

*"From  
whence  
shall our help  
come?"*

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**N**ORTHWEST of the Union of South Africa on the Atlantic coast lies a land as large as France and Italy together. It is one of the poorest lands on earth. And it is one of the most sorrowful.

Sixty-six thousand Europeans live in South West Africa; 473,000 other human beings *exist* there. They have inherited a history of suffering:

In 1884 South West became a colony of Germany. "Might makes right," said the Germans, and the brutal application of this theory resulted in the near-extirpation of a noble tribe which spared in war the women and children of its enemies. Eighty thousand Hereros were reduced to 15,000 Hereros. The "civilized" Germans did not spare women and children.



South West Africans fought with the Allies in World War II against Germany. They were promised, in exchange, the return of their ancestral lands. They received, instead, at the hands of the League of Nations—and this was bitter—mandate status under the rancorous rule of South Africa.

After World War II South Africa was the only nation which refused to turn its mandated territory over to the United Nations to become a trust territory of the international community. The Union wished, rather, to annex the territory. This the International Court of Justice forbade South Africa to do, ruling that the Union was obligated to submit annual reports on South West and to transmit petitions to the United Nations.

It is not surprising that the nation dominated by white supremacists, racists who originated the *apartheid* policy, has steadfastly refused to abide by this requirement. Member nations of the U. N. have condemned South Africa's actions, vigorous resolutions have been passed, the world has censured South Africa—but futilely. The rulers of South West Africa pursue their course. For South West there has been no justice.

*'This birth is hard  
and bitter agony  
for us, like death.'*

WHAT is it like for an African, or for a "Colored" person, to live in the land South Africa considers its fifth province?

For two-thirds of South West Africa's non-whites it means to live outside the "Police Zone," the area of white settlement, in rural areas called reserves, there to work lands arid and sterile: unworkable.

To be an African means to have even these inhospitable reserves confiscated at the whim of the administration.

To be an African man means to be recruited by the South West Africa Native Labor Association to work in mines and on farms—there to receive wages one-tenth those of white workers. To be the wife of a recruited African means to live "widowed" on the reserves, to cope with "fatherless" children, to suffer loneliness, poverty, and despair.

To be an urban African means to live in shanty "locations" like the one in the capital city of Windhoek which John Gunther described as "one of the most gruesome and nauseating slums I have ever seen," where shanty walls are likely to be made of old automobile fenders, and drinking water is likely to be contaminated with sewage.

Education: To be an African is to have none. There is not one school comparable to a European secondary school for Africans in all of South West. Europeans, on the other hand, are required by law to educate their children.

Wages: Average wages for Africans are \$2.80 to \$9.10—*per month*. The highest wage is \$33.60 per month. Wages may be as low as \$1.26 per month. A second-hand suit costs \$14.00.

An African's diet often consists principally of corn meal (mealie meal). The standard of living for Europeans in South West Africa is among the highest in the world.

To be an African means to have no civil

rights, no bargaining power with employers, no representation on any political body, no adequate medical care.

An African may need a police pass when he wishes to visit a friend several blocks away for a cup of coffee. He needs a pass to stay out after curfew (9 P.M. in Windhoek). He needs a pass to look for employment. He needs at least nine kinds of passes!

To be an African may mean to be murdered for peacefully protesting against obscene laws. It did mean that for 12 unarmed Africans who gathered in Windhoek December 10, 1959, to demonstrate non-violently against being forcibly removed to another location; and it meant being wounded for fifty more of their number.

An African child is not born to joy.

*"Give us back  
a dwelling place."*

**"O** LORD, help us who roam about. Help us who have been placed in Africa and have no dwelling place of our own. Give us back a dwelling place."

So prayed Chief Hosea Kutako of the Herero tribe on the eve of the Reverend Michael Scott's departure for the United Nations in 1946 with the first petition from African tribes of South West Africa.

The Committee on South West Africa, established by the General Assembly, is empowered to receive documents and petitions from aggrieved parties in South West. For many years, Michael Scott, an English clergyman who before he became Chief Hosea Kutako's emissary had championed the cause of Indians and Africans in the Union of South Africa, was the only petitioner at the U. N. for the peoples of South West. In 1956, Scott—a passionate, gentle, stubborn man, beloved of his South West brothers—was joined at the U. N. by a young Herero petitioner, Mburumba Kerina. More Africans followed. Later came a young student, later an exiled political leader; in 1960 have come two more exiled leaders (exiled by the

South African government for daring to protest against *apartheid*), and the Reverend Marcus Kooper, a peaceable man his government had deprived of income and congregation and condemned to live in a barren desert with his crippled wife and five children, whom the desert could not possibly support.

The Union of South Africa has refused to allow a single petitioner to leave South West. All these petitioners have had to escape—by what dangerous means and at what peril to their lives it is impossible to say.

*"Indeed, we do not sleep.  
And from whence  
shall our help come?"*

**I**N THESE few petitioners are embodied all the hopes, the fearful prayers, and the aspirations of the thousands of oppressed in South West Africa.

Meanwhile, what of their wives and brothers—the families left behind? And what of the families of the imprisoned in South West Africa, the families of the deported, the families of the exiled?

Mburumba Kerina has a family in the United States now. But he had a brother in South West Africa. His brother was killed in the Windhoek massacre.

The five children of Marcus Kooper lived on tree gum in their desert exile. What do they do now that he is gone?

Can the petitioners here ever forget that their families—and most of them are large—are existing on the charity of their impoverished neighbors? Can they ever forget that the people whose freedom they are seeking are without food?

*"From whence shall our help come?"*

"If you wait too long for something that belongs to you it breeds bad things. When a person has lost patience, he sometimes commits suicide. . . ."

Frustration is reflected in these words of a South West African, and an urgency it is impossible to ignore.

We cannot afford to stand by and watch the death of the hopes of a long-suffering people, any more

than we can afford to stand by and allow the bodies of South West Africans to die of malnutrition, enforced exile and despair, or to watch young lives being crushed by "police action"—official murders.

How can we help to keep these hopes alive? How, indeed, can we help to keep these bodies alive?

How? By our constant awareness, our sympathy, and our compassion translated into dollars.

Sam Nujoma, President of the South West Africa People's Organization, in a letter appealing to the American Committee on Africa for funds, has indicated that a family of four Africans can survive on \$11.20 a week. This is a modest sum. Two American youngsters could easily earn this weekly pittance by baby sitting! \$11.20 a week does not provide for a car or even for a bicycle; it does not pay for books, for radio, for TV, for automatic dishwashers. It barely pays for food and for minimal clothing and shelter. But modest as this sum is, South West Africans do not have it. The families of the petitioners, the exiled, the imprisoned, the families of the dead and the dying, do not have it.

They need it. And you can help. The Africa Defense and Aid Fund of the American Committee on Africa is prepared to send money for the welfare of the needy.

Give to the Africa Defense and Aid Fund generously. Give out of compassion, because people are suffering. Give also out of enlightened self-interest, in the realization that the sickness of any member of the world community contaminates the health and debilitates the strength of the entire world community.

Your contribution to the Africa Defense and Aid Fund is a contribution to the cause of justice and a gift to the world all children, black and white, will inherit.

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