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Public Meeting to Mark 10th Anniversary of the International Court of Justice Opinion on Namibia

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How does one follow the excellent statement just given by Paulette Pierson Mathy? First, I must say I share with her the warmth of looking into the audience and seeing so many familiar faces, people one has known and worked with over these past many years.

I am happy to convey to this meeting the greetings, solidarity and congratulations of the World Council of Churches. The WCC is a fellowship of churches bringing together some three hundred churches from over one hundred countries of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

We have long been concerned with how we provide solidarity, concrete solidarity to the people struggling in Namibia and South Africa. As recently as August last year the Central Committee of the WCC called upon its member churches and all Christians:

"to press governments and international organizations to enforce comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, including a withdrawal of investments, an end to bank loans, arms embargo and oil sanctions and in general for the isolation of the state of South Africa." (1)

From as long ago as 1928 the ecumenical movement, then speaking through the International Missionary Council, voiced concern about relationship between organized racism and political and financial support for maintaining racism. Since 1969 through the Special Fund to Combat Racism the WCC has given over US$ 2,000,000 in humanitarian grants to the liberation movements of South Africa and Namibia including a 1980 grant of 200,000 to the SWAPO. During the 1948 First Assembly of the WCC, in Amsterdam in a statement called "the Social Function of the Church", the Assembly stated that the church could only say "a convincing word" to society about justice and human dignity if it

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(1) Document No. 33, Statement on South Africa, August 1980
took steps to eliminate the practices of discrimination and segregation.

Thus it is that in August 1980 the Central Committee of the WCC called upon member churches to

1) support the Council of Churches in Namibia;
2) increase pressure upon UN Security Council members for speedy implementation of UN Resolution 435;
3) denounce the exploitation of Namibia’s natural resources by various TNC’s such as Rio Tinto Zinc

and furthermore the Central Committee reaffirmed its 1977 decision recognizing SWAPO as the authentic representative of the Namibian people.

Further, at the International Conference in Solidarity with the struggle of the People of Namibia, the Church Group there representing some 16 international church bodies and church related organizations called upon churches throughout the world to dissociate themselves from corporations and banks operating in South Africa and Namibia by way of forcing the termination of such companies operations in South Africa and Namibia. The resolution particularly noted those companies exploiting the natural resources of Namibia in violation of Decree No. 1 of the UN Council for Namibia.

In these positions and others we know that we are not alone. We join a vast assembly of countries and organizations which are pressing for the enforcement of the 1971 International Court of Justice decision stating South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia, for the complete isolation of South Africa and for the fundamental eradication of apartheid. We note that the OAU has repeatedly called for "the mobilization of world public opinion in support of the effective application of economic and other sanctions against South Africa." (2)

Recent international UN and NGO Seminars on transnational corporations, oil, arms violations and bank loans have stated clearly "That there must be sanctions applied against the South African apartheid regime."

(2) Council of Ministers, OAU, Resolution on the Application of Sanctions Against the Racist and Minority Regimes in Southern Africa, CM/Res. 734 (XXXIII) July 1979
In spite of the triple veto exercised by South Africa's traditional allies, France, Britain and the USA, the 30 April 1981 overwhelming vote in the UN Security Council in support of the resolutions brought in by the UN Africa Group signals the increasing and inevitable isolation of the Apartheid regime in the community of nations.

Friends, apartheid is far from eradicated. This meeting is but part of our work of pressing anew for sanctions against apartheid. Developments in South Africa, and global developments wherein key Western countries are openly embracing the South African police state, should only serve to intensify our ardour to combat the apartheid regime. Apartheid is clearly gaining new friends in the West. A document recently released to the world's press dated May 14, 1981 shows Chester Crocker opining to Secretary of State Haig the following highly revealing thoughts:

"A relationship initiated on a cooperative basis could move forward toward a future in which South Africa returns to a place within the regional framework of Western security interests... We can work to end South Africa's polecat status in the world and seek to restore its place as a legitimate and important regional actor with whom we can cooperate pragmatically. You will also need to respond with an artful combination of gestures and hints. The gestures would include, as described in the attached paper, small but concrete steps such as the normalization of our military attache relationship."(3)

This statement, the recent June 20 announcement by Reagan's government that it will probably train a South African coast guard (in formation), one which will be "civilian" rather than naval in order to circumvent the already much circumvented UN arms embargo, the South African military commanders visits to Washington and New York and the increasing assistance the US government is giving to traitor groups such as "oink, oink"UNITA to destabilize the sovereign People's Republic of Angola are clear indications of the direction of the current Rawhide/Rainbow Republican administration.

(3) Memorandum to the Secretary of State from Chester A. Crocker, p. 6
It cannot be stated too loudly or too forcefully that today South Africa illegally occupies Namibia; further that the very presence of South Africa as an administrating power in then South West Africa is a product of the same manipulating and arranging by the Western powers that today keep South Africa in Namibia. The ICJ in its advisory opinion of 1971 has helped to create for the world community a clear situation vis-à-vis Namibia for it ruled that South Africa is legally bound to withdraw from Namibia immediately but additionally said that:

"Member States of the UN are under obligation to recognize the illegality of South Africa's presence in Namibia and the invalidity of its acts on behalf of or concerning Namibia, and to refrain from any acts and in particular and dealings with the Government of South Africa implying recognition of the legality of or lending support or assistance to, such presence and administration". (4)

Going back through the years of Namibian history two major themes consistently emerge. First, a point which I would like to emphasize this evening is the fact of continual resistance by the Namibian people to foreign domination. I am proud to say that many Namibian churches and countless church people have been part of this resistance, both within the nonviolent and violent stages. SWAPO today is part of a historical continuum of struggle. One which begins with the 17th primary resistance against European intruders and is expressed today in the growing operations of PLAN. SWAPO is rooted in the Namibian soil. As pointed out in the Political Programme of SWAPO:

"The close historic identification of our movement with the interests of the toiling masses of the Namibian people is one of the main factors which explain the resilience of our movement when compared to other anti-colonial groups which have emerged in Namibia and have either collapsed or remained paper organizations."

Thus it is that the WCC will once again call on its member churches to intensify their support to SWAPO as the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people.

There is a second theme which shows just as clearly. Succinctly stated it is the continual effort of the Western powers, especially Britain, the United States and Germany to either themselves rape and pillage

(4) As quoted in IDOC Namibia, The Strength of the Powerless: An Idoc dossier, Rome 1980, p. 65
Namibia and the Namibian people or to retain Namibia under the control of those who willingly and consciously will do the pillaging and raping for them.

There is a document which we all know well. It is a document which is itself the product of serious political struggle. Part of it reads:

"No person or entity, whether a body corporate or unincorporated, may search for, prospect for, explore for, take, extract, mine, process, refine, use, sell, export, or distribute any natural resource, whether animal or mineral, situated or found to be situated within the territorial limits of Namibia without the consent and permission of the United Nations Council for Namibia or any person authorized to act on its behalf for the purpose of giving such permission or such consent."

(Decree No. 1)

Why Decree No. 1? Behind these words lie a history which we are beginning to learn all too well. Excellent research like The Rossing File booklet done by CANUC, the various studies done by UN and UN-related bodies, the Paris Solidarity Conference, the seminar and above all the constant resistance by the workers inside Namibia are all contributing to the creation of a massive dossier which documents the schemes of plunder which have been and are being carried out by Western governments and corporations in Namibia.

The Daily Telegraph recently reported that in 1980 Rossing mine had a profit of £52 million*. This means an almost 40% increase from the £27 million net profit in 1979. This amazingly high figure clearly raises the question of who is buying Rossing uranium. But it also points to why the Rio Tinto Zinc group and its partners, which like all TNC's true to their nature (i.e., what Malcolm X called "the bloodsucker"), can never rest. They are now going on to begin a new exploration programme in Namibia.** The Rossing groups callous disregard for Decree No. 1, for safety and good working conditions for the workers is rooted in an insatiable demand for profit but also a calculated design to exploit Namibia's resources as quickly as possible for this is the group once led by Sir Val Duncan (late chief Executive of RTZ deceased 1975) who in authoring the 1970 Duncan Report stated clearly his concern for

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* Daily Telegraph, Monday May 18, 1981
** Financial Times, Wednesday May 20, 1981
the people of Namibia and other parts of black Africa when he recommended to the Foreign Office "disengagement from black Africa and other less economically important areas and concentration on the 'developed' parts of the world such as Australia, Canada and South Africa."*** It's a report to be read, one that rests squarely in the manipulative and dominating tradition of the European world's "civilizing missions" "trusteeships" and white man's "burdens".

In many, many of its aspects it's a history which could be told by many. Aboriginals in Australia - victims of Rio Tinto Zinc's greed there - could tell it. The Shoshone in Montana - there victims of AMAX, Newmont, Bethlehem- could tell it. Black, Puerto Rican and Mexican workers in Bethlehem's south side Chicago plant could tell related histories of super-exploitation, on the job injuries, "speed-up", layoffs and pay raises for white male executives. The Guaymi in Panama could recite the same history of Rio Tinto's desecrating sacred land. As someone put it in a recent Rio Tinto annual meeting:

"it's the same old story of 'sucking the goodness out of the land and spitting it in people's faces'". (5)

Who among us would be surprised if with the days of a free SWAPO-led Namibia, there comes from the Namibian people an unequivocal demand for reparations from the Rio Tinto Zinks, Metallgesellschaft, Bethlêhems and Unilevers? Who among us would blame (given the history) a free Namibia government, which fully aware of the operations of a mine like Rossing wherein it has established within the company its own paramilitary organization, if it banned Rossing and its various managers from ever operating in Namibia?

Just as there is a changed global situation in the world today, so too is there a change in the consciousness of many working and church people throughout the world. More and more people see their own interrelatedness. More and more in Britain, the UK, Germany, regular folk see a relationship between their handling dangerous "yellowcake in unmarked furniture trucks and the bombings of children in refugee camps so that the same companies can keep on getting the same ol'yellowcake. Like Mylai, like Wiriyami (like Orangeburg and New Cross) Kassinga is

***Lanning, Mueller, Africa Undermined, Penguin, 1979, p. 425
(5)"RTZ Chief Shouted Down By Shareholders" Guardian, May 28, 1981
not forgotten. It remains emblazoned in our memories impelling us ever forward.

Mr./Ms. Chairman, friends, my deepest gratitude to be with you this evening. To share with you this day. On behalf of the WCC I extend our congratulations and solidarity. From myself I say simply A Luta continua!