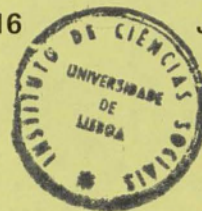


THE STATUS OF THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN AFRICA A Midyear Report from the American Committee on Africa

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The government of South Africa is lying to the world that there is peace and goodwill in Namibia. Yes, there is peace, but to the point of a gun.

Lutheran Youth in Namibia, statement on 1971 World Court decision

The year since June, 1971, has emphasized that the African people themselves will determine their destiny. Outsiders can help or hinder; they cannot decide. In June, the International Court of Justice advised the United Nations that South Africa held Namibia (South West Africa) illegally. Namibian church, student, and political protest against South African rule rose, culminating in December with a general strike of Ovambo workers against the contract labor system. At the same time, a nation-wide African protest was organized in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) to reject a settlement arranged between Britain and the illegal minority regime without prior consultation with the African majority. In the neighboring Portuguese colonies, the liberation movements continued to move forward, bringing education, health care, and local government to the liberated areas. But Portuguese resistance has been strengthened by massive aid from the United States through the Azores Pact.

NAMIBIA

The strike in Namibia is not merely a bread and butter affair but it is political and a struggle of a colonized and brutalized people. It is part and parcel of the liberation struggle.

SWAPO statement to U.N. Security Council,
Ethiopia meeting, January, 1972

The unanimity of Namibian opposition to South African control has been demonstrated throughout the year by a series of remarkable events triggered by the World Court opinion but far deeper in both cause and response. Most dramatic was the spontaneous strike of some 15,000 Ovambo workers against the contract, virtually slave, labor system. The U.S.-owned Tsumeb mine was among those struck. SWAPO was active in the strike but did not claim to organize it.

Structural modifications in the system and modest wage increases were not significant enough to end the strike. When the fishing season opened February 29, 1972, the two largest fish processing plants at Walvis Bay were closed by striking workers. South Africa holds at least 60 convicted Namibian political prisoners with an unknown number in detention, but resistance is so deep that new leadership continues to develop. Of these, twelve are now on trial in Windhoek for strike activities. South Africa admits detention of 213 more in northern Namibia, while SWAPO puts the figure near 900. South African troops were rushed secretly to Ovamboland to deal with resistance after the strikers returned home, and many deaths have been reported.

Before the strike, leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in S.W.A., with support from the Anglican Bishop of Damaraland, had called for independence, detailing abuses under South African rule. A milestone in February was a convention of nonwhite groups including Hereros, Rehoboth Basters, Ovambo, Nama, and others, which rejected fragmentation of Namibia into Bantustans and called for U.N. action to end South African rule. Among those represented was the South West African Peoples Organization, recognized by the O.A.U. as the major liberation movement in the territory.

SWAPO has been organizing armed resistance since 1966, chiefly in the Caprivi Strip which South Africa has fortified heavily, including a large airforce base at Katima Mulilo. SWAPO mines the area and incidents are frequent, ie a patrol vehicle destroyed March 30 with one dead and seven injured. On January 2, 1972, its forces stormed an army post near the air base and on January 6 it ambushed two armoured cars. Popular militancy following the strike has included Ovambo attacking the South African army with bows and arrows, sticks and pangas. Administrative posts, phone lines, road equipment and the like have been attacked and many miles of Angola border fence torn down by Ovambo who live on both sides. Portuguese forces have been sent there to cooperate with the South African troops.

ZIMBABWE (Rhodesia)

There is only one thing we want: our country.
Zimbabwe liberation leader to the U.N., January, 1972

Within three weeks of the announcement of British-Rhodesian settlement terms, postponing possible majority rule into the next century, the African National Council was organized to oppose the proposal. It cut across political and tribal lines and penetrated every district in the country. The "No" from the tribal trustlands was as clear as that from the cities. Police who rounded up anti-settlement demonstrators in Bulawayo found not only civil service employees but also off-duty police among them. Even tribal representatives in the legislature joined the opposition. The Pearce Commission reported a majority opposed.

Through the years, dissatisfaction had showed in many local actions: in the schools, and where Africans were dispossessed from traditional lands. African leaders were jailed but communicated easily with the outside when necessary (most workers in prisons, as elsewhere, are black in a 96 per cent African population). Occasional incidents and arrests revealed liberation people active far from the borders, obviously based inside the country. Last summer two Africans were sentenced to 3-1/2 years hard labor for having "comforted, harboured, and assisted two African terrorists;" a third received two years for



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sheltering others. Soon after, an arms cache was found in a Salisbury warehouse near Highfields, an African township. Again in April, 1972, three Africans were sentenced for bringing arms and ammunition into the country. These, of course, are the failures; success is silent.

Such underground and guerrilla activities are the work of both the Zimbabwe African National Union and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union. An attempted unification in fall, 1971, created FROLIZI with military emphasis but large elements of each group did not go along. In January, 1972, the O.A.U. sponsored a meeting which led to the creation of a United Military Command of ZAPU and ZANU. Herbert Chitepo of ZANU is chairman and Jason Mayo of ZAPU is secretary. Within Zimbabwe, the ANC has maintained an impressive unification of diverse people.

GUINEA-BISSAU AND CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

We love peace; we hate war. But we want to be free.

Amilcar Cabral, January, 1972

The secure hold which PAIGC (the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde Islands) has over the countryside in Guinea-Bissau was illustrated in April, 1972, when a United Nations delegation spent seven days in liberated territory. A major change in PAIGC operations began in August, 1971. Better equipment for troops, and a secure rear, meant that military activity could center on urban areas; even the capital, Bissau, was shelled. All over, attacks now average more than two a day. There is free communication and coordinated action between the PAIGC underground in the towns and PAIGC field forces outside. Organization and activity is increasing in the Cape Verde Islands in preparation for open struggle there. The islands are suffering from a periodic famine. There are rumors of a U.S. base there.

PAIGC is preparing for election of regional councillors and the first popular assembly in Guinea's history. When this occurs PAIGC will become the de facto government of Guinea, and the only government responsible to the people it has had. Development of education, agriculture, and trade continues. The medical situation is improving, as there are nine field hospitals each with a doctor in charge. More than 400 students have been sent abroad for advanced study. There are a dozen agronomists, with fifteen more in training. Under the Portuguese, Cabral had been the only one.

MOZAMBIQUE

Our constant concern is to expand the struggle so as to give freedom to more people.

Samora Machel, September 25, 1971

Last year, Portugal launched three great offensives, each claiming to have successfully destroyed FRELIMO, the Mozambique Liberation Front. This year FRELIMO is pressing into new territory, with the Portuguese unable to move on the ground. Now they war by helicopter, by bombing raids and destruction of villages and cultivation; they round up Mozambican peasants into fortified villages as the only way to stop their support for FRELIMO and the liberation struggle. Even in the provinces they still control, the Portuguese resort to mass arrests to check rising opposition; reportedly 1,400 are imprisoned in Gaza, Inhambane, and Lourenco Marques provinces. Additional arrests were made throughout the southern region at the time of Malawi President Banda's visit, September, 1971.

FRELIMO launched an offensive in Tete province where Cabora Bassa dam is under construction, in September, 1971. Tete was the last part of Mozambique conquered; its people have been politicized in the mines of South Africa and Rhodesia and on tobacco and cotton plantations. They welcomed FRELIMO in spite of terror and torture by the Portuguese and they took pickaxes to the new "mine-proof" hard-surfaced roads. Eleven trains were blown up in five months, and as far south as 85 miles from Beira. Cabora Bassa has been isolated, as is the town of Tete. The road from Salisbury across Tete to Blantyre (Malawi) is kept open only by regular armed convoys. Beyond the Zambezi river, FRELIMO has penetrated to the Rhodesian border in one direction and Zambezi province in another.

As 1972 opened, FRELIMO intensified activity in Niassa province. The Portuguese headquarters at Vila Cabral was attacked; an important military post was destroyed along with three bridges and a railroad engine, and the usual road sabotage. FRELIMO forces in Niassa and Cabo Delgado made contact. FRELIMO territory includes a million people and one-fifth to one-fourth of Mozambique. Its schools, health and medical system, and social services continue to expand and it is unquestionably the dominant Mozambique liberation movement. The recent merger of two dissident groups based in Kenya, FUMO and MOLIMO, with Zambia-based COREMO, added only slightly to the impression of a second liberation movement. COREMO has had sporadic activity in areas near Zambia for several years.

ANGOLA

The Portuguese government has lost the war.

MPLA, January, 1972

MPLA, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, continues to be the largest and most effective of the liberation movements in Angola. Last June GRAE lost its governmental status with the O.A.U. but the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, FNLA, on which it is based retains the status of a recognized liberation movement. The National Union for Total Independence of Angola, UNITA, has never been recognized.

MPLA advanced in at least three ways in the past year. First, it now has heavy artillery. Five towns were shelled in the Dembos region and northern and eastern Moxico and Cuando-Cubango. Second, Miconge near the Congo-B border was shelled, marking the return of action to Cabinda for the first time since 1970. Third, a sixth military region was opened in the Huile-Cunene region on the Namibia border. MPLA reports the use of herbicides by the Portuguese in Bie and Lunda provinces, and serious food and transport problems because defoliation has destroyed the people's food supply and MPLA must bring food in rather than receive it. Health services are improving in MPLA areas, estimated to include a million people. Portuguese arrests in Luanda last summer for pro-MPLA activities and distribution of subversive literature indicate that an underground continues to function in the cities.

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FNLA, with perhaps 10,000 troops, is based in ZAIRE and the areas in Angola which it controls ring the border. In September, FNLA was reported by Portugal as active in the Cuango river area from which it had been driven in February. FNLA reported intensified Portuguese bombing of Moxico and defoliation of plantations in February, 1972. In April an Austrian journalist reported a 1,200-mile trip through UNITA areas in Moxico province with a short incursion into Bie. UNITA forces, he says, total about 3,000 men and women armed with captured equipment. They have three bases with agricultural co-ops that help feed the troops; bush schools that use wooden slates and charcoal or manioc for chalk; medical posts but no doctors. Portuguese napalm bombing was reported.

FOURTH FRONT

A wave of arrests started in metropolitan Portugal last June as the result of increasing acts of sabotage there. In July the Minister of the Interior said that the government had found communist infiltration into the military establishment, universities, and trade unions, and that arrests were continuing. By August 15, the number of known political prisoners had risen to 160. Sabotage, protests, and strikes continued. Mass arrests started again at the end of September and are still frequently reported. Sabotage is most often directed against NATO installations or operations, and Portuguese air and naval ships and installations. Evasion of military service by emigration and desertion continue to be problems.

SOUTH AFRICA

How is the outside world to know of the numerous organizations, big and small, that have sprung up in the last few years all formed for the purpose of self defense and to launch a struggle for freedom? Who, outside South Africa, knows that the biggest organizations in the country are peasant organizations, the same peasants who have borne the brunt of oppression, exploitation, starvation, and torture; torture because they have at last raised their voice in protest against the unbearable conditions of their existence!

Unity Movement of South Africa, 1971

Trial is a prime source of information about liberation struggles, though they reveal failures, for additional publicity does not jeopardize continuing actions. South Africa's second longest security trial, this year, resulted in five-to-eight-year sentences for thirteen members of the Unity Movement of South Africa and its affiliate APDUSA. They were charged with financing recruitment of people to undergo political and military training; assisting people to evade the police; making their homes available for secret meetings and/or speaking at such meetings; collecting and distributing money and messages; furnishing people with board, lodging, and transport. The trials attracted wide attention because of the long detention of the defendants and evidence of the routine use of torture in questioning.

Activities of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress continued as previously reported, in propaganda and training of cadres abroad; in organization and local actions of the underground inside South Africa. In August, 1971, leaflet bomb distributions were reported in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Port Elizabeth. The ANC leaflets were printed in Tswana, Zulu, and Xhosa. Just too late for last year's report was the 15-year sentence for ANC's James April who had fought at Wankie in 1967, been jailed in Botswana and deported to Zambia, and had returned to underground work in South Africa via London. The year saw the surfacing of general militancy in many areas, especially among the Coloured, among urban Africans, and in the development of black consciousness among students.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE

Questions of aid and investment are important.... But the guts of the relationship between Africa and America is race, and hence southern Africa.

Sir Seretse Khama, March, 1971

The Nixon Administration continued its increasingly open sympathy for the minority regimes of southern Africa by rescuing Portugal from financial crisis with an approximate \$435 million in grants, loans, and credits in return for continued use of the Azores base. It continued to supply both Portugal and South Africa with "non-military" planes for unrestricted use. It joined South Africa and Portugal in open defiance of the U.N. embargo on Rhodesia by importing chrome. U.S. policy has always allowed trade, investment, and exchanges which strengthened colonialism and apartheid in southern Africa; Nixon has moved backward to de facto alliance with the racist powers.

THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

ACOA supports the liberation movements and works to change U.S. policy. To learn more, or to join the struggle, write to ACOA at 164 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10016. Contributions earmarked for the Africa Defense and Aid Fund will be used to give legal defense and political support to the movements.

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