

Namibia Newsletter

June, 1986



FARISANI IN DENVER — WARNS THAT NOTHING HAS CHANGED IN SOUTH AFRICA

"President Botha has said enough, and perhaps even done enough, to hoodwink the Western world. But Blacks in South Africa know that nothing has changed," according to Dean T. Simon Farisani, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa.

"We know that the lifting of the State of Emergency, which was applauded by your leaders, really meant nothing. We knew this, not because we are prophets, but because we are products of the South Africa experience."

Speaking at Our Savior's Lutheran in Denver on May 21st, Farisani emphasized that the so-called "reforms" of apartheid were cosmetic changes only. "It is the strategy of the National Party to do just enough to fool the Western world, to avoid the diplomatic or economic pressure that might be brought to bear on the apartheid system."

Farisani, who has been detained and tortured several times in the past nine years, was on a national speaking tour sponsored by Amnesty International. His message was clear: "Don't be hoodwinked by South Africa."

Farisani said it was difficult for his people to understand U.S. response to the current situation in southern Africa. "As blacks in South Africa, we are taught that every white person is a genius. So we don't understand why you don't understand the political maneuvers that are going on in our country."

He explained that at the same time the "State of Emergency" was lifted, the government announced a "Public Safety Amendment" which would allow regional police to have the same powers as under the emergency decrees. "In any case, we were confused by the whole notion of a 'State of Emergency'. South African police have always had the power to take you in the middle of the night and do with you what they wish," said Farisani, who nearly died during torture in 1982.

Farisani expressed concern about official U.S. policy toward South Africa. "More than 2000 people have died in the last 18 months and still we are told by your leaders that it is not the 'right' time to bring pressure on our government. What surprises us even more: when people like the Burchfields are harassed, we expect to hear lots of noise from the White House. We listened carefully. We heard nothing Suffering, when it happens at the hands of South Africa, does not seem important."



A film about Dean Farisani's experiences, *Torture of a South African Pastor* was made in 1983, and is available through most Lutheran resource centers or National Namibia Concerns.

NAMIBIAN LUTHERANS CRITICAL OF U.S. ROLE

Calling the United States and South Africa participants in the "theft of our freedom," Namibian Lutheran Bishop Kleopas Dumeni has demanded that Namibians be granted their "God-given right to self-determination, our human rights in their fullest."

Speaking in Brussels, at an international conference on Namibia, Dumeni said that the U.S. has shown itself to be South Africa's ally instead of championing Namibian independence. United States insistence that Cuban troops be withdrawn from Angola before the U.N. plan (Resolution 435) can be implemented has "placed a stumbling block in the way of our independence," said the bishop. In spite of personal risk, Dumeni spoke strongly in favor of economic sanctions against South Africa.

Another Namibian churchleader, Abisai Shejavalu accused the Reagan administration of "not being on the side of the Namibian people" by introducing obstacles to the U.N. plan for free elections. Shejavalu expressed "disappointment, even anger, that the Western countries of the so-called free world have joined South Africa to block our freedom, causing more torture, suffering and death."

PREUS SAYS U.S. SEEN AS ALLY OF SOUTH AFRICA

In a direct and courageous statement, Bishop David W. Preus has charged that the United States government shares responsibility for the illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa.

Addressing the U.S. Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on South Africa on June 3rd, Bishop Preus called for "major changes in U.S. policy." He was critical of the precondition, imposed by our government for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 435, namely the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. "In our view, the U.S. government has provided the South Africans with the perfect excuse not to implement 435," said Preus.

Preus noted that South Africa has consistently refused to implement the resolution, and that, "by its attacks on Angola, can assure itself that the condition placed on its implementation, the removal of Cuban troops, can never be fulfilled."

"Let me be as explicit as possible on this point," continued the ALC presiding bishop. "The churches and the vast majority of people in Namibia see no threat whatsoever in the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. They see no reason why we should allow South Africa to justify its brutal occupation of their land because of events which don't concern them."

In addition, he said that U.S. support for UNITA, an anti-government organization in Angola, makes this country "an ally of South Africa. . . . 'It is now U.S. weapons, as well, which are precluding . . . implementation of Resolution 435.'"

Preus emphasized, "As far as the Namibian churches are concerned, there are now two countries responsible for the occupation of Namibia: South Africa and the United States."

The bishop reiterated the ALC's call for comprehensive economic sanctions and for the immediate implementation of UNSC 435. He also urged the end of aid to UNITA.

Preus called upon the State Department to recognize the genuine issue in southern Africa: Among the people "in southern Africa there is no debate . . . U.S. fear of 'Communism' in the region is seen as an absurd excuse not to address the clear and present dangers of apartheid."

We are indebted to the Namibian Communications Centre and John Evenson for many of the articles used in this newsletter. Information about Namibia is not readily available in the public press, so we are grateful for John's excellent sources.

It was late Saturday night when I telephoned Cape Town. Both Susan and Red Burchfield were working on sermons. The text was Luke 16, the story of the rich man and Lazarus. They said, "In our wealthy, all-white suburb, we experience Lazarus every day. Each day people come, literally with open sores and rags, and they ask 'Do you have any bread, Massa?' " The daily reality of life in Namibia and South Africa is that of suffering and dying, of brutality and violence, of struggle and despair.

Our friends said, "There seems to be no good way out of this. The situation has gone long past the point of negotiation or 'reform' of the system. Things will change only when apartheid has been ended, only when the present government is gone. That will happen only with more bloodshed. It is very hard for us who believe in non-violence."

Last week some pastors had met, struggling with interpretation of scripture in the light of the southern African situation. Burchfield said, "You can talk about 'redemptive suffering,' or call it the 'theology of the cross,' or simply 'faith,' but it doesn't appear to work. It doesn't seem to create change, to bring justice, or even some kind of stability. But nonetheless, we are called to be faithful. We cannot despair. We want to remain here with the people."

And so, Susan and Red are there in Cape Town. They bring clothing to the imprisoned, they try to comfort the parents whose children have been sjambokked, they minister to their congregations, and they help us understand the struggle.

In less dramatic ways, you and I are called to be faithful, to stay with the struggle of the Namibian people for their independence, to continue in the battle against apartheid. We do not see many victories, just as the Burchfields see "no good way out." But those of us who are Christian know we are called to follow the example of Christ, who met defeat, and who through defeat was victorious. We are called not to experience immediate triumphs, but to stand with the suffering ones and to remain steadfast—faithful in proclaiming and living the Gospel.

Solvang Kjeseth

BURCHFIELDS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

Grace and Peace to You All in Jesus Name!

We feel loved! Loved, supported and cared for. Our first three months in South Africa have been marked not only by overwhelming shock, but also by overwhelming support. We say thank you to all of you for your prayers, letters, calls, action and inquiry on our behalf during this dramatic time.

On April 22 we arrived for our second court appearance to find the court house surrounded by four caspirs (armoured troop carriers) in addition to many South African Police who were "securing" the street and the entrance to this so-called public place of justice. As we waited with the others, the mother of a co-defendant told of the police harassment of her son. The police had repeatedly come to her house, attempting to take Johnny away for further "questioning" regarding the airport incident. He is one of the five pressing assault charges against the police for treatment during the March 7th airport arrest. Even that morning at 5 a.m. they had pounded on her door and taken both of them to the police station. A knot began to form in my stomach. Her Johnny is the same age as our Erin. . . .

On Pentecost, May 18, we will be officially installed into ministry here and our rather strange and stressful orientation period will end. During these weeks we have been slowly learning Afrikaans, listening, learning and adjusting, each in our own way. . . .

This indeed is a painful country of contrast. From our window we can see the sun set over Table Mountain. It is no less than memorably spectacular. We can also see it from the lush yard of our old two-story home in the English speaking white ghetto. (The church moved us to the Kraatz house when they returned to Germany.) Only two miles away, squatters camp, hidden in the bush along the freeway. They must take down their shacks and tents each morning and bury them to hide them from the police. At night they rebuild to find some shelter from the wind and rain. Part of the culture shock comes not only from experiencing first hand apartheid's brutal oppression and injustice, but also from witnessing this injustice done in Jesus' name by a so-called Christian, so-called democratic government. . . .

We four send you our love as we are ever conscious of continuing ministry together with you across the miles around the table of the Lord.
Shalom,

The Burchfields
5 Arundel Road
Rondebosch 7700 Cape Town
Republic of South Africa



Dorothy and Herman Diers received itinerary suggestions from a SWAPO friend before their trip to Namibia in February. They have returned to Wartburg College, and will be excellent resource persons for us. We received a beautifully written excerpt from their journal, covering their time in South Africa and Namibia. If you would like a copy, please send a large, self-addressed, stamped envelope to National Namibia Concerns.

"DELIBERATELY CREATED POVERTY" IN NAMIBIA SAYS BISHOP

Bishop James Kauluma, President of the Council of Churches in Namibia, condemned the "deliberately created poverty" in his country during the launch in London, on the 19 of May, of a new Oxfam report, "Namibia: A Violation of Trust". According to the report, "South Africa's continued illegal occupation . . . means that the majority of Namibia's people live in conditions of great poverty and deprivation," despite the fact that the country's abundant mineral resources make it "one of the wealthiest in Africa".

The Oxfam report states that poverty in Namibia is created by unchecked exploitation and export of the country's wealth by South African, British and other foreign interests, and by the colonial structure of the economy, which ensures that wealth remaining inside the country is almost entirely in white hands. The report details some alarming statistics—the average ratio of white to black incomes is about 18:1; each white child has 5 times more spent on his or her education than a black child; illiteracy among black adults in Namibia is estimated at 60 percent.

The author of the report, Susanna Smith, also describes how development projects, set up to alleviate poverty and deprivation in Namibia, are obstructed in their work by the South African occupying forces. Teachers are often detained, mobile health nurses are constantly harassed and soldiers frequently burst into schools, questioning the children roughly.

Produced by Oxfam, a British based development organization, the report is based on 20 years practical field experience in the territory.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS BRING EXPERIENCE, COMMITMENT

Four people were elected to the Board of Directors of National Namibia Concerns during its annual meeting in April. We're pleased with the caliber and commitment of our new members:

Elizabeth Landis is a lawyer who has been active in southern African issues for years. She is former Senior Political Affairs Officer in the Office of the U.N. Commissioner for Namibia. An article by Landis on security legislation in Namibia was published recently in the Yale Journal of International Law.

Paster Harold Schlachtenhaufen has been an advocate for Namibia since being a classmate of Abisai Shejavali at Wartburg Seminary and at Aquinas institute. The author of numerous resolutions on Namibia and South Africa presented (and occasionally passed!) in both church and political conventions, Schlachtenhaufen is pastor of Mt. Zion Lutheran in Detroit.

Dr. Akbarali Thobhani, professor at Metro State College in Denver, comes originally from Uganda. He serves as Interim Director of Metro's Institute for Intercultural Studies, and teaches classes in African History and South African politics. He is a recipient of the United Nations Peace Medal for his southern Africa advocacy efforts.

Jubie Whitford's energy and commitment to the cause of Namibia was heightened following a visit to South Africa and Namibia in 1984. A member of the Southern Wisconsin District Task Force on Namibia, Whitford initiated a "paper chain project" which gathered thousands of signatures in support of UNSC Resolution 435.



NEW SOUTH AFRICAN PROPAGANDA APPEARS

The South African government spends millions of dollars on propaganda efforts. Recently a new publication, *Namibia Digest*, appeared in London (sadly enough with a picture of Chester Crocker on the front page). It is a sophisticated piece which promotes the puppet "transition government," dismisses U.S. Resolution 435, and describes church leaders and the Council of Churches as pawns of SWAPO.

Thus, the *Namibia Digest* joins the *Namibia News Gazette* and the publications that come from the "Namibia Information Service", the "Namibia News Bureau" and the "Office of the Government of Namibia" as examples of disinformation that we must counter.

SOUTH AFRICAN "REFORMS" ARE MEANINGLESS

"Don't be fooled", said Rev. Simon Farisani, as he spoke about the so-called "reforms" of the Botha government.

"Don't be fooled", said Dr. Abisai Shejavali, speaking about the puppet government that has been installed in Namibia.

"Don't be fooled", said Red and Susan Burchfield, telling about the escalating violence that is not being reported on our television screens.

They said that what is happening can only be considered "cosmetic changes—apartheid is only getting a 'facelift' in order to fool the world." For example, when the "State of Emergency" was lifted, legislation was introduced that would allow regional officials to impose the same types of restrictions. And when the pass laws were repealed, plans for "controlled urbanization" were initiated, described by many as "more subtle, more sophisticated, and more deadly".

Since the new "State of Emergency" was imposed on June 12, unprecedented restrictions have been clamped on the media and the press. For the time being, at any rate, South Africa appears to have given up on fooling the world. For whatever reasons, perhaps desperation, South Africa has admitted that it will not let the peoples of the world know the facts about its cruelty and oppression. Insiders predict that the present "State of Emergency" will continue until at least late December. Perhaps after several months of repression and killing the Botha administration—or its successor—will speak again about "reform." Don't be fooled.

ACTION ALERT

Once again, the apartheid government in South Africa has escalated its war of regional destabilization through its unprovoked attacks on Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Angola. As death, destruction, and repression continue, the U.S. Congress must be pressured to invoke comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. Repeatedly we are being told by church leaders in Namibia and South Africa that economic pressure is the last hope for lessening the bloodshed.

As we go to press the situation on anti-apartheid legislation in the U.S. Congress is changing swiftly. On June 18, the so-called Dellums amendment passed the House of Representatives by a voice vote. This bill calls for immediate, comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. On June 19, Senator Cranston and five other Senators introduced S. 2570 into the Senate. It has essentially the same content as the Dellums amendment (formerly HR 997). Urge your Senators to support S. 2570 without diluting its strength.

It will be argued that total withdrawal of U.S. business from Africa, refusal of South African imports, curtailment of South African airlines landing privileges in the U.S., etc., constitute measures which are too harsh. This is not true.

The "Eminent Persons Group" of the Commonwealth nations, a high-level group of leaders which worked for six months to outline a framework for peaceful negotiation between the majority black population and the South African government has completed its report with the disturbing conclusion that the South African government is **not** willing to negotiate at the present time. Malcolm Fraser, former Prime Minister of Australia and co-chairperson of the "Eminent Persons Group," has publicly argued that if the United States and its allies fail to impose strict economic sanctions on South Africa, the result will be a civil war in South Africa which will spell death for millions and will destroy Western commercial interests in South Africa.

Political "wisdom" in Washington says that Americans are tired of the apartheid issue—that they are no longer concerned about this. We need to generate thousands of letters immediately to insure passage of these anti-apartheid measures. Please send a letter or postcard **today!**

CAN YOU HELP?

It cost \$4600 to print and distribute the last Namibia Newsletter to 12,500 people. That is a lot of money! The Board of National Namibia Concerns discussed the possibility of going to a subscription system. However, since one of our goals is education, and since there is so little information available on Namibia, we do not want to limit our circulation at this time.

CAN YOU HELP?

If everyone who is able will send a five or ten dollar contribution, designated for the Newsletter, we will be able to continue this wide distribution of information about Namibia. PLEASE DO IT TODAY!

COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS CALLS FOR RELEASE OF NELSON MANDELA

Under a mandate from the meeting of the commonwealth nations in Nassau, October, 1985, a select group of several prominent commonwealth personages, including Malcolm Fraser, former Prime Minister of Australia, General Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria and Dame Nita Barrow, President of the World Council of Churches, investigated the present situation in South Africa over a period of six months from mid-December, 1985 to early June, 1986. They submitted their report on June 7. They had interviewed virtually all the major parties involved with the current conflict in southern Africa—from members of the Black Sash organization to black labor leaders, from the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe and the President of Zambia, to ordinary people in the black townships of South Africa. They had several police sessions with Prime Minister Botha and his cabinet; they met later with various representatives of the African National Congress in exile.

General Obasanjo had a private preliminary meeting with Nelson Mandela. Later, the full group met with him on two occasions. They were deeply impressed with the integrity, personal presence and statesmanlike position of this charismatic leader who has been imprisoned for 24 years, recently in Pollsmoor Prison. They argue that release of the legendary 68 year old figure is absolutely essential if the destruction of South Africa is to be avoided. Their recommendation reads:

Central to the Nassau Accord was a call for the immediate and unconditional release of Nelson Mandela, and all other political prisoners. That call remains unheeded. It is one to which we attach the highest importance.

Again, please call upon the U.S. government to demand the release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners!



WHAT'S

A major "Thank You" goes to the Division for World Mission and Inter-Church Cooperation for their grant of \$10,000 to help with the cost of publishing NNC materials.



BOOK REVIEW

Sipo Mzimela's book, *Apartheid: South African Naziism*, is clearly written and concise. Mzimela has done a good job of documenting both Nazi and South African racism. He carefully compares the churches and government of South Africa to those of Nazi Germany.

This is not a tenuous connection, as some might assume, that Mzimela makes between these two governments. Rather he points out that many leaders of the National Party in South Africa were educated in Nazi Germany.

I believe this book is valuable for several reasons. First, it is the most concise account of the church's role in Nazi Germany that I have read. And Mzimela is not easy on the church leaders of that time and place. He emphasizes that very few of them came out against the official policy of anti-Semitism in the Third Reich. This is something we need to hear.

Second, this book gives an excellent description of the South African churches' role in *apartheid*. This description encompasses the role played by various churches, from the Dutch Reformed Church's theological support for racial segregation and its surprisingly great influence upon the government, to how the other churches support *apartheid* even though their policies are in fact against it.

However, it is not all gloom and doom. After telling of the horrors of *apartheid* and of the churches' role in helping to perpetuate it, Mzimela gives the reader a list of things that can be done to help bring an end to this horrendous religious and political heresy.

This is an excellent book for the person who wishes to learn more about *apartheid* and its religious and political implications. But it is also a valuable lesson in how fallible and sinful the Christian church can be, especially if it only looks out for its "own kind".

John Cawkins

Carol Wall, a member of the Southern Africa Task Force for the South Pacific District, told her congregation of the need for support for church-run kindergartens in Namibia. Members of First Lutheran in Torrence, California, responded with a \$2000 check!

At the last convention of the Ohio District ALC, NNC Board member, Barb Fullerton, and members of the WMIC committee used a variety of tactics to keep the issue of apartheid before the delegates: grafetti in the bathrooms, thirty-second "commercials", and official resolutions. They wore sandwich boards telling about the Burchfield arrest, and collected 346 signatures of support which were sent to Cape Town officials and the South African Embassy.

A new baby, daughter number five, was born to Selma and Abisai Shejavali early in May. We are grateful for the safe arrival of this beautiful new Namibian.



Matt Dismer, a Boy Scout from Meridian, Idaho, chose a special project, collecting and sending textbooks to Namibia as part of his quest to become an Eagle Scout. Matt and his friends in Troop 137 in Horseshoe Bend, Idaho, are pictured above as they prepared 520 pounds of books for shipment to Namibia. Matt is on the right in the second row.

HAPPENING . . .



Julius Mtuleni, a Namibian pastor studying at Wartburg Seminary, will serve on the staff of Our Savior's Lutheran in Denver, Colorado this summer. His wife, Josephine, will gain experience as a volunteer nurses aide while improving her English language skills. Pictured above is the Mtuleni family: Julius, Josephine, Kanyofi, Mohote and Latenda.

Divestment resolutions and statements of solidarity with the people of Southern Africa were again passed in a number of district conventions of the American Lutheran Church. We have received copies of actions taken in Ohio, Southern Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, and Central districts. If you know of more, please let us know. We'd especially like to hear what happened at the LCA synod meetings.

National Namibia Concerns has received a grant of \$1000 from the Research and Social Action department of the Lutheran World Federation to assist in the preparation of curriculum materials designed to present the issues of Namibia and apartheid to Sunday School age children. Earlier we received a \$2500 grant from the Committee to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches. We are grateful for the confidence shown in us by these international organizations!

Dr. Sibusiso Bengu, secretary for Research and Social Action of the Lutheran World Federation, received an honorary doctorate from Wartburg Seminary in May. Bengu, a South African professor, is widely respected for his steadfast opposition to apartheid. The author of two books, "Searching After Gods Not Our Own" and "Mirror or Model: The Church In An Unjust World", Bengu has lectured often in the United States and Europe on the topic of the root causes of social and economic injustice.

Bethany Lutheran Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma, co-sponsored a weekend conference, "Apartheid in South Africa" with Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry and several other congregations on February 22, 1986. Bethany invited Rev. Jonathan Hevita, a Namibian pastor studying at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa. He spoke Saturday evening on the theme: "Crisis in Namibia, History and Situation." Dr. Winsome Munro, exiled South African who is a professor at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, spoke on the "Struggle of Women in South Africa." Pastor Hevita also gave the sermon on Sunday at Bethany and led an adult forum.

Other speakers at the weekend conference included the Rev. Rubin Phillip, a priest from South Africa serving at St. James Episcopal Church in New York, and Dr. Clifford Green, professor of theology at Hartford Seminary. Shuping Coapege, African National Congress observer to the United Nations was also in attendance. A dozen films were shown at the Tulsa Public Library as well as in several high schools. The conference was very well attended and gave Bethany and the Tulsa community the opportunity to learn more about the oppressive situation in South Africa and Namibia. Pastor Hevita will remain in our hearts and prayers as he returns to Namibia this summer to continue his ministry there.

—Jean Zietlow

Nearly half of the student body at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, signed a petition calling for the divestment of college funds from corporations doing business in South Africa. Luther has a fine record for hosting Namibian and South African students, but the Southern Africa Concerns group has been frustrated at the lack of response from the Board of Regents.



The **NAMIBIA NEWSLETTER** is a publication of National Namibia Concerns. For information about our organization, please contact us at:

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AI-GAMS CONFERENCE DEMONSTRATES NAMIBIAN UNITY

One of the most significant gatherings in the history of the struggle for independence in Namibia took place in Windhoek on April 29th and 30th, when more than sixty representatives of churches, political parties and community organizations came together to discuss South Africa's continued occupation of their country.

The meeting, known as the **Ai-Gams Conference** (Ai-Gams is a pre-colonial name for Windhoek), was called by the Council of Churches in Namibia, and convened in defiance of a hastily invoked "banning order" from the South African imposed "Transitional Government."

Speaking to the group, Dr. Abisai Shejavali said, "We all share a common concern regarding the lack of progress toward peace, justice and true independence in our country. We are here to consider the possibility of concretizing our stand whereby we speak with one voice. That is where our strength lies."

In a remarkable show of unanimity, delegates representing sixteen different groups issued a strong statement condemning South Africa's continued occupation of their country, and affirming the U.N. plan for independence (UNSC Resolution 435). Participants rejected the so-called "transitional" government, objected to the continuing South African military presence, and opposed military conscription and "all oppressive and inhumane laws" imposed by the apartheid regime.

The Ai-Gams Declaration also condemned the "unholy alliance" between the United States and South Africa, as they try to bypass Resolution 435 and link Namibian independence to extraneous issues such as the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.

Participants in the Ai-Gams Conference committed themselves to:

- Mobilize and conscientize the Namibian people to actively resist the status quo;
- Embark on a campaign to bring the immediate implementation of UNSCR 435;
- Work toward the abolition of the "transitional government"; and
- Carry on the campaign against compulsory military service.

In an unprecedented demonstration of unity, the document was signed by:

Churches: *Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA; Roman Catholic Church; Anglican Diocese of Namibia; African Methodist Episcopal Church; Methodist Church; Council of Churches in Namibia; and later, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELOC).*

Political Parties: *Damara Council; Mbanderu Council; Namibia Christian Democratic Party; Namibia Independence Party; Nudo Progressive Party; South West Africa National Union (SWANU), South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).*

Other Groups: *Namibia National Students Organization; Namibia Women's Voice; Young Women's Christian Association.*



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