An On-The-Spot Investigation of the Background to the Windhoek Riots

By BRIAN BUNTING

DESPITE intimidation and intense pressure from Government and City Council officials and the police, the Africans of Windhoek location are standing firm in their opposition to the enforced removal to the new location of Katutura.

"WE WOULD RATHER DIE THAN LEAVE OUR HOMES," MANY OF THEM TOLD NEW AGE.

The boycott of the bus service, beerhall, cinema and dance hall declared by the Africans is protest against the removal scheme on December 8 — two days before the riots — continues in full force, and the beerhall in the location remains closed.

In a letter to the United Nations the leading spokesman of the Negro-White people — Chief Hosea Kutako, Chief Samuel Witbooi, Sam Nujoma (President of the Ovamboland People's Organisation), and Usha Kaokwela (Acting President of the South West Africa National Union in the absence overseas of Mr. Korongo) — express their rejection of the location removal scheme and state:

"The situation in South West Africa is critical and demands immediate action by the United Nations to remedy the situation."

NO RIGHTS

The Africans are opposed to the removal, the statement says, because the apartheid policy is responsible for the injustices under which they live in South West Africa, such as lack of political rights, inadequate educational facilities, inadequate medical facilities, unsanitary farming, the restriction of the movements of the Africans in the land of their birth, low wages, hardships and the removal of the Africans from their lands.

"All those injustices which have segregated the Africans to the status.

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Main street in the old Windhoek location, photographed on the day the women demonstrated to the Administrator against the arrest of some of their number who opposed the removal scheme.

The Police Were Worried

From BRIAN BUNTING

CAPE TOWN

On my way to Windhoek by plane last week, I was accompanied by Chief Constable Steynmann, one of the top Special Branch men in Cape Town. A prominent firm in his language was a powerful pile of field glasses. At Windhoek airport he met me as by a member of the local Special Branch men, and he duly pointed me out to his Windhoek colleagues.

From the moment I arrived in Windhoek, I was "tailed" by Special Branch men day and night. The Europeans met around my hotel in massive cars, or drank beer on the stope and made a careful note of everybody who came to see me. The Non-Europeans had the less enviable task of following me long distances down the streets under burning, cloudless skies. Every person I spoke to, every address I visited, every phone call I made was duly entered in Special Branch records.

To protect some of my African friends from this police spying, I had to go out at night into the bush and conduct my interviews in pitch darkness.

On the morning I was due to leave Windhoek, I was woken at about 5.15 a.m. by the inevitable knock on the door of my room in the hotel. Two members of the Special Branch entered and showed me a warrant signed by the Chief Magistrate authorising them to look for evidence in connection with alleged incitement to public violence in connection with the recent Windhoek location riot.

They went through all my notes and papers and scrutinised all the photographs I had taken in Windhoek town and locations. They asked me whether I had distributed any pamphlets in the location and whether I had seen Mr. Jaap Basson. After making copious notes, the two detectives departed, taking nothing with them. I caught my plane at Windhoek airport and returned to the Union—but just in case I got up to any mischief on the way, two Special Branch men were on the plane with me to see me safely over the border.

While on the one hand I was hounded by the police like a common criminal, on the other hand I was received with great courtesy by some of the most prominent citizens of Windhoek. Among the Europeans I interviewed were the Mayor and Town Clerk, the Location Superintendent, the Chief Executive Officer, members of the United and Nationalist Party, representative figures in the English, Afrikaans and German speaking communities, and officials of the Chamber of Commerce. I also had lengthy conversations with leaders of the South West Africa National Union, the Ovamboland People's Organisation and other leaders of the African and Coloured communities.

I was taken on a conducted tour of the old and new locations in the mayoral car, accompanied by the Mayor, Mr. Jaap Snyman, and the Location Superintendent, Mr. de Wet.

New Age readers can thus be assured that the story we print this week is based on the facts, as told to me by the people on the spot.
"END UNION RULE," SAY AFRICAN LEADERS

NEW AGE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1959

Leaving (Continued from page 1) of slaves are not new to the Afri
can people. In the "Near and Not to Europeans".

Coloured and African leaders are
affirming to New Age their demand for an end to rule by the Union Government and the placing of the territory under United Nations trusteeship.

VOLUNTARY REMOVAL.

Following the United Nations
resolution to Mr. Lowe calling for the abandonment of the use of force against the inhabitants of the Windhoek location, the Mayor of Windhoek, Mr. Jean Snyman, has been claiming that far from being forced to move to Katutura, the location occupants are falling over themselves to get houses there.

"We are not interested in U.N.O. The people have come to us and asked us to move there and we are doing what they want," Mr. Snyman said.

Mr. Snyman claimed that about 2,000 people have already moved to Katutura, and that the people are so keen to move that they are prepared to stay without location. At Katutura which are not even completed.

"If we had the houses ready we could move 75 per cent of the people without any trouble today," he added.

In support of the location I did see people in occupation of half-finished houses, but I was unable to interview any people in either the old or new location, and so cannot give their reasons for moving.

However, the Grand Council officials admit that half the people who have moved to Katatura while African leaders told me that most of the Africans who have moved so far are employees of the Government Council and therefore would be penalised if they refused to move.

STRENGTHENED BY GUNS.

In any case, Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Ovambo People's Organisation, put it this way: "This is not a move of our own free will. How can we exercise free will when we are surrounded with guns?"

Apart from the police are still patrolling the location. Fire, petrol and water have been kept in readiness at the Grand Council offices in the location and saw those trucks, with police standing by our tour of the location, but the Mayor refused to allow me to photograph them.

"They are not only here because of the emergency," he said. "Such pictures cannot be taken to say that this is the way we usually rule the people here."

The previous week, said the Mayor, attempts had been made to turn down the houses of some of the people who were willing to move. The police are here for the protection of persons and property."

I was told later that the houses set on fire belonged to policemen and an irregular member of the Advisory Board who had supported the removal scheme.

GETTING RID OF THE "AGITATORS"

WINDHOEK

I KNOW the mentality of my people," the Mayor, Mr. Jean Snyman, told New Age.

"The problem is that they are so keen to move that they are prepared to stay without a home at Katutura which are not even completed." In pursuance of this belief, the authorities are now trying to get rid of the "agitators".

The Organising Secretary of the South West African National Union, Mr. Nathaniel Myeni, has been ordered out of Windhoek and forced to return to his home in the German district.

The Secretary of the Union's Organising Committee, Mr. Jakob Kuhanga, has also been sent out of Windhoek and returned to Ovamboland.

It will be remembered that Mr. Toivio Hermano-Ja-Toivo, one of the founders of the O.P.O. who was endorsed out of Cans Town after he sent a message to U.N.O. last year, was also forced to return to Ovamboland where he is now living under severe restrictions in the village of his chief.

TWO MORE

Two other leaders are threatened with eviction from Windhoek at this moment — Mr. Sam Simon, President of O.P.O., and his employer, Mr. Bartholdis Shishuma, a carpenter-hoekker.

When I asked the Mayor why these two were being deported, he would not say anything about it apart from what he had read in the newspaper. The location superintendent, he said, had ordered them out.

I remissed Mr. de Wet that it wasn't the police but the municipal authorities who had cleared the location.

On October 29 Mr. Simon received a letter from Mr. van Logtenberg ordering him to leave his house in Deception settlement with his wife and children, as he told me, he didn't have anywhere to go and Mr. Nujoma had paid his service contract until January.

Mr. van Logtenberg then summoned the two of his office, cancelled Mr. Simon's contract and issued the deportation order.

"No income to New Age."

When I told the Mayor of Mr. de Wet, he had claimed it was a police matter, then he said it was an interior matter.

"The police have turned the houses over to the Interior Department, who in turn have turned the houses over to me, and I have turned the houses over to the Interior Department."

It was to appease for Mr. Shishuma that Mr. de Wet had acted so quickly.

The licence on Mr. Oliver Tombo was revoked by the Interior Department in Windhoek last week only to be turned over to the licence by the Chief Native Commissioner, because he could no longer be expected to enter the territory.

The two men were now being deported by a local attorney, who has told an appeal against their deportation. It was to appease for Mr. Shishuma that Mr. de Wet had acted so quickly.

"Deportation orders or jailing of villages will never stop us fighting," for our rights. We will fight to the last drop of blood. We don't want the Union Government in South West Africa.

"As soon as we have our independence we will help our friends in the Union to have the rights which they want today. We will also co-operate with the Afri
can Union to put an end to colonialism on the African continent."

ANC Condemns Windhoek Killings

The African National Confer
ence, at its recent confer
ce in Durban, passed a resolu
tion "condemning as the sist, deposing and killing of people and the quelling of nonviolent resistence in Windhoek. These incidents are seen as an attack on the conscience and the administration of South West Africa by the Nationalist Governmen".

"The flagrant violation of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the repeated refusal to take notice of United Nations resolutions by the Government of the Union are a threat to peace in the area. This conference urges U.N.O. to take immi
nent steps against the perpetration of such crimes against the people of South West Africa, by the Nationalist Government."

ANC Condemns Windhoek Killings
A Location By Any Other Name...

When the City Council chose the name Katutura for the new location in Windhoek, they were given to understand it meant "Place of Final (or Permanent) Residence".

Later, however, they discovered it meant the exact opposite - "Place Where There is No Final Residence". But by then it was too late to change and the name is blazoned on huge letters on the Council buildings in the new location.

The Africans must have had a good laugh over that.

scale for Council employees in terms of which the starting wage for an unskilled labourer would be £10 a month. Contract labourers from Ovamboland get as little as £1 a day plus food and quarters. The average wage of a farm labourer is probably about £4 a month plus food and quarters.

For any of these people a rise of £2 a month would be a heavy burden.

The Chamber of Commerce and the Nationalists have discussed the matter and advised that wages of people moving to Katutura should be raised, but in fact nothing has been done and as far as the people are concerned talk of increased rents is a fact. Acknowledging this difficulty, the Mayor may be in the process of calling a meeting of all public bodies in January at which the question of wage and rent increases may be discussed again.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION

At bottom, however, the main objection of the Africans to the removal is political.

The refusal of the Africans in the Windhoek location to be moved to the Katutura location has been stated on numerous occasions in the most direct and unambiguous terms, said Mr. Uarj Krukkento, Vice-President of the South West African National Union, in a statement to the Katutura location.

"There is not the slightest doubt that the overwhelming majority of the Africans are opposed to the removal scheme... apportioned to each is repugnant and unacceptable, even if it is under the guise of 'new location'. Our opposition to the removal, apart from other weighty economic and political considerations, is founded on principle. Since this move involves a principle there can be no compromise."

Mr. Krukkento pointed out that the removal scheme was fathered by an all-White Town Council, a body 100 per cent unrepresentative of the Africans. It was not a question of moving Africans from one point to another, but of removing them from their homes.

WOMEN'S DEMONSTRATION

Angered by this, women from the location marched to the Government buildings to protest to the Administrator and ask for the removal scheme to be halted.

The Administrator refused to receive them and ordered them to leave the ground. The police told them to go to the Chief Magistrate, who addressed them, but they were not satisfied with his statement. The women were fined £2 each for creating a public disturbance.

December 8: In protest against the removal scheme, the Africans proclaimed a boycott of the beer-halls, bus service, cinema and dancehalls — all municipal undertakings. From the earliest the boycott was a complete success.

December 10: A special Advisory Board meeting was called by the Town Council in the afternoon. Present were the Mayor, the Municipal Superintendent, Chief Magistrate, Police Chief and about 20 Africans. The Mayor told the people that if the boycott continued, the Town Council would have to withdraw the service. The Police Chief warned the audience that they had to obey the law of the land. The sort of demonstration which the women had conducted the previous day would not be tolerated, he said.

The people raised the question of the location removal, but the Mayor refused to discuss the matter, saying it was already decided and there was no point arguing about it.

At a huge meeting in the location, African opposition to the removal scheme is made abundantly clear.

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