A MESSAGE FROM NAMIBIA FOR NORTH AMERICAN CHRISTIANS

(The following message is excerpted from an interview with Bishop Kleopas Dumeni, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church, Namibia's largest denomination.)

I am not here to describe and to tell you, to tell your churches what to do, but rather to give them information about the war situation in my country.

South Africa—the South African government—is occupying Namibia illegally. It is well known all over the world. Even the World Court announced this decision in 1971 that South Africa is in Namibia illegally. There is a buildup of military camps, many bases or checkpoints on the roads. Movement of military vehicles by horse, cycles, on foot, in air and panzers (armed troop vehicles). And sometimes they are shooting during the night and you don't know whether or not you will get a new day. Many of the teachers, ministers and other co-workers in different jobs in the country are in jails. Some of them for a long time. Some of them we don't know where they are.

The South African government makes propaganda as a condition that they are fighting against communism. But all that can be said here about the communism is that it is used as a condition and a weapon and propaganda by the South African government. It is propaganda. Who is SWAPO? Let me tell you. SWAPO is members, they are members, men and women, daughters and boys, of our families. Members of our churches. I said churches—irregardless of denomination. Baptized, confirmed, married, with rights in their parishes, in their churches. Christians. But the question is why they left the country. Precisely because of the hardship I told you. The war situation. Apartheid. Separate development. Injustice. And that is not Christian. It's against the whole Christianity. They are not communists.

I can just, maybe, say three points. Number one: We know that our fellow Christians all over the world, including North America, they are praying for us. We received hundreds of letters expressing solidarity with the suffering people. I ask them simply to continue, not to cease in praying for the suffering people. And I wish to say, with them, our thanks and appreciation, and to let them know this is very very helpful for our people. Number two: We have many Namibians outside of this country because of this war situation. We cannot help them with their daily needs and the spiritual ones. I plead with the fellow Christian parishes, congregations or churches, to help these Namibians. Regardless of their denominations, race and color. But to see their needs, for their education or other needs, to continue to help them. Because our hands to help them are very short. It is our wish and will for you to take care of them on behalf of the churches in Namibia. Number three: Out of our deep desire to come to the end of this killing, suffering, bloodshed—to see peace in our country—I plead with your churches to do what they can do to approach their respective governments to put more pressure on the South African government so that the settlement or the implementation of Resolution 435 of the Security Council can be implemented.
What do Namibian people want? They want peace. They want to be given a chance to elect their own leader. This is the will of the majority of people in our country. It would be very good and I would be very happy if this crying of the suffering people will be heard by those who have authority and rights in this matter. But as churches we are continuing to pray and ask God, and we hope—this is our sight—that this answer will be given one day. We want it today, but we hope and believe Namibia will be free one of these days.

NEW CHURCH PRESS DEDICATED IN NAMIBIA

Oniipa, Namibia: A new church press to replace the one blown up by a bomb November 19, 1980, was dedicated in a six-hour service on June 6, 1982. Some 1,500 representatives of Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church (ELOC) congregations, other Lutheran churches in Namibia, and sister churches from other parts of the world attended the service led by ELOC Bishop Kleopas Dumeni.

Dumeni told the assembly, "ELOC has for a second time experienced the destruction of its printing plant. Its staff and members have suffered, even till death. Yet in death there is victory, destruction builds love and unity among churches and Christians, of which the new printing plant is an indication. The destruction of the plant by explosives planted by unknown foes of the church was a useless deed since Christians in the country and abroad could rebuild it and install new offset printing equipment. The church cannot be destroyed by such deeds."

The director of ELOC's press, Moses Amkongo, thanked all who had supported the rebuilding effort. He noted that the first gift had come from a pastor who was later killed by a landmine in the war torn northern Namibian region. Assistance to rebuild the press came through the Lutheran World Federation's Community Development Service (CDS) from various Lutheran churches in South Africa, Sweden, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, Norway, the United States, Denmark, Canada, the Netherlands, France and Tanzania. Olle Eriksson of CDS represented the Lutheran World Federation at the dedication ceremony. Also present at the ecumenical gathering were leaders and representatives of Roman Catholic, Anglican and Baptist churches in Namibia.

The ELOC printing press had first been blown up in 1973 and rebuilt in 1975. Both bombing cases are unsolved. But in the latest bombing in 1980, South African soldiers were in the vicinity shortly before the building exploded in flames. The slowness of the police in investigating the incident further added to the suspicion that the soldiers may have been involved. (Lutheran World Information, 10 June 1982)
NEW ELOC PRESS IS SHOT


THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCE WAS IMMEDIATELY INFORMED BY THE CHURCH HEADQUARTERS TO WHICH COMMANDANT A.S. KLEIN-HANS OF OSHAKATI RESPONDED BY SENDING HIS REPRESENTATIVE COMMANDANT NEL FROM ONDANGUA. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXC. COMMITTEE OF THE OVAMBO GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO INFORMED. COMMANDANT NEL INSISTED TO BE GIVEN THE VALUE OF THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE DUE INCIDENT AND WAS ASKED THAT THEY SHOULD MAKE A DEEPER INVESTIGATION TO GIVE A WRITTEN REPORT. ESTIMATION WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE AT LATER STAGE. SIMILAR CASES HAVE OCCURRED SEVERAL TIMES DONE TO PROPERTIES OF THE CHURCH AND TO THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUALS. AN OPEN QUESTION REMAINS: WHY THE BULLET SPECIFICALLY CAME TO HIT THIS VERY NEWLY REBUILT BUILDING OF THE PRINTING PRESS, WHICH HAS BEEN TWICE DESTROYED BY UNKNOWN ENEMY OF THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY?

THANKS TO GOD NO HUMAN LIFE LOST, NEITHER MACHINES WERE DAMAGED.

K. DUMENI, BISHOP OF ELOC
(INTERNATIONAL TELEX FROM COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN NAMIBIA)

ANGOLAN CHURCHES CLAIM ATROCITIES BY SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIERS

Luanda, Angola: Churches in Angola have appealed to the international community to condemn the genocide and destruction caused by South Africa's occupation troops which have invaded southern Angola, according to the latest edition of the Lutheran World Information Service released in Geneva. The appeal was made by the General Secretary of the Angolan Council of Churches, the Reverend Daniel Ntoni-Nzinga who decried international indifference to the suffering in Angola caused by the South African occupation.

According to the Reverend, thousands of Angolans have been displaced from their homes by South African military excursions, many of them having fled into the bush. About 130,000 Angolans were officially known to have fled southern Angola to seek refuge in the northern part of the country, but the total figure of displaced people was believed to be several times over the official figure.

"South Africa is waging a secret war against Angola. The international community should be made aware of this," he said. He pointed out that apart from the displaced Angolans the country was harbouring more than 50,000 Namibians, 5,000 South Africans and 20,000 Zaireans. "These people need help and assistance which the Angolan Government and other voluntary agencies are providing, but there is a need for more--more importantly because the cause of this situation should be eliminated," he said.

He blamed South Africa's hot pursuit policy against the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) for creating the war situation. "They are flagrantly violating international conventions by entering Angola at will and killing people indiscriminately," he accused. Victims of the incursions, he added, included women and children in refugee camps. He pointed out that the churches in the country were doing everything in their power to aid the refugees and the displaced people. "But it is important that the people who support the apartheid regime realise that far from protecting Christian civilisation they are supporting a brutal system that will stop at nothing to perpetuate an obnoxious system," he added. (Windhoek Observer, 24 July 1982)
ADVOCACY LETTERS FOR NAMIBIA

Letters to Namibians are very important. They assure the Christians of Namibia that others are praying for their safety and freedom.

Since the South African occupying police will read your letters to the Namibians before they do themselves, you may wonder what this will mean. Most importantly, it means that the South Africans know that persons in North America are watching the events in Namibia with great interest, and that we are concerned about the safety of the church leaders, in particular.

Write to:

Bishop Kleopas Dumeni
Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church
Oniipa, Private Bag 2018
Ondangwa, South West Africa/Namibia

President Hendrik Frederick
Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA/Namibia
P. O. Box 5069
Windhoek, South West Africa/Namibia

Vice-President Zephaniah Kameeta
Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA/Namibia
P. O. Box 5069
Windhoek, South West Africa/Namibia

Letters to your representatives in North America are also important. The diplomatic pressure that the United States and Canada can bring to bear, if they have the will to do so, can force South Africa to remove its occupying forces from Namibia.

Write in support of United Nations Resolution 435 and in support of elective economic sanctions against South Africa if its troops do not leave.

United States Senate: The Honorable
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

House of Representatives: The Honorable
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Canada
Members of Parliament: The Honourable
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

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