

OPERATION NAMIBIA ACTION BULLETIN NO. 2

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MAY 31 ACTIONS - "MANY FLOWERS BLOSSOMED"

Two months ago, Operation Namibia called upon concerned groups to organize small demonstrations at South African embassies, consulates or other extensions of the South African government. The actions were to occur simultaneously on May 31. (May 30, you will remember, was the deadline given South Africa by the United Nations to begin withdrawal from Namibia.)

The deadline passed. And we succeeded in bringing off a total of twelve actions - three in Australia, five in the USA, and four in Europe. Here are highlights from the information we received about the actions.

AUSTRALIA - With excellent coverage by television and the newspapers, there were demonstrations in Adelaide, Sydney, and Canberra. A petition of a thousand names was given to the Australian government asking it to help Namibia gain its freedom. Names for the petition are still being collected.

UNITED STATES - In New York at the South African Mission to the UN, twenty people picketed, gave out over 1000 leaflets, and stationed a "spectre of death", symbolizing South Africa's Namibian policies. Outside the South African embassy in Washington, twenty people maintained a standing vigil for twenty-four hours, joined by others for shorter lengths of time. The vigil included "tableaus" (human bodies portraying a dramatic scene without sound or movement) to dramatize the Namibian situation. Other US actions occurred in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Ann Arbor, Michigan.

EUROPE - In Stockholm, seventeen people picketed outside the South African embassy for ten to twelve hours - in 5 degrees C. Despite the cold, they managed to leaflet as well. Other actions were reported in Copenhagen, Zurich, and England.

We've learned from several sources that South Africa is quite aware of Operation Namibia and the May 31 actions. Also, news of the actions was broadcasted, we understand, into Namibia by the SWAPO radio link so that Namibians would be informed of the growing worldwide support for their struggle.

The Philadelphia Namibia Action Group, which has initiated and is now coordinating Operation Namibia, feels the transnational actions on May 31 comprise a strong beginning for the campaign. We thank all of you who have put energy into it so far.

FUTURE PLANS

In July, P.J. Hoffman and Bonnie Barnes from Philadelphia, and David Perry from Colorado are going to the triennial conference of the War Resisters International in the Netherlands. We see this as an important time to do major strategic thinking about the future course of the campaign, since representatives from groups in several countries will be able to get together and share their views. More concrete long-range plans ("to Africa or not to Africa") may be determined by this gathering of folks. Also, ON organizers will be talking with people, doing workshops at the Triennial and elsewhere in Europe, and asking WRI to support the campaign.

The United Nations has designated August 26 as Namibia Day. This will be observed as "a reminder of the critical time in August 1966 when the people of Namibia were forced to begin their resistance against the aggression of the illegal occupation." This is another key date for ON activity, but to maintain a campaign of predictable one-day actions reduces our effectiveness.

Therefore we propose a series of actions to take place beginning in late August. The basis for these actions will be the UN Council for Namibia's declaration that "any animal, mineral, or other natural resource produced in or emanating from the Territory of Namibia which shall be taken from the said Territory without the consent and written authority of the UN Council for Namibia or of any person authorized to act on behalf of the said Council [definitely not including South Africa!] may be seized and shall be forfeited to the benefit of the said Council and held in trust by them for the benefit of the people of Namibia." Any vehicle, ship or container found to be carrying such goods is subject to the same seizure and forfeiture.

We suggest that groups find warehouses of goods from Namibia or transportation lines carrying the goods and do actions accordingly. By attempting to confiscate goods, blockade ships, prevent their unloading and performing similar dramatic (nay, daring!) actions we can draw considerable publicity, further arouse public consciousness, put more pressure on South Africa, as well as direct pressure on the illegally operating corporations. (As a start, Philadelphia dockworkers have already been refusing to unload many South African ships.)

These late August actions would continue or recur as frequently as folks could do them. In addition, August 26 would be an important time to communicate with South African embassies and such, stating our concerns and our determination to act. Calls can also be made to newspapers to raise the issues with them.

RECENT EVENTS + ANALYSIS

It is important to keep in touch with the various moves and counter-moves made by all the parties concerning themselves with Namibia. The following is a description of the recent "changes" in South African policy, the responses of the United Nations, the press and SWAPO, and Operation Namibia's analysis of these recent events.

As May 30 approached, South Africa issued official statements of its position of "compromise" on the issue of Namibian self-government. Since that date it has been announced that what was described as the "irritating" aspects of racial segregation would be eliminated. The Prime Minister of South Africa, John Vorster, has emphasized that South Africa does not claim "one single inch" of Namibian soil, and that his country would not interfere with the right of the "different peoples of Namibia" to determine their political future. Mr. Vorster also offered to "exchange ideas" with a committee for Namibia set up recently by the Organization for African Unity. He has refused to accept U.N. supervision of the transition to independence and a dominant role in that process for SWAPO. (Both the UN and OAU regard SWAPO as the representative nonwhite political body in Namibia.)

In early June proposed legislation that would allow the admission of all races to hotels, restaurants and cafes at the discretion of the owners was announced. The legislation also provides for the removal from public places of signs proclaiming "whites only" and "non-whites". The executive council of South West Africa was said