

NOWIN NO WAR IN NAMIBIA

'During World War II the South African government respected the conscience of individuals and there was no conscription. The country is even more seriously divided now than it was then.'

South Africa is illegally occupying Namibia and this is cause for many in conscience to refuse military service. When South Africa withdraws from Namibia there would be no need for a massive military establishment unless there has been a political failure to respond to the desires of the citizens.

If a conscripted army is necessary it will be because of the political failure to respond to the desires of the citizens, and that army will be engaged in a civil war, which is good cause for many to refuse military service. In such a civil war, if the state has to rely on conscription to man its army the war is already lost.

Therefore the Black Sash demands that the South African government abolish all conscription for military service. We maintain that there is no total onslaught against the people of South Africa and the total strategy demanded of us is not the military defence of a minority government but the total all-out effort of all South Africa's people to bring about democratic government and the relief of the poverty and deprivation suffered by the majority.'

Black Sash resolution, 1983 National Conference

In July 1983, the annual conference of Conscientious Objectors Support Groups took up this resolution and decided to campaign on the issue of conscription. They launched a campaign with the support of some 18 organisations including the Black Sash.

So it was that our Cape and Transvaal Regions recently joined in a two-week campaign to focus on the situation in Namibia and call for an end to conscription.

Poster demonstrations, press conferences, vigils, for those who have died, public meetings and leaflet distributions were organised. In the Cape, the End Conscription Committee issued buttons and stickers. In Johannesburg there was a slide tape show and a Saturday evening concert. One of the ECC pamphlets issued in Cape Town was banned.

Demonstrators in Cape Town, calling for peace in Namibia were taken to police stations to verify their legality. In Johannesburg an irate member of the public held up the rush-hour traffic by getting out of his car to hurl abuse at a demonstrator.

The Cape stands were filmed by a foreign television service and will later be included in a documentary.

The SWAPO viewpoint

was put to a press conference in Cape Town on May 8 by Anton Lubowski, the SWA advocate who has joined Swapo.

The majority of people in Namibia, he said, wanted peace. 'You can never win a war like that — why not stop,' he argued. If peace initiatives failed, he feared an escalation of suffering and a situation in Windhoek similar to that in Beirut.

It was unfair to judge Swapo as a political party, he said. 'It is a liberation movement, so different people support it. Some are Marxist, others not.' If PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) was seen as the military wing of Swapo, the SADF might be seen as the military wing of the National Party, Mr Lubowski felt.

The CDP viewpoint

was put by Mr Hans Rohr, leader of the Christian Democratic Party in Namibia to the same press conference.

His party, he said, had much support among blacks but only about 5% of whites supported them. Though he was often called a 'terrorist' or a 'communist', his party rejected violence. Still, he understood how, after decades of oppression, people could say there was no solu-



Campaign buttons

End conscription campaign

tion but to take up arms and fight for their rights. As a Christian, he was opposed to marxism, communism and authoritarianism. In this, he felt, he differed from Swapo. He believed that a just, responsible, socially relevant capitalism was better than socialism.

The NCC viewpoint

Young South Africans were conscripted to 'maintain the South African presence in Namibia by force and to uphold apartheid' Pastor Kameeta of the Namibian Council of Churches told a Mass Meeting in St George's Cathedral in Cape Town.

'We can place the blame for the war in South Africa and Namibia squarely at the door of those who create and implement apartheid policies.'

The legal system

'You hardly ever know when a law is being made until it is promulgated,' said Mr Lubowski, referring to what he terms the one-man rule of the Administrator General.

The application of security laws in Namibia, he said, is worse than that in South Africa in that not only the security police, but also the army and sometimes even the railway police are empowered by the law to act against any person suspected of committing a security offence. The detaining official can detain anyone he suspects for 30 days' and this can be extended for a further 30 days with permission. But there is no way of checking whether permission has been given and the security police have admitted they have no record of people detained.

The victims

When action, often vicious action, is taken against individuals, often by the Koevoet unit, an acceptable defence is a claim that those taking it were acting in the belief that they were helping suppress communism or terrorism. In one case, the victim of such an act was a member of the National Assembly, the DTA.

Other cases include that of Mr Kakavu. Who 'disappeared'. Only after an application for presumption of death did the security police admit they had arrested him and all the men of his village. The court found he had been tortured and had died as a result of being held by the security police.

In another case, two girls were shot.

In a third, certain brutal action was taken by a man disguised in Swapo uniform.

The judiciary

Namibia, said Lubowski, has a very good judiciary if 'they' would give it a chance. He cited the Marienthal incident as an example. An application to court for a decision on whether the 147 people held in detention at Marienthal after the SA attack on the refugee camp at Casisinga in Angola in May 1978 were being legally held, had been banned by the executive.

'I have never in my whole legal career experienced that the executive will seek to ban a court action and effectively intervene in the judicial process like that,' said Mr Lubowski.



'The war there is a civil one in which one man's hero is another man's terrorist', Anton Lubowski told the Cape Town press conference. From l to r, Anton Lubowski, Michael Evans, Hans Rohr.

End conscription campaign

The ECC viewpoint

'The End Conscription Committee say NO to conscription because it helps prolong the war in Namibia. South Africa's continued occupation of the country is illegal in terms of international law and is a cause of the war. Many church bodies have called for the withdrawal of South African troops, for the speedy implementation of UN Resolution 435 and the holding of free and fair elections so that the people of Namibia can determine their own future. We endorse this. Let there be an end to the war. Let there be an end to the loss of life, the maiming of people, the psychological damage and all the other costs this war is engendering.'

DAVID SCHMIDT, Chairman ECC, Cape

The Black Sash viewpoint

We believe very strongly that the whole question of conscription should be a matter for serious public debate in this country. We have taken the enormous step of putting the country on a war footing without any of the public debate there should be about such a move that affects the lives of every single person in the country.

SHEENA DUNCAN, National President



David Schmidt, ECC Chairman in Cape Town.



Pastor Kameeta of the Namibian Council of Churches speaking in St Georges Cathedral.

High cost of war

OVER the last decade the South African state has demonstrated an increasing commitment to military alternatives. In a classic 'carrot and stick' approach this militarization is juxtaposed to the offer of peaceful coexistence — a coexistence based very much on South Africa's terms. The war in Namibia, already described as 'unwinnable' by Lieutenant-General Jannie Geldenhuys, is daily exacting heavy cost in terms of financial and human resources.

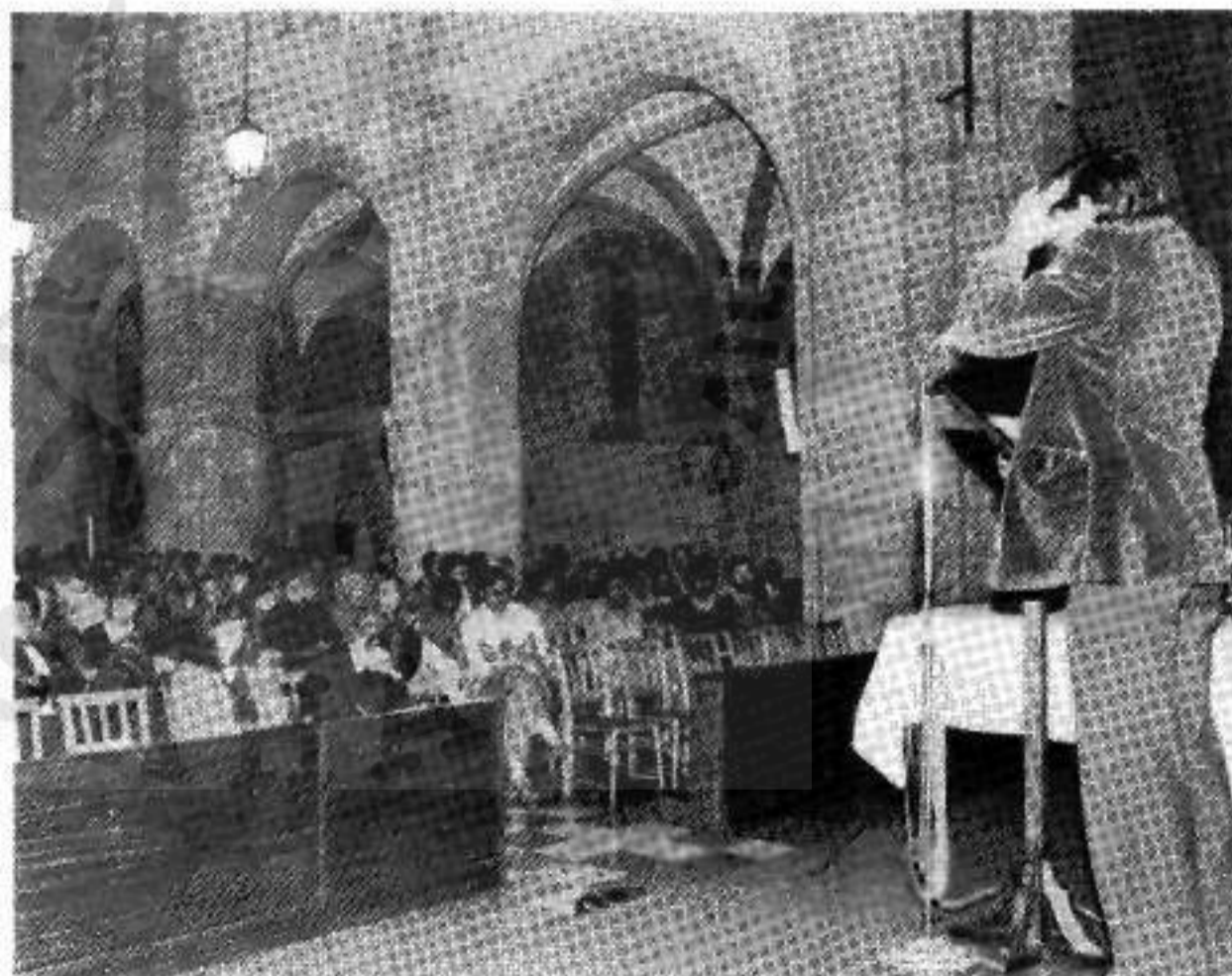
● The South African defence budget has increased enormously from R44 million in 1960 to R3755 million in 1984. The Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, has indicated that this amount must remain high and probably increase in the near future.

● It is estimated that 10 percent of the total South African budget is being spent on Namibia. In 1980 P.W. Botha announced that R3 000 million had been spent on 'infrastructure and defence' in Namibia. The annual cost of the war alone is about R600 million.

● The Namibian economy is suffering severely from the protracted conflict. Since 1978 the country has experienced an average negative growth rate of -1.5 percent. 75 percent of the country's needs are imported.

● At least 10 000 Namibians have died in the 18 year war. This amounts to 1 percent of the entire population.

Objector Vol 2 No 3



'We should ask why we are being conscripted, what we would be called to do and whose interests we are defending in Namibia'. Rev David Russel addresses the 350 strong meeting in St George's Cathedral, Cape Town.

Statement from the End Conscription Committee

The people of South Africa want peace — peace that begins at home, not in London or in Komatipoort, and the people of South Africa shall have their peace. Let us work towards that day. Let us build a new South Africa — a South Africa that does not have to defend itself against its own sons and daughters with the most powerful military machine in Africa.