

# BOSTON COALITION FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

(with B.C.M.H.E.)

box 8791, boston, mass. 02114



## NEWSLETTER

### January '81

## SWAPO/SAMRAF in Boston

In early October, the BCLSA hosted the Boston leg of a three-month national tour by the Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO) and the Southern African Military Refugees Aid Fund (SAMRAF). SWAPO is the liberation movement fighting for Namibia's independence from South Africa, which illegally occupies. SWAPO was born in 1959 out of a workers' organization. It took up armed struggle in 1966 only after it became clear that South Africa would never peacefully give up control over the mineral-rich and strategically located nation. (Namibia borders Angola, Zambia, and Botswana, as well as South Africa, and provides an important "buffer" between South Africa and Black-ruled Africa.) South Africa currently has 70,000 troops in Namibia, waging war against the people there.

That's where SAMRAF fits in. It's an organization made up of South African draft resisters and military deserters, as well as American allies. It sees among its goals the weakening of the South African military by encouraging other white soldiers to desert and

building political and material support for the liberation movements in southern Africa, especially SWAPO at this time.

The speakers were Ellen Musialela from SWAPO and Mike Morgan from SAMRAF. Ellen is a member of the Executive Committee of the SWAPO Women's Council. At 30 she is a 16-year veteran of the liberation struggle. She has served as a soldier as well as a diplomat, representing SWAPO in several African countries. As a leader of the Women's Council one of her jobs now is to encourage the participation of women in all aspects of the liberation struggle. SWAPO recognizes that their fight for liberation can't succeed without the liberation of the women of Namibia. Ellen told the story of a woman who is second in command of the SWAPO armed forces, "not because she is a woman, but because she is the best person for the job."

Mike Morgan was a member of the South African Defense Force. He deserted after serving on the front lines in Namibia. He says,

*Cont. on page 2*

*SWAPO/SAMRAF cont.*

"I'd been told all my life that the guerrillas were the terrorists. But I realized that *we* were the terrorists, and that the liberation movements are the greatest hope for real peace in southern Africa."

The purposes of the tour were to educate people in the U.S. about the struggle in Namibia and the role of SWAPO, and also to raise material aid to build a pediatric clinic in southern Angola for Namibian refugees. The BCLSA also strove to make the links between the liberation struggles in southern Africa and the fight at home against racism and imperialism. To that event we cosponsored one event with the African Liberation Support Committee and one with the Boston Alliance

Against Registration and the Draft. We also organized a labor forum, making contacts with several unions in the Boston area. Ellen and Mike also spoke at more than a dozen other places while in Boston.

We feel the the organizing we did around this tour represents a small but significant step forward in the scope of our outreach and in our understanding of the need to unite with other forces and help build a broad southern Africa solidarity movement.

The fund-raising aspect of the tour in Boston was a great success — over \$2000 was raised while they were here. And plans are underway to take up material aid work in an ongoing way .

—Melinda Tuhus





FPS/cpf

## WILLIE SANDERS CLEARED OF ALL CHARGES

In September, over a year and a half after he had first been charged, Willie Sanders was finally cleared of all charges involving a series of rapes which took place in Brighton in 1978/79. Mr. Sanders was acquitted twice by Suffolk County juries, one case against him was dropped because of insufficient evidence, and another case was dismissed because of improper police conduct. The case against

Mr. Sanders was clearly a racist frame-up instigated by the police to alleviate public pressure on them to solve the cases. Recognizing that Mr. Sanders was being scapegoated by the police simply because he was a black man (the rapist was black) who happened to have been working in the Brighton area at the time, community groups, churches, and women's organizations in the city endorsed his cause and lent support to his defense committee.

Commenting on his client's acquittal, attorney Max Stern said, "This man should never have been arrested, should never have been indicted, should never have been tried once and certainly should not have been tried twice." Willie Sanders himself saw his acquittal as a victory in an ongoing struggle against racism. "The struggle against racism keeps on," he said after his acquittal. "It's a struggle each and every day. There would be no point in me saying, 'Thank God, it's all over,' because it's not."

The victory in Willie Sanders' case did not come easily or cheaply. Defense costs — assessed at rock bottom prices — came to over \$50,000, not to mention the mental torment endured by Sanders and his family in the long period between his arrest and final acquittal.

In a bid for the "better late than never" award, a week *after* the case was settled the **Boston Globe** ran a four-part series on police procedure in the case which bore out the accusations that the defense committee had been making all along of improper identification procedures and false statements on the part of the police.

## LEVI HART: NO INDICTMENT

As if to prove Willie Sanders' warning that the struggle against racism is far from over in

*Racism cont.*

Boston, it was announced on October 17 that an all-white grand jury had failed to return an indictment against patrolman Richard Bourque in the shooting death of Levi Hart. The black 14 year old was killed by a bullet from Bourque's gun last July 15 following a stolen car chase in Kenmore Square. The judge at an earlier inquest had concluded that there was "ample cause to believe that the death of Levi Hart was the result of an unlawful act or acts on the part of Richard Bourque."

**A NATIONAL TIDE OF RACISM**

The news of the Hart case was underscored by equally disturbing reports from other parts of the country. Taken together they reveal a growing racist trend in the U.S. From Buffalo it was reported that several black men were killed and that in two cases their hearts were torn out. In Atlanta, 11 black children have been murdered over the last year and four others are missing. In Greensboro, North Carolina, members of the Ku Klux Klan and a Nazi organization were cleared of charges of killing five members of the Communist Workers Party during an Anti-Klan rally. The all-white jury acquitted the Klansmen and Nazis despite the existence of a videotape showing the actual killings. Closer to home, at Harvard and Williams Colleges, black student leaders have received racist threatening letters. And to top things off, Ronald Reagan, an out and out champion of the New Right, was easily elected to the White House in November (in an election in which 48% of registered voters didn't bother to vote.)

These are just a few indications that racist violence is on the rise in this country. As inflation and unemployment continue to undermine working people's living standards, anger which should be directed at the

economic system which has created this situation is instead being deflected and re-directed against minority groups. Nazism with its doctrine of anti-Semitism initially flourished in Germany during a period of economic decline, and Jews were scapegoated for causing economic problems. Today, the New Right in this country is trying to scapegoat minority groups for our present economic woes. In the meantime, the oil companies and other big businesses report record profits and the stock market soars at the news of Reagan's election. Clearly there is a racist offensive underway in this country.

In Boston, the Black United Front and the Anti-Racist Violence Committee of the Boston People's Organization are organizing against this offensive. The BCLSA supports the work of these organizations and urges you to join them or us and take a stand against racism.

—DM



*Struggle/cpf*

## Struggle for Decent Lives — from Boston to South Africa (Solidarity's the Key!)

The recent three day visit (October 16-19) to Boston by Tozamile Botha was a rare opportunity for many of us to hear first hand about community and labor struggles in South Africa. Botha, a member of the ANC (African National Congress, a leading liberation movement in South Africa) was a worker at a Ford plant in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and president of the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO) until he was "banned." (To be "banned" by the South African government means that you cannot meet or talk with anyone but your immediate family.) He recently escaped from South Africa and is currently on a tour of the U.S.

While in Boston, he spoke to a variety of audiences, including members of the UAW at the General Motors plant in Framingham, students and staff at Boston University, and labor and community activists at an event sponsored by the BCLSA. He described his activities at the Ford plant and in PEBCO.

### COMMUNITY, LABOR SOLIDARITY

PEBCO, a community based political organization, evolved to protest poor housing, high rents, exorbitant bus fares, and forced removals of whole Black communities from one slum area to another. As Botha pointed out, one cannot avoid political activity in South Africa, everything one does is closely affected by the system of apartheid. Even getting on a bus is a political action, for the buses are segregated by the political system.



South African labor leader Tozamile Botha

Demands made by organizations like PEBCO for better conditions in housing and work and, above all, full political representation challenge the system of apartheid.

Botha stressed the ties between community and labor activities. When Ford forced him to resign because of his activities in PEBCO, 700 workers in the plant walked out. The workers also had a number of other grievances, including demands for equal pay, training and promotion. Ford's response to the walkout was to call in the police and to fire the workers, saying they would rehire them according to "individual merit." Ford tried to hire scabs, but community support, organized by PEBCO, was so strong that Ford couldn't hire enough scabs to keep the plant open, despite a 20% Black unemployment rate. PEBCO also organized a boycott of all white

owned stores and businesses to put further pressure on Ford. Inspired by and in solidarity with the Ford workers, workers from the nearby General Tire plant also walked out. After three months, Ford was forced to agree to complete reinstatement of all workers, including Tozamile Botha, and to negotiate on other grievances. The strike, sparked by the firing of a community leader, was won through labor and community solidarity.

### **END U.S. SUPPORT OF APARTHEID**

Botha pointed equally sharply to the alliance between American corporations and the South African government. Ford did not hesitate to call in armed police to attack the workers as they began their strike, and to have police roam through the Black community harassing people during the strike. Also, it can hardly have been a coincidence that Botha was arrested the day after the strike was settled, was imprisoned for a month without charges, released and then "banned." An important voice of worker and community unrest was conveniently silenced.

Addressing the issue of Western corporate and government involvement in South Africa, Tozamile Botha said:

"Some foreign governments and multinational corporations exploit our people using the same system [of apartheid], paying slave wages, protected by the South African government. Of course, their argument is that if they pull out of South Africa, Blacks would starve. But Blacks have shown their determination to struggle and make sacrifices...when they went on strike at Ford for three months without pay,...when they faced guns with stones in Soweto in 1976, when more than 2000 died,...when more than 200 died in struggle this year..."

"All those who supply South Africa with arms, military expertise, and financial loans, and all those who have invested to make South Africa economically viable, are responsible for the deaths of all these patriots and for the system that obtains in this country. They are retarding the process of our national liberation. On behalf of the people of South Africa I appeal to the world to call for the release of Nelson Mandela [imprisoned ANC leader] and all political prisoners, to call for the isolation of South Africa in all fields, for the observance and enforcement of the arms embargo, and for comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa."

### **SOLIDARITY FOREVER**

Following Botha's speech at the BCLSA sponsored event, Ted Comick presented BCLSA's views on why it's important for workers and community activists to support the struggles of the people of southern Africa. He began his speech by recalling the traditional labor principle of solidarity, "across the color line, across the sex line, across the skills line." He pointed to three important struggles in the U.S. — for jobs, for peace and against racism — as being directly related to solidarity with the liberation movements in southern Africa.

### **STRUGGLE FOR JOBS**

"As long as low wages and lack of basic human rights are normal in South Africa and Namibia, U.S. companies are going to be drawn there like vultures to a feast. Often as not they will close up shop here in the process, or they will use the threat of shut-down to break strikes.

"Among the Massachusetts companies that have operations in South Africa are GE, GM,

*Cont. on page 9*

## Time is Counting: El Salvador and South Africa

Nearly a year ago, one of the opposition groups in the Central American country of El Salvador kidnapped the South African ambassador to that country. As part of his ransom they demanded that their side of the story of what was happening in El Salvador be printed in major Western newspapers. The South African government refused to meet their demands, and the ambassador was eventually killed.

That the South African ambassador should have been chosen was no accident. It was a way of demonstrating that the South African and Salvadorean regimes have much in common. In both countries there is a grossly unequal distribution of wealth and power. Race rule in South Africa has deprived the black population of political and economic rights. In South Africa, the white population, comprising only 17% of the population, controls over 87% of the land. In densely populated El Salvador, 2% of the population owns 60% of the arable land.

Both among the black population of South Africa and the people of El Salvador, one child in four dies before age five. Faced with a 50% unemployment rate and starvation wages at home, tens of thousands of Salvadoreans are forced to leave their country in search of work every year. (It has been estimated that Salvadoreans comprise the third largest segment of the Hispanic community in Boston, outnumbered only by Puerto Ricans and Cubans.) In South Africa, most men are forced to migrate to "white" areas in the country to find work. These workers are legally required to leave their families behind in the black reserves.

As in South Africa, the people of El Salvador have organized to fight for their



freedom. The Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), made up of 150 organizations incorporating all sectors of society, was recently formed to unite opposition to the ruling Junta. The Junta, installed by a coup in October 1979, has carried out a campaign of terror and violence against the Salvadorean people. Since last January over 9000 people have been killed by government forces — usually thinly disguised as secret "death squads."

### U.S. INVOLVEMENT

The United States sees Latin America as part of its sphere of influence. U.S. corpor-

*el salvador*

ations have over \$40 billion invested in Latin America. In El Salvador, as in other Central American countries, U.S. stores such as Mac-Donalds and Sears Roebuck sell their wares. The First National Bank of Boston has had a branch in San Salvador since 1964. A number of U.S. electronics and textile firms have established factories in El Salvador to take advantage of the low wage rates there.

The U.S. government is afraid that change in El Salvador could involve a move towards socialism and threaten U.S. domination of the region. So Washington has backed the ruling Junta, openly supplying it with arms and economic assistance. In early December the U.S. temporarily suspended this aid because it was momentarily embarrassed by the murder of four American women in El Salvador. The fact that the previous loss of over 9000 Salvadorean lives could not produce a similar response surely says something about the depth of U.S. government concern for the Salvadorean people.

An outright U.S. invasion of El Salvador in response to the growing popular insurrection

in that country seems unlikely just now. Instead the U.S. strategy is to rely on the right wing regimes in Honduras, Guatemala, or possible Venezuela to intervene militarily if the Junta fails to maintain control. Not that the U.S. has ruled out the possibility of direct intervention. Referring to the success of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, National Security Chief Zbigniew Brzezinski has stated that the U.S. will not permit another successful revolution in Central America, "even if we must take the most reprehensible measures to prevent it. . . . If all else fails, we'll send in the Marines."

In El Salvador and in South Africa, people are rising up for freedom. In both areas, the U.S. government claims to be seeking moderate and peaceful solutions, while at the same time it throws its weight behind right wing regimes. As is becoming increasingly apparent in both regions, such regimes can only be maintained through terror. Dictatorships almost by definition seem indestructible until just before they fall. When they go, however, they go very fast. Time is counting in El Salvador and in South Africa.



## STOP RUN-AWAY JOBS



*Tozamile Botha cont.*

Gillette, Nabisco, Honeywell, and many more. Among those who have run away to South Africa: Firestone closed a Fall River plant in 1971, cost Massachusetts 770 jobs, employs 2451 in South Africa; Goodyear laid off 300 in New Bedford in 1976, employs 2534 in South Africa. General Tire and Rubber still employs 375 people in Reading, but over 2000 in South Africa. The rubber industry is not unique in this regard. Westinghouse in Springfield, W.R. Grace in Cambridge, Borden in Peabody, and American Can in Needham all closed up plants during the past ten years while opening or maintaining plants in South Africa.

"I should stress that while losing jobs affects us all, it hits Black people and Spanish speaking people and women worst of all, since they are the last hired and first fired by the employers.

"It should be clear then, that when we support striking workers in South Africa we are also strengthening ourselves. When we aid Tozamile, the ANC, and PEBCO we are making it harder for corporations to hold out

on us here. As corporations have fewer and fewer slave labor havens to run to around the world, they'll be forced to face squarely our demands for jobs, no discrimination, good working conditions and decent pay.

"War is a real threat facing the world today. It doesn't take much imagination to see whose side Reagan would fall on if business in South Africa started howling about "threats" from the freedom fighters in South Africa. And if Carter or Reagan did intervene militarily in southern Africa, not only would the U.S. military be fighting the ANC and PEBCO — i.e. against the interests of the working people of southern Africa — it would be working people and minorities in the U.S. doing the fighting. Workers fighting against workers, against their own interests and allies.

### STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM

"South Africa is the greatest beacon of racism in the world. And the greatest racists in this country, from the KKK to Senators like Jessie Helms of North Carolina, draw great inspiration from its existence. We can see what effect Helms, the KKK, and closer to home the South Boston Marshalls, is having on the lives of people here. Blacks and even some white people are murdered and beaten by these people. Helms' North Carolina, where racism is barely concealed, is also the least unionized state in the U.S.A. And right here in Boston, racism has often been a factor in undermining the unity necessary for union drives, better contracts, and end to discrimination, not to mention the whole range of issues like better schooling and housing.

For all these reasons, then — jobs, peace, an end to racist attacks — working people, Black and white and Spanish speaking, men and women in the U.S., right here in Boston, have a deep interest in the victory of the freedom forces in southern Africa." —Peig

B.C.M.H.E.  
735 Commonwealth Ave.  
Boston, MA 02215

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Boston, MA  
Permit No. 14624

B.C.L.S.A.  
P.O. Box 8791  
Boston, MA 02114

Address Correction Requested  
Return Postage Guaranteed



## Use Us! BCLSA Resources

Are the members of your organization or your friends interested in learning of the lives and struggles of Southern African people? We have three slide show presentations available for you to choose from. Each presentation is free, and would be introduced by a BCLSA member who could answer your questions afterwards.

**Banking on Apartheid:** (30 min) shows the involvement of the First National Bank of Boston in South Africa, and its practices here in Boston. It provides a graphic illustration of the links between the struggles of the people in Southern Africa and of people in Boston (and throughout the U.S.)

**Victory in Zimbabwe:** (30 min) a new updated version of our old show including new slides from free Zimbabwe, new music, and a section linking the struggle against racism here with the struggle in Zimbabwe.

**Women Under Apartheid:** (25 min) describes how the system of apartheid in South Africa affects women, and how they've participated in the struggle against this oppression.

If you would like to arrange a presentation, call 522-8699.