

# What are the issues in Namibia?

SOUTH Africa has occupied Namibia for over seventy years in contravention of international law.

This illegal occupation has caused immense misery to thousands of ordinary people. At the end of 1988 South Africa signed a treaty with Angola and Cuba, known as the Brazzaville protocol. This agreement provided a timetable for the implementation of United Nations Resolution 435 to usher in Namibian independence.

This significant and hopeful development will substantially reduce conflict in the region, and Namibia - known as Africa's last colony - will be finally be free.

But in the face of all these agreements, negotiations and international manoeuvring, we tend to lose sight of the people of Namibia, their history as a colonised nation and their heroic struggles to drive away the colonisers.

The struggle for the independence of Namibia has been going on since 1883 with the German annexation of the territory. Under German occupation systematic genocide of all the people of Central and Southern Namibia began. The issuing of the notorious Extermination Order by the German commander resulted in the extermination of 60% of the people in the region. By 1907 the Herero population had been reduced from 80 000 to 20 000.

After the Germans were

defeated in World War I, in 1919 South Africa was awarded South West Africa and mandated to administer it as an intergral part of the metropolitan area. While this implied that South West Africa would no longer be considered a colony, in fact, the oppression and exploitation of the voteless black majority continued on a scale similar to that experienced under German rule. This was evident when Smuts ordered the bombing of the Bondswarts village resulting in considerable loss of life.

After the second World War, when the United Nations was formed and all mandated and colonial territories were under UN trusteeship, Pretoria refused to let go of South West Africa.

Internal and external resistance to South Africa intensified and in 1960 SWAPO was formed. When SWAPO tried through peaceful means to get South Africa out, it was forced to resort to armed struggle in 1966. Meanwhile in 1971 the world court ruled that South Africa's occupation of Namibia is illegal and in 1973 the UN General Assembly recognised SWAPO as the sole and authentic voice of the Namibian people.

Finally in 1978, UN Security Council Resolution 435 became the internationally accepted peace plan for the Namibian independence.

Although SA agreed in prin-



Heroes' homecoming: Some of the thousands of people who gathered at Windhoek airport on June 13 to welcome back exiled Namibians.

ciple to the resolution, it repeatedly raised obstacles to its implementation and pursued policies which made implementation of resolution 435 an impossible task. Instead it installed a stooge administration in defiance of the UN. Its programme of aggression and destabilisation against the people of Namibia and Angola intensified. In May 1978, South African troops backed by bombers, attacked SWAPO bases and refugee camps at Casinga in Angola killing 314 adults and 298 children.

But what changed all this? What forced a well equipped military who for ten years brought death and destruction in Namibia and neighbouring Angola to the negotiating table? What forced the politicians of Pretoria who

unleashed terrible forces onto innocent and defenseless people to give in after so many years and agree to Namibian independence?

Certainly not the diplomacy of Pik Botha and Chester Crocker. ON the contrary the sustained resistance of the Namibian people, the financial cost of South Africa's war with Angola and the defeat of the SADF at Cuito Cuanavale.

In July 1987, Unita and SADF troops tried to seize the strategically important town of Cuito Cuanavale. This time they faced a different, more prepared and better equipped FAPLA (Angola Armed Forces). When South Africa's ageing fleet of Mirage fighters arrived into Southern Angola, they flew straight into a combined Cuban/Fapla

airforce in their MiG 243's. Faster, newer and more manoeuvrable, the South African Impala and Mirage fighters were no match. For the first time in more than ten years SA had lost its aerial superiority and its ground troops no longer had air support. This major defeat resulted in a high number of casualties while the rest were compelled to scramble back to the relative safety of Namibian soil. In August 1988 SA was forced to sign a cease fire with Angola.

The other factor is the cost of an ongoing war. As a result of sanctions and disinvestment, South Africa's ailing economy could ill afford a war and the occupation of Namibia (thought to cost in the region of R2 - million a day) without putting even more pressure on the economy.

Finally and most importantly, the courage and high level of resistance also contributed to South Africa's withdrawal and its acceptance of the implementation of resolution 435.

It is for them the men, the women, and children and those who lived before them who laid down their lives that we stand in support of along with the international community and all those who cherish freedom and peace, we recognise SWAPO as authentic representative of the Namibian people.

Although the independence of the Namibian people draws closer, we must not lose our guard, but continue to be watchful of South Africa's attempts to undermine the election process and independence in Namibia.

## BRIEFS

### Obituary

On May 1, 1989 Dr David Webster (44) was tragically gunned down outside his home in Troyeville. Dr Webster worked tirelessly helping friends and family of those in detention. He was also founder member of JODAC and the Five Freedoms Forum.

Over 7000 people attended his funeral to pay tribute to him. Firoz Cachalia, Publicity Secretary of the TIC had this to say of David: "He gave solace and support to the victims of repression... he had come to symbolise the re-emergence of the spirit of the Congress Movement and the struggle for a non-racial, egalitarian and humane society."

The TIC would also like to extend condolences to the families of Mr Malek Rasool, vice president of the TIC, Dr Aboobaker "Hurley" Asvat, Mr Elliot Shabangu and the many others who have paid with their lives in the struggle against Apartheid.

Hamba Kahle, Comrades

### ANC stalwarts

Executive members from the TIC and NIC visited Harry Gwala at his home in Pietermaritzburg. Gwala was released from Robben Island last year after being sentenced for Umkhonto we Sizwe and ANC activities in the sixties.

TIC President, Cassim Saloojee and TIC Publicity Secre-

tary, Firoz Cachalia met with Govan Mbeki recently. They had discussions on the proposed trip to India by the MDM and general discussion of the situation in the country.

### Youth Day

June 16 rallies were held in Lenasia at 2pm and in Laudium at 8pm. Mohammed Valli, acting general secretary of the UDF speaking at both the rallies called on the communities and the youth in particular to intensify the struggle against the apartheid regime.

### Namibia

On the 18th of May, the Johannesburg branch of the

TIC had invited David Soggot, a Namibian Senior Counsel to lead a discussion on Namibia. He expressed concern that the implementation of resolution 435 is constantly in danger because the security situation is still in the hands of the South African forces.

### Role of business

On May 28 the TIC Business and Economy Group held a successful business conference. Over 400 businessmen attended and contributed meaningfully in the deliberations. Booklets and videos of the Conference are available at a nominal fee. Contact Cassim Saloojee at (011) 834 3228 for details.