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THE AGONIES OF NAMIBIA : AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM AND SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION*

Preamble

Victim of vicissitudes of history, rapacious plunder, inhuman repression, oppression and incineration, Namibia continues to bleed. The minority racist regime of South Africa which illegally grabbed this rich and beautiful land continues to perpetrate a crime against humanity in open defiance of the international community and flagrant violation of international law, decisions of the highest bodies of the United Nations and declarations and rulings of the International Court of Justice.

The diabolical and brutal means of violence and terrorism employed by the South African regime in retaining its vice-like grip on Namibia read like a hair raising chapter lifted right from the history of the Dark Ages and unthinkable in the 20th century civilized society. Human rights, democratic values and all cannons of justice continue to be trampled over with impunity by this ruthless and fascist regime without the least scruple.

Namibia stands out as a great human tragedy in the annals of international relations. The repeated efforts of the United Nations to end this tragedy proved infructuous in the face of the intransigence of the determined usurper backed up by his military might. The only redeeming feature in this tragic and poignant story is the

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rare courage and valour with which the patriotic people of Namibia continue to wage their heroic struggle for independence under the leadership of the SWAPO.

Namibia and Global Policy-Objectives of South African Regime

The agonies of Namibia are placed in perspective when they are viewed against their historical backdrop and the framework of the global policy objectives of the South African racist regime.

Historically, the present agonies of Namibia can be traced to the ill-fated decision of the erstwhile League of Nations in 1920 to mandate to South Africa the territory of Namibia which became a German colony in 1884. Ever since Namibia has become shackled to the policy-objectives that the minority racist regime of South Africa has been relentlessly pursuing in subduing, repressing and dominating the black Africans within South Africa and also outside it in the entire region known as Southern Africa. The major political and economic components of this fascist policy appear to be:

- (i) The white population of South Africa (comprising only 10 per cent of the total population of South Africa) belongs to a superior race and is entitled to a better life than the non-white population. The apartheid policy is, therefore, a necessary instrument in ensuring the preservation of the political and economic status of the white minority.
- ii) The policy of political and economic discrimination against the non-white majority is integral to this fascist concept of racial superiority and may extend to any degree of repression, oppression and exploitation considered necessary to sustain the regime and advantages enjoyed by its members.
- iii) Concessions made to the black Africans from time to time to meet internal and external pressures arising from continuing violation of basic human rights will

have to be in such form and within such limits as are not likely to be detrimental to the central objective of preservation of the racial superiority of this minority ruling group.

- iv) In the present geo-political situation marked by East-West power rivalry the pre-eminence of South Africa (as represented by its white minority) as a power in the entire region of Southern Africa is stressed by Pretoria as an imperative for the political and economic security of the region.
- v) Such a regional security shield is projected as vital to the security of the West in the growing East-West polarization, with South Africa by virtue of her superior military power posing herself as the "regional power" capable of providing such a shield.

South African external relations appeared to be guided chiefly by the parameters set by the above national and foreign policy objectives. South Africa's move to annex Namibia in 1949 was, therefore, not a sudden decision; nor was its refusal to surrender the territory of Namibia to the United Nations trusteeship on the termination of the mandate in 1966 a mere show of arrogance. The syndrome of exploitative plunder of Namibia has been in the making for years prior to that date. In like manner, the same policy-frame explains the tactics that the regime in Pretoria has always adopted in trying to destabilize neighbouring black African states by providing encouragement and even military aid to dissident political groups in Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Lesotho, and sometimes even by resorting to direct military strikes causing terror and destruction. The most recent act of such naked aggression was perpetrated in Angola. The object was clearly the coercion of Angola to agree to the withdrawal of Cubans. This was a demonstration of her self-assumed role as "super power" of the region destined "to sustain white civilization in South Africa and also fight communism in Southern Africa as a whole".¹

1. S.A. Gopal, "Southern Africa" in *World Focus* February 1983 (New Delhi).

Pretoria's "grand design" of reforms includes the creation for South Africa a tricameral legislature with separate (segregated) chambers for the "coloured" and the "Asians", and, installation of a state council for Namibia which, in the words of the Administrator General William Van Niekerk "would neither administer nor govern the territory but would draft proposals for an interim government until independence".

An Appraisal of South African Policy and Action

South African policy and action in relation to Namibia and Southern Africa based on racism and racial discrimination are proving increasingly counter-productive and non-viable. Her diabolical policy of supporting the dissidents in the neighbouring black states has evoked general condemnation. True, through her stance in posing as a shield against the spread of communism, Pretoria succeeded in moving closer to the present American Administration. This, however, fell much short of securing open American support to her racist policy or to the continued illegal occupation of Namibia.

Pretoria appears to have succeeded in securing Washington's support to Pretoria's linkage of withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola to the issue of independence of Namibia but not as a precondition. According to American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker, American objective was to secure a commitment that Cuban troops would leave during the implementation of Security Council Resolution (SCR) 435. He added that America never asked that the Cubans leave first. The linkage concept was rejected by Angola as well as by the UN Security Council. Besides, the military invasion of Angola by the SADF evoked universal condemnation. Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, the British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, during his visit to Southern Africa, reiterated on 4 November 1983 at Harare the British views on the linkage "stated firmly in the United Nations Debate. We do not believe that there should be any preconditions for Namibian

independence other than those naturally arising out of the United Nations".²

Pretoria's design of installing a puppet Government in Namibia also appears to have backfired. Chairman of the Democratic Turnhalle

South African policy and action in relation to Namibia and Southern Africa based on racism and racial discrimination are proving increasingly counter-productive and non-viable.

Alliance (DTA) Dirk Mudge, leader of the now defunct "Council of Ministers" had earlier indicated that the DTA was considering participation in the State Council of South West Africa. Subsequently the DTA decided against participating for the time being. As a result, the Council was never actually established.

The Search for a Solution

The search for a solution of the problem followed two directions:

- 1) The first was the armed struggle for the liberation of Namibia from the illegal occupation of South Africa. This struggle continues in the face of the superior armed might of the South African regime. While the valour and sacrifice of the brave Namibian people and the SWAPO won the high admiration of all freedom loving people, the cost in life and property in this unequal war has been enormous, underlying the urgency of an immediate political solution.
- 2) The second consisted of the series of measures adopted by the United Nations which as the legal Trustee for the territory of Namibia has been relentless in its efforts to find a political and lawful solution of the problem. In 1946 the UN rejected South Africa's proposal for annexation of Namibia and asked

2. Mr. Rifkind at Press Conferene at Johannesburg Airport on 8 November 1983

her to surrender the territory to the UN trusteeship. The pretext that the mandate had lapsed with the extinction of the League of Nations was found untenable by the International Court of Justice which ruled in 1950 that South Africans should hand over Namibia to the United Nations. In view of South Africa's non-compliance the United Nations terminated South Africa's mandate in 1966. The International Court of Justice again ruled in 1971 that the UN and not South Africa had sovereignty over Namibia, thus rendering "Odendal Plan" altering Namibia's status legally invalid.

The United Nations took another important step in 1973 by recognizing SWAPO and appointing the UN Commission for Namibia. The UN maintained its position regarding the legal status of Namibia by refusing to recognise the Turnhalle Conference held in Windhockin 1975. In 1976 the UN set 31 December 1978 as the target date for the independence of Namibia.

Five Western countries—Britain, Canada, France, West Germany and the United States of America formed themselves into a Contact Group. The proposals of the Group for UN supervised elections were found acceptable to all parties. But South Africa again proved to be intransigent and went ahead with a facade of elections which as earlier mentioned finally proved infructuous following resignation of DTA leader Mudge from the "Council of Ministers" in 1982.

UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar undertook a mission to Southern Africa in August 1983 in order to explore further the possibilities of a speedy peaceful solution. He found prospects for a solution encouraging and observed that "finality on the modalities of implementing Security Council Resolution 435 had never been closer ; however, the position of South Africa regarding the issue of the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola still made it impossible to launch the UN plan."³

3. Secretary General's statement to the Press on 29 August 1983

Future Outlook.

In any assessment of the future outlook for a peaceful political solution of the problem several factors—ideological, political and economic—have to be taken into careful consideration.

(1) *Ideological* : The most serious impediment to the peaceful solution of the problem stems from the racist and fascist ideology of the ruling regime in South Africa. As already observed this was at the root of South Africa's intransigence and various ploys adopted by her to foil the efforts of the United Nations for a solution and also to hoodwink the international community through "fake" reforms. In order to disarm the foreign critics, particularly those in West Europe and North America, Botha signed peace agreements with Angola and Mozambique to halt the fighting. Botha also undertook a tour of European countries recently. If the purpose was image-building for himself and his ruling party with a view slowly to bringing South Africa to the international fold, the outcome was far from promising. The press-reports on his tour indicate that wherever he went, the official reception was cool, and protest demonstrations massive. Reagan administration's stated policy of "constructive engagement" with Pretoria is unlikely to be of much help internationally unless Pretoria disengages it from its racist and fascist ideology.

(2) *Political* : The international ire against the minority racist regime of South Africa is steadily mounting. The UN Security Council Resolution 545 adopted by 14 to nil (the US abstaining) condemned South Africa's continued military occupation of parts of Southern Angola, demanded her unconditional withdrawal and redress for any material damage suffered by Angola. British Government not only supported the resolution but also deplored "this latest South African action" and regretted the resulting loss of life.

The seventh Non-aligned summit also expressed strong condemnation of the racist Pretoria. The International Conference in Support of the Namibian People for Independence held in Paris in April, 1983 called upon governments to "render continued and increased moral

and political support as well as financial, military and other assistance to SWAPO to enable it to intensify its struggle for the liberation of Namibia".⁴

Thus, international opinion remains as strong as ever in favour of Namibia's independence. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has also been consistently supporting the cause of an independent Namibia and the SWAPO. Third World countries including Bangladesh have also been unequivocal in their support.

However, a harsh reality that has to be recognized is that all the efforts of the international community, even those of the Contact Group for a political solution ran into obstacles created by intransigent Pretoria in one form or another. The most recent obstacle created by her is known as the 'linkage issue'—linking Pretoria's withdrawal to that of Cubans from Angola supported in principle by the United States. All other parties involved including the UN have unequivocally rejected the linkage issue as extraneous and irrelevant. However, a political understanding over this issue appears to be feasible for the following reasons :

(a) The position of the United States as subsequently explained by American Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker (on 1 December 1983) was that what the US asked for was a commitment to withdrawal of the Cubans (with a time table) during the implementation of the SCR 435 and not that they must leave first.

(b) The conciliatory response of President dos Santos during UN Secretary-General's visit to Luanda to the effect that Angola would be ready to discuss with her Cuban friends "the new timetable" for the progressive withdrawal of Cuban forces subject to following conditions to guarantee Angola's security :

- (i) The immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the SADF from Angolan territory ;
- (ii) Early implementation of SCR 435 ;
- (iii) An end to South African aggression against Angola ;

4. Paris Conference Proceeding, April 1983

(iv) An end to South African military and logistic support to UNITA.

(c) In view of the US and Angolan positions as now officially stated, the political climate for fruitful follow-up action through the good offices of the UN Secretary-General in securing the support of the United States in the withdrawal of the SADF from Angola and speedy implementation of SCR 435 appears to be favourable.

(d) Success so far achieved by Pretoria in trying to move closer to the present American administration by declarations and postures reflecting the latter's security and strategic concerns has to be viewed in the light of the following realities :

(i) Whatever place the American administration may envisage in its scheme of security arrangements for Southern African region, or, for that matter even within the much broader frame of the security of the South Atlantic (popularly known as the "Walters Plan", believed to have been devised by General Vernon Walters), it is unlikely that the administration would be unaware of the enormous cost involved in underwriting Pretoria's aggressive and provocative racist policy of hostility against its neighbours. It would, indeed, be naive to expect that any such move to tow Pretoria's line was possible without seriously jeopardising large American interests in other parts of Africa. Besides, private American business interests are rapidly growing in black Africa with hundreds of millions of dollars invested in Angola and elsewhere. 'The volume of US Trade with Nigeria has nearly surpassed its volume with South Africa'. American private business has also spread out in Zaire, Kenya, Sudan and Guinea, particularly in mining and manufacturing sectors. The need of the hour is, of course, complete unity in the ranks of the African nations.

(ii) Any attempt on the part of the United States to develop strategic relations with the racist South African regime at the expense of good relations with black Africa is bound to prove

self-defeating. Besides loss of prestige and serious risks to economic interests, such a policy would create a climate most favourable to Soviet Russia to gain in her influence in black Africa with the least strain on her military-economic resources.

(3) *Economic*: The situation in South Africa and Namibia appears to be grimmer than ever, with the burden of military expenditure growing progressively heavier.

(a) South African economy plunged even deeper into recession in 1983. The decline in GDP was estimated to be at least 2 percent compared to the decline of 1 percent in 1982. Withdrawal of foreign investments by end of July 1983 was projected at R. 1300 million reflecting rapidly dwindling confidence of foreign investors.

(b) Namibia's economy is also in a shambles as a result of predatory exploitation of her economic resources by South Africa and her rapacious agents, resulting in virtual paralysis of the construction industry. Government administration is highly inefficient and corrupt.

International opinion remains as strong as ever in favour of Namibia's independence. The overall situation is one of increasing dissatisfaction over South Africa indicating that the time is ripe both politically and economically for a fresh initiative for implementation of SCR 435.

The second tier ethnic governments are cited as the most profligate. The consequent economic and financial crisis is underscored in a confidential report from Secretary for Finance (Mr. Jones) to the Administrator-General in 1983 (June) leaked by Mr. Eric Lang (a prominent member of the business community) in Windhoek in the following words :

"The present constitutional dispensation in terms of which representative authorities (second tier government) are permitted to feed like parasites on the fruits of the land with no control or supervision, or

without making a corresponding yield, and, are fast busy leading to the destruction of the entire South West Africa. By 1987, the external debt of Namibia will equal its GDP".⁵ The cost of Pretoria's military strikes is also charged to Namibia's budget as the 'cost of counter-insurgency operations against SWAPO'

(d) Pretoria's repressive apparatus maintained in Namibia has swelled to an uneconomical size, with one soldier on the average for every 35 inhabitants, thus, imposing an increasingly greater burden in terms of economic and human cost.

(c) The plunder of the natural resources remains rampant. The uranium extracted by Rossing is being taken out of the country in contravention of the UN regulations.

The over-all situation is one of increasing dissatisfaction even among the "moderates", as a genuine settlement seems no nearer. The failure of Dirk Mudge's DTA in winning the support of a majority in Namibia and earning the confidence of Pretoria has created a political vacuum, thus, indicating that the time is ripe both politically and economically for a fresh and vigorous initiative for implementation of SCR 435.

Such an initiative can count on the willing, united and unequivocal support of the entire international community. As in the past Bangladesh will lend her full support to all efforts and measures in securing the implementation of SCR 435. In reiterating the complete solidarity of Bangladesh with the just cause of Namibia I once again salute the brave people of Namibia and the undaunted leadership of the SWAPO.

5. Mr. Eric Langs' interview with the Press (June 1983)