

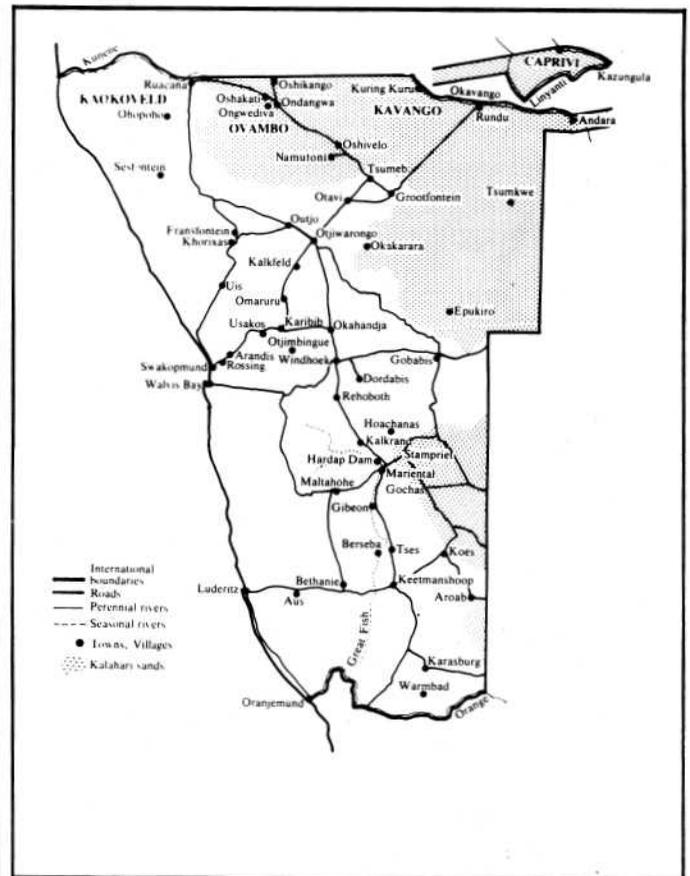
PROFILE

NAMIBIA

Basic Facts

Name	Namibia; but referred to by South Africa as South West Africa/Namibia.
Government	International law recognises the United Nations Council for Namibia as the legal authority, and in turn the UN recognises the South West African People's Organisation SWAPO as the sole authentic representative of the people. De facto Namibia is ruled by South Africa.
Capital	Windhoek
Area	824,000 km ²
Population	1.4 million Rural 70% Annual growth rate 3%
People	'African' 83% 'Coloured' 9% European (excluding up to 90,000 military) 8% Religion: 90% Christian, of which half Lutheran, 20% Catholic, 9% Anglican. Languages: 9. Ovambo is spoken by half the population. SWAPO uses English as a common language, the present administration Afrikaans.
Health	Infant mortality 163 per thousand for blacks (21 for whites) Life expectancy (1970) 31 for Ovambo men (65 for whites) Number of doctors (1975) 1 for 7700 people.
Skills	Literacy estimated by South Africa at 35%. 1% of African adults have completed secondary school and 12% primary. ▶

Map



The Churches

Strong identification with the colonial system was an early attitude of the German Lutheran and Catholic missionaries, though less marked among the Finnish Lutherans in Ovamboland. Nevertheless the church grew to include the majority of the population. Until the 1960s it was responsible for all education for black people, and today its network of missions, schools, hospitals and clinics is particularly important in the north. Inevitably, many of the members of the liberation movements were Christians. Gradually the institutional church became more Namibian and more vocal. A turning point came in 1971, when the black leaders of the two largest Lutheran churches issued an open letter repeatedly referring to the UN Charter of Human Rights and denouncing the conduct of the South African administration. Striking migrant workers applauded the Lutheran bishop. In the succeeding decade many missionaries were expelled — including three Anglican bishops — and church spokesmen blamed the South Africans for two bombings of the Lutheran press at Onipa, in 1973 and 1980, whilst on the other hand parts of the church continued to support the status quo. In 1978, however, sufficient common ground was established for all the main denominations except the white Dutch Reformed to collaborate through the Council of Churches for Namibia. Lutheran, Anglican and Catholic bishops went to Geneva in January 1981 to hold discussions behind the scenes at the abortive conference between SWAPO and South Africa. The churches, now almost all black-led, have come to use the Council of Churches to issue statements to South Africa and to international bodies calling for peace, human rights and free elections; at the same time they try to foster development in the less war-torn regions of the country.

Statement by the Namibian Council of Churches to the US Delegation on its Visit to Namibia, 12 June 1981

The Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), representing more than 75% of Christians in this country, is continuously committed to work for justice, peace and reconciliation.

It is out of this commitment and firm desire to see peace that the Council of Churches in Namibia has been especially concerned over the years about a peaceful and just solution of the political problems of our country and through various actions has supported the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 (1978).

We had appealed on numerous occasions to the United Nations, South Africa and the five western countries (USA, West Germany, Britain, France and Canada) for an immediate implementation of the UN plan. It is our conviction that this would prevent the escalation of violence and bloodshed and the growing hatred amongst the people of Namibia.

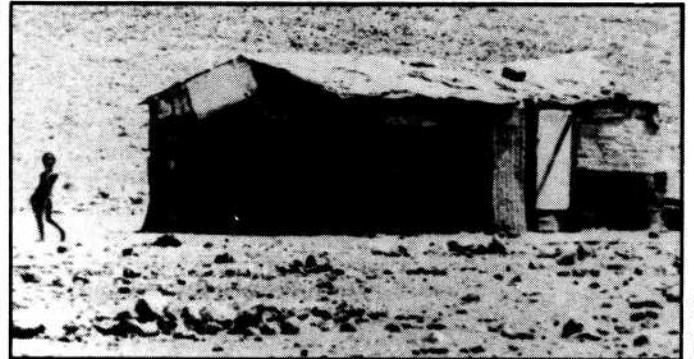
While there are now talks about the protection of the rights (privileges) of minorities, we are dumbfounded to learn that the long overdue right of the majority of the nation to determine their own future and to become independent seems to be a secondary matter for some western governments. Thus, the Council of Churches in Namibia believes in the same

rights for all Namibians as declared in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

It is in the interests of all our people, therefore, that every effort be made to immediately resume discussions aiming for a cease-fire date, and a start of implementation in accordance with Security Council Resolution 435 (1978). We reiterate that it is our continued conviction and confidence that the only practical peaceful solution lies in the hands of the United Nations.

We feel that any party involved in the negotiations who does not have the faith to co-operate in the national interest and who is insensitive to the suffering of our people should be held responsible for any failure of a peaceful solution.

We therefore again appeal to our congregation and all Christians throughout the world to pray without ceasing for the peace of Namibia (Col 4:2).



Living conditions in Damaraland

IDAF

Resources

Namibia in the 1980s *CIIR/British Council of Churches Position Paper, October 1981. 64pp, price £1 available from the organisations listed below. This contains a short bibliography.*



Australian Catholic Relief, PO Box J124, Brickfield Hill, N.S.W. 2000, Australia.



Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace, 3028 Danforth Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M4C 1N2, Canada.



Catholic Institute for International Relations, 22 Coleman Fields, London N1 7AF, UK.



Trocaire — Irish Catholic Agency for World Development, 169 Booterstown Avenue, Co Dublin, Ireland.

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Economy	(1979)
	1) GNP US\$ 1120 million GDP US\$ 1680 million The difference between GNP and GDP represents income to foreigners.
	2) Per capita GDP: \$1260 Average personal income for Africans: \$188.
	3) Main exports: diamonds, uranium oxide, base metals, beef/cattle, fish, karakul pelts (used for astrakhan).
Income distribution	Over 60% of GDP goes to company profits or taxes on profits. Another 24% goes as salaries etc. to whites (8% of population). 12% goes to blacks, i.e. 'Africans' and 'Coloureds' (92% of population).
Land distribution	6500 (white) ranching units cover 40% of land. 120,000 households live on another 40% of the land.
Employment	18% of labour force is unemployed. 45% of labour force is migrant labour, away from families. Almost no legal trade unions for blacks.

Chronology

- Early 19th c.** First white traders and missionaries.
- 1878 Britain annexes port of Walvis Bay (later transferred to South Africa).
- German Colonial Rule**
- 1883-85 German 'protectorate' declared over rest of Namibia.
- 1890s German settlers arrive; blacks evicted from their path.
- 1904-06 Great Herero and Nama Revolt. Germans adopt policy of genocide. Over 80,000 Namibians killed.
- 1908 Diamonds discovered; copper and lead mine already open.
- 1915 German surrender to South African troops.
- South African Colonial Rule**
- 1920 League of Nations gives British Crown Mandate for Namibia, to be exercised by South Africa.
- 1920s Boer farmers and fresh waves of German settlers; introduction of South African legislation controlling land and labour. Two risings (100 killed in 1922).
- 1946 South Africa refuses to recognise UN as successor to League of Nations.
Mining boom begins.

- 1949 First petitions to UN by Namibians for end of South African rule.
- 1957 Herman Toivo ya Toivo founds Ovamboland People's Organisation (to become SWAPO in 1960).
- 1959 Police fire on Namibians protesting at apartheid removals — 11 killed.
- 1962-4 Odendaal Commission recommends establishment of separate 'homelands' for different 'population groups'. South Africa starts implementation.
- 1966 UN ends South Africa's Mandate, and orders South Africa to withdraw.
First SWAPO military actions.
- 1967 SWAPO members imprisoned — Toivo ya Toivo for 20 years.
- 1969 SWA Affairs Act no 25 de facto incorporates Namibia into South Africa.
- 1971 International Court of Justice rules that South Africa occupies Namibia illegally.
Mass strike of Ovambo migrant workers.
- 1973 2½% turnout in Ovamboland elections, boycotted by SWAPO.
- 1974 UN Council for Namibia Decree no 1 requiring the Council's consent for any mining in Namibia.
- 1975-6 Independence of neighbouring Angola and abortive South African invasion of Angola.
South Africa abandons incorporation of Namibia and calls white-dominated Turnhalle Conference — which proposes independence by 1979.
Western powers twice veto sanctions against South Africa when South Africa fails to meet UN deadlines for withdrawal.
- 1977 Western powers propose settlement plan, with UN sponsored elections.
South Africa transfers Walvis Bay back to South Africa.
Churches reject Turnhalle.
- 1978 Western proposals, incorporated in UN Resolution 435, accepted by SWAPO and, initially, South Africa.
War intensifies; South Africa kills 700 Namibian refugees in Kassinga raid into Angola.
South Africa rejects UN Plan and instead holds internal elections, won after intimidation by the DTA, an alliance of parties from the Turnhalle Conference (SWAPO boycotts elections).
- 1979 Continued negotiations; SWAPO accept proposals, South Africa alternately delaying and intransigent.
- 1980 South Africa gradually transfers control of governmental institutions to Namibia.
November: DTA do badly in elections for second tier 'ethnic' legislative assemblies.
Major incursion into Angola, with use of mercenaries.
- 1981 January: abortive Geneva Conference.
New American administration proposes initially abandonment, then amendment, of Resolution 435.
Continued escalation of the war; repeated and prolonged South African attacks into Angola.

Political Developments

Recent political history has centred round two major developments: the growth of the liberation movement, SWAPO, and the manoeuvres of South Africa to maintain Namibia's dependence whilst preferably granting nominal political independence.

SWAPO emerged in 1960 from a political movement of students and migrant workers. The size of SWAPO meetings and demonstrations, the impressions of church and other workers, and the failure of any other party to establish itself all testify to its widespread support; the South African army itself estimates SWAPO would win more than half the votes in a free election.

South Africa's apparent strategy since 1975 has been to install a pro-South African regime in Namibia and then grant independence, looking for an arrangement similar to the Muzorewa 'internal settlement' in Rhodesia. The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), led by Dirk Mudge, has been built up in the hope it would be a viable alternative to SWAPO. The institutions of government have been steadily transferred from Pretoria to Windhoek. By 1981 there was a National Assembly (derived from the 1978 'elections'), a Council of Ministers whose DTA chairman had authority over all internal matters except security, and separate 'ethnic' authorities with jurisdiction over different racial groups. Civil service departments formally separate from their South African counterparts were set up, together with a South West Africa Defence Force (largely composed of South African troops, though with Namibian conscripts). Two problems remained. One was the failure of the DTA to consolidate its position — despite SWAPO's non-participation, the DTA fared abysmally in the November 1980 election for ethnic authorities, losing the key 'whites' authority to the right wing AKTUR with its Afrikaner rancher and civil servant support. These whites suspect the DTA of undermining white privilege — AKTUR on the other hand perpetuates formal apartheid in such fields as education. Blacks suspect the DTA for the opposite reason, anticipating little change. Many of the ethnic administrations are also corrupt. More important, however, was the second problem: the whole edifice rested on the continued presence of large numbers of South African troops.

Since 1977 a Contact Group consisting of the United States, Canada, West Germany, Britain and France, has proposed an alternative procedure,

centred on UN-supervised elections and formalised in UN Security Council Resolution 435. A consistent pattern has recurred in negotiations. Each time South Africa has raised objections — over the election date in 1978, the size of the UN military presence during transition (1979), the location of SWAPO bases after a ceasefire (1979), the idea of a Demilitarised Zone (1980/81) and the supposed lack of impartiality of the UN (1980/81). Often these objections were followed by increased military action against SWAPO (the Kassinga raid which killed 700 people in Angola was made in the midst of negotiations over Resolution 435). It is a matter of record that over all the issues listed above, except the first, SWAPO nevertheless made concessions. Further objections have always been raised, for South Africa was not prepared to accept Westminster-style elections that SWAPO might win, as the Defence Minister told the United States in April 1981. By mid-1981 a further series of negotiations had begun, but the Reagan Administration's failure to condemn South African incursions into Angola threatened the common front of the Contact Group.

Meanwhile, the war in the north has intensified and expanded. The military arm of SWAPO, PLAN, has since 1966 mounted an increasing number of guerrilla attacks on the South African occupying forces and those they see as collaborators. PLAN has widespread support, particularly in Ovamboland, where it is said that SWAPO takes control after sunset. The South African response has been an enormous escalation of the war — by August 1981 some estimates of troop numbers were as high as 90,000, and there were repeated and prolonged invasions of southern Angola. In Ovamboland the telling assumption of the South Africans seems to be that everyone supports the enemy; church sources report repeated massacres of groups of civilians on suspicion. Churches have been desecrated, and a theological seminary firebombed. The people live in the midst of a battlefield, the depredations of war compounded by drought and the difficulty of sustaining agriculture. As the Council of Churches in Namibia stated in January 1981, commenting on the delays over UN settlement proposals: 'Endless negotiations on minor grounds prolong the acute agony and suffering of our people, as they only increase the numbers of our people who die as a result of the war'. ■



Police break up a rally in Windhoek

Glossary

AKTUR	Right-wing white party.
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance. South African-backed alliance of parties established as an alternative to SWAPO.
GDP	Total value of goods and services produced annually within the borders of a country (whether by nationals or foreigners).
GNP	Total value of goods and services produced annually by nationals of a country (whether within the borders or outside).
PLAN	Military arm of SWAPO.
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation. Liberation movement recognised by the United Nations.

Economic Situation

The political economy of theft

Namibia is a classic case of an economy pillaged in the interests of foreigners. In the 19th century a population of less than half a million lived in a country considerably larger than France. Two groups moved in — European settlers who established huge cattle ranches, and foreign mining companies. Over 80,000 Namibians were killed as German forces established their rule and evicted those in the way. Black Namibians now lived mainly in the north, but rural poverty increasingly forced them south to work — ensuring a labour supply for the new enterprises.

As a result, Namibia today ranks among the ten richest African countries if the total value of annual production (GDP) is divided by the number of people. In practice, however, by far the largest share of this wealth — about three-fifths — goes straight to company profits or South African taxes on profit. Little is left for the majority of the people: the average income of black Namibians is no more than that of Tanzanians — though Namibia's annual production per head is six times that of Tanzania. Furthermore, blacks are almost entirely excluded from skilled or managerial posts (except as primary school teachers or nurses); there are only 5,000 Africans in the whole country who have completed secondary school.

The economy is extra-ordinarily oriented towards South Africa and the outside world. 90% of goods produced are exported. There is very little processing before export — even cattle are exported live. Manufacturing is tiny. 80% of goods consumed, including half the food, is imported. No other country exhibits such extremes.



Diamond workings at Oranjemund

Mining

Mining is the largest sector, contributing over a third of GDP. Most mines are owned by multinational corporations, including Amax and Newmont (USA), Falconbridge (Canada), RTZ, Consolidated Goldfields and Charter Consolidated (UK), as well as South African private and state corporations. Namibia's Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM), owned by the South African multinational De Beers, produces about a sixth of the world's annual supply of gem diamonds, and until recently the bulk of Namibia's mining income. CDM is extremely profitable — the selling price of a diamond is about four times the cost of its production.

Establishment of new mines has been illegal under international law since the UN revoked South Africa's mandate over Namibia in 1966. A major challenge to this has come from the development of the world's largest uranium oxide complex at Rössing, which reached full production in 1979. The majority equity holder is the British multinational RTZ; the British Central Electricity Generating Board has contracted to buy uranium oxide; West Germany, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Japan and the USSR are also implicated. SWAPO strongly opposes the current illegal arrangements, but has indicated its willingness to sell uranium to commercial users at an economic price after independence.

The present administration prides itself on the attractive terms offered to foreign mining companies, including low taxes and no obligation to process minerals locally, to plough back profits into the country, or to recruit Namibians for management posts. Such policies reinforce underdevelopment by limiting the growth of local industries, preventing the creation of a body of skilled Namibian technicians and managers, and reducing the tax from minerals which the government could then spend on wider development projects or social services.

Agriculture

Namibia has a hostile environment — 50% desert, and only 2% of the land suitable for crops. Incoming white settlers established huge ranches (over 50 km²) producing beef and karakul wool for export. They remain dependent on state support, complex technology and low wages. ►

By contrast African agriculture has been neglected in the interests of creating a flow of labour out of the overcrowded 'reserves'. Crop yields are among the lowest in the world, reflecting poor services and markets and the absence of family members on migrant labour contracts. Very few families can subsist without money sent back from migrants. Meanwhile food has to be imported.

Fishing

During the 1970s the rich fishing off the coast of Namibia was exhausted as a result of overfishing by South African companies: further offshore much the same was being done by fleets from other countries. At its height the operation, based on Walvis Bay, supported eight processing plants and had an annual income of over US\$ 120m. Warnings from scientists about the effects on fish stocks of such a high rate of fishing were ignored, and by 1980 catches had fallen to one-seventh of their 1968 volume. One of Namibia's long-term assets was thus destroyed with no benefit to the Namibian people.

The processing plants at Walvis Bay are now closed and the operation has been transferred to Chile, where restrictions on catches and on the repatriation of profits are not unduly severe.

Labour

About 110,000 Namibian workers are migrants, most of them on 12- to 18-month contracts living in spartan and overcrowded compounds separated from their families. The system allows low wages, since families supplement the wage by agriculture. These low wages were essential for the early growth of the mines and ranches. However, particularly since the massive strike of Ovambo migrant workers in 1971, migrants have been active politically and constitute the backbone of the liberation movement. There is now a split amongst the dominant white groups: mining companies are prepared to see higher wages



and an end to migrant labour, since the wage bill is a small proportion of their costs and they have an interest in a settled, skilled labour force; ranchers, on the other hand, would be hard hit if they had to increase wages, and they constitute the main support for AKTUR, the diehard right wing party.

Legislation has been passed to permit trade unions, but no unions with strong shop floor organisation have in practice been allowed for blacks. Attempts to establish a National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), supported by SWAPO, since the mid-1970s are strongly opposed by the state, and union leaders are often detained. However, as might be expected from mines' changed attitude to migrant labour, the CDM mine has permitted a workers' committee which management believe to be associated with NUNW.

There is an extreme shortage of high level manpower, with a heavy dependence on South African whites. ■

The Future

The present economic system is likely to continue if South Africa can repress widespread opposition to its rule, and in particular the guerrilla war mounted by the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO). If, on the other hand, the United Nations succeeded in its objective of holding free and fair elections, nearly all sources are agreed that SWAPO would win power. SWAPO statements indicate that a SWAPO government would attempt to transform the economy. There would be a redistribution of land to reduce inequalities of ownership and raise rural income. The contract labour system would be ended to allow families to live together. Basic social services would be introduced for all. A central aim would be to create a more integrated economy, with increased food production, more export processing and the establishment of industry. SWAPO would reduce the country's dependence on South Africa, replacing this with links with neighbouring states and a wide range of foreign countries. There would be a major state role in large-scale enterprises. In view of the acute

shortage of trained Namibians, the success of these programmes would depend on a continued supply of skills and technology from overseas. This is also likely to reduce the speed at which SWAPO can realise its long-term aim of establishing a socialist system. SWAPO has, in fact, stressed that every attempt would be made to retain skilled white personnel after independence, and that multinational companies would be acceptable providing they operate within the guidelines of national policies. All major mines would be kept operating, as an essential source of revenue, using a combination of management contracts and joint ventures with multinationals; there is every indication that, as in neighbouring Botswana, this would be acceptable to the companies. (Exceptions will arise with mines opened after the 1966 revocation of the UN Mandate).

SWAPO has devoted considerable effort to the education of refugees. By 1981 over 3000 students were in SWAPO-organised secondary education outside the country — as many as the number in equivalent classes inside; the 500 students in post-secondary training organised by SWAPO were significantly more than those inside. ■