The struggle in Namibia is not complicated. It is a struggle of the Namibian people, by the Namibian people, for the Namibian people to free their land which is occupied by a foreign colonial power. All the Namibian people, all the Africans including those that are collaborating and cooperating with South Africa are entitled to be free and independent. That is the objective of the struggle in Namibia.

Time and again it has been said that if you believe in freedom you must suffer and sacrifice for it, and this is what the Namibian people have been doing for a very, very long time. The struggle did not start with the present generation of Namibians. Sam Nujoma did not start the struggle in Namibia. It was started by our forefathers fighting against German occupation of our country. Today we are merely continuing that struggle for freedom and for independence.

NAMIBIAN HISTORY

African history is often dated from the time that Europeans reached our continent, but long before the arrival of the Europeans and the subsequent colonization of Namibia our country was an undisputed domain of various African communities who roamed freely over the length and breadth of the territory. They were free, sovereign and independent. Some engaged in cattle-raising and dairy farming. Others were hunters and gatherers. Still others were accomplished artisans in metallurgy. Some were clever traders, and still others were remarkable warriors. All of them were proud Africans whose mode of existence was characterized by communal interdependency and shared common destiny. They fought battles among themselves, conquered one another, and sometimes the vanquished were co-opted into the society of the victors. But never was there enslavement of people, reducing them to the status of chattels, of things devoid of life and dignity that would be disposed of at the whims of the master. That is the history we remember, the heritage we received from our forefathers.

Now let me say something about our meeting with the first colonizers and oppressors of Namibia, the Germans. The name Namibia derives from the name of the Namib Desert which runs the full length of our coast. Namib means a shield to defend yourself against an enemy, and that shield, the Namib Desert prevented the intrusion of hostile foreigners from Europe into the interior of the country for more than four centuries. They were able to penetrate the interior of Namibia only through the Cape Province in South Africa. In 1485, long before Columbus reached this part of the world, a Portuguese sailor reached our shores, but it took more than four hundred years from that date for Namibia to become a colony of imperial Germany.
It was at the Infamous Berlin Conference of 1884 and 1885 that the imperialist powers met to divide up Africa for European domination, control and exploitation, and to enslave Africans, reducing them to mere labor units. Our meeting with these foreigners, whether they were garbed as missionaries, marauding fortune seekers, colonial administrators, or district commissioners was always violent. We have painful memories about the Christianizing and civilizing mission during which we lost our land, during which our livestock was seized, and during which we were reduced to concentration camps as animals to provide cheap labor. We have painful memories about the domination of one-third of the Namibian population because they dared to resist foreign domination.

In Namibia apartheid was actually started by the Germans who, like the Afrikaaners and others today in Namibia and South Africa, believed in racial superiority. The relationship between the Africans and the Germans was the relationship of masters and servants. Land was no longer ours. Our heritage, customs and way of life were ridiculed and denigrated, our history falsified and negated. Namibians lost mastery over their destiny and became vanquished people in their own beloved fatherland.

But as patriots of Namibia we remember Hendrik Witbooi. He was a Namibian guerrilla commander, national leader, a hero and martyr of our struggle. We remember Maharero, who sought to guarantee his people's rights and limit colonial intrusion, Mandume, the Kwanjama King who expelled all traders from his territory for exploiting the prevailing famine. We remember many men and women, young and old, who sacrificed during the early occupation of our country to vindicate our dignity, to ensure that we regained our freedom and independence. Their resistance was about freeing land, freeing natural resources, and freeing labor, and this is still our struggle.

SWAPO—A PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

SWAPO is a people's movement, the vanguard of the Namibian revolution, the liberator and catalyst. SWAPO is a mass movement, mobilizing, uniting and politicizing the oppressed people of Namibia to assume the responsibility to liberate the fatherland by waging a multi-dimensional struggle, militarily, politically, diplomatically, ideologically, and culturally. SWAPO is the sole and authentic representative of the struggling Namibian people at home and abroad. SWAPO was formed on 19 April 1960 and has been waging an armed liberation struggle for more than 15 years against the most powerful military, economic, industrial and technological power on the African continent.

We have not defeated the enemy and that may not necessarily be our objective. The objective in large measure is to ensure that we do not lose. We have scored victories against the enemy. We have been able to pin down more than 100,000 soldiers, police, and secret agents. We have compelled the enemy to spend millions and millions of dollars to maintain the colonial, illegal infrastructure in Namibia. We have raised the price of occupation very high and we intend to continue with the struggle.

SWAPO is anti-racist, anti-colonialist, anti-neocolonialist, anti-imperialist, anti-fascist, anti-Zionist, and anti-apartheid. We are also manifestly anti-capitalist. We have opted in favor of a socialist path of development. We have elected to struggle, to sacrifice in order to free our country, to liberate land, resources and labor, in order to build a socialist society.

We also believe in international solidarity and cooperation. We are proud to say that the socialist group of countries and various other progressive forces throughout the world have been our friends and allies, and it is with their assistance and support that we have been able to intensify the struggle.

UNHOLY ALLIANCE WITH SOUTH AFRICA

In contrast, we see in the policies of Western Europe, North America, Japan, and Israel an underlying racism which moves them toward an unholy alliance with South Africa. Apart from being capitalists and colonialists, the people who control our resources and control our destiny are white people. We also know that southern Africa constitutes indispensable real estate. President Reagan has reminded us that southern Africa is strategically important to the United States. There are known historical and traditional links between North America, Western Europe, Israel and increasingly Japan. We are also reminded time and again of the geo-political survival of the economies and the industries of those regions. We know that there are strategic minerals in South Africa. We believe they belong to us, but of course they are controlled today by those minority racists. We are aware of the extent of investments and bank loans from the United States and her allies. We know the NATO military network which links Walvis Bay, our harbor, to the NATO global military organization, creating forward bases for aggression in southern Africa. Historically not only President Reagan, not only President Nixon, but as far as we can recall all the governments of these United States have supported and abetted racist
of independence let alone armed struggle. Even up to the early 60's, years in which we started to organize nationally across the country, we believed that since most African countries were achieving independence via constitutional means by going to Paris, London, or Brussels, we too could realize freedom and independence by peaceful means. So we organized demonstrations and occasionally strikes. We sent delegations to the administrator. We consulted with the district commissioners for the redress of grievances. That was too much for the racists. Many of our leaders of that period were forced into exile, and the first thing that they did when they left Namibia was to try to secure tickets to come to New York as petitioners to the UN to plead for the Namibian cause. The response of South Africa to these demonstrations, to these strikes, to efforts to consult, was increased repression, arrest, torture, and murder of the Namibians. It was then that the Namibian people realized that our struggle would require more than petitioning and demonstrations, that it would indeed take the launching of an armed struggle.

It was the enemy, South Africa, it was the Western countries and their support and assistance to South Africa, it was the increased and continuing oppression, and exploitation of the Namibian people by South Africa, that compelled the Namibian people to organize militarily. South Africa's presence in Namibia was declared illegal in 1966 by the UN General Assembly. The resolutions of the United Nations, the advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice, the demands and the injunctions of the international community are all aimed at combating that illegal South African colonial presence in our country. It is on that basis that the international community, the overwhelming majority of the member states of the United Nations decided to accord the status of the sole and authentic representative to SWAPO. It is on that basis that we receive support and assistance to intensify the struggle. It is on that basis that the United Nations Council for Namibia was created as the sole administering authority over Namibia until independence.

South Africa sabotaged and undermined all the work of the Council, all the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations, refusing to give way in its determination to maintain Namibia under its control.

By 1975, 1976, most of the member states of the United Nations felt that enough was enough, that the international community should urge the Security Council to impose comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa. Security Council meetings were convened three times with that objective, and three times we had triple vetoes cast by the Western permanent members, United States, France, and Britain on a resolution calling for sanctions.

THE CONTACT GROUP

In 1977, after the election of President Carter, we saw the emergence of the "Contact Group"—made up of the United States, United Kingdom, France, Federal Republic of Germany, and Canada. Feelers were sent out to us that the Western countries, members of the Security Council at that time, wanted to engage the African countries, the OAU, and SWAPO, in discussions which, if fruitful, would lead to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 385 which had been adopted in January 1976. Resolution 385 set out the principles and conditions to be observed in any transition to independence.

SWAPO expressed its skepticism about this diplomatic initiative, questioning the sincerity of the Western Five and the chances of success in the face of past failures. Similar efforts in search of a peaceful solution had been made by the UN Secretary General, by visiting fact-finding missions and committees
of consultations, and even by African leaders risking their own political demise. Always, South Africa remained intransigent, obstinate and defiant. Why should the new initiative succeed?

They gave us three reasons: one, that they were doing this collectively — they assured us that each one of them as a member of the United Nations had always brought pressure to bear on South Africa, but this time they were doing this collectively, and therefore this was stronger than this or that separately. Secondly, they informed us that they had extensive relations with South Africa, and felt that they stood the best chance to prevail on South Africa to cooperate with the United Nations. And thirdly, they told us that in addition to those two reasons, or in spite of those two reasons, they had their own interest in southern Africa, and that therefore they preferred a peaceful solution rather than intensification of armed struggle, for in the latter case they stood in danger that their interest there might be jeopardized. We said those were excellent reasons. Therefore SWAPO and the concerned African states agreed to await the outcome of new “peace initiatives.”

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

That was in 1977. There are more South African troops and police agents in Namibia now than were there in 1977. There are more South African military bases now in 1981 than were there in 1977. More Namibians have died, including those who died at Kassinga, than in 1977. More Namibians are being incarcerated and tortured and killed than in 1977. In the period from 1977 to the present, South Africa has steadily imposed one fait accompli after another in Namibia, and today we are being told that there is an elected regime in Namibia led by a so-called Council of Ministers. That is the situation inside Namibia.

Similarly on the diplomatic front, what was clear has become unclear. The whole question of the illegality of South African rule and the issue of decolonization, a question which in 1977 the whole world had clearly delineated South Africa to be the obstacle, is now mired in confusion. There is distortion of the situation, falsification of history, and today’s propaganda depicts SWAPO and the Namibian people as the obstacle to Namibia’s freedom and independence. Today the responsibility of the United Nations is in question. The United Nations is being blackmailed while supporting the cause of Namibia’s independence. Attempts are being made to divorce SWAPO from the Namibian struggle. We are being called terrorists. We are being depicted as agents and instruments of the Soviet Union. The lie contends that we do not have a cause, that we believe in violence for the sake of violence, that we kill coldbloodedly our mothers, our fathers, our brothers and sisters, our wives, our husbands. This is what has happened on the question of Namibia between 1977 and the present.

Inside Namibia today we have a situation very similar to the situation that confronted the Vietnamese people in Indochina. At a certain stage in that tragic conflict a program was launched which was called Vietnamization. Today Namibians are being conscripted into the colonial army. This is the Namibianization of what is essentially a colonial conflict. Some Namibians have been bribed, have been offered all the profits of the colonial occupation of our country. They have been made dependent upon the system, and they have gone over to the enemy side. But many patriot Namibians, youth and students, are being conscripted into the colonial army. The propaganda claims that these are people opposed to SWAPO’s terrorism, people who are prepared to die in the defense of private property in Namibia. Yet no African in Namibia owns property anywhere. No African in Namibia owns land, and every day more young people flee across the border to Angola to escape serving in this army.

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

In 1977 we also agreed to participate in elections in Namibia. We were already at that time recognized by the overwhelming majority of the international community, by the OAU, Non-Aligned movement, and the United Nations. Some ambassadors at the UN felt that SWAPO was making a fundamental mistake by agreeing to participate in elections when the international community had already recognized it as the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people. Whom were we going to compete against? We responded to our friends and to others that we were confident, as we still are, that if elections were free and fair, SWAPO would win. The choice before the Namibian people, who had no land, and no rights, was a choice between freedom and slavery. I cannot conceive of a Namibian in the situation of free and fair elections choosing to remain as a slave. Everything else is secondary. That is the question that would be posed before the Namibian people. And we are the patriots, the combatants who have demonstrated the courage and determination to wage the struggle against the South African might, the ones upholding the legacy and heritage of our forefathers. That’s why our people will support us. And that’s why they will vote for SWAPO.

By the time that we went to Geneva at the end of 1980, after several years of negotiations carefully shepherded by the Contact Group, all the substantial issues had been resolved. The question left was that of implementation. Before the implementation process could begin, the two principal parties to the conflict in Namibia, the two armies that are fighting in Namibia, the South African colonial army and the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), needed to agree on the modalities of ceasefire. SWAPO had accepted Security Council Resolution 435 which requires the repeal of repressive laws, free elections, a constituent assembly to frame an independence constitution, and a UN presence to enforce UN authority. We had been ready since September 1978 to participate in the implementation of the process. South Africa from that date on has raised one problem after another in the process of obstructing and delaying implementation. SWAPO went to Geneva and reiterated our readiness to implement 435, our readiness to sign a ceasefire right there in Geneva with South Africa so that the implementation would begin. South Africa went there to sabotage the meeting, and finally succeeded in deliberately wrecking the meeting. That left an impasse.

MANDATORY SANCTIONS

We believe that the application of mandatory, comprehensive sanctions against South Africa is the next logical and necessary step that the international community must take. On our part, for as long as South Africa’s colonial occupation of our country continues, the struggle continues. We have no other alternative but to continue to intensify the armed liberation struggle in Namibia. If you believe in freedom, in social justice, if you believe in liberation, support us. Don’t try to convince us to choose between peaceful solutions — we don’t know what that means, because there is bloodshed, there is war in Namibia. It is through negotiations, should the enemy agree — and the Resolution 435 provides for the basis — that we can bring about peace in Namibia. At the moment there is no peace in Namibia. There is a bloody war. So in the face of a bloody war you do not talk about peaceful solutions, however desirable this is. And the history of our struggle can attest to the fact that we have preferred a peaceful solution. We have been forced to pick up arms, and for so long as there are more than 100,000 South African troops in Namibia, don’t ask us to lay down our guns.

The struggle continues. Victory is certain.