

## **CELEBRATING NAMIBIA**

Any ex-freedom fighter will tell you that after the war, winning the peace becomes a greater battle. In the case of Namibia, /not victory has/been easy and certainly wasn't sudden if anything its expectation reached such a frenzy that SWAPO's victory at the polls could truly be described as orgasmic. The buildup was that frenzied. The celebrations have since commenced and our own dear Major-General Ike Nwachukwu has since paid a solidarity visit. Quite appropriate.

No doubt as the UNTAG forces evacuate the territory (all these are ware situation expressions) and the media deluge and focus eases off, the Namibians and their friends will logically ask, what next?

Ike Nwachukwu has pre-empted or anticipated the situation when in his visit he had promised inter-alia to support the Namibian Government and peoples with our ubiquitous Technical Aids corps otherwise known as the TAC-TEAM. This is of course commendable but how far reaching is it??

The Namibian question is an issue of peculiar importance, not just because it is one of the very few territories where the United Nations have constituted itself into a state administrative machinery but because of the strategic logistic of the South West African nation and also its possibility of being a forestaste to solving the South African Question. Thus in conceptualizing our attitudes and responses to developments in that region, it is not sufficient to think only of material support for the Government and people. It is imperative that we constitute a solid policy think tank to reationalise and map out the direction to which we should send aid and more importantly to fashion out the content and quality of assistance we are in the best position to offer under the prevalent circumstances. Thus, I quarrel with the money dominated Namibian Solidarity Fund, whose Chairman is the eloquent Alhaji Maitama Sule.

Of course my quarrel is supported by hindsight. See what happened in Angola. In the mid-seventies just before the Angolan independence, we had launched under the charismatic leadership of Murtala Mohammed the Angolan Appeal Fund, Nigerians responded in their characteristic generous manner and we raised a sizeable sum to show our support for the Angolan people in general and the Popular Movement for Liberation of Angola, MPLA, in particular, our action showed bravery and foresight because MPLA soundly trounced FNLA and UNITA to form a government led by the Late Augustino Neto whose show of appreciation to Nigeria was not phenomenal for its profusion or longevity or even warmth. Howbeit we celebrated with our brothers because the most important thing had happened. Angola was free!!

But in International Relations every gesture of kindness is expected to be reciprocated by show of closer ties. But then nobody is saying Angola was ungrateful for our

assistance, what probably happened was that we did not package our assistance in a manner to garner endearing value. We just thought; give them money. They will be happy; if they are happy they will be our friends.

In discussing Namibia today, the experts on the subject are not likely to be found in the Ministry of External Affairs or even in the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, although I concede that Dr. Ajala's profundity on the subject has captured my attention and respect. Professor Femi Osuntokun, the erudite historian who is one of the Special Advisers to the Ministry of External Affairs on this subject certainly has some respectable socio-historical knowledge about the Namibian issue, but their input has not been translated to action because their knowledge is profoundly general. But the Namibian Question begs for specialist approach to finding an answer, and this writer who is a general student of International Law and Relations finds that tin juxtaposing the result of our contribution in liberation struggles in the Southern African hemisphere during the struggle and our relationship with the liberated nations after independence has never quite reflected the fervency of our efforts. Thus have been lacking in our policy and strategic planning and orientation, particularly among within or among the corps of the policy executors and formulators.

Any informed member of the Nigerian Society of International Law or indeed any student or practitioner of International Law will tell you that Professor Itse Sagay is this country's leading authority on Namibia. In 1975 the University of Ife Press published his seminal volume titled "The Legal Aspects of the Namibian Dispute". This compendious book on whose blurb the publishers painted the Namibian pictures by stating that "No Single Issue has aroused so much passion and controversy and occupied the attention of the International community as much as the question of Namibia. It continues to remain the most intractable and potentially the most dangerous unsolved problem of the international community, is a very readable text. The publishers went ahead to state that Dr. Sagay's (as he then was) book answer (emphasize mine) the urgent need for a single volume containing the Legal and political history of the Territory and gives a penetrating analysis of all the complex legal issues involved in the situation. It is an outstanding contribution to a difficult and complicated aspect of International Law".

This self-effacing academic who will certainly be embarrassed by my unabashed pitch followed up that volume with a book titled "Racial Discrimination in International Law; University of Ife Press published this in 1981. I dare say that if the book was not good University of Ife Press would not publish it. But this article is not a review of the works of Professor Itse Sagay. However his name came up because the discussion was about Namibia, and this writer recognizes that in a country where those who are trying to find an answer to not know the Question, we have often lost out inspite of our best genuine intention. If the Good Book says "look and your will find", one expects that the authorities involved should go that extra hog in scouting out specialists to tackle special assignments. They need not be on permanent payroll or have any permanent official

tags. Our country has become inspite of having the best we never use them. Thus while celebrating Namibia, lets pause the ask, what next? Those in a position to ask that question should start searching like made for an answer or more accurately, for a correct answer that will ensure our continued good relations with the jubilant people (no longer the oppress people) of Namibia.

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