

"Nothing Can Stop Us"

—SWAPO Woman Speaks

As South Africa looked yearningly to the incoming Reagan administration to ease the mounting military and diplomatic pressures for UN-supervised elections in Namibia, Ellen Musialela toured the United States in November telling the other side of the story. At the end of her tour, the representative of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) sat down with Southern Africa and repeated the message she had carried all across the country—that the people of Namibia are determined to win their freedom, and that South Africa's resistance to elections reflects not strength but weakness.

The apartheid regime is fighting "a losing war," she told us. "It's not weapons which fight but the determination of the people"—a determination exemplified by what she told of herself, of the dedication and commitment that have been her life since she first joined SWAPO in 1964 at the age of 14.

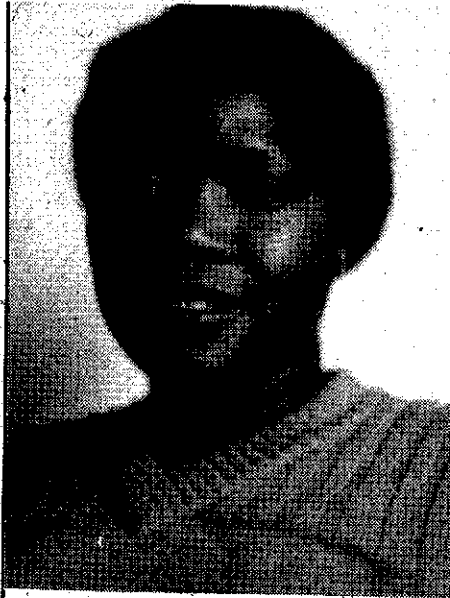
by Gloria Jacobs

Ellen Musialela was only eighteen years old when the South African police came looking for her. She had just returned from a clandestine trip to Botswana where she and a male colleague had raised money to buy transport equipment for SWAPO and worked briefly organizing Namibians living on that side of the border. When she arrived back at her parents' home in the Caprivi Strip, Musialela discovered she'd been branded a criminal by the government—"They were looking for me, dead or alive."

That night, without time to rest from her Botswana trip, Musialela began the journey that exiled her from her country, a journey that would lead her to SWAPO training schools in Africa.

"When I arrived home that day [in 1968] my parents said I should leave the country immediately." Musialela and her companion set off right away, on foot, hiking to a new life.

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Representative Ellen Musialela spent three months touring the US.

"We walked the entire night without sleeping to get as close to the border as possible. Late the next day, we came to a river where women and children were fishing. We were so thirsty we decided we had to approach the river, but as we did so, a car with about fifteen police pulled up.

"There was one Black policeman and he said to us in our language, so the whites could not understand, 'We are looking for you. Run away. Cross the border and I will not tell the others that you are the ones we want.'

"Without taking any water, we got up and kept on following the river, trying to reach the Zambian border before the police realized who we were. We were only 100 yards from Zambia when we looked back and saw the police car coming at us, very fast. We were so tired, but we ran the last yards to the border station, where the guards tried to stop us from entering. 'We are freedom fighters,' we said. 'You must let us in.'"

Musialela and her partner entered Zambia with the South Africans only a few feet behind them. "Those are not freedom fighters. They are thieves," the South

Africans told the Zambians, who refused to hand us over because they said they were forbidden to by international law. The South Africans then threatened to open fire on the border hut. They fought and argued for two hours and finally turned away in disgust. We went to Lusaka then and joined other comrades from SWAPO."

A Nation in Struggle

In the last few years, squeezed between SWAPO's growing military strength and mounting international pressure, the South Africans have become more desperate and vicious in their attempts to cow the people. Whole villages and their outlying fields have been burnt to the ground; South African troops freely cross into Angola where they bomb SWAPO refugee camps filled with civilians. And says Musialela, the police have been digging holes in the ground to put their prisoners in because the jails are so completely filled.

"Recently whole schools of students have crossed the border just to get away from the terror," says Musialela. When she joined SWAPO, students were not involved in quite the same numbers.

"A member of SWAPO came to our school to speak. He arose my consciousness." But, she admits, her consciousness was already on the rise, her eyes already open to the injustice of South Africa's illegal occupation of her country.

"I could see quite easily that white children had better schools than we did. They rode buses to school while we walked. They had books, more teachers." She needed 25¢ to buy a party card, so Musialela went to her parents, who tried to dissuade her from joining. "They feared I would expose myself to the enemy." Finally they gave in and let her have the money. Musialela later learned that both her parents were SWAPO members.

She spent the next four years organizing students in her own school and traveling to other areas during her vacations.

After the police drove her out of the country, SWAPO leaders offered to send her on to higher education. No, she said, she wanted to be trained for combat. Musialela spent the next six years in military

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Lutherans

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the side of divestment. When the vote was taken, 447 delegates voted for divestment.

The Coalition celebrated with a rip-roaring party. The trustees convened an emergency meeting to discuss what had just happened. And, unknown to all of us, Bishop Dlamini sat down to write one of the bitterest, most guilt-producing speeches that the convention had, possibly, ever heard.

It came on Monday. Dlamini attacked the delegates for voting for divestment. He lashed out at "white people who vote for divestment so that my people can suffer." He threw the convention into a turmoil.

Some delegates angrily accused the Coalition of having "tricked and misled them." Others, who had not attended the open hearings, claimed that Bishop Dlamini was the only South African person they had ever heard on this issue. And one delegate went to the microphone and introduced a resolution to repeal Saturday's 447-331 vote for divestment.

Again the Coalition went into lobbying action. We spent the whole night answering all kinds of newly discovered questions. But as someone put it, God was on our side.

On Tuesday morning, the delegate who had introduced the motion to rescind, returned to the microphone and pleaded that the resolution passed in support of divestment be allowed to stand. "I have talked to other Black South Africans and I now understand that Bishop Dlamini would be in serious trouble if he went back home and was said to have supported divestment. The law provides for a mandatory five years in jail or the maximum of death by hanging. I now understand. . . ." □

SWAPO Woman

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and administrative training. In the late '70s she went to Angola as the assistant secretary for finance of the SWAPO Women's Commission, which had been formed in 1969.

"Originally there were only four women with positions of power in the party. But after the Portuguese coup, when we were able to go into Angola and meet with freedom fighters, we saw what women had done. Many women joined after that.

"In Namibia, women's problems are like those in South Africa. The men go to the urban areas to find work but because of the pass system, the women must stay in the villages. Sometimes they earn as little as three rand a month for working in the fields. But most can't even find work on the farms and must try to feed their families with the little they can grow.

"We are trying now to teach women to fight. Some are base commanders. But also we want to show they must participate side by side with men on all levels. Kwame Nkrumah said, 'When you train a man, it's only one man. When you have trained a woman, you've trained a nation.'

"We have shown that without the participation of women, you do not truly have a revolution. It's very hard to find our combatants inside the country, because the women in the villages care for them. They give them food and shelter."

Musialela has been inside the country several times since she left. "I enjoyed myself when I was inside. I saw that my people were determined. We were never short of food, because people took care of us.

"But the situation inside the country is very bad now. There is martial law. The enemy is confined to bases because we control territory. They get frustrated and then go out to harass villages, burning and destroying their food. It is important for the world to double its efforts to help our struggle. Nothing will stop us." □

ANC Interview

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But again you see the contradictions of the South African political system are such that the development of the Black middle class is going to be affected by the fact that in the urban areas they continue to be subjected to the same form of disabilities that affect the general mass of the people. They are not immune from pass laws. They are not immune from having their business located in the rural areas, far away from the white sections of the population and planted right in the midst of an impoverished population. Those people must realize for them to have full development it is necessary to remove this system which imposes certain curbs on them. This situation would tend to make them swing more to the patriotic forces.

What are the most important tasks at this point for the international solidarity movement?

There is the usual program we have put forward: economic sanctions; oil embargo; arms embargo; isolation of the regime in all spheres including the question of the sports boycott and so on. Of course, that must include the demand for the release of political prisoners—in support of the movement that has already developed inside the country.

Now, particularly at this time, we are calling for much more vigilance on the part of the international community to remain committed to the struggle for the isolation

of the regime in spite of what it might do in the future to try and convince them that change is possible within the apartheid system. MF & JC

Resistance

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survive repeated suppression. The internal and external wings need each other either is to succeed.

There are signs of increasing cooperation between the internal and external movement. Some black consciousness leaders such as trade unionist Tozamile Botha have made a relatively smooth transition into the exile movements upon leaving South Africa. ANC attacks on black consciousness have recently subsided, and the ANC broke sharply with bantustan leader Gatsha Buthelezi following criticism from inside the country. Widespread support for the Free Mandela campaign and the willingness of the people to shelter armed guerrillas are another indication of growing unity among the Black opposition.

After 300 years of oppression, history is finally catching up with South Africa's ruling whites. The guerrilla attacks and domestic unrest that have occurred continuously since 1976 are but a foreshadowing of things to come. And Pretoria knows it. This is why they have adopted a "total strategy" and continue to pour billions into tanks and missiles and planes. But weapons didn't stop the liberation of Mozambique or Angola or Zimbabwe, and it won't stop the liberation of South Africa.

Steve Biko once noted that "The mightiest weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." If this is so then the white supremacists have already lost the greatest of their arsenal. In South Africa the minds of the people are set on freedom. M.F.

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