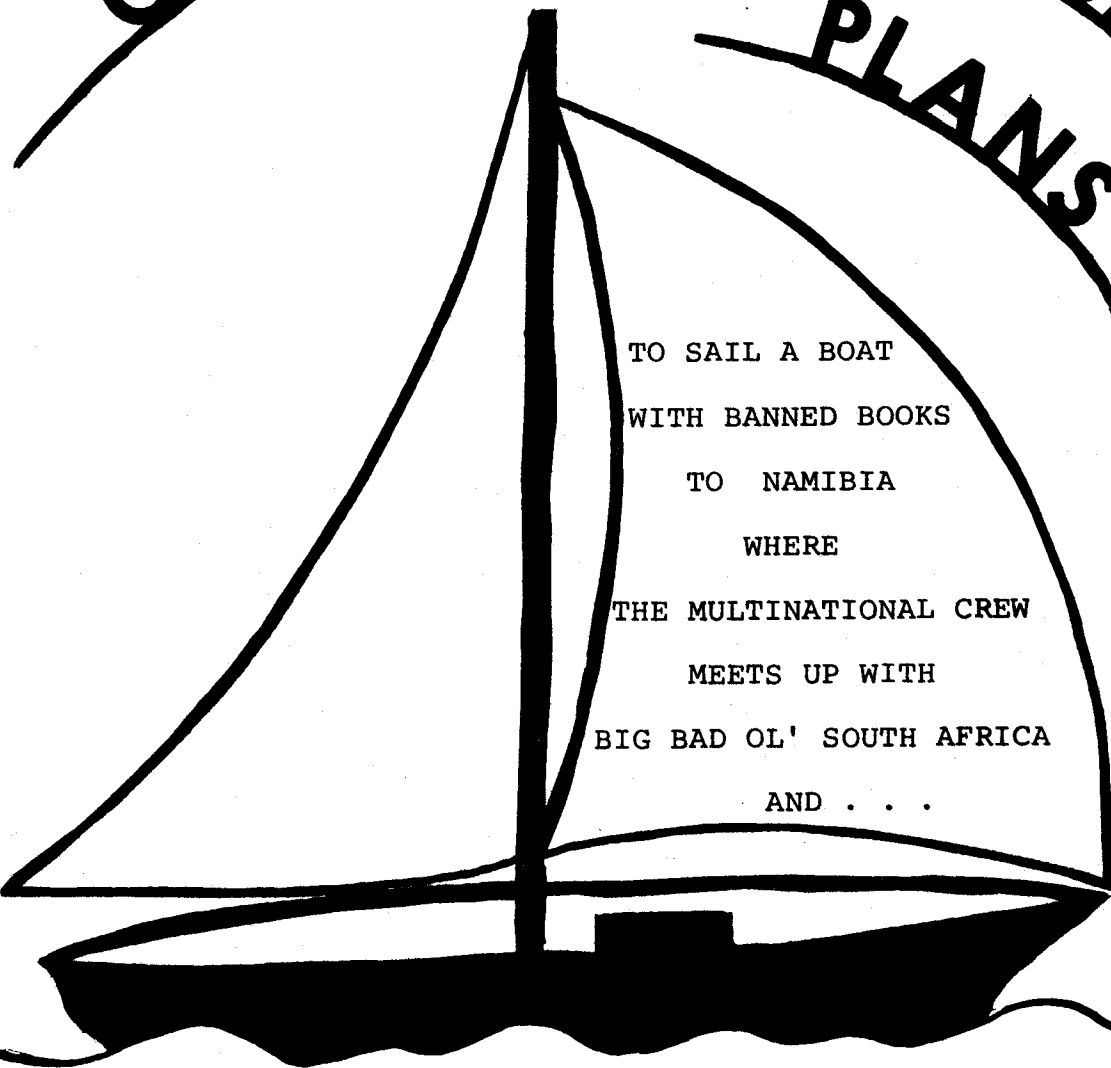


OPERATION NAMIBIA PLANS



TO SAIL A BOAT
WITH BANNED BOOKS
TO NAMIBIA
WHERE
THE MULTINATIONAL CREW
MEETS UP WITH
BIG BAD OL' SOUTH AFRICA
AND . . .

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Operation Namibia - Recent Events

After the twelve May 30/31 actions in cities in Australia, Europe and the United States (as reported in ON Bulletin #2), the Philadelphia Namibia Action Group decided to embark on another short-term project in addition to continuing the work on our long-term plans: nonviolent interventionary action in Southern Africa. Here are short reports of both endeavors.

DEL MONTE ACTION - In late July, PNAG visited the Del Monte distribution center in Swedesboro, New Jersey, from which three hundred products are distributed along the East Coast. Two of our Namibian friends, both members of SWAPO, joined us for the day. We presented a statement of our concerns to Mr. Hall and Mr. Bailey, the center's two administrators with whom we had an appointment, and discussed the issues with them.

First, we protested the recent change on the labels of Del Monte sardine cans (from "packed in South West Africa" to "packed in South Africa") which implies a recognition of Namibia as a province of South Africa. We showed them a letter from Del Monte's Press Relations Manager confirming that the sardines are still fished and packed in Namibia. We also gave them copies of the U.N. decree on Namibia's natural resources and explained that it is now illegal for them to purchase and distribute the sardines. Finally, we suggested that liberation for Namibia may be very near and that it would be in their best interest to cooperate with the U.N. and those who will be Namibia's leaders after independence. Our SWAPO friends then delivered a statement of their own which emphasized this point.

Mr. Hall and Mr. Bailey seemed particularly impressed to learn that a few oil companies, including Gulf and Exxon, have recently ceased prospecting operations in Namibia because of pressure from church groups. They assured us that they would be in touch with the San Francisco management immediately and that they would call us as soon as any decisions are made.

W.R.I. AND EUROPEAN WORK - Also in July, three American ON organizers, Bonnie Barnes and P.J. Hoffman from PNAG and David Perry of Colorado, attended the triennial conference of the War Resisters International in the Netherlands, to meet with European ON organizers and supporters. Our primary goal was to decide whether or not nonviolent interventionary action in Namibia was desirable and practical, and what form that action would take.

By the time the week was half over, we were not only considering the "Walvis Bay Blockade" and "freedom march" proposals, but six others as well. We spent a lot of time assessing the ideas, listing both positive and negative aspects of each. In the process, we developed a list of criteria for helping us decide on a particular action. But we seemed to be getting nowhere in deciding when we stumbled across an idea that immediately excited us: a sea voyage culminating in the delivery of banned books to Namibians. It was downhill from there; we spent the rest of our time strategizing and planning.

Operation Namibia has agreed upon the "books for a free Namibia" action. The rest of this ON Bulletin is devoted to telling you what we intend to do and accomplish by it.

CRITERIA FOR NONVIOLENT INTERVENTION IN NAMIBIA

This list was developed by ON organizers at the WRI conference.

A good action should:

- have a clear purpose;
- have a simple form;
- utilize a symbol that speaks for itself;
- have a positive thrust as well as be confrontative;
- educate, expose myths about the situation in Namibia;
- create a dilemma for South Africa, leaving South Africa no say to respond to the action without losing;
- have dramatic build-up, create a maximum crisis over a long period of time;
- be timed well for maximum effect;
- have support from within Namibia;
- have support from Namibians and other Africans outside the country;
- not jeopardize the people in Namibia without their full knowledge and consent;
- be able to enlist world-wide support and participation;
- allow for easy funding - both large grants and grass-roots fund-raising;
- be logistically feasible;
- be repeatable on a local level around the world;
- lead to further action that builds on its gains.

A SCENARIO

Mid-February, 1976: After months of preparation, a boat sets sail from Europe, bound for Namibia. Well-wishers and press have gathered in a small ceremony and celebration to see it off. The boat has special significance, for it carries a cargo of books collected by various people around the world, books needed by Namibians, but banned by South Africa. The aim of the boat and its international crew is to deliver the books openly into the hands of the Namibians who have requested them, without any interference by the South African occupation administration in Namibia.

The journey to Namibia takes about five weeks. On the way, the boat stops at various West African ports; at one point to pick up further cargo - books from African sources. Progress reports of the voyage are transmitted from the boat by short-wave radio. A journalist-cameraperson is aboard to help record events. By the time the boat nears Namibia, continued publicity has much of the world watching to see what move South Africa will make. Support groups are ready to respond with immediate direct action in case South Africa tries to stop the boat. The crew, committed to nonviolence, ready themselves for whatever South Africa may offer.

"BOOKS FOR A FREE NAMIBIA" - A MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION:

Here we ask ourselves a few questions to present in more detail our plans and reasons for choosing the books project.

Why do you choose to work on Namibia?

Perhaps our involvement is primarily an emotional response to the plight of the Namibians, who live under one of the most oppressive regimes in the world. Namibians are systematically denied the most basic human rights, imprisoned and tortured in South African sponsored "homelands," and their rich beautiful land exploited with its wealth going to white South Africa and Western countries.

Operation Namibia sees a global need for radical social change, and those of us living in the "developed" First World are acutely conscious of the need for revolution in our own countries. It is our belief that freedom for Namibia helps bring about the needed changes in our own societies. More directly, Namibian independence from South African domination gets us closer to revolutionary changes in South Africa itself.

We feel the time to act is now. Events in Southern Africa are moving quickly, with the decolonialization of Mozambique and Angola and the strengthening of independence movements in Zimbabwe and Namibia. The crisis is coming to a head, according to voices in the Organization for African Unity and the Southern African black states. Increasingly the world is paying attention. By placing ourselves in this picture of growing conflict as a new force for change, we can have a greater impact than ever.

What do you hope to accomplish?

The overall goal of Operation Namibia is to help effect revolutionary change in Southern Africa. To further this goal we decided to undertake nonviolent direct action to aid the people of Namibia in their struggle. The purpose of the books project is two-fold: to deliver the banned books to Namibians who have requested them, and to put new pressure on South Africa to withdraw totally from Namibia. The way we deliver the books is by sailing them on a boat into Walvis Bay, and taking complete responsibility for their distribution. The way we pressure South Africa is by conducting the campaign openly, publicly, informing world press of our intentions as we proceed. These two aims are complementary - we combine the confrontative aspects of publicly defying South African authority with an attempt to provide help and support directly to Namibians.

This project can also have a number of additional effects. We will be helping expose recent "changes" in South African policy as merely a show of removing the more outward signs of apartheid while maintaining fundamental injustices. This will make it less easy for Western countries and their multinational corporations to continue their support for South Africa. Also, the publicity attendant on this action will provide basic information for people who have never heard of Namibia; anti-apartheid efforts will be strengthened.

Why did you pick this particular action? Why not work on your own governments and corporations?

Operation Namibia cannot be the definitive force for change nor produce the definitive action. We chose nonviolent interventionary action from a number of options. For example, we could have begun a boycott of Namibian

sardines, undertaken a long-term educational campaign, pressured our corporations to stop investing in Namibia, or raised money to assist Namibians. One of the things that influenced our choice was knowing that there are groups already using these valid strategies, but no one to our knowledge was organizing for direct action in Namibia itself. For reasons given above, now is strategically a good time to begin direct action. Operation Namibia has the skills and experience to mount a good direct action campaign. Furthermore, action we take can only add to the other efforts.

How does this project help to achieve your goals?

It places South Africa in a dilemma. If South Africa, in the midst of world publicity, refuses to let us enter Namibia with the books, it is exposed as an oppressive ruler for not allowing a basic tool for self-government to reach the people it is supposedly encouraging to "develop." If we do enter, then South African authority in Namibia has been weakened and it will be that much easier to challenge South African power over other issues. Either way the aims of our project will have been furthered.

Why a boat? Why books?

We chose to approach Namibia by sea because it is difficult if not impossible to enter through Botswana or Angola right now, to say nothing of South Africa! Also, a sailing boat is a very exciting symbol. The voyage builds up anticipation, and a confrontation on Namibian waters would be dramatic. The open and nonviolent nature of the project, cargo and crew is evident throughout the journey, and all can be monitored by South Africa, U.N. observers, or press. A sailing vessel is seemingly weak and hardly a threat, but at the same time is a concrete, visible symbol of opposition.

As a symbol of freedom of thought, books speak for themselves. In addition, they are tools which can be used democratically to build a new society. Books, and the ideas and information they contain, can be shared, and allow people to make their own decisions about the way a new society is built. Finally, South Africa cannot take the books and use them for its own purposes, as it could with other forms of aid (e.g. radio parts, food, or medical supplies).

Isn't sending aid patronizing?

It certainly can be. This aid, however, has been requested; further, the books can be freely accepted or rejected as people choose. We are trying to minimize the dangers of our being patronizing by maintaining contact with and eliciting feedback from Namibians and other Africans all along the way, by getting some of the books from African sources, and by having African crew members.

Why do you organize openly? If you really want to get the books in, you'll have to smuggle them in.

Smuggling will certainly get the books into Namibia, but the act would not produce any real change. Covert action could be used to show that we are afraid of South Africa or have something to hide - South Africa is the one with things to hide. Publicity works for us, both in terms of making the issues well known and in safeguarding us from South African violent interference.

What is all this emphasis on nonviolence?

Nyerere and Kaunda have both declared that this is the last chance for nonviolence to resolve the southern African question. It's essential that those who believe in nonviolence or, for that matter, the need to avoid bloodshed, should work on nonviolent direct actions to disturb and break down the white minority regimes. As for the books project, a commitment to a nonviolent discipline is of extreme importance. Any violent act from us plays the South African game (they're well-practiced in it) and gives them an easy way out of the dilemma in which we try to catch them. Violence would focus attention on itself rather than our message and the strength of our position would be diminished. Violence would also place the people working with us in greater danger than they may be already.

How do you relate to South Africa in this project?

We make a distinction between keeping South Africa informed about our activities and acknowledging their presence in Namibia. To avoid the spread of misinformation and to safeguard the ship and crew, we shall be in contact with South African officials - but not asking for their permission! We recognize that South Africa has the power in Namibia but assert that they have no right to be exercising it. Therefore we shall not acknowledge South African authority by getting their visas or having passports stamped. We shall insist that every book we carry must enter Namibia and that the crew must be free to travel inside Namibia in order to distribute them.

Are there legal questions involved?

Although we're not conducting this action in order to produce a test case, we shall be exploring with lawyers various legal questions, such as what constitutes piracy, violation of freedom of the seas, freedom of access to ports, and the illegality of South Africa in Namibia.

Aren't you endangering Namibians by this action?

The action minimizes the dangers of Namibians by relying on outside organization. But there is some danger to those who would associate themselves with the project inside Namibia, and potentially to those assisting outside the country. The important thing is that we are not unthinkingly putting people into danger, or giving them no choice in the matter. Those who participate will be doing so with full knowledge of possible consequences, and there is equally the opportunity to have nothing to do with the project.

What's your relationship to SWAPO?

We support the aims of SWAPO as well as those of other groups working within or without Namibia for Namibian independence. We look for support for our action from all of them. But we see SWAPO's support as particularly important since it is widely recognized as the representative political body of Namibia. However, Operation Namibia is an autonomous effort with no official connection with any other group working for Namibia's freedom.

What happens after the action is finished?

This action, whether or not the books are delivered, leaves Operation Namibia in a position to continue a long-term campaign. It is important to keep the pressure on South Africa by follow-up actions.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS -

You can help with!

BOAT - Know anyone with one?
Give us any leads.

MONEY - Got any? Know where we can find some?

CONTACT PEOPLE - Are you one? As an O.N. contact person, you can help us where you are in getting the project going.

SUPPORT GROUPS - Are you in a group that would want to put part of its resources into O.N.?

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

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