

Dateline: Namibia

ANGOLA AND SOUTH AFRICA SIGN PEACE ACCORD: DATE SET FOR NAMIBIA INDEPENDENCE PLAN

Editorial

"The work of peace, the work of justice, is honorable work. It is work favored by God our Creator. Pray with us, work with us. May God grant us peace."

When Namibian Bishop Kleopas Dumeni addressed these words to a gathering of American Lutherans in 1987, he offered a plea for deliverance from a people enduring a seemingly endless agony of war, oppression and foreign occupation. Over the long years of suffering, many Lutherans in the United States have been moved to witness in deed and in prayer for their brothers and sisters in Namibia.

Now, with the signing of a new peace agreement between South Africa, Angola, and Cuba, it appears that our prayers have been answered. Independence and peace in Namibia may finally become reality, and Bishop Dumeni's words now invite American Christians to share both the bright promise and the difficult challenges that lie ahead.

For even in this time of joy we should remember that God's work for peace and justice in Namibia remains unfinished, and that Namibia's people are not yet free. Our hope should be tempered by the knowledge that past promises and agreements by South Africa have been broken. And if the peace plan is set into motion we must be prepared to mobilize our resources for the next steps in the long journey to Namibian freedom—truly free and fair elections, and help in healing the wounds of war. Far from marking the end of Lutheran aid and advocacy, in 1989 we begin a new chapter in that Namibian-American solidarity.

The next months will be crucial in determining the life and future of Black Namibia. Never have our friendship, our prayers, and our tangible support been more needed. With God's help, the long journey to independence may soon be over. Let us walk with our Namibian sisters and brothers in solidarity until the goal is reached.



South African, American, Angolan and Cuban delegations at the signing of the Tripartite Agreement in New York on December 22.

On December 22, 1988, the foreign ministers of Angola, Cuba, and South Africa ended years of war and months of tense negotiations with an agreement that paves the way for Namibian independence. The so-called Tripartite Agreement, signed under the glare of television floodlights and popping flashbulbs at United Nations headquarters in New York, provides for the withdrawal of 50,000 Cuban troops from Angola under UN supervision in return for the independence of South African-occupied Namibia.

The accord establishes an April 1 deadline for the start of the long-delayed Namibia independence plan, Security Council Resolution 435. The Western-drafted resolution, which calls for South African withdrawal from the territory and UN-supervised elections, was accepted by Pretoria in 1978 but never implemented.

The first contingent of Cuban troops in Angola will also be withdrawn by April 1 under the terms of the American-brokered settlement. The Cubans have 27 months to withdraw their forces from Angola.

Secretary of State George Shultz, speak-

ing at the signing ceremony, called the agreement "a momentous turning point in the history of southern Africa. Today," he said, "we are privileged to participate in the culmination of a decade of effort to implement the United Nations plan to assist Namibia in taking its rightful place in the family of nations."

But Namibian church leaders are more cautious. As Lutheran Bishop Hendrik Frederik commented in November, "I will believe our independence is coming when I observe United Nations troops in Windhoek instead of South African forces."

The church leaders are equally skeptical about the United States. They have come out strongly against an American proposal to reduce the number of UN peacekeeping troops in Namibia during the transition period, saying the UN troops are needed to ensure free elections. The U.S. proposal, offered as a cost-cutting measure, would slash the size of the Namibia peacekeeping detachment in half. The move is strongly opposed by the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO, and by the Angolan and Cuban governments.

For the people of Namibia it has been a long journey toward freedom. For over 100 years their country has been ruled by white foreigners—first German and then South African—who stripped the people of their land and liberties, and waged bloody wars of conquest and occupation against the territory's Black and overwhelmingly Christian majority.

Since 1966, when diplomatic failure finally prompted the Namibian independence movement SWAPO to take up arms against the occupation army, perhaps 20,000 Namibians have died as a result of South Africa's war. Many thousands more, including thousands of women and children, church leaders, teachers, and health professionals, have been beaten, tortured, or detained without trial by South African army and police forces. A staggering 75,000 Namibians—1 out of every 20—are in exile to escape the repression and the apartheid system of legalized racism that South Africa imported to its Namibian colony.

For all of these reasons, the December 22 signing of the Tripartite Agreement between South Africa, Angola, and Cuba was greeted with joy in Namibia. Because in exchange for the withdrawal of the Cubans from Angola, the agreement commits South Africa to implement the 1978 blueprint for Namibian independence, United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. After the long years of war and suffering, peace and freedom in Namibia are finally in sight.

The Bitter Past

But Namibians' hopes for the future are tempered with the caution borne of bitter disappointment. Previous "agreements" on Namibian independence, including Resolution 435 itself, have been broken with impunity by the South African government, while America and the other Western democracies did nothing.

Namibian church and political leaders are also worried that if South Africa finally decides to put Resolution 435 into motion, it will try to manipulate the UN plan to favor its Namibian surrogates—and that the United States will wink at South African electoral fraud. They have asked their overseas partners to help ensure that the Namibian people are permitted to exercise their votes in genuinely free and fair elections. For this reason it is important that American Lutherans understand Resolution 435—its strengths as well as its limitations.

The UN Plan

United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 is the term used to describe several different UN documents that, taken together, spell out the only internationally accepted formula for Namibian independence. It was adopted by the United Nations in 1978 after South Africa rejected an earlier, stronger proposal, Resolution 385.

The heart of Resolution 435 is a plan drafted by five Western countries—the United States, Canada, Britain, France and West Germany—after consultations with the South African government. This plan calls for the withdrawal of all South African soldiers from Namibia, and, within a period of seven months, for a UN-supervised election of a "Constituent Assembly" which is to draft an independence constitution. Other elements in the plan include a ceasefire between South African and SWAPO soldiers in Namibia; the repeal of racially discriminatory and repressive South African laws in the territory; freedom of speech and assembly; the return home of Namibians living in exile; and the release of all political prisoners and detainees [see box].

Resolution 435 also establishes a United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), composed of 7,500 peacekeeping troops and about 1,500 civilian police and administrators, to monitor

implementation of the agreement by both sides and to supervise—but not conduct—the elections.

South Africa Keeps Control

That is an important distinction, for unlike Resolution 385, which established an interim United Nations government in Namibia, Resolution 435 permits South Africa's colonial administration to continue governing Namibia during the transition period. Under the terms of the UN plan, South Africa's Namibian police force, which includes the dreaded paramilitary unit Koevoet, will continue to operate. Furthermore, South African civil servants will remain in charge of government health and education facilities, as well as employment and social welfare services.

Even more importantly, although the ranking United Nations official in Namibia, the Special Representative, must "satisfy himself" that the constituent elections will be conducted fairly, it is South African officials who will actually run the elections. The United Nations will oversee the process, but South Africa's authorities will register voters, prepare the voter rolls, print and distribute the ballot

KEY

Both United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 and the Tripartite Agreement between South Africa, Angola and Cuba establish timetables for implementation.

March 31 Withdrawal of first 3,000 Cuban soldiers from Angola completed under United Nations supervision. Gradual withdrawal of all Cuban troops from Angola continues.

April 1 Implementation of Resolution 435 begins: United Nations Transition Assistance Group personnel assume duties. Formal ceasefire begins, South African and SWAPO military forces restricted to base under UN supervision, monitoring of South African police and civil authorities by UN begins.

Release of all Namibian political prisoners and detainees begins.

Withdrawal of South African army from Namibia begins.

May 13 Withdrawal of all but 12,000 South African troops completed.

Repeal of all racist and repressive South African laws completed.

Demobilization of Namibian soldiers in South Africa's occupation army completed.

Rules governing November elections published.

Plans for return of refugees completed.

June 3 South African troop levels reduced to 8,000 men.

Return of 75,000 Namibian refugees begins.

NAMIBIA: THE UN PLAN MOVING AHEAD

papers, and count the votes.

Even with tight monitoring by the United Nations, control of the election process and the police and civil administration gives South Africa enormous influence over the lives of ordinary Namibians, and many opportunities to affect the outcome of the vote. Many observers fear that South Africa will try to use that influence to promote its allies and to intimidate supporters of SWAPO.

Elections, But Not Independence

If the Namibian independence plan is implemented on schedule, the Namibian people will conduct their first genuinely democratic elections on November 1. But they will not be electing a government. Under the terms of Resolution 435, the winners of that ballot will become members of a Constituent Assembly whose only responsibility is to draft the constitution for an independent Namibia. Completion of the constitution, a process estimated to last five months, will bring Resolution 435 to an end.

But the plan contains no formula for the formation of a government in Namibia, and is silent on such important questions as who

controls security and administration in the interim between the end of Resolution 435 and inauguration of Namibia's first independent government. Under these circumstances, parties defeated at the polls could be tempted to seize power through civil disturbances and violence.

Walvis Bay

Walvis Bay is Namibia's only deep-water ocean port and is vital to the country's economic prosperity. But in 1977, the South African government declared that Walvis Bay was part of its territory, and would remain so after Namibian independence.

Although the United Nations has affirmed that Walvis Bay is an integral part of Namibia, the future status of the port remains uncertain. Meanwhile, South Africa has issued its citizenship papers to area residents, and built new military facilities along the harbor. South Africa has offered to negotiate use of Walvis Bay with a "friendly" Namibian government, but it knows that without the port, Namibia will remain economically and militarily vulnerable.

The Angolan War

Of all the obstacles still ahead on the road to Namibian freedom, none looms larger than the war between Angola's socialist government and the rebel UNITA movement headed by Jonas Savimbi. For over a decade, South Africa has used occupied Namibia to arm and supply Savimbi's movement and launch its own bloody attacks against the Angolan army and their Cuban allies. Now, under the terms of the December 22 Tripartite Agreement, South African aid to UNITA must stop. But the treaty does nothing to end the fighting between Angolans or halt U.S. military aid to Savimbi. Escalation of the Angolan conflict runs a grave risk of intervention by the allies of the losing side — in violation of the fragile Tripartite Agreement on which Namibian freedom depends.

The Angolan war poses other dangers to the UN plan as well. According to South African and Namibian press reports, tens of thousands of UNITA soldiers and their families live in northern Namibia. Many of these Angolans have been given Namibian identity papers and may try to register and vote for pro-South Africa parties in the November elections. With South African officials in charge of voter registration, it may be difficult for UNTAG officials to identify and prevent Angolans from voting. Namibian church leaders are concerned that UNITA soldiers could be used by South Africa to intimidate SWAPO members during the electoral campaign, and destabilize the country after independence.

The Journey Ahead

Throughout the coming year, American Christians will be asked to make many contributions to the liberation of their brothers and sisters in Namibia — contributions of time, talent, and resources. As citizens of the United States, we are in a unique position to help.

Our opportunity arises from our own democratic heritage as a nation, and the influence that our country can wield to assure that Resolution 435 is implemented fairly. We must work closely with our elected officials to assure strong American support for free and honest elections in Namibia. We can share our knowledge and concerns with others. In cooperation with our Namibian partners and United Nations officials, we should challenge any effort to weaken the UN plan.

For the Namibian people, it has been a long and tragic journey toward freedom. Their successful arrival over these next months may depend on the steps we take on the journey ahead.

KEY DATES

Resolution 435 and the agreement on withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. The key dates in this complex process are as follows:

	Release of all Namibian political prisoners and detainees completed.
June 24	South African army in Namibia reduced to 1,500 men.
June 25	Election campaign begins.
August 31	Cuban troops in southern Angola move to 15th Parallel, 150 miles north of the Namibian border, while withdrawal from Angola under UN supervision continues.
October 31	Remaining Cuban troops in Angola move to 13th Parallel, 300 miles north of the Namibian border.
November 1	Elections for Constituent Assembly in Namibia. Withdrawal of 25,000 Cuban troops from Angola completed.
November 15	Constituent Assembly convenes within seven days of certification of election results to draft independence constitution. No date set for formation of government or independence.
April 1, 1990	Withdrawal of 33,000 Cuban troops from Angola under UN supervision completed.
October 1, 1990	Withdrawal of all but 12,000 Cuban troops from Angola completed.
July 1, 1991	Withdrawal of all Cuban troops from Angola completed.

FOR LUTHERANS IN NORTH AMERICA: NEW CHALLENGES

For years many Lutherans in North America, as they sent out their annual Christmas cards and letters, included a prayer that peace might come to their sisters and brothers in Namibia. This year, at last, a tangible hope for peace was crafted in the form of diplomatic agreement right in the midst of the Christmas season. And, while the prospect of a real peace in Namibia is cause for joy, it brings new responsibilities for American Lutherans. Now a different kind of work begins!

Friends of Namibia the world over are mobilizing for free elections and independence. Lutherans, especially, because of profound historical and spiritual ties with the Namibian people, will be deeply involved in the process of transition to nationhood.

Already representatives from the United Nations and church groups throughout the world are evaluating and assessing with Namibian leaders what a successful transition to independence will require. What needs will there be? What must the world community do? In search of answers to these questions, an official of the Lutheran World Federation has recently spent several weeks with Namibian church leaders to identify needs and organize procedures for meeting them.

Support for Refugees

Perhaps the most dramatic task facing the transition leadership—and one in which Lutherans will play an important part—is preparation for welcoming home and resettling approximately 75,000 Namibians who have lived in exile. Many of them were born in refugee settlements in Angola, Zambia and Botswana, and will be entering Namibia for the first time. Many others have spent years away from friends and loved ones. When one considers that the territory has a population of only one and a half million, and that the returning refugees therefore constitute one in every twenty Na-

mibians, the daunting dimensions of the task become more clear.

Already Namibian Christian leaders have volunteered church and social service facilities throughout the country to serve as repatriation centers. Together with United Nations representatives and church relief personnel, they are visiting possible resettlement sites near the towns designated as entry points for returning Namibians.

Already they are assessing the necessary financial and human resources needed for new construction, or the repair and adaptation of existing buildings; for provision of adequate toilet and other sanitary facilities; and for the countless other things that will be needed before the first refugees begin to arrive in June.

Already lists are being drawn up of full-time and part-time workers who can help with refugee resettlement when the time comes. Solutions are being developed for such critical problems as shelter for thousands who will have no place to go upon arrival; care for people with special needs, including small children without families, the elderly, the disabled, and otherwise handicapped people; and jobs for tens of thousands in an economy already plagued with unemployment.

Help with Healing

There will be a great need for pastoral and psychological counseling as families, torn apart for years, and having been forced to forge new lives in different situations, are suddenly reunited. Young people, born and nurtured in refugee camps outside Namibia, may face severe emotional trauma as they adjust to life in a land they have never known. All of this, and much more, will require skilled and sensitive personnel, and significant amounts of money.

The provision of health care during the transition period is another matter of grave concern. Hospitals run by Namibian churches are justly famous for their skill and

commitment as health care providers for the Black population. It is estimated that they supply forty percent of all health care for Black Namibians, and an even greater percentage to people in the north. Church hospitals have always been subsidized by the Lutheran World Federation, but they also receive significant funding from the colonial government. Now—in a time of hugely increased need for health care—there is a danger that government funding may be cut off. It is a matter of profound concern.

What You Can Do

What can Lutherans back home do to help? Like their brothers and sisters in Namibia they need to use this time—right now!—to prepare. And it is clear that soon large amounts of money will be required. Already, the Namibian churches have turned to the Lutheran World Federation for significant financial assistance in the transition to independence, and Lutherans throughout the world will be asked to supply those funds. Now is the time to think about appeals—and, perhaps, develop fundraising strategies in your own congregation, synod or region.

Now, also, is the time to be vigilant, for South Africa has broken past promises to free Namibia and end its illegal and unjust occupation. Alert your elected officials about the need for Western support for free and fair elections in Namibia. Continue to write letters of support to Namibian church leaders, reminding them that we continue to pray for and support them. Keep abreast of events in southern Africa. It is up to each of us to search out the news and to disseminate it among those we know. To this day, most Americans do not even know that there is a Namibia. You can help to change this by your concern. And always, always, remember Namibia in your prayers.

Through work and prayer we can help assure that Namibians will celebrate their next Christmas in freedom.

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