

## **An Exercise in Eyewash**

### **SWAPO**

*Memorandum issued by the London office of SWAPO on 11 October 1968, concerning the implementation of 'The Self-Government for Native Nations in South West Africa Act' in Ovamboland.*

The 'Self-government for Native Nations in South West Africa Act' was enacted at the end of last session in the South African Parliament. According to this act, Namibia (South West Africa) is going to be divided up into six so-called 'Native Nations', each 'Nation' as an autonomous unit. On the 17th October, the first of these 'Native Nations' will come into being. The Legislative

Council for Ovamboland will be opened in Oshakati by the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development and Bantu Education, Mr. M.C. Botha. According to the *Windhoeck Advertiser* of 3rd October,

The Legislative Council will be representative of all the seven regions of Ovamboland. Each of the seven regional Tribal Authorities is entitled to designate not more than six members . . . As was the case when the Transkei was granted self-government, the Government of the Republic will second a number of civil servants to assist in the administration of the various departments of Ovamboland under self-government. These officials will be designated Directors. One of the Directors, Mr. F.A.J. du Preez of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, will act as co-ordinating officer for the Departments of Finance, Economic Affairs, Justice, Community Affairs, Agriculture and Works and Education.

In other words, the same personnel, representatives of the South African regime, will continue to rule, it is only their positions which are changing names.

The South African Bantustan policy – of which this is an example – is based on the fallacy that cultural and linguistic differences between population groups prevent co-operation and communal feelings. On the basis of this idea, South Africa regards herself justified in dividing up the areas where the indigenous population live, into small, autonomous 'Bantustans' which have minimal contact with each other. SWAPO has all along strongly opposed the South African Bantustan policy. We argue that in Namibia, where the various population groups live scattered this policy is undoubtedly a deliberate move to destroy the unity of our people. We also regard it as an exercise in eyewash and blatant hypocrisy, intended to fool the outside world.

The implementation of the 'Self-government for Native Nations in South West Africa Act' has many implications. One can see that the exercise is bound to lead to great suffering on the part of the people of Namibia: all the Bantustans will be situated in poor areas without any natural resources worth developing. This, in turn, means that the Bantustans will continue to be utterly dependent upon South Africa for economic assistance. Furthermore, the areas which are left to the white minority are rich in natural resources; consequently the exploitation of these areas will directly benefit the white population, and only go to the inhabitants of the Bantustans as 'economic assistance' which, one can envisage, will be given with a patronising hand by the South African regime. As each Bantustan is going to contain people belonging to one population group only, one can foresee extensive forced moves of people from one area to the next. Many families will have to pull up their roots from the place where they may have lived for generations, and go to an area to which they have no ties whatsoever. Many families may also face financial difficulties, difficulties in adjusting to the new situation in which they find themselves; in short, they face stresses and strains which may easily

lead to a break-up of the family unit.

Another facet to the South African Bantustan policy is that it keeps people without contact with the outside world. Their educational system purports this isolation, as it emphasizes the uniqueness of customs and traditions of particular population groups, and ignores the general development of modern society. Thus, people in a 'Native Nation' will end up as backwards, ignorant and unable to tackle the problems of modern society – exactly what is intended by the South African regime. The regime thus gets its justification for continued overlordship – 'these people are not ready for independence' – a phrase too often heard from representatives for the white supremacists in Southern Africa.

The Bantustan policy is a violation of human rights, of international law, of any ultra-national charters functioning today. We want to draw your attention to this and ask you to do your utmost to counteract and condemn this pernicious policy practiced in our country. We also ask you to urge your Government to support an urgent debate in the United Nations General Assembly, and to back any resolution leading to practical action. South Africa must be forced to give up her illegal administration of Namibia by all means at the disposal of the United Nations, including the use of force.