

Truth and Reconciliation: The Road Not Taken in Namibia

Paul Conway

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Politics

Upon the collapse of South Africa's apartheid regime during the 1990s, there remained the legacy of many unanswered questions regarding thousands of people who had been victimized throughout the prolonged effort to topple that odious system. Many who were presumably tortured and murdered had simply disappeared without information about their whereabouts or remains. Many others died in mysterious ways. The killers and those who could provide information about the victims remained at large, even within government agencies such as the police. The response of South Africa's first democratically elected leaders in the African National Congress (ANC) was dramatic. President Nelson Mandela initiated wide-ranging investigations into unresolved crimes of the apartheid era, under the direction of Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as part of a national process called Truth and Reconciliation Hearings.

Clearly South Africa, from 1995 to 2001, provided the most ambitious and promising model for truth and reconciliation politics. That controversial program included elements of very extensive hearings, prosecution, and compensation to victims.(1) There, as with virtually all other truth commissions, the promise of amnesty as an incentive was central to the process. Only amnesty could encourage perpetrators to provide information about human rights violations. Without amnesty, the truth about individual cases – as well as systematic abuses in the country's recent past – could be suppressed and denied indefinitely. In other words, the price of historical truth and the presumption of political (re)conciliation involved a significant compromise in the pursuit of criminal justice.

Although there is no one model for such policies, variations of truth and reconciliation politics had previously been attempted in several countries during transitions from tyrannical regimes to democratic systems. In Chile, Argentina, Peru, the Philippines, and Guatemala, for example, efforts were made to expose widespread crimes and provide some measure of resolution after democratic institutions were restored. A comparative study by Bronkhorst found that conciliatory policies in several countries included investigations, amnesty for confessed criminals, prosecution of the worst offenders who refuse to cooperate, and compensatory settlements to victims.(2) The mixed record of numerous truth commissions and their recent proliferation has become the subject of intense debate and academic scrutiny.(3) In one noteworthy case, however, salient pressures to initiate a truth and reconciliation process were rejected.

In Namibia, as in South Africa, thousands of people disappeared during the struggle against apartheid. Given the international enthusiasm for what transpired in South Africa, and many indications that the process there has been salutary, an important question is why nothing comparable happened in neighboring Namibia. Why did the government there spurn repeated appeals to systematically investigate crimes and ugly

mysteries regarding the fate of those who had disappeared in the years prior to independence? Was there a deliberate effort to suppress some information about wartime human rights abuses? Research done by human rights activists, dissident clergy, and Namibian political figures provides some literature and documentary data that bears upon such questions. Another source of information was provided via interviews that I conducted in Windhoek in July, 1997 and August and September, 1999. At those times the hope for some kind of reconciliation process was still alive; the claim on the part of the government was that reconciliation had already taken place.

Namibia: The Road Not Taken

South Africa had previously controlled the colony of Namibia, or Southwest Africa, as if it was a fifth province, forcing its brand of racial segregation and repression upon the indigenous population for three decades prior to 1990. After the collapse of apartheid, Namibia quickly adopted a new, democratic constitution. As soon transpired in South Africa as well, the victorious leaders of the struggle against apartheid won control of the government in the country's first free elections. The organization chosen to rule Namibia was the Southwest Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO). (4) The first elected President was SWAPO's charismatic commander, Sam Nujoma.

From the onset of the Nujoma administration, Namibia's government was committed to a declaratory policy of reconciliation. The new Constitution (Article 141 - Existing Appointments) guaranteed that, "persons holding office on the date of independence shall continue to hold such office. . ." (5) That controversial clause meant many white officials who previously supported apartheid would retain their jobs. The new president also promised to provide a document that would account for roughly 11,000 who were missing and last assumed to be in SWAPO's care. The idea of open hearings in a broad national inquiry was widely discussed.

Observers have long taken for granted (and rightly so) that South Africa's regime and its collaborators were responsible for the vast majority of political crimes that occurred within Namibia during the era of apartheid. As far back as the mid-1970s, however, there had been numerous allegations of abuses within the ranks of SWAPO (operating then in exile). Many complaints were directed to clergy and administrators in Namibia's churches with the expectation they would act as intermediaries. There were charges that more than a thousand suspects were imprisoned in the SWAPO camp in Mboroma, Zambia, for example. (6) Many more were allegedly imprisoned ("detained") and tortured elsewhere, particularly in Angola. Subsequent efforts by some SWAPO Youth League and PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) cadres to bring about democratic reforms within SWAPO were "ruthless(ly) suppressed," according to a 1985 study by anti-apartheid dissidents Erica, Attie, and Hewat Beukes. (7)

Also during the mid-1980s, the Parents Committee of Namibia (PCN) was formed by former "detainees" to represent parents and relatives of thousands of missing persons who were last seen in SWAPO facilities. They too appealed to Namibia's clerical leaders, but to no avail. (8) The Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), established in 1978,

apparently failed to respond to many poignant appeals for intervention on behalf of SWAPO detainees. One explanation for the CCN's failure was that leading clergy feared to discredit SWAPO during the war because that might help the enemy. SWAPO seemed to be the only viable alternative in the moral struggle against apartheid. Thus in the years prior to Namibia's independence, the CCN acted more as an arm of SWAPO than as an independent moral force within the colony.(9) Within the country, PCN was virtually alone in their efforts to publicize the detainee issue. Abroad, Amnesty International recognized serious human rights abuses in SWAPO camps for the first time in their annual report for 1987.(10)

The arduous struggle to achieve peace and defeat apartheid in Southwest Africa finally came to a climax with a ceasefire declared in 1988. The implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 required the withdrawal of South African military forces from the territory and the release of all political prisoners on both sides. On July 4, 1989, the first of SWAPO's detainees – 153 individuals – returned from one camp in Angola with stories of torture and disappearances.(11) The following month, over a dozen more escaped, claiming that many more were left behind.(12) Altogether thousands still remained unaccounted for. Thereafter, evidence that SWAPO officials had condoned or concealed significant and extensive abuses in their Angolan and Zambian camps continued to mount.

After SWAPO's landslide victory in the country's first election in 1990, the detainee issue was vigorously debated. It was at this point that a group of ex-SWAPO detainees in Windhoek organized the Political Consultative Committee (PCC). They publicized the issue with a "Report to the Namibian People," describing numerous atrocities and listing the names of thousands who were missing since the war's end. The PCC's protest against the controversial appointment of an official known to be responsible for crimes against many SWAPO detainees was bolstered by international human rights organizations, but the PCC's demand for a national investigation of the issue was circumvented by maneuvers in the new legislative body.(13)

In the first session of Namibia's parliament (the National Assembly), MP Moses Katjiuongua proposed the establishment of a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to probe into the detainee issue. After a spirited debate, Katjiuongua's motion was defeated.(14) Subsequently, in June of 1991 the Assembly passed a resolution requesting the government invite the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to carry out an investigation concerning those declared missing since the war.(15) Many critics, including Katjiuongua and the PCC, opposed that course of action, arguing it was inadequate. ICRC investigators were only allowed to gather and document information about the fate of the missing that the governments of South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, and Botswana agreed to provide. Although there was a surprisingly large response to a public appeal for Namibian citizens to submit information to the ICRC that generated 1,700 names, members of the PCC subsequently compiled a list of many (hundreds) more names of alleged detainees not included in the ICRC list.(16) Finally, to the frustration of dissidents, the ICRC was not empowered to address the issue of

accountability for those who remained missing. What could have been the beginning of a national inquiry turned out to be a prolonged stalemate.

After the ICRC investigation, Namibia's government simply declared a policy of national reconciliation had been accomplished.(17) Consequently there were no national hearings nor was there any publicized, programmatic effort to investigate the cases of disappearances and allegations of SWAPO misconduct numbering in the thousands. The tentative and inconclusive ICRC report only served to exasperate former detainees and dissidents.

The most carefully documented report of problems within SWAPO in the aftermath of the country's first elections was published by the Africa Watch section of Human Rights Watch in August, 1992.(18) The report, whose principal author was Richard Dicker, detailed many accounts of prisoners who were detained and tortured as suspected subversives. Dicker's analysis, based on many interviews, was balanced in the sense that many of the (more numerous) human rights abuses committed by South African authorities and collaborators were also carefully documented. What was surprising to many human rights workers and international scholars who read it was that so many crimes were reportedly committed by SWAPO officials as well. The Human Rights Watch Report had little impact within Namibia itself. Government officials in Windhoek claimed the issue had been resolved. Nonetheless the detainee issue continued to smolder.

In Namibia's second national election in December of 1994, the main issue was the economy, which showed modest growth and stability. SWAPO repeated its first landslide victory, even extending its control of the Assembly to over 73% (53 of 72 seats). The charismatic President Nujoma did even better, garnering the support of 76% of the electorate. In the following year, however, there was a dramatic development in Windhoek which rekindled flames of controversy over the detainee issue. A detailed account of SWAPO abuses, chronicled by a respected German pastor with much experience in the country, was published and rapidly circulated throughout the capital. The book was *Namibische Passion*, then translated into English as *Namibia: The Wall of Silence*.(19) The author was the Reverend Siegfried Groth, who initially had been an enthusiastic SWAPO supporter and remained a foe of apartheid throughout the war. His evidence was based on many interviews with victims he had encountered in Namibia and in exile in neighboring countries and in Germany. The book became a cause celebre. It also became the catalyst for a new, wider mobilization of ex-detainees and their supporters.

The new organization was called the Breaking the Wall of Silence movement or, simply, the BWS. Organizers constructively engaged the CCN, which at that point was finally receptive to proposals that many allegations of systematic abuse (and SWAPO's lack of transparency on the detainee issue) be thoroughly investigated. Despite pressure from government officials calling for a boycott, the CCN did facilitate a conference on the detainee issue that generated further criticism of the government's intransigence.(20)

SWAPO leaders responded sharply to their critics, denouncing Groth's book, the CCN, and the new BWS movement. Nujoma went on national television to personally attack Groth and Christo Lombard, a prominent academic critic and BWS supporter.(21) The leadership of the CCN was condemned by SWAPO's Secretary General as well.(22) Typically, in harsh rebuttals by SWAPO officials, the patriotism and wartime allegiance of dissidents was questioned. The most substantive effort to respond to Groth's book and to deflate the BWS movement came forth with the government's publication of a long-promised list of Namibians who died in exile while under the auspices of SWAPO. The document was entitled "Their Blood Waters Our Freedom" (called "Book of the Dead" by critics of SWAPO). Just under 8,000 names of Namibians missing since the war were accounted for; all were declared to be "heroes."(23)

Dissidents in the BWS responded with a critique of their own, pointing out many errors of omission, commission, and logic in the SWAPO publication.(24) They failed, however, to elicit any subsequent effort on the part of the government to initiate further inquiries. In recent years, the BWS movement and a smaller nongovernmental organization called the Namibia Human Rights Society (NHRS), under the leadership of former detainees, have struggled to keep the issue alive. NHRS officials assert that thousands are still unaccounted for (their highest estimate of roughly 4,000 still missing is debatable, even among dissidents). In private conversations, officials referred to a huge canyon or "crevice" not far from Lubango, in Angola, where they believe the bodies of many of SWAPO's victims were dropped.(25)

In 1997, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission requested that hearings be held in Namibia. Within days, Namibia's government formally rejected that request. Some officials expressed the notion that Namibia should not simply copy what might or might not be done in South Africa. At that point many dissidents again expressed outrage and disappointment in the Windhoek press.

SWAPO's critics were hardly ignored by government officials. To the contrary, dissident groups were vigorously criticized in the media.(26) Although they apparently failed to broaden the constituency of those with a strong interest in the detainee issue, the dissidents raised new, awkward questions about Namibia's puzzling military intervention in support of the Kabila government in neighboring Congo (DRC) and the torture of suspected secessionists in the Caprivi Strip region during the winter and spring of 1999. (27)

In the country's third national election campaign, late in 1999, the detainee issue was occasionally debated (along with more salient issues), partly because of the emergence of a new political party. Ben Ulenga, the leader of the party called the Congress of Democrats (COD), had previously been a PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) soldier, prisoner of war on Robben Island, and SWAPO's first Ambassador to the United Kingdom. After resigning from SWAPO, he declared himself a strong supporter of detainees who had been victimized. Ulenga's rhetoric on the issue failed to generate any wider opposition to SWAPO however. SWAPO candidates again gained the support of over two-thirds of the voters, further consolidating their control of the

legislature.(28) At that point the possibility of any truth and reconciliation process, comparable to what has happened in South Africa, seemed to be a hopeless cause.

Conclusions

It is possible now to restate the basic question of why the government chose not to initiate a truth and reconciliation process similar to South Africa's. Many citizens there, even within the party organization of SWAPO, agree on the answer: It is still called "the detainee issue." SWAPO leaders recognize that issue is still fraught with dangerous potential to embarrass or damage high-ranking officials. Dissidents argue that a pattern of denial, cover-ups, and cronyism ensued within the party throughout the post-war decade. The pattern, they say, threatens to undermine the development of a democratic political culture in Namibia.

Anecdotal and documentary evidence suggests that Sam Nujoma was made aware of persistent allegations of violent abuses to SWAPO detainees; as military commander, he was formally responsible for many of the crimes that occurred during the war.(29) As President he constantly refused to allow any systematic investigations of many alleged war crimes; he excoriated and discredited clerics such as Groth, the NSHR, and the BWS when they pleaded for his intervention. Nujoma's charisma, it seems, was hardly tarnished by the detainee issue.(30)

When Nujoma decided to run for a third term as President despite the constitutional limit of two Presidential terms, the National Assembly (with over two-thirds of its members representing SWAPO) simply amended the constitution to comply with his wishes. During Nujoma's third campaign in 1999, he easily weathered allegations of a somewhat corrupt administration and clear evidence of significant human rights abuses by government authorities who responded to a feeble secessionist threat in the Caprivi region during the winter of that year.(31) As the personable, dynamic, founding father of his country, Nujoma continues to rule without any serious challenger on the political horizon.

Under Nujoma's leadership, excessively authoritarian tendencies in SWAPO's command structure had been noticed and reported back in the 1970s. SWAPO leaders tended to suppress dissent and to squelch dissenters but because of the wartime struggle against an evil enemy known to be ruthless, such behavior was typically ignored or disregarded by many outsiders. Violent techniques of interrogation may have been promoted by eastern European military advisors who indoctrinated PLAN cadre with an extreme ideological (Marxist-Leninist) orientation.(32). Undoubtedly a major factor that explains some of the repression was an excessive fear of subversion within the PLAN. SWAPO was betrayed by numerous spies and informers ("askari") collaborating with South Africa's apartheid regime just as the ANC had been.(33). As a consequence, many soldiers and others who were thought to be critical of SWAPO were suspected of disloyalty. Some SWAPO officials were undoubtedly overzealous in their efforts to discover, discredit, and destroy spies within their ranks. According to one sympathetic account of the failure of Namibian churches to intervene on behalf of the victims of

SWAPO torture, there was an “understandable paranoia about the penetration of spies (in SWAPO) and...really no mechanisms to check whether people were genuine activists or not.”(34)

It seems likely that many abuses within the SWAPO camps reflected tribal or ethnic bias on the part of officials. Documentary evidence, as well as interviews with prominent Namibian activists, indicates that SWAPO’s persecution of their own soldiers and supporters during the war was tainted by ethnocentrism on the part of Ovambo officials. The leaders of PLAN guerrilla forces were predominantly men from Ovamboland in the north of the country bordering on Angola and Zambia (where the notorious camps were located). Thus geography as well as political decisions put Ovambo cadre in charge of Namibians whom they distrusted. Evidently a disproportionate number of SWAPO detainees who were tortured were non-Ovambo suspects.(35) Many SWAPO volunteers who were Herero, Nama, Damara, or from other minority backgrounds, were likely to be suspected of disloyalty simply because of that fact. (36)

Throughout the 1990s, SWAPO has maintained a broad constituent base well beyond the Ovambo peoples, who comprise just over half of the country’s total population. SWAPO continues to flourish in part because of its reputation as the only force that liberated the country from apartheid. SWAPO politicians constantly (and not so subtly) attempt to discredit most of their critics by suggesting they were on the wrong side in the struggle against apartheid (as the DTA was but most other parties were not).(37)

In the case of South Africa, reconciliation was a practical as well as an ideological concern. There was an immediate need to discourage and prevent “white flight” or the “brain-drain” of thousands of white officials and technicians who were critically important to the viability of that country’s economy. (38) Without such a process, the establishment of majority rule might have caused many whites to fear persecution, if not punishment, for the extensive crimes committed in defense of apartheid. Such a threat was never widely perceived in Namibia. There SWAPO’s constitutional guarantee of tenure to numerous whites in administrative positions, reassurances and guarantees to business leaders, and their constant refusal to pursue and prosecute war criminals and collaborators effectively discouraged the possibility of white panic and flight.

Throughout the 1990s, Namibians were generally concerned about the overall economic situation in the country. A small minority of whites maintained control of the best land and its natural resources. A majority of citizens remain undereducated, underemployed, and poor.(39) In numerous ways, SWAPO’s response to the situation it inherited from the apartheid era deserves praise. For example, Namibia still invests more in public education (10% of the GDP and 25% of government expenditures) than most countries.(40) Even dissident critics conceded there was progress during the first Nujoma administration. According to Katjiuongua, for example, “conditions improved and the government deserves to get credit for some real progress that was achieved up until roughly 1995.”(41) This widely shared opinion partly explains why it was so difficult for

SWAPO's opponents to exploit the detainee issue during election campaigns. Towards the end of the 1990s that issue was no longer news; politicians took predictable positions and there were no discernable shifts in public opinion. Even the two most independent newspapers in the country then editorialized against proposals for a truth and reconciliation process. Ironically, one editor argued the time for such a strategy had long passed, the other argued against it with the rationale that "the wounds are so fresh."⁽⁴²⁾

Namibia's political and economic situation is somewhat less promising now than it was several years ago. Despite withering outbursts from public officials who disagree with criticisms in the independent newspapers, the press remains free. But investment has tailed off and private sector job opportunities have diminished.⁽⁴³⁾ In addition to the country's deeply rooted economic problems, the promise of democratic development has been shaken during the recent election campaign. According to media analyses in the Windhoek press, the electoral competition for power was shaped by personalities and symbols rather than issues. More ominously, pro-SWAPO "mobs" were allowed to intimidate and squelch opposition party rallies; numerous other irregularities were alleged.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Although a large majority of voters clearly endorsed SWAPO rule, an intensely anguished, active minority within the country has been alienated. Rightly or wrongly, their alienation is based on the perception that non-Ovambos and others not affiliated with SWAPO are systematically excluded from political appointments and other opportunities. Ultimately the failure of truth and reconciliation may be seen as part of a broader failure on the part of Namibia's founding fathers.

Notes

1. D. Bronkhorst, *Truth and Reconciliation: Obstacles and Opportunities for Human Rights*, (Amsterdam: Amnesty International, 1995). Bronkhorst concluded his study with the insight that there is no extant model for the process that would apply to all or most countries. (pp.150-151)

2. South Africa's development of a truth and reconciliation process has been far more ambitious (perhaps too ambitious, as Bronkhorst states on pp. 84-85). A useful summary of South Africa's approach is Michael Everett, *Reconciliation in South Africa*, (Washington: National Defense University, January, 1999) INSS, Strategic Forum publication number 158. It is noteworthy here that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa did investigate and publicize numerous human rights abuses committed by ANC during their struggle against apartheid. Many in the ANC leadership, including Thabo Mbeki, opposed such an evenhanded strategy. (See Mark Gevisser, "Two South Africas," *The Nation*, November 23, 1998, p. 7 on problems inherent in that experiment, see James L. Gibson and Amanda Gouws, "Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa..." *American Political Science Review*, Vol 95, No 3, September, 1999, pp. 501-517.

3. Jonathan D. Tupperman, "Truth and Consequences," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 82, No 2, March/April 2002 pp 128-145. As Tupperman indicates, East Timor and Sierra Leone are the most recent countries to initiate truth commissions. At least 21 have "run their course since 1974."

4. The acronym SWAPO (for South West African Peoples Organization) based on the name of the colony prior to the 1970s, became a misnomer when the official name of the territory, and later the country, was changed to Namibia with the imprimatur of the United Nations. Nonetheless, the name of the organization has retained the designation of Swapo and the capital letters have been discarded since independence.

5 "SWAPO's old foes reappear in top police posts," *The Independent*, April 28, 1989. Solomon "Jesus" Hauala, who was known as the "Butcher of Lubango" by detainees, was appointed as Commander of the

Army in October, 1990. (see ff. 29 below)

6. Rev. Salatiel Ailonga, Letter to Bishop Leonard Auala, May 24, 1977; excerpt in Christo Lombard, *The Detainee Issue: An Unresolved Test Case for SWAPO, the Churches and Civil Society*, (Windhoek: 1997 monograph) p. 8

7. Beukes, A. et al., *Namibia: A Struggle Betrayed*, (Rehoboth: 1986 monograph)

8. Lombard, op cit, p. 9

9. Phillip Steenkamp, "The Churches," in *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two Edged Sword*, Colin Leys and John S. Saul, eds., pp. 106-107. See also P. Trehwela, "SWAPO and the Churches: An international scandal," *Searchlight South Africa*, Vol 2, No 3, pp 65-88. BWS 1996 Annual Report (Windhoek) p. 3

10. Amnesty International, *AI International Report for 1987*.

11. The first group to return held a much-publicized press conference that told of SWAPO atrocities. "Many disrobed to show their scars from torture." Steencamp, op cit p. 106;

12. "Historic Origins of BWS," *BWS Annual Report*, 1996 (Windhoek, 1997) p. 3.

13. Political Consultative Committee, *Report to the Namibian People* (Windhoek, 1990)

14 "National Assembly accused of 'deliberately delaying' detainee question," *The Namibian*, April 22, 1991, p. 3 ; see also, "Judicial Inquiry or Red Cross Investigation?" *Windhoek Observer*, November 7, 1990, p. 1.

15. The genesis of the ICRC investigation is described by Prime Minister Hage Geingob in *New Era*, Friday, 4-6 October, 1996, p. 3

16. The ICRC report acknowledged that 1,605 out of a total of 2,161 tracing requests were unaccounted for whereas "the previous South African government still had to account for 34 persons." Lombard, op cit p. 1

17. SWAPO's use of the term "reconciliation" referred to the government's vague policy that implied amnesty or forgiveness but without any process that allowed for a sweeping investigation of war crimes (or quest for truthful information), prosecution of unrepentant criminals, or compensation to victims. See Gwen Lister's "Concentrate on the Issues," *The Namibian*, November 5, 1999, p. 5.

18. Africa Watch, *Accountability in Namibia: Human Rights and the Transition to Democracy* (New York: Human Rights Watch, August, 1992)

19. Groth's 1995 book was first published in German (in Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag) then in English and quickly distributed in Windhoek. It was translated into Afrikaans in 1996.

20. Tabby Moyo, "Some Churches Getting Cold Feet over Planned CCN Reconciliation Conference," *The Namibian*, November 15, 1996. P. 5; BWS Annual 1996 Report, 1996 p. 6

21. *BWS 1996 Report*, pp. 10-11, Lombard op cit, p. 14

22. Lombard, op cit, p. 14.

23. There were 7,792 names in the document. *Their Blood Waters Our Freedom*, (Windhoek: SWAPO, released on August 25, 1996)

24. Mongraph: "BWS Comments on the Book, 'Their Blood Waters Our Freedom,'" September 29, 1996.

See also the NSHR critique in *Windhoek Advertiser*, 19 September, 1996, p. 1-2.

25. Interviews with NSHR officials.

26. Typically, SWAPO Secretary General Moses Garoeb labeled critics as “irresponsible, unpatriotic elements and foreign remnants of fascism, and apartheid.” He described the head of the CCN as a “nonentity unknown in the long journey to freedom of our people... under the influence and control of renegades and foreign finance,” etc. (Lombard, p. 14) According to University of Namibia professor Andre duPisani, many Namibians see SWAPO as representing liberation and the official opposition as linked to “colonial rule.” (New Era, Monday, 23-25 August, p. 14)

27. All of Namibia’s newspapers published graphic photographs of torture victims, including a former MP. See, for examples, the *Windhoek Observer*, August 20 and 21, and *New Era*, Monday, August 23-26, p.1

28. In the December, 1999 elections, SWAPO actually increased its margin of control with 76% of the overall vote. President Nujoma beat all of his opponents with 77% of the vote. Ben Ulenga received 11% and his new party, formed earlier in year, had 10% of the vote making it the second most popular party in the country, albeit by a tiny margin. The DTA was third with 2,500 fewer votes than the COD. (Source: *The Namibian*) In one voting district (Oshana) with over 82,000 votes cast, Nujoma won 98% of the votes; in another (Omaheke) with over 70,000 votes cast, Nujoma reportedly got 99%. Such results cast serious doubt on the fairness of the electoral process

29. *Africa Watch (Human Rights Watch) Report*, op cit, pp. 105-107. Interviews with former detainees. During the 1980s Nujoma visited detention camps in southern Angola such as Hainyeko. He was frequently accompanied by Solomon Hawala, who was in charge of SWAPO prison and security services. According to many detainees Hawala, who called himself Jesus, was notoriously cruel and became known as the “Butcher of Lubango.” Yet he was appointed by Nujoma to be Namibia’s first Commander of the Army. Many others who were identified by former detainees as torturers in the SWAPO camps were appointed to high positions in Namibia’s police and military forces. Hawala’s appointment evoked much protest from human rights NGO’s. (e.g. *Amnesty International Weekly Update*, October 30, 1990.

30. Given his personal popularity in Windhoek, dissidents abjure criticizing the president in public. In private conversations, however, many express a conviction he is directly responsible for some of the crimes committed in the SWAPO camps and, of course, the cover-ups.

31. See ff. 25.

32. See Groth, op cit, pp. 120 and 130-150, esp. 136. He documents SWAPO/PLAN members who were trained by Soviet and Chinese cadre and groomed for leadership roles in Eastern Europe. See also *BWS Report 1996*, pp. 10-11

33. The first acknowledgement that SWAPO was presumed to be heavily infiltrated by South African collaborators appeared in “SWAPO alleges a massive spy network,” *The Namibian*, February 21, 1986, p. 3.

34. Steenkamp, op cit p.114.

35. Interviews with NSHR officials.

36. “Proportionately speaking, the ones from the south and center were the major targets.” Testimony from a detainee from Keetmanshoop in *Accountability in Namibia*, p. 70. According to another detainee, Johan, “The practice was that everybody who came from the south and center was arrested.” Ibid, p. 76 Interviews also confirmed that this perception of discrimination against non-Ovambos remains quite strong.

37. The DTA, formerly the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, was created by South Africans attempting to perpetuate the apartheid regime in Namibia during the 1970s. SWAPO’s success in linking all of the

opposition parties to “colonial rule” is explained by Andre duPisani in *New Era*, August 23-26, p. 14.

38. Interviews (Subjects requested anonymity).

39. According to a US Department of State report on human rights conditions in Namibia, whites have an average per capita income of \$14,000 a year and many of the poorest blacks earn just \$65. Unemployment is nearly 40% (http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report/namibia.html).

40. Robin Sherbourne, “Namibian Education’s Three R’s,” *The Namibian*, April 13, 1999, p. 5

41. Katjuongua interview (Windhoek, August 28, 1999).

42. Gwen Lister argued “the time for Namibia to have a truth commission along the lines of that in South Africa has long past.” (*The Namibian* editorial, October 11, 1996) The more conservative *Windhoek Advertiser* also opposed “a local truth commission” in a October 14, 1996 editorial. Even as the President of the CCN proposed a forum to discuss the issue in a nonpartisan venue, the *Advertiser* editorial discouraged efforts to create a truth commission stating that “the wounds are so fresh.”

43. Robin Sherbourne, “What Every Voter Should Know About the Economy,” *The Namibian*, October 15, 1999.

44. Tangeni Amupadhi, "Elections 'Free but not that Fair'..." *The Namibian*, December 9, 1999.

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