

# Namibia: no end of a tragedy

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Once again the United Nations has failed to solve the Namibian problem. In the face of absolute arrogance and utter defiance demonstrated by the Government of South Africa, the UN sponsored conference on Namibia at Geneva was declared closed on the 14th of this month. The note of futile anger and great regret expressed by the UN Under Secretary Mr Brian Urquhart at the concluding session of the conference made headlines in all major newspapers, but for the suffering Namibians it brought no consoling message. The unfortunate but not exactly unexpected result of the conference has given birth to a number of questions, among them the question of the creditability of the United Nations as the forum of international opinion.

Namibia, previously called South West Africa, was a German colony until 1915 when the South Africans drove the Germans out of the territory and gained control over it. In 1920, when the League of Nations was formed, South West Africa was turned into a mandatory territory and South Africa was entrusted with administering the territory. After the Second World War, the United Nations decided to extend its trusteeship over the territory and in 1949 striped South Africa of all its right over it. But as a first example of her obstinacy South Africa refused to accept the UN decision. Defying all international law and practice, it demonstratively annexed the territory and turned it into one of her provinces. Since then the issue has repeatedly been discussed by UN and other international organisations, but all claims and cries have so far met with no success.

The first international opposition to this unlawful annexation was voiced by the

International Court of Justice. In 1950, the Court decided that the territory was still under UN mandate and South Africa had no right over it. During the XXI session of the United Nations held in 1966, the General Assembly repeated the Court's decision and called upon South Africa to pull out from the territory. In the following year a special UN commission for Namibia was set up. The aim behind the commission was to arrange for proper administration of the territory and in the process, prepare the country for full independence. In 1968, South West Africa was renamed as Namibia.

Five years later, in 1973 the XXVIII session of the UN General Assembly once again called upon the Pretorian Government to comply with the UN decision and return the Namibians their legitimate right over the territory. In the following year, during the XXIX session of General Assembly, the United Nations passed a resolution to impose an arms embargo on South Africa. It was also decided to sever economic ties with her.

But all these decisions were made on papers and demands pronounced in the conference halls. While everybody fumbled with words to condemn South Africa the Government in Pretoria quietly carried on its business to grab Namibia and her rich natural resources. In her sinister designs, South Africa was ably supported by interested quarters in the West. The only real resistance came from the people of Namibia itself. In the past two decades a strong resistance movement has grown up inside Namibia and in the last few years it has developed into a full scale liberation war. Spear-headed by the South West Africa People's Organisation

(SWAPO), the patriots of Namibia have already made substantial success. As a direct international support to this movement, SWAPO has been recognised by UN as the legitimate representative of the people of Namibia. But the continuing guerilla war has also brought home for the Namibians death and disaster. South Africa with its rich arsenal and huge military potentialities has virtually established a reign of terror in this region. The neighbouring Angola and Mozambique have also been regular targets of S.A. onslaught. As a result, the continuing war in Namibia has already claimed hundreds of lives and made thousands homeless.

The latest UN move was directed to bring an end to this tragic and most gruesome war. Already a decade has passed and the UN commission on Namibia has failed to bring South Africa to the conference table to meet the SWAPO leaders. The new year conference at Geneva was the result of many months deliberation and patient persuasion. But the mood of the conference was set right from the beginning by S.A. She along with a number of internal parties of Namibia refused to negotiate with SWAPO as the only legitimate representative of the people of Namibia. This was, in fact, a flat refusal of the UN General Assembly decision. But the SWAPO leaders decided to adopt a compromising attitude in the conference. Sam Nujoma, the SWAPO leader offered a compromise formula, according to which an UN supervised cease-fire would come into effect from 30th of March and in the next seven months a general election would be held in the country. He declared that SWAPO would accept any result of the election. As a further proof of his good intentions, Sam

Nujoma declared that despite a SWAPO victory, he would maintain a multi-party political system in the country. This would automatically nullify SWAPO claim as the sole representative of the people of Namibia. But nothing could satisfy South Africa and her satellites; and as a result the meeting was declared postponed.

The repeated failures of all UN attempts to solve the Namibian issue have given rise to a number of questions, among them the simplest one is the UN has failed to solve the problem? The apparent answer is of course, South Africa's defiance. But why the committee of the nations of the world has so far failed to compel a single member country to abide by its decision? The reason stems from the fact that UN is a voluntary organisation and it preserves no mandatory sanctions against its member nation. The only authoritative organ in the UN is the Security Council. But before the Security Council

can embark upon any action, all the five permanent members of the council must pronounce a 'yes' to it. But its a rare fortune when the 'big five' can speak in a common language. In the XXIX session of the General Assembly, a decision was reached by 125 votes in favour, 1 against and 9 abstentions to expel South Africa from the United Nations. But when

the resolution reached the Security Council for a final approval, one of the 'big five' found enough reason to disagree with the decision and vetoed the move out.

As an alternative approach, the UN General Assembly decided to impose economic and military sanctions against South Africa. The effective execution of this decision could achieve miracle. But dollars and cents are more important to many than the perpetuation

of death and disaster. It has recently been disclosed that neither the arms embargo nor the economic sanctions against South Africa have been successful. In a recent disclosure made in the American news journal 'Newsweek', it has been reported that a single American business man Mr Gerald Bull who deals mainly in ballistics, has smuggled up to 50 million dollars worth of artillery shells, howitzer barrels and technology from the US to Cape Town. Quite bluntly the journal has questioned the possibility of an official link in this affair. Another report says that many European and American oil companies were openly violating the oil embargo on S.A. The same report says that in the last few months more than 42 oil tankers have reached the ports of Cape Town; among them no less than 26 ships were owned by Shell and atleast one by British Petroleum. No wonder these

shipments have been made under the vigilant nose and eyes of the respective Governments. Ironically many of these Governments are the chief patrons of the United Nations and they still are responsible for making our world happy and secure. No wonder with such patrons, South Africa will many more years attempt to maintain their regime of occupation.

At the end of the conference Mr Sam Nujoma has somberly said, 'Now we have no way but to go back to our guerilla bases'. May be the patriots of Namibia are many miles away from independence; may be many more lives would be lost before Namibia can breathe the air of liberty. This is only a matter of time. But when finally the day shall dawn upon Namibia, who shall account for our today's failure to save the countless lives?