

Dateline: Namibia

Editorial

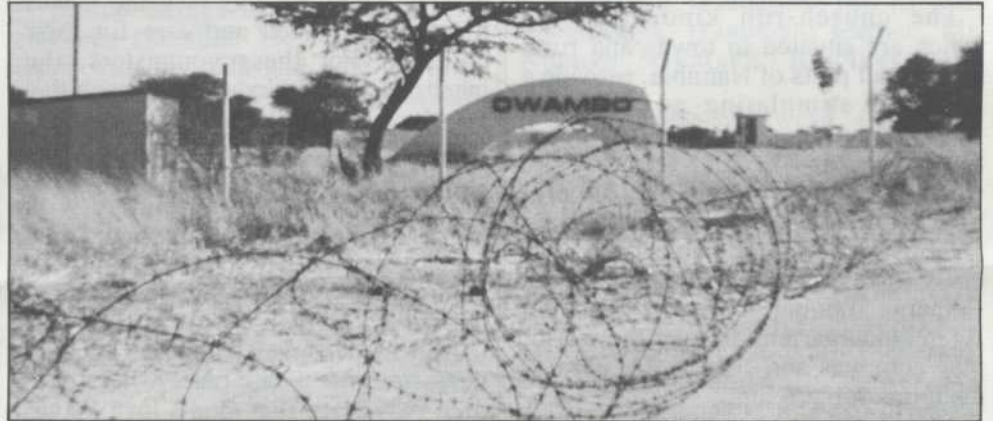
THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

This past season there has been recurring news about the demonstrations against South Africa at its embassies and consulates. Bishop Tutu was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize, and in South Africa the stateless black majority in urban areas has been demonstrating its anger against apartheid. But have you read or heard anything about Namibia?

In cities and state capitals, in Washington D.C. and in corporate boardrooms all over North America there has been continued talk of the growing movement for disinvestment and other economic sanctions against South Africa. If you read the South African newspapers, you can see that they are very concerned about the possibility of sanctions. And if you read of the actions of the multinational companies that control much of the industrial wealth of South Africa, you can see that they, too, are disturbed. They have become so disturbed that they, together with the government, are pleading against sanctions on the grounds that such actions may harm the black majority. Can you imagine that? The same South African government that has murdered hundreds of peaceful black protesters now wants you to believe it opposes sanctions out of its concern for black people! But even in this debate, where are the suffering people of Namibia?

South Africa has been able to make the world forget about Namibia. Even in the midst of demonstrations and disinvestment Namibia is forgotten. And South Africa is laughing. Why? Because the demonic violence of South Africa is nowhere played out more cruelly, more consistently, than in the north of Namibia. There the killing is normal, the torture commonplace, the detentions everyday, the beatings hourly. South Africa is laughing because we have forgotten.

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Barbed wire in Ovamboland, northern Namibia

Credit: Lutheran World Ministries

Events

THE IMPRISONED NATION: SOUTH AFRICA SEALS OFF NORTHERN NAMIBIA

In a dramatic new escalation of repression, the entire northern border region of Namibia was designated a "security zone" by the South African government on March 11, 1985. Access to that area by visiting church leaders, journalists and all others is now prohibited without a police permit.

In an announcement made over government-controlled radio in Windhoek, South Africa's Police Commissioner for Namibia, Lieutenant General Dolf Gouws, said that the new security arrangement "would be enforced strictly, and heavy penalties would be handed down to people travelling in the area without the necessary permits."

The announcement brought immediate reaction from officials of the Council of Churches in Namibia, who represent more than 70 percent of the population in the territory. According to Dr. Abisai Shejavali, general secretary of the council, the new regulations "will isolate the population of the north from the rest of Namibia and from the world."

"We are protesting this action very strongly," said Dr. Shejavali. "This will hamper the work of the churches. The north is where most of the suffering is. It is where the war imposed upon us by the colonial power is occurring."

The new "security zone" comprises six of the so-called ethnic homelands set up by the South Africans: Ovamboland, Kavangoland, East Caprivi, Hereroland East, Bushmanland, and Kaokoland. Over half of Namibia's 1.4 million people live in this area, which borders on Angola, Botswana and Zambia.

The restrictions mean that visitors to the area, both from Namibia itself and from outside the country, will have to apply to the police for a permit to enter the region. The permit, if granted, will be for a specific number of days and good only for the one trip. South Africa had similar restrictions in force in the early 1970s, and used the permit procedure to deny access to church visitors and others who were not favorably inclined to South Africa's occupation of the country.

According to Lieutenant General Gouws, the "regulations are in the interest of the visitors because the security forces are not able to guarantee their safety."

Dr. Shejavali disputed this analysis, saying, "I think this has not been done to protect any visitor. Most of the suffering in the north is from the side of the South African regime. These regulations will hide these things that they do from people who can report them — church visitors, journalists and others."

LUTHERAN KINDERGARTENS THREATENED

Twenty-four kindergartens in Namibia caring for 1,300 children are faced with closure if the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), is not able to raise \$50,000 for the 1985 budget.

The church-run kindergartens, which are situated in towns and rural areas in all parts of Namibia, provide a safe and stimulating environment where parents can leave their children for the day and be sure that they are well looked after. The children are provided with a daily meal, and are cared for by teachers who have been specially trained for this type of work at a Lutheran training school in Namibia. As in kindergartens all over the world, play activities and singing are used as mediums for teaching.

The children are taught basic Christian education and are encouraged in

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Namibia is where South Africa trains its white soldiers to kill black civilians. A Catholic priest reported to me that South African soldiers have told him they feel cheated if they return from Namibia without having killed a black person.

Namibia is where the church of Christ is under constant harassment. Where priests and pastors are being detained. Where evangelists are arrested and tortured. Where God's people — school teachers and farmers, miners and shopkeepers — are being beaten and killed. Where God's children are being conscripted to defend the racist, illegal occupation of their country.

Namibia is also the place that the United States and Canada (along with Great Britain, France and West Germany), promised the rest of the world in 1978 that they would bring to freedom. Our trade and investment ties, they said, could be used to persuade South Africa to grant their colony independence.

But we have traded, invested, enticed and "constructively engaged" with South Africa for seven years since then, and Namibians are still being killed, tortured, detained and beaten. Perhaps our leaders have forgotten.

How about you? Have you forgotten Namibia? Your brothers and sisters in Namibia have not forgotten you.

activities which enable them to participate and share in church festivals and special services. They also learn the more practical tasks of how to wash, dress and take care of themselves. Sixty teachers are employed at the 24 centers, and each has between 10 and 35 young children to look after.

The kindergartens are particularly important for the poor and the unemployed. Many parents lack the means to adequately feed and care for their children. For these youngsters, the meal they eat in kindergarten each day may be their only one. Other children, particularly those of working parents, are often left without adult supervision during the day — sometimes with tragic results. Youngsters have died from eating rotten food they discovered in rubbish heaps while roaming the streets on their own.

And in occupied Namibia, the kindergartens are a rare place where children may learn that God's love knows no color. Under South Africa's apartheid laws, government-run educational programs in Namibia are organized along racial lines, with separate and unequal facilities for black, "colored" and white children. Over the years it has been the churches who have taken the lead in providing educational opportunities for the country's majority black population. And it was the churches who initiated pre-school kindergartens, recognizing the important role they had to play in a society beset by poverty, war and legalized racial discrimination.

Church leaders are fearful that if sufficient money is not found to keep the

kindergartens open, the government will step in and take over the facilities — taking the young children out of the church's care and imposing instead an inferior and segregated system.

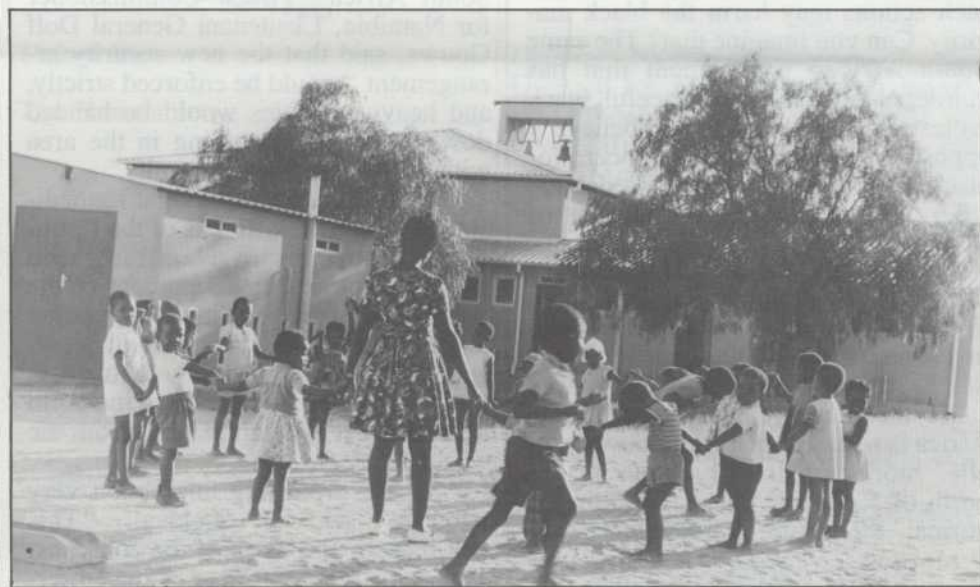
At present, the kindergartens are funded mainly by the parents, who contribute \$31,000 annually towards the program's budget. But the high unemployment situation in Namibia has resulted in fewer donations to the church, said ELC Vice Preses Pastor Zephaniah Kameeta, at a time when rent, electricity and food costs have increased dramatically.

Despite the best efforts of the families concerned, and a special donation from the church, so far the kindergarten program has raised only 41 percent of its 1985 budget. This is why the ELC has issued an urgent appeal for an additional \$50,000 to help cover the costs of teachers' salaries, school lunches, supplies, rent and maintenance.

"We are facing closing or handing over to the government," Pastor Kameeta observed, "and both will be catastrophic." After noting that the amount needed to continue the kindergarten program is less than \$4.00 per child, Pastor Kameeta commented, "We pray and hope to receive some help from our friends abroad."

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A Lutheran kindergarten in Namibia
Credit: Namibia Christian Communications Trust

TERROR CONTINUES

One person has died in prison and at least 39 others are being detained without trial by the South African police in northern Namibia, according to church sources in the country.

Mr. Thomas Shindobo Nikanor, a contract miner, died in detention on January 27. He had been arrested without charge on January 22 by security police at his home in Engela, in northern Namibia. According to South African police officials, he died "by hanging himself with his socks."

At least 39 other persons are known to have been detained by the South Africans since mid-January, including Lutheran church officials, school principals and teachers, and officers of Barclays Bank in Namibia. All are being held under a South African security law for Namibia known as AG9. The law permits South Africa's occupation authorities to detain persons without charge or trial for repeated periods of 30 days.

Concern for the safety of the detainees was expressed yesterday by leaders of the large Christian churches in the South Africa-occupied territory.

The detained Lutheran pastor, Sakeus Shaduka, was arrested on January 31 at his parish near Oshaango, a rural, wooded area in Ovamboland. Pastor Shaduka is 56 years old and serves a parish of about 4,000 persons. Three Lutheran evangelists are also being detained: Mr. Timiteus Shikongo, 48

years old, Mr. Abisai Iihuhwa and Mr. Andreas Namweya, 60. All serve parishes in rural areas where the South African army has recently been accused of intimidating church members into enlisting in the South West Africa Territorial Force.

The dead Namibian, Thomas Shindobo Nikanor, 45 years old, was a contract laborer at the Consolidated Diamond Mines at Oranjemund in southern Namibia. He was on home leave with his wife and nine children on January 22 when he was detained.

News of Nikanor's death reached Anglican and Lutheran church officials on January 29, and church lawyers were directed to assist the family with an inquiry. A prominent pathologist, Dr. Jonathan Gluckman, performed an autopsy for the family on February 1. (Dr. Gluckman was a pathologist for the family of the late Steve Biko, who died while in detention in South Africa.)

Communications with northern Namibia are difficult, and the names of some of the persons detained in mid-January have just been reported by their families. Included, in addition to the Lutheran church officials and Mr. Nikanor, are two officials of Barclays Bank. Mr. Oscar Haludilu, a manager at the Barclays branch at Oshakati, is 35 years old and a member of the Lutheran church. Mr. Ndeuka Nakatana is a worker at the Ondangua branch of Barclays.

This list of detainees as presently known is as follows:

Ms. Desiderius Ankome, teacher;

Miss Christiana Darihote, school principal; Mr. Simon Hango, (Lutheran) teacher; Mr. Joseph Hailume (Lutheran); Mr. Oscar Haludilu, (Lutheran) Barclays Bank officer; Mr. Abisai Iihuhwa, (Lutheran) evangelist; Mr. Lazarus Iithete, mine worker; Mr. David Jonas, (Anglican); Mr. Shikongo Kalyenge, (Roman Catholic) school principal; Mr. Reinhold Aumbi Kwathiindge, (Lutheran); Mr. Kleopas Mweuhanga, (Lutheran) teacher; Mr. Ndeuka Nakatana, Barclays Bank officer.

Mr. Andreas Namweya, (Lutheran) evangelist; Mr. Titus Nashima, (Roman Catholic) school principal; Mr. Petrus Naukushu (Lutheran) teacher; Mrs. Lucia Ndalyatapeni, (Anglican); Mr. Kondjene Neghede, (Anglican); Mr. Joseph Petrus, (Anglican); The Rev. Sakeus Shaduka, (Lutheran) pastor; Mr. Teofelus Shidjuu, (Lutheran); Mr. Franciscus Shikongo, teacher; Mr. Timiteus Shikongo, (Lutheran) evangelist; Mr. John Shiluwa, (Anglican) mine worker; Mr. Reinhold Shipo, (Lutheran); Mr. Oskar Shikoyeni; Mr. Paulus Shipweya, (Roman Catholic); Mr. Erastus Uutoni, (Lutheran) postal worker; Mr. Kashululu Viliho, (Roman Catholic) teacher; Mr. Marius Walombola.

Frank Hamunime, (Lutheran) contractor; Lazarus Gideon (Lutheran) teacher; Nestor Ashoongo; Petrus Shipahu; Ndume Wejulu; Simeon Georg; Paulus Barnabas; Hannai Haunaya; Peter Nghidulika Haitembu, (Lutheran) chief.

† Mr. Thomas Shindobo Nikanor, died in detention, January 27, 1985.

ASSAULT VICTIMS WIN COMPENSATION

The South African occupation authorities in Namibia have reached out-of-court settlements with eight victims of assault by the dreaded secret police unit Koevoet. On January 25, South Africa agreed to pay Mrs. Katrina Hamukwaya, the widow of Jona Hamukwaya, \$29,000 to drop her civil suit against the South African Minister of Law and Order, Louis Le Grange, South African Defense Minister General Magnus Malan, and South Africa's Administrator-General for Namibia, Dr. Willem Van Niekerk, for responsibility in the death of her husband at the hands of Koevoet on November 18, 1982.

Eyewitnesses to Hamukwaya's death have testified that the school teacher was "beaten like a snake" on the banks of the Kavango River by Koevoet soldiers, and doctors who examined Mr. Hamukwaya testified that his injuries revealed he'd been dragged and subjected to "massive trauma." A 1983 inquest into Hamukwaya's death found that his death had resulted from "an act or omission on the part of members of the unit known as Koevoet."

Seven other Namibians, Raimbert Kudumu, Frans Majira, Patricia Katanga, Petrus Shekunya, Petrus Ugwanga, Petrus Amukoshi and Ms. Paulinus Imelide, received a total of \$15,000 as compensation for assaults inflicted by Koevoet in the Ovambo and Kavango war zones.

The settlements were the first to be reached on charges of atrocities by Koevoet. Many observers believe South Africa agreed to the out-of-court arrangements to prevent additional evidence of Koevoet atrocities from being aired in court.

Advocacy Aids

Back issues of Dateline: Namibia may be ordered free of charge by writing Dateline: Namibia, 231 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016; or phoning (212) 696-6841. The film "A Cry for Freedom" is available from LCA synod libraries or through the Augsburg Publishing House audio-visual departments. Other resources on Namibia are available from Lutheran World Ministries, 360 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. ABISAI SHEJAVALI

Dr. Abisai Shejavalu is the General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Namibia. He is 50 years old and an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church, Namibia's largest church body. The council that he serves is a fully ecumenical body with Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Congregational churches as members. Fully 70 percent of Namibia's 1.4 million people are followers of the Christian faith.

Dr. Shejavalu's native land is the last colony on the African continent. Namibia was first occupied by Germany in the last century and has been governed by South Africa since World War I, originally under a trust mandate from the League of Nations. In 1966, the United Nations revoked the trust mandate, citing the brutal occupation policies of South Africa as betraying the "sacred trust of civilisation" that was the heart of the mandate. In 1971, the International Court of Justice upheld the revocation of the mandate. Yet South Africa refused to leave the territory, and its occupation continues.

Dateline: Namibia spoke with Dr. Shejavalu in Harare, Zimbabwe.



Dr. Abisai Shejavalu
Credit: Namibia Christian Communications Trust

Q: Namibia has been under colonial occupation for over a hundred years. The United Nations has a plan for the independence of Namibia, Security Council Resolution 435. What exactly is the obstacle to its implementation?

A: South Africa is really the stumbling block to the implementation of Resolution 435. Although South Africa has agreed to it, it is always trying delaying tactics not to give any real independence to the Namibian people. Then the United States, especially this President Reagan, came up with the issue of the Cuban presence in Angola, which has now been linked to our country's political settlement.

Q: But South Africa says that it can't withdraw from Namibia because, if it did, the Soviet Union, through the Cubans, would install in power the Namibian liberation movement, SWAPO (South West Africa Peoples Organization), which they describe as a "terrorist organization." They say the Namibian people are more afraid of SWAPO and the Soviets than they are of South Africa, and that South Africa is protecting them from that.

A: This is not true. SWAPO is dedicated to the implementation of Resolution 435. They agreed to that and also that the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) will come to supervise elections. We say the Cuban presence in Angola is not a threat to the majority of people in Namibia. We don't think that our independence should be connected to the issue of another state. Angola, as a sovereign state, has the right to invite Cubans in. We know who has caused the problem in southern Africa and in Angola — it is South Africa.

I think the West should know that our struggle is not being made on behalf of the Soviets. We are serious about our independence and freedom, and we are struggling to achieve it. What we want only is to let Resolution 435 be implemented. Give the people a chance to participate in fair and free elections.

Q: The beginning of the withdrawal of South African forces from southern Angola in February 1984 was presented as the beginning of a process that would lead to independence for Namibia. In your experience, has the signing of this agreement with Angola brought peace to Namibia in any way?

A: When we heard that South Africa was going to disengage its troops from southern Angola, we were happy that

something would be done, but people who are living near the border say it seems to be a kind of trick. One day you see South African troops coming out of Angola, and the following day you see others going in. (South African troops halted their withdrawal in August 1984, and remain in possession of a substantial portion of Angolan territory — Ed. note.) Nothing has been brought about that would mark peace in Namibia. Things are becoming worse and worse. People are being detained. People are kept incommunicado; they are not brought to trial. People wanting to visit their relatives in detention sometimes don't know where the man is, or where the women have been kept. Men and women are being arrested, men and women are being killed, men and women are being beaten up — all these by forces under the South African government. So there is no peace.

Q: What is the attitude of the South African troops in the north? Do they act as though they are trying to protect Namibia from an outside threat, or do they act more like an occupation army?

A: The South Africans tell the Americans they are a defense force in Namibia, but we in Namibia, we ask ourselves, are these people really a defense force? They tell the world they are protecting the Namibian people from "terrorists" — but in reality they are the ones who are causing a lot of deaths. They are the ones who are destroying the humanity of Namibia. They are the ones who are doing everything. They beat up the people, they come during the night.

There is Koevoet. You have heard about Koevoet? (A counterinsurgency unit of the South African police, see page 7) These people put themselves in freedom fighters' uniforms, they go to houses and villages saying that they are SWAPO men and they want to be given food. They pretend to be SWAPO. But after they are given food, they come again and say, "You are the people who are giving the terrorists food." Then, either they beat up the people or they kill them or do anything they want. It is very difficult if you see someone with a gun coming to you and asking for food. So they do many things.

It is illogical to believe that SWAPO freedom fighters are those who are killing or destroying or beating the people. SWAPO is committed to the struggle for freedom of Namibia and cannot turn and destroy the people. The crimes that are taking place there, whether it is killing or rape, are being caused by the occupation of South African troops and police forces.

Whenever a man is found dead, South African soldiers and police forces say that he has been killed by "terrorists." It was now clear, however, who had killed this man. SWAPO has become a scapegoat for all these evil deeds which have taken place.

Q: And this is a common occurrence in the north?

A: It takes place many times.

Q: How have the people fared economically under South African rule? What is the current economic situation in Namibia?

A: There is a lot of suffering — like unemployment and the injustice of the distribution of the economy. Black people are paid less, and what they receive cannot feed and support their families. Some of the people who are working as nurses or teachers might get more than before, but this is only for a few. The majority are suffering economically.

Q: Do people still have to come from the north to the south to work in the mines?

A: Yes, they do. They come from the north to the south and they are given a very short time to visit their families, and if they overstay they might lose their job. They are given one month or one week a year to visit their families. It is really a difficult situation. There are not yet houses so that migrant laborers can live with their families.

Also, the war situation is really a problem. Some young people and women have left the north and gone to the south because they think it is safer. But in the south you have to have a job in order to survive. This is very difficult. You find people crowded in small houses, and the government doesn't do anything to provide enough housing or give money to the people so that they can survive.

Q: Is it proving a real problem?

A: It is causing problems because you find that the people are without food, children are being born and they are suffering from malnutrition. Also, our country has been badly affected by drought for several years. I think the whole life is very difficult, really difficult.

There are not enough schools to educate black people. Then there is a special problem for those young people who have gone to school and taken exams — they remain without a job. This is causing a hopeless and helpless situation for the young people. It is very difficult. The whites get better education and get the jobs.

Q: Just because of the color of their skin?

A: We could say we are suffering just because we are black.

Q: So that is the heresy of apartheid. Now there is a curfew in effect in northern Namibia — what does that mean for people's lives?

A: It is very difficult, because after 6 or 7 o'clock in the evening you have to try to remain silent at your home. If you become sick and you need some kind of emergency treatment, you cannot be taken to the hospital because you are not allowed to move. Even women who are giving birth to a child are not allowed to move during the night.

Q: Do you know of specific cases where people have died because of the curfew?

A: If you come to our country we can take you to the north and you will have many people who will tell you — if they trust you. Because usually the people do not trust strangers, especially people coming from America.

Q: It sounds like the Namibian people are becoming increasingly angry or bitter towards the United States because of the role the Americans play in supporting South Africa.

A: Yes, it is true. It is a real pity that the American people, who speak about democracy and liberty, have stopped the oppressed and suffering people of Namibia from getting their independence and freedom. In the sense that Reagan is cooperating with the South African government, all Americans are supporting South Africa militarily, politically and economically. Our problems, our sufferings and our oppressions are not only being caused by South Africa, but also by America and by the other Western countries who are now cooperating with South Africa. It is a pity that Reagan and the American people could not side with the oppressed people, but instead they side with the oppressor, a minority which is dominating more than 26 million people in South Africa. We wish the United States would take a strong stand against the South African government and that South Africa would withdraw its troops from Namibia. We wish that when the United States speaks of liberty, it would know what it is really talking about.

Q: What are the implications from that after independence — do you think the Namibian people will still be angry and will remember what the Americans have done?

A: Well, we try to forgive. But I think the most important thing for you, as an American, is not to wait until we have become independent to see whether we will have a good relationship with you. I think the best way is to begin now to side with the right side — to side with the oppressed people who have suffered many years struggling for their freedom and human rights. What you could do is to side with them against oppression, against this apartheid system, and against all these forces which function against justice, against humanity.

Q: Speaking as an individual and a Christian, would you say that United States policy towards Namibia right now is a Christian policy?

A: It is a non-Christian policy. Because one's Christianity has to be seen from one's actions. I think sometimes some people say that they are for freedom and independence of Namibia but they speak only with their mouths, we do not read it in their actions. Your policy of siding with South Africa against the suffering majority is non-Christian. We say that apartheid is a sin, is a crime, is a heresy. Why should you side with that?

Q: If there were three things the people in the Western nations could be doing to help Namibia, what would those three things be?

A: I think the first one is that pressure should be brought to bear on the United States government to support the United Nations in the struggle for liberating Namibia from the colonial regime of South Africa. The United States should stop from vetoing and abstaining from the resolutions made

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Churches Decry New Regulations

Resolution of the Executive Committee of the Council of Churches in Namibia of 14th March 1985, regarding Proclamation AG 28, Declarations and Orders under the Security District Proclamation 1977, Districts of Ovambo, Kavango, Kaokoland, Eastern Caprivi, Bushmanland and Hereroland East.

We the Executive Committee of the Council of Churches in Namibia express our dismay and deep concern about the above-named security proclamation. We believe that such legislation at this stage of negotiations is a retrogressive step which will reintroduce restrictions on freedom of movement of people within our country.

We believe that we are expressing the feeling of the overwhelming majority of our country's population who are members of the various churches affiliated to the Council of Churches in Namibia. We believe that such legislation has no democratic base and is arbitrarily imposed on the people. It is our contention that such legislation will

have the following effects. It will hinder the church in the exercising of its legitimate activities in the following ways:

- The free proclamation of the gospel and the work of reconciliation will be hampered,
- Clergy and church workers may be severely restricted from performing their church functions,
- In terms of the proclamation:

No person unless he (1) is a member of the security forces or unless (2) is in possession of a permit issued to him by the commissioner of the South West African Police or any person acting under his authority to the effect that authority has been granted to him to enter or be in that district for such purposes and during such periods and subject to such conditions as may be mentioned in the permit.

From these provisions it appears that powers will be given to the police which prescribe amongst others, the purpose, period and even conditions which may be imposed on any persons entering these areas. We believe that this constitutes a serious violation of freedom of movement which will place in jeopardy the possibility of free and fair elections in terms of UN Resolution 435 if not everyone is afforded the

right to campaign freely. In situations of emergency in human need, people may be prevented from responding because of the stated provision of three days notice for application.

The people in the northern district of our country have experienced much suffering as a result of the war situation. As a result of this proclamation they will be further isolated. We believe that access to, and contact and fellowship between churches in the affected areas and churches fraternally linked, and the continuing need to reaffirm partnership with the international Christian community will be curtailed. In addition, contact with and the free flow of information from these areas both internally and to the outside world is a prerequisite for a solution to the conflict in Namibia.

Therefore, because of these foregoing concerns and in our belief that increased restrictions do nothing to answer the present need, nor do they invite hope for peace in the future, we strongly call for the unconditional repeal of the proclamation, and we further resolve to appoint a delegation of church leaders to consult with the Administrator General on this issue to seek the repeal of the proclamation.

Shejavalu Interview continued

on behalf of Namibia at the United Nations. Support should be given to the U.N. for the independence of Namibia whenever it is dealing with the issue. Our independence should be the number one issue, and you should get away from this linkage of Cubans to our political settlement. This I say in all seriousness.

The second thing I would say is that help could be given in educational and in material ways to support our Namibians in exile in their many needs, and help to those who are inside Namibia to get more education. If they are helping our brothers and sisters in exile and at the same time helping our brothers and sisters in Namibia in education, then we will say that they are helping us to educate the whole nation.

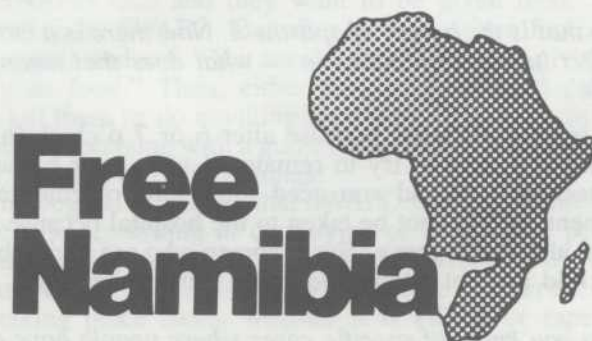
Q: *How can people provide material or educational assistance?*

A: Inside Namibia they can do it through the council of churches. For our people in exile, they can do it through SWAPO.

The third is, I would call to those Christians who have been helping with their prayers — praying for our struggle, praying for our churches, praying for our people in Namibia and in exile — to continue to pray because the situation is really terrible. The life of Namibians is being destroyed. We need this occupation to come to an end. We don't want South Africa there, because while South Africa is in Namibia, our independence is still far. We need really to pray and when we pray we should also be ready to participate in action.

Q: *Finally, Dr. Shejavalu, there has been a debate in America about the decision of the Lutheran World Federation to suspend membership of the South African churches between those who think this is a positive thing and those who say this cuts off dialogue, isolates the churches of South Africa, and is inherently un-Christian. What is your assessment of that debate?*

A: Unity between the oppressed churches and the oppressing churches is no real unity. There is no such thing — unity between oppressor and oppressed. The members of the white Lutheran church are employers; they employ the black Lutherans — the relationship is boss and servant. The boss is a Lutheran and the servant is a Lutheran. Is that really unity in Jesus Christ? We want to see ourselves equal in Jesus Christ — all one, children of God in Christ.



Koevoet: Dossier on a Death Squad

To assist the regular army in its illegal and brutal occupation of Namibia, the South African government has created and deployed a band of more than a thousand security "policemen" known as Koevoet. Commanded by white officers, most of them South African, the malcontents and thugs of northern Namibia have been brought together to provide a powerful intimidation force against the people of Namibia and their aspirations for independence.

"The people in Namibia call Koevoet 'the important enemy,'" said one Namibian from the war zone. "Enemies to ourselves and enemies to nature. They are trained by South Africa so that they do not fear to do anything — including things that are inhuman. They are trained to frighten and scare the people and to be brutal as to make the people afraid of South Africa so that we will not support (the Namibian independence movement) SWAPO."

South Africa has occupied Namibia illegally since 1966, when the trust mandate granted it by the League of Nations was revoked because of gross violations of human rights. Since 1966, the South West Africa Peoples Organization, Namibia's largest independence party, has waged a low-scale guerrilla war against the South African army in Namibia. In 1978, the UN Security Council proposed a plan, Security Council Resolution 435, to bring a peaceful settlement to the war and a UN-monitored election process leading to independence. The plan includes the orderly withdrawal of South African soldiers to either South Africa or specified bases inside the country.

But under Resolution 435 the South African police will not be required to leave until the elections are completed, and, under the nominal direction of UN officials, the South African police, presumably including Koevoet, will control the population during the election process. Since its creation in 1979, Koevoet has become the most feared occupation unit in Namibia.

NAME

Koevoet, which in the Afrikaans language means "crowbar."

ORIGIN

Formed secretly in 1979 as an elite counterinsurgency police force,



South African army and police officers in Namibia.
Credit: Namibia Christian Communications Trust

Koevoet was first identified in the press as an assassination squad with a "death list" of community and church leaders in Ovamboland, northern Namibia. Because some of Koevoet's atrocities against the civilian population became the basis for court cases, the unit became increasingly visible until in 1984 the South African government openly paraded the group in front of the press.

COMMAND STRUCTURE

Koevoet falls under the direct control of the South African police in Pretoria. Brigadier Hans Dreyer, commander of Koevoet in Namibia, was sent there in 1978 to organize the unit. Dreyer served in the South African Police in Rhodesia during that country's war for independence, and was formerly a Security Police chief in South Africa.

Officers of Koevoet are white, and most are South Africans. According to press reports they are volunteers, and many, like Dreyer, saw service in the Rhodesian war on the side of the white minority government.

Constables of Koevoet are black, recruited mainly from Ovamboland and Kavangoland. There are also former members of the Angolan anti-government UNITA movement and ex-SWAPO members in the force.

TACTICS

Koevoet is not involved in police investigations. Detachments of black constables and white officers are sent out in counterinsurgency "search and destroy" missions for a week or two. They are relieved in relays by fresh constables, so that high speed is maintained. In the words of the South African Rand Daily Mail, "they hunt down their quarry in a bloodhound style."

Koevoet units approach remote huts and villages in search of guerrillas. Civilians are interrogated and often tortured in the field or taken back to base. Koevoet members sometimes dress up as SWAPO guerrillas, entering family residences, called kraals, seeking food and shelter. Once given assistance,

they reveal their identities and impose summary punishment. Court cases have revealed that Koevoet members have burnt kraals, killed women and children, and taken part in widespread looting from the local population.

The brutal methods of interrogation, torture, and killing are deliberate tactics by the occupation forces of South Africa to intimidate the population of northern Namibia against assisting SWAPO.

An example of the many deaths attributed to Koevoet is seen in the court case surrounding the November death of Mr. Kudimu Katanga in Kavango. Mr. Katanga had crossed the Kavango River to cut poles and reeds for his hut, and was stopped and assaulted by a white Koevoet member upon his return. He was further kicked by Koevoet special constables and forced to run more than six miles in front of an armored vehicle. When Katanga sat down, a constable hit him with an ox yoke and ordered him to get up. Katanga collapsed and died soon after. The Rundu magistrates court found that the two Koevoet policemen had acted "over-enthusiastically," and fined one \$22 and the other \$45 for common assault.

This is but one incident in which civilians have been brutalized by this special unit of the South African police. Only a small number of such cases ever reach a court of law. Mr. Katanga had not been charged with any crime, nor was he given any opportunity to defend himself in court. Under South African security laws in Namibia, the police have the right to detain persons without legal recourse, and the civilian population is constantly subject to the arbitrary decisions and brutal activities of Koevoet.

Excerpted from a forthcoming study: Koevoet: South Africa's Death Squad In Namibia
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NAMIBIAN CHURCHES PROTEST CONSCRIPTIONS

Despite threats of prosecution from South Africa, Christian churches are increasing their protest against military registration in the occupied territory of Namibia. In a statement issued Monday, December 10, 1984, the Council of Churches in Namibia says the South African plans for conscription of Namibian men ages 17 to 55 are "illegal." Noting the coming "feast of the birth of the Prince of Peace," the church statement pledges "firm support for those who refuse to register on the grounds of conscience and love for justice, freedom and peace."

Signed by ten church leaders, the statement calls for the immediate implementation of the independence plan for Namibia known as United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, and says that "the South African minister of defense has no right to legislate this defense law."

In October of last year the South West Africa Territorial Forces (SWATF) announced that all men were required to register for conscription into the force. Its commander, South African General George Miering, has since said that legislation enforcing the registration would be issued in January

1985. He has warned that those persons who do not register will be liable for prosecution under the South African Defense Act.

But Anglican Bishop James Kauluma, president of the council of churches, stated that, as an illegal colonial power, South Africa "does not have the legitimate right to compel people to register for the army."

The United Nations removed a trust mandate over the territory from South Africa in 1966. That year also marked the beginning of a military campaign against the South African army by the South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO).

According to the Rev. Alan Brews, who signed the statement as a representative of the Methodist church, "We regard SWAPO to be a Namibian force, made up of local Namibians who have become frustrated with the situation and have opted for an armed struggle." The churches wanted peace and did not at this time condone the armed struggle, said Brews, but "this conscription into the SWATF is for many Namibians like being conscripted into the army of the enemy."

"I think the South Africans are trying to be able to say that the war is being carried out not by South African forces, but by the South West Africa Territorial Force," said Brews. "But," he continued, "the SWATF is South African-trained and motivated."

Other signatories to the statement declared that they would not cooperate with the military. Dr. Abisai Shejavali, a Lutheran and general secretary of the council, said, "We will not register." Elder Bartolomeus Karuaera of the African Methodist Episcopal Church said his church "would never advise people to register for the army. I am over sixty," said Karuaera, "but even if I were within the age of registering I would rather go to jail than go into the army."

When asked whether the priests and brothers of the Roman Catholic church in Namibia would register for the army, Vicar General Heinz Henning said, "No. Absolutely not!"

According to the South African Defense Act, it is an offense for any person or group to use language or do anything that might encourage persons to refuse to serve in the South African Defense Force. The penalty for violating this act is imprisonment of up to six years and a large fine.

Earlier this month the second largest church in Namibia, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of South West Africa, issued a strong statement condemning the conscription plans. That church, along with the largest Lutheran church, the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-kavango Church (ELOC), the Congregational and the German Lutheran churches, also signed the protest statement.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Namibian Christians need your prayers and support. Let them know that you share their hopes for liberty. Write to

Dr. Abisai Shejavali
General Secretary
Council of Churches in Namibia
P.O. Box 57
Windhoek 9100
South West Africa/Namibia

Let government officials know of your concern about Namibia. Let them know that the time for the freedom of Namibia has come. Your letters and telephone calls to congressional or parliamentary representatives can assist in putting their attention on the continuing, illegal occupation of Namibia by the South African Defense Force. You can make a difference.

L.C.A. ARCHIVES

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Canada

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