

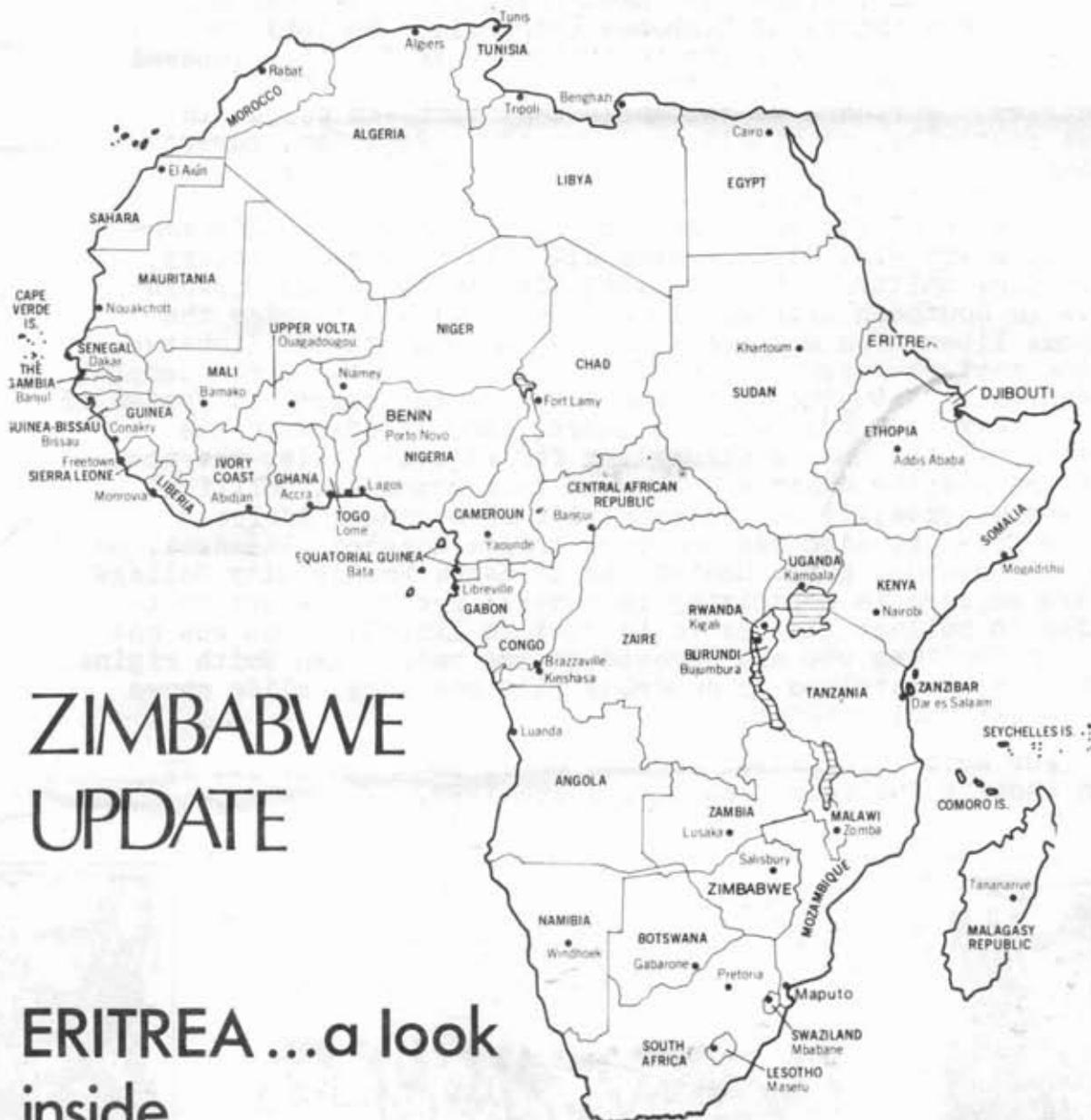
# Southern Africa Support Committee

Vol. 1

# NEWS LETTER

Jan-Feb

March 79



## ZIMBABWE UPDATE

ERITREA ...a look  
inside.

# History of the Southern Africa Support Committee

The Southern Africa Support Committee (SASC) is a multi-racial group engaged in activities relating directly to and supportive of the independence struggles of the peoples of Southern Africa.

In existence since 1975 SASC recognizes that the white minority governments of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), Namibia (Southwest Africa) and Azania (South Africa) have forcibly imposed the inhuman system of apartheid on the black people of these countries. Further, we recognize that to black people in these countries, apartheid means rigid segregation, poverty, arbitrary imprisonment and one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world.

Because of the barbaric conditions under which Africans must live and die, SASC opposes all United States military, economic, cultural and political ties to the racist governments in Southern Africa. Beyond this, we acknowledge the various liberation movements in Azania, Namibia and Zimbabwe as the real representatives of the vast majority of the people. We explicitly view the white upholders of the apartheid system as illegitimate and immoral. In short, SASC stands with the African people who are struggling for majority rule, the abolition of apartheid and a system of full economic, political and social equality in the countries of Southern Africa.

At present, SASC has branches in Los Angeles, Pasadena, on the UCLA campus, Santa Monica and at Santa Monica City College. We are engaged in organizing in several areas. We are continuing to collect clothes to be sent to Zimbabwe refugees and freedom fighters who are opposed to the racist Ian Smith regime. SASC is also involved in numerous film showings, slide shows and educational programs.

For more information on SASC or if you wish to set up a film showing for your group, call 684-1892.



# ZIMBABWE UPDATE

1979 could be the year when the chickens finally come home to roost in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). 1978 was the year of the "Internal" Settlement- An attempt to form a moderate government in which Zimbabwe's white population (240,000 out of a total population of 7½ million) retained a strong voice. The three moderate blacks who took part in developing the "Internal" Settlement, Muzorewa, Sitole and Chirau, spent much of the year unsuccessfully trying to win the support of the black population. They failed so miserably that the "free" elections which were to be held in December 1978 and which to elect the first Black government in Zimbabwe, were postponed and in their place a new plan was substituted.

In the new plan, elections are to be held in April of this year, but now whites are guaranteed 28 of the 100 seats in the new parliament, and cabinet positions in proportion to their representation. This revised plan is a significant change from the original plan which called for the Black party which won the election to form a government of its choice. In other words, the ruling white capitalists in Zimbabwe, recognizing the truly mass character of the national liberation forces of ZANU and ZAPU, no longer trust that their interest can be represented by moderate Blacks.

Events in the last period have been very sobering to those who are trying to prevent the liberation of the people of Zimbabwe. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia estimates that 90-95% of the people support the Patriotic Front (the joint military command of ZANU and ZAPU). Patriotic Front control of the countryside is so great that they now feel strong enough to step up activity in urban areas. In December a spectacular rocket attack on the country's main oil depot was a devastating blow to the white minority government. In addition, it has been estimated that 1,000 liberation fighters have infiltrated Salisbury, the Capitol.

In response, the government has begun wholesale conscription of Blacks into the army, and stepped up recruitment of mercenaries. At the same time, though, record number of white Rhodesians have decided to bail out of their sinking ship. The exodus has now reached 2,000 people a month.

Unless the U.S. or one of its allies intervenes directly, it appears likely that this will be a year of rapid progress in the struggle for national liberation in Zimbabwe.

## ZIMBABWE MUST BE FREE



Date December 28, 1978.

Dept Permanent observer Mission to the  
United Nations.

Ref War Communique No. 19.

THE FOLLOWING WAR COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED AND BROADCAST TODAY BY THE PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION DEPARTMENT OF ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION, A COMPONENT OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT:-

ZANLA GUERRILLAS OF THE ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION (PF) KILLED MORE THAN 475 TROOPS OF THE RHODESIAN REGIME IN THE SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER PERIOD OF THE ON-GOING OFFENSIVE AIMED AT RESTRICTING THE SALISBURY REGIME'S ADMINISTRATION TO ISOLATED AREAS.

ACCORDING TO ZANU WAR COMMUNIQUE NUMBER 19 ISSUED IN MAPUTO THIS MORNING THE ZANLA OPERATIONS DURING THE PERIOD IN QUESTION CONSISTED OF 490 MAJOR AMBUSHES RPT CONSISTED OF 490 MAJOR AMBUSHES, 31 MAJOR SURPRISE ATTACKS AND 35 SABOTAGE OPERATIONS

WHICH INCLUDED TWO BOMBARDMENTS OF UMTALI-  
THE COUNTRY'S FOURTH LARGEST CITY. 13  
PARAMILITARY FARMSTEADS WERE ALSO BOMBAR-  
DED.

15 WAR PLANES, INCLUDING THREE MIRAGE JETS  
AND TWO CANBERRA BOMBERS WERE GUNNED DOWN  
AND 38 MILITARY VEHICLES WERE DESTROYED.

THE ZANLA GUERRILLAS ALSO BLEW UP THREE  
MAJOR BRIDGES INCLUDING THE TOKWE BRIDGE  
TARRED ROAD AND CARRIED OUT 12 RAILWAY  
SABOTAGE OPERATIONS INCLUDING 5 MAJOR  
ATTACKS ON THE BEIT BRIDGE-RUTENGA RAIL-  
WAY LINE; REBEL RHODESIA'S LIFE LINE TO  
APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA.



Date December, 21st, 1978  
Dept EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
Ref

#### OIL TANKS BURNT IN RHODESIA

A press statement by tirivafi kangai, the  
Cheif Representative of ZANU-Patriotic  
Front - to the United Nations and the  
Americans.

The political and military situation in  
Zimbabwe continues to develop rapidly in  
favor of our liberation movement. Now  
that the British Government has failed to  
implement its Anglo-American proposals and  
is even deviating from the spirit and word  
of those proposals, the people of Zimbabwe  
have thrown their weight and support for  
our revolutionary armed struggle as the  
only medicine that will put some sense into  
the heads of Ian Smith and his stooges.

Militarily, the war now covers the whole  
country. It has developed quantitatively  
and qualitatively. It is the intensifica-  
tion of the war that our forces recently  
blew up petrol (gas) tanks in Salisbury,  
Rhodesia's Capital City. Attached please  
find a statement issued by President Mugabe  
regarding this gallant attack.

#### ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION ( PATRIOTIC FRONT)

MAPUTO

12th December, 1978

STATEMENT RELEASED BY COMRADE ROBERT MUGABE  
PRESIDENT OF ZANU AND CO- LEADER OF THE  
PATRIOTIC FRONT

The blowing up of the fuel centre in Salis-  
bury by our ZANLA Forces comes as part of  
our operational strategy for Salisbury as  
well as for the country as a whole and ser-  
ves to underline the qualitative nature  
manifesting itself in the development of  
our war of liberation as it progresses  
towards a new and final stage. The rebel  
regime of Ian Smith and his willing  
collaborators is daily getting more and  
encircled as we drive it to its inevitable  
doom.

It is these circumstances of impending de-  
feat which are driving the regime into  
desperate acts of naked aggression de-  
liberately aimed at destroying civilian and  
military institutions and installations  
which are purely Mocambican and have had no  
association whatsoever with our liberation  
forces. Nothing could be more radiculous  
and dishonest than the regime's contrived  
claim that any of the places it has been  
attacking in Mocambique are ZANLA targets  
The regime is certainly fully aware that  
the totality of our forces have been fully  
deployed in Zimbabwe where their operations  
extend over more than 80 per cent of the  
country. Why should we ever retain our  
forces or create arms dumps in Mocambique  
when we have vast liberated zones under our  
uncontested control and administration  
which can accommodate them? The regime can-  
not dispute the reality that, having lost  
to us in most rural areas, we now control  
and administer most of the country and its

population and have thus become the more effective administrative power in Zimbabwe. Our greatest joy and source of inspiration is the phenomenon of mass support behind our Party and the complete rejection of the Smith regime and its unrepenting stooges.

PAMBERI NE CHIMURENGA!  
A LUTA CONTINUA!

# STRUGGLE UNTIL VICTORY

## ZAIRE-The IMF takes control

In their never-ending effort to maintain control over the heart of Africa, Zaire, the western powers have issued a direct challenge to President Mobuto Sese Seko, through the International Monetary Fund, (IMF). The IMF periodically loans money to countries, and is, in the case of Zaire, loaning over \$600 million to the Central African Nation.

However, this is not just a case of a nation receiving a loan. The IMF in the person of Dr. Erwin Blumenthal, has emphatically stated, "We will not bail you out unless we are allowed to administer the aid ourselves we do not trust you".

In conjunction with that view, Blumenthal has assumed control over the entire foreign exchange procedures, and consequently controls all areas of export earnings, commercial banking, food imports, raw materials, petroleum, and other vital segments of Zairean life.

In addition, Blumenthal, acting as officer of the world Bank, has issued letters banning credit and exchange facilities for over 50 Zairean companies, many of them owned by Mobuto's closest friends and staunchest political associates. Indeed, two of the companies, La Compagnie de l' Ubangi et de la Mongala (CUM) and La Socie'te' Général d' Alimentation (SGA), are owned by Litho Moboti, Mobuto's uncle and head of the family clan! Is there no pill too large for Mobuto to swallow??

The agents of the IMF do not intend to stop here, and Mobuto's capacity is extended even further after ceasing control of the foreign exchange procedures, they have launched a search for a Finance Minister whose job includes the imposition and collection of taxes. Furthermore, the Belgian government, former colonizers of Zaire, have sent over 25 Belgian Custom officers to oversee the department.

Meanwhile, Zaire is virtually grinding to a halt. This works directly for the benefit of the IMF, because the closer Zaire comes to total paralysis, the easier the manipulation of Mobuto. But, truthfully, where Western powers are concerned, Mobuto has always gone along with the program. He does not rank as one of the world's richest men because he stands up for the self-determination of his country.

However, Mobuto's constant hand-holding with the Western powers, i.e., France, Belgium, England, the United States, Canada, Germany, Iran, Italy, The Netherlands and Japan, have landed Zaire in the worst economic predicaments of its existence. Check the following: 1) There is virtually no Transportation; Steamers have broken down, Lorries are not making trips through the countryside, half the National Locomotives and, three-quarters of the road trucks are incapacitated through lack of spaces, and

maybe one Air Zaire Flight in four goes on the scheduled day, if at all. When machines are available, there seldom any fuel. Zaire can buy only 60% of its needed fuel and 90% of that is used in Kinshasha.

Even there, lines at filling stations are 70 cars long by 8:00 a.m.

Several state hospitals have been totally abandoned and medicines are lacking throughout the country. In Kinshasha, only the Chinese clinic and the Salvation Army hospital are operating adequately. The results are predictable. In the interior, the death rate of children has increased, so that mission doctors estimate that 50% die before they reach five years.

Although the educational system in Zaire is still functioning, its is constantly interrupted because workers are unpaid and consequently seek other means of earning their income. Payment for state workers arrives months late. In 1978, the government imposed a wage freeze of 20%, but according to World Bank figures, inflation has been at 80% since 1974 and now well beyond 100%.

Throughout Zaire the cost of a 50 Kilo SACK of either the two main staples, Manioc or rice, barely enough to feed a family of four for a month, is often more than a worker's entire monthly earnings. By November, 1978, the price of staple foods had multiplied by 12 in seven years. Since then, it has doubled.

The peasants have given up growing cash crops such as cotton, which earn Zaire valuable foreign exchange, but pay much less than manioc or rice. In addition, when cash crops are grown, there is essentially no transportation to the country's Urban centers, where 30% of Zaire's 27 million reside. As in Ethiopia, there is the consequence of mass starvation, which as we know, is a definite Catalyst for revolution.

To Be Continued

## MILITARY RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

If you're white, South African and male, you're drafted into the South African Defense Force military. It's as simple as that. There is no "alternative" service. There is no "conscientious objection". There is no "lottery system". Every white male

South African becomes eligible for the draft at age 17. The alternative for those who refuse to fight for the South African apartheid system is 3 years' detention in prison.

As the liberation struggle in Southern Africa continues and intensifies, the South African regime's need for troops also increases. In 1977 the length of compulsory national service for white males doubled to two years. Following this two-year tour of duty each conscriptee is required to serve an additional 8 years in the Citizen's Force. Members of the Citizen's Force are called up for 3 months of active duty each year.

The brutal effects of South Africa's apartheid system have been well-documented in this and other issues of the S.A.S.C. newsletter. It is without a doubt one of the most vicious and systematic destructions of people of color ever devised. The minority white population of course receives great benefits from this system. They have one of the highest standards of living in the world. But the costs in human life are even higher.



We should not be surprised to learn that there is a small, but growing, military resistance movement developing among white South Africans. Southern Californians had a chance to hear about this movement first-hand last November (1978) when Michael Morgan of the South African War Resisters and Don Morton of the South African Military Refugee Aid Fund (S.A.M.R.A.F.) visited Los Angeles as part of a national speaking tour of the U.S.

Michael Morgan is a 23-year-old white South African, who deserted from the army in 1978, choosing instead to support the liberation struggle. He went to London, where he met other South Africans who had deserted or left to avoid conscription. One of these was a man named Bill Anderson, who was the first South African military deserter to speak out publicly against the atrocities committed by the South African Defence Force against African people. They helped organize a group of South African War Resisters in London with the goal of supporting the black liberation struggle in South Africa and Namibia, aiding resistance work inside the South African military, and providing legal and material aid to "draft dodgers" and deserters outside the country.

Don Morton is also a white South African, who was forced into exile in 1971 after the Security Police attempted to arrest him for his anti-apartheid efforts and public disclosure of police torture. He has continued to work against apartheid and is staff coordinator for S.A.M.R.A.F., a U.S.-based organization working to support and publicize South African military resistance and organizing.

Statistics from inside South Africa obtained by these groups show that there are indeed white South Africans unwilling to fight and kill for Apartheid. The tables below show numbers who refused to report for the draft as well as the numbers caught by the authorities and sentenced to prison from 1974 to 1977.

YEAR	REFUSED TO REPORT	SENTENCED/JAIL
1974	?	159
1975	3324	605
	(The year South Africa invaded Angola)	
1976	3584	916
	(The year of the Soweto Uprising)	
1977	3839	532

As deserter Michael Morgan said, the numbers who are willing to risk jail rather than serve in the military shows that there is something happening even among white South Africans. For, "It is not a long-standing tradition for white South Africans to go to jail."

Many of the draft dodgers are living underground within their own country. Others have managed to slip across the border into Botswana or Angola. Others have sought refuge in Europe or the United States. A few are known to have committed suicide.

Once they are conscripted into the Army, South African soldiers are used to keep down rebellions at home and abroad. There are 50,000 South African soldiers illegally occupying Namibia. The South African Defense Force (SADF), is fighting an all-out war in Namibia against SWAPO, the (Southwest African People's Organization) liberation forces. In reality, they are fighting against the Namibian people - defining any black man woman or child within "enemy territory" as a "terrorist" Essentially every South African soldier spends at least one tour of duty fighting guerilla forces in the border areas of Namibia. They are encouraged and rewarded according to the number of so-called "terrorists" they manage to kill.

SADF soldiers are also used for hit and run missions into Angola and Zambia. Michael Morgan himself was witness to a SADF attack on a "guerilla camp" 10 kilometers inside neighboring Zambia. In fact, most of those killed on this raid were women and children.

Within South Africa itself, troops have been used to break strikes, disperse demonstrations, and shoot protesting school children. During the Sharpeville uprising, troops were used in the murdering of many peaceful demonstrators.

The SADF possesses virtually every technological weapon in existence. Without the presence of the South African Air Force, SWAPO would have won the liberation struggle for the Namibian people long ago. But, as we have seen in Vietnam, technological warfare alone is not enough. In a guerilla war against the native population, the SADF is dependent on a large and loyal force of ground troops. The South African army is the backbone of Apartheid. And thus the growing military resistance is a grave threat to the South African government.

With the extreme racist and militarized ideology of white South Africa, many are anxious and willing to join the army and "go up to the border and shoot blacks". But others have been willing to buck the system and leave family, friends

and home country rather than fight for a morally bankrupt system. More important, each one who has left has said he's known others who would have left if they had known how.

#### WAR RESISTANCE ORGANIZING

The goals and activities of the South African War Resisters and SAMRAF include the following:

1. Support of SWAPO and South African liberation movements, especially by providing information on South African military activities.
2. Publication of OMKEER, a newsletter distributed inside South Africa and aimed at soldiers and draft-eligible civilians. "Omkeer" means "about face" in Afrikaans. It includes information and advice for military dissenters on where to go and how to leave the country.
3. Provide legal and material aid for military dissenters once they are outside South Africa.
4. Work to establish legal precedence for political asylum for South Africa military refugees in the U.S.A., Britain, Canada, and other English speaking countries, ect. At present those who leave to avoid military service may usually get some kind of temporary status in these countries, but it has to be renewed every 6 months to 2 years. Often they are unable to get work permits and forced to lead a marginal and uncertain existence.
5. Provide information and education about the plight of South African deserters and conscientious objectors.

#### WHAT CAN WE DO IN THE U.S.?

No one should be able to understand the plight of South Africans who are conscripted into the military and ordered to commit crimes against humanity better than Americans who witnessed the tragedy of the U.S. war against Vietnam. Military resistance organizing is extremely difficult in South Africa. Mere possession of a copy of Omkeer could result in up to 10 years imprisonment.

It is estimated that the anti-war movement and G.I. resistance cut at least several years off the war in Vietnam and saved many lives. Likewise, each potential soldier who refuses to fight in the South African government's was against

African people will weaken the government's stronghold on the tip of the continent.

We should demand that congress support asylum for South African military refugees in the U.S. We should be prepared to provide political and material assistance for South African military dissenters.

Above all, we must work to educate ourselves and others in support of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

People who are interested in supporting South African military resistance organizing may contact:  
SAMRF 138 Berkley Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217

**ALL  
PEOPLE  
SUPPORT  
UNITED  
RESISTANCE!**

# NEWS BRIEFS



New Racist Mercenary film, worse than the "Wild Geese". "Games For Vultures" (Southern Africa Jan. 1979)

As the war in Zimbabwe gains more momentum racist movies like "The Wild Geese" are being more and more developed, to counter the just struggle of the Zimbabwean people and its leadership the Patriotic Front (ZANU and ZAPU) "Games For Vultures" is the most recent example.

"Games For Vultures" is an even worse mixture of Sadism, Racism, lies and white chauvinism.

The film, is British-financed, with U.S. involvement, is currently being shot in South Africa. It stars "Wild Geese" star Richard Roundtree, who says publically, he portrays a "fanatical guerilla leader," in defense of himself he says, "I am not a political person."

The film perpetrates the lie that white Rhodesians have fabricated, that black guerilla's have been killing massacrina missionaries and church people.

Like the "Wild Geese," the film is written by a Rhodesian white.

The British anti-apartheid movement calls the film the "nastiest piece of political propaganda to come out of the British film industry in many years."

We must also, (in line with the need to support the patriotic front), be ready to pick and expose the Racist film when it arrives.

Tanzania Reports fighting along Border with Uganda. (New York Times-Jan. 23, 1979)

Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania - Tanzania reported the fact that heavy fighting took place today along its border with Uganda, where a two-week frontier war was fought last year.

A communique' was issued in Dar Es Salaam, saying that Ugandan forces had attempted to invade Tanzania, Sat., Jan. 20 at three points along the 100 mile border west of Lake Victoria. "Fighting continues", the communique' said.

Calif. Statewide - Southern Africa Coalition Still On The Move (Southern Africa Support Committee Newsletter- 1/29/79)

Just a note on the SAC to let you know that the coalition is still interested in uniting with all groups doing work around Southern Africa. The interregional body (Southern Calif. and the Bay area) met Jan. 20, 1979 in San Francisco and discussed many things, including: Inviting Tirivafi Kangai (ZANU rep. to UN) and Callistus Ndlovu (ZAPU Rep. to UN) for April (wk. April 4-11), a national day to rally support for the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. We also discussed plans for the next interregional meeting, Sun., Feb. 18, in San Francisco, in which people from Seattle AFSC and Portland, Oregon AFSC, and Comrades from Southern Africa Freedom Organization in Eugene, Oregon will be present.

HUNDREDS IN RHODESIA MISS CALL-UP (The Star Johannesburg, South Africa Jan. 13, 1979)

Bulawayo- Over 434 of 1500 white Rhodesian youth due to be inducted into the Rhodesian army this week failed to appear at their reporting centres. Most of the 434 whites who failed to report for national service had left the country as a part of the growing exodus.

Less than 300 blacks eligible out of over 1544 who were eligible, showed for the call-up; and many of them were opposed to the racist regime.

One of the first blacks being called up for national service said, he would prefer to fight as a guerilla than join the racist Rhodesian armed forces. Another 17 year old, Karanga, from the Gutu area near Fort Victoria, said, "the internal governmental agreement in Rhodesia would not end white superiority or privileges or meet the aspirations of blacks, so why should I have to fight for this?"

SOUTH AFRICA IN DYING NEED OF OIL (The Johannesburg Star, Jan. 13, 1979)

"One bus equals 55 cars in fuel", says the Johannesburg transport department.

South Africa gets 90% of its oil from Iran, but since the revolutionary crises in Iran, oil production has ceased. In addition, Rhodesia is almost totally de-

pendent on oil coming from South Africa for its racist economy.

In South Africa's bid for more oil, the South African government through its transport department said if all Johannesburg's car drivers travelled to work by bus, 94% of the fuel used for travelling back and forth would be saved.

Mr. Les Pettey, general manager of the department, said one bus could replace 55 cars. 55 cars would use about 160 litres (1 litre equals 1 quart) to commute to work and back. The bus would use only 9 litres for the same trip. Conditions are becoming more unpleasant for South African whites.

#### CAMPAIGN BEGINS AGAINST MERCENARIES

(SASC Newsletter Jan. 29, 1979)

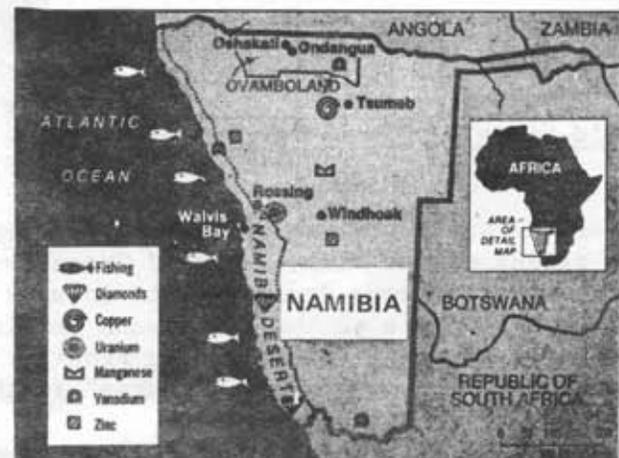
The Southern Africa Coalition (So. Calif. region) on Jan. 27 held its first educational on mercenaries recruited from the US, who are going to Zimbabweans to kill Africans. The program was attended by about 75 people, and was held at the Holman United Methodist Church.

Comrade Israel from ZANU (PF) spoke on the present developments in Zimbabwe, and "Chimuranga" (people's war). There were also many questions raised by the people in attendance. There was also a slide show on US mercenaries were threatened with expulsion, no medical care, no Petrol, etc., if they did not register with the D.T.A..

**PROTEST THE KRUGGERAND!!!**



# Namibia Update



In our past editions of the News Letter, we told of the continued negotiations between South Africa's John Vorster and Sam Nujoma of the South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO), on the question of Namibian Independence. Well the talks, which were to discuss the elections, seem to have broken down once again, because South Africa has again shown unwillingness, and is going ahead with its elections which were to be held in Dec. of last year 78. South Africa's plan was and still is, to set up a puppet government to insure its military strategic and economic positions inside Namibia. The U.N. Security Council met on the matter and concluded that it would give South Africa two weeks to drop their plan for the 'elections for December, or sanctions would be imposed against them. Those two months have now passed, and Mr. Pictet Botha, South's Africa's Prime Minister, has been in New York for further talks at the United Nations and preparations for the elections continue. With the approach of the new year, the situation in Namibia grows even more tense. SWAPO and the Namibia National Front are boycotting the elections and only the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) are participating.

SWAPO says that South Africa, elections will not succeed first of all because it has more mass support than S.A. and second, S.A. has in the past betrayed the people of Namibia with mass arrest and killings of political figures of SWAPO. South Africa as far as SWAPO is concerned,

has never been willing to accept that it is illegally occupying Namibia despite even the newest policy for transition which was agreed on by South Africa and SWAPO. This policy was to have United Nations supervised elections. SWAPO has acknowledged this from the very beginning and says it will continue its armed struggle to break free from the Apartheid policy of S. Africa and Western Intervention.

Moreover, Justin Ellis, a white South African, and a member of the Anglican Church of Namibia, was expelled from Namibia. Ellis documented several instances of brutal force and other irregularities in connection with the registration of voters; These atrocities were published in the Christian Centre newspaper on November 29 in Namibia.



## ERITREA- 500 YEARS OF STUGGLE

In its eighteenth year today, the Eritrean struggle is the longest ongoing armed struggle for national liberation in Africa. In the 17th year of the war, with the Eritrean people on the threshold of victory, a new situation has developed. The character of the war has changed. It is no longer a war between the Eritrean people and the expansionist regime of Ethiopia. Instead it has become a war

between Eritrea and the Soviet Union. I will try to explain how this has happened. However, before I discuss the current situation, I would like to give a brief overview of the history of the Eritrean struggle.

For the past 500 years, Eritrea has been the setting of almost continuous war. Our country has been the battleground of various contending armies, on the one hand, and the scene of war between our people and the forces of aggression, on the other. The first Europeans to set foot in Eritrea were the Portugese, but they were immediately followed and expelled by the Ottoman Turks. The Turks first landed at the strategically important port of Massawa. From Massawa they pushed to occupy all of Eritrea. The Turks plundered our country and exploited the people until 1865, when they were replaced by the Egyptians.

Egyptian occupation of Eritrea was shortlived because the partition of Africa by various European imperialist powers had begun and was nearing completion. By 1885, the year the imperialist invasion of Africa was officially sanctioned at the infamous Berlin Conference, Eritrea had become the victim of Italian colonial aggression. The Italians first invaded Eritrea in 1869, but did not crush the resistance until 1889, when Eritrea officially became an Italian colony. From 1889 to 1941, Eritrea remained an Italian colony, but in 1941 Italian colonialism was replaced by British control. A new era was about to begin.

The British developed a plan, the so-called Bevin-Sposa plan (named after the then-foreign ministers of Italy and Great Britain.) This plan attempted to divide Eritrea along religious and regional lines, annexing Western Eritrea to the British colony of the Sudan, and the Eritrean plateau in the Eastern lowlands to the then British neo-colony of Haille Selassie's Ethiopia. The Bevin-Sposa plan was foiled, however, by the resistance of the Eritreans, and the support that this resistance received in the United Nations. With the failure of the Bevin-Sposa plan, U.S. imperialism now took a hand in the Eritrean 'problem.' Using its dominant position at the United Nations, the U.S. introduced a federal resolution that called for an association between Eritrea and the Ethiopian Empire under Haille Selassie. This resolution was opposed by both the Eritrean people and the U.N. commission on

Eritrea (made up of Burma, Norway, Pakistan, South Africa, and Guatamala.) The commission attested to the desire of the Eritrean people for self-determination, and this testimony was supported by most of the Asian and Latin American countries, and ardently advocated by the socialist countries. However, U.S. imperialism would not be stopped. In the words of then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, while from the point of view of justice the rights of the Eritrean people should have been considered, the strategic and economic interests of the U.S. dictated that Eritrea be federated with the U.S. ally, Ethiopia.

Thus, federation was planned and imposed on Eritrea in order to serve the overriding interests of U.S. imperialism. During the federal period the national, democratic, and human rights of the people were trampled upon, until in 1958 the Eritrean flag was torn down, the government was forced into a purely administrative role, and the Eritrean assembly was stripped of most of its authority. In response to this situation, Eritrean workers, students, and other patriots carried out a mass protest demonstration in March, 1958, and Eritrean workers began a general strike that paralyzed the neo-colonial economy in the major urban centers. The Ethiopian army of occupation responded with force, killing over 540 Eritreans. This bitter experience was a turning point in the national liberation struggle. After 1958, Eritrean patriots realized that peaceful political struggle could not hope to achieve the aim of national independence. The movement to liberate Eritrea began as a clandestine movement in 1958, with the goal of preparing the way for armed struggle. Due, however, to certain organizational weaknesses, and also to the backlash of repression from Ethiopia, the liberation movement advanced very slowly. In 1961, armed struggle was launched by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF.) The ELF lacked, however, a concrete program behind which to mobilize the Eritrean people. As a result, the liberation movement suffered a number of setbacks. A bitter internal struggle began within the ELF, and after a time, the more progressive forces within the ELF split off from the ELF and established the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF.)

The EPLF was established in 1970, and was, at the time, greatly at odds with the

ELF. In 1971 a civil war broke out in Eritrea, in which the ELF attempted to destroy the EPLF. This was unsuccessful, however, and in 1974 the civil war came to an end. On October 20, 1977, the two groups came together and formed a United Front. In April of 1978, ELF and EPLF established three joint committees which had the function of coordination of the struggle against the common enemy, and at the same time carrying on a democratic struggle within the organization in order to resolve the remaining obstacles to unity. This, in a nutshell, is the process that led to the development of the EPLF, and resulted in the almost complete liberation of Eritrea, and the implementation of the programs upon which the future Eritrea would be based.

So, what is the present state of the Eritrean revolution? Eritrea is made up of various religious groupings, regions, and nine different nationalities. The colonial system, with its new social and economic structures, resulted in the emergence of an Eritrean working class. This development helped to break down the traditional barriers that separated the various communal groupings in Eritrea. In the process of common struggle against common foreign enemies, a national consciousness has developed and consolidated among the people. The Eritrean struggle has become a popular one.

Present-day Eritrean society is basically colonial and semi-feudal. The overwhelming majority of the people are peasants and nomads who live under abject conditions of poverty, ignorance, and backwardness. One result of the struggle underway is the transformation of these conditions. Side by side with the war of national liberation is the struggle for social transformation. In the liberated areas, villages, and cities, people's assemblies have been established as the basis of popular power. The process of economic and agricultural development are also important objectives. Over 300 schools have been built in the liberated areas, and modern medical services have been made available to the people (often for the first time ever.) Above all, the people are being organized, politicized, and armed to defend the gains of the revolution. So, in Eritrea today, a profound process of social change is underway. Both this process, and the just struggle of the Eritrean people for self-determination, deserves the support of all freedom-loving people.

After years of struggle against U.S. imperialist-backed Ethiopia, as the liberation forces were on the verge of success, the Soviet Union intervened on the side of the Ethiopian military dictatorship against our revolutionary movement. What led to this situation? In March of 1978, the Ethiopian military Junta began mobilising all its available resources with full political and military support from the Soviet Union. With the help of Soviet aid, Ethiopia prepared to launch a full-scale military offensive against Eritrea. In July, 120,000 Ethiopian troops launched its offensive against the liberated areas in Eritrea, and opened up nine different fronts. On all these fronts the Soviet-backed offensives were initially crushed, but, after long and bitter fighting the Ethiopian aggressors made some headway in the south-western corner of Eritrea. But, by the end of August the fighting had practically come to a standstill, and it was clear that the Ethiopian offensive was not going to succeed in crushing the liberation forces.

The Ethiopians were then forced to ask for more Soviet aid, and having done so they launched the second main offensive on Nov. 18th, 1978. Once again, the Eritrean people resisted on all fronts, but could make very little headway against Soviet-backed Ethiopia. So, the EPLF decided to make tactical retreats from some of the less important fronts and to strengthen the defences in the more strategic liberated areas. This proved a wise move, for once the most strategically important areas were strengthened, further Ethiopian offensives were halted.

The Soviet entrance into the war has drastically changed its nature. A Soviet general now directs ground operations, and another Soviet general is coordinating aerial bombardment (which includes napalm, defoliants, phosphorus, and plaster bombs similar to those used in Viet Nam.) There are also over 200 Soviet military experts and many Soviet and Cuban troops.

The result of this direct intervention by the Soviets has been suffering on a massive scale. In the last month alone 5000 Eritreans have been killed, nearly 10,000 wounded, and more than 100,000 made homeless. The new situation is bound to prolong the struggle and multiply our sufferings, yet, we will not be defeated. In the final analysis, our experience confirms that it is neither the size of the aggressor army,

nor the quantity and quality of its weaponry that carries the day; it is rather the conscious men and women who know what they are fighting for, and who will achieve victory, whatever the cost to themselves. The Eritrean people have tasted freedom, have known what it means to control their own lives, and will never return to bondage. For this reason, we are absolutely confident that, in the end, victory is ours.

The following was a transcript of a speech by And Berhane, a representative of the Eritrean People's Front (EPLF). It does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Southern African Support Committee.



# IMPERIALIST STRATEGY IN ZIMBABWE AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

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## S.A.S.C. Principles of Unity

The Southern Africa Support Committee has recently completed its Principles Of Unity. They are as follows:

- 1) We oppose apartheid in Southern Africa and racism in the United States and see them as a common enemy of the peoples of the United States and Southern Africa.
- 2) We oppose all United States economic, political and military ties or intervention, direct or indirect, in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia which supports and strengthens the power of the white minority government.
- 3) We support the right of self-determination for the peoples of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia and seek to build support for the genuine national liberation movements now fighting for the liberation of these countries.
- 4) We give critical support to the newly independent Peoples' Republic of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau and oppose any external attack or intervention in their internal affairs.
- 5) We see building a mass movement in the United States against all forms of oppression and exploitation as the surest support for the liberation movements in Southern Africa and elsewhere. As one step in this process, we seek to promote labor support in the United States for the Black Trade Unions of the apartheid states.

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