The GOLDEN HARVEST

The GOLDEN HARVEST had been on its way to Namibia for a year and a half when it anchored in Accra, Ghana last spring. There the crew was well-received by David Acquah of the Ghana National Committee Against Apartheid, who sponsored an exhibition on Namibia in their honor and whose help with publicity was invaluable.

As always, there were problems and much work to be done on the vessel. Again they built a new boom, for the one just made in The Gambia had broken. Barry’s health weakened daily and he was forced to return to Ireland for a few months of treatment and rest. More happily, they made many friends at the dockyard who volunteered their labor, books were donated from many sources, and Ghana’s Foreign Ministry granted them an exceptional sum of $5000.

To crew members Maggie and Roy, however, the greatest gift was the joyous birth of their daughter, Ann. Although her arrival was inconveniently timed, for Maggie had to return to England to insure a safe delivery, we have all shared in their pride. Roy visited his family for a few weeks, then returned to the G.H. in July to carry on what they had begun together. Needless to say, Maggie is missed on the crew, and she and Roy look forward to their reunion once the action is completed.

TROUBLE IN NIGERIA: Though shorthanded, the crew sailed on to Lagos, Nigeria, not in the least

In Lagos, the crew dialogued with the national revolutionary party, FRELIMO, on the relationship of nonviolent action to the armed struggles, visited with Bill Sutherland and David Sogge of the American Friends Service Committee. They were graciously hosted by Sharfudine Khan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who arranged for a grant from the Lutheran World Church Federation. Although in the end they received less than one-third of the funds they had budgeted for (see p. 3), this did enable them to order a new sail from Denmark and to send David Moodie to Lusaka, Zambia where he visited the Namibia Institute, made further contacts and talked with Namibians-in-exile about the Books Project. He arrived in Lusaka at a particularly tense time, just after the bombing of Zimbabwean refugee camps, and being a white stranger, he was automatically suspect and held in detention for a few days. The same sort of tension in Mozambique seems to have precipitated a mysterious three-week disappearance of the Fri’s engineer, Ed, who reappeared from detention in mid-January.

TheFri leavesMaputoFebruary 6th, impressed and intrigued by the complicated, developing new society of Mozambique, and unsure about what lies ahead.
suspecting the trials that awaited them there, ending on October 31st when they were forced at gunpoint to sail without food or water (except for some canned fish) in an unseaworthy vessel, for they were in the middle of repairs.

"We came to Nigeria," wrote Karen Elise, "with the hope of pumping new life into Operation Namibia, a project plagued with small financial resources, mechanical difficulties, malaria, boils and South African interference. The commitment of the crew to overcome all obstacles... and the neverwavering support from dockyard workers, students, fish sellers, company managers, bus queue standers, thinkers... has kept Operation Namibia alive. We hoped that in Nigeria we could make final preparations for the long and rough sea passages ahead the confrontation in Walvis Bay, in terms of maintenance, provisions, crew members and publicity."

Although months in advance they had shared their itinerary and purpose with the Nigerian High Commission in Accra and the Anti-Apartheid Committee and SWAPO representative in Lagos, when Gambian crew member Momodou went overland to Lagos to prepare for the crew's arrival, he found that no information had been forwarded to External Affairs as expected. Worse yet, Nigerian authorities deported him, despite the fact that Gambians can legally visit Nigeria without travel documents, because they didn't believe that an African could represent a transnational project.

MASS REFUGEE GRAVE

May 4, 1978: 600 Namibian refugees lay dead near Kassanga after South African troops had bombed and invaded their camp. Six days earlier, South Africa had accepted the Western proposal with the proviso that all violence must be ceased.

The G.H. approached Lagos on September 15th but couldn't get permission to enter because the port's radios were out of order; so at the invitation of a friendly sailor, they entered and moored alongside a water tanker, replenished their low water supply, and set off to announce their arrival. They found no trace of Momodou, but five days later he slipped back across the border to rejoin them. It was reassuring when they received customs, immigration and security clearance, made numerous helpful contacts, and gained extensive media coverage, including a BBC interview. The Anti-Apartheid Committee, officially appointed as hosts to the crew, agreed to print thousands of leaflets and O.N. letterheads; the NPA dockyard workers offered support, materials and labor; and word came that Head of State General Obasanjo had approved a grant for the project. For a month, things progressed smoothly.

There were some internal problems, though: a man and woman from Ghana had joined the crew for a trial period, but were soon disillusioned by the rigors of G.H. life, did not share the political and social visions of the others, and failed to attend meetings to discuss these differences. Finally, they "went on strike," left G.H., were arrested and, on October 22nd, were flown back to Ghana. Later it appeared that they were used as tools of the National Security Organization in the saga which followed, but what exactly happened and why we'll never know.
WE WANT TO GIVE YOU MORE THOROUGH NEWS OF G.H. AND FRI—THEIR IMPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES AS THEY SAIL TO NAMIBIA—BUT COSTS ARE PROHIBITIVE. IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE, PLEASE ATTACH A REQUEST TO YOUR NEXT CONTRIBUTION AND WE'LL SEND YOU EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS, COPIES OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE, ETC.

THE GOLDEN HARVEST WILL BE OUT OF FUNDS WHEN IT REACHES ANGOLA, but we have no funds to send them right now.

While in Maputo, the FRI expected a $5000 grant from the Lutheran World Church Federation office, then learned after budgeting the whole sum that all but $1500 was held as fees for administering the funds! WE COULD SEND ONLY HALF OF THE $400 THEY URGENTLY NEEDED before sailing from Maputo on February 6th.

We need your support. In addition to our usual expenses, we've had especially high communication bills from the crisis period in Nigeria.

Remember that checks made payable to "A. J. Muste Memorial Institute/Books for a Free Namibia Project" are tax deductible.

CAN YOU HELP?

PNAG is a collective of the Movement for a New Society, working from an office in a Philadelphia Life Center house named "North Star." Since March of 1975, we have been an organizing center for Operation Namibia, a transnational campaign using nonviolent direct action to support Namibia's struggle for independence and social justice.

Locally we've been publicizing that struggle and exposing U.S. corporations which bolster South Africa's illegal occupation there. Numerous local radio stations have interviewed us; we've been speaking and presenting our slide show and dialoguing with other groups about cooperative actions, such as the divestment campaign at the University of Pennsylvania (where Joanie is a student and employee).

As a small group meeting twice a week on top of very busy work & study lives, we've had difficulty living up to our commitments, but Transnational Collective of MNS has begun to share time and energy with us—a morale boost for both groups.

In September we joined Training Organizing Collective in coordinating an MNS Orientation Weekend which included macroanalysis sessions on Southern Africa. We've led workshops on direct action, racism and campaign building in the summer and fall MNS training programs, and in October we again led an Orientation Weekend group in a demonstration at a local supermarket, leafletting shoppers, labeling cans of sardines "STOLEN FROM NAMIBIA/PRODUCT OF APARTHEID," and presenting petitions to the manager. The latter was part of our continuing campaign against the importation of Namibian products through illegal contracts between South Africa and multinational corporations.

THANKS TO YOU, THE BOOKS PROJECT HAS SURVIVED

Since Operation Namibia's "Books for a Free Namibia" project was conceived at the 1975 War Resisters International conference in Holland, PNAG has shared responsibility for the action with a group in London, the crew of the Golden Harvest and, more recently, the crew of the Fri. We keep separate financial records, but each group works at fundraising for the whole and, when one group is in need of immediate funds, the others respond by sending what they can.

In order to purchase the Golden Harvest in 1976, O.N. organizers took a "leap of faith" by collecting interest-free loans from friends, organizations and some of ourselves, with the rationale that fundraising would be easier once we had proven our seriousness by launching a boat.

By the end of 1978, PNAG had repaid all U.S. loans, totaling $5,750, helped London-O.N. with some of its debts, and sent funds to the crews when possible. Through discouraging delays and troubles, PNAG has survived financially because of your support: over $8,000 in individual donations, and over $9,000 in grants from American Friends Service Committee, Chase Fund, Fellowship of Reconciliation, National Council of Churches, People's Fund of Philadelphia, Sharing Fund, and Washington Area Fund for Life. THANK YOU, DEAR FRIENDS! We are also appreciative of Branywine Alternative Fund for patience when we were unable to meet our loan payments schedule at times, and to Philadelphia War Tax Resistance which has just granted us a third $1000 loan.

PHILADELPHIA NAMIBIA ACTION GROUP: Who are we and what do we do?

"Like the two crews, PNAG is multi-racial and international. We are an eager-to-grow 5-person collective, seen above at a strategy/clearness retreat: Ken Martin and Joanie Prior below; lt. to rt. above, Laurie Wolfe, Gil Gilmore and myself.

-Linda Nunes, Tanzania

MANY OF YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN OUR CURRENT LITERATURE EXPLAINING THE BOOKS PROJECT AND OUTLINING THE HISTORY AND CURRENT SITUATION IN NAMIBIA. Please do send us a postcard and we'll mail you these materials immediately.

THANKS TO YOU, DEAR FRIENDS!
Suddenly on October 16th, armed Nigerian security police (NSO) boarded and searched the ship, allegedly looking for weapons. They harassed the crew and dismissed their travel documents as "fake." Momodou and Kris voluntarily accompanied them for "questioning" but were detained instead and not questioned until just before their release nine days later. On the 17th, the NSO returned to confiscate their radio and tried to arrest them all, but the harbor master intervened by confirming the claim that forcing them to abandon ship would be against international law codes; they were allowed to stay. There were rumors, alluded to by the press, that they were spies, with possible South African connections, who were "exploiting Nigeria's anti-apartheid stand.

The materials printed by Anti-Apartheid were impounded by the police, and support dwindled for no one wanted to appear on a ship which was now "off the Nigerian list." We confronted the Nigerian ambassadors at the U.N. and in Washington, but there were no official charges or explanations except for "something must have gone sour."

We can only speculate: Were they mistrusted as foreigners, or national project yet had little money? Was the NSO unwilling to admit that it had made a mistake? Had it begun because one of the Ghanaians had no passport, or because Momodou had reentered the country? Was it because the crew was in touch with radical Nigerian politicians? Did South African agents interfere to discredit the Books Project? Was it because the crew sent us reports that South African goods were finding their way into Lagos despite official boycotts?

When the navy removed their lines and forced G.H. to sail, Kris was ashore with all their passports, ship's papers and project documentation, for he was trying to refute the slanderous accusations of the press. Six days later, the crew radioed from an island off Togo that they were safe, had taken on provisions, and would proceed into Lomé. Of course, without any papers, they were detained in Togo until Kris received word of their location and, together with Barry who had returned from Ireland, provided the papers for their release.

"We are tired, very thin and shell-shocked," wrote Karen Elise. Morale has been low since the deal, yet they have sailed again, plan to stop in Gabon and expect to be in Luanda by the end of March. Barry, still very ill, has finally had to go home for good, and Roy, who is both captain and radio operator, is longings to return to his family and experience his daughter's growth first-hand. None of them expected to devote more than three years of their lives to this voyage, but they are doing just that, with more courage and commitment than we could match.