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THE WALVIS BAY ISSUE

OVER TO NELSON

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Through a quirk of political fate, the decision on the handing over of Walvis Bay to newly independent Namibia will very largely rest in the hands of the ANC. Attached to that move — if it occurs — will be the nature of SA's future relations with the Swapo government of Sam Nujoma.

In a carefully calculated diplomatic move, Foreign Minister Pik Botha and his team of negotiators have shifted responsibility for the Walvis ownership issue to the NP's prospective partners in the constitutional negotiation process.

Senior government sources close to the talks on the enclave told the *FM* this week that the De Klerk government has, in principle, decided to hand over the harbour town to Windhoek.

That was the message which Botha gave to his Namibian counterpart, Theo-Ben Gurirab, when the two men and their negotiating teams met in Cape Town a week ago.

However, the South Africans made it clear to Gurirab that such a decision could not be taken by Pretoria alone — and that it would entail an amendment to the constitution. Walvis Bay's linkage to SA dates back to the colonial era and the Namibian claim rests on geographic and economic arguments; territorially it is part of SA. If SA agrees to cede authority, it would be internationally welcomed as a gesture of goodwill to a former enemy.

Botha emphasised that his government was not prepared to initiate any amendments to the constitution at this delicate stage of the pre-negotiating phase involving the ANC and other interested parties. Amendments — including any decision on the future of Walvis Bay — could, therefore, only be discussed, at the earliest, during the planned all-party conference due to take place later this year, Botha told the Namibian delegation.

As the NP had already agreed in principle to hand over Walvis Bay, a final decision on its future would rely on the other parties. The ANC would in all probability be the determining factor.

The *FM*'s sources say that Gurirab was visibly disappointed by the outcome of the talks. The Namibian government had never doubted that Pretoria would hand over the town.

Now it finds itself having, in effect, to negotiate the issue with the ANC. This could raise problems.

Would the ANC want to hand over Walvis Bay, for example?

At this stage, the ANC has not indicated what its position on Walvis Bay might be. A reluctance to agree to a handover would sour relations between themselves and Nujoma's

Swapo — but the issue simply hasn't been adequately addressed within the ANC, along with many other issues.

Gossip ① *Does ANC feel that*
 Diplomatic circles are buzzing with gossip about the relevance of the R1m donation by the Namibian government to the ANC recently, in the light of which, the ANC would presumably be hard pressed to deny Nujoma's claim to Walvis Bay, it is speculated.

There is also the obvious point that SA — whatever legal and historical claims it may have on the enclave — has a lot to gain internationally by handing over Walvis Bay. An obstinate position over the enclave could damage the diplomatic breakthroughs which began to manifest themselves after De Klerk started his reform initiatives. This week, the Johannesburg daily, *Beeld*, said all realistic South Africans accepted that SA should relinquish the town.



During the Cold War and the heyday of Soviet expansionism, it was to SA's advantage to have access to a strategic harbour close to Angola; but that has now lapsed, the newspaper argued. *Beeld* also questioned the financial benefits of Walvis Bay to SA. Compensation can be negotiated, it said, adding that instead of engaging in a futile battle for the retention of Walvis Bay, SA's energies should rather be directed at finding an acceptable solution for its own problems relating to land.

How does ANC feel
 Botha told Gurirab that until such time as a decision had been taken by the all-party conference and the constitution had been amended, Pretoria would be amenable to the idea that Walvis Bay be jointly managed by the two governments during the interim period. Both Botha and Gurirab said they would report back to their respective govern-

ments.

No date has yet been set for another meeting.

Eddie Botha

THE CABINET

DEVICES AND DESIRES

Deputy Finance Minister Org Marais is back in favour but Agriculture Minister Jacob de Villiers is on his way out. In simple terms that's the message of last week's Cabinet reshuffle.

Marais, the second most senior deputy minister after Roelf Meyer takes over from Trade & Industry and Tourism Minister Kent Durr who is ambassador-designate to London. Marais' post will be filled by Durr's deputy, Theo Alant, once a firm favourite for Durr's job.

Marais, a former head of Unisa's business school, seemed to have reached the pinnacle of his political career as a deputy minister and was seldom tipped to go any further. He is regarded as a government workhorse, having chaired various commissions and investigations into technical aspects of financial and economic policy and has a suitable background for Trade & Industry.

Jacob de Villiers was brought into President F W de Klerk's first Cabinet as a specialist. He is indirectly elected by the Nat caucus and has not fought an election. A former "Farmer of the Year," he was apparently regarded as the right man to stem growing hostility in the financially squeezed and politically nervous farming community and to try to put agriculture back on to an economic footing.

However, it is understood that his autocratic management style severely undermined his standing among farmers and organisations marketing farm products. His replacement has been widely welcomed in the farming community. Though De Villiers retains his Development Aid portfolio, and has been given the added responsibility of Public Works & Land Affairs (previously with George Bartlett), it seems that his days in Cabinet are numbered.

Kraai van Niekerk, now "own affairs" Agriculture Minister, takes De Villiers' job. Though a Cape MP he is regarded as tough enough to handle the powerful rightwing farming lobby in the Transvaal.

His deputy will be Tobie Meyer, elder brother of Roelf Meyer — and also a former "Farmer of the Year." Meyer, the MP for Cradock, is regarded as a new-generation Nat keen to push on rapidly with reform.

The other new deputy minister is David Graaff, son of former United Party leader