

The purpose of this Update is to comment on several crucial events which have occurred in

the Namibia context since the time of our 28 February issue.

NAMIBIA

11 MAY 1978

NAMIBIA UPDATE
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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1 March & ff. Political riots claim at least a dozen lives.

27 March. Murder of Herero Chief Clemens Kapuuo, leader of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance.

7 April. Violence erupts at Kapuuo funeral. Stone throwers met with machine gun fire. Many killed and wounded.

10 April. Proposal of Five Western Powers submitted to United Nations Security Council.

14 April. Lutheran, Anglican and Catholic church leaders in Namibia urge acceptance of Western Proposal "as a basis" for building a united and free Namibia.

18 April. Justice M.T. Steyn, Administrator General of Namibia, issues new proclamation (AG 26) vesting him with power to detain any person or number of persons for indefinite custody without recourse to courts.

24 April-3 May. Special Session of United Nations General Assembly devoted to Namibia.

24 April. Mass arrests under AG 26 begin. Thirteen members of SWAPO leadership detained.

25 April. South Africa accepts Western 5 Proposal providing "clarification" on several points is satisfactory to them.

3 May. SWAPO calls leaders to meet with Western 5 to seek agreement on proposal.

4 May. South African Army invades Angola to attack SWAPO camps. Kill between 500 and 1000 men, women and children.

5 May. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania announces the release of 11 SWAPO dissidents who have been detained since 1976.

6 May. United Nations Security Council unanimously condemns South Africa's raids; imply economic sanctions.

7 May. SWAPO cancels talks with Western 5 to "bury their dead and care for their wounded."

MEANWHILE...

in other parts of Southern Africa, the "internal settlement" in Rhodesia is threatened with collapse due to a summary dismissal of a black official; blacks form a new party in South Africa and a few days later three of its top officials are detained. At home, numerous shareholders resolutions (Lutheran Church in America and Gettysburg Seminary among them) are presented to annual meetings of U.S. companies operating in South Africa asking for withdrawal or some such thing. None received large support but many had the required percentage of votes to permit another hearing. Thousands of students petitioned their colleges and universities to use their endowment portfolios to oppose apartheid. Congress considers abolishing Export-Import Bank credits in South African transactions.

THE CHURCH SPEAKS AND ACTS

Before analyzing some of the events from this side of the ocean, it will be useful to reprint a telex received on 9 May from the Rev. Kleopas Dumeni, assistant to the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church in Namibia.

The current wave of unrest and violence reached new and terrible dimensions with the onslaught on several SWAPO camps in southern Angola by South African forces on Ascension Day, May 4. We strongly condemn the merciless killing and wounding of hundreds of people, among them women and children, unable to defend themselves. This has filled the whole community with shock, grief and concern. Many families are mourning and in many other homes there is uncer- (cont.)

THE CHURCH SPEAKS AND ACTS (CONT.)

tainty among beloved ones. As in the past we still disapprove killing, political murder, torture, political detentions, forced abductions, and intimidation irrespective of by whom or to whom this is done.

During the last weeks and months there has been a strong exodus of people from Namibia, mainly youth but also whole families. In most cases the cause was frustration. Many people have lost their hope for a just solution of the problems of this country. There are those who have turned to apathy while others decided to go in exile. Among those who left there were those who feared arrest or feared for their life because of their political views; there were those who had been sacked from their jobs or unable to get employment; those who thought they would get educational opportunities abroad; those who left in youthfully or even childish enthusiasm for the sake of freedom. Then there were also people who were abducted, though they probably were in minority. In any case, most of the people in the camps must have been people who had left the country recently, willingly or unwillingly.

We still, as we have done in the past, plead with all in power and authority, whether inside this country or outside its borders, to do their utmost to prevent and to restrain themselves from further bloodshed. We request immediate supervision by the United Nations as such supervision has already in principle been accepted by all parties concerned. We do not

need empty words. We need a neutral party between the fighting parties to stop the killing and intimidation. We plead with those concerned: SWAPO, the South African government, DTA and other parties not just to request the other to stop hostilities or to withdraw but to agree soon on laying down the arms simultaneously. International assistance is still needed in this respect and we request continued efforts to reach an agreement on the basis of the recent Western proposals though there are problems still to be solved.

In a separate pastoral letter to the congregations we plead for continued prayer for peace, for our nation and for those in trouble. We request the members of our congregations and all other people concerned to show mercy and to forgive and we greet you all with the words of Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians 1: 3-9: "He, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes, he helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles. . . The burdens laid upon us were so great and so heavy that we gave up all hope of staying alive. We felt that the death sentence had been passed on us. But this happened so that we should rely, not on ourselves, but only on God."

That telex speaks more eloquently than anything else we can write, but it may be desirable to fill in some of the details of the chronology headings.

MARCH-APRIL HOSTILITIES

Political rallies are at least weekly events in Namibia. Parties are anticipating elections sooner or later and are telling their stories. The South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO) and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) are the leading contenders.

The DTA is a coalition of tribal groups who emerged from the Turnhalle Talks which produced a constitution, but which the South African government agreed to put aside at the insistence of the Western 5. In some ways Turnhalle has become more powerful in its DTA reincarnation. The South African government has organized and armed tribal armies and body guards for tribal chiefs. These military units, allied with the

DTA, "keep peace" at DTA rallies and provide the fire power when the government feels that SWAPO is provocative.

It is reported that SWAPO's political meetings are frequently disbanded by government order and sometimes harrassed by tribal police.

What started the riots at the beginning of March is not clear. It is alleged that SWAPO attacked DTA bystanders. That may be. It remains a fact that it was almost exclusively SWAPO members who were killed.

When Chief Kapuuu was murdered, the government lost no time in accusing SWAPO, who denied

the charge. Body guards were with Kapuuo at the time. Police were close by. The murderer escaped.

On 26 April practically all of the SWAPO leadership was detained under AG 26; no one has been charged with any crimes as of 10 May.

THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Eight days of double sessions produced a Declaration on Namibia which essentially repeated former statements by the U.N., such as: Namibia is the direct responsibility of the U.N. until it achieves independence, which is its inalienable right. South Africa is the illegal and repressive occupier of the territory, has defied the demands of the international community that it withdraw its administration.

der Chapter VII of the Charter of the U.N., particularly comprehensive economic sanctions, an oil embargo and an arms embargo."

Emphasis on supporting the armed struggle and urging economic sanctions caused the Western and Nordic countries, along with a number of other democratically ruled nations (21 in all) to abstain when the vote was taken. There were no "nays."

The General Assembly took note of the new situation also. It condemned South Africa's military build-up and especially the creation of tribal armies. It reiterated the judgment that Walvis Bay is an integral part of Namibia. It expressed support for "the political and diplomatic efforts of SWAPO to secure genuine independence for Namibia...in conformity with U.N. Security Council Resolution 385 in its entirety."

Most of those who abstained, moreover, felt that the Declaration and Action Programme did not take seriously what they perceived as the progress which had been made toward a negotiated settlement.

In its Programme of Action, the Assembly called upon all Members States of the United Nations to support and assist SWAPO "to enable it to intensify its struggle for the liberation of Namibia." In the event South Africa does not comply with Resolution 385, the General Assembly went on record urging the Security Council "to take the most vigorous measures, including sanctions provided for un-



All in all, in spite of the tough rhetoric, The General Assembly closed on an optimistic note. SWAPO called its Central Committee members to New York to meet with the 5 in an effort to resolve the issues of the location of South Africa's troops and Walvis Bay. Assuming that some understanding could be reached, the Security Council would meet and before long the peace keeping force and administrative personnel, together known as the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group, would be dispatched to Namibia and the campaign and electoral process would begin, but . . .

ASCENSION DAY, 1978

The events of this day sparked the statement from Pastor Dumeni, the day South African forces slaughtered Namibian men, women and children in military and refugee camps in southern Angola. This took place two days before the scheduled talks between SWAPO's leadership and the representatives of the Western 5.

tiations at this point. Its representatives left New York shortly after the Security Council met. Its U.N. representative said, "We must go to bury our dead and care for our wounded."

Angola called for an immediate meeting of the Security Council, which on Saturday unanimously condemned the South African action, called for the complete withdrawal of its forces from Angola or face economic sanctions. South Africa said it had already withdrawn.

South Africa claims that it was in hot pursuit of "terrorists" who had been active in the northern part of Namibia, but in other contexts representative folks in Namibia have said, "the freedom fighters are not our enemies; the South African Army is our enemy." The Ascension Day massacre would validate that statement.

SWAPO could hardly be expected to enter nego-

Finally, one is forced to ask, "Why should such extensive military action take (continued)

ASCENSION DAY, 1978 (CONT.)

place at this time?" There was no major offensive on the part of the liberation forces. Indeed, with the exception of the abduction referred to by Pastor Dumeni, there has been no proof that SWAPO has been involved in hostile

acts against civilians. Many believe that the foray was calculated to sabotage the negotiations; there is much to support this contention. South Africa denies that this is true, but has offered no convincing explanation for its action

THE FUTURE

Predictions are perilous, but since just before the day "violence reached new and terrible dimensions" SWAPO was ready to confer with the 5 on the problem areas of their proposal, it is likely that this

effort may be renewed at some undetermined date. The church in Namibia and its supporters hope that a just negotiated settlement may be reached, even though each passing day reduces the chances.

THE ROLE OF AMERICAN CHURCHES

1. Lutheran church leadership calls upon all members to intercede at the throne of God for the victims of apartheid in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, and to express their solidarity with the oppressed as occasion demands.

2. Lutheran World Ministries has endorsed the provisions of Security Council Resolution 385 and encourages members of its constituency to voice their support by writing to their congressional representatives with carbons to (1) the Secretary of State, Washington, D.C. 20520, and (2) the U.N. Commissioner for Namibia, United Nations, New York, N.Y. 10017.

3. Lutheran, Anglican and Catholic leaders in Namibia, together representing about 75% of the population, have no confidence in any "internal settlement" which South Africa continues to propose, for it exploits tribal differences and invests the white population with disproportionate power. Those who agree that Namibia should be a united country should oppose "internal settlement" proposals and make their views known as in (2) above.

4. Politically controversial strategies will emerge in the Security Council of the United Nations. Arguments will be advanced that economic sanctions against South Africa will "hurt the blacks the most" or that they will be "ineffective," or that they will be counterpro-

ductive in that "they will drive South Africans into the laager." Others will argue that blacks are already "suffering without hope" and that if sanctions will produce hope, that is the way to go; that South Africa needs foreign support for its depressed economy, and that the South Africans are already in the laager. Lutheran World Ministries has not taken a formal position on this matter, but the presidents of the ALC and LCA, who visited South Africa and Namibia in 1977, returned with the conviction, later supported by their councils, that there should be no further economic investment in South Africa by American corporations. Sanctions seem to be the only untried strategy left to the international community. Viable alternatives will certainly be welcomed, but in their absence earnest consideration must be given to supporting such measures.

Write your opinion as in (2) above.

5. Finally, congregations and individuals are encouraged to enter into dialog with their banks on possible loans to the South African government or its agencies, and if their banks are making such loans to demand that they discontinue or that accounts will be closed. Granted, these are harsh actions, but not nearly as harsh as the manner in which the South African government has been treating the Namibian brothers and sisters who have called on us to support their quest for liberation.