

# Namibia Newsletter

November, 1986



On June 1st, over three thousand Christians, representing most of the denominations in Namibia, joined in the Roman Catholic celebration of Corpus Christi. Proclaiming unity in opposition to the South African occupation of their country, the group marched with Christian banners and crosses through the townships outside of Windhoek. The theme of the day was: "One in the body of Christ: Together a Free People." Abisai Shejavali can be seen on the left in the front row.

Photo courtesy of Namibia Communications Centre, London, U.K.

*"We have prayed for the government to change its policies. Now we pray for a change of government so that the justice of God's Kingdom may prevail and his people be liberated to live in peace."*

Dr. Zephania Kameeta  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA

## BURCHFIELDS BEGIN NEW CHAPTER IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID

While the deportation order has removed the Burchfield family from South Africa, their hearts remain in Capetown, with the courageous people they had come to love. Susan and Red are living temporarily in Seattle while they sort out the dramatic change in their lives brought about by a decision of the South African government that "it is in the public interest to order your removal from the Republic of South Africa."

Saying goodbye to their friends was very painful. Susan says, "It is always hard to say goodbye, especially when you don't know when you'll be coming back. But it's harder still to look at people's faces as you say goodbye, not knowing if they'll be alive when you return."

She tells of her friend, June Esau, who was detained and tortured in 1985. Esau later had the courage to identify the police who had tortured her, and bring charges

against them. As she publicly accused them, each looked at her and made a motion of slitting a throat. She was in hiding when the Burchfields came to know her. Now they have received word that she has been arrested. They think about her five year old daughter . . . and they wonder if they'll ever see their friend alive.

While Red and Susan want to return to team ministry, they are unsure what form this will take. In the meantime they continue in the struggle, speaking to groups about their experiences, telling the stories of faith and courage that they learned from the people of South Africa.

They are clear that apartheid, at its base, is a religious issue. "The government of South Africa does these things in the name of Christianity, and supports its actions with Bible passages. Apartheid is a heresy. Christians around the world must say, "No."

Dear Friends,

There is cause for rejoicing!

The successful vote on sanctions, and the announcements by General Motors, IBM, and Honeywell that they are withdrawing from South Africa demonstrate the breadth of the feeling against apartheid. These actions indicate our voices **are** being heard, that you people in the Namibia network and the other anti-apartheid groups did carry out your tasks. Congress people and corporate headquarters have been forced to recognize that the American people do not want to be seen as supporters of apartheid.

Thanks to each of you who has taken some action to bring this about.

Yet events in southern Africa are moving so quickly that we cannot relax. There are ominous signs of increasing chaos in southern Africa: The death of Machel in Mozambique, actions by South Africa against its neighbors, stepped up violence in Namibia, support by our Congress for the forces of UNITA in Angola.

And now, increasingly we hear suggestions from the far right that our country also begin to give aid to RENAMO (The Mozambique National Resistance is a group of South African sponsored terrorists who have completely disrupted the life and economy of Mozambique ever since its independence.) Nearly four million Mozambicans face starvation because fields and crops were destroyed by RENAMO forces. RENAMO has murdered Red Cross workers, attacked rural health clinics, sabotaged relief projects and kidnapped and tortured countless civilians. Now our Congress is being told that we must aid RENAMO in order to fight communism. . . .

We are facing a tremendous educational task—to interpret these events to people in this country. I've been told that the issues of southern Africa are too complex for people, that the mood of "Anti-communism" is so strong that it is useless to tell people that this is an invalid issue in southern Africa.

I don't believe this. If enough time is spent on education, if folks have a chance to raise their questions and express their fears, if Namibia becomes a real place with real people, our experience is that Americans will respond. The challenge is to find time and people and funds to do that education. You know that South Africa is stepping up their efforts—we must do the same.

Immediately following the Senate vote, I spoke with Bill Johnston of Episcopal Churchpeople for a Free Southern Africa (ESCA). Bill growled: "Don't celebrate too much. The big job lies ahead." He reminded me about the first moon landing—when NASA had programmed every move of the astronauts, down to the last second. Written into the script was a pause—just after Neil Armstrong had set foot on the moon, NASA's timetable allowed for "Two minutes of exultation." Then back to the task at hand.

We are now in that position. Our work grows more difficult, more complex by the day. But we are called to be faithful to the task which we have begun. We must continue down the long path in solidarity with our friends. Thank you for your partnership in the "long walk toward freedom."

*Salving Kjerfve*

# HAPPENING . . .



These people were part of the crowd of 13,000 to 15,000, old and young, that attended a SWAPO rally in Katutura, the black township near Windhoek. It was the first time in recent years that SWAPO's request to hold a public gathering had been granted.

Photo courtesy of Namibia Communications Centre, London, U.K.



Members of the youth group of Holy Shepherd Lutheran in Denver helped stuff 6500 envelopes with materials announcing the Free Namibia Emphasis in the ALC. Here they are pictured in their new "Free Namibia" T-shirts. NNC is grateful to all the volunteers who make it possible for us to continue this work.



Lise Faillettaz (some of you remember Lise from the 1983 Conference on Namibia at Wartburg Seminary) visits with Gabriel and Fredrika Uahengo at the LCA Global Mission Event at St. Olaf College last July. Southern African concerns were well represented; workshops dealing with Namibia were filled each session. In addition to the Uahengos, Paster Martin Nelumbu and Pastor Shekutaamba Nambala from Luther/Northwestern Seminary assisted with presentations.

## INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON NAMIBIA GATHERS ADVOCATES

Nearly sixty people, representing forty anti-apartheid groups from twenty countries met in Stockholm from October 15-19th. With support from the U.N. Council for Namibia, and a major grant from the government of Sweden, the meeting was organized by the Swedish "Isolate South Africa Committee (ISAK)", which, itself, represents a broad coalition of nearly 60 anti-apartheid groups in Sweden.

The purpose of the meeting was to exchange information and ideas, and to plan strategy for the coming months. The SWAPO delegation, headed by Dr. Nickey Iyambo (chief of medical services for the Kwanzasul refugee camp) cautioned participants that the struggle is becoming more bitter as South Africa feels more pressure, both from the liberation movements and from world opinion. The path ahead is not easy, but the Namibian people are determined to be free.

Major topics discussed were: U.N. Resolution 435, its strengths and weaknesses; the divestment movement and sanctions; material aid to SWAPO; U.N. Council for Namibia Decree No. 1, prohibiting the exploitation of Namibian resources; the arms embargo against South Africa; and the oil embargo and the international campaign against Shell Oil.

U.S. groups represented at the conference were the American Committee on Africa, Episcopal Churchpeople for a Free Southern Africa, TransAfrica and National Namibia Concerns. (The NNC network can be pleased that Elizabeth Landis, from our Board, presented one of the major papers.)

The gathering was worthwhile in that it gave us a chance to meet a wide variety of people and learn about "Free Namibia" campaigns in various countries. The informal

exchange of ideas and the sharing of materials and strategies was extremely important. It was good to be linked with others who share a common goal!

## AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH LAUNCHES FREE NAMIBIA EMPHASIS

Meeting in convention in August, delegates of the American Lutheran Church (ALC) overwhelmingly endorsed plans for a "Free Namibia" emphasis in congregations throughout the country.

The heart of the Free Namibia Emphasis will be education and action on the local congregational level. ALC Bishops have appointed Namibia Contact Persons in each district. These persons will receive news bulletins every two weeks, with information about events in Namibia, actions by the churches in that country, advocacy suggestions and prayer requests for special situations. The contact people will distribute this information in their regions.

This extensive "grass-roots" effort, the brain-child of Professor Herman Diers of Wartburg College, has received strong support from ALC Bishops and national staff—many of whom have visited Namibia and South Africa.

Sunday, November 2, 1986, was designated as "Free Namibia Sunday" in the ALC, and served as a "kick-off" for the emphasis. That date was chosen to commemorate the 20th anniversary of U.N. action declaring South Africa's occupation of Namibia to be illegal.

Staff work for Free Namibia Emphasis is being done by National Namibia Concerns. For questions or suggestions, the telephone number is (303) 830-2774.



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