"It is absolutely pointless to have a whites only election. It won't prove anything and is simply a waste of time. What is needed is a general, fair and free election in which all parties can participate on a non-discriminatory basis. The policy of my party is inclusive, not exclusive - everybody must participate in that election; exile movements and their leaders as well." The man saying this, (and his party), is not participating in the forthcoming whites only election on the 6 May, even though he is white and comes from the most prominent nationalist party supporting family in his area. In fact, before breaking away he occupied the most powerful position in the white political establishment in his region. He is Dirk Mudge, leader of the Republican Party in Namibia and Chairman of the DTA.

"I would welcome a whites only election. In this way we could settle the issue of open schools once and for all." Speaking is Kosie Pretorius, leader of the Nationalist Party in Namibia. Kosie and his supporters are fairly confident that they could wipe the floor with the Republican Party of Mudge and his supporters on the schools issue."

After a week in Windhoek, it became clear that one of the key options for whites was to participate in a general election in order to establish what the distribution of political support in Namibia as a whole is; or to participate in a white "ethnic" election to determine the degree to which prejudice and racism had changed or been confirmed.

Of course, any resemblance to neighbouring South Africa is purely a matter of co-incidence. On the 6 May, here in South Africa, a mandate would have been given for "quicker reform", "visions", "broad-based coalitions", "reform through security", "practical partition" or some such white electoral profundities.
That is the important difference between us!

But back to Namibia. The interim government suffers from a severe crisis of legitimacy and credibility, and one is struck by the candour and frankness with which they concede this. They govern without a mandate and without having had an opportunity to test the support of the people on whose behalf, and for whose benefit they claim to govern. This is not a group of white politicians using a white vote to govern everybody else who did not vote for them. These are white and black politicians, some with limited mandates, others with none, trying to govern Namibia under the heel of Pretoria and the contempt of the liberation movements. From the left, they are denounced as "stooges" tied to the financial and military apron strings of Pretoria, and from the right, they are accused of being "sell-outs" betraying the birthright of the white man in Africa. And there are some able and interesting characters among them: Dirk Mudge, an enigmatic politician whose rough-tough exterior conceals an extremely agile mind. As an Afrikaner, he has traversed political terrains which some of his people have not dreamt existed. Leaving the protection of his own tribal institutions, he has moved out and invited traditional people with primordial loyalties into modern day politics.

In his camp he also has a former vice-president of SWAPO, as well as a representative who was based in Sweden for 10 years and speaks fluent Russian and Swedish. Also in the interim government, but not of Mudge's party, is a Minister of Education fluent in 12 languages, (he speaks a beautiful idiomatic Afrikaans) and is a Tswana born in Pretoria and now a naturalized Namibian. And then, of course, former exiles like Shipanga, Katjioungua, and Kzonquizi
But outside of the interim government and not inside SWAPO are
collectively politicians like Peter Kalangula of Ovamboland and
Garoëb of the Damaras, who feel as strongly as SWAPO about
the lack of legitimacy of the interim government. Those of
SWAPO to whom I spoke, are passionate in their insistence that
there can be no credible government in Namibia as long as South
Africa dominates the region militarily and financially, and
that can never happen as long as Pretoria cannot resolve South
Africa's domestic problems and, as a consequence, it defines
Namibia as part of its security interests. In short, Namibia
forms part of Pretoria's "total strategy" against the "total
onslaught" and anyone collaborating with Pretoria is "selling
out."

And so, we have a deadlocked country - Pretoria drawing the
circus arena within which the contending parties posture and
live out their aggressive fantasies towards one another. They
are either going to go on accepting this as inevitable or
some internal dynamic is going to emerge which can bring about
enough internal solidarity to challenge the deadlock. How that
comes about must at least involve a demonstrable degree of military
and financial independance and a government that results from
a general election in which all parties, DTA, SWAPO, SWANU,
Kalangula, Charoeb, NP, have competed for support without prejudice
and intimidation.

It is one of those numbing ironies of history that when the interim
government cautiously flexed its muscles in that direction,
the representative of the South African government, with the
approval of the President, warned that the interim government
was not "broadbased enough to be representative of the majority
of people in Namibia"! This coming from a President who was
elected by 50 members of his own party caucus, in a country
of +30 million people and who has called an all white election
for 17% of the total population in which only white parties
seek a mandate on how to deal with the blacks of South Africa.
"Broadbased and not representative" - my foot!