



American Committee On Africa

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At dawn on June 9, 1983 the South African authorities hanged three members of the African National Congress, Marcus Motaung, Jerry Mosololi and Simon Mogoerane. Just a month before in northern Namibia an ordinary family was sitting eating supper. They heard shooting and the children were sent inside. Before the parents could join them, the father had a bullet through his back. He died within the hour, victim of random shooting by South African soldiers.

The senseless killings, the beatings, the raping by South African soldiers who illegally occupy Namibia will never be disciplined when those in highest authority sanction executions, when State President and Prime Minister have blood on their hands. During his visit to the United States last week, the General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Namibia Dr. Abisai Shejavali told of the terrible burden he carries, trying to console the widows and children who suffer the senseless death of their husbands and fathers. He wore a red scarf around his neck, explaining that it was a symbol pointing to the destruction of life that is taking place, the blood that is being shed in Namibia.



Allies in Oppression

The South African regime has powerful allies in their illegal occupation of Namibia. These include the foreign corporations that continue to exploit Namibia's resources in violation of U.N. Council for Namibia Decree Number One, of September 1974. The Africa Fund, associated with the American Committee on Africa, has published Namibia's Stolen Wealth: North American Investment and South African Occupation. It gives detailed information about the North American corporations active in Namibia.

A recent example of the attitude of U.S. corporations in Namibia was provided by the most important U.S. firm there, Newmont Mining Corporation, in April 1983. Declining an invitation to participate in a conference held at Columbia University Law School on "Namibia Under International Law," a Newmont Vice-President explained,

After careful consideration, I must respectfully decline. As I am sure you know, our representation in Namibia is through our interests in the Tsumeb Corporation. We have had a long and healthy relationship with the Republic of South Africa and with Namibia, and feel that a commentary regarding the legal aspects of our interests in Namibia will not be proper or beneficial.

Plan of Action

Because of the continued suffering of the Namibian people, because of the strong support given to the illegally occupying South African forces, the international community has recognized

its responsibility in assisting SWAPO and the people of Namibia in their just struggle for freedom and independence. The Plan of Action for the Full Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples calls on member states to adopt measures to achieve the cessation of all new foreign investments in and financial loans to South Africa and to wage a vigorous and sustained campaign against activities and practices of foreign economic, financial and other interests operating in colonial Territories which are detrimental to the interests of the population of those territories.

In the United States non-governmental organizations are called upon to take actions that will help achieve the ends intended by the plan of action since such action is not forthcoming from our national government.

International Seminar on Namibia

In December, 1982 with the support and cooperation of the United Nations Council for Namibia and SWAPO, the American Committee on Africa held an International Seminar on the Role of Transnational Corporations in Namibia. Eighty experts and activists from 54 organizations in 12 countries in Europe, Africa, North America and Japan met for four days in Washington DC. Sharing economic and political developments in relation to Namibia and learning in detail the actions of support groups around the world, generated tremendous energy and renewed commitment to the struggle on the part of the participants. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Sean MacBride, who was the first United Nations Commissioner for Namibia, served as

president of the seminar.

SWAPO's Theo-Ben Gurirab called attention to the work before the seminar and to SWAPO's understanding of the role of transnationals saying, "In the next few days, you who are experts on the subject before us will read out to us your findings from your research as to the nature and dimensions--horizontally and vertically--of the role of transnational corporations in Namibia. To us, it is a very basic question. Their role is negative. It is part and parcel of the system of oppression and exploitation. Transnational corporations do not, have never, and for the foreseeable future, will not serve any useful positive role for the Namibian people."

Thirty-eight papers were presented which demonstrated the ways in which transnationals are stealing the wealth of Namibia, particularly in areas of fishing, uranium and diamond mining. Activists gave vivid accounts of ways in which they are challenging political and economic links between their countries and South Africa and building support for the Namibian freedom struggle. In intensive working group meetings, participants exchanged action techniques and developed plans for closer communication and coordination.

A unique feature of this seminar was the recognition of the need to share its findings widely and make use of its participants. Immediately following the Washington sessions, teams were sent to six North American cities where local activists had taken on major responsibility for coordinating programs. Cities visited were Atlanta, Boston, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Montreal, Ottawa, and

San Francisco. The teams included a SWAPO representative, activists from Holland, Norway, Britain and France, and someone from ACOA. They carried with them the final declaration of the seminar and a Message to the People of the United States. The message expressed "distress that a combination of economic interests and political misconceptions by the U.S. had caused it to take actions which prolonged the struggle of the Namibian people for their independence and delayed the holding of free and fair elections by the U.N. in Namibia."

Divestment Campaign

One of the most important campaigns against apartheid South Africa now being waged in the United States is the divestment campaign. Already more than 30 colleges and universities have divested more than \$100 million from banks and corporations operating in South Africa and actions calling for divestment have taken place on hundreds of campuses. Major Protestant denominations have voted to withdraw from banks and do no business with corporations which operate in South Africa. Dozens of national, regional and local church bodies have taken special action against Citibank, the largest U.S. lender to Pretoria.

States and cities across the country are now taking up the question of the investment of public funds in banks and corporations operating in South Africa. 1982 was a year of major victories in this campaign with strong legislation passing in Massachusetts, Michigan, Connecticut and the cities of Philadelphia, Wilmington, Delaware, Atlantic City, New Jersey and Grand Rapids, Michigan. This legislation requires the divestment of up to \$300 million.

Both the Massachusetts and the Philadelphia bill call for full divestment of pension funds and both are being used as model legislation in campaigns around the country. Already in 1983, legislative action against apartheid is being worked on in 21 states and 8 cities and counties.

To stimulate this campaign, ACOA and Mass Divest, the state coalition responsible for the passage of the Massachusetts bill, organized a conference on Public Investment and South Africa in April. The weekend event began at the United Nations where 16 legislators made statements before the Special Committee Against Apartheid. Speaking at the United Nations is of great importance to these legislators, making them feel part of an international movement against apartheid. The Public Investment Conference continued in Boston where over 100 state and municipal elected officials, union leaders, and grass roots activists worked for two days. Participants came away with new information on countering anti-divestment strategies by South Africa and the corporations, new sources for developing the financial arguments, and a detailed understanding of how to get a bill successfully through a legislature. As important, the participants left with renewed energy to carry the campaign to states and cities throughout the entire country.

The difficulty facing opponents of apartheid in the U.S. is made abundantly clear by the fact that the Reagan administration still insists that the central problem blocking a settlement in Namibia is the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. To change this national policy we are working at the state and local level, helping to educate the people of this country to demand a policy that supports the independence struggle in southern Africa. Already the

fruits of this strategy are beginning to develop. There are now several pieces of legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that would limit South Africa's access to international capital, and would strengthen the arms embargo. One of these is part of the replenishment authorization bill for the International Monetary Fund. It would authorize the opposition to any IMF loan to any country which practices apartheid. As this bill and others are being debated, the prior work done at the state level begins to emerge. An aid to one congressman said that since his state had already passed divestment legislation, support for an end to IMF loans to South Africa should be easily forthcoming.

The campaign on behalf of the struggle of the people of Namibia and South Africa will continue to increase pressure on South Africa and to contribute to the Plan of Action to isolate South Africa economically as well as politically and militarily.