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UN PEACEKEEPING IN NAMIBIA

Abstract

The United Nations Transition Assistance Group operation in Namibia in 1989 was a turning point in the shift from traditional peacekeeping procedure to a new generation of multidisciplinary process. It represented a political mission, a peacemaking mission and a peace building operation, all in one. The host country, Namibia can be found on the south-western part of the African continent. And today, it is considered to be a safe, stabile state where there are no gunfights or political persecution any more, so the country is rarely presented in the CNN news. This article is about the way how Namibia became a liberated state and about a successful new UN mission generation, along with the Hungarian role in police activities.

Keywords: Namibia, United Nations Transition Assistance Group, peacekeeping, independence, liberation, South West Africa People's Organization, South African Defence Force, South West Africa, freedom, police contingent, Hungarian, peacemaking, South African Police, Koevoet

Since the late 1980s United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations have significantly changed from the traditional operations – where the function of the UN force was that of an interposition force, whose authorization was to separate warring parties – to a new generation of multidimensional “interventionist” force.

The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) operation in Namibia in 1989 marked a turning point in the change from classical United Nations peacekeeping force to a new generation of multidisciplinary, “interventionist” and multidimensional force, whose objective go beyond the mere separation of combatants and includes bringing about new political dispensations [Tsokodayi (2011:II)].

The peacekeeping-military activities of the Hungarian Republic in Africa have been receiving more and more exposure in recent years. This relates not only to those involved or interested in peacekeeping, but also to common people, who are gathering more and more information about these events. Despite all this, there is still a lot that is unheard of or scarcely revealed. The following article is about how Namibia became a liberated state and about a successful UN mission, along with the roles of Hungary in the police activities.

Namibia

Namibia can be found on the south-western part of the African continent. People in the North often think of Africa as a place which is unsecure and unsafe. However, today the country is considered to be a safe, stabile democracy on the African continent, where there are no gunfights or political persecution any more, so the country is rarely presented in the CNN news. Hence Namibia is a peaceful, constantly developing country.

From the time of colonial history and politics

Namibia was first discovered by Portuguese travellers from Europe at the end of the 15th century. However, as from the coast only the endless deserts could be seen, the explorers thought that these vast lands would be worthless; therefore they moved on [Udogu (2011) pp. 17-18]. Namibia became a German protectorate during the so called “Delayed Germanic Colonisation” process, at the end of the 19th century. During the Congo Conference¹ in Berlin between 1884 and 85, the Germans put their hands on the entire territory and named it the *Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (German South West Africa). At this point Great Britain was still looking forward to becoming neighbours with the Germans [Szabó (2002)]. During the First World War, the South African Union occupied the region. From the formation of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) in 1961, Namibia became part of the RSA, until her sovereignty was recognized. Namibia was also part of the horrific oppressions system of the apartheid and went a long way to gain its independence.

The SWAPO² – a party formed from the alliance of the liberating organizations – won the first free elections and has been in power ever since.³ There are 72 representatives in the Parliament. Since 1994, there have been elections held every fifth year that have been judged completely democratic, according to the opinion of some of the major international organisations such as the UN. At the latest elections held in November 2009, twelve parties were able to nominate legitimate candidates and run the electoral processes.

The Republic of Namibia is a relatively new state among the numerous countries in Africa (only South Sudan is younger). In cooperation with the UN, the progress of the country will be closely monitored in the future. Namibia is incredibly active on various international platforms and is a member of many

¹ At the conference the following countries were present: Germany, France, Great Britain, the Austria-Hungarian Monarchy, Italy, Russia, Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Dania, Sweden, Turkey and the United States of America

² South West Africa People's Organization

³ Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Namibia, July-August 2005, p. 32
http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/ACHPR_Namibia_UK.pdf [2012.01.22]

international organizations. It serves as a respectable precedent for many other African countries as a good example for peaceful transition and gradual development. The ethnical content of Namibia is very varied. The Bushmen and the Namas and the Damaras have been living in this region since ancient times. Approximately 600 years ago, the Ovambos, the Hereros and half a dozen of other ethnic groups appeared and – last but not least – since the 17th century some Europeans have migrated to the region too. The ethnic constitution is as follows: 87.5% Africans, 6% whites and 6.5% mixed origins.⁴

The country has been characterized by economic and political stability as well as by constant progress for the past 22 years. Namibia has become a model in Africa, showing an example to be followed in development, unity and tolerance.

Geography, climate

The Republic of Namibia is located in the south western part of the African continent. It is bordered by Angola in the north, by Botswana in the east, and the Republic of South Africa in the south and by the Atlantic Ocean on the west along its 1,400 km long coastline. Its territory is 830,000 square kilometres big. Its capital city is Windhoek located almost exactly in the geometrical centre of the country. Namibia is inhabited by 2.15 million people and its density is 2 people per square kilometres [The online Factbook: Namibia]. Its huge vast lands are home to many diverse geographical formations and various climate belts. The Namib Desert and the Etosha National Park can be both found here just to mention some of Namibia's natural wonders.

Language, Education

The languages spoken in Namibia are not the least homogenous as all the different ethnic groups speak different languages. On the path to independence choosing the appropriate official language for the country took a lot of thoughtful consideration and was eventually a significant political decision. Apart from the indigenous languages of Namibia, three European languages gained important role during the past centuries in the south western African country. The emergence of the European languages can be divided into two separate phases.

The first phase took place at the end of the 19th century along with the German colonization. During these processes the German language gained an important role and became the official language of the Germanic colony. The

⁴ Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Namibia, July-August 2005, p. 15

second phase can be characterized by the appearance of other two European languages that filtered through the borders of Namibia from the South African regions. One of these languages is Afrikaans, which traces its roots back to Dutch. Afrikaans was spread by the Boer colonists that settled on different parts of Namibia between the 17th and the 20th centuries with fluctuating intensity. Despite the fact the Boer settlers with Dutch origins were colonists themselves; soon they had to face the hardships of ethnical cleansing as the British arrived in the region setting up the first couple of concentrations camps. With the British occupation, the English language also appeared.

After acquiring their independence, English became the official language in 1990. However, it wasn't the practicalities that supported this decision. It was rather the politics, because at that time about 90% of the population did not speak English [SocioLingo Africa (2009)]. Neither of the languages of the occupiers or the oppressors was any better than the others. Eventually, due to the major role of the UN in Namibia's becoming an independent country – the UN uses English as one of its official languages – and also due to the international dominance of English, English became the official language of the country. The rejection of the German and the Afrikaans languages can be also explained with political and historical reasons. In spite of the fact that still many people in Namibia use Afrikaans in their everyday lives, this language has no international importance. German on the other hand was only used by the non-African minority population. Thus, English has become the official language that is still only used by a relatively small group of people. However, English is becoming ever more popular among younger generations. From among the non-official languages in Namibia, the most widely spread languages are Afrikaans, German, Oshiwambo, Herero and Nama (the languages of different ethnic groups) [Ethnologue: Languages of Namibia.]. 1,600 different schools can be found in the country, where 550,000 juveniles are taught by 19,000 teachers and are facilitated by 4,000 other grown-ups. The government is trying to extend education to all members of society; however some of the nomadic tribes – including the San and Himba ethnic groups – are still isolated and not involved in the education system.⁵

Economy

Namibia used to be part of the RSA's mandate territory for centuries that exercised a strong influence on its economy. Significant part of import and financial stock and human force still comes from the RSA. The disadvantageous agricultural characteristics of Namibia are balanced out by the mineral resources and the mining industry, and all the branches connected to the procession of the

⁵ Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Namibia, July-August 2005, p. 53-56

heavy industry products. These constitute 8% of the domestic economic income and 50% of exports. The most profitable is Namibia's uranium production that makes Namibia rank among the top five uranium producers worldwide. Namibia is also famous for its diamond mining, fishing and its guano production along the coast. It has a reputation for its mineral deposits and ranks one of the world's top number ones with its uranium, wolfram cadmium and copper extraction. Despite the fact that Namibia is rich in natural resources, its processing industries are underdeveloped [The online Factbook: Namibia]. With the extinction of the non-renewable energy resources, this country can soon lose its major source of income. With this picture in mind, an alternative solution had to be found to secure the country's future. This is why the creation of educated society has been emphasized. Despite the limited agricultural possibilities, almost half of Namibia's population makes a living from agriculture. So – just like in many other African countries – the development of the secondary and tertiary branches is yet to come. It has caused some serious problems that the deserted regions are still lacking basic infrastructure and the distribution of wealth is absolutely uneven.⁶ It is mainly the investors from the neighbouring southern countries that profit from the privatization of the mining and processing industries [NEPRU (2010)].

Background

While Europe was still busy with World War I, on 16 August 1915, German South West Africa was thoroughly occupied by South African troops. In 1910, the South African Union had been established by Capetown, Transvaal, Oranje and Natal that were already under British rule. With the outbreak of the World War, the Union started its military activity. German troops and the German speaking inhabitants were both imprisoned in prison camps. This way German South West Africa *de facto* ceased to be a German colony. South African troops kept the region under military control. On 30 January 1919, a mandate system was adopted and the victorious powers took control of the region. With the ratification of the Versailles treaty on 28 June 1919, the Weimarian Germany withdrew all her claims from all her former colonies to the favour of the Antante powers. At the same time, South Africa gained provisional powers over South Western Africa. This way South Western Africa became part of the League of Nations and it has *de jure* ceased to exist as well.⁷ Wilson, the president of the United States declared that the provisional forces over the mandate territory should not remain for good and they should enable the people living in the area to reach self-government in the long-run [Dierks (2005)].

⁶ Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Namibia, July-August 2005, p. 83-87

⁷ Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Namibia, July-August 2005, p. 31

The South African Union was part of the British Association of States from 1926 and it did every endeavour to annex South Western Africa [Hearn (1999) p. 37]. As the descendant of the League of Nations, the UN was formed on the 24 October 1945. A delegate from the UN called Bevin expressed that Great Britain would place all its mandate territories under UN authority. To the contrary, on 7 May 1946, the RSA handed in a petition to allow them to integrate the occupied parts politically as an organic part of the RSA. This petition was rejected by the UN on 14 December 1946 – mainly due to the proposal of Maharaj Singh. International lawyers considered this a precedent to allow the UN to act as the lawful heir of the League of Nations, when it comes to making a legitimate decision concerning the mandate territories [Dierks (2005)]. Nevertheless, the RSA informed the UN at the beginning of 1947 that they would still treat South Western Africa as a mandate state and not as a ward [Udogu (2011) p. 44]. According to the National Court, the RSA was not obliged to ratify the agreement on the ward status. So the UN set up an ad hoc committee to place South Western Africa under its ward in compliance with the UN Resolution 449 A of the General Assembly [Dierks (2005)]. The Committee had numerous attempts in 1951 with the RSA to negotiate the status of the region. These attempts were rejected by South Africa as they thought that the UN was not the competent partner to talk with, instead the negotiations should have been made with the USA, GB and France. The leaders of Namibia were invited by the UN to represent local people at the general assembly. However, South Africa denied issuing passports for the Namibian politicians, so they were still unable to speak up for their country.

In 1953, the UN General Assembly decided to revise South West Africa's (Namibia's) mandate even without South African consent. This attempt did not bring any achievements though [Dierks (2005)]. The International Court carried on dealing with the case of south western Africa throughout 1956. The documents expressed that the UN did have the right to take sides in the case of South West Africa and it should enable petitioners to have their say at the assembly.⁸

On 19 April 1960, the SWAPO was formed, which was the first, non-ethnic, pro-independence opponent party [Hearn (1999) pp. 38-39; Dobell (1998) pp. 27.32].⁹ Sam Nujoma became the president of the party; other party members included Mburumba Kerina, Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, Jacob Kuhangua, Solomon Mifima, Paul Helmuth, Andreas Shipanga, Erasmus

⁸ These people were as follows Michael Scott, Mburumba Kerina, Jariretundu Kozonguizi, Hans Beukes, Markus Kooper, Sam Nujoma, Ismael Fortune, Jacob Kuhangua and Hosea Kutako.

⁹ One predecessor of the SWAPO was OPO (Ovambo People's Organisation), which only represented the Ovambo ethnic groups.

Erastus Mbumba, Emil Appolus, Maxton Joseph Mutongulume and Carlos Hamatui. From this point on, the International Community considered the SWAPO as the representative of the legal Namibian opposing party. However, South Africa considered it as a communist movement [Dierks (2005)].

Apartheid politics

The goals of the Namibian independence movement not only include the achievements of national sovereignty, but also the termination of racial distinction and inequality. From this point of view, the Namibian Independence movement is completely different from the independence movements of other African countries. The origins of the Apartheid regime can be traced back to the demand for demographic changes by the growing black population, which endangered the autonomy of the white ruling classes. Industrialization between the two World Wars attracted a lot of African inhabitants from the countryside to the cities, radically enhancing and making the “Black Scare” more widespread among the white inhabitants. Due to all these factors, the Apartheid ideology and politics were born. The only goal for building up an Apartheid system was to preserve the inequalities between the black and the white population. These anti-Semitic struggles were secured legally as the party, representing the interests of the Dutch community – forming a two-third majority of the white population – won the elections in 1948. The victory brought fundamental changes in the history of South Africa. The new government was constituted of ministers who strongly disagreed with the South African Union joining Great Britain against Hitler’s Germany in WW 2. Besides, the English and the Jews, it was the non-white community that became the major target of the system. Racial inequality and inferiority were not only advertised, but legislative measures were also taken. The registration for revealing racial origins became legally mandatory from 1950 [Hearn (1999) p. 38]. From 1953 public transportation carriages became segregated. From 1957 all public places were segregated too. From 1960 different races were allowed to go to their work places only through different entrances. After getting rid of the compromising policies followed until 1948, it became only a question of time when the oppressed layers of society would rebel against this system [Búr (2008)].

The beginnings of opposition

In 1961, the South African Union ceased to exist and the South African Republic was born. The country announced its independence and quitted the British Association of States. This way the RSA had to face the world on its own and still, it took a long time for Namibia to achieve its real independence. Despite the fact that the General Assembly ended the South African mandate

with its Resolution 2145 issued in 1966, still they could not enforce this Resolution of Pretoria, and so the General Assembly had to escalate the issue to the Security Council¹⁰. So the SWAPO started its military attacks for the liberation of South Africa on 12th June 1968 [Dobell (1998) pp. 35-37]. In the meantime, the UN acknowledged this territory under the name of Namibia. The illegal occupation from this point de facto was upgraded to a freedom fight. At the same time, the General Assembly of the UN reprimanded South Africa for not letting UN observers entering the region [Dierks (2005)]. The Security Council dealt with the issues of Namibia in several cases, and in 1970 it was declared in the UN SC 276 Resolution that South Africa is illegally present in the region. This resolution did not bring any changes either, so on 29 July 1970 the Security Council had to turn to the International Court to ask for advice in the UN SC 284 Resolution, from its experts concerning the consequences the denial of the UN SC 276 Resolution would bring to South Africa [UN: Namibia - UNTAG].

The Court emphasised that if any subsidiaries of the UN expressed that any situation may be non law-abiding, then it cannot be left without consequences. The members of the UN must do everything to cease the illegitimate situation. South Africa, which was responsible for the emergence of the violating situation according to the Court, must terminate this situation, and withdraw its troops from the territory of Namibia. The fact that South Africa is not entitled to rule the south-western territories does not eliminate the responsibilities of the South African government to pursue their responsibilities and duties. The Court clearly expressed that the member states of the UN consider the South African presence in the Namibia region illegal and void. They must also avoid supporting South Africa in any ways, or to help them in occupying Namibia [International Court of Justice: Namibia]. In a 1971 ruling, which was the fifth decision made by the International Court concerning South Africa; the Court broke with the theories articulated by the 1966 verdict. It also confirmed the decisions made by the UN and condemned South Africa. The Court pinpointed that the future presence of South Africa in Namibia is illegal, and they must end the occupation of the country. The ruling made it clear that all UN and non-UN countries must stay away from any form of connection with South Africa. Despite of the decision of the International Court, the issue of Namibia remained unresolved. Also the UN was dealing with the situation of the territory in its many resolutions and working out many plans to find a solution, still unsuccessfully [Dobell (1998) pp. 40-41].

In the meantime, the situation of the neighbouring Angola completely destabilized. By 1973, about 50,000 Portuguese military troops were fighting the

¹⁰ Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Namibia, July-August 2005, p. 32

three liberating organisations. They were called the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA.¹¹ For this reason the South African Defence Force (SADF) was also mobilized. The same year the UN created the position of United Nations Commissioner for Namibia. From this year on, the German Federal Republic changed Namibia's policy and from this time it was officially stated that South Africa was illegally occupying Namibia [Dierks (2005)]. In 1975, Angola became independent. However, the same year a civil war started between UNITA, MPLA and FNLA, which situation was worsened by the intervention of other external international forces. The socialist type of government was supported by the Soviet Union, while UNITA fighting against them was given credit by South Africa and Zambia [Hearn (1999) pp. 39-40; 45-46]. The Soviet Union became one of the main supporters of the freedom movements to secure its own interests. Ideologically the MPLA and the SWAPO were both close to the Soviet Union and the Russian forces provided more and more military help by delivering tanks and airplanes and sending experts. Later on, even Cuban troops were shipped to Angola, thus making MPLA stronger than the others. By 1976, the MPLA and the Cuban forces gained full control over Luanda and its national infrastructure, and they pushed all UNITA activities to guerrilla fights. In 1976, the Cuban troops fought back FNLA, and MPLA and UNITA kept fighting each other with the help of the USA and South Africa respectively. This way the SWAPO got stuck between two military forces: South Africa on the one side and the UNITA troops on the other side [Hartmann (2009) pp. 27-50].

On 30 January 1976, the UN passed the Resolution 385 declaring the organization of free election in Namibia under the provision of the UN, but South Africa ignored this Resolution [Hearn (1999) pp. 41-42]. On 29 September 1978, the Security Council passed Resolution 435 after long preliminary talks that outlined the final solution for the Namibia situation. It was this resolution that triggered talks between the countries involved with the cooperation of the US. The international organisations gave an ultimate dated at the beginning of 31 March 1978 for the declaration of its independence. Still, South African air and land forces launched attacks against the SWAPO troops stationed in south Angola, and in April almost 40 SWAPO commanders were detained. In response, the UN asked its member states to support the SWAPO [Dierks (2005)]. With the Reagan administration joining the conflict in 1981, the US took up a new role in hammering out the conflict. The US asked South Africa to draw up the price they would need in order to be able to accept UN SC Resolution 435 and to enable Namibia to have free elections [Hearn (1999) pp. 49-52]. South African asked for the withdrawal of the Cuban troops as the

¹¹ MPLA: People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola – Labour Party (Portuguese: Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola); FNLA: National Front for the Liberation of Angola (Portuguese: Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola); UNITA: National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Portuguese: União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola)

guerrilla fights between 1985 and 1988 have become serious battles in the Southern Angolan territories, where heavy military arsenal was accumulated on both front lines. It was already clear that these fights were no longer about the freedom of Namibia, but about the power struggle of the two regional powers – Angola and South Africa – developing into a wide spectrum military conflict that needed to be resolved urgently. According to experts, the gradually unfolding desperate situation of South Africa has also contributed to the final cooperation [Hartmann (2009) pp. 27-50].

Peace process and peacekeeping actions

By 1988, the peace treaty was supported by many countries including the US, the Soviet Union and Cuba. The fights gradually decreased by 1988 and peace talks started in July 1988. The cease fire commenced from 10 August 1988. The same year in December, in New York the three lateral peace treaties was ratified by Cuba, Angola and South Africa [Hearn (1999) pp. 44-45]. The peace treaty also had an appendix stating the UN SC 435 Resolution would go into action and the withdrawal of the South African troops from Namibia would be carried out. Even though this was accepted by South Africa, it denied accepting cease fire with the SWAPO. After this, the Chancellor of the UN gave an ultimatum to the parties involved and eventually the cease fire was ratified on 1 April, and the military conflict came to an end [Udogu (2011) pp. 172-174]. At the same time, the declaration of the independence of Namibia – with the UN Security Council Resolution 435 – entered also into effect. Although there were still some minor conflicts taking place between the radical white groups and the free black military forces, after the ratification of the New York agreement both parties were able to control their regular into forces and hence they were able to avoid further clashes. With observes from UNTAG arriving in the region, the demilitarization process started and troops returned home. In a few years' time, Namibia became a peaceful and balanced country. The 22-year-long fights demanded about 12,000 SWAPO and 700 SADF casualties [MTI (1989)].

The UNTAG peacekeeping activities

On 16 February 1989, the UNTAG was formed with reference to the UN Resolution 632 to support the work of the UN in its endeavour to realise Namibia's independence and to carry out free, legitimate elections. The UNTAG mission ensured the termination of all malicious atrocities and the withdrawal of occupational forces. All discriminative laws were made void, all political prisoners were freed and all refugees were guaranteed a safe and peaceful journey home, according to international laws [Hearn (1999) p. 62].

In February 1989 Lieutenant General Dewan Prem Chand arrived in the Namibian capital Windhoek, and not much later peacekeeping forces followed [Dierks (2005)].

The transitional period started on 30 March 1989. Canada stated that they would open a diplomatic agency in the country, to constantly follow the independence processes. The news was disseminated by Joe Clark the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs after having met up with Andimba Toivo ya Toivo in Ottawa, the Chief Secretary of SWAPO the party fighting for Namibia's independence [MTI (1989)].

The mission of the UN consisting of 8,000 members was dedicated to ensure Namibia's independence, which eventually happened.¹² The plan of the UN started with the cease fire and was concluded in April 1990 by the formation of the independent government, and the formal independence becoming active. This plan contained the abolition of the racist laws until May 1989 and the return plan of the nearly 41,000 Angolan and Zambian refugees home. In November 1989, the elections for the Constitutional National Assembly were held.

The UNTAG operations started officially on 1 April 1989. The mandate of the UNTAG was defined by the UN SC Resolution 435, whose execution was blocked by South Africa for years. The Finnish Martti Ahtisaari was appointed as the leader of this mission, but he only got to Namibia with an 11 year long delay [UN: Namibia - UNTAG]. The UN SC Resolution 435 never defined the starting point of the mission, only the fact that it should finish one year after it start. The UNTAG was a comprehensive operation that was carried out according to the theories provided for in the 4 paragraph of the Constitution of the UN [UN SC Resolution 435]. The UNTAG was enabled by the Resolution 435 – which was later confirmed by Resolution 632 – that it had the right to monitor the lawful and fair elections and to create the national assembly [UN SC Resolution 632]. The peacekeeping forces played an important role in carrying out the legitimate elections, demilitarizing the opposing parties, checking the withdrawal of the South African troops and supporting the return of the refugees.

The UNTAG was considered as a novelty operation by the UN as there were no opposing opinions from either of the member states of the UN. It was a real collaboration of the countries at the end of the Cold War years, because it did not count which side of the Iron Curtain the participants were from. To be precise, there was only one disagreement concerning the budget, so the budget

¹² There were 4500 soldiers, 1750 policemen and 1800 civil servants serving in the mission.

had to be reduced. The budget started off at 700 million USD and eventually a 416 million sum was agreed on for the operations [Hartmann (2009) pp. 27-50]. Many feared that the low number of the peacekeeping forces would be manipulated by South African troops and hence manipulate the outcome of the peace keeping processes. This never happened and the outcome of the elections was respected by both parties. In the mission, there were both soldiers and policemen alike. It was the task of the soldiers to demilitarize both the South African and the SWAPO troops, to monitor the withdrawal of the South African troops from Namibia, and demobilize those Namibian regular and territorial units that fought against the SWAPO.

By the end of April 1989, 30,000 SWAPO troops were demilitarized. The demilitarization of the South African military forces in the meantime was going according to previous plans. Thanks to this, by November 1989 all troops belonging to the South African Defence Force had left Namibia [Hearn (1999) p. 117]. Military hardware was extracted from the region in three months. Their weapons were delivered to South Africa with the control of UNTAG. The collection of small arms became much more of a headache as many of them stayed with inhabitant, still a significant amount of them were taken out of circulation [Hartmann (2009) pp. 27-50].

The mission's scope of authority also extended to civil police tasks. In fact, it wasn't commissioned to carry out direct provost duties, but instead, police forces serving in the UN were monitoring their local counterparts. This included observing the everyday work of the local police forces and accompanying them everywhere so that their work became controllable. The observers had an important role in local people feeling safe and that the UN was present in Namibia. Despite a lot of criticism in the beginning from parties present in Namibia – especially from SWAPO – and also people being sceptical about the presence of the UNTAG, eventually their mission was carried out successfully [Hearn (1999) p. 32]. After a few month of hardship, they even received local support. Eventually UNTAG achieved its goals in ensuring Namibian sovereignty, as by the end of the mission, it paved the ground for the people to live independently provided by the newly won freedom. As Resolution 453 laid down, the one year time-frame of the mission, the mandate of the UNTAG expired after a year. A few hundred UNTAG officials stayed in the country form an advisory body, or as trainers of the Namibian police forces, but the former roles of the UN expired with the Namibian independence born. The independence of Namibia was officially proclaimed on 21 March 1990 and it became a member state of the UN on 23 April the same year.

The activities of the Hungarian police contingent

In 1988, to the Hungarian government was requested by the former Chief Secretary of the UN, Perez de Cuellar, to send military troops and police forces to the UNTAG mission to Namibia. For specific reasons, Hungary only provided the mission with police forces. However, only three English speaking members were found, so the other 22 members had to be „borrowed” from the national security services and from among the members of the foreign affairs services. The head of the contingent became Ambassador Tamás Gáspár, the Head of the African Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs entitled as lieutenant-colonel. Győző Somogyi police lieutenant-colonel was appointed as his deputy. The police forces were responsible for training the others as members of the foreign affairs and the national security services were not familiar with the classic police duties, such as checking somebody’s identity, trace fixing and the like. Later on however, their command of languages and former diplomatic experience turned out to be a great advantage. Their basic training was provided by the Police Academy, but they received constant training from the fellow policeman from the very beginning of the mission. It was a comprehensive training and participants got vaccinated to all tropical diseases. Compared to later missions, participants received very good equipment, almost perfect compared to domestic equipment. They had mixed devices including equipment both for the police and the soldiers. They did not use their regular grey police uniforms, but a green coloured one, which, apart from the winter period was perfect. As the government at the time wanted to break out from its international isolation, it took Hungary’s part in the mission very seriously and wanted to provide the members of the mission with the best equipment available. The group set out for Vienna on 23 April 1989 and from there, together with the Austrian police forces to Cairo. There they were joined by other international police groups. From Cairo they flew to Windhoek via Nairobi. There they were welcomed by the leaders of the UN mission and they participated in a week long training session concluded by passing a test at the end of the week.

The Hungarian police contingent was divided into three smaller groups. 13 people went to North Opuwo under the commandship of Zsolt Varsányi. The members of the second group stayed in the central areas in Windhoek and the third group served in Keetmanshoop. The groups were led by police forces as they were professionally trained. However, the group quickly dissolved in the capital city as their leader László Temesi was appointed to have a role at the headquarters of the mission and so his people were dispersed in different camps. Tamás Pál became the leader of the southern troops, despite the fact that officially Tamás Gáspár was in charge who quickly became the commander of the entire southern region. He was the one who moved the headquarters of the

police mission to Windhoek, into the Trosky Building. Later on, as his commission for sector commander expired, he became the President of the Commission Committee of UNTAG. Apart from him, there was one more Hungarian serving in the field of Logistics at the headquarters. All the other members were stationed at different police stations and observation points.

The Hungarian police forces were responsible for checking the activities of the Koevoet¹³, which was created by the South African Police to fight back the guerrilla attacks of the SWAPO. They accompanied the patrols with jeeps and occasionally with helicopters too. During their patrols they ensured that local people were not terrified and they were entitled to meet with their political groups and express their opinions freely. The Hungarians soon became famous for their command of languages. The 13 Hungarian policemen spoke 13 different languages including Russian, Turkish, Persian, French, German, Spanish, Finnish etc., and of course English was spoken by all members. There was a case when their commander accidentally dropped the conversation of two policemen, saying: “They can’t possibly be policemen, they speak so many languages.” He said so because these languages are not usually spoken by policemen from the west. However, many Hungarian members joined from the Foreign Affairs.

Compared to other police forces, the Hungarians were overeducated, as all of them had academic degrees. This was due to the fact that in Hungary policemen are trained holistically and they have to master all fields. This is not usually the case in other countries, where an average policeman for example never studies criminal investigation. This different background was soon revealed, as the Hungarian policemen registered data on the site, investigated, interrogated at the same time and the collected data were divided among policemen from other countries. This was not always advantageous, but work delivered by the Hungarian contingent was highly appreciated and positively evaluated by the leaders of the mission. As the Hungarians returned home after the change of the communist system, many of them were fired or they had to retire. The mission and their work were not evaluated appropriately, despite the fact that this was the first mission of the Republic of Hungary to Africa accomplished successfully.

Final thoughts

“The UNTAG operation had many novel features and constituted an evolutionary step beyond the United Nations traditional role in peacekeeping and monitoring self-determination processes. This was because of the far-

¹³ Koevoet means crowbar in Afrikaans (and Dutch); official name was the South West Africa Police Counter-Insurgency Unit (SWAPOL-COIN), also known as Operation K

reaching mandate given to the Secretary-General by the Security Council. UNTAG's principal function was to create the conditions for the holding of free and fair elections. This meant that it was required to be, and was, deeply involved in the whole political process of Namibia's transition from the illegally occupied colony to the sovereign and independent state. UNTAG thus had to play its part in monitoring and implementing a ceasefire, withdrawing and demobilizing troops, monitoring local police forces, managing a political "normalization" process, supervising and controlling the resultant elections and assisting the transition to independence. Because of the vast international interest in Namibia, a territory with a unique status under international law, each step was taken under a searchlight of public scrutiny and comment. The mandate made it one of the most political United Nations operations, and the logistical dimensions, together with the strict timetable involved, caused it to be one of the most demanding, in practical terms.

The lessons drawn from the successful operations will ever remain: the full cooperation of all parties, the continuing support of the Security Council and the timely provision of the necessary financial resources. Against this background, UNTAG has demonstrated how much the United Nations can achieve by making full use of all its resources, including its diverse skills and its staff's commitment [UN: Namibia - UNTAG].”

It was an excellent case of successful UN peacekeeping mission in delivering peace and stability. The Republic of Namibia can look back upon 22 years of peaceful democratic development. For the period from the time of independence, Namibia has done quite well as far as its international reputation is concerned. It can be illustrated with the aim of Namibia's Constitution, which is internationally respected. Therefore, the Namibian State can establish a positive precedent in implementing constitutional reforms and ensuring democratic rule and good governance in the southern African region (Angola, DRC and Zimbabwe) [Erasmus (2010)].

Thus UNTAG was not just a peacekeeping operation; it was a political mission, a peacemaking mission and a peace building operation all in one [Tsokodayi (2011:II)].

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