

STATEMENT BY

The Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of an Independent South West Africa

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The purpose of our mission to South West Africa was fulfilled. A group of specialists in medicine, nutrition, cooperatives and agriculture made the attempt to go into South West Africa on December 6th to explore projects to further the development of an independent South West Africa, and were stopped by the South African authorities. South Africa's action is in defiance of the United Nations resolutions on South West Africa. We had hoped that the South African authorities would not prevent us from carrying out a proper investigation. This would not only have resulted in practical benefits to the people of South West Africa, but would have revealed a basic change of attitude in South Africa towards the future of South West Africa. But we were not so naive as to expect compliance from the authorities. Indeed, a vital element in our plan was to dramatize South Africa's refusal to accept United Nations' resolutions and we think we have achieved this.

Our group of five had planned to land in Windhoek. The pilots of the two chartered planes refused to do so. Contrary to one newsreport, the lead pilot gave no indication that he would be willing to land for a guarantee of \$56,000. He made quite clear that he thought we might all face imprisonment, and he was not prepared for that. Had the pilots of the planes been part of our team, the South African authorities would not have been able to stop our planes from landing. However, the authorities were clever in including the pilots as well as the passengers in their threat, "You shall have to bear the consequences," if the planes landed. The pilots were not included in the planning of the project because we feared that they might not have been willing to leave Lusaka had we done so.

Press reports have already indicated generally what happened in our attempt to land at Windhoek, the capitol of South West Africa, on December 6. To summarize, our group of five, accompanied by three reporters, two of whom were Zambian and one of whom was British, left Lusaka early on the morning of December 6. We were first contacted by the South African police a few moments after we had left Livingstone, Zambia, and were probably already over Botswana. The police told our pilots that the passengers on the planes did not have visas and would not be permitted to enter South West Africa. After checking with us, the pilots reported back that the passengers still intended to go to Windhoek.

The second confrontation with the South African authorities came after our planes were within thirty miles of the airport at Windhoek. They asked for the names of the passengers on the planes and these were duly given. Then, the South African spokesmen at Windhoek airport told us to write down a "long and very important message," which was repeated

twice and read as follows: "You will not be allowed to land at Strijdom Airport or any other airport in South West Africa unless all documents of crew and passengers meet all local, legal requirements. We know the reason for your mission and should you land against this instruction, you shall have to bear the consequences."

Our pilots began to turn their planes back at this point without consulting us. We protested that we wished to land at Windhoek, and the lead pilot said with positiveness that he was neither prepared to lose the company's plane on the one hand, nor did he wish to face imprisonment. Because the supply of fuel in the gas tanks was almost exhausted, both pilots asked Windhoek authorities for permission to land for refueling. This was denied with the suggestion that the planes should make for either Ghanzi or Maun in Botswana. With the needle of the fuel guage on "empty," our immediate problem for the next hour and a half was to try to find the airstrip at Maun. The pilot was not at all sure whether this could be done and commented that we did not have enough fuel to return to Livingstone. Fortunately, the airstrip at Maun was located after the regular fuel supply in the planes had given out and the emergency tanks were brought into use.

Upon our return to Lusaka, we cabled a protest to Prime Minister Vorster of South Africa as follows: "We strongly protest South Africa police refusal to allow us to land at Windhoek yesterday. Pilot yielded to Police threat although committee willing to test your consequences for our act carried out under international law. Your government's fear to hold discussion with peaceful advocates for development once more expresses your callousness to the welfare of African people." We also cabled the United Nations Council on South West Africa, informing them of what had happened and stating our willingness to give a report to the Council either in writing or in person, or both.

Enough time has now elapsed to try to make some evaluation of this attempt by a non-governmental group to go into South West Africa for constructive work in line with the United Nations resolutions. The following points are clear:

- 1) Since this was the first attempt by any group to go into South West Africa using the resolutions of the United Nations as their authority, the South African government indicated by action, not just by words, that they do not accept the United Nations authority in South West Africa.

- 2) The South African de facto authorities made clear that they do not wish to allow experts in such fields as health, nutrition, cooperatives, or agriculture, to go into South West Africa to further development programs unless they are willing to recognize the authority of the South African government and unless the programs are carried out within the framework of the apartheid structure.

- 3) The South African de facto authorities made quite clear that they would keep any group out even at the risk of the lives

of those who were attempting to enter South West Africa. The refusal of the authorities to allow our planes to land for refueling emphasized this.

4) The South African de facto authorities are keenly disturbed by efforts such as this. According to reports, thirty policemen waited for five hours at the Strijdom Airport for our group to arrive, including the Commissioner of Police for South West Africa. According to the Rand Daily Mail, newspapermen were told by the Security Police that if they took any pictures of our group, their cameras would be confiscated.

5) It is important for this kind of project to be repeated as many times as there are individuals or groups prepared to do so. Not only does this kind of action have the effect of making clear to the South African authorities that the present control of South Africa over South West Africa is not acceptable, but it also has the effect of informing the vast majority of people, the Africans, within South West Africa, that there are people elsewhere in the world who believe in their right to freedom and independence, and are prepared to take some risks to implement their beliefs.

6) We believe this project emphasizes that at least some Americans seriously believe in the right of the self-determination for those people in Africa in areas still dominated by a white minority. Perhaps this will help in part to off-set the general lack of initiative of the United States Government in dealing with the racial issues in southern Africa.

We look upon this project as just a beginning. We trust that other projects, not necessarily a prototype of this one, may take place in the months ahead. We never had the naive impression that this project was basically going to change the situation in South West Africa. We feel that the project was eminently worthwhile in making clear to the South African authorities that their present de facto control over South West Africa must be challenged by more than words and that they could expect further protests as they attempt to maintain their control by force over a subject people.