

Document No.

NS-20

International Seminar
on
The Role of Transnational
Corporations in Namibia

Sheraton Washington Hotel
Washington, DC
November 29 - December 2, 1982

.....
"Educate to Liberate"

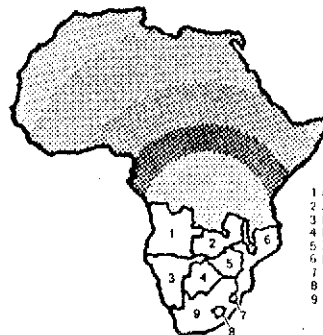
by: Southern Africa Task Force of Houston
USA

.....
Organized by the
American Committee on Africa
198 Broadway
New York, NY 10038
(212) 962-1210
with the support of the
United Nations Council for Namibia

Southern Africa Task Force

P.O. Box 88128

Houston, Texas 77288



1 ANGOLA
2 ZAMBIA
3 NAMIBIA
4 BOTSWANA
5 ZIMBABWE
6 MOZAMBIQUE
7 SWAZILAND
8 LESOTHO
9 SOUTH AFRICA

"Educate to Liberate"

November 23, 1982

SOUTHERN AFRICA TASK FORCE OF HOUSTON, TEXAS

The Southern Africa Task Force of Houston is less than 1 year old in spite of the fact that it has been brewing in the heads of some individuals for the last two years or more.

In February, 1982, Congressman Mickey Leland made it possible for the Congressional Black Caucus to meet in Houston in the first Southwest Regional Forum. During this forum, there was a foreign affairs workshop which included a session on South Africa. This session attracted the largest number of participants of the three sessions offered in the workshop. Also, the session was addressed by more of the congressional members than any other single session for that weekend. This was a definite indication that there was interest and concern about the dire situation in Southern Africa. Also, people continually asked, "What can we do?"

The Task Force took this as a signal to begin its formation. Slowly, the Southern Africa Task Force, as it is now called, has been forming. Even though it is not a stable entity, it has managed to implement several activities which have enlightened the Houston population.

In May, 1982, a tour of persons representing 4 national and international organizations actively involved in eliminating apartheid, offered their services in participating in a South Africa-Namibia Teach-In. This lasted for three days and ended with the first open invitation to the Houston community to become involved in the Task Force.

In June, 1982, the Task Force sponsored a Soweto Day Commemoration. The featured speaker was Judge William Booth of the American Committee on Africa. More than 200 people attended this affair. The interest level was high.

Presently, and since August, we have been involved in a campaign to impede South African Airways from landing here in Houston, December, 9.

Specifically, we can say that we are involved in the very simple task of educating the Houston masses about the oppressive conditions of the people of Namibia and South Africa. But when one looks at the mentality of this part of the world, it is immediately evident that this task is not a simple one.

We are continually fighting the Reagan administration mentality which focuses on the economic feasibility of cooperating with South Africa and American companies in Namibia and South Africa rather than on the total absence of human rights of the African population in those two countries. (The present governor, who fortunately was not re-elected, Bill Clemmons, owns Sedco, a company which is presently constructing oil rigs off the shores of South Africa.)

Educating the population about Namibia has been difficult. It is continually overshadowed by South Africa. We have been working toward making it possible for

Houstonians to view Namibia within its own right as a separate entity apart from the situation in South Africa. We are doing this by always including Namibia in discussions of South Africa making it clear that the two issues, eliminating apartheid and gaining independence, are related, but they must be looked at separately as well.

We have been using films on Namibia at the very same time as we have been using films on South Africa. This has met with some success. We will be approaching a relatively large segment of the peace movement here in Houston with the subject of Namibia and its uranium and how that affects the nuclear disarmament issue.

One Lutheran minister has shown an interest in Namibia. Because of the presence of the Lutheran church in Namibia, we have continually encouraged this church to keep its congregation informed and involved in the liberation of Namibia. Films and written materials have been made available to this church and any other interested congregations. We have also been trying to locate Namibians who are in the Southwest and who are willing to speak out on the subject of Namibia. The church is willing to provide transportation, housing and lodging costs for this person.

Other future activities being considered are establishing contacts with elementary and secondary schools, university groups, churches, community, social, and fraternal groups. This will be to educate them and hopefully generate funds for Namibian refugee activities.

We also plan to utilize various national days regarding Namibia to highlight the Namibian situation.

Divestment is a definite project for the very near future. We have already begun discussions, very superficially, with city elected officials. A bill was proposed a year ago by a state representative, Al Edwards, to divest \$200 million of the University of Texas System funds. It never got out of committee. This we hope to be instrumental in reviving along with other anti-apartheid groups in Texas.

We have been working to establish a network with other groups in Texas and the Southwest around the divestment issue, South African Airways, and other Namibian and Southern Africa issues where networking is necessary.

We have been extremely fortunate in having a congressman, Mickey Leland, in our district who is interested in the situation of the Namibians and South Africans. His office has been of great assistance to us. We hope to maintain that relationship in the future and establish similar ones with other elected officials.

Many of our activities are on the drawing board, but just as we have managed the activities we have so far with just a few, we will implement these activities as we increase our active workforce.

Members of the Task Force feel it is continually necessary for the Task Force members to acquire more up-to-date information. Therefore, we have information workshops for ourselves. This assists us in increasing the workforce which can go before the public and make presentations which are both general and specific.

Contact persons Beneva Williams Nyamu or Steve Honore' at 527-7352 or 528-1225 (National Black United Front office of Houston, Texas.)