

nora chase says

**'remember namibia'**

Most Namibians will not be aware of the 40th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights because 1988 will be overshadowed by the commemoration of two major events in our history: the tenth anniversary of the Cassinga massacre and the tenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, which established a process of transition for Namibia's independence.

For many Namibians the connection between these two events has left a deep and painful scar, not just because 600-750 Namibians died in the SADF raid on the Cassinga refugee camp, but because it took place at a time when South Africa was heavily engaged in negotiations leading to the acceptance, by both Swapo and South Africa, of Resolution 435.

The actions of the SADF were, at the time, a crucial indicator of the dual strategy which has characterised South African policy for the next ten years. On the one hand there was the facade of being ready to negotiate Namibia's future; on the other hand South Africa created obstacles to a negotiated settlement by escalating the conflict, engaging in wholesale aggression and destabilising neighbouring states. □

*As background material we have collated the following information on the Cassinga massacre and Resolution 435.*

**Cassinga**

On 4 May 1978, between 600 and 750 Namibians died at Cassinga in a joint SADF operation consisting of about 1 500 troops from both the army and the airforce. The SADF claimed that Cassinga was a SWAPO headquarters and military base. However Nora Chase dismissed this claim saying that it was a transit camp for Namibian



refugees inside Angola, including old men, women and children. Over 450 people were wounded, 112 taken prisoner of war, while the dead were buried in a mass grave at Cassinga. The prisoners of war were interned in a camp at Marienthal for the next six years. The camp was kept secret from the outside world for all that time.

**Resolution 435**

The Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978 ratified the proposals of the 'big five' Western nations for Nami-

bia's transition to independence. (The 'big five' were the United States, Britain, West Germany, France and Canada.)

**The proposals called for:**

- The appointment of a United Nations Special Representative to ensure conditions that could allow a free and fair election.
- The election of representatives to a Namibian Constituent Assembly which would draw up and adopt an independence constitution for the country, comprising a single political entity.
- The repeal, by the South African Administrator General in Namibia, of all discriminatory and restrictive laws which might impinge on the election process.
- The release of all political prisoners and detainees;
- The free return of exiles to participate in the election process.
- The cessation of hostile acts by all parties.
- A 12-week deadline for the withdrawal of the majority of South African troops from Namibia. Only 1 500 soldiers would be allowed to remain for the duration of the election process, but would be confined to barracks.
- The monitoring of the agreement by the military section of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (Untag).

UN Resolution 435 provides the only chance of a peaceful solution to the Namibian question and was accepted by all parties including the SA government. Hopes were high that Namibia would attain independence during 1978, but after the accession to power of Mr P W Botha, it became clear that the South African government had no intention of allowing Resolution 435 to be implemented. □