

IN NAMIBIA

it's illegal for African workers to strike.

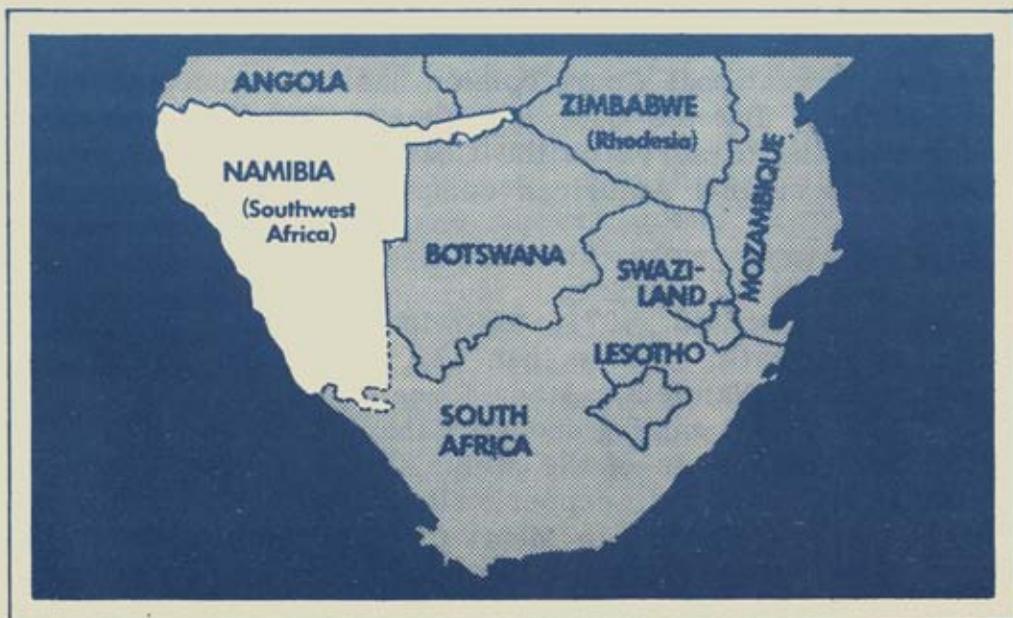
IN NAMIBIA

churches supporting Africans are being persecuted.

THE U.S.

supports Namibia's ruling white minority.

CAN WE IGNORE NAMIBIA?



WHY NAMIBIA ?

Namibia (formerly 'South West Africa') lies along the south-west coast of Africa and is bordered by South Africa, Angola, Zambia, and Botswana. It covers 318,261 square miles, making it more than twice the size of California. White occupation of Namibia dates back only to 1889 when Germany, a latecomer on the colonial scene, established a garrison. Now, 95,000 whites dominate Namibia and its 654,000 black population with the gun.

THE UNITED NATIONS VS. THE UNITED STATES

In 1919, at the end of World War I, the League of Nations granted a mandate to the Union of South Africa to administer South West Africa. After World War II, the United Nations took over the supervisory powers of the League. In 1966, the General Assembly terminated South Africa's mandate over Namibia because of the failure to govern in the interests of Namibian people, and the introduction of systematic white domination in the form of apartheid. The UN assumed jurisdiction itself, creating the Council for Namibia, but has been prevented by South Africa from exercising its authority there. On June 21, 1971, the International Court of Justice handed down an advisory opinion affirming South Africa's presence in Namibia to be illegal. South African racist practices and anti-labor legislation in Namibia are likewise invalid, and a direct contradiction of the mandate.

The International Court opinion has been accepted by the United States. But the U.S. has also weakened the position of the UN for refusing to serve on the Council for Namibia, and failing to take steps against American companies in Namibia.

AFRICAN LABOR STRIKES!

On December 13, 1971, following months of sporadic protest throughout the nation, more than 12,000 Ovambo contract-workers, about a third of Namibia's labor force, began a general strike that brought the crucial mining industry there to a near standstill. One of the focal points of the strike is the Tsumeb Corporation mining operations (lead, copper, zinc), jointly controlled by two U. S. companies, American Metal Climax and Newmont Mining. But the strike also hit in Windhoek, the capital, spreading to

service trades, construction, and other occupations, and touching non-Ovambo workers as well. Striking Ovambos in Windhoek were sent on special trains to Ovamboland, on the northern border of the territory. The South West African Native Labour Association (SWANLA) attempted to procure strike breakers, but failed.

Strikers were protesting the contract-labor system. Ovambo contract-workers, for example, are confined to "Ovamboland" and are allowed out only as "contract" labor. They have no choice of job or say in determining wages, working and living conditions, and are confined in segregated barrack-like compounds, without their families, when on contract. To strike or otherwise break contract is a crime. Until it was abolished by the recent strike "settlement," work could only be secured through SWANLA, which represented the major employers.

According to strikers' representatives, the "settlement" is merely a watered down version of the old system. Though government and business claim the strike is over, independent observers deny it. Only some workers have returned to work. And the strike spreads to new locations, as in March to the fisheries at Walvis Bay. Meanwhile, troops have been sent in, there is a ban on all meetings of more than five people (except worship services), and there is a blackout on most news from the area.

SOUTH WEST AFRICA PEOPLES ORGANIZATION OF NAMIBIA

SWAPO, formed in 1960, has been engaged in political action against the South African presence in Namibia. Since 1966, SWAPO has added military action to clandestine political action, particularly in the Caprivi Strip in the northeast. With its initial base among Namibian workers, it has gained support among other sectors of Namibian people, and has been particularly strong in Ovamboland. According to the London Observer, the South African police have discovered, since the strike began, leaflets distributed in large numbers by SWAPO in the ports, mines, and farms of Namibia. SWAPO representatives in exile have been careful to identify with the strikes without admitting and direct involvement in the strike itself, which might further endanger people inside the country.

THE CHURCHES

On January 30, 1972, four Africans were killed by police who broke up an Anglican Church meeting in Ovamboland. For insofar

as the churches have identified with Namibian people, the South African government sees them as dangerous subversive elements.

The start of the recent phase of church-state conflict was a statement of June 30, 1971, by Bishop Auala of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa, on behalf of their almost 300,000 adherents. In an open letter to the South African Prime Minister, they listed the grievances of the African people: intimidation by racist policies, denial of free speech, freedom of movement and the right to vote, forced separation of ethnic groups, the contract labor system. These African church leaders were supported by the Anglican Bishop of Damaraland, Colin Winter, and by the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in South West Africa. Bishop Winter and two of his associates have since been expelled from Namibia for support of the strikers. His predecessor, an American, had been expelled in 1967. In recent years the South African government has taken action against twenty clergymen in Namibia by means of deportations, passport withdrawals, and visa refusals.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

It is in Namibia that there is the clearest legal case against the white-dominated regime. Consequently, as brutal as South African action against the strikers has been, it has been more restrained than in South Africa, and there has been a clear attempt to conceal from world opinion what is happening. There is an urgent need to let people know what has been happening there, and to support the efforts of the Namibian workers and people.

Apart from spreading the word, we can:

*(1) Demand the US government cooperate with the UN Council on Namibia; in particular disallow any deductions for taxes illegally paid by US firms (according to the UN) to the South African government on income earned by enterprises in Namibia.

*(2) Support the strikers by protesting to American Metal Climax and Newmont Mining, the two largest US firms involved.

*(3) Give money for strike support and legal defense.

THE MADISON AREA COMMITTEE ON SOUTHERN AFRICA, 306 North Brooks Street, Madison WI 53715, can provide more information and speakers. We are trying to raise \$1000 this spring, to go to SWAPO for strike support and legal defense. So if you can help in any way, with your money or your time, CALL Wandile Kuse (256-1359) or Ruth Minter (241-1137).