Before We All Are Yet Wiped Out

New York, March 4—The 300,000-member Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church has asked Lutheran churches worldwide to urge their respective governments to support Namibian independence "by peaceful means" and "before we all are yet wiped out." In a statement, which came out of the church's synod meeting in December, the church said that "hundreds of members of our parishes and congregations have lost their lives" in Namibia (formerly known as South West Africa), a territory of one million people controlled by South Africa.

The statement arrived in late January at the headquarters of Lutheran World Ministries, the USA National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, and was accompanied by a letter from Bishop Kleopas Dumeni of Oniipa.

Some church members, the statement said, "have been killed, others have died as the result of land mines...Private houses have been put afame and many innocent civilians have had their properties either destroyed or damaged." The statement also said that pastors and lay preachers have been imprisoned, and that 13 percent of the 300 synod delegates meeting at Ongwediva said they had at one time or another been imprisoned and tortured.

The church's statement was released at a time when South Africa approved a plan proposed by five Western powers, including the United States, revising the United Nations plan for Namibian independence. Under the proposal, half of the constituent assembly would be elected as individual representatives from geographical districts and the other half would be apportioned according to votes for political parties, on a national basis.

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Namibia Churchmen Are Pessimistic on Talks

By CHARLES AUSTIN

A group of visiting church leaders from South-West Africa said in New York last week that they were not optimistic about the international talks on independence for the territory.

The group, which was ending a seven-month tour, said United States officials, including the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester A. Crocker, consistently dismissed the objections voiced by the visitors when they were told progress was being made toward independence for South-West Africa, also known as Namibia.

"They did not want to hear of our pessimism," a member of the group said.

The Rev. Albertus Maasdorp, general secretary of the Council of Churches in South-West Africa, was particularly critical of American policy in southern Africa, a policy he asserted is totally shaped by fear of Soviet activity there.

Group Holds News Conference

"The U.S. Government has become an agent in South Africa's 'holy crusade' against Communism," Mr. Maasdorp said at a news conference Friday.

Representatives of the United States, Canada, France, Britain and West Germany have long been trying to mediate the conflict in South-West Africa, whose administration by South Africa is being fought by guerrillas of the South-West Africa People's Organization.

Church leaders in southern Africa have generally supported the initiatives of the five nations, but after their monthlong tour the visiting church leaders said they were disappointed in the attitudes they had encountered.

Members of the delegation in addition to Mr. Maasdorp were Dr. Maxime Rattrass, general secretary of the All-Africa Conference of Churches; Bishop Kleopas Dumeni and the Rev. Absalom Hasheela of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church; Bishop James Kaluma of South West Africa, an Anglican, and the Rev. James Moulder, a member of the executive committee of the South Africa Council of Churches. The All-Africa Conference of Churches, with 120 member denominations and councils of churches, sponsored the trip.

U.S. Sympathies Faulted

Dr. Rattrass said he believed the Reagan Administration was too sympathetic to the South African Government. "Western governments should listen to the entire continent of Africa, not just Pretoria," he said.

Mr. Maasdorp said South Africa showed no signs of removing its troops from South-West Africa, although a reduction in military force was to be one of the conditions to be met before elections are held there. Other members of the delegation accused South Africa of trying to set up a puppet political structure in the territory that could control the elections.

Bishop Kaluma said the plan to have Namibians vote twice, once for a party and once for an individual, made the election too complicated. "None of the five Western nations conducts elections that way," he said. The election plan, rejected by the guerrillas, is the most recent snag in the independence talks.

Military activity in the northern part of the country is intensifying, Mr. Hasheela said, adding that the church's printing plant has been bombed twice and that an Anglican seminary was also bombed this year. Bishop Kaluma said ministers from his church were frequently detained by South African security forces.
Commentary

Namibians Declare SWAPO Not Communist

In newspaper reports from South Africa and in the American press it has been alleged that Namibia’s largest independence party, the South West Africa People's Organization, is a Marxist communist group controlled by the Soviet Union. Because many members of churches in America are concerned about these charges, Dateline:Namibia asked the leaders of the Namibian churches to comment. This is consistent with the basic policy of Dateline:Namibia, namely, to present the views, concerns and news of Namibian Christians to Christians in North America. We also talked with Mr. Andreas Shipanga, leader of the SWAPO-D party (dissidents who broke away from SWAPO in 1976) who recently appeared before a Senate sub-committee on the communist connection.

First it must be stated that the churches in Namibia have not officially singled out support for any one political party in the independence struggle. They have officially called for the implementation of UN-supervised elections so that the people of Namibia can elect their own government from among these parties. Although they have not particularized their official support, they have spoken out to counter false statements and misrepresentations about these parties. The South African claim that SWAPO is communist is refuted by Namibian church leaders.

It should also be remembered that South African laws restrict freedom of speech and have been used to detain persons who differ with official South African views on political matters. Although South Africa has repeatedly admonished the churches not to speak on “political matters,” Namibian Christians have exhibited great personal courage in speaking the truth.

We asked Lutheran bishop Kleopas Dumeni, leader of Namibia’s largest church, about the communist allegations.

“I know that the South African government makes propaganda that they are fighting against communism. It is propaganda. Who is SWAPO? Let me tell you. SWAPO are members, men and women, from our churches. I said churches, regardless of denomination. Baptized, confirmed, married with rights in their parishes—they are Christians. But the question is why they left the country. Precisely because of the hardships of the war situation, apartheid, separate development and injustice. And that is what is not Christian—it’s against the whole of Christianity.”

In a similar discussion, Dr. Albertus Maasdorp, Lutheran pastor and executive secretary of the Council of Churches in Namibia, said: “The South African government has tried to convince the West that their fight in Southern Africa is a holy war against communism. This is not true. Their war is against the people of Southern Africa, the people of Namibia. It is a war against Christians. It is not a war against communism—that is a smoke screen. I sympathize with your concern for Soviet expansion, but the conflict has nothing to do with our struggle for independence.”

Dr. Maasdorp continued, “We in the churches in Namibia have no evidence that can make us believe that SWAPO is communist or an agent of communism. We are concerned about our people who are in the movement because the majority in that movement are Lutherans, Catholics, Anglican...If SWAPO is labeled as anything it is to be labeled a national liberation movement.”

Recent evidence given to a Senate sub-committee by Namibian, Andreas Shipanga, helps put into context the aid given to SWAPO independence fighters by the Eastern bloc. Mr. Shipanga explained how he and other Namibians in SWAPO first approached the Western countries, chief among them the United States, in the 1960’s for help in gaining independence from South Africa. He reported, “Either it was because of grave naivete or some strange illusion, that the first rounds we made in Dar es Salaam were to knock on the doors of the Western embassies. We really believed that it was possible to convince the Western democracies that our right to self-determination and our struggle against South African rule was noble, just and worthy of their support.” Unfortunately the SWAPO leadership was met with what Shipanga calls “hostility and contempt.” “The South African government propaganda division has done its homework seriously: ‘No black who talks about oppression and injustice is his own man—behind him must be the Russians.’ ”

After this rejection SWAPO obtained its support from African and non-aligned countries and eventually from the Soviet Union and East Germany. Commenting on the known fact of Soviet support for SWAPO, Shipanga said, “Will this mean that continued South African rule against the wishes of the majority of Namibian people is legitimate?... Do some people in the USA really believe the bushes and sand dunes of Namibia to be teeming with Red blacks, all indoctrinated with Soviet ideology? I can testify here truthfully that in Namibia I have never come across a single communist black person.” Shipanga continued, “Is it true that only the communists are the opponents of apartheid and racism in Namibia and South Africa? If so, does it really mean that the capitalist West is firmly in cahoots with apartheid and racism as the communist East says?”

Before We All
Are Yet Wiped Out
continued

Because the geography has been divided by South Africa into tribal districts, it seems the plan will foster tribal and racial representation, said the Reverend Edward May, director of the Office on World Community of Lutheran World Ministries in New York. The assembly that would set the course for Namibian independence could only make constitutional decisions by a two-thirds vote. With at least ten distinct ethnic groups and more than 40 parties or would-be parties, some Western observers believe that the election setup is intended to prevent the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) from controlling Namibia's fate after a single election.

The Ovambos, who are believed to represent about half of Namibia's population, overwhelmingly support SWAPO, which has been waging a guerrilla war against South African forces for several years. Continuing attacks by South Africa inside neighboring Angola have raised the fear that the warfare might be escalated, pitting South African forces against Cubans or other Soviet bloc forces in Angola.

May said that while church leaders in Namibia support the United Nations independence plan, they are opposed to some of the recent changes proposed by the Western powers. "They say the churches keep trying to unite the people, and the changes that are being suggested in United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 (the Namibian independence plan) open the way to more division," he said.

May sees little hope for a speedy resolution to the Namibia question. "The United States has supported South Africa in the past, a country which in turn has suppressed the people in Namibia, most of whom are Christians. We are receiving a call from our brothers and sisters in another country who are asking for help in building an independent and united nation," he said.

(Lutheran World Information)
An Interview with Carl Mau

(The following material has been excerpted from an interview with Dr. Carl Mau, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, conducted by the editor of Dateline: Namibia in Geneva, Switzerland, February 1982. Dr. Mau, during the first portion of the interview, described his first visit to Namibia and South Africa in 1969—a visit that revealed to him at first hand the desperate plight of the Namibian people the majority of whom are Lutherans.)

Q: Since that first visit, you've been back a number of times.
A: Oh, yes, I've been back four times.

Q: And the stories of oppression keep coming—of pastors being arrested, of Christians and others being put in detention, of church presses being bombed. Has anything changed since the first time you were there?
A: Well yes. And that's even more depressing. To some it makes the situation look even more hopeless. It's just simply become worse and worse. The repression at the present moment is at a level where you have to believe that the South African government and its forces in Namibia are committed to eradication and not giving up—with very little conscience anymore. You have to have the impression that they are now determined to go forward and care very little anymore about who gets hurt in the process. That's the impression I now have.

Q: This is the South African administrator general?
A: Yes. The South African administrator general in Windhoek for the Namibian territory. They no longer seem to care. And if you tell them, or appeal to them, you feel as though it's falling on deaf ears. So if you ask me how the situation's gotten, I'd have to say it's gotten steadily worse. So that violence begets violence. And if you're committed to a course of violence in order to get your way, it goes further and further, you see?

Q: Some of the Namibians, in reaction to this violence that they've lived under for so many years, have taken up arms. In a very rudimentary way they have been trying to free their country. Could you tell us how the church has reacted to some of its own people who have wanted to join this cause—one that would use arms and violence against the South African occupying army?
A: This is a very important point, and I'm very anxious to talk about it because we have known the major movement in Namibia, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), from its inception. I have known many of its leaders personally, and have the highest respect for them. These were young men, mostly from our churches or the Anglican communion, who were committed to the freedom and independence and improvement of conditions for their people. They came over to New York as young men, completely inexperienced, wondering how they could get a hearing at the United Nations. And the church, from the beginning, tried to help them in this strictly non-violent course.

And we, too, as individuals, tried to help them. Paul Empie, at that time general secretary of the old National Lutheran Council, gave them their first help and made their first contacts for them at the United Nations. It was to help them get started on this simple, clear, political program—not only non-violent but, I would say, possessing great integrity. It was an emerging leadership for which you could only be grateful. Any number of times when we met with them they were absolutely committed to non-violence; they would not get involved with radical forces that were trying to push them in the direction of violent solutions.

The first time we really heard about the oppression they then suffered was when the major trials were mounted against a group of their leaders who were extricated from Namibia and taken to Pretoria. These were the famous trials in 1967, '68, fifteen of them—and most of the people who were convicted are still in Robben Island (South Africa's maximum security prison), convicted for allegedly disturbing the peace and being involved in subversion. It's just ludicrous, of course, if you look at that trial and how it happened. That was the first major attack on the South West Africa People's Organization, which was dubbed from that moment on as a movement supposedly being influenced by communists.

You see, the strategy always is if there's any resistance to a system, it's being fomented by communists. We know that pattern, and that it was also a tactic used by the Nazis. But the South West Africa People's Organization continued. Finally the decision had to be made by the movement that it could no longer remain committed to the non-violent approach; that it had to take up arms: "We hate to do it; we've never wanted to do it." But the decision was then clearly made to do it.

Q: That must have caused a great deal of concern within the churches themselves that had been committed to a non-violent solution.
A: Yes.

Q: What happened then?
A: Well, I would say the church was very much aware of this whole development because it was mostly church people providing the leadership. And so, while the church regretted it as much as the leaders of the movement regretted it, the church said, "We understand. Because violence is being done to us. We plead with both parties, 'Please abandon the violent stance that you have towards each other.'" And the South West Africa People's Organization has always said, "We are willing to lay down our arms tomorrow if we can begin a path of peaceful negotiations for what we consider to be our rights," as has been affirmed, you know, by the courts of justice and the World Court, and so forth.

So this has always been a basic stance of SWAPO that the moment we can do this, we'll lay down our arms. And the church has always pleaded with both sides, "Please lay down your arms." At the same time, the church has to be concerned for the people of SWAPO because they're members of their church to a great extent. A pastoral ministry is being provided for the SWAPO people, many of whom are in exile, or who are a part of the liberation army that SWAPO has mounted. And so the church provides a ministry as we provide a chaplaincy for our armed services in the United States. So, too, the church is able to provide a pastoral ministry for these people wherever they are.
Q: As a churchman, speaking with other churchmen and women—speaking both to Namibians and to people from the United States and Canada—what do you feel the churches can do? What can individual churchmen and women do to assist in a solution before the violence gets even more horrible?
A: Well, I have to start always with that for which the Namibians plead the most. And that is concentrated and regular prayer. The power of prayer is something they deeply believe in. And that's a great inspiration for us all. It's something we have to do much more, and more systematically than we're presently doing. Secondly, I think we must inform ourselves as citizens of our respective countries as to just exactly what our countries' role is in supporting apartheid. We are all intertwined in this system by complex links and connections. But the people of North American churches believe in freedom and equal opportunity and equal rights. Once blacks have the chance to be full partners in Namibian society, then the society can flourish for all, rather than a major segment of the population being exploited for the sake of the few.

Q: The South Africans and many Americans might say that black Namibians, once they get this chance, won't know how to use it.
A: I know with all of the black leaders that I have spoken to—at length—they absolutely insist they will not make the mistake of racism all over again. They abhor it; it's a terrible disease; and if there's anything they're committed to, it's not to have that when they enter into power, or when they share the power. They want to have the white persons and, I would say, a considerable majority of those who have experience, they want to have them with them. This has also been demonstrated in Zimbabwe. There's a great desire on the part of the black leadership to have that for which they are struggling, namely, a society with equal rights for all human beings.

Q: Suppose that South Africa's intransigence does not change and the violence keeps going. What will that mean for the church inside Namibia and for concerned Christians outside?
A: First of all, it will be a period of increasing and untold suffering. We have to recognize, really, that a war is going on now and that people are dying. I just telegraphed to a funeral that is going on in Namibia right now, our condolences and a word of comfort. One of the leaders of the Ovambo church was killed because a vehicle in which they were driving hit a land mine. The place is a minefield. I think you will never kill the spirit of the Namibians, but they will face this suffering for years to come.

There'll be deep alienation and all will be losers. And the country will be devastated. Many will be refugees. There are tens of thousands of Namibians now whom we are serving in refugee camps all over Southern Africa. So you will have the devastation of a war, the situation of the end of a war. I believe, also, that the apartheid system for all of Namibia and South Africa bears the seed of its own destruction. It's a matter of time. And it's a matter of vision on the part of white leadership to change now or to wait, so that their children will pay the price of the great sins being perpetrated on the people down there.

Q: So Christians in the West had better start informing their political leaders about this matter.
A: Yes. It's a part of our faith, you see. We're not just talking about political expediency. We're talking about the elimination of a system that is an insidious illness within the human family. You were asking what can our church people do, and how are we also implicated in a way. There's a phenomenon here that really upsets me very much, and it's hard to explain.

Advocacy for Namibia

Both the United States and Canada are currently involved in negotiating a settlement in Namibia. Now is the time to make your views known. Take the time to write your members of Congress or Parliament, asking them to support United Nations efforts for Namibian independence from South Africa. Congressional elections in the United States will be held next fall. Be sure to ask candidates from your area what their views are concerning South Africa and Namibia. Your letters now and your vote next fall may have a direct bearing on governmental decisions.

United States
SENATORS
The Honorable __________________
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
The Honorable __________________
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 10515

Canada
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
The Honourable __________________
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
## Events inside Namibia

### Many Church Delegates Imprisoned or Tortured by South Africa

(The following statement was passed at the December synod meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church, Namibia.)

We, as synod, acknowledge with deep sorrow and disappointment that during these last few years, no peaceful changes whatsoever have been brought about, and that all the good efforts which were made could not succeed in bringing our country to independence. In fact, during these few years, sufferings, persecutions and torturings are more predominant than at any time in the past. Hundreds of members of our parishes and congregations have lost their lives as a result of the prevailing sufferings and hardships of this time in our country. Some (of them) have been killed, others have died as a result of land mines which are being planted on roads.

Private houses have been put afame and many innocent civilians have had their properties either destroyed or taken from them. Hundreds of people, both males and females, have been held in jails—some whose whereabouts is still unknown. Young men are forced to undergo military training against their will. (There has been conscription since 1980.) Those waves of persecutions and torturings have caused thousands of our church members and other members of the Namibian nation to become exiles throughout the world. Likewise, those sufferings and hardships are hindering the ministry of the Gospel to be carried out to such an extent that it reaches all the people.

Some of our pastors and other lay preachers have been imprisoned at one time or the other. We are not allowed to pay visits and minister to those church members who are imprisoned, nor are their family members allowed to visit them. Furthermore, it was found out at the time of the synod session that about 13 percent of the synod’s 300 delegates, both males and females, did taste the severity, harshness and bitterness of jail and torturings at one time or the other. A number of the church properties were destroyed, such as the printing plant which was destroyed for the second time in a bomb blast on November 19, 1980. In the same way, also some of the inner-country mission places had been destroyed.

The synod is lodging an appeal to all those who have authority over the affairs of our country to see to it that the people of Namibia, without any further delays, will get a chance to elect their own leaders peacefully and freely by means of the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435—ending the prolonged state of sufferings and bloodshed among our people.

In conclusion, the synod is appealing to all her sister churches all over the world to still continue:

- the work of prayers and intercessions on behalf of our country and its people.
- to serve members of our churches who are in exile in their respective countries.
- to approach their respective governments and urge them to sincerely strive for the realization of the independence of this country of ours by peaceful means, without any further delays, before we are all yet wiped out.

## Church Leaders

### South African Army Involved in Death of Pastor

On January 18, 1982, a landmine explosion believed to have been detonated by South African occupying forces killed Namibian Pastor Mika Iilonga, Dean of the Western Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church. Informed sources in Europe and Africa have told Dateline: Namibia that Pastor Iilonga was subjected to the “callousness that South Africa is known for in its relations with blacks.” They indicate that proper medical aid was withheld from Iilonga after the explosion. Long a victim of South African harassment, the 50-year-old Iilonga died in a South African military camp where he had been taken after the explosion.

Pastor Iilonga had traveled that morning to Lutheran church headquarters to gather foodstuffs and materials for the drought-stricken people of his diocese. The dirt road he traveled on had been swept for mines by South Africans before he began the journey at eight that morning. Observers reported that the sight of the explosion was near a South African army outpost. They said that it would have been impossible for soldiers of Namibia’s liberation movement, the South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), to have placed a mine in that spot during the daylight hours after the army had checked the road for mines.

At 5:00 P.M. the explosion destroyed Iilonga’s pickup truck, killing two passengers outright. The specific nature of Iilonga’s wounds was not stated. Sources report that, despite pleas to take the pastor to a hospital less than 45 minutes away, the soldiers took him to their outpost with assurances that a military helicopter would take him to a hospital. When the helicopter arrived at 10:00 P.M., Pastor Iilonga was already dead.

Sources also report that before he died, South African soldiers tried to pressure Iilonga to sign a statement saying that a SWAPO landmine had caused the explosion. This he refused to do. The soldiers also tried to pressure Mrs. Iilonga (who came to her husband’s side from their nearby home) to sign the statement. She also refused. Before he died, Iilonga told his wife, “May God forgive them.”

Later that night South African soldiers surrounded the Iilonga home and again tried to coerce Mrs. Iilonga into implicating SWAPO. She refused, and soldiers withdrew after Lutheran church officials protested to the South African authorities.

*Los Angeles Times* newsman Jack Foisie was at Okahoa two days after the death of Iilonga. He traveled with Finnish Lutheran nurse Kirsti Pakkala to the Iilonga home. Foisie reports that as they passed safely on the road by the wreckage, Sister Pakkala said, “God is with us today... Pastor Iilonga was such a good man.”

Foisie reported in a *Los Angeles Times* article that many Namibians “and Finnish missionaries believe that some of the misfortunes that beset Lutheran activists like Iilonga are South African created.” His report continues, “They suspect that some mines are detonated on command of the South Africans.”

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Bishop Dumeni, the late Dean Iilonga, Pastor Shipana
Hymn to Freedom

Namibia, enchained in tyrant's bondage,
Your people plead for freedom to be free
From rod and lash, from terror's sway a hostage,
To you, Lord God, they cry in misery.
How long, O Lord, how long shall evil triumph?
How long, O Lord, shall prisoners captive be?

Help of the helpless, comfort of the mourning,
Hope of the poor, the orphan's sanctuary,
They call for justice, shall that call be heeded?
They cry for mercy, shall they mercy see?
Arise, Lord God of Hosts, their one defender,
Smite tyrants' chains to set your people free.

Arise, Namibia, now your dawn is breaking,
United march to claim your destiny.
A people freed from racist domination,
Reborn in hope, destined for liberty.
Let freedom ring from every hill and valley;
Let justice stream for all the world to see.

To you, Lord God of Hosts, be glory given.
You gave us martyrs, give us victory.
The fire of freedom you alone implanted:
Children of freedom may we always be.
Namibia then one nation under heaven,
Upholding justice, truth and equity.

Colin O'Brien Winter

To be sung to the tune “Finlandia”

An African Magnificat

Sing out my tongue, God's greatness sing,
None great as He, his deeds confess,
Hope of the poor, the martyr's king,
His name is Truth and Righteousness.

God loves the poor and helpless ones,
The grasping rich he sends away,
Workers for peace he calls his sons
And daughters, to this very day.

The mourners' mouths with laughter swell,
Their burdens with the poor He'll share,
God, rescue prisoners from the hell
Of torture chambers and despair.

The exiles wait for Him in trust,
He'll bring them home, their country freed
From tyrants’ weapons now all dust
And ashes, useless as their greed.

Come freedom's children, sing his praise.
God of the poor, the captive's friend,
He'll never fail us in our days:
We'll praise Him still till ages end.

Colin O'Brien Winter

To be sung to the tune “Old Hundredth”

Additional resources on Namibia

For further information we suggest you write to the following sources:

Dr. Edward C. May
Director, Office on World Community
Lutheran World Ministries
360 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010

Mr. William Johnston
Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa
853 Broadway
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Office of the U.N. Commissioner for Namibia
1 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

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