CHAPTER III

CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND NAMIBIA/ANGOLA QUESTION

Reagan's Contact Group Diplomacy

Namibia presented the first test of 'Constructive Engagement'. The U.S. started its efforts for the resolution of Namibian problem along with its other western allies. This effort of the United States came to be known as the Contact Group Diplomacy. The U.S. accepted the United Nations resolution 435 of 1978 as the basis for achieving the Namibian independence.

However, negotiations had reached an impasse. The terms of U.N. participation had not been agreed. Between 1978 to 1980 the Contact Group had met with persistent evasions and objections on the issue by South Africa. Although the Contact Group conceded most of Pretoria's demands, South Africa had not accepted United Nations as an honest broker. It questioned Security Council's recognition of SWAPO as the sole representative of Namibian opinion. Under this situation the Reagan Administration felt it necessary to consider additional measures which would motivate white regime to take a decision that would pave way for Namibia's independence.

After Crocker's exploratory discussions with Pik Botha and the Frontline states, the Contact Group agreed that progress would be enhanced by measures aimed at giving greater confidence to all the parties on the future of an independent Namibia. It was addressing mainly South Africa's fears which Crocker wanted to allay.

By the time Reagan became the President, the Contact Group had accepted South Africa's major demands. It agreed for example, that South Africa should remain in occupation of the territory until independence. South Africa would not be asked to dismantle the homelands until elections had been held. Moreover elections would even be run by South African officials who would have general responsibility for choosing the electoral system maintaining a register of voters and even counting the number of votes. SWAPO failed to persuade the Contact Group that the Secretary General's special representative should be given at least a veto over the South African Administrator General.

In addition, the Contact Group agreed that the elections would be held before power was transferred. That the U.N. peace-keeping force and the 1500 strong South African army would be jointly responsible for monitoring

2. Ibid. p. 49.
the peace. Finally the Contact Group also agreed that although the SADF (South African Defence Force) would be allowed to operate in "selected locations", where demilitarisation would not apply, SWAPO would be required to remove its forces behind a fifty mile demilitarised zone on both sides of the border within the first fourteen days of a settlement.

By August 1980 South Africa had only two remaining objections to the U.N. plan: the question of U.N. impartiality, given that the Security Council still recognised SWAPO as the "sole" representative of Namibian opinion; and the Contact Group's alleged lack of consultation with the territory's "internal parties". In response the Western powers proposed an all party conference in Geneva at which they hoped that both issues would be resolved.

Hopes were never higher than at this time. On 7th January, 1981 there was a meeting at Geneva between all parties involved in the Namibian dispute. At the complicated negotiations, it was agreed that internal political parties in Namibia - namely the Turnhalle Alliance directed by Dirk Mudge - would sit at the same table with SWAPO negotiators. The Republic of South Africa would be accorded the same advisor's status as the other Frontline nations in the region. The agenda of the conference was left slightly ambiguous to placate South Africa. The U.N. officials did

4. Ibid.
not want the coming constitution to be a subject on the agenda because this would allow further grounds for obfuscation, by South African officials. Instead, it was agreed that the peace plan and other practical proposals would be on the agenda.

On the first day of negotiations at Geneva, Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim called for a firm argument for a cease-fire date that would clear the way to independence for the territory by the end of 1981. As the talks continued, even the most elementary step of the cease-fire became impossible. The conference ended with South African delegation declaring the West plan premature. SWAPO, for its part, said the conference had failed because of the "intransigent prevarication" of South Africa.

At Geneva, South Africa advanced the argument that the U.N. General Assembly had given preferential treatment to SWAPO. However, it was too late to break off the conference on this pretext. The argument could only have been used as a pretext for not attending in the first place, since the resolution had been passed in 1976. This argument could also be easily rejected on the ground that the United Nations would hold practically no power during the

7. General Assembly Resolution 32/146, (December 20, 1976,) recognised SWAPO as the sole and authentic representative of Namibian Public Opinion.
elections, while South Africa would still be able to use its considerable economic and military presence in Namibia, to influence the voters. In this connection, Sam Nujoma declared:

"It is absurd that the colonial power which in actual fact is responsible for organising the elections should be the one to demand impartiality from the United Nations. It is rather that the United Nations and the international community should require assurance from South Africa."

As could be expected, the nations of the world were furious at South Africa's backing off from peace in Namibia. When the General Assembly reconvened to assess the situation in Namibia, the majority of the speakers blamed failure of the Geneva talks on South Africa. They felt that if the impartiality of the U.N. had not been the excuse used, South Africa would have been able to find another. It seemed clear that South Africa was not yet ready to withdraw from Namibia. Hence they intensified their pressure on the western countries by calling the Security Council to impose sanctions on South Africa. The President of the Council for Namibia stated:

"South Africa must be held totally responsible for the collapse of the Geneva pre-implementation talks on

Namibia. And it should now be clear to all that it is South Africa which is intransigent and has rejected once again a rare chance for a peaceful solution of the Namibian question, showing preference for a military confrontation whose consequences would be very serious indeed...We must once more urge these Western countries which not only are trading partners and traditional allies of, South Africa, but were also initiators of the ideas the ultimately culminated in the United Nations plan, to flex their economic muscles and bring pressure upon the racist regime of South Africa to comply with the United Nations resolutions, thereby bringing about the implementation of the United Nations plan without any further delay”.

The permanent observer of SWAPO declared:

"The promises and assurances given in the spring of 1977 (by the Contact Group) have proved to be fraudulent and dishonest. How else can we interpret the obvious recalcitrance of the so-called Contact Group, which continues to pretend that it is completely helpless and in the face of Pretoria's continued defiance, intransigence and hostility towards the international community?...The question before, the resumed session of the Assembly is whether the international community can now demonstrate the courage of its convictions by drawing the line here. It is in our

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view, a matter of urgency for this Assembly to adopt unanimously a clear and categorical position, representing the awareness of the world community that enough is enough and that what is called for is the total mobilisation of all resources, as was done against Nazism, to end the racist colonial oppression and illegal occupation of Namibia by neo-Hitlerites of South Africa".

This request by SWAPO was clearly reflected in the resolutions adopted by the thirty-fifth resumed session of the General Assembly. On 6 March, 1981 this resolution called upon the Security Council to "convene urgently to impose comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa, to ensure South Africa's immediate compliance, with the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations relating to Namibia.

With the unprecedented participation of nineteen foreign ministers, the Security Council started the debate on the question of Namibia. Three African members of the Security Council, Niger, Tunisia, and Uganda, sponsored five draft resolutions aimed towards meeting the international challenge South Africa had created. When the draft resolutions were put to vote all were killed by triple vetoes cast by Britain, France and the United States.

10. Ibid. pp. 57-81.

These powers justified their negative votes on the ground that the imposition of sanctions would close the prospects for further negotiations with South Africa. In fact a fresh round of negotiations with South Africa was under way as the representative of the United States stated:

"We have already undertaken consultations in Africa and we have met at a high level with other members of the Contact Group in London. With these actions, we will continue the process begun years ago by our predecessors. We will continue that process in the next few days with discussions of the Namibia problem, at the ministerial level with our colleagues in the Contact Group in Rome. The next step will be the preparation of specific proposals which we would hope to discuss with the parties concerned in the near future.... It is for that reason that we could not support the draft resolutions. We do not believe that economic sanctions are an effective means of influencing political policy".

At the diplomatic level, the Reagan Administration along with other Contact Group members embarked on consultations to draw up fresh proposals. A formula was reached to "strengthen" resolution 435: property rights would be

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guaranteed, together with a multiparty system with constitutional safeguards for the whites. A constitution would be drafted before the holding of elections. The Region Administration was now to seek consensus by means of shuttle diplomacy. It was to consult with South Africa and with the Namibian "internal parties" while the United Kingdom was to do the same with the African States and SWAPO.

In May 1981, Foreign Minister Botha visited Washington for talks with Haig. He declared that the new proposals made by the Reagan Administration offered a real possibility of moving ahead on negotiations. The constitutional guarantees "would allay fears and anxieties" among the white minority in Namibia where nineteen percent of the population is black.

However, as the negotiations progressed and new prospects for a settlement appeared, South Africa started raids on Angola's southern province of Kunene. It launched the largest military operation against SWAPO since 1975. The invasion's purpose, besides weakening SWAPO, was to destroy Angolan air defence systems, and to stall a UNITA


buffer zone along the Angolan-Namibian border. In a secret memorandum, explaining his meeting with Malan and Pik Botha, in South Africa, Crocker wrote:

"The South African government sees Savimbi in Angola as buffer for Namibia. The South African government believes Savimbi wants Southern Angola. Having supported him, thus far, it would damage South Africa's honour if Savimbi is harmed."

Although the invasion was condemned by all the members of the United Nations including every one of the Western allies the U.S. response gave moral support to South Africa. Chester Crocker declared:

"The Reagan Administration would not take sides between blacks and whites in South Africa or try to undermine the South African Government in order to carry favour elsewhere. We can not and will not permit our hand to be forced to align ourselves with one side or another in these disputes."

"The U.S. representative told the Security Council that his government deplored violence from any quarter, but that the latest episode must be understood in "surrounding context". Angola had "large elements of foreign advisors", and substantial supplies of foreign arms have been shipped

into Angola to supply and resupply elements of SWAPO that have been engaged in violence across the Angolan border”.

There were several hostile responses to Washington’s backing for South Africa, The Security Council voted on a resolution which strongly condemned South Africa for "pre-mediated unprovoked and persistent armed invasion", of Angola, for using the illegally occupied territory of Namibia as a springboard for attacks and for using mercenaries.

This draft resolution received thirteen votes. France included in favour, but the United States vetoed it. Representative of United States said that, his government had to vote against the resolution because it placed blame for the escalation of violence solely on South Africa. He said further that United States deplored recent South African actions but that the violence in the region was fuelled by "foreign combat forces in Angola, particularly the large Cuban force, and the provision of Soviet-originated arms to SWAPO.

Although dissociating itself from the operation,

it referred to context of SWAPO incursions into Namibia, plus Cuban and Soviet military involvement, adding that this incident underscored the need for urgent movement towards a Namibian settlement.

The U.S. veto in the Security Council marked a significant split between the United States and other members of the Contact Group. The allies complained that the Reagan Administration wanted to link Namibian independence to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and charged that Washington was dragging its feet over the negotiations. The French had been particularly worried at the implications of the U.S. stance over Angola. They saw it as compromising the West's position with the Frontline states whose collective assent to a negotiated Namibia settlement was vital to securing SWAPO'S consent to any changes or addition in resolution 435 (1978).

However despite the South African attacks on Angola, the Frontline States were still backing a negotiated settlement as the preferred option for Namibia. Angola

continued to exercise restraint, refraining from invoking the assistance of other countries and from putting Cuban forces into the frontline of the fighting.

**New Proposals**

Inspite of South Africa's attacks the negotiations on Namibia continued, with Crocker taking the initiative on behalf of the Contact Group. The Contact Group presented a document entitled, "Principles concerning the Constituent Assembly and the Constitution for an Independent Namibia," to SWAPO, South Africa, the internal parties in Namibia, the Frontline states and Nigeria.

This document if acceptable to the parties concerned, was to be followed by phase two: agreement on implementation of the plan, including a resolution of the questions of U.N. impartiality and role of U.N. peacekeeping troops, to be completed by 31st March, 1982. Such an agreement would have to satisfy South Africa's concerns while still ensuring a fair and free election. Phase three-implementation of the settlement plan contained in Security Council resolution 435 (1978) as modified-could begin if and when agreement was reached on phase two, with a target date of March 1982.

The crucial element of the Western proposals was that a future constitution would be adopted by a two-thirds

majority of the Constituent Assembly membership. This meant that SWAPO needed to win the election by a large majority if it was to control the direction of the new government. SWAPO needed to win at least sixty-seven out of one hundred seats and assure that it would have sixty-seven votes on hand to vote for the constitution when it was drawn up. This proposal was obviously intended to create a situation where SWAPO would not be able to achieve a position of unquestioned dominance in a pre-independence election.

In Section B the principles provided that the electoral system would ensure fair representation in the legislature to different political groups, by proportional representation, by appropriate determination of constituencies, or by a combination of both. Proportional representation and regional elections could mean an ethnically skewed election that would continue white domination. This white domination was what the strongest of the white parties of South West Africa Nationalist Party in Namibia wanted. It's leader Kosie Pretorius told the Windhoek press on that "we reject a one-man, one-vote election under

26. For the full text of the Western Proposal See The Windhoek Advertiser October 27, 1981.
United Nations supervision for a Constituent Assembly. Pretorius advocated an election by ethnic groups.

The remaining proposals suggested principles for an independent constitution to be agreed by the parties taking part in an election. These were a declaration of fundamental rights; the right to associate for political or trade union purposes; equality before the law; protection from the arbitrary deprivation of private property or deprivation of private property without just and prompt compensation. This, too, was aimed at easing white fears by limiting the powers SWAPO could exercise in an independent Namibia, if it won governing authority.

In order to induce South Africa to accept this highly favourable package of amendments, the United States thus offered South Africa more carrots instead of sticks. While little was asked of South Africa, Angola was told that getting rid of Cubans would be a condition for progress on Namibia. Although South African government leaders reacted positively to the Western proposals, Pretoria had not still provided a formal response. This was probably due to the reaction by the conservative parties. Jaap Marais told a

29. Geisa Maria Rocha, op. cit. no. 27.
30. Frank J. Parker, op. cit. no. 5 p. 118-120.
rally of 1000 conservative whites in Windhoek that it was "madness" to draw up a constitution to end a war. He called for whites not to turn in their weapons to the United Nations but to use them if South Africa "sells out".

South-Africa's protege, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), demanded to know how the West could guarantee that SWAPO would abide by the constitutional safeguards to which it agreed.

With no definite acceptance of the proposed constitutional principles from anyone, the Contact Group met in Canada in mid-December to work out an amended formulation that would satisfy South Africa and the internal parties who wanted an ethnic election; the DTA which wanted guarantees, & SWAPO which wanted a fair election. On December 17th 1981, a revised proposal was presented to the parties concerned. Now instead of the familiar "one-man, one-vote", the proposal called for "one-man, two-votes".

The West's proposal was highly ingenious. It had met the black African demand for one-man one-vote election to a great length but was less favourable to SWAPO and had favoured instead the DTA. The proposal would have made it difficult for SWAPO.

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31. Ibid.
33. For the entire text of the revised proposal, see Wind.
to obtain the two-thirds majority of the Assembly seats required under the constitutional proposals for the adoption of a Namibian constitution.

Breakthrough for Constructive Engagement

The year 1984 started (as far as Namibia was concerned) on a hopeful note. On 15th December 1983, the South African government, in a letter to the U.N. Secretary General, had offered to disengage its forces from Southern Angola, an area which they had occupied since July 1981. Pretoria's offer, however, was conditional on Angolan reciprocity and assurances (provided by Luanda and Washington) that SWAPO and Cubans would not take advantage of the situation.

Early in January 1984, Angola had indicated qualified acceptance of Pretoria's offer to disengage and to call a truce, subject to certain conditions. These included the total withdrawal of all South African forces from Angola and firm commitment on the implementation of U.N. resolution 435. These conditions were to be met without reference to what Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos called "extraneous considerations" a clear reference to

linking withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola to a Namibian settlement. In a related development SWAPO repeated its call in a letter to U.N. Secretary General, Perez de-Cue- lar for a direct talks with South Africa and a conclusion of a ceasefire.

These diplomatic overtures increased considerably when U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester A. Crocker visited South Africa and several other countries in Southern Africa late in January, 1984. South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha announced the disengage- ment of South African forces from Angola as a result of assurances given by Crocker. This was an important move in a regional context because it not only paved the way for further talks between Angola and South Africa but also improved the overall climate for reapproachment between Pretoria and Angola. These diplomatic initiatives of various regional actors and U.S., culminated in the signing of Lusaka Accord on 16 February 1994.

The costlines of recent wars to both sides might have influenced them to seek at least a limited to reduce the chances of further confrontation. However the earlier diplomatic exchanges had definitely prepared the ground for the Accord. The Accord provided for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of South African forces from Angola and the estab

35. Ibid.
lishment of an Angolan/South African Joint Monitoring Commission (JMC). It was envisaged that the Angolan forces would be responsible for ensuring that Southern Angola would not be used by SWAPO for incursions into Namibia. The JMC was expected not only to monitor the South African disengagement but also to detect, investigate and report any alleged violations of the commitment of the parties under the agreement. South Africa agreed to withdraw its troops from Cunena Province by the end of March 1994. Neither SWAPO nor UNITA were supposed to move into the zone.

Unprecedented optimism was expressed in diplomatic circles concerning the possibility that the troubled Namibian/Angolan fracture might be closer to peace than it had for years. Underlying this optimism was a belief that under the Accord, South Africa had made a renewed commitment to work constructively towards a settlement. In some respect the Accord was adhered to, at least initially. The South African and Angolan military got on well within the Joint Monitoring Commission. SWAPO promised Angola that it would reduce its activity in the zone.

The withdrawal did begin albeit much more slowly than had been agreed at Lusaka. In May 1984 South Africa finally pulled out of Naviga, the capital of Cunena Province, which they had occupied since August 1981. But very soon disputes arose over Pretoria's claims that SWAPO was being allowed to infiltrate into Namibia. As a result, the withdrawal slowed down and the process expected to last only a few months, dragged on for over a year.

SWAPO, had agreed to honour the Accord but refused to declare the truce. Its guerrillas continued to move towards Namibia either through or around the cease-fire zone, which did not cover the entire border, SWAPO's intransigence at this time reflected resentment at being excluded from the agreement that seriously affected its operations. For the time being, however, the Reagan Administration, saw the agreements as one step towards the eventual goal of Cuban withdrawal and Namibian independence, was satisfied that they had helped to create a better climate of trust between South Africa and Angola.

However, euphoria over Lusaka and the sudden bloom of detente in the region did not last long. By the end of the year they were fading, together with the hopes for political progress within South Africa.

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On May 21 the same year two South African soldiers were killed and one was captured by Angolan forces in the Cabinda Enclave in the far North of Angola. Malan said that a small force had been on a reconnaissance mission to find ANC and SWAPO training camps, but the captured South African officer stated that the force had intended to sabotage oil storage tanks of the American Corporation Gulf oil. If it had succeeded in its mission, it would have been a severe blow to the Angolan economy while UNITA would have claimed the credit. This admission was politically embarrassing for Pretoria. It caused Luanda to break off the negotiating contacts. It also gave Castro, a pretext to increase the number of Cuban troops in Angola from an estimated 25,000 to 31,000 by the end of 1985.

From the end of June 1985, South African forces regularly crossed into Angola to attack SWAPO and to help UNITA. The pre-Lusaka situation had been restored and one of the successes of "Constructive Engagement", nullified. Thus four years after the Reagan administration first embarked on "constructive engagement", it had little to show for its efforts.

Critics charged that constructive engagement had produced neither independence for Namibia nor substantial

changes in South Africa's apartheid policies. Crocker's effort to resolve the Cuban linkage had not borne fruit. Instead, it had resulted in closer U.S. ties with South Africa, with Washington getting little in return. Much of what the U.S. Administration viewed as progress towards regional detente had actually been repair of the damage wrought by South Africa's efforts to destabilise its neighbours.

Inside Namibia, Botha had launched another internal government for the territory - the Transitional Government of National Unity (TUGNU). It was based on the Multi-Party Conference, established in August 1983 to bring together non-SWAPO parties. It provided for an executive and a legislative authority (National Assembly). The new government was given all powers previously exercised by the Administrator-General. However strong reserve powers still remained with him. Thus the reins were still in Pretoria's hands.

At the same time U.S. policy shifted towards active support for UNITA in the context of the Reagan Doctrine. The U.S. Congress agreed to repeal the Clark Amendment (1975) which had banned U.S. aid to Angolan rebel

movements, opening the way for military aid to UNITA. This policy shift exposed a contradiction in Reagan's policy, with one strand promoting negotiations, stability and peace in the region, reflected in Lusaka Accord, and the other promoting violent conflict by military and political support for one side in a civil war.

The justification for aiding UNITA laid in the increased supply by the Soviet Union of more sophisticated weapons to the MPLA, as well as the increased number of Cuban troops. Hence Jonas Savimbi, the leader of UNITA, was given red carpet welcome in Washington during his visit to the United States in the initial months of January and February 1986. On 16th February 1986, the Reagan Administration confirmed that it was going ahead with a $15 million programme of convert military assistance to Savimbi. By the beginning of 1986 the CIA was organising the supply of ground to air missile and other equipments to UNITA.

In response Angola's official radio announced that the United States decision to provide arms to Savimbi amounted to a declaration of war against the Angola government and accused Washington of entering into strategic alliance with South Africa.

Thus by abandoning diplomacy for military intervention, the United States entirely recast its policy in Southern Africa, killing any chance of acting as an honest broker. Military aid to UNITA was seen throughout the area as an evidence of Washington's support of South Africa in
regional conflicts in the name of fighting anti-communism. Hence Washington's influence in the region was reduced to a great length. Moreover, the U.S. actions had the effect of encouraging South Africa which could again argue that it was on the side of the West in their struggle against communism. South Africa's support for UNITA now became more open.

Aid to UNITA doomed the Namibian initiative, the central goal of the Reagan Administration's African policy. President Botha, however, subsequently caused a flurry of diplomatic speculation by proposing 1 August 1986 as a new deadline to implement U.N. resolution 435 for the independence of Namibia. The setting of that date gave an appearance of a fresh offer. However, the fact was that Pretoria had suggested the date only because the United States had insisted to do so in a last-ditch attempt to rescue the talks. In fact the terms of the agreement notably the insistence on the prior removal of Cuban troops from Angola had remained intact.

The failure to reach a settlement on Namibia did not in itself represent a major foreign policy defeat for the United States which had no vital interests in the

40. Panline H. Baker, op. cit. no. 38 p. 194.

region. But the hopes of the Reagan Administration to get
Cuban troops out of Angola were shattered. Angola confirmed
that all links between it and the two main countries fund­
ing UNITA remained broken.

Washington’s influence was limited by its policy
contradictions. On the one hand, Crocker, dissociated the
Administration from Pretoria’s actions and in October 1985
the U.S. voted for the unanimous Security Council resolu­
tion condemning Pretoria for its latest aggression against
Angola; on the other hand, Reagan favoured supporting
UNITA. Due to these policy contradictions in the region,
United States was perceived as tacitly supporting South
African aggression.

Last Phase of Diplomacy

The main attention, from late 1987 was focused on
the conflict in Angola. In September-October of 1987 the
Angolans with Cuban support were more strongly armed than
in 1986 had renewed their offensive against UNITA. They
were repulsed by UNITA with South African support which on

42. George W. Shepherd Jr. “The United States’ South Afri­
can Policy: The failure of Constructive Engagement”,

43. James Barber & John Barratt, South Africa’s Foreign
this occasion was explicitly admitted by South African government. Fighting in Cuando-Cubango province continued in the early months of 1988, around the key town of Cuito Cuanavale, but eventual military stalemate was followed by a new round of negotiations.

In late January 1988, the Angolans and Cubans told Crocker for the first time that they were prepared to a total withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola as a part of a general Southern African peace settlement. This concession opened the door for the first direct talks among South Africa, Angola and Cuba in London in May 1988.

In early 1988, however, the South African leadership had shown no sign of flexibility. It's artillery was pounding the remnants of the Angolan force at Cuito Cuanavale. In March, when Crocker showed the Africans a new Cuban Angolan working paper setting out a four year Cuban withdrawal plan, Foreign Minister Botha dismissed the proposal in scathing terms. President Botha himself reiterated this attitude and added a new condition; "we are staying in Angola until the Cubans leave". He thus made the removal of Cuban troops a condition for the SADF's withdrawal from Angola, without reference to the latter's


removal from Namibia.

In short as Cuba and Angola signalled their readiness to seek a peace settlement in early 1988, they had few grounds for believing that South Africa was prepared to leave Angola. Much less that it was ready to negotiate seriously about Namibian independence. Now, when Angola and Cuba had shown their hand by accepting the principle of a Cuban troop withdrawal, the question remained how could South Africa be pressurised into a serious bargaining mode? Castro concluded, as he explained later, that "it was necessary to change the correlation of forces". In other words, he decided to step up military pressure on South Africa.

Castro embarked upon what he was later to call, 'the most important strategic operation' of the war. He ordered a main force of 15000 newly arrived reinforcements to move directly to the Namibian border. How fast the Cubans moved and how far they were initially ordered to go, is uncertain. However, it is clear that Castro orchestrated the scale and timing of deployment towards the Namibian border so as to put pressure on South Africa at the

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The South Africans did in fact, raise the issue in London, where they sought guarantees that Cuban troops would not cross into Namibia. However, Cubans offered no such assurances. By then Cuban forces in Angola had been boosted to 45,000 and more were on the way. Moreover, the Cubans had constructed bomber bases at three nearby towns (Xangongo, Mupa and Cahama) to support their ground forces.

Upto this point, the Botha government had offered no serious concessions in the talks either at Brazzaville in May 1988 or at Cairo in June the same year. In Brazzaville, it demanded an end to the Cuban build up on the border. South African leaders denounced Angola for harbouring ANC operatives and insisted that reconciliation between the dos Santos government and UNITA was a prerequisite for a settlement. The Angolan government were reported to be furious with South Africa. It charged that South Africa had clearly gone to Brazzaville not to move towards a settlement but to seize the opportunity for public relation, namely, to project to the world the image of South African officials meeting with.


African leaders in an African Country.

In Cairo meeting on 22-25 June 1988, South African officials demanded that Cuba should remove its 45,000 troops from Angola in seven months, the same period in which South Africa was to withdraw its forces from Namibia. They further demanded that Savimbi be brought into a coalition government in six weeks.

However, a few days after the Cairo talks had ended, a major clash occurred between the forces of South Africa and Cuba at Calueque. This clash offered sobering testimony to the risks and high costs of engaging an enemy equipped with advance weapons and willing to strike back hard. Indeed the Calueque incident brought out the growing misgivings in South Africa about the SADF's presence in Angola. Here for the first time the Cubans and Angolans had sufficient combat power to prevent the movement of South African air and ground forces. The political columnist of the Johannesburg evening newspaper, Die Vaderland, wrote that hopes should be placed on attaining peace, since neither side could win the war.

Meanwhile the Cubans continued to build up their forces in Southern Angola and the South Africans in Namib-

49. For a detailed analysis of these early talks, see Gillian Gunn "A Guide to the Intricacies of the Angola-Namibia Negotiations", Centre for Strategic and International Studies Africa Notes (Washington D.C.), September 8, 1988.

ia. Nevertheless there were no further clashes between the two armies after Calueque. In fact that engagement appears to have been a major catalyst in moving the two sides to seek ways of avoiding further such clashes and intensifying their search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

It would be inaccurate to suggest that there had been no progress on the diplomatic front before the Calueque incident. But until then, both sides had maintained their hardline positions and offered no significant concessions. The first real breakthrough, however, came during the next round of talks in New York on July 11, 1988, two weeks after the clash at Calueque. The venue was Governor's Island, a U.S. Coast Guard station in New York harbour, selected for its isolation, particularly from the media.

In the early stages of the meeting, Carlos Aldana, head of the Cuban delegation, made a surprise announcement. He admitted that the Cubans privately recognised the necessity of accepting linkage — that is, Namibian independence for a total Cuban withdrawal from Angola although it continued to pose 'political problems' for them to do so publicly. South African participants later accepted that statement. They were convinced that the process might work.

The delegates with key mediation, then hammered out 14 Principles for peaceful settlement on South Western Africa. Of these 14 Principles, declared to be 'indispensable' to a settlement, two were crucial. One committed Angola and South Africa to name a date for the implementation of Resolution 435. The other called for redeployment of Cuban troops to the north and the staged and total withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, on the basis of agreement between Angola and Cuba. The three governments also agreed to respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to prevent the use of their territories for hostile acts against other states, in short, to end the South African assistance to UNITA and Angola, sanctuary for the ANC guerrillas.

The massing of Cuban troops north of the Namibian border and the clash of Calueque, had cast a shadow of suspicion and unease over the New York talks. The South African military, in particular, had serious reservations about their government's making further commitments to process already fraught with uncertainties and serious risks for South Africa. Following a U.S. suggestion, the military chiefs of Angola, Cuba and South Africa, together with the American mediators met secretly in the Cape Verde islands on 22-23 July, 1988.
A key issue at Cape Verde was the modality for the withdrawal of South African forces from Angola. The Angolans and Cubans insisted that there could be no serious negotiations. According to a U.S. participant, neither Cuba nor South Africa wished to fight, but both were prepared to do so if necessary. 52

The other issue at Cape Verde was how to minimise the risk of further clashes which might lead to all out conflict. South Africa proposed a complicated plan to put physical distance between the two opposing armies which included such technical issues as gun ranges and early warning systems. The official communiqué noted an exchange of viewpoints on the military situation in Southern Africa, which would be taken up again at the next four party meeting in Geneva on 2 August, 1988. The Cape Verde talks thus laid the ground-work on rules of disengagement and turned out to be a critical turning-point in the search for a settlement.

Three days after the Cape Verde meeting, Fidel Castro gave his annual talk to the Cuban nation. It included an important discussion of the Southern Africa situation.

52. *Adelphi Papers* op. cit. no. 46, p.24.
tion. After attributing progress in the negotiations to Cuba's dispatch of troops to Cuito Cuanavale, Castro stated that "Cuba only seeks a just solution, no humiliating, destructive defeat of South Africa". He then declared that:

"If the (Angolan) agreement is completed and respected, Angola and Cuba will carry out a gradual and total withdrawal of all the internationalist contingent in Angola.

The next round of talks took place in Geneva on 2 August 1988. The South African delegation took the initiative by proposing a series of moves by each government to implement the 14 Principles agreed upon in New York. It proposed a ceasefire on 10 August; implementation of Resolution 435 to begin on 1 November; a total SADF withdrawal from Angola by 1 June 1989; and the creation of monitoring system inside Angola by 20 August. The offer was tied to an immediate Cuban troop deployment to the north and the closure of seven ANC camps in Angola.

Although the Angolans and Cubans found much of this, unacceptable, the talks went ahead. On 5 August 1988, the two sides announced their agreement to a sequence of


steps to achieve peace, and to meet again. This Geneva Protocol, essentially confirmed the rules of disengagement for the opposing armed forces. Cuba would move its troops 30 miles north of the border by 10 August, while South Africa was to withdraw all its forces from Angola by 1 September. Once the South African withdrawal was complete, Cuban troops would not take part in offensive operations in South-East Angola—that was UNITA'S stronghold—unless they were harassed.

The parties set 1 September, 1988 target to reach agreement on a schedule for the Cubans to deploy north and for their total withdrawal from Angola. They would also recommended to the UN Secretary General that implementation of Resolution 435 begin on 1 November. The Geneva talks were, therefore a major step towards a final accord, even though the critical issue of a timetable for the Cuban troop withdrawal, remained unresolved.

Three days later, Angola, Cuba and South Africa jointly announced an immediate de-facto ceasefire in Angola and Namibia. On 30 August Angola and South Africa confirmed that all South African troops had departed from Angola. The Cubans and SWAPO were deploying behind their respective withdrawal lines.

Meanwhile, President Botha met with Parliament, to deliver his first major speech on the negotiations. In a clear effort to pre-empt right-wing opposition to a settlement, he stressed South Africa's role in bringing about the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola which would contribute to the peace and stability of the whole. Southern Africa.

At a follow up meeting in New York on October 6-9 October, 1988 South Africa accepted a U.S. compromise proposal for a 24 month withdrawal. Angola and Cuba made their last offer: a 30 month Cuban withdrawal period, which they insisted was the minimum required for training Angolan forces to take over the defence of Angolan population centres and other tasks performed by the Cubans since 1976. They further pointed to the logistical problems in moving 50,000 troops and weapons from positions scattered across Angola.

South Africa however, was reluctant to remove its forces from Namibia as long as a large body of Cuban troops remained within easy striking distance of that territory. During the New York talks, however, South Africa recognised that a rapid Cuban departure from Angola was simply not feasible. It concentrated, instead, on winning Cuban-Angolan agreement to the more attainable goal of a rapid Cuban

deployment from the Namibian border. South Africa initially insisted on the departure of three quarters of the Cuban force in the first year while Angola and Cuba were adamant that only half the force should leave in that time. The issue remained unresolved for a month, while the parties turned their attention to other matters.

Meanwhile Angola had launched a major offensive against UNITA in central Angola. The main thrust, involving one battle in which the Angolans claimed 1,300 UNITA guerrillas had been killed.

South Africa responded with a low-key diplomatic initiative to persuade several African states to mediate in Angola's civil war. In also made a number of mild threats. Defence Minister Malan warned the Angolans, against attempting to destroy UNITA, which would put the talks 'in immediate jeopardy'. Thus, SADF, which four months earlier had fought in support of UNITA, made no move to intervene. Any such action would have torpedoed the peace negotiations to which it appeared to be committed.

As negotiations resumed in Geneva on 11-15 November, 1988 South African officials stated that they were prepared to be flexible to the pace of the Cuban troop withdrawal. Indeed, participants noted that both South Africa and Angola appeared to have greater leeway than

before: South Africa because the elections were behind it, and Angola because of its recent victories against UNITA which had gone unchallenged by the SADF.

On the fifth day the three delegations announced their agreement on a formula for Namibia independence and a phased Cuban withdrawal. Subject to approval by all three governments, the formula established a 27 months timetable for the withdrawal of Cuban troops. By August 1989, 15000 Cubans would have left Angola and the remaining 35,000 would be located above the 15th Parallel. That is, 60 miles north of the border, which would be used to transport Cuban troops and equipment to the port of Namibia. By 1 November 1989, the date set for Namibia's independence election, half the Cubans would have left Angola. The Angolan and Cuban governments approved the formula followed by South Africa.

These agreements were then deliberated by senior delegations from the three governments at meeting in Brazzaville. Finally on 22 December 1988 representatives from Angola, Cuba and South Africa met at UN headquarters at New York. They signed the two historic accords, setting in motion the process for Namibian independence and the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. It marked the culmination of a diplomatic initiative of United States which had been pursued for more than eleven years.

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