties resolved. Many participants supported a similar Election Council for Namibia, especially since the proposal of an independent electoral commission now seemed impractical. □