James Sutterlin: Mr. President, I would like first to thank you on behalf of Yale University for agreeing to participate in this oral history project on the United Nations.

To start out, very quickly, I would like to ask you what was the background that brought you to the job of UN Commissioner for Namibia? You were elected to that in 1977.

Martti Ahtisaari: First of all, my first association with Namibia comes back to the early 1960s. I returned to Finland from Pakistan, where I was serving in an aid program, and I received the first -- as a student leader, I received the first Namibians to Finland for study. When I became Ambassador of Finland to Tanzania, among other countries, I had to deal with the Liberation Committee of the OAU, which was situated in Dar es Salaam, and our assistance to the Committee plus the humanitarian assistance to SWAPO. I was also accredited to Zambia. I was also the Finnish member, or I was chosen to become the member, in the UN Institute’s Senate. So, I was heavily involved in dealing with members of SWAPO and Namibians in general. So, when John McBride wanted to leave the post as a Commissioner, I think he also proposed me, because he had come to know me while in the Senate of the Institute. And so the delegation came to see me and asked
if I would become a candidate, and I said, “You have to ask my government.” That’s how I became endorsed by the African group in the UN.

JS: So, you had known some of the people in SWAPO before actually becoming commissioner?

MA: Yes.

JK: And if I understand it, Finland has always had a certain special relationship with this area, even when it was South West Africa. Did that have an influence on this?

MA: No, in that sense, Finland was no strange country to South West Africa or Namibia, because the Finnish missionaries, Lutheran missionaries, had been working there. They have been now working there for well over 100 years. They replaced the Rheinische mission in Ovamboland, which is where half of the population lives.

JS: So that long-standing relationship, was that of value to you when ultimately you became...

MA: Yes, particularly in the most difficult times -- when we come to those -- it was absolutely vital to have that relationship with the churches, which I still have.
JS: And then you became the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Namibia, and you occupied the two positions at the same time. How was this possible? Was there any contradiction between the two positions?

MA: Of course there was, because some people were... there was a danger that you would become a split personality, because some people wanted to talk to Ahtisaari as the Special Representative and others didn’t want to talk to him as a Special Representative; others wanted to talk to him as the Commissioner. As a matter of fact, I had to, in order to avoid this dilemma, have two separate offices. And they were not very far from each other. I took some people from the Commissioner’s office, I recruited a few people from outside, and I was trying to sort of move... and I went to the office depending on the customer. But it was obvious that this couldn’t last forever, that the moment would come and you would have to make a choice where you wanted to be, and split these two.

JK: Did you see your position as Commissioner closer to SWAPO so to speak?

MA: Well, it was obvious, because the Council for Namibia wasn’t a traditional UN body. It was a body that was supporting SWAPO as the sole and authentic representative. The Council was not meant in a normal UN fashion. Out of the Western governments, if I recall correctly, there were Belgium, Australia, and Finland, and the rest were non-aligned countries or others.
JS: And when it came then to the actual activities of the Contact Group in developing the plan that ultimately became the Plan for Namibia, how did you play your role at that point? How was your contact with...

MA: Of course, it was... I think the Council wanted to have a bigger role than they could have in this process. I think that everyone tried to keep them informed, but I had no liberty... of course it strained my relationship, I think to some extent, to SWAPO and to some extent to the Council, when I had to deal very closely with the Contact Group. They were developing their ideas, they wanted to spar with us and ask our advice as to what would fly and what would not be acceptable, and so on. So, we had a very close working relationship, but in the same fashion we – I and my colleagues in the Special Representatives office – had a very close working relationship with the Frontline States.

JS: Now, during this period as Special Representative, did you have any contact with the South Africans?

MA: Yes. Occasional ones, always basically in connection with one negotiation or another. I remember organizing, I think it must be recorded, before we went to Namibia, I organized in my residence a meeting between South African government representatives and SWAPO leaders. And the present Prime Minister was there, the Foreign Minister was there, some others were there. And I provided, as I said, the electricity and atmosphere and Chinese food, in a small apartment in Manhattan. It was the first time, I
think, that they met in that... occasionally they must have bumped into each other, they must have... but at least that they could talk to each other.

JS: And how about with the Contact Group, with the five western members of that?

MA: Very intensive contacts, because it was bound to be -- and I think it has developed into long-lasting friendships -- and from the Front-line States as well

JS: And were you able to contribute actually to the plans as they were being developed in the conversations between the five and South Africa?

MA: I think it would be fairer to ask what Don McHenry and others felt, Henry Miller - - what our contribution was. But we were like a sounding board, and I think they appreciated the fact that we had a sense... and also we were always thinking that it would come to us for implementation. ‘How could it be done?’

JS: I actually hadn’t thought of Don McHenry, but he of course was the American...

MA: He was the American, and Henry Miller who was his assistant who was very much involved with helping. I would recommend you talk to both.

JS: Because the person that I was especially interested in was Chester Crocker, of course...
MA: Yes, but he came at that stage when he had to actually try to solve it. The plan was then there. But he had to find a formula, and it may have not been possible for Don McHenry and his team at that time to convince the South Africans, but then many things had happened. The timing is always important, at how good you are. And Don... I am full of praise for the team that Don McHenry led, and Henry Miller there. But it simply wasn’t the time when the South Africans were ready.

JS: Although they did work out what eventually became the plan.

MA: Yes, but the plan was there. That was their making. And then we had to find out “How do we get the South Africans involved?”

JS: Let me just ask this again, to be absolutely clear: do you feel that you were able to contribute to the ideas that were...

MA: I think in the sense that what I was definitely watching in that process was what role would it give to me, if I were to be the Special Representative running? And I assumed that I would be. But then we were rather optimistic that we would go there -- the first mission was taking place in the autumn of 1978 or in late summer, 1978. So, obviously I was saying “Is this practicable? What sort of role? Can I actually supervise and control the process in the light of the plan?” So, that was my main preoccupation,
and we were obviously developing plans already, so that what sort of administrative machinery we would require?

JS: And did I understand you to indicate that Nujoma was already a figure at this point?

MA: Yes, yes. He was the Chairman, and I met him first time when I was Ambassador in Dar es Salaam.

JS: Can I skip ahead and ask what was your initial impression of Nujoma in those years?

MA: Now, of course. I think when you look at this historical process, the transformation from a leader of a liberation movement to the head of a state with a newly independent country is a major thing. And I think he has surprised us positively, all of us who knew him, that he became the champion of reconciliation in his society which was extremely divided. It is a small population we are talking about; it is not South Africa where the problems are magnified from that of Namibia. So, there he had to be a spokesman for his party, and you had to behave in that way. And now of course, we all, I think, were victims of the jargon -- it’s like a Cold War political climate, that if you knew your ten commandments... and that goes for all of us who lived through that period of time.
JS: Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has expressed some of the same thoughts that you are expressing.

MA: I went through what Javier said...

JS: Oh, you did?

MA: Because when I saw your list of questions I said, “My god, it’s ten years ago!” And I read, actually, the Namibia part on the plane, and on many things you get answers from most of the questions from that chapter in his book.

JS: Because he found, as you read, that he was quite leftist, tended to spout communist slogans, or Soviet slogans at least, at that point.

MA: Yes, but you have to remember where the arms were coming, where the support was coming, where the solidarity was coming. And it had to be seen in the East-West context as well. But don’t forget that most of the present leadership were trained in the United States and lived here for many years. They were trained also by the UN -- we were very foresighted in that sense -- Hage Geingob ran the UN Institute in Lusaka, gained the administrative experience; he also got the first experience of development planning when I was Commissioner. I was working very had to be able to tell them “You have so-much money available -- tell me the priorities, and then we’ll meet the UN specialized agencies.” And I defended them against some of the ideas of the specialized
agencies. We were trying to use this as a learning process, how you have to react when you get to the government, and Geingob was strongly involved, he was very good in that.

JS: That’s very interesting. I had not myself even recalled the Institute that was there.

MA: The Institute was there, and then I also was interested in getting Geingob to run the meetings with me. I developed the concept of the ‘national program,’ because with that umbrella -- it was like the embryo of development planning. I said, “You have to learn now, you have to fight amongst yourselves, what your priorities [are]. You can’t all allow every Secretary of Education or Transport to say that ‘I want this, that, that.’ When money is scarce, you have to decide what the priorities at this stage are, and thinking what you will need when the country becomes independent.” And therefore this was a part of the preparation for Geingob also. I think he would agree on that. When my own background was from the Development Corporation, so I feel very strongly about it, and actually there was that preparation later on when we had the transition period and before that.

JS: And then this preparation was there?

MA: Yes.

JS: Now, when you led the mission in 1978, the survey mission, was this your first actual trip to Namibia?
MA: Yes. That was the first time that I put my foot down there.

JS: And what was your impression?

MA: It’s that Namibia -- of course we had read a lot about Namibia, we had seen pictures about the country. It first of all showed how strongly the South African administration was controlling the events there. I think that was very important to recognize. They ran the place. The enormous distances in the country was one, and how ruggedly handsome the country was. And perhaps that there were, even then, NGOs who were trying to keep up the challenge for the South African legal-illegal administration, and this 435 movement, and human rights people who were there.

JS: Let me ask you more about that, I’ll skip ahead on the NGOs because that is of great interest at this point. You did find there were NGOs already active? Those were local NGOs?

MA: Yes, and the churches were part of that in one way or another, because there was the Council of Churches, even if the churches were on some issues divided.

JS: The church was divided?
MA: The churches were, because there were a number of churches. The Lutheran church was, I think, branded as a pro-SWAPO one.

JS: In talking with other people who were in Namibia, I gain the impression that the churches were ultimately extremely important?

MA: They were extremely important throughout the process. Even before we came there, because they were keeping the moral background and the resistance towards the South Africans. Had the churches role not been there, over and above providing the education -- I think the only decent education, in their sort of unbiased education -- the health facilities, I think the most important was the moral support for the people of Namibia. That’s why I always argued with our own missionary society, “Don’t under any circumstances withdraw your people, because their role is important in supporting the indigenous church as well.”

JS: And did you find later that the churches were a useful instrument for getting the UNTAG message across?

MA: Yes. And get the objectives of UNTAG. My personal role to the leadership of the Lutheran church was absolutely vital, and we are still dear friends with Bishop Dumeni, he visited my official residence recently. So, every time he comes, we meet.
JS: Yes, he was just recently interviewed and he gave an account of your meeting in the north, just after April 1st, I guess.

MA: Not only that, yes, that as well -- but no, he was then in Zimbabwe then immediately, and he called me from there and I could give him a full account, so he knew what was happening, which was very important. But then afterwards when all this criticism was leveled, I think he knew... and he knew that he could count that I would tell him the truth, which was absolutely vital. It was not easy, but that there had been that long-standing connection helped and we gained back our credibility.

JS: Now, he was the bishop, right?

MA: He was the bishop.

JS: And you did meet with him then, after the April 1st difficulties?

MA: Yes.

JS: And was he able to give you useful advice, or were you able to give him useful advice?

MA: I think we always had been able to discuss very candidly with each other, and it was important that they had the confidence of the population. And they played a very
important role in receiving the refugees when they were coming back. The church was absolutely vital in providing shelter for them.

JS: Was there any other NGOs that you would highlight?

MA: There was that human rights... there was a human rights center in the north, and people who were involved in that. Their role diminished when we got our UNTAG centers up there because their clientele started coming to us, because they could turn with their complaints to us. But they were there throughout the process, but I think it is fair to say that their role started diminishing. And then the movement 435, before we came, was vital because they were pushing for the adoption of the...

JS: How do you assess the overall role of the United Nations and of Pérez de Cuéllar actually in bringing, over this long period, the realization of resolution 435?

MA: As it comes across in his book, he was very important. There were always moments when the Secretary-General could get the access, and I think in convincing the South Africans of the UN’s impartiality, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar’s role was absolutely vital because I think he was beyond... he was criticized as well, as he says, and he quotes some rude letters from Pik Botha -- it is nothing new. But he was able -- I don’t think anyone in South Africa could argue that he was not an impartial civil servant heading the organization. I think that Namibia was a marvelous occasion, and it hopefully also taught many of us who were participating what it means to be an international civil servant.
Some of my African colleagues were criticized that they were too much, too close to South Africa, and I defended them then because they were not. They actually showed that you couldn’t keep any favors to anybody. Obviously many of us had worked very closely with SWAPO, but when the implementation started, they were one party among the others. And I made it absolutely clear -- and in some cases a few people failed in that test -- but those in senior positions showed that, and I am very proud of them for that. Because they realized that this is... and it was a litmus test for us, and I don’t think anyone can argue -- you can ask anybody -- that we passed that test with flying colors. For that I am extremely proud.

JS: And for this purpose, actually, the Secretary-General and you to a certain extent had to separate yourself from the Council on Namibia...

MA: But that’s why it turned out to be that in the end it was impossible to maintain, because it was always used as an argument against you, that I am a spokesman. When we came to Namibia, still, when the DTA, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, the abbreviation was said to mean ‘Don’t Trust Ahtisaari.’ This was the nonsense we had to face for a long, long time.

JS: On both sides, as I understand it.

MA: No, depending... at some stages. But no, of course from non-SWAPO sources, but there was criticism sometimes from the SWAPO side as well. But there was a very
moving experience after the elections were over. I was invited to a German farm, and one farmer after another – there were three or four of them, I was there with my wife – came and thanked me, and they were really in tears. They said “We treated you rather unfairly, but we thank you for what you have done for this nation.” And that’s very moving because it came very spontaneously, one after another came to see me personally, after dinner. Those are perhaps the best rewards of all.

JS: I don’t remember whether it is in this Pérez de Cuéllar book or not – and I wrote it – but some people have commented that the task force that was established by Pérez de Cuéllar was dominated, rather, by let’s say, OAU-oriented people, and who were rather suspicious of Ahtisaari for a while. Did you sense that?

MA: Well, it’s obvious. Look, when you are in the field, I used to think always it is a tradition in any organization that those who are in the field believe that all those who are in the headquarters don’t understand anything, and those who are in the headquarters think that they have lost totally their sense in the field. Then again, people working in the Secretariat under much greater political pressure – you know from your years in the Secretariat that it requires an enormous character not to be yielding to the political pressures, and some do it better than the others. I had always an option to go back to Finland – I was on a leave of absence. I always said “I am not coming to this job if I can’t have that option.” I very often told – I remember telling it to Dr. Peter Onu, who was the Deputy Secretary-General of the OAU, that “Peter, I want to go home. I don’t want to go
through this nonsense.” He said “Martti, you are not going anywhere. It is better to have a devil we know.”

No, but you have to establish your own credibility on being independent because otherwise people will push you around. I think it is definitely more difficult to resist the political pressures when you are in New York than when you are in the field. So, I think that consolation is there, whether it was this operation or any other. As long as we understood that under what sorts of constraints our colleagues were working, and of course when the 1st of April things happened, then of course people become very nervous. We had to keep our heads cool, and live it through knowing perfectly well that it would take some time.

JS: There are two questions that I want to ask about the period leading up to April 1st. One is the delay in the General Assembly in approving the budget. In your judgment was this a serious element in the timing of the deployment of the UN?

MA: Of course it would have been better that business was done a half a year earlier, because normally the minimum for deploying a battalion is six to eight weeks. We all know that. And therefore I was a bit surprised that the incursion took place because people knew that we were not there. So we could not in any way give the protection... but if somebody can state the positive notion of that, that they wanted to get the UN protection there. And everyone knew we were not there. I think we tried to be innovative and so those formulations, that it’s ‘up to 7,600’ but we would now employ only 4,350... and it turned out to be that it was quite adequate. It was not... the numbers don’t so much
matter. I think the police was much more crucial, and again there we would have done better if we had been able to send... and that’s one of the annoyances that I have with the UN, that they never published this -- because our recommendations were clear: when you have a new operation, never accept police or people where you require certain skills before sending your recruitment teams to the countries and they interview each and everybody. We would have managed with perhaps one-third less police, but we had to pay for 600. If you can’t speak any known language or you can’t write, then you have to have always somebody there.

JS: The other question has to do with Marrack Goulding’s trip to Angola, where he met with Nujoma just before April 1st. I wondered, did you receive word of his conversation?

MA: We must have. Jim, I can’t... I should have checked; I didn’t have time. I was so busy before I came here. But I have to assume that we did get... and I think in the light of that particular discussion, it should have never been unclear to SWAPO leadership what the terms of the agreement were. So, it served that purpose, and if something happened after that, at least one can’t argue that they didn’t know what the commitments were that had been made. Whether we knew it or not, I think we must have gotten a message somehow. This point that I am making is perhaps much more vital, in the sense that people say “Did they know what were the contents?” They must have been briefed by everyone, a long, long time during this process. But then at least Marrack did a very important job in telling what exactly the agreement was. So, that argument falls away.
JS: And Nujoma at that point referred back to an alleged agreement that Waldheim had reached...

MA: I think it was not an agreement, it was some statement. But that idea or proposal was never accepted. Everyone knew that as well. There was a proposal by Waldheim to establish, or to ask to establish, bases, but they felt that it would be good... politically South Africa didn’t want any bases inside.

JS: Moving on then to April 1st, can you just give me your impression: what happened?

MA: I think it is well-covered in the Pérez de Cuéllar book.

JS: You think it is accurate in there?

MA: I think it is an accurate description in what was happening. I have always said it – and have you seen the German... when we had this meeting. I have a book there from this German seminar where we all participated.

JS: I may have seen that years ago, but...
MA: I will show it to you, the book, that you can at least order it for your use, because there is a lot of discussion. I saw this as a containment exercise more than anything. Everyone says that “You authorized this and that...” The question was the people would have gone out full-swing if we didn’t try to contain that somehow. And damage was going to happen. The question was can we make it as little as possible. Too much happened nevertheless, but that was not of our making. We could not have prevented them. They had their behavior patterns, which were bad; but you can’t argue that South Africa did at that time do all that was required from them. I couldn’t criticize them... I couldn’t say that they had not controlled the bases, and we had our military observers saying, “Yes, there they are.” So, when they then realized, rightly or wrongly, but they argued that they couldn’t control the existing police forces, can’t control that we will go out, so we were trying to say, “As little as you can.” So, it was not a question of whether we were authorizing it. You may very well say that “yes, they were doing it, but can we bring the damage to the minimum.” I think it is a fair account.

JS: And it is also in the book, I think, that clearly the Secretary-General authorized the action that you took.

MA: Yes, in the first instance, and then it says that Viru [Dayal] said, “Don’t do anything of the sort” afterwards, as you say. But it is not an easy thing to be in that situation, that you land in the place and you have been flying, I think, 30 hours roughly, and you are faced with this sort of development.
MA: No. I think the worst alternative that could have happened was that it was the end of the whole exercise. There was a real danger -- and of course people made those sorts of noises. For me, it was absolutely vital to recognize after that, that if they went through this, they may have had an advance notice of what was going to happen because they had infiltrated SWAPO -- I’m sure they had -- and they had their informants on the other side. I take that for granted. I have no evidence about that. But people were very vulnerable, because people could be blackmailed through the South Africans... people were under detention. I think it is humanly understandable that this could have happened.

MA: But the important thing is that if they didn’t pull out from the exercise then, then I knew that they meant business. And that meant that I could actually take a much more firm grip on the process and supervise it much more firmly because there was not the danger... I think that psychologically and politically I realized then and there that they were here to stay.

JS: And at the Mount Edjo meeting, where in a sense this was brought under control, did you have an adequate voice there?
MA: I don’t think that we had much voice there because everyone knew what was going to happen -- we were not the ones who were making the decisions, it was the participants then. It was obviously clear that we needed the Contact Group’s support to get the whole thing...

JS: To get back...

MA: Yes. It was perhaps important in many ways also that former adversaries were meeting there and saying “Yes, we have to get this working.” But we were in the wings. I spent a lot of time in Brazzaville when the final agreement was made -- we were not at the negotiating table. But everyone came to see us. I say that we were like a lady in waiting there.

JS: Well, the Americans and the Russians were in the same situation -- or not?

MA: No, no. In Brazzaville, definitely, Crocker was in the driving seat.

JS: Crocker was the driver.

MA: The Russians were, perhaps. But we saw each and everybody.

JS: Let me go back to the Crocker question, then, at this point. What was your impression of the role that he played in this whole thing?
MA: He was absolutely crucial. I think he was very ingenious in trying to find a way to get... whether he invented the linkage or not, I think it is irrelevant who. The question was that we had to find a formula -- we were stuck, we had a good plan that could be implemented but we were not making progress. So, you had to find something that would satisfy everybody.

JS: In this connection, this goes back a little bit to before, but on the withdrawal of the Cuban forces: in the end, although obviously the United Nations could not recognize the linkage, I think Pérez de Cuéllar did, and tried to work to see that the Cubans would leave. Were you involved in this?

MA: You have read Crocker’s book?

JS: Yes, I have.

MA: So, I went to Luanda quite often when they didn’t want to talk to the Contact Group. I went in, and sometimes... I was telling the present Chairman of the OAU, the President of Burkina Faso, and I waited three days in Luanda before the President gave me an audience, and I very often told them “Look, I am not coming here to tell you what you want to hear, but I am going to give my own assessment to you. You don’t like it, what I am saying, but that is the only way that I can be of any assistance.” So, obviously
we were discussing what could move the process forward. And I told them to then decide.

JS: And the Cuban troops were key?

MA: It was definitely... I mean, without that I don’t think that we could have started implementation. So, you needed there, of course, you needed the Cubans, you needed the Russians, to support that.

JS: Right. I had a question here about the UNTAG staff but I am going to skip that because it is very well covered in that report.

MA: Yes.

JS: I did only want to ask about the appointment of the deputy ambassador, Legwaila. At that point, General Prem Chand felt that he was the deputy. Were you aware of this?

MA: I must have been, it struck me every time I read it; but whether Prem actually said it to me – he must have done it perhaps privately. And I knew of course, Joe Legwaila. I don’t think that any one of us were then terribly enthusiastic about it, because I think we all saw it as some sort of criticism about our handling. Obviously that psychological thing had been there, but let’s face it: if it had to be somebody, you could hardly have
found a better man than Ambassador Legwaila, whom I have absolute great admiration for, and I knew that he would be reinforcement in any case.

JS: We just interviewed him – he shares the same view of you.

MA: Yes, no. Because he is an independent soul, and that is absolutely vital. And he had the confidence – he came from the region, and then he has shown his abilities after that as well.

JS: Actually as Ambassador he had been extremely critical of the action that you took, as a matter of fact.

MA: Yes. I don’t think he had much choice but to sing in the same choir.

JS: Yes, yes. Again I had just this one technical question because it’s not covered in the book, and this is UNTAG’s responsibilities with regard to the SWAPO bases in Angola. Was that purely on the military side? Were you involved in that at all?

MA: Of course we were... and particularly after what happened on April 1st. It was vital to get the Angolans. They were not very strict in doing that, but we had occasional access there, so I think the mere formality was performed in that respect.

JS: But it was left pretty much to the military side?
MA: Yes. Mind you, on all these many details, I find that I should have spent a week going through everything that I have, to go through and check with Cedric [Thornberry] as well and compare notes with him. He is writing something on it.

JS: Is he writing a book?

MA: Yes.

JS: Well, the basis for it is in that report.

MA: Yes.

JS: Now, when you took up the position as Special Representative in Namibia, and the process of UNTAG’s work began, how would you describe your relations with, first of all, the Namibian political leadership? Did you have periodic meetings with them? How did this work?

MA: We had, of course with SWAPO we were meeting continuously, but we tried also to see every time we were in the territory we made a point of seeing each and every political group, up to the smallest one. And then they traveled to the United States because some of them, Carl, [I believe], from DTA, he had been educated on a grant from the scholarship fund of the Council for Namibia -- but obviously the argument always
was that the UN was favoring SWAPO. It is the purpose... and it is very difficult to argue against, if somebody has been declared sole and authentic representative.

JS: But were you able to maintain contact also -- I mean you personally -- with the farmer community, with what I could call the conservative elements?

MA: No, of course they were in the parties, but only through the political structures.

JS: Only through political structures.

MA: Yes.

JS: Did you rely on the people in the field to also maintain contact and liaison with the political elements in the neighborhood?

MA: You mean in the other countries?

JS: No, no. In the centers, the regional directors?

MA: You mean while the process...?

JS: Yes.
MA: No, no, no. If you are now talking about the transition period...

JS: I am, yes.

MA: Yes, yes, of course then. Because we established the center structure, we had ten-plus-32. So, we had ten regional and thirty-two, if I recall correctly, district centers. And of course these were continuously in touch with the local population. They visited farms, they organized meetings. They organized meetings with all the political groupings, church leaders and so on. They were trying to do what we were doing in the headquarters. Yes, yes, and there we had a very active... during that process, of course we had to get our message through.

JS: And you were doing that at your level also?

MA: Yes. Actually it started, and you describe it here, about when Pérez de Cuéllar came in July of that year, we organized the first meeting with all political parties, because we used him as an excuse to get them -- then we started working with them to produce the code of conduct, which they all signed, and then every second week we met, and we saw who has actually misbehaved. I didn’t go public otherwise.

JS: I know, OK. Is there one more question?

MA: Yes, OK.
JS: I will try to pick out the most important question.

MA: Have you talked to Paul Szasc?

JS: No, he is the one person we haven’t talked to.

MA: Talk to him, because he was on all the legal work. It was so weak, in that sense, our presence there, that I welcomed Paul.

[side 2]

JS: I wanted your assessment of the amount of UN contribution, which means your contribution, Szasc’s contribution, to the peace-building process there, that is the constitutional process, the legislative process...

MA: What we were doing there, when we came... I organized, for instance, dinners where we had... it was a question of bringing the people together. When we had a couple of these eating and drinking sessions in my house – they were all class-mates and everyone knew each other, it is a small society in that sense – they started meeting themselves. They didn’t need me. And that’s how... I think it was an attempt to ease the political and constitutional process. And then the thanks go to Hage Geingob who in
seventy-two days produced a constitution. It is a record time, I think, in any country.

And he said that they saw eye-to-eye and they wanted to have a democratic constitution that would defend their rights – whether you were SWAPO or DTA. Of course, Paul had a role there, and Mark Pumani had a role. If he ever comes here -- he is working with Nyerere on this. He is a former Attorney General of Tanzania, a very solid citizen, talk to Mark. He was a deputy director in the Lusaka Institute.

JS: A final question on that: In Namibia, it seems to be the most successful example, with the possible exception of El Salvador, of this peace-building process, of establishing democratic institutions. Why do you think this was?

MA: First of all, we were very innovative -- and I don’t take much credit except in supporting it -- this information campaign and the political campaign by the centers, where we actually briefed people on what their rights were. That was very vital and we have a lot of anecdotes of that. And head of the information, Iselde Rivero, who is in Madrid heading the information center, could tell you a marvelous story from when she organized the gathering, and she was saying “You can vote for anybody, and your husband does not need to know,” and the local chief who was translating the question and everyone started laughing when the chief, in very animated form, told the audience this, because the person who asked was his wife! Everyone was laughing.

So, it was a very intrusive process. We tried to get everybody, and of course the outcome in the elections, when you had such an amount of people voting, it is unheard of. That created, I think the basis for that.
JS: You have to go.

[end of recording.]