

Early in 1977, five western countries which were then members of the United Nations Security Council (Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, known as the "Contact Group") initiated a proposal designed to bring Namibia to independence through elections under the supervision and control of the United Nations.

The proposal won what appeared to be the consent of the South African government, the South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO), and the African "Frontline States." The problem, however, was that the proposal was open to a variety of interpretations and after the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 435 on 29 September 1978, based on the proposal, no agreement has been reached on the way its resolution should be implemented.

#### WHY NOT?

The situation resembles the political evolution of Southern Rhodesia into Zimbabwe. Those in power had been brought to recognize the need for change, but wanted to write a prescription for change which was not acceptable to the international community. In Rhodesia, a unilateral declaration of independence was made in 1965 by a group of whites, led by Ian Smith, instead of accepting the established process for decolonization which could have moved that country to independence without bloodshed.

For almost 15 years the Smith regime was in power without international recognition. The liber-

the educational and health systems to near disaster. Western governments and the Lutheran World Federation, among others, are attempting to address these needs, but so far the assistance from governments has been disappointing, especially when compared with their earlier promises for economic aid.

#### NAMIBIA

In the Namibia situation, the United Nations has progressed from appeals to demands that South Africa withdraw its administration from the territory so that internationally supervised elections can install a democratically elected government. Instead, South Africa continues to rule through its own ethnic, tribally based elections, ostensibly to seat representatives to draw up a constitution, but step by step South Africa has invested those elected with legislative and executive authority. The elections, which seated a majority of a party called the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) have been recognized as valid by no nation in the world other than South Africa. Those who have been elected are widely regarded as surrogates of the South African government.

Parallel to Southern Rhodesia's situation, the Namibian liberation movement, SWAPO, which started out as a nonviolent agent of change, turned to armed struggle in 1966, and today war rages along the northern border of Namibia, with all the death and destruction it brings.

Inside Namibia, people suffer so much that many

# NAMIBIA

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ation movements took up the armed struggle in 1966 and the U.N. voted economic sanctions in 1968. Eventually, in 1979, the Smith government installed, through its own electoral process, what was, for all practical purposes universally regarded as a puppet regime. It was only early this year that Southern Rhodesia became Zimbabwe through a popular vote supervised by Great Britain. But it followed a long and bloody struggle which, in addition to the slaughter of thousands of people, almost destroyed the economy of the country, and brought

go into exile--some to fight, others to escape political harassment, prison and death. Refugee assistance for Namibians is a major continuing program of the Lutheran World Federation which has also served refugees from Mozambique and Rhodesia, among others.

#### WHO IS THE REBEL?

One of the perversities in interpreting the Namibian situation is the manner in which realities become fiction and fantasies are clothed



as fact by the public press. In Southern Rhodesia, Ian Smith was in rebellion against the legitimate government of Britain and yet, during the struggle for independence, the liberation groups were portrayed as the insurgents and rebels. In Namibia, no less a prestigious institution than the International Court of Justice has declared that South Africa's presence in Namibia is illegal and that it is under obligation to withdraw, but in spite of this it is the members of SWAPO who are called rebels and terrorists. The U.N. is forced to deal with the South African government as a legitimate party to the debates and to meet its conditions in an effort to bring about a cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution of the situation. One of South Africa's current demands is that the "democratic parties" or "political parties and movements" or "leadership" in the territory be brought into the negotiating process at this late date. These are the "parties" and "leadership" which emerged from the 1978 elections sponsored by the South African government and which enjoy no international recognition whatsoever, nor do they have the support of the Christian Council of Namibia which opposed the South African process of elections.

Meanwhile, a well-orchestrated campaign in the only English language daily newspaper in Namibia seeks to discredit the U.N. plan. Everyone but South Africa is blamed for the delay in the implementation of Resolution 435, including the Contact Group, Donald McHenry (U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.), SWAPO, Kurt Waldheim, Martti Ahtisaari, Jimmy Carter, the Frontline States, and the Organization for African Unity. Most international observers, however, agree that South Africa is playing for time and creates new demands with each response to U.N. proposals in order to delay the process. There are a few inside Namibia as well who give voice to this kind of analysis. One is Gwen Lister, political columnist for The Windhoek Observer, a weekly. On 5 July 1980 she wrote:

*...The last few weeks have made one or two points clear, and have exposed several political fallacies, which have for too long held the country in their grip.*

*That the DTA was prepared to be accommodating, while SWAPO was the retarding factor in the negotiations towards a settlement in this Territory, is an outright lie. That South Africa was prepared to work towards an internationally acceptable settlement of the Namibia question is*

*also an untruth, as recent events have adequately demonstrated.*

*The situation always was, and still is, that South Africa wished to install a sympathetic government, in the form of the DTA, on her borders. No matter the lip service which she has paid for over three years to the possibility of a U.N. election.*

She goes on to point out that impartiality is a two-way street, and that South Africa's claim that U.N. supervised elections cannot be fair as long as the U.N. General Assembly accepts SWAPO as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people is balanced by the South African appointed Administrator General's partiality for the DTA and by the fact that his personnel provide the infrastructure for the election!

#### THE VOICE OF ELOC

Another person to voice such sentiments is the Right Rev. Kleopas Dumeni, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church. In addressing the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, he deplored the newly created South African sponsored and tribally based ministerial council in Namibia which has been invested with executive powers, an action which can be interpreted as a step in a process toward an "internal settlement." Dumeni said:

*It is quite clear to everyone of us, including the authorities themselves, that the institution of such a Council is not the answer to the Namibian problem at all. For it will never bring peace to our war-torn country. And an institution that cannot bring the long-desired peace to the people who very badly need it is doomed to be an end in itself in the long run.*

He described the situation in which ELOC works.

*The bulk of the struggle for Namibia is being waged mainly within ELOC territory, in the far North of Namibia, especially in the area of Ovamboland and Okavango. Hence, of the three Lutheran churches in the country, ELOC is the most affected by the guerrilla warfare in the land. The intensity of the war and the amount of the subsequent bloodshed are always on the increase. Many church members are in jail all over the country.*

He named several of them and then concluded:



*We are yearning--really yearning--for a cease-fire and peace in our country.*

Dumeni scored action by the South African administration to reduce drastically--and eventually eliminate entirely--expatriate church workers (Finns) from ELOC territory and appealed for increased aid to train indigenous personnel to staff the numerous schools, 12 hospitals, 21 clinics and other institutions.

He concluded his report in these moving words:

*The predicament we find ourselves in as we are trying to mediate between groups opposing each other, however, is that: if you comply and do the will of one of the opposing groups, then you are running the risk of losing your life at the hand of the other....What, in the world, is one supposed to do in this regard?*

*Our overall desire, therefore, is that:  
-a cease-fire between the fighting parties should be effected, the sooner the better;  
-fair and free elections under the supervision of the U.N. be held, so that the people of Namibia once and for all could express their will;  
-we want to remain in unity with all our fellow believers in the world over.*

That unity implies prayer, expressions of solidarity and political advocacy in behalf of these sisters and brothers in the faith. "If one member suffers, all suffer together." (1 Cor. 12:26)

While the people suffer, many see South Africa's further delays as buying time to:

- 1) Strengthen the hand of the DTA and other "democratic parties" inside Namibia;
- 2) Intensify its propaganda against SWAPO;
- 3) Attack SWAPO bases inside Angola, where the Angolan government charges that the South African forces destroy not only SWAPO camps but also Angolan government installations;
- 4) Await the outcome of November elections in West Germany and the United States. Bernard Nossiter, U.N. correspondent for the New York Times, reflects what is so often implied in the South African press: "South Africa thinks it might get a more sympathetic hearing with a Chancellor Franz Josef Strauss in Bonn and a President Ronald Reagan in Washington."

#### PROSPECTS

In spite of South Africa's stated "determina-

tion to conclude successfully the negotiations of the past three and a half years to bring the Territory to independence," the litany of complaints about the U.N. favoring SWAPO and the injection of fresh demands into the process raise questions about South Africa's real intentions. Mr. Donald McHenry charges that:

*...The stumbling block remains today what it has been for the past two years--a determination of political will--a decision of South Africa to settle. There are no substantive differences (between the parties) in my judgment. Once one has decided he wants to settle, there is no reason why we cannot implement the (U.N.) proposal, but the political will is absent.*

Ambassador McHenry expanded these views in testimony before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives on 9 September 1980, when he addressed himself to South Africa's latest objections contained in its letter to U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim on 29 August. Mr. McHenry said:

*The letter contains a number of allegations and interpretations of fact that can only be described as distorted. In particular, we regard the direct attacks on the Secretary General personally as both unhelpful and unjustified....*

*If there is a genuine issue buried within the rhetoric of the South African letter, it is the issue of the impartial implementation of the U.N. settlement plan. In this connection, South Africa has charged that the United Nations General Assembly's designation of SWAPO as "the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people" raises questions as to the ability of the United Nations to supervise impartially the elections in Namibia....*

*As South Africa is aware, the settlement plan for Namibia would be carried out by the Secretary General under the authority of the Security Council, not the General Assembly. The Security Council has never adopted or endorsed the disposition of the General Assembly to regard SWAPO as the sole representative of the Namibian people. On the contrary, Security Council resolutions 385 and 435, on which the U.N. settlement plan is based, fully endorse the principle that the leadership of the territory must be determined through free and fair elections in which all political parties, including SWAPO will be placed on an equal foot-*



ing. Finally, it should be noted that significant elements of the Namibian people, including political parties and the Namibian Council of Churches--whose member churches comprise among their congregations more than half of the territory's adult population--support prompt implementation of the settlement plan.

...The most significant action inside Namibia has been South Africa's creation of a so-called "Council of Ministers," composed entirely of members of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, the party which won the South African supervised elections of December 1978. These elections were boycotted by major internal political parties as well as by SWAPO and not recognized by the Five or by the international community. This "Council of Ministers" has been given considerable authority by South Africa and the Government seems to be scaling down the visibility and scope of the Administrator General. In response to this action, the Governments of the Five released a statement on July 11, making clear their refusal to recognize the "Council of Ministers" and their insistence to be held fully accountable for the implementation of the U.N. settlement plan.

The fighting along Namibia's northern border also increases, with losses to both SWAPO and South Africa ever growing and with South African raids into neighboring states becoming more frequent. The Frontline States have given the Five their cooperation and support, but their willingness to participate in this settlement effort cannot be taken for granted. Likewise, SWAPO's willingness to implement the settlement plan cannot be taken for granted....If the settlement cannot soon be implemented, the Frontline States and SWAPO may have second thoughts.

As I stated in my previous testimony, most African members of the United Nations are convinced that South Africa has never had any intention of proceeding with an internationally acceptable settlement in Namibia. The Frontline States believe that, since they have brought SWAPO to accept the settlement, it is now up to the Five to obtain South Africa's agreement. If South Africa does not agree, there will be increasingly strong calls at the United Nations for us to support our own negotiations by ex-

erting real pressure, including economic sanctions if necessary, on South Africa to comply.

At present, the key to an internationally acceptable settlement in Namibia lies with the South African Government, and the Five must continue their efforts to convince South Africa that such a settlement is their best alternative....I hope that the South African Government will display the political wisdom and the political will, which is now all that is required for the attainment of peace and independence in Namibia.

The patience of the international community is wearing thin. African states feel that they are held hostage by an economically powerful South Africa which can dictate terms to much of their continent as well as to the West.

At the U.N. there is considerable talk about "partial interruption of economic relations and of...air travel," actions permitted by the U.N. Charter when "a threat to the peace" has been determined by the Security Council. Such sanctions may block oil supplies from and cut civil air links with South Africa.

Lutheran World Ministries has resolved that it favors mandatory partial or complete sanctions in the event of South Africa's noncompliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions adopted to bring independence and peace to Namibia.

This kind of decision on the part of the Security Council requires affirmative action by the U.S. government, and deserves expressions of support to congressional representatives by U.S. citizens.

At a Conference in Solidarity with the Struggle of the People in Namibia held recently, the participants were reminded that the week following 27 October has been designated since 1976 as an international Week of Solidarity with the People of Namibia. On 27 October 1966 the U.N. revoked the mandate given by the League of Nations to South Africa to bring the territory of South West Africa or Namibia to independence. Everyone is urged to join in prayers and in political and economic advocacy for the Namibians especially during that week.