

other groups were also represented on the executive. The Damara leaders, Alpheus Harasemab and Franz Hoisemab, were both on the executive.³⁰ During 1922 the president of the Windhoek branch was Aaron Mungunda, although the administration with some justification suspected that his brother, Hosea Kutako, was the "controlling spirit". The chairman was Solomon Monguya, a Xhosa employed on the railways, and the secretary Clements Kapuuo, the father of the Clements Kapuuo who succeeded Hosea Kutako as leader of the Hereros.³¹

The UNIA spread rapidly in Windhoek and its surrounding areas. According to the leaders of the Zwartboois, a Nama grouping which was opposed to the organization, "(a)lmost all the natives of Windhoek and also of the farms of the district" had joined the organization by the end of 1922. These included both black (Herero, Damara etc.) and yellow (Nama) people.³² In November 1922 the Department of Native Affairs inspected the books of the organization and found that 871 members had paid the required 3/3 membership fee. This was a significant achievement, given the low wages paid to black labourers during this period. The membership of the organization was probably much larger than indicated by the subscription figure because the office bearers were unable to account for all the money in its bank account, and subscriptions were also "very much in arrears".³³

Membership of the organization was open to all blacks in the territory, and Windhoek office-holders stated that they "intended establishing branches in Okahandja, Karibib and Usakos, and in the course of time throughout the Protectorate".³⁴ Although the Department of Native Affairs, Windhoek, found it "significant" that control of the Windhoek

branch had shifted from its West African founders to local groups,³⁵ West Africans continued to play a role in the Windhoek organization. Two Liberians, for example, accompanied the delegation which met Native Affairs official Harry Drew in November 1922. There are indications, however, of tensions between the West African and local members of the Windhoek branch. Drew remarked that at the conclusion of his meeting with the UNIA leaders, representatives of the two groups of leaders (ie. Liberians and Hereros) asked for private interviews with him.³⁶ The relationship between the Windhoek and Luderitz branches was also ambiguous. The petition of the Windhoek branch to establish a hall for the organization was, for example, supported by a letter from Headley, the president of the Luderitz branch.³⁷ It also appears that at this early stage (February 1922), Headley was recognized as the president of the Windhoek branch.³⁸ However, subsequently the two branches attempted to expand into other parts of the territory independently of one another. Headley made use of West African and West Indian contacts in attempting to establish branches of the organization in Swakopmund and Ushakos,³⁹ while the indigenous UNIA leaders relied on more indigenous channels.⁴⁰

While the administration saw the suspicion between the foreign and local components of the UNIA as a product of ethnic hostilities or of the opportunism and dishonesty of the foreign element, there were even more fundamental differences between the two groups. The foreign group was not only materially privileged in relation to the indigenous population, but was also self-conscious of its advantage in terms of Western education. Headley, for example, maintained that illiterates should not be office-holders in UNIA "for nowadays a man who cannot read and write for himself is nothing else but a fool to this movement..."⁴¹ Investigation by administrative officials of the Windhoek branch of UNIA had disclosed

that the predominantly local leaders of the organization "are hampered by want of education in regard to which they seem ambitious."⁴²

Headley and other UNIA leaders in Luderitz also appeared to be unable to understand conditions in other parts of the territory. Besides the specific class interests of many of the Luderitz leaders, the UNIA executive was also hampered by the isolation of Luderitz and the special circumstances that existed there. Even today, the town of Luderitz is isolated from its hinterland by the Namib.⁴³ The nearest permanent settlement is at Aus, more than 100 kms away. The desert terrain surrounding the town is of little or no use for agriculture, and Luderitz has therefore relied almost exclusively on the diamond mines and fishing industry. Furthermore, in the 1920s the labour force consisted largely of foreign and migrant workers. Coloured and African labourers from South Africa and further afield were accorded special privileges, while Ovambo migrants were isolated from the town by strict control of the compounds.

Given these circumstances, it is understandable that the UNIA executive in Luderitz was incapable of comprehending the tensions that existed in other parts of the territory, and which in 1922/3 had brought blacks and whites to the brink of a state of war.⁴⁴ In 1922, for example, Joseph Hailand, a UNIA member in Usakos, had written to Headley asking what could be done to alleviate the oppression of government and farmers, and expressing alarm about the way in which local whites were arming themselves. Headley replied that he did not "know of any war between white and blacks":

We are living in a peaceful state down this way in Luderitz,

that the predominantly local leaders of the organization "are hampered⁴² by want of education in regard to which they seem ambitious."

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We are living in a peaceful state down this way in Luderitz,

both white and Blacks, alike, and I don't see the cause of anybody arming themselves. One thing that I will ask all my people is to obey the laws of the Government, and abide by the Constitution of the Protectorate, and I am sure that the Government, or the Farmers, cannot molest you...45

The attitude adopted by Headley and other literate or semi-literate West Indians and West Africans to the overwhelmingly illiterate indigenous population was often blatantly paternal. In a letter to a local newspaper in March 1924, for example, Headley described the aims of the UNIA in the following terms:

To establish a Universal Confraternity among the race; to promote the spirit of pride and love; to reclaim the fallen; to administer to and assist the needy; to assist in civilising the backward Tribes of Africa; to assist in the development of Independent Negro Nations and Communities or Agencies in the principal countries and Cities of the World; for the representation and protection of all Negroes irrespective of nationality; to promote a conscientious worship among the natives of Africa; to establish Universities, Colleges, Academies and Schools for the racial Education and culture of the people; to conduct a world wide Commercial and Industrial Interchange for the good of the people; to work for better conditions in all Negro Communities.46

Even if one overlooks the inherent paternalism and vague, high-flown terminology of this passage (which was clearly aimed at the white readers of the newspaper), the aims outlined by Headley were hopelessly remote from the pressing needs and interests of the local population, struggling for survival in the rural areas. In the same letter, the UNIA president went on to argue that

...the Negroes that are domiciled in the Protectorate, has as much interest at stake into the Financial and Industrial development of the Republic of Liberia, as he has at the present time, if any, in the Windhoek Native Location...47.

Possibly because of the tensions that existed between the Luderitz and Windhoek branches of the UNIA, local leaders of the Windhoek branch approached the administration in July 1922 in order to obtain permission

for some of its leaders to travel to New York, where Garvey had his headquarters. The three leaders who were to make the trip included the Windhoek president, Aaron Mungunda, and two others, one a Nama and the other a Herero. The plan was squashed by the Native Commissioner who "suggested various difficulties in the way even if permission were granted".⁴⁸

Windhoek leaders thus concentrated their attention on propagating the aims of their organization in other parts of the territory. In October and November 1922 Mungunda and a Damara, Theodor Hanbanue, visited Karibib, Usakos and Okahandja in order to hold meetings with the local black population. It is clear from the responses they received that the ideas of the UNIA had already penetrated the areas beyond Windhoek and had generated considerable interest. According to the report of a police spy at Usakos, Mungunda urged "the black men to pull together and to Unite as one and then they will get their liberty as this is their land". He explained the strength of the whites in terms of their unity. Blacks should do the same and assist one another, no matter if they were Hereros, Damaras or Ovambos.⁴⁹ At Karibib Mungunda was reported to have told a meeting that the organization was working in conjunction with Americans and that they wanted to establish their own administration.⁵⁰

The UNIA envoys seemed to have aroused the most interest in Okahandja, at that time a major centre of the Hereros. Four meetings were held there, and the report of the local police spy on these meetings clearly illustrates the extent to which Garveyism had already become associated with millenarian expectations. At the first meeting Mungunda explained that the object of the organization was to unite blacks. He urged his audience to listen carefully to what he had to say as he had already

been wrongly reported in other districts. At the next meeting Mungunda complained that what he had said at the first meeting had been misunderstood, because all the young men and women had been asking him "when the Americans were coming to release them."

If I told you that the American Negroes were coming to release you, I think you would be satisfied, but it would be a lie. I know nothing about America. The society has been formed through American ideas, but Americans only explained it but did not do the work - we must do that. It is no use holding out false hopes about America, because I do not believe that they will ever be able to come here to help you.⁵¹

At the remaining meetings a number of new members were recruited and an executive and a "business committee" were elected. Hereros and Damaras were equally represented on the two committees. Eduard Maharero, the brother of Traugott Maharero who was leader of the Okahandja Hereros and who had also taken an active role in the proceedings, was elected chairman of the Okahandja branch. The police spy who attended the meeting, concluded his report by stating that although he did not think the Okahandja blacks would rebel, talk that the Americans were coming to free the country spread throughout the district.⁵²

The millenarianism that became associated with Garveyism in the Namibian countryside, took a number of different forms, all of which were grounded on the basic premise that help would come from the "Americans" or some other external source. According to some versions the Americans would arrive in ships or aircraft.⁵³ In other versions, soldiers would issue from the ground:

From the gorge over there beyond yonder hills, in distant mountains I saw troops issue, they came from all sides towards Windhoek and took it.⁵⁴

The Rhenish missionary in Omaruru reported that a rumour had spread in

the district that certain people had landed at Cape Cross and that the government should find out whether they were not American soldiers.⁵⁵

Almost everywhere in the Police Zone, Garveyism created an air of expectancy which, combined with the disillusionment of blacks and the underlying tensions of the society, produced a general attitude of defiance and persistent reports of an approaching revolt. For example, a police spy operating in the Okahandja district was told "that three days beyond Gobabis there are a lot of natives including Hereros, Bushmen and American Negroes waiting for the white people to come there to start a fight. There are altogether about 300 natives there with rifles, and some without rifles. They still want more arms. A Herero came from there to get recruits."⁵⁶ From what he had heard during his tour of the district, the spy gained

the impression that the natives intend to rise and that the action is being engineered by American negroes. The trouble, if it arises, will begin on the eastern border of the District when the rain starts. One of the causes of discontent is the sheep inspection and the branding law. Vaccination has also caused a great deal of discontent. The American negroes have advised them not to brand their stock, refuse to allow their sheep to be inspected, and refuse to be vaccinated.⁵⁷

These impressions were supported by another police informer who toured the same district a few weeks later. He reported that a number of people had joined UNIA, had collected money for the organization and were waiting for badges.⁵⁸ Yet another informer reported that at Okasise he had been told that "the Herero people want to fight but have no rifles":

At Okamatero I met some Hereros who said they were waiting for the Americans, then they would start ... At Okombahe I found a Herero who said that the American people had written on the stone at Karibib. He said that the Americans had built houses at Windhoek, where they can come together... At

Waldau the Hereros spoke of the Americans giving a button, to keep until the time is come... I think the American negroes are at the bottom of all the unrest, and that the Hereros, except for the American influence, would never think of fighting again, having once fought the Germans. The Hereros are very eager and anxious for the Americans to come.⁵⁹

Millenarianism in perspective

The essential characteristic of millenarianism is that it envisages a new age, a millenium, in which people will be delivered from some form of suffering or in which the idealized conditions of the past will be restored. While millenarium movements have often been described as essentially irrational and backward looking, as Keller points out, they also represent "an attempt to cope with the present, to change it, and to create a more promising future".⁶⁰ Michael Barkun has argued that many millenarium movements can be seen as a response to disaster.

Men cleave to hopes of imminent worldly salvation only when the hammerblows of disaster destroy the world they have known and render them susceptible to ideas which they would earlier have cast aside.⁶¹

Robert Edgar has used Barkun's framework to illuminate the context that gave rise to Wellington Butelezi's brand of Garveyism in the Transkei⁶² - a form of Garveyism which in fact shared many characteristics with that of the Namibian countryside. The situation in Namibia in the early 1920s provides some confirmation of the disaster hypothesis. Pre-colonial Namibian societies had been subjected to a series of traumas and disasters, including colonial conquest, the rinderpest epidemic of 1897, near annihilation and an unusually harsh form of forced labour. In the early 1920s disaster had culminated in the cruel shattering of the hopes created by the defeat of the Germans. That the millenarium tendencies of Garveyism should have taken root most firmly among the Hereros, also lends some credibility to the disaster hypothesis.

However, there are aspects of millenarianism other than the response to disaster which need to be considered. What is particularly striking about the Namibian situation in the 1920s is not merely the destructive (or disastrous) impact of colonialism on the Namibian societies, but also the essential powerlessness of the colonized in the face of the organizational and military capabilities of the colonial state. It is clear that even those who had placed their faith in the "Americans" were aware that the colonial state could only be dislodged by military force, but it was equally apparent that indigenous communities did not on their own possess the means to take on the military power of the colonial state. For the most part Namibians did not passively regard the "Americans" as liberators, but rather as a catalyst which would help to bring about a general rising of Namibians themselves. Seen against this background, the millenarian beliefs expressed by Namibian Garveyites appear less absurd or irrational. In fact, as argued later in this thesis, the political and military assertion of the Namibian people only became a practical possibility when external developments helped to balance the disproportionate power of the colonial state. That initially aid was to come from an international body based in the United States, provides an ironic comment on the development of the Namibian history.

Another important aspect of millenarianism in Namibia is that it not only served as a means of boosting the morale of the colonized (and thus supporting an active defiance of the administration and settlers), but also served to undermine the morale and confidence of the settlers and colonial state. While settlers and colonial officials scoffed at the absurdity of the belief that the Americans would come to the aid of the Namibians, there was a distinct uneasiness in their reception of these

reports. There appears to be a certain relish in the way in which black Namibians divulged to white employers, police informers or colonial officials reports of imminent rebellions or "American" activities. There is something of a taunt in the earlier mentioned example that certain unknown people had landed at Cape Cross, and that the government "should see whether these were not Americans".⁶³

The millenarian content of Namibian Garveyism may thus also be seen as a specific form of political struggle, or even as a means of extending the long tradition of military resistance in Namibia. George Balandier has argued that in certain contexts, religion may become "a smokescreen for politics".⁶⁴ In Namibia millenarian assertions seem sometimes to approach a form of "psychological warfare".

During 1922/23 white fears of a general rising attained unprecedented heights. Reports of impending rebellions reached the administration from nearly all districts. Settlers maintained that conditions in 1922/23 were similar to those that preceded the rebellion of 1904 "when the former German Government made light of everything, even answering with threats, until eventually the memorable days of January, 1904, broke upon us".⁶⁵ In February 1922 the Magistrate of Keetmanshoop appealed to the administration to supply the town with 300 rifles. He maintained that he was "satisfied there is mischief brewing - and if the Police were in a position to protect the Public or even the public in a position to protect themselves, I would have delayed writing to you."⁶⁶ In the latter half of the same year, following the circulation of a letter calling for the unity of Ovambos, Namas, Damaras, Hereros and San, the management of the OMEG copper mine asked the administration for

"at least two machine guns".⁶⁷

Although the colonial authorities went out of their way to squash and discourage rumours or reports of impending rebellions, they were at times also infected by the alarm and insecurity that pervaded the country during this period. The apparently panic-stricken response of the administration to the Bondelswart rebellion is only one example of the tenuousness of the confident image the administration attempted to project.⁶⁸ In October 1922 Native Commissioner Manning was doubtful that a general rising would occur but foresaw the possibility of "small outbreaks" in isolated parts of the country after the rains set in.

As submitted in previous Memoranda, the question of settled conditions in parts where no strong tribal control exists largely depends upon a sufficient number of Police and outposts for regular patrols strong enough to carry out the law and - in the absence of a small mobile force which seems very desirable - rifle associations in every district... I would respectfully venture the opinion that the means of enforcing all laws or promptly dealing with possible outbreaks in this large Territory are not adequate at the present time."⁶⁹

During the same month the Secretary for SWA sent a coded telegramme to the Magistrate of Okahandja requesting him to employ spies to ascertain the extent to which blacks in the district were armed. It would be "bad policy" to open small stations and have men and equipment captured, he advised. Forces should be concentrated.⁷⁰

Garveyism and the generalization of rebellion

In a situation of this sort, the fine dividing line between the intention to create fear and insecurity among whites and the more active intention to encourage or bring about an actual rebellion is blurred. That between 1922 and 1925 there were two large-scale rebellions and a number of other smaller incidents of resistance and defiance, is on its own an indication that rumours of a general rising went beyond the mere

attempt to frighten the settlers and the administration. The dilemma this posed for authorities and settlers is expressed by the Rhenish missionary A. Kuhlmann:

If there was a question of an armed rising we would hardly find it out, for as long as the people talk big, there is no direct danger, but if the hidden spark of hostility continues to smoulder on there is no saying when it may burst into flames."⁷¹

Indications of rebellion were apparent even before the Bondelswarts revolt erupted in May 1922. As pointed out earlier, the Bondelswarts had come close to an active rebellion in 1917, and thereafter there were frequent reports of unrest in the district of Warmbad. More important, there were indications that the Bondelswarts may have expected their rebellion to develop into a general rising. According to a police informer, talk of a general rising in the Herero stronghold of Okahandja had begun in 1921.⁷² In February 1922 the Magistrate of Keetmanshoop appealed to the administration for military assistance to meet what he termed his "strong suspicion of native unrest in this town and District". The magistrate had clearly been shaken after he was confronted by a Herero "commando" which rode into the town and "in an insolent manner demanded to know what their tribesmen were doing in jail". (A number of Hereros had been arrested after a faction fight between Hereros and Ovambos in the area.) The magistrate reported that the Hereros blamed the administration for the low prices of stock and their consequent struggle for existence. They were also "violently indignant" about reports that they would be forced to move from their reserve at Tses. Although he was reproached by the Secretary for SWA for exaggerating the situation, the magistrate refused to back down, asserting that there was indeed a "restlessness among the Natives". To back up his

claim, the magistrate stated that only a few days before there had been a "big meeting" in the Warmbad district (the district of the Bondelswarts). "Even the Hottentots from this district were notified to attend and their masters were unable to hold them back."⁷³

In March '922 the Magistrate of Rehoboth also reported "unrest amongst the Hottentots in this country". A Baster field cornet had been told that the Namas were preparing for war. The Baster captain, Cornelius van Wyk, told the magistrate that "since the New Year he had noticed strange Hottentots in his area and that letters are passing between Hottentots here and others outside the District". A patrol sent out to investigate had found the suspected Namas in possession of Garveyist propaganda.⁷⁴

Evidence to the effect that the administration resorted to precipitate and drastic action against the Bondelswarts because it feared a general uprising, has already been considered.⁷⁵ Further information to support this emerged after the rebellion. The Keetmanshoop police reported in October 1922, for example, that during the rebellion, Jan Hendriks, leader of the Veldskoendraers, had convened a meeting "with the object of assisting the Bondelswarts". The meeting had been attended by Gideon Matundu, Herero leader in the Keetmanshoop area. It was also reported that another meeting had been held in the Berseba reserve where the Isaacs faction and the younger people had decided to help the Bondelswarts. It was only through the intervention of the collaborative Chief Goliath that they had been prevented from doing so.⁷⁶ According to evidence presented to the Bondelswarts Commission, the Bondelswarts leader, Jacobus Christian, wielded considerable influence not only over his own people in the Warmbad area, but also over Namas at Berseba and

Keetmanshoop. Shortly before the military campaign against the Bondelswarts, the Keetmanshoop Nama captain, Manasse, wrote to Christian asking what could be done about the pass laws.⁷⁷

During the rebellion a Basuto who was employed by the municipality as a foreman of the Keetmanshoop black township, addressed a meeting in the township, urging the people to attack the town and seize arms and ammunition.⁷⁸ In July a police patrol which had been sent out to arrest Jan Hendrik, captain of the Veldskoendraers, and six others for failing to pay their dog tax, was fired upon. Hendriks was later sentenced to six years imprisonment for attempted murder.⁷⁹

In the same month the magistrate of Gobabis was killed by a poisoned arrow during a skirmish between the police and a large group of San. The conflict with the San had begun in June 1922 when a police patrol was sent from Gobabis to investigate stock thefts on an isolated farm about 100kms from the magisterial seat. According to a later report, the San in the area had previously been organized in small groups with little connection to one another. However, the magistrate of Gobabis reported that shortly before the trouble "a certain Zameko by reason of his personality and ability has obtained influence over the whole population of the area which is as unusual as it is unfortunate."⁸⁰ The patrol which was sent out to investigate was ambushed by a large group of San and it reportedly managed to escape only by firing on its attackers. One of the horses of the policemen was killed by a poisoned arrow.

In July the Gobabis magistrate set out with an armed patrol to locate the San and "negotiate" with them. From the mission station at Epukiro

the magistrate reported that he had received information to the effect that the San under Zameko were going to fight and that they had collected large quantities of dried meat as provisions for the *kriegsleute* (soldiers). "They say straight out that they are going to make war."⁸¹

On 24 July a missionary from Epukiro who had gone out to investigate the theft of some stock was compelled to beat a hasty retreat when he came under fire from the San. Two days later the magistrate and his patrol located Zameko's group and in the ensuing battle the magistrate was killed by a poisoned arrow.

Following the death of the magistrate, a larger force was sent after the San, and Zameko and some of his followers were captured in mid-August, but not before a further skirmish in which at least six San were killed. In a statement to the Police, Zameko said it had been their intention to kill both the Magistrate and the police.⁸² The matter did not end here, however. In September the acting Magistrate of Gobabis reported that he regarded the "Bushman trouble" as "serious".

The district north of Epukiro is unsafe for any European and an unarmed man's life would not be worth a day's purchase.⁸³

The magistrate also reported that there was "a little native agitation going on throughout the district", and this might lead to trouble if the district police force was not increased.

Prior to this the administration had received information which connected the San revolt with a more general uprising of blacks in the territory. According to one informant, two representatives of Samuel Maharero had entered the territory from Bechuanaland, and had toured the country, in order to discuss the strategy for a future rebellion. The tactics of 1904 had been inadequate because the Hereros had first attacked the

farms, giving the whites in the towns the opportunity to mobilize. The mobility of the Hereros had also been restricted by their large herds of cattle. In preparation for the coming war, blacks should therefore sell their cattle and buy horses and donkeys, and when the time came they should attack the towns first. The messengers had also stated that the Damaras and Bushmen (San) would also be involved in the war.⁸⁴

Although this report may have been fabricated by the farmers of the district, who had long been agitating for police reinforcements, other information that emerged during this period lends some credibility to the report. For example, the missionary at Epukiro reported in August that the San were going to make war.⁸⁵ In June 1922 the magistrate of Rehoboth reported that the Hereros were buying horses on a "large scale". This and other information led him to believe that the Hereros were preparing to rebel.⁸⁶

In September and October there were persistent reports linking a general rising to the eastern frontier and including the San among the rebels. For example one informant stated that Hereros, San and "American Negroes" had gathered on the eastern frontier to prepare for a war.⁸⁷ Another informant referred to the killing of the Gobabis magistrate adding that

(t)hose were native people who did that, and all natives are the same. We can easily get rifles...⁸⁸

As the rainy season approached, talk of an impending rebellion became more persistent. In Omaruru, for example, a police informer stated that

(t)he talk is that if there is any trouble here they, the Hereros, are to let Samuel Maharero know; they also state that they can get guns and ammunition in a day. This talk is general in the location among Hereros including men and women.

The informer went on to say that he had heard "a little while back" that Herero emissaries had been sent from Windhoek into the area occupied by the Bondelswarts.

The Hereros, the Rehoboth Bastards and the Bondelswarts are on friendly terms. The Hereros say that the Bastards have declined to give up their arms to the whites and that the Hereros would stand by the Bastards in trouble.⁸⁹

Another informant from the same district stated that meetings had taken place from the Okahandja district in the centre of the country to the Grootfontein district in the far north. Whenever the Hereros met on the farms, "their first and general conversation" was about the rising.⁹⁰

However, the anticipated general rising failed to materialize. The spirit of insurrection instead spent itself in more limited acts of defiance and resistance which only served to impress on the people the preponderant power of the state. In various parts of the country blacks defied colonial regulations relating to branding, sheep inspection and compulsory vaccination.⁹¹ In the Rehoboth district a group of Namas who had not been allocated a reserve, simply moved onto private farms with their stock, and threatened to "kill any policeman who was sent to turn them off".⁹² By 1924 the optimism and militancy of 1922/23 was already giving way to resignation and passivity. At the beginning of 1924 the administrator was able to report that "no rumours of Herero or other Native risings have been circulated as has been the case in practically every preceding year."⁹³ Acts of resistance still occurred, but these were more sporadic and isolated.

In the latter half of 1924 inhabitants of the Vaalgras section of the Tses reserve offered concerted resistance to the branding regulations. The Herero leader, Gideon Matundu was adamant:

Our souls and our bodies belong to the government and it can do with them what it pleases, but our cattle are our own property.

A number of leaders of the Vaalgras community were finally arrested and convicted, but before they could be jailed, they "were forcibly rescued from the police by a large mob of natives." In the negotiations that followed the rescuers adopted "a very determined and defiant attitude," arguing that as they were all opposed to the branding law, they were all equally guilty. Subsequently 175 men and woman marched into the Keetmanshoop prison where they remained for three days. They were finally persuaded to leave by the chief native commissioner and the leaders of the rescue group were tried and convicted.⁹⁵ Resistance also occurred at the temporary reserve of Okatumba where more than 100 people refused to move until the government threatened them with force.⁹⁶

However, These were only isolated acts of defiance which failed to provide a focus for discontent in other parts of the territory or to ellicit sympathetic responses of resistance from other areas. It was only with the build up of resistance in the Bastard community, which finally culminated in the Rehnborth rebellion of 1925, that the administration once again faced the threat of a general rebellion of the black population.

Endnotes for chapter six

1. SWAA A492/2, Memo. to Native Affairs, Luderitz, 15/4/19; Native Affairs, Luderitz - Secretary, 16/11/20.
2. SWAA A492/2, vols 1 and 2.
3. SWAA A492/2, J.H. Harrison, Monrovia - Secretary, SWA, 29/5/16; Magistrate, Swakopmund - Secretary, 10/8/16; Memo. to Native Affairs Luderitz, 15/4/19; Magistrate, Luderitz - Secretary, 26/4/20; Immigration Office, Luderitz - Secretary, 20/1/20.
4. SWAA A492/2, SA Railways, Windhoek - Secretary, 30/11/25. See also Native Commissioner - Secretary, 6/5/22. The Administration used the terms, "Kroo men" and "Kroo boys", to refer to the Kru of Sierra Leone and to West Africans in general.
5. ADM 3823/3, 'Summary of wages drawn by Natives and Coloured persons', Luderitz, Quarter ending 21/3/22.
6. SWAA A492/2, Magistrate, Luderitz - Secretary, 26/4/20.
7. SWAA A492/2, SWA Police, Windhoek - Secretary, 29/9/20.
8. SWAA A492/2, Native Commissioner - Secretary, 6/5/22.
9. E.D. Cronon, *Marcus Garvey*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973, pp. 3-4; J.H. Clark, *Marcus Garvey and the vision of Africa*. New York: Random House, 1974, pp. 8-9; E.S. Redkey, 'The flowering of black nationalism: Henry McNeal Turner and Marcus Garvey', in J.H. Clark (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 391-393; V.L. Foster, in J.H. Clark (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 414.
10. T. Martin, *Race first*. London: Greenwood Press, 1976, p. 45.
11. J. H. Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.
12. T. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46. See also, R.L. Okonkwo 'The Garvey movement in British West Africa'. *Journal of African History*, 21, 1980, p. 108. See also S. Pienaar, *South Africa and the League of Nations 1929-1939*. Ph.D. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1982, p. 168.
14. See, for example, ADM 152/C248, 'Law list from the advisable shipment of the U.N.J.A. (sic) organisation of New York', 11/3/21.
15. Okonkwo, *op. cit.*
16. SWAA A50/31/1, Native Affairs, Windhoek - Secretary, 21/12/21.
17. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1925, U.G. 26-26, p. 21.
18. SWAA A50/31/1, Native Affairs, Windhoek - Secretary, 21/12/21.

19. *Ibid.*; ADM 152/C248, Native Affairs, Luderitz - Secretary, 7/9/22.
20. SWAA A50/31/1, Magistrate, Luderitz - Secretary, 20/3/22.
21. ADM 3823/3. Wages in Luderitz compared favourably with those in other parts of the territory. According to the administrator's report for 1922, black labourers employed by the mines, railways and industry earned "9d. rising to 1s.3d. and more per shift", while farm labourers on average earned between "10s. and 15s. to 20s. per month, with food and occasional clothing." Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1922, U.G. 21-23, p. 21.
22. ADM 152/C248.
23. See, for example, A.D. Smith, *Nationalism in the 20th century*. London: Martin Robertson, 1979, p. 106; Okonkwo, *op. cit.*
24. See, for example, SWAA A50/31/1, Headley, Luderitz - Abraham, Swakopmund, 25/3/22; Headley, Luderitz - Hailand, Usakos, 14/11/22.
25. SWAA A50/31/1, cutting from 'Negro World,' 18/10/21.
26. SWAA A50/31/1, Magistrate, Luderitz - Town Clerk, Luderitz, 19/11/21; ADM 152/C248, 'Coloured and Native People, Luderitz: Alleged Grievances', 24/4/22.
27. See, for example, ADM 152/C248, W. Adrianse - C. Kadalie, 26/1/22.
28. Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 420. See also C. Briggs, 'The decline of the Garvey Movement', in J.H. Clarke (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 174 - 179.
29. SWAA A50/31/1, Native Affairs, Windhoek - Secretary, 22/11/22; Liebig's Co. - Secretary, 20/1/22.
30. A312, item 77, Executive, UNIA, Windhoek - Major Bowker, Windhoek, 2/1/22.
31. SWAA A50/31/1, Native Affairs, Windhoek - Secretary, 22/11/22. It was men like Kutako, Mungunda and Kapuuo who provided the links between the first phase of popular resistance in the 1920s and the creation of a mass-based nationalist movement in the late 1950s.
32. SWAA A50/31/1, David Zwartbooi et al. "The government," undated (date of translation, 30/11/22).
33. SWAA A50/31/1, H. Drew, Windhoek - Secretary, 10/11/22.
34. *Ibid.*
35. SWAA A50/31/1, Native Affairs, Windhoek - Secretary, 22/11/22.
36. SWAA A50/31/1, H. Drew, Windhoek - Secretary, 10/11/22.
37. A312, Item 77, Headley, Luderitz - G.F. Hofmeyr, Windhoek, 6/2/22.
38. A312, Item 77, Executive, UNIA, Windhoek - G.R. Hofmeyr, 17/2/22.

39. SWAA A50/31/1, Headley, Luderitz - Abraham, Swakopmund, 25/3/22; Headley, Luderitz - Hailand, Usakos, 14/11/22.

40. See below.

41. SWAA A50/31/1, Headley, Luderitz - William Abraham, Swakopmund, 23/5/22.

42. SWAA A50/31/1, H. Drew, Windhoek - Secretary, 10/11/22.

43. Interviews with Town Clerk and other residents of Luderitz, June 1981.

44. See below.

45. SWAA A50/31/1, Headley, Luderitz - J. Hailand, Usakos, 14/11/22.

46. *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9/3/24, quoted by Z. Ngavirue, 'Political parties and interest groups in SWA: a study of a plural soc.' Ph.D. Thesis, Oxford University, 1972, p. 256.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

48. SWAA A50/31/1, Native Commissioner - Secretary, 11/7/22.

49. SWAA A50/31/1, SWA Police, Usakos - Magistrate, Karibib, 26/10/22.

50. SWAA A50/31/1, SWA Police, Karibib - Magistrate, Karibib, 19/10/22.

51. SWAA 396/4, 'Report of Native Corporal Jacob', 6/11/22.

52. *Ibid.*

53. H. Vedder, 'The Herero', in C. Hahn, H. Vedder and L. Fourie, *The Natives Tribes of SWA*. Cape Town: Cape Times, 1928, p. 163.

54. SWAA A396/13, Statement by A. Kuhlmann, Omaruru, 11/10/22.

55. *Ibid.*

56. SWAA A396/4, Statement by David Ngxibi, 3/10/22.

57. *Ibid.*

58. SWAA A396/4, 'Report of Native Corporal Jacob', 27/10/22.

59. SWAA A396/4, Statement by John Retsang, 31/10/22.

60. B.B. Keller, 'Millenarianism and resistance: the Xhosa cattle killing', *Journal of Asia and African Studies*, 13, 1-2, 1978, p. 96.

61. M. Barkun, *Disaster and the millenium*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, p. 1.

62. R. Edgar, 'Garveyism in Africa: Dr Wellington and the American movement in the Transkei', *Ufahamu*, 6, 3, 1976, pp. 31-57.

63. See above.
64. Quoted by Keller, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
65. SWAA A396/4, Letter to editor, 'Lander-Zeitung', 11/10/22.; See also SWAA A396/13, Statement by A. Kuhlmann, 11/10/22.
66. SWAA A396/10, Magistrate, Keetmanshoop - Secretary, 2/2/22.
67. SWAA A396/4, Native Commissioner - Acting Secretary, 12/10/22.
68. See chapter four, above.
69. SWAA A396/4, Secretary - Magistrate, Okahandja, 13/10/22.
70. *Ibid.*
71. SWAA A396/13, Statement by A. Kuhlmann, 11/10/22.
72. SWAA A396/10, Statement by David Kobase/Gowaseb, 17/10/22.
73. SWAA A396/10, Magistrate, Keetmanshoop - Secretary, 2/2/22 and 10/2/22; W. Theron - A.J. Waters, 21/2/22. The misgivings of the Keetmanshoop magistrate were justified when only two months later the Bondelswarts actively rebelled against the administration. See chapter four.
74. SWAA A396/6, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Secretary, 14/3/22 and 18/3/22.
75. See chapter four, above.
76. SWAA A396/10, SWA Police, Keetmanshoop - SWA Police, Windhoek, 30/1/22.
77. G.L.M. Lewis, *The Bondelswarts rebellion of 1922*. MA thesis, Rhodes University, 1977, p. 196.
78. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1922, U.G. 21-23, p. 25.
79. *Ibid.*, SWAA A396/10, SWA Police Keetmanshoop - SWA Police, Windhoek, 27/7/22; Magistrate, Keetmanshoop - Secretary, 25/7/22.
80. SWAA A50/25, Acting Magistrate, Gobabis: 'Report on the Bushmen trouble in the Gobabis district', 17/9/22.
81. SWAA A50/25, Van Reyneveld, Epukiro - Karalowa, 12/7/22.
82. For a more detailed account of the conflict, see SWAA A50/25, 'Report of the acting magistrate of Gobabis', 17/9/22; SWA Police, Gobabis - Magistrate, Gobabis, 20/9/22; 'Statement of Zameko. Bushman captain', 18/8/22.
83. SWAA A50/25, Magistrate, Gobabis - Secretary, 20/9/22.
84. SWAA A50/25, Statement by Max Hallmann, Gobabis, 17/8/22.

85. SWAA A50/25, Magistrate, Gobabis - Secretary, 17/8/22.
86. SWAA A396/6, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Secretary, 29/6/22.
87. SWAA A396/4, Statement by David Ngxibi, Okahandja, 3/10/22.
88. SWAA A396/4, Magistrate, Okahandja - Secretary, 1/9/22. Hunter-gatherers like the San, have generally received little attention in the history of southern Africa. For example, W.G. Clarence-Smith, in his study of southern Angola, maintains that hunter-gatherers were "of negligible historical importance". (*Slaves, peasants and capitalists in southern Angola 1840-1926.*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 72.)
89. SWAA A396/13, Statement by William Kaapnaar, Omaruru, 16/10/22.
90. SWAA A396/13, Statement by David Krbase/Gowaseb, Omaruru, 17/10/22.
91. See, for example, SWAA A219/2, A219/6, A219/12, A396/4, A396/13.
92. SWAA A396/6, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Secretary, 7/12/22 and 6/1/23.
93. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1923, U.G. 21-24, p. 12.
94. SWAA A219/9, Head Constable, Keetmanshoop - Inspecting Officer, Keetmanshoop, 25/7/24.
95. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, p. 21; SWAA A219/9.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

Chapter seven

THE REHOBOTH REBELLION

The defiance and militancy which reached a peak in the 1922/23 period, may have died down completely if it had not been for the Rehoboth rebellion of 1925. Although this rebellion revolved around the essentially "internal" issue of local autonomy for the Baster community at Rehoboth, it once again helped to provide a focus for the more generalized and dispersed resistance of other communities - and in particular for the Hereros. It further involved issues which transcended the interests and concerns of the immediate community.

The significance of the Rehoboth Gebiet

The Rehoboth community had come into being in 1870 when Hermanus van Wyk, leader of a large group of Basters who had migrated from the northern Cape, rented the area from the Swartbooi Namas. Although the Basters established a permanent community at Rehoboth, the tenure of the land on which they settled was insecure. Furthermore, they found themselves embroiled in the protracted conflict between the Namas and Hereros. As a result of these insecurities, the Basters welcomed the "treaty of protection and friendship" offered them by the Germans in 1885, and a long relationship of collaboration ensued. They provided military assistance to the Germans in 1896, 1897 and during the great rebellions of 1903-07. However, as the Germans consolidated their control over the territory, the Basters became less useful to them and as a result the autonomy of the Rehoboth community was steadily eroded. The concurrent encroachment of settlers on the Gebiet also entailed a loss of land.¹

In 1915, during the South African invasion of the territory, the Basters

rebelled against the Germans after Baster soldiers had been ordered to guard South African prisoners despite an earlier assurance that the Rehoboth Burghers would not be directly involved in the war. The retaliation of the Germans exacted heavy losses of both life and stock from the Basters. Soon after, Cornelius van Wyk who had succeeded his father as leader of the Basters, established contact with General Louis Botha at Walvis Bay and was reportedly told that "that which you have, at least, you will keep". The Basters interpreted this to mean that the South Africans would restore their independence to them.² During the next five years of martial law, the Basters received assurances from both the administration and the Union Government that they would not lose the rights they possessed under German rule.³ The ambiguity of this position was at least partly a result of the uncertain status of the former German colony and the consequent vagueness of South African policy in Namibia, but it served to foster Baster hopes of independence. In effect, Rehoboth enjoyed considerable powers of self-government during the military period. Most cases against Basters were tried by their own judges,⁴ and in 1916 when the Basters complained about the behaviour of their servants, they were informed that this was "simply a matter of internal administration among themselves".⁵

During this period, however, the Rehoboth community was undergoing important structural changes. Under the combined impact of losses sustained during the war, and the drought and depression of the early 1920s, the Basters were becoming increasingly impoverished, and, in particular stock farming, the economic mainstay of the community, was in decline. As a result many Basters, particularly those of the poorer classes, sought alternative sources of income such as trading in game

pelts and karosses, or the selling of grass and firewood. Perhaps the most important of these, however, was the renting of pasture to Herero and other non-Baster stock-owners.⁶ These alternative sources of income had some important implications for the community. As Pearson notes, it allowed the subordinate Baster class to free itself partially from the relationship of clientage to the dominant Baster class, thus creating a new political force within the community. More specifically, it enabled the poorer Basters to loosen ties of dependence imposed by the stock-loan system that was in existence.⁷

The renting of pasturage to Herero and other non-Baster stock owners had far-reaching implications. In terms of size of population and stock-ownership alone, the Africans in Rehoboth formed a significant group. In 1925 the population of the *Gebiet* numbered 3 500 Basters, 2 500 Africans and about 30 whites. Between 1925 and 1928, 230 Herero families were removed from Rehoboth, taking with them 8 000 head of large stock and 25 000 head of small stock.⁸ Although, as Pearson points out, the system of squatting in Rehoboth gave Baster landowners a degree of leverage over their tenants,⁹ the existence of a large group of African squatters in Rehoboth obviously constituted a new political influence within the community.

The creation of an African squatter community in Rehoboth was at least in part a product of the contradictions in colonial policies during this period. While the restrictions on African stock ownership were eased, the allocation of land - particularly in the early 1920s - failed to keep up with increases in black-owned stock. Furthermore, not only was the land allotted for reserves of an inferior quality, but the whole reserve system was slotted within the larger labour extractive system

which applied throughout the territory. In order to live in the reserves, blacks required a permit and were subjected to grazing fees and other taxes directly aimed at restricting the number of stock in the reserves. Initially squatting on white farms and government land provided some outlet from the repressive labour system, but the administration had early declared its opposition to squatting and it was made illegal in terms of section 13 of Proclamation 11 of 1922.¹⁰

Proclamation 11 was, however, not applied to the Rehoboth *Gebiet*, and it was not until the Baster Agreement of 1923 that the authorities obtained the legal means to control squatting within the *Gebiet*. However, the resistance of Baster rebels between 1923 and 1925 prevented the administration from taking action against squatters, and it was only after the suppression of the Rehoboth rebellion that African tenants of the Basters were prosecuted within the *Gebiet*. The Magistrate of Rehoboth pointed out after the rebellion that the prosecution of squatters

which was hardly possible under the old system of control by the Raad, has certainly had the effect of stimulating the labour supply and driving out loafers as well as preventing the *Gebiet* from becoming a refuge for deserters.¹¹

Thus prior to 1923 the *Gebiet* provided a sanctuary to black stock owners from the labour repressive system operative in other parts of the territory. It was also clearly in the interests of black squatters in Rehoboth to exert every available influence towards retaining or extending Baster autonomy. The relationship between Basters and Africans in the *Gebiet* was not clear cut, and should be seen against the background of the marginality of a coloured community within a colonial and racially-polarized society. As already noted, the Rehoboth community had a long history of collaboration with the colonial authorities. Collaboration - particularly between the Baster Council and the administration - conti-

nued after the occupation of the territory by the Union, and the Council periodically called on the colonial authorities to deal with recalcitrant servants and other blacks who defied their authority.¹²

On the other hand, those Basters who rented pasturage to African squatters, were involved in mutually dependent relationships with their tenants. Pearson has possibly overemphasized the one-sided dependence of African squatters on Baster landlords, maintaining that this was used to put pressure on Herero tenants to defy the stock branding regulations.¹³

However, there is ample evidence of Herero resistance to the branding regulations in other parts of the territory before this became an issue in Rehoboth.¹⁴ Furthermore, for those Basters who chose to challenge rather than collaborate with the colonial authorities, African squatters provided potential military and political allies. Not only did the Herero and other tenants form a numerically significant part of the Rehoboth population, but they also provided essential contact with the larger Herero group.

For the Hereros outside Rehoboth, the Basters also offered a potential ally against the colonial regime - particularly as the Rehoboth Burgers had retained most of their arms. Already in 1922 there were reports that the Herero leaders in Windhoek had established contact with the Basters:

The Hereros say that the Bastards have declined to give up their arms to the whites and that the Hereros should stand by the Bastards in trouble.¹⁵

These shared interests between Hereros and Basters became particularly important during the Rehoboth rebellion because the rebellion coincided with the administration's attempts to remove the Hereros from the "temporary" reserves in the central districts of the territory to the newly

established reserves in the Sandveld. The Herero leaders had strongly resisted the move, arguing, with some justification, that the allocated area could support neither them nor their stock, that it was "a country only good for wild beasts".¹⁶

The Majority Party and the Baster Agreement

While a full analysis of the causes of the split that occurred in the Rehoboth community lies outside the scope of this dissertation, a few pointers can be provided. The most basic reason for the cleavage in the Baster community revolved around the choice of tactics by this marginalized community caught up in the struggle between blacks and whites, colonizers and colonized. Initially the Baster community had chosen collaboration with the colonial authorities, but this collaboration had entailed heavy costs, and in 1915 the community had rebelled against the German authorities. Following the South African occupation of the territory, the dilemma of collaboration or challenge still remained, compounded by the ambiguity of South African policy in relation to Rehoboth. From the beginning of South African rule there was evidence of disagreement about tactics in the Baster Council. In 1916 V.S. Thomas, a Cape Town attorney, was commissioned to petition the Union Government on behalf of the Baster Council. The petition raised a number of complaints against the military administration of the *Gebiet*. When the Baster captain, Cornelius van Wyk, was confronted by the irate military magistrate of Rehoboth, he backed down and "seemed surprised at the allegations contained in the document". The magistrate maintained that some members of the Council seemed ignorant of the contents of the petition and that the negotiations with Thomas had been conducted "almost entirely" by Samuel Beukes, who at that time held the position of magistrate in the community.¹⁷ It was Samuel Beukes who later opened the rift in the Baster Community by resigning his position as magis-

trate and helping to launch the rebel "majority party".¹⁸

As Pearson has shown, the split in the Baster community was not essentially along class lines, but rather involved a division *within* the dominant class. However, the rebel segment of the dominant group strengthened itself by accommodating the Baster subordinate class through the creation of a "Parliament", in addition to establishing a Baster Council of its own. The rebel segment also sought to include the African population of the *Gebiet* within its coalition. It was reported that Herero and other non-Basters were given the status of *achterburghers* and that some were allowed to vote.¹⁹ As noted earlier, it was in the interests of African squatters in Rehoboth to support an autonomous Baster community. Moreover, there appear to have been long standing tensions between the original ("Old") Baster Council and some of the Africans in the *Gebiet*. In 1916, for example, the Baster captain had requested the administration to remove about 20 Nama families from his farm because they refused to work.²⁰ In 1922 the captain and other members of his council complained about Africans who refused to pay their taxes and expressed concern about "unrest" in the area.²¹ By entering into a collaborative relationship with the colonial authorities, the Baster council not only committed itself to supporting the policies of these authorities, but became dependent on their aid when faced with opposition.

According to Viall, the existence of opposing factions within the Rehoboth community went back to 1916.²² However, the conflict was brought to a head in 1923 when the administration attempted to formalize its relationship with the community by means of the Baster Agreement. This agreement which emerged from negotiations between the administration and

the Baster Council, provided for the local self-government of the *Gebiet*, but made all laws passed by the Council subject to the approval of the administrator as well as giving the administrator the discretion to extend any of the laws operative in the territory to the *Gebiet*. The administrator was obliged to consult the Baster Council before introducing new laws into the *Gebiet*, but did not require its approval.²³

The rebellion

In August 1923 the agreement was put before a meeting of Rehoboth Burghers, and rejected by 117 votes to 42. In spite of this opposition, the Baster Council signed the agreement, but succeeded only in consolidating the opposition to it. When the administrator visited Rehoboth in September to explain the agreement to the community, not a single Baster attended the meeting. In April 1924 the rebel faction - which had become known as the majority party - organized elections for a new Council and "parliament". Those who supported the agreement (the minority party) refused to accept either the election or the new bodies that were created. The two councils, which became known as the Old Council and the New Council respectively, therefore operated alongside one another, competing for ultimate authority over the community. Finally, in December 1924 the New Council issued a declaration of independence. The administration responded by passing Proclamation 31 of 1924 which abolished the captaincy, council and other institutions of the Baster community and vested all the powers and functions of these institutions with the magistrate of Rehoboth.²⁴

From this point the situation rapidly escalated into a direct confrontation between the rebels and the administration. In December and January the majority party held elections for the captaincy and council and

continued to operate as the *de facto* government of the *Gebiet*. In order to impose its own authority over the community, the administration announced that unless the community complied with its cattle branding regulations by 1 March 1925, prosecutions would be instituted. As the administrator later admitted, the administration had decided to impose its authority through the branding law because it was "the most convenient for bringing matters to an issue".²⁵ The rebels refused to comply with the regulations and consequently a number of prominent members of the majority party were summoned to appear before the magistrate. With one exception these summonses were ignored, and when the police attempted to arrest the leaders they were prevented from doing so by supporters of the New Council.²⁶

Aftermath and significance of the rebellion

In the next few days the forces of the Rehoboth rebels and the troops and police of the administration began concentrating in and around the *Gebiet* respectively. At dawn on 5th April the town was surrounded by South African forces and the rebels given an ultimatum demanding their unconditional surrender. When the ultimatum had expired, three aircraft of the South African Air Force flew low over the town and the administration's mounted force moved in, arresting 632 people and confiscating 304 firearms.²⁷ The significance of the Rehoboth rebellion extends beyond the immediate issues of the Baster community and its relationship with the South African authorities. As suggested above, the rebellion provided a focus for a much wider resistance against the colonial authorities. With the suppression of the rebellion, the widespread popular resistance and unity collapsed, and Namibia entered a new phase of its history. For the next 20 years resistance was not completely absent, but

it assumed more muted forms and lacked the coherence and unity that it displayed during the first five years of the mandate. There was more at stake in the Rehoboth predicament than the assertion of community independence. For both the administration and black stock owners, an autonomous Rehoboth represented a gap in the all-embracing system of labour control that was at the basis of Native policy in the territory. The chronic labour shortages of this period and perennial complaints of farmers that the reserves were sanctuaries for the idle, made it essential for the administration to act and plug this gap in its system of labour control.

Under these circumstances, the administration's choice of the branding regulations as a means of forcing the Rehoboth rebellion to a head, could hardly have been random. When these regulations were first introduced in 1921, Native Commissioner C.N. Manning (who, ironically, served as magistrate of Rehoboth during the height of the rebellion) made it clear that they were

closely connected with the control of natives as, apart from land, stock is their first consideration besides being a form of currency.²⁸

Branding and other forms of stock marking were essential not only as a deterrent to stock theft, but also for the control of the movement of stock, the counting (and thus control over the numbers) of black-owned stock, the management of the reserves, and the control of squatting.

The suggestion that the Basters had to put pressure on their African tenants to force them to defy the branding regulations, or that the resistance to branding in Rehoboth was responsible for similar resistance elsewhere,²⁹ appears highly questionable when seen in its proper context. Resistance to the branding regulations had occurred in various

parts of the territory, but particularly in Herero areas, some time before they became an issue in Rehoboth.³⁰ However, it is possible that the example of Baster resistance to the regulations helped to spur on resistance in other places, as for example in Ovitoto in March 1925.³¹

If in fact the Basters were able to encourage resistance to branding in other parts of the territory, why should it have been necessary for them to subject their tenants to pressures in order to achieve the same results?

By all accounts Africans, and particularly the Hereros, in the *Gebiet* responded enthusiastically to the cause of the Baster rebels. It is significant, for example, that more non-Basters than Basters were arrested, and finally prosecuted, during the culmination of the rebellion. Of the 632 people so arrested, 289 were Basters, 218 Hereros, 75 Namas and 50 Damaras.³² In his annual report, the administrator expressed concern about the role of non-Basters in the rebellion.

The most serious aspect of the attitude of the opposition in Rehoboth, not only in this instance, but during the past eighteen months, has been the effect on the natives who have apparently come to regard the *Gebiet* as a sort of haven where no law exists.... The attitude of natives incited by the opposition section was openly hostile.... It follows that the natives do not wish to see our laws enforced in the *Gebiet*.³³

Similar concern was expressed by the Old Raad which complained in December 1924 that the rebels "continue to incite not only our own Community, but worse, the Natives...."³⁴

According to the magistrate of Rehoboth, with the exception of a few servants of the Basters, all the non-Basters arrested during the rebellion were "free agents". The magistrate reported that he had received information to the effect that the Hereros were in favour of attacking

the police several days before the South African forces moved into Rehoboth.³⁵ Some months before the Rehoboth rebellion reached a head, the administration feared that a general rebellion might break out in the territory. In December 1925 the Administrator's Office sent an urgent *communiqué* to all magistrates in the territory informing them that "the administration has received reports of native unrest which has been accentuated by the attitude of the Rehoboth Community as a result of Proclamation No. 31 of 1924." It was believed that "native emissaries" had been sent from one district to another and that "secret communications" were being exchanged. While the administration cautioned against alarm, the magistrates were instructed to keep a close watch on all "native movements" and to submit a weekly report on developments in each district. The magistrates were also urged to establish "intelligence systems" to facilitate the removal of whites from isolated rural areas should a rising occur.³⁶

The administration also took action on another level. Frederick Maharero, the eldest son of Samuel Maharero, together with other highly placed Hereros from Bechuanaland were visiting the various Herero communities in Namibia at this time. On the same day that the district magistrates were informed of a possible rising in the territory, Frederick Maherero and his entourage were ordered to leave the territory. The administration maintained this was necessary because the Hereros had adopted a "defiant attitude" since Maherero had arrived in the country.³⁷

Pearson has correctly observed . . . out the involvement of the Hereros in the Rehoboth dispute, the administration "might have been content to bide its time" and used economic pressures rather than milit-

any measures to bring the Basters in line with its policies.³⁸ Towards the end of March 1925 the head of the military forces in the territory urged the Union Government to proclaim martial law in the Rehoboth district, arguing that if resistance in the *Gebiet* was "not immediately checked by extreme and drastic measures, conflagration may rapidly spread over the whole country and place us in position to face a serious situation which under present adverse conditions will be difficult to cope with".³⁹ A few days after the suppression of the rebellion, reports continued to reach the administration of a possible rising of the Hereros. The magistrate reported on 7 April that he had received information that the Hereros intended to rise. He had been unable to ascertain the date of this rising, but "gathered that it would be in about three weeks time".⁴⁰

Perhaps the clearest evidence of the administration's fear of a general uprising were the measures adopted by the military in other parts of the territory after the suppression of the Rehoboth rebellion. Herero witnesses maintained that the aircraft used to intimidate the Rehoboth rebels, not only flew over Rehoboth but also over the Herero reserve of Orumba.⁴¹ Following the suppression of the Rehoboth rising, the administration pressed the Union government to sanction "bombing demonstrations" in selected areas throughout the territory including Ovamboland. The proposal was at first vetoed by the Minister of Defence, probably because of the international outcry that followed the bombing of the Bondelswarts in 1922. The administrator continued to insist on the importance of these "demonstrations" and permission was finally granted.⁴² The aim of these "bombing demonstrations" was to impress upon potential rebels the great power of the state, and thus to avert a

possible general rising. The Herero leader, Hosea Kutako, later told Michael Scott that at this time the Hereros at Orumba were refusing to be moved to the Epukiro reserve in the Sandveld.

I told them I was going back to Orumba where there is water. On hearing this the Government sent an aeroplane to come and frighten us. I was taken to the place where the aeroplane was dropping bombs 43

Soon after, the administration was able to accomplish its task of moving the reluctant Hereros from the reserve. The "bombing demonstrations" also appear to have served their purpose in other areas. The magistrate of Keetmanshoop, for example, reported that he had taken "advantage of the presence of the Hereros in Tses Reserve at Kl. Vaalgras on the occasion of the Bombing demonstration, to address them on the question of branding and am glad to say that they all exception are having their cattle branded." 44

Soon after the suppression of the rebellion, the administration began moving the Hereros out of the Rehoboth *Gebiet*. The Herero leader, Festus Kandjo la - complained that in the administration's haste to clear Rehoboth of the Hereros, many had been forced to leave their stock behind. Permission to return to the *Gebiet* to retrieve their stock was denied. 45 In 1927, following publication of the Rehoboth Commission Report, it was decided that with the exception of the Damara who were servants of the wealthier Basters, "all Natives would be removed from the *Gebiet*, and henceforth no Native would be granted right of residence there". 46 However, even before this the police had been instructed "to prosecute under Sections 14 and 15 of the Bastard Agreement, all able-bodied natives (except the lot of Hereros and some Hottentots awaiting removal to Reserves) found in the *Gebiet* unless they are in bona fide employment, or can produce a permit from the magistrate authorising

their presence in the *Gebiet*⁴⁷ The gap in the labour extraction system was thus effectively plugged. The removal of black squatters from the *Gebiet* continued the process of impoverishment of the Basters. In his report in 1926 the administrator noted that there was "a good deal of poverty" among the Basters:

...many of them depend largely on what they receive from natives in payment for grazing and squatting on their farms. The natives, however, are being moved out of the *Gebiet* and sent to reserves as rapidly as possible, and those members of the Rehoboth community who are dependent on them will no doubt feel the resultant pinch.⁴⁸

The removal of black squatters from the *Gebiet* served yet another purpose. It eliminated what the leader of the armed forces in the territory, Colonel De Jager, called the "dangerous link between Bastards in the *Gebiet* and natives in other parts of the country."⁴⁹

Reasons for the failure of the first phase of popular resistance

Essentially there were three major sets of factors which accounted for the failure of the first phase of popular resistance in Namibia: the fragmented nature of the Namibian social formation, the composition and nature of the political organizations established during this period, and the preponderant power of the colonial state.

Largely on account of ecological conditions, Namibia has a relatively small population scattered over an area which is two-thirds that of South Africa. The vast distances and scattered population have provided a major obstacle to national organization throughout Namibian history. However, in the late 1920s the Namibian population was still in the process of recovering from the shattering impact of the colonial wars and repression of indigenous institutions of the early twentieth

century. Although they were largely dispossessed, the people of the police zone lacked the social integration to constitute a proletariat. The larger part of the population was scattered among the various settler farms and in the small and badly organized rural communities. The urban population was small even in relation to the total population, and tightly controlled by the colonial state. A foreign component of the black population, with distinct interests of its own, played a dominant role in the urban areas and added further diversity (and disunity) to the Namibian social formation.

The division of the territory into the police zone and northern areas placed additional obstacles in the way of national organization, and effectively excluded the more densely populated northern areas from the political movement that developed in the police zone. Similarly, migrant workers from the northern areas were effectively isolated from the rest of the population by the contract labour and compound systems. However, despite the isolation of the north and the cooption of indigenous leaders into a system of indirect rule, there are indications that some of the Ovambos were also influenced by the spirit of rebellion that permeated the southern and central regions. During the period of intense resistance towards the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1923, Ipumbu, king of the Ukuambi Ovambos, issued ammunition to his people and ordered them to guard the Onolongo and Ondangua routes into his country in order to prevent whites from entering or passing through his territory. There were also reports that the Ukuambi were selling stock to obtain ammunition and gun powder.⁵⁰ In December 1922 an Ukuambi headman who had quarrelled with Ipumbu, informed the administration that the Ukuambi king had been sending agents into the police zone in order to acquire both

arms and information.

They (Ipumbu's agents) invariably go without passes and are clever in evading the police. They are all after buying rifles and ammunition, he does not send a few at a time, twenty or thirty are always away south. They bring him stupid information such as "This Government is finished, we hear all over that the Americans are coming to take this country."⁵¹

Early in 1923 the Portuguese representative at Namakunde on the border with Angola, stated that he had received reports "that natives in Damaraland were making preparations with Ovambos and natives in our territory to rise against our and your Governments."⁵² Earlier there had been a rumour in the Outjo district that that the Hereros were obtaining arms from Ovamboland.⁵³

In spite of these, and earlier-mentioned signs of cooperation, the anti-colonial movement in the territory never achieved the degree of coordination necessary to pose a serious threat to the colonial state. On each occasion the authorities were able to isolate and deal swiftly with manifestations of resistance, thus preventing outbreaks elsewhere in the territory.

The structures of Namibian political organizations during this period, were also not suited to the task of leading effective and unified resistance to the colonial state. Both the ICU and the UNIA were externally-based organizations, and this allowed the authorities to isolate the Namibian branches from their headquarters in Cape Town and New York. Furthermore, the millenarianism latent in Garveyism tended to deflect Namibian resistance away from internal organization towards a hopeless dream of external intervention.

By the latter half of 1923 both organizations were in difficulty. The ICU was effectively isolated from its headquarters in Cape Town and unable to resolve the problems in its executive committee.⁵⁷ Native Affairs officials in Windhoek reported in September 1923 that local blacks had withdrawn from the UNIA branch and that no meeting had been held "for some time". The conviction of Marcus Garvey in New York on charges of fraud, may have contributed to the decline of the association, it was suggested.⁵⁸ The Luderitz branch was experiencing similar difficulties, and the administrator reported in 1924 that the Luderitz branches of both UNIA and the ICU had "practically died out and it is only the South-West Africa National Congress which still has some adherents and occasionally holds meetings."⁵⁹

In the final analysis, however, it was the disproportionate military and organizational resources of the state that brought about the denouement of this phase of resistance in Namibia. In particular the aeroplane changed the whole complexion of guerilla warfare in the territory and provided a powerful symbol of colonial supremacy with which to intimidate the colonized. Aircraft had been used not only to effect the swift suppression of the Bondelswart rebellion and to intimidate the Rehoboth rebels, but also to impress upon other indigenous communities the military power of the colonial state.⁶⁰ The helpless confusion and bewilderment that followed the bombing of the Bondelswarts was summed up by their leader, Jacobus Christian: "*Wy hadden geen planne omdat die vliegmaasjines ons bedonderd geschooten hadden.*"⁶¹

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E.V. Walter has argued on the basis of a study of Zulu society under Shaka, that "it is not the instruments of violence as such but the techniques of social control" which ultimately determine whether or not

people will revolt.⁶² However, analysis of social structures in Namibia between 1915 and 1925⁶³ suggests that colonial "techniques of social control" were not completely effective, and that the colonial state was still in the process of consolidating its control over indigenous communities in the police zone. It was only after 1925, with the establishment of reserves, the cooption of indigenous and urban elites, and the further elaboration of the legal superstructure, that the colonial state⁶⁴ was able to exercise effective control over the colonized population. Given the circumstances of the early 1920s, the colonial state was forced to rely more heavily on its "instruments of violence".

The introduction of aircraft was therefore crucial in preventing localized outbursts of rebellion from spreading to other parts of the territory. It has been consistently⁶⁵ held that although the circumstances of most of the black population favoured a general rising it lacked the organizational structures necessary to plan and coordinate such a rising. This meant that a general rising would only be possible if a specific community took the initiative in leading the rebellion and was able to hold out long enough for other communities to join it in the struggle. The administration clearly realized this, and therefore acted swiftly and brutally to suppress both the Bondelswart and Rehoboth rebellions.

Without the resources to challenge the enormous power of the colonial state, overt resistance ceased to be a practical or rational alternative, and the colonized could do little but wait for some development to change the balance of power in their favour. For the next twenty years of Namibian history, resistance in the police zone took largely covert⁶⁶ and symbolic forms.

Endnotes for chapter seven

1. P. Pearson, 'The Rehoboth rebellion', in P. Bonner (ed.) *Working papers in southern African studies, Volume 2*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981; J.D. Viall, *The history of the Rehoboth masters*. Mimeo, 27/1/1959.
2. *Ibid.*; I. Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa from the beginning of the nineteenth century*. Cape Town: Juta, 1971, pp. 204-205.
3. Viall, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-29.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
5. SWAA A396/6, Secretary - Magistrate, Rehoboth, 29/1/16.
6. Pearson, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-40.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Viall, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
9. Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
10. SWAA A50/6, Magistrate, Okahandja - Native Commissioner, 16/4/25, for example, establishes a clear link between the prohibition of squatting and the labour shortage in the territory.
11. SWAA A50/6, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Native Commissioner, 3/9/26.
12. SWAA A396/6, Secretary - Magistrate, Rehoboth, 29/1/16; Magistrate Rehoboth - Secretary, 14/3/22.
13. Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
14. See below.
15. SWAA A396/13, Statement by William Kaapnaar, 16/10/22.
16. M. Scott, *In face of fear: documents relating to the appeal to the United Nations of the Hereros and other South-West African people*. Johannesburg: M. Scott, 1948, p. 59.
17. ADM 2989/2, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Secretary, 20/6/16.
18. Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.
20. SWAA A396/6, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Secretary, 18/1/16.
21. SWAA A396/6, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Secretary, 14/3/22 and 11/11/22.
22. Viall, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-42; Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
25. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, p. 13.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12; A312, Item 79, Secretary - Administrator, 27/3/25.
27. Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
28. A312, Item 75, 'Suggestions re (1) Native cattle branding; (2) small stock marking', C.N. Manning, 25/6/21.
29. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, p. 10; Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
30. See above.
31. SWAA A219/12. Magistrate, Okahandja - Secretary, 13/3/25.
32. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, p. 13.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
35. A312, Item 79, Manning, Rehoboth - Administrator, Beaufort West, 11/4/25.
36. A312, Item 79, Administrator's Office, Windhoek - All Magistrates, 20/12/24.
37. SWAA A460/25, vol. 1.
38. Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
39. A312, Item 79, Secretary, Windhoek - Hoofd., Cape Town, 10/3/25.
40. A312, Item 79, Magistrate, Grootfontein - Secretary, 7/4/25.
41. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
42. A312, Item 79, Administrator - Minister of Defence, Cape Town, undated; Secretary, Windhoek - Hoofd., Gibeon, 9/4/25; Hoofd., Cape Town - Administrator, 11/4/25.
43. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
44. SWAA A219/2, vol. 2, Magistrate, Keetmanshoop - Native Commissioner, 25/4/25.
45. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.
46. Viall, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.
47. SWAA A50/6, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Native Commissioner, 3/9/26.

48. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1926, U.G. 22-27, p. 5.
49. A312, Item 79, Col. de Jager, Rehoboth - Hoofd., Cape Town, 14/4/25.
50. SWAA A396/15, Resident Commissioner, Ondonga: 'Memorandum for the Native Commissioner', 25/1/23.
51. A312, Item 39, Statement by Ukuambi refugee headman, Festus, Ondonga, 28/12/22. See also chapter nine, below.
52. SWAA A396/15. Portuguese representative, Namakunde - Union Government representative, 19/1/23.
53. SWAA A396/11, Magistrate, Outjo - Secretary, 20/3/22.
54. See chapter six, above.
55. P. Bonner, 'The decline and fall of the I.C.U. - a case of self-destruction?' in E. Webster (ed.), *Essays in southern African labour history*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978, pp. 114-120.
56. C. Soudien, *Johannesburg 1917 to 1930: a preliminary study of the protest and conditions of the African people*. MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1979.
57. See chapter five, above.
58. SWAA A396/5, Memorandum, Native Affairs, Windhoek, 28/9/23.
59. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, pp. 27-28.
60. See above, chapters four and seven.
61. G.L.M. Lewis, *The Bondelswarts rebellion of 1922*. MA thesis, Rhodes University, 1977, p. 94.
62. Cited by Barrington Moore, Jr., *Injustice: the social bases of obedience and revolt*. London: Macmillan, 1979, p. 85. Claude Welch, Jr. ('Continuity and discontinuity in African military organisation', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13.2, 1975, pp. 236-237) makes a similar point: "Combat effectiveness appears to depend far more on the cohesion and esprit of soldiers than on the weaponry they employ. (The military history of Vietnam should make this abundantly clear.)"
63. See chapters two and three above.
64. See chapter ten, below.
65. See above, chapters four, five and six.
66. See chapter ten, below.

Chapter eight

CONTRACT LABOUR AND THE COLONIAL ECONOMY

The preceding chapters have dealt also exclusively with the central and southern parts of Namibia known as the police zone, and little attention has been devoted to the northern areas of Ovamboland, the Okavango region, the Kaokoveld and Caprivi. Although a provisional boundary between these northern areas and the Portuguese colony of Angola was first created in 1815, and these territories were incorporated as part of Namibia by both Germany and South Africa, for the larger part of Namibia's colonial history they retained an identity separate from the rest of the territory. These northern areas were not conquered or colonized by either German or Portuguese colonists, and in terms of an enactment passed by the German governor of South West Africa in 1906, all traffic between the police zone and the northern areas was made subject to the governor's consent. This enactment also prohibited the importation of arms, ammunition, horses and spirits into the area and controlled the recruitment of labour. Under South African rule the northern territories were gradually brought under colonial control, but the colonial authorities took pains to preserve the isolation of these areas from the police zone.

The one major exception to this isolation was migrant or contract labour which provided the essential link between the police zone and the northern areas. As the main labour reservoir of the colony, it locked the northern areas, particularly Ovamboland and the Okavango area, into the colonial economy. One of the major achievements of black nationalism in Namibia was the political integration of the northern areas into the

rest of Namibia. Migrant labourers were to play a major role in this integration. From the late 1950s onwards migrant labourers from the north played an increasingly prominent role in resistance to colonial rule, not only constituting a major power base of the nationalist movement, but also helping to politicize sections of the peasantry in Ovamboland, and providing a significant part of the manpower required by SWAPO's political and military organizations.

The origins of the contract labour system

The origins of migrant labour from northern Namibia and southern Angola antedate the extension of colonial control over these areas by some 25 years. A clear distinction must therefore be drawn between those conditions which initially led to the flow of migrant labour, and later colonial interventions which both maintained and augmented this flow. Initially climatic and ecological conditions were crucial in creating the conditions for labour migration from northern Namibia and southern Angola.

Recent research on ecological conditions in Angola shows that at least since the fourteenth century, climatic instability has "contributed to maintaining a precarious balance between food resources, population and disease."¹ At least since 1550 droughts and famines in west-central Africa have resulted in large migrations of populations. As Dias points out, these larger migrations during famines appear

to have been a magnification of a more regular, underlying pattern of seasonal migration occurring annually in the dry months between June and November.²

Although climatic and demographic patterns in Namibia have been less

well researched, the available evidence is indicative of similar trends as in southern Angola. This is consistent with the climatic topography of this part of the continent, as the variability of rainfall increases while its incidence decreases as one moves from north-east to south-west, so that the more arid and drought-prone areas are found in the southern and western extremes of the larger region.³ In Ovamboland, for example, the period 1863 to 1972 saw 50 years of drought, of which 15 were widespread and severe, a further 13 years of abnormal floods, and at least two years of devastating pestilence (rinderpest, 1897 and locusts, 1907).⁴

There are significant correlations between the number of migrants recruited in Namibia between 1907 and 1916 and drought, famine and other natural disasters in the sending area (See table 8.1). Prior to 1908 the number of migrant labourers recruited never exceeded 2 000.⁵ During the 1907-08 season, however, there was a severe (second degree) drought as well as an infestation of locusts, and the migration rate rose to about 4 000 for the year 1908. A further very severe (third degree) drought in 1910-11 which resulted in famine in 1911 is reflected in increases in the migration rate which exceeded 9 000 in both 1910 and 1911. The subsequent drop in recruitment to just over 6 000 in 1912 in turn correlates with the good rainfall of the 1911-12 season. The years 1913 to 1916, however, saw continuous and severe drought and famine. This is reflected in the increase of the migrant labour force to above 11 000 in 1913 and 1914. Economic activities and the recruitment of migrant labour were interrupted by the war and occupation of the territory by South African forces in 1915.⁶ However, with the recommencement of recruiting in 1916, drought and famine in Ovamboland produced an unprecedented surplus of migrant labour.

TABLE 8.1: RAINFALL, FAMINE AND LABOUR MIGRATION RATES

FROM OVAMBOLAND, 1907 - 1919

YEAR	ANNUAL RECRUITMENT OF OVAMBO LABOURERS	RAINFALL AND OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING PRODUCTION
1907	1 700	1906-07:103 (Locusts)
1908	4 000	07-08: 68 (Late rains)
1909	-	08-09:160 (Famine floods)
1910	9 100	09-10:122
1911	9 300	10-11: 42 (Famine)
1912	6 100	11-12:122
1913	11 600	12-13: 54 (Famine)
1914	11 100	13-14: 82
1915	(War)	14-15: 81 (Famine)
1916	-	15-16: 51 (Famine)
1917	3 500	16-17:139
1918	-	17-18:106
1919	-	18-19: 56 (Drought)
1920	7 000	19-20: 91
1921	4 000	20-21:123 (Depression and drought)
1922	3 000	21-22: 43 (Depression and drought)
1923	-	22-23:133
1924	3 300	23-24: 71
1925	4 000	24-25:164
1926	4 000	25-26: 74

Colonial policies and migrant labour

While drought and famine helped to lay the foundations of the migrant labour system in Namibia, colonial policies reshaped these ecological responses into a comprehensive system of labour control and exploitation. Under South African rule, the whole basis of power in Ovamboland was changed. By the combination of a system of indirect rule which incorporated the kings and headmen into the colonial administrative apparatus, and the occasional use of military force, the South African authorities gradually undermined the power and prestige of the Ovambo ruling classes. Their task was considerably facilitated by the conditions of drought and famine in which they found Ovamboland in 1915 and by the immediate circumstances of the Ukuanyama who together with their king, Mandume, had fled across the border into Namibia after their defeat by the Portuguese in Angola.

Mandume had been forced by his immediate military and economic vulnerability to declare his allegiance to the new colonial masters and accept the constraints of British "protection". However, as the Ukuanyama gradually recovered from the devastating effects of the drought and Mandume was able to reorganize his military forces, he began to reassert his authority and continued making excursions into Angola in spite of the threats and protests of both South African and Portuguese officials. As the Portuguese were demanding that Mandume be handed over to them and the South African authorities feared that Mandume's defiance would undermine their authority throughout Ovamboland, they forced a confrontation with the Ukuanyama king. A military force was finally dispatched to Ovamboland in December 1916, and Mandume's capital, Ehole, was attacked on February 6, 1917. The Ukuanyama were defeated in a short, but fierce battle in which Mandume was also killed.

The defeat of the Ukuanyama allowed South Africa to consolidate its administrative and military control over Ovamboland. Following their defeat, the Ukuanyamas became the first Ovambo group to be effectively disarmed. The administration was also in a position to ensure that another king was not appointed to provide a rallying point for Ukuanyama resistance. After 1917 the Ukuanyama were ruled through "headmen" by the colonial authorities. Furthermore, the action against Mandume helped to prevent cooperation between the different Ovambo groupings in their resistance to colonial rule. The administrator pointed out in 1917 that

the result of the fight at Ehole and the progress of the troops through the country have had the most salutary effect on those headmen inclined to support Mandume...10

Securing political and military control over Ovamboland was of the utmost importance to the maintenance of the migrant labour system. As

there were only a handful of colonial officials stationed permanently in Ovamboland, the administration was heavily dependent on the cooperation and compliance of the indigenous leaders. The defeat of the Ukuanyama provided the administration with an ideal opportunity to mould the indigenous rulers and institutional structures of this section of the Ovambos to their needs.¹¹

The severe drought and famine of 1915 had resulted in an unprecedented surplus of labour which the colonial economy, still in the process of recovering from the disruptions of the war, was unable to absorb. An immediate effect of this surplus was to force down the price of migrant labour. Late in 1915 the Director of Public Works was advised to make use of "as many Ovambos as you can employ at low rates of wages",¹² and it was suggested that the railways "should employ on relief works a considerable number of natives in exchange for their food only."¹³ The wage rate suggested by the Chief Native Commissioner and confirmed by the Director of Works in 1915 ranged from 2/6 per month for youths ("picanins") to 5/- a month for "strong able-bodied men".¹⁴

It was not surprising therefore that the surplus of labour did not last very long. By the end of 1916, when good rains had broken the drought in Ovamboland and the economy of the police zone had recovered from the worst effects of the war, the settler economy returned to its familiar state of labour shortage.¹⁵ At the close of 1916 the railways were already short of 1 100 labourers and the mines of 1 000.¹⁶ In 1917 fewer than 4 000 labourers were recruited from both Ovamboland and Okavango.¹⁷ This condition of chronic labour shortage was to continue through to the 1920's and result in a severe labour crisis between 1923

18
and 1925.

In spite of their securer political control over Ovamboland and the efforts of the recruiting organizations after 1926, the South African authorities were unable to exceed or even match the high recruitment rates of the German period between 1910 and 1914.¹⁹ Climatic factors were at least partly responsible for this. Although there were occasional droughts and food shortages after 1915, these never reached the level of the droughts, famines and other natural disasters of the 1910 to 1915 period. Fluctuations in the flow of labour from Ovamboland were closely tied to the supply of food in the area. As the administration's representative at Namakunde remarked in 1917, "good crops mean a scarcity of labourers for the Protectorate."²⁰

The low migration rates after 1916 cannot, however, be explained in terms of climatic conditions alone. Health conditions, particularly on the mines which absorbed the lion's share of migrant labour, also played an important role. Thus the influenza epidemic of 1918, which was preceded by a severe outbreak of measles, resulted in a 20 per cent death toll among black labourers on the diamond mines in Luderitz.²¹ This had an immediate impact on the supply of labour from Ovamboland and the Okavango. The resident commissioner in Ovamboland reported early in 1919 that the epidemic had "broken down" the system of labour recruitment:

...the natives have naturally become nervous and since throwing Ovamboland open again, I have had to make tours, hold meetings and so forth to dispel fears and endeavour to quickly re-establish the old system.²²

Another factor which may have influenced the low migration rates after

1923 was the effect of the depression on diamond production. During the depression the world demand for diamonds declined drastically and prices dropped from an all time high of 113/11 shillings per carat in 1920 to 79/5 in 1921, 61/2 in 1922 and 54/10 in 1923.²³ As a result of the unfavourable market, Luderitz diamond producers had cut back on production and retrenched nearly the whole of their black labour force. As the mines and the railways were the two major employers of migrant labour in the territory, the majority of migrant labourers was affected. The only major avenue of employment which remained open to migrants was farm labour, and there are indications that during the depression many migrant labourers were redirected to the farms.²⁴ From the beginning of South African rule, Ovambo and other migrant labourers had strongly resisted farm labour. For example, the resident commissioner in Ovamboland reported during the military period that groups of labourers

calling for labour passes to proceed South have invariably been asked whether they would not contract for farm and agricultural work, but this suggestion is always met with general expressions of disapproval.²⁵

Farm labour was rejected not only because of the poor wages, rations and treatment of labourers, but also because Ovambo labourers preferred to work in large groups "due to the erratic and often poor treatment accorded parties (of migrant labourers) after being spilt up and distributed to farmers in the past."²⁶

Clearly the large work groups on the mines and railways afforded greater protection and security to migrant labourers than the relative isolation on farms. Officials in the Native Affairs Department had frequently advised the administration against forcing migrant labourers to accept farm labour. In those cases where migrants had accepted farm labour out of ignorance of the conditions on the farms, this had frequently led to

discontent and desertions. It was felt that any large-scale channeling of migrants to the farms would have a negative effect on further recruitment.²⁷ The administration had therefore adopted the policy of directing migrant labour, particularly from Ovamboland - its major source of such labour - to the mines, railways and Works Department. This, it was argued, would conserve police zone labourers for the farmers.²⁸ During the depression, however, opportunities for working for the mines and railways were significantly circumscribed, and farm labour therefore became the only major alternative for migrant labourers. It was a combination of factors like these that resulted in low migration rates from the northern areas after 1922.

The diamond market first showed signs of recovery in April 1922, and by July of that year production was resumed. Between October and December 1922 the diamond companies placed requisitions for more than 3 000 labourers from Ovamboland, but by April 1923, the administration had been able to recruit little more than 700 labourers for the mines. According to the inspector of mines, 2 000 fewer Ovambos were recruited in the last six months of 1922 than had been recruited during the same period in 1920 before the depression.²⁹ In December 1922 a new agreement had been negotiated by the Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM) with the Diamond Syndicate in Kimberly in terms of which its mines were to produce between 35 000 and 40 000 carats a month.³⁰ However, during the first four months of 1923 it was reported that, on account of the labour shortage, the company had only been able to produce an average of about 20 000 carats a month. It was estimated that during the first quarter of 1923 a deficit of 72 000 carats had been incurred, and the company had to make "very serious inroads" into the stock of diamonds it kept in reserve. It was feared that reserves might not be sufficient

to fulfill the quota for that year.

Initially the diamond companies had resisted the recruitment of both local (police zone) labour and labour from South Africa. Although the diamond mines had made use of a large complement of South African migrant labourers both during the German period and the military period, South African labourers were paid about three times as much as Ovambo and other Namibian migrant labourers. In 1917, for example, Ovambo labourers were paid £1 per month as opposed to the £3 per month wage of labourers recruited from South Africa.³² However, with the Ovambo resistance to migrant labour in 1923, no alternative remained but to recruit labour externally from South Africa, Bechuanaland and Basutoland.³³ Attempts were also made to recruit labour from Namaqualand and some diamond mines even resorted to local Nama labourers although the mines had in past maintained that police zone labour was inadequate.³⁴

In spite of the use of external labour supplies, the mines continued to experience labour shortages. In 1924 the diamond mines were estimated to be short of 2 000 labourers,³⁵ and the following year the administrator reported that the problem had intensified:

This demand for labour is due to the number of settlers coming into the country and the increased activity in mining and industrial concerns and has now reached the stage where the question of obtaining farm labour from outside the territory will have to be more seriously considered for shortage of labour is seriously hampering farming, mining and industrial development.³⁶

In their eagerness to supply labour to the mines official recruiters appeared prepared to accept any Ovambo labourer, regardless of age or state of health, who was prepared to accept contract labour in the south. Together with the harsh and unhealthy conditions on the mines,

this helped to push up the death and disease rates on the mines, and led in turn to the spreading of reports in Ovamboland which further discouraged the flow of migrant labour from the territory.³⁷ Migrant labourers also transmitted diseases from the mines to Ovamboland. In 1924 and 1925 there were outbreaks of influenza in Ovamboland which caused heavy death tolls, particularly among the Ukuanyama who made up the biggest part of the Ovambo labour force.³⁸

As a result of the labour shortages, the high death and disease rates on the mines, and the general dissatisfaction of mining and other employers with the administration's recruitment policies, a series of conferences were held between the administration and mining representatives in order to solve these labour problems. The possibility of forming an association to organize the distribution and recruitment of labour was first raised at a conference between the administration and mining interests towards the end of 1923. However, the idea was shelved as "premature," and instead a quota system for the distribution of labour to the different mines was agreed upon.³⁹

Further meetings were held in August and September 1924 in which the mines agreed to the imposition of new standards in the accommodation and rations of migrant labourers. Provisions were also made for the standardization of medical examinations of recruits and the posting of a medical officer to Ondonga.⁴⁰ Finally at a conference in Windhoek in December 1925, it was decided to create two recruiting organizations, the Southern Labour Organization (SLO) which would cater for the labour needs of the diamond mines and the Northern Labour Organization (NLO) which would provide labourers to the northern mines and farmers. While

the SLO would recruit labour from Ovamboland, the NLO would recruit from the Okavango area.

Provision was also made for the "medical" classification of recruits into three categories: "A-labourers", those considered fit for the more rigorous conditions of the diamond mines; "B-labourers", those fit for mines and industries where conditions were not so rigorous as in Tsumeb and Grootfontein; and "C-labourers", those who were not considered suitable for mining or industrial employment, but were fit for farming or domestic labour.⁴¹ By agreeing to the creation of the labour organizations, the administration was able to rid itself of some of the problems of labour recruiting while keeping control over the activities of recruiters. The administration was strongly opposed to allowing individual employers to do their own recruiting because it was felt that recruiters might have "a disturbing effect" on the black population beyond the police zone, and that competition between different groups of employers "might have the effect of unduly increasing the cost of labour".⁴²

Labour shortages and the decline of the mining industry

One of the outstanding features of the first ten years of South African rule in Namibia was the ability of the northern areas to resist the pressures of the colonial state to extract a migrant labour force. In spite of the creation of labour organizations, the labour shortage continued to the end of the 1920's, when drought and depression severely curtailed economic activity in the territory. Following a tour of the police zone in 1926, the administrator reported that he had "everywhere"⁴³ encountered complaints about the shortage of labour:

It was hoped that the formation of the two recruiting assoc-

iations ... would improve the position, but these hopes have up to the present not been realised. On the contrary ... the number of natives recruited during the year was lower than ever before...

The labour shortage, the administrator claimed, was making further development of mining impossible and retarding the progress of the country.⁴⁴ In spite of the concerted efforts of both recruiting organizations to expand the migrant labour force, there was a small drop in the number of migrants recruited from the north between 1927 and 1928, which prompted the administrator to remark that the "efforts of the recruiting organizations have definitely established that it is hopeless to expect to supply from sources within the borders of the Territory the ever growing demand for labour".⁴⁵

Another prominent feature of the early phase of South African rule was the segmentation of the labour force of the territory, and the near monopoly held by the mining industry over migrant labour from the north. The segmentation of the labour force was closely tied to the centrality of the mining industry, and in particular diamond mining, within the colonial economy. The diamond mines were able to wield enormous political influence because of dependence of the administration on the diamond tax as a major source of revenue. In terms of the provisions of the 1899 Precious Stones Act of the Cape Colony, 60 per cent of the profits of the diamond mines went to the state.⁴⁶ The segmentation of the labour force was also intended to protect the interests of the settler farmers. If migrant labour from the north was channelled to the mines, the majority of black labourers within the police zone would be "reserved" for the farmers. This "ethnic division of labour" would also help to keep wages low by preventing competition for scarce labour

resources between the mines and the farmers.

These major trends in the supply and organization of labour were, however, to undergo important changes during the next two decades. The administrator's conclusion that the migrant labour supply from the north had already reached its limits,⁴⁷ was to prove wrong. Following the depression and severe drought of the early 1930s, the migrant labour force from the north increased significantly. This upward trend was interrupted, but not stemmed, by the outbreak of World War II. With the economic expansion after the war, the flow of migrant labour from the north increased phenomenally, from 15 000 in 1945, to 22 000 in 1955, 30 000 in 1960, and 43 000 in 1970.⁴⁸ The monopolization of migrant labour by the mines was also to undergo a transformation. With the decline of the mining industry during the depression and World War II, agriculture assumed an increasingly important position within the colonial economy, and was able to demand a progressively larger share of the migrant labour force. By 1948 settler farmers had secured more than 50 per cent of this labour force against the Namibian mines' 25 per cent.⁴⁹ Although the farmers' share of the migrant labour force declined after 1948, while that of the mines grew, settler agriculture continued to be an important employer of migrant labour, and the mines were never again in the position to assert the monopoly they had enjoyed in the first ten to fifteen years of South African rule.

Decline of the mining industry

As Lenzen points out in his history of diamond production, the year 1926 was a major turning point in the fortunes of the diamond industry centred on southern Africa.⁵⁰ In 1925 rich deposits of alluvial diamonds were discovered in the vicinity of Lichtenburg in the Transvaal and by

October 1926 these new fields were producing more crude diamonds than the entire De Beers Group. In 1926 further alluvial deposits were discovered along the Namaqualand coast of the northern Cape. These new discoveries accounted for the production of more than £20 million of diamonds by the end of 1929. The Namibian mines were the most severely affected by this sudden expansion in world diamond production. The diamonds produced by the new fields were of a similar quality to those produced in Namibia, and thus came into direct competition with Namibian production. While the established South African mines cut back on exports (and not production), the Namibian mines were also forced to reduce production. As a result the labour force of the diamond mines was reduced in 1927 by several thousand labourers who were diverted to other sectors of the economy such as agriculture and the tin mines.⁵¹

TABLE 8.2 : RECRUITMENT OF MIGRANT LABOUR FROM OVAMBOLAND, OKAVANGO AND
ANGOLA, 1926-1974⁵²

Year recruited	Total	Year recruited	Total
1926	6 318	1945	15 341
1927	6 793	1946	13 424
1928	6 277	1947	-
1929	5 862	1948	17 494
1930	4 849	1949	19 487
1931	1 835	1950	18 659
1932	309	1951	19 239
1933	229	1952	20 860
1934	1 151	1953	20 646
1935	3 380	1954	20 080
1936	4 931	1955	22 752
1937	9 245	1956	21 885
1938	9 487	1957	21 722
1939	8 458	1958	23 296
1940	9 705	1960	30 129
1941	7 325	1966	39 033
1942	7 678	1970/1	43 890
1943	12 404	1973/4	56 181
1944	11 072		

Further cutbacks in diamond production became necessary towards the end of 1929. The administrator reported in that year that the "continued effort to regulate production to the vagaries of the market has of late years become an annual occurrence and of necessity militates against efficient working".⁵³ These initial difficulties were, however, to be compounded by the impact of the depression on the world diamond market. The onset of the depression was clearly manifested in the sharp decline of diamond imports into the United States, the world's major diamond buyer. Diamond imports into the US decreased by more than 80 per cent between 1929 and 1932.⁵⁴

From 1929 the mining industry in Namibia went into decline, with recovery only setting in 1935/36, and then only partially. In 1930 about 1 500 black labourers were retrenched by the diamond mines. In the following year the Namaqualand Diamond Company closed down, retrenching all its employees.⁵⁵ During the last quarter of 1930, CDM's output was reduced to 38 000 carats, as compared to the 135 000 carats output of the first quarter. This, the administrator commented, might "without exaggeration be described as the collapse of the diamond market".⁵⁶ Further drops in diamond production and exports occurred in 1932, however, and in 1933 CDM ceased all operations except for prospecting and the removal of overburden.⁵⁷ An improvement in diamond sales took place in the second half of 1934, but the increased demand for diamonds was counteracted by a steep drop in price, which fell from 63,5 shillings in 1933 to 34 shillings in 1934.⁵⁸

TABLE 8.3 : PRODUCTION AND SALE OF DIAMONDS FROM NAMIBIAN MINES,
1926-1934⁵⁹

Year	Diamond production (carats)	Diamond sales (carats)	Price per carat	Total value sold
1926	683 801	726 808	56,42	£2 050 688
1927	723 877	577 341	56,13	1 620 862
1928	503 142	564 383	49,25	1 389 864
1929	597 189	533 101	60,69	1 617 698
1930	415 047	214 036	59,62	640 253
1931	71 532	103 131	58,18	300 000
1932	17 944	44 313	95,30	211 170
1933	2 374	9 113	63,50	57 860
1934	4 126	257 813	34,00	449 167

Other minerals showed similar declines in both production and exports. In 1930 there was a sharp drop in the price of copper, and the OMEG mine at Tsumeb introduced wage cuts for both black and white staff. During the same year there was a drop in the price of tin and a decrease in vanadium exports.⁶⁰ The price of copper fell again in 1931, as did the prices of silver and lead.⁶¹ By 1933 nearly all mines in Namibia had ceased production.⁶² Vanadium production (South West Africa Company) was only resumed in 1935 and copper production (OMEG) in 1937.⁶³

With the collapse of the mining industry during the depression, labour recruitment dropped drastically. For the first time since the beginning of South African rule, the supply of migrant labour exceeded the demand.⁶⁴ From 1929 recruitment of migrant labour dropped steadily until it reached 309 and 229 in 1932 and 1933 respectively.⁶⁵ South African and other foreign labour had already been phased out during the depression period.⁶⁶

TABLE 8.4 : MINERAL AND AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS, 1925-1941

Year	Mineral exports	Percentage of total	Agricultural exports	Percentage of total
1925	£2 148 349	9	£404 539	15
1926	2 526 007	77	647 220	20
1927	2 504 027	70	933 873	26
1928	2 033 870	61	1 144 819	34
1929	2 587 931	72	825 157	23
1930	1 835 790	72	604 763	24
1931	576 672	40	697 714	48
1932	195 113	18,7	784 244	75,3
1933	86 845	5,96	1 195 446	82,12
1934	121 404	10,63	924 715	82,24
1935	844 134	33,55	1 566 047	62,80
1936	1 194 005	38,43	1 796 925	57,83
1937	1 421 784	38,52	2 134 792	57,84
1938	1 330 789	37,38	2 063 094	57,94
1939	723 014	21,28	2 561 063	75,40
1940	944 067	25,5	2 606 737	70,4
1941	719 847	14,3	4 001 006	79,5

From the administration's viewpoint, the most serious aspect of the crisis in the mining industry was the fall in mining revenue. During the first five years of the mandate (1920/25), revenue from mining had averaged about £446 000 a year. However, from 1926/27 a steep decline occurred, reaching a basement of £10 000 in 1932/33.⁶⁸ The fall in mining revenue produced large deficits in the administration's budgets from the beginning of the 1930s. These deficits could only be met by loans from the Union government.⁶⁹ As illustrated by Table 8.5, the diamond tax made up the larger part of the general mining revenue and was therefore largely responsible for the steep drop in state revenue.

TABLE 8.5 : MINING AND DIAMOND REVENUE, 1926-1934

Year	Mining revenue	Diamond revenue
1926/27	£240 000	£217 000
1927/28	49 000	28 000
1928/29	95 000	76 000
1929/30	116 000	92 000
1930/31	41 000	22 000
1931/32 (after funds)	14 000	No comparable figures
1932/33	10 000	
1933/34	45 000	
1934/35	55 000	

Changing relationships between agricultural and mineral production

The depression not only resulted in an absolute decline in mineral exports, but also reversed the proportion of mineral to agricultural exports.⁷¹ In 1925 minerals had made up 80 per cent of Namibia's exports, while agricultural products made up only 15 per cent. In spite of the severe drought of the late 1920s and early 1930s, agricultural exports (48%) surpassed mineral exports (40%) in 1931. The proportion of mineral exports continued to decrease, reaching 6 per cent in 1933 against 82 per cent for agricultural exports. Although mineral exports displayed an upward trend after 1933 they did not reach the levels of the 1920s. Moreover, with the outbreak of the Second World War, a decline set in once again, halving the value of mineral exports. Agricultural exports on the other hand, increased substantially from 1933 and were favourably rather than adversely affected by the war.

This combination of factors ensured that agricultural exports retained their lead over mineral exports throughout the 1930s, in spite of the partial recovery of the mining industry between the depression and war. By 1941 mineral exports made up only 14,3 per cent of all exports, while agricultural products constituted 79,5 per cent of this total. Because

of the special difficulties of shipping during the war, base mineral exports suffered most severely, and early in 1940 the OMEG copper mines was forced to close down once again.⁷² With the exception of an initial decline in 1939, the impact of the war on the diamond market was not as marked as that on base minerals, and the demand for industrial diamonds actually increased as a result of the needs of the munitions industries. It would appear, however, that the Namibian diamond industry did not gain the full benefit of these conditions because of quota restrictions.⁷³

Farming, however, flourished as a result of the war. Ready markets were found for agricultural products both overseas and in the Union where accelerated industrial development and military needs substantially increased the demand for food products. In addition, both the demand and prices of karakul pelts remained high.⁷⁴ In spite of the combined effect of the depression and the severe and protracted drought during the late 1920s and early 1930s, agricultural exports did not decline as steeply as mineral exports. According to figures provided by the administration, agricultural exports dropped from more than £1 million in 1928 to £605 000 in 1930. Recovery first set in 1933 and after a short-termed reversal caused by the outbreak of foot and mouth disease⁷⁵ in 1934, export figures rose steadily.

These export figures, however, mask the considerable difficulties experienced by every branch of agriculture except karakul farming during the crises of 1929 to 1935, and the substantial state aid that was poured into settler agriculture to tide it over this period.⁷⁶ It was essentially karakul farming which prevented the collapse of agricultural exports during the drought and depression. Because karakul lambs are

slaughtered for their pelts at birth. the risks of drought are minimized⁷⁷ in this branch of farming. Although the price of pelts did drop slightly during the depression, karakul farming suffered less than any other branch of agriculture.⁷⁸ This together with the quick turnover of capital,⁷⁹ resulted in the remarkable growth of this industry from the early thirties. In 1931, for example, the administrator observed that the

one bright spot in the farming industry has been the karakul, for the price of pelts has dropped very little. It is not surprising that more and more attention is being paid to this branch of farming.⁸⁰

The number of karakul sheep in the territory grew from 290 000 in 1930 to 1,2 million in 1935 and 3,2 million in 1943. Exports also grew rapidly, from under £1 million 1938 to £4,3 million in 1945 and £5,6 million in 1952. By 1946 Persian Lamb (karakul) pelts made up 50 per cent of the territory's total exports.⁸¹

It was not until the early 1950s that agriculture's dominant position within the Namibian economy was challenged. The mining sector had begun recovering after the war, and by 1951 again commanded a larger proportion of the gross domestic product than agriculture. Thereafter mining continued to grow at a faster rate than agriculture, and by 1956 mining accounted for 43 per cent of the GDP while the agricultural sector accounted for only 23 per cent.⁸² Following World War II secondary and tertiary industries, which had previously made up an insignificant part of the economy, also expanded rapidly. For example, secondary industry's contribution to the GDP increased from a mere £600 000 in 1945 to £4,7 million in 1956.⁸³ These broad economic trends have continued to the present. In 1977, for example, mining contributed an estimated 33,2

TABLE 8.6 : SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT 1925-1956
(£ MILLIONS)

	Agriculture and fishing	Mining	Total primary sector	Total secondary sector	Total private tertiary sector	Total public sector	Gross domestic product at factor cost
1925	0,6	2,6	3,2	0,3	1,3	0,5	5,3
1926	0,8	2,5	3,3	0,4	1,4	0,5	5,7
1927	0,8	2,8	3,7	0,4	1,5	0,5	6,2
1928	1,5	2,1	3,6	0,4	1,7	0,6	6,3
1929	0,9	2,6	3,6	0,5	1,9	0,6	6,5
1930	0,3	2,1	2,4	0,4	1,5	0,6	4,9
1931	0,6	0,7	1,2	0,3	1,2	0,6	3,3
1932	1,0	0,2	1,2	0,3	0,8	0,4	2,7
1933	0,4	-0,02	0,3	0,3	0,9	0,4	1,9
1934	1,1	-0,03	1,1	0,2	1,0	0,4	2,7
1935	1,9	0,5	2,4	0,3	1,0	0,4	4,2
1936	2,2	0,9	3,1	0,3	1,3	0,5	5,3
1937	2,8	1,1	4,0	0,3	1,5	0,5	6,3
1938	3,0	1,9	4,9	0,3	1,5	0,5	7,2
1939	3,5	0,7	4,2	0,3	1,5	0,6	6,5
1940	2,5	0,2	2,7	0,3	1,6	0,6	5,2
1941	3,5	0,5	4,0	0,3	1,9	0,6	6,7
1942	3,2	0,4	3,6	0,3	1,7	0,6	6,1
1943	5,3	0,8	6,1	0,4	2,0	0,6	9,2
1944	5,5	1,1	6,6	0,4	2,2	0,7	9,9
1945	4,5	1,3	5,8	0,6	2,6	0,8	9,9
1946	4,1	1,7	5,8	0,8	3,3	1,1	10,9
1947	6,3	2,3	8,6	0,9	4,2	1,4	15,2
1948	7,3	4,1	11,5	1,3	4,9	1,7	19,4
1949	7,1	5,5	12,6	1,1	4,3	1,9	20,9
1950	9,8	8,7	18,5	1,7	6,4	2,0	23,5
1951	11,7	14,8	26,5	2,2	8,1	2,2	39,5
1952	12,1	16,3	28,4	2,8	9,5	2,7	43,3
1953	13,4	16,5	29,9	3,3	11,1	3,3	47,6
1954	15,0	17,3	32,3	3,7	12,2	3,8	52,0
1955	16,2	24,6	40,8	4,0	14,5	4,1	63,4
1956	16,4	31,3	47,7	4,7	15,2	4,6	72,3

per cent to the GDP, while agriculture's share had shrunk to 13,9 per cent. On the other hand, the secondary and tertiary sectors made up 14,1 and 35,2 per cent of the GDP respectively.⁸⁵ The changing relationship between mining and agriculture is demonstrated even more starkly by the export figures for 1977. In that year agricultural products made up 18 per cent of the territory's total exports, as against mining's massive 70 per cent.⁸⁶

The 20 year period in which agriculture held a dominant position within the Namibian economy had some important implications for the development of colonial, and especially labour, policies. From its inception in 1920 the administration's settlement programme was heavily supported by financial and other aid from the state.⁸⁷ This tendency became more pronounced as mining revenue declined after 1926. Already in 1927 the administrator had remarked on the precariousness of the diamond industry as a source of revenue, and had emphasized "the necessity of developing other sources of revenue".⁸⁸ As no other significant alternative existed, the administration therefore turned its attention to agriculture.

The farming industry at the outset requires substantial assistance, but it is stable and contributes in many directions to revenue.⁸⁹

These tendencies were reinforced by the continuing decline of mining. In order to pursue its policies of land settlement and agricultural development, substantial sums of money had to be borrowed from the Union government. Between 1926 and 1935 the administration borrowed £2 576 900 from the Union government,⁹⁰ mainly in order to finance the development of settler agriculture.

The role of agriculture in shaping the contract labour system

The impact of these developments on the migrant labour system became apparent immediately after the depression when the recruitment system had been reinstituted. In 1935 a comprehensive series of regulations aimed at the control of the migrant labour force was introduced in the form of Proclamation No. 29 of 1935 and Government Notice 180, 1935.⁹¹ Essentially, Proclamation 29 provided for control over the mobility and employment of migrant labourers from beyond the police zone as well as

from other territories. Its major provisions included the introduction of a pass system and register for all "northern and extra-territorial Natives". Although provision was made for the exemption of those labourers who had been in the police zone for ten years or longer, exemption ultimately depended on the decision of the Chief Native Commissioner. In terms of the proclamation it became an offence to employ passless migrants, and for migrants without passes to offer themselves for employment. In addition the proclamation provided for the repatriation of migrants to their "places of recruitment or domicile".⁹²

According to the administrator, the "principal object" of the proclamation was "to prevent northern and foreign natives from flocking into the urban locations where they become detribalised and fail to support their families".⁹³ Although "detribalization" undoubtedly caused some concern among administrative officials in Ovamboland and other northern reserves,⁹⁴ the major thrust of the new legislation was to ensure a cheap and rigorously controlled labour force for the farms and mines, as the administrator's subsequent discussion of the proclamation attests:

As far as possible this class of native (i.e. migrant labour) is not allowed to come into the urban areas but is given employment either on the farms or mines.⁹⁵

That contract labourers were being reserved for both the farmers and the mines represented a significant departure from pre-depression policies when the mines possessed a virtual monopoly over this labour force. Moreover, as the mines did not resume full production until after World War II, their labour needs during this period were limited, and it was essentially the farmers with their abysmally low wages and poor working conditions who required protection from the "lure" of better paid jobs in the urban areas. As Stanley Greenberg points out, "(c)onstraints on

labour mobility are a routine response of landowners to the changing fortunes and opportunities of their farm labourers." ⁹⁶

The origins of Proclamation No. 29/1935 can be traced back to 1928 when following the recommendations of the Farm Industry Commission, administration and settler representatives had discussed the possibility of reintroducing the German *diensbuch* or registration system. Although this particular proposal was not implemented, mining and agricultural interests had agreed on the necessity of introducing tighter control over the contract labour force. The mines which absorbed the lion's share of migrant labour, were concerned that the failure of some migrants to return home was having a negative effect on the indigenous authorities in the sending areas and that the latter would therefore resist recruiting in their areas. It was also felt that tighter control over migrant labourers would help to decrease labour recruiting fees. ⁹⁷ However, legislation was only introduced in 1935, presumably because of the intervening depression and the consequent decline of mining production.

In spite of this early consensus between mining and agricultural interests, it would be mistaken to equate the interests and requirements of the mines with those of the settler farmers. Although both mines and farmers were essentially interested in a cheap and accessible labour force, the settler farmers were in a far more vulnerable position than the mines. This was not only because the mines, with the connivance of the administration, had ensured for themselves the majority of contract labour, but also because migrant labourers themselves had shown a definite preference for mine labour above agricultural labour. Although, as

already demonstrated, conditions on the mines were far from favourable, migrant labourers generally preferred to withhold their labour completely, rather than risk the far worse conditions associated with farm labour. In general the financial strength of the mines allowed them greater flexibility in adapting both wages and compound conditions when pressures were brought to bear on them.⁹⁸ Settler farmers were therefore in greater need of political intervention and coercion to secure a labour force.

The settler-controlled Advisory Council had played an important role in the formulation of Proclamation 29. It saw the proclamation as not only providing the necessary control over the contract labour force, but also as a means of reducing the recruiting fees of the Northern Labour Organization (NLO) which supplied labour to the farmers and the northern mines. In fact the Advisory Council equated the interests of the NLO with those of the farmers.⁹⁹

Whatever the intentions underlying the proclamation, its implementation certainly favoured the interests of white farmers. Not only did it prevent the threatened flight of labour to the towns, but it also helped to channel migrant labour into agriculture and to reduce wages. For example, the Native Affairs Department in Tsumeb noted that under the provisions of the proclamation, Ovambo and other northern labourers who had been in the polize zone for a number of years, had been forced to return to their "home areas" where they were recruited at lower rates of pay:

In one case a native who had been earning £2 per month returned as a farm boy at 10/- a month.¹⁰⁰

Some farmers had taken advantage of the proclamation to threaten migrant

labourers "that if they ever leave their service they will be sent back to their homes by the Police":

Rather than risk that many of the boys who seem to have an unholy terror of returning to Ovamboland, will work for nothing.¹⁰¹

The proclamation was also used by the administration as a weapon and a threat against "foreign" or northern labourers whose presence in the territory, was considered "undesirable", and even in the case of labourers who had been in the police zone for more than ten years. Not only was the administration empowered to repatriate any "foreign" or northern black, but it could also have the costs of repatriation deducted from the wages of the person repatriated. In 1937, for example, an Ovambo resident of Luderitz was repatriated for being an "agitator" because he had resisted paying the Ovambo tribal levy and, ironically, had helped to organize a petition against the proclamation under which he was later repatriated.¹⁰²

While Proclamation No. 29/1935 provided the general framework within which the contract labour force was controlled, other, more specific, measures were used in conjunction with this law, to channel migrant labour into the agricultural sector. The most effective of these was the "medical" classification system that had been adopted in 1925 to curb the high mortality rates on the mines. In terms of this classification system migrant labourers recruited in the north were subjected to a medical examination and then classified into "A", "B", "C" and "D" categories, supposedly in accordance with physical fitness and age. While labourers classified in the "A" and "B" categories were drafted to the mines and "D" labourers were rejected as physically unfit for any form of work, "C" labourers were reserved for farm labour and certain

TABLE 8.7 : CLASSIFICATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS, 1927-1955¹⁰³
(BY PERCENTAGE)

Year	A	B	C	D
1927	76,2	11,2	11,7	0,9
1929	70,4	12,9	14,9	0,9
1930	73,9	15,1	5,7	5,3
1931	69,1	16,4	3,4	11,1
1934	86,1	-	-	13,9
1935	75,3	-	5,4	19,3
1936	64,2	1,0	27,8	7,0
1937	43,5	13,4	34,4	8,7
1938	28,9	18,2	47,4	7,4
1939	29,9	1,1	61,3	7,5
1941	10,3	3,4	85,1	1,2
1942*	15,3	4,7	80,0	
1943*	20,4	5,3	74,2	
1944*	13,8	13,7	72,5	
1945*	15,3	21,0	63,6	
1946	10,9	10,2	71,1	7,8
1947*	32,7	18,6	48,7	
1948*	44,8	26,3	28,8	
1949*	49,2	25,0	25,8	
1954/55*	66,7	14,5	18,7	

*Percentage of "D" category not available. Percentages calculated on the basis of "A", "B", and "C" categories only.

classes of "light work" on the mines. As demonstrated by the figures above, before 1936/37 the vast majority of migrant labourers were classified as "A" labourers, while the number of "C" labourers remained consistently low. After 1935 these ratios gradually changed until they were reversed, so that from 1938 to 1947 the majority of labourers fell into the "C" category.

The percentage of "C" labourers steadily declined from a peak of 85,1 per cent in 1941 until in 1948 "A" labourers once again made up the greater proportion of the migrant labour force. Thereafter these trends continued until in 1954/55 "A" labourers made up 66,7 per cent of the migrant work force, while "C" labourers had decreased to 18,7 per cent.¹⁰⁴ However, agriculture's share of the migrant work force did not

decline as drastically as these figures suggest because of changes in the system of distribution. Thus although the number of "C" labourers had decreased to 18,7 per cent in 1954/55, 31,8 per cent of the migrant labour force was channelled into agriculture during this period, the additional labourers being provided from the "A" and "B" categories.¹⁰⁵

In 1948 when "C" labourers comprised about 29 per cent of the migrant labour force, more than 50 per cent of the 17 500 migrant labourers were employed by settler farmers. Although by the mid-1950s mining was employing a slightly larger part of the migrant labour force than settler agriculture, the latter continued to absorb a significant portion of this labour force.¹⁰⁶ Thomas, for example, estimated that in the early 1970s, commercial agriculture employed 23 per cent of an estimated total of 43 500, against mining's share of 28 per cent. The remainder of the migrant work force was shared out among the administration, construction, transport, commerce, fishing, secondary industry and domestic service.¹⁰⁷

Further implications of agriculture's dominance over labour policies

The foregoing analysis demonstrates the central role of the agricultural sector in shaping the contract labour system in Namibia during the 1930s and 1940s. It was also during this period that a fundamental change in the flow of migrant labour was achieved by the re-routing of this flow from mining into agriculture. Seen against the circumscribed aims of the colonial system, this represented a remarkable achievement, particularly as migrant labourers had manifested a long-standing resistance to farm labour. In 1937, for example, the NLO which was responsible for distributing migrant labour to the farmers, expressed doubts that the organization would be able to maintain the flow of contract labour to the farms:

The farmers will have to pay better wages very soon, as with numerous new chances of employment and the mines open, natives will not be willing to accept the present low wage on farms ... We are doing our best to prevent a rush of boys from farms to the Mine(s) ...¹⁰⁸

Not only were wages in agriculture lower than in any other sector or type of employment, but the introduction of contract labour into the farming sector was accompanied by a corresponding drop in farm wages. According to Olivier, a Native Affairs official who was later to become Commissioner-General of South West Africa, before the introduction of migrant labour into farming, police zone labourers had been paid an average wage of 15/- a month. Ovambos (migrant workers), on the other hand, were engaged at an average wage of 8/- to 10/- a month.¹⁰⁹ These appallingly low wages were of course at the bottom of the popularity of contract workers among farmers. In addition the housing, labour conditions and the treatment of labourers on farms were worse than in any other sector. In spite of their extremely low pay, farm labourers were often held responsible for losses of livestock and were forced to work for months without pay when stock was lost.¹¹⁰ The unfair and even brutal treatment of farm labourers was encouraged by the isolation of farms and by the essentially coercive nature of the labour system which allowed northern migrants no choice of employers.¹¹¹

Settler agriculture's control over labour of course extended beyond the contract labour force. The changing distribution of the black population of the police zone between urban and rural areas provides an impressionistic insight into the extent of state coercion in the service of agricultural interests in the post-depression period. Between 1913 and 1936 the black population of the towns dropped from 26 558 to

18 493. During the same period the black population of the rural areas increased substantially, from 55 189 in 1930 to 69 379 in 1936.

TABLE 8.8 : DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK POPULATION IN POLICE ZONE, 1928-55 ¹¹²

Year	Towns	Reserves	Rural areas	Total
1928	23 929	19 966	63 042	106 937
1930	26 558	18 859	55 189	100 630
1936	18 493	21 830	69 379	109 702
1946	30 020	24 487	73 307	127 814
1955	48 967	27 594	92 780	169 314

The distribution of northern and extra-territorial blacks (i.e. migrant labourers and permanent settlers in the police zone, shows similar trends:

TABLE 8.9 : DISTRIBUTION OF NORTHERN AND EXTRA-TERRITORIAL
BLACKS IN THE POLICE ZONE, 1930-55 ¹¹³

Year	Towns	Reserves	Rural areas	Total
1930	5 274	85	5 898	11 257
1936	2 860	112	8 393	11 365
1946	4 577	280	18 757	23 614
1955	14 191	342	21 437	35 970

Not only do these figures show a significant drop in the presence of this segment of the population in the towns between 1930 and 1936, but the figure for 1946 is lower than that of 1930 even though the total population had more than doubled during this period.

One of the consequences of the increasing use of cheap contract labour in settler agriculture, was the displacement of many police zone blacks from the rural areas. These displaced labourers moved either to the reserves or the towns where, after World War II, rapid industrialization

was creating new jobs which offered considerably better wages than those in the agricultural sector.¹¹⁴ This opportunity for police zone labourers to establish themselves in the relatively "privileged" industrial sector, played a major role in the creation of inequalities between contract and local labour and the generation of supposedly "ethnic" tensions between northerners and police zone blacks.

The introduction of migrant labour into agriculture during the 1930s and 1940s had a number of other crucial and more direct consequences for both farmers and migrants. It was not only the existence of good markets for agricultural produce which created a boom in the agricultural sector, but also the availability of cheap, and at times abundant, labour. This is made clear by the Report of the Long Term Agricultural Policy Commission of 1949:

The Ovambo herdboy is the doyen of the Karakul labour corps and his services are indispensable ... Karakul farming ranks as the highest branch of the agricultural industry and any set back to it will at once be reflected in the economy of the State. This branch of farming cannot be maintained on its present level without its minimum requirements in good, reliable labour: *failure in supply thereof will constitute a serious menace to the future of the karakul industry.*¹¹⁵

For the migrant worker, the control exercised by settler agriculture over the migrant labour system also had far-reaching implications. The channelling of migrant labour into agriculture took place at a crucial time, when the growing crisis in the sending areas was breaking down resistance to labour migration and creating an unprecedented flow of labour to the police zone.¹¹⁶ The conditions of farm labour may thus be expected to have had a significant impact on the developing political consciousness of migrant labourers. This was particularly so as most migrant labourers first entered the labour market as farm labourers. In

fact in 1948 a formal ruling was introduced that all contract labourers who offered themselves for the first time, had to spend at least one contract period as farm labourers.¹¹⁷ The impact of the contract labour system on the political consciousness of migrant labourers will be examined in a later chapter.¹¹⁸

Although the political influence of settler farmers declined following the recovery of mining and increasing industrialization after World War II, farmers continued to have an important influence over labour policies. Agriculture's interests and labour problems dominated the inquiries and findings of both the 1938 and the 1945-1948 Native labour commissions.¹¹⁹ During the war recruitment for the Native Military Corp (NMC) in Namibia was tightly controlled in order to preserve the farm labour force. Thus only "A" and "B" labourers could be recruited for the NMC, thus excluding the majority of farm labourers.¹²⁰

In 1943 the two labour organizations, the SLO and the NLO, were amalgamated to form the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA) which was given exclusive rights to recruit labour. The largest shareholders in the new organization were CDM and the NLO. The new organization was controlled by a council of two members chosen by the two major shareholders. In addition provision was made for the administration to nominate a third member, who would, however, not have full voting powers. In 1949 the administration made use of this prerogative to appoint a representative of agricultural interests to the SWANLA council. At the same time a liaison officer was appointed to mediate between SWANLA and the SWA Agricultural Union (SWAAU), and a Native Affairs official engaged to control the recruitment and the distribution of labour by SWANLA.¹²¹

However, as settler farmers continued to agitate for a greater say in SWANLA, legislation was introduced in 1952, principally in order to give farmers greater control over the organization. In spite of opposition from other interests in SWANLA, the farming sector was allowed to appoint two of the five directors of the reconstituted organization. The other three directors were appointed by the administration, CDM and the NLO. The organization was renamed the "New SWANLA".¹²² Farming interests were thus able to directly influence the recruitment and distribution of labour. They were also able effectively to block the introduction of minimum wages for blacks.¹²³ and to continue to stem the flow of black labour from the countryside to the towns.¹²⁴

Endnotes for chapter eight

1. J.M. Dias, 'Famine and disease in the history of Angola, c. 1830-1930', *Journal of African History*, 22, 1981, p. 349. See also J.C. Miller, 'The significance of drought, disease and famine in the agriculturally marginal zones of west-central Africa', *Journal of African History*, 23, 1982, pp. 17-61. Although southern Angola and northern Namibia are separated from one another by a colonial boundary, they have important historical, cultural and ecological links. Both regions fall within the rain deficient climatic zones of southern and eastern Africa and share a climate similar to that of the Sahel regions of north-central Africa. While both pastoralism and settled field agriculture are possible in northern Namibia and southern Angola, they are rendered marginal by ecological constraints. According to existing records, droughts have occurred in west-central Africa since 1550 at least, and severe droughts resulting in famine have occurred at least once every decade. The worst droughts and famines have occurred in southern Angola, in those regions which are a geographical and climatic extension of Ovamboland and other northern Namibian regions. These droughts were often preceded or accompanied by floods and pestilence such as locusts, rats, frogs and ants.
2. Dias, *op. cit.*, pp. 355-6.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 350; Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 18; R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and class formation: the origins of migrant labour in Namibia, 1815-1915', in T. Adler (ed.), *Perspectives on South Africa: a collection of working papers*. Johannesburg: African Studies Institute, 1977, p. 16.
4. R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment, contract labour and worker consciousness in Namibia, 1915-72', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4, 1, 1977, pp. 57-58.
5. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 261.
6. See Table B.1, below.
7. J.H. Wellington, *South West Africa and its human issues*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 43; Moorsom (*Journal of Southern African Studies*), *op. cit.*, p. 37; ADM 3370, Report on administration, 1917; Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1926, U.G. 22-27, p. 34; M.J. Olivier, *Inboorlingbeleid en administrasie in die mandaatgebied van Suidwes-Afrika*. D. Phil. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1961, pp. 253-281; R.J. Gordon, 'Variations in migration rates: the Ovambo case', *Journal of Southern African Affairs*, 3, 1, 1978, p. 265. While writers like Moorsom and Clarence-Smith recognize the importance of the ecological fragility of these areas, they stress the role of underdevelopment associated with external trade and class formation as the principal cause of early labour migration, and thus relegate environmental factors to a subsidiary or contextual role. Essentially Moorsom and Clarence-Smith argue that the impact of long-distance trade on pre-colonial formations in Ovamboland and Angola resulted in increasing class differentiation and the centralization of state power. This in turn led to systematic and heavy state taxation on cattle in order to provide the means to procure necessary and luxury goods for the kings and emerging "aristocracy" or *lenga*. The more vulnerable segments of the population were reduced to poverty and were thus forced to resort

to migrant labour in order to supplement their incomes. G. Clarence-Smith and R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and class formation in Ovamboland, 1844-1917', in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds.), *The roots of rural poverty in central and southern Africa*. London: Heinemann, 1977, pp. 96-112; pp. 3-49; R. Moorsom, 'Migrant labour in Namibia', *Africa perspective*, No. 3, 1976, pp. 17-29.

8. Union of South Africa, *Report on the tour of Ovamboland by Major Pritchard*, U.G. 38-15, Pretoria: Government Printers, 1915. Major Pritchard, a South African official who visited Ovamboland in 1915, estimated that 30 000 people had died in Ovamboland as a result of famine. Thus Pritchard was able to offer King Martin of the Ondonga food aid for his people and at the same time urge the king to encourage his people to undertake labour in the south in order to pay for this aid.

9. Union of South Africa, *Report on the conduct of the Ovakuanyama Chief Mawila during the military operations conducted against him*, U.G. 37-17, Pretoria: Government Printers, 1917; ADM 958; ADM 629.

10. Report on Mandume, p. 6.

11. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 195-197.

12. ADM 63/13, Secretary - Director of Public Works, 3/12/15.

13. ADM 63/13, Secretary to Assistant Director of Railways, 18/12/15. See also ADM 533/3 Acting Native Commissioner - Resident Commissioner, Ovamboland. 17/1/16; ADM 2794/5, Circular No. 2/1915/308.

14. ADM 16/13, Director of Works - Secretary, 24/12/15.

15. ADM 958, Report of resident commissioner, Ovamboland, 1916. 15/1/17.

16. ADM 1586, J.F. Herbst - R.H. Gage, 14/11/16.

17. ADM 3370/2, Report on the administration of the Protectorate for the year 1917, pp. 21 and 24.

18. See below.

19. See Table 8.1, above.

20. ADM 958, Report of Government Representatives, Namakunde, 1916, 10/1/17. See also Administrator's reports, 1923, p. 14 and 1925, p. 28.

21. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1918, U.G. 34-19, 1919, p. 7.

22. ADM 419, Resident Commissioner - Military Magistrate, Grootfontein, 5/2/19.

23. G. Lenzen, *The history of diamond production and the diamond trade*. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1970, p. 171 ff.

24. See, for example, ADM 3823/3, Farmwirtschaftliche Vereinigung, Outjo

- Administrator, 10/7/22; Magistrate, Gobabis - Native Commissioner, 13/1/22.

25. ADM 419, Resident Commissioner - Secretary, 17/5/19.

26. ADM 3828/3, C.N. Manning - C.G. Courtney-Clarke, 4/10/21.

27. ADM 2279/4, Native Affairs, Grootfontein - Acting Secretary, 20/4/21; ADM 419, Resident Commissioner, Ovamboland - Secretary, 17/5/19; ADM 3823/3 (3), C.N. Manning: 'Memorandum for his Honour the Administrator', 14/9/21; C.N. Manning - C.G. Courtney-Clarke, 4/10/21.

28. See, for example, Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1919, U.G. 40-20, 1920, p. 5; ADM 2794/5, Secretary - Magistrate, Tsumeb, 6/2/17.

29. ADM 3823/3 (5), 'Memorandum on shortage of Native Labour for mines, 1922'.

30. ADM 3823/3 (5), CDM Secretary, 24/1/23.

31. ADM 3823/3 (5), 'Memorandum on shortage of Native Labour for mines, 1923'.

32. ADM 3390.

33. See ADM 3823/3 (5), Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1923, U.G. 21 - 24, 1924, p. 14. Various difficulties were, however, experienced with foreign workers. In 1923, for example, Bechuana labourers on the diamond fields went on strike following a dispute about the length of their contracts and the payment of overtime. The strike began at Kolmanskop but threatened to spread to all the other fields where Bechuana were employed. It was only through protracted negotiations and police action that these strikes were contained. In 1925 discontent among Khosa labourers on the diamond mines reached such a level that 103 labourers deserted and attempted to make their way across the Namib desert between Luderitz and the Orange River. Of these, fourteen died of thirst and hunger and the majority were (to use the administrator's terminology) "recaptured". ADM 2279, SWA Police, Luderitz - Magistrate, Luderitz, 17/1/24; Magistrate, Luderitz - Secretary, 25/1/24, Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1925, U.G. 26-26, 1926, n. 28.

34. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33 - 25, 1925, pp. 22-23; ADM 3823/3 (5), CDM - Secretary, 3/1/23.

35. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33 - 25, 1925, p. 21.

36. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1925, U.G. 26 - 26, 1926, p. 27.

37. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, 1925, p. 29. See also ADM 3823/3 (6), CDM - H.P. Smit, 13/2/24, in which the diamond company complained that it had been sent children weighing between 70 and 87 pounds and estimated to be between nine and thirteen years of age.

38. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, 1925, p. 29; Administrator's report, 1925, U.G. 26-26, p. 77.

39. ADM 3823/3 (6), 'Meeting of representatives of the mining industry, held at Windhoek on 13th November, 1923.'

40. ADM 3823/3 (6), 'Native Labour Recruiting Conference', 1/9/24. See also Administrator's report, 1924, pp. 77-78.

41. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1925, U.G. 26-26, 1926, pp. 28 and 87-88.

42. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1926, U.G. 22-27, 1927, p. 36.

43. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1926, U.G. 22-27, 1927, p. 11. Although the administrator's statement is not strictly accurate and there had in fact been a slight increase in the number of contract labourers recruited in 1926 (see Table 8.1 above), it is clear that the small increase did not meet the administration's expectations.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

45. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1928, U.G. 22-29, 1929, p. 70.

46. G. Lenzen, *The history of diamond production and the diamond trade*, London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1970, p. 173.

47. See above.

48. See Table 8.2.

49. M.J. Olivier, *Inboorlingbeleid en administrasie in die m. ndaatgebied van Suidwes-Afrika*. D. Phil. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1961, pp. 289-290.

50. Lenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

51. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1927, U.G. 31-28, 1928, pp. 17 and 90; Lenzen, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-178.

52. Union of South Africa, Administrator's reports, 1926, U.G. 22-27, p. 37; 1927, U.G. 31-28, p. 50; 1928, U.G. 22-29, p. 69; 1929, U.G. 23-30, p. 73; 1930, U.G. 21-31, p. 92; 1931, U.G. 17-32, p. 67; 1932, U.G. 16-33, p. 83; 1933, U.G. 27-34, p. 51; 1934, U.G. 26-35, pp. 59-60; 1935, U.G. 25-36, p. 53; 1936, U.G. 31-37, pp. 54-56; 1937, U.G. 25-38, pp. 60 and 74; 1938, U.G. 20-39, pp. 62-63; 1939, U.G. 30-40, pp. 108-109; SWAA A73/26, Annual reports, Native Affairs; SWAA A50/188/1949, Annual report for 1949; Olivier, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-290 and 300; R.J. Gordon, *Mines, masters and migrants: life in a Namibian mine compound*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1977, p. 24. Although there are some small discrepancies between some of the figures provided by the sources listed above, these do not contradict the general trends illustrated by Table 9.1. The only major discrepancy is for the year 1929, where Gordon indicates a total recruitment of 6 121 labourers as against my total of 5 862. However, further scrutiny reveals that although Gordon uses

the same source as I have (i.e. Administrator's report, 1929, p. 73), he has confused the original figures, arriving at an inflated and incorrect total.

53. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1929, U.G. 23-30, 1930, p. 41.

54. Lenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

55. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1930, U.G. 21-31, 1931, p. 31.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

57. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1933, U.G. 27-34, 1934, p. 23.

58. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1934, U.G. 26-35, 1935, p. 33.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

60. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1930, U.G. 21-31, 1931, pp. 32 and 44.

61. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1931, U.G. 17-32, 1932, p. 22.

62. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1933, U.G. 27-34, 1934, pp. 16 and 23.

63. Union of South Africa, Administrator's reports, 1935, U.G. 25-36, 1936, p. 31; 1937, U.G. 25-38, 1938, p. 20.

64. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1930, U.G. 21-31, 1931, p. 91.

65. See Table 8.2.

66. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1927, U.G. 31-28, 1928, p. 48.

67. Union of South Africa, Administrator's reports, 1932, U.G. 16-33, 1933, p. 26; 1938, U.G. 20-39, 1939, p. 99; 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, p. 207; SWAA A73/22 Annual Report 1941, para. 1251.

68. University of the Witwatersrand Library (Church of the Province, South Africa) A 842, J.C. Smuts Papers, B1, D.W.F.E. Ballot, Memorandum, 20/7/1935, (subsequently, Ballot Memorandum, 20/7/35), p. 31.

69. Union of South Africa, *Report of the Commission on the Economic and Financial Relations between the Union of South Africa and the Mandated Territory of South West Africa*. (subsequently Economic and Financial Relations Committee Report), U.G. 16-1935, Pretoria: Government Printer, 1935, p. 34.

70. Ballot Memorandum, 20/7/35, p. 31; Economic and Financial Relations Committee Report, p. 163.

71. See Table 8.4, above.

72. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, p. 60; SWAA A73/22, Annual Report 1941.

73. Union of South Africa, Administrator's Report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, pp.87-88; SWAA A73/22, Annual Report 1941.

74. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, p. 61; SWAA A73/22, Annual Report 1941; SWAA A73/26, Annual Reports, Otjiwarongo, 1945.

75. See Table 8.4.

76. A312, Item 25, 'Land settlement in South West Africa, 1939'; Ballot Memorandum, 20/7/35, pp. 33-35. See also chapter three below.

77. Ballot Memorandum, 20/7/35, p. 71.

78. D.C. Krogh, 'Economic aspects of the karakul industry in South West Africa'. *South African Journal of Economics*, 23, 2, 1955, pp. 104 and 107.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

80. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1931, U.G. 17-32, 1932, p. 22; See also A312, Item 25, 'Land settlement in South West Africa, 1939'.

81. Krogh (1955), *op. cit.* pp. 101-103.

82. See Table 8.6. While there is no necessary relationship between GDP (production) and exports, particularly of mineral products, like diamonds, can be stockpiled, mining's share of the GDP displays the same general trends as the export figures presented in Table 9.3.

83. See Table 8.6.

84. D.C. Krogh, 'The national income and expenditure of South-West Africa'. *South African Journal of Economics*, 28, 1, 1960, p. 5.

85. R.H. Green and K. Kiljunen, 'The colonial economy: structures of growth and exploitation', in R. Green, M.J. Kiljunen and K. Kiljunen. (eds.), *Namibia, the last colony*. Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1981, p. 38.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

87. See chapter three below.

88. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1927, U.G. 31-28, 1928, p. 24.

89. *Ibid.*

90. Krogh (1935), *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101. See also Ballot Memorandum, 20/7/35, p. 32.
91. SWAA A50/75, Proclamation 29/1935; Government Notice 180/1935.
92. *Ibid.*
93. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1935, U.G. 25-36, 1936, p. 42.
94. See below, chapter nine.
95. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1937, U.G. 25-38, 1938, p. 47.
96. S. Greenberg, *Race and state in capitalist development*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980, p. 59. See also Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, p. 434.
97. SWAA A50/75, 'Control of Extra-Territorial Natives employed in South West Africa' (memo. from Secretary to Administrator), 10/4/30.
98. The diamond mines, for example, introduced changes in the accommodation, rations and hospital facilities for migrant labourers, when high death rates on the mines began threatening the flow of labour.
99. SWAA A50/75, Members of the Sub-Committee of the Advisory Council - Administrator, undated.
100. SWAA A50/75, 'Extract of Native Affairs Annual Report 1937 from Officer in Charge of Native Affairs, Tsumeb', undated.
101. *Ibid.*
102. SWAA A50/75, Assistant Native Commissioner, Luderitz - Native Commissioner, 12/3/37. See also petition dated 29/9/36. For other examples, see SWAA A50/75 *passim*. The proclamation was also used to rid the territory of those members of the West African community who were considered to be "undesirable".
103. Calculated from figures provided by R.J. Gordon, 'Variations in migration rates: the Ovambo case', *Journal of Southern African Affairs*, 3, 3, 1978, p. 267; Union of South Africa, Administrator's reports, 1929, U.G. 23-30, 1930, p. 77; 1930, U.G. 21-31, 1931, p. 97; 1931, U.G. 17-32, 1932, pp. 71-72; 1946, U.G. 49-47, 1947, p. 25; SWAA 473/22, Annual Report 1941; Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 300.
104. See Table 8.7.
105. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 300.
106. *Ibid.*, unnumbered table between pp. 289 and 290.
107. W.H. Thomas, *Economic development in Namibia*. Munich: Grunewald, 1978, p. 286, footnote 39.

108. SWAA A50/75, Northern Labour Organization - D.I.H. Meintjes, Otjiwarongo, 11/3/37.
109. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 298. See also chapter nine, below.
110. SWAA A50/75, NLO - D.I.H. Meintjes, 11/3/37.
111. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
113. *Ibid.*
114. *Ibid.*, p. 298.
115. South West Africa, 'Report of the Long Term Agricultural Policy Commission', Windhoek, c. 1948 (undated), p. 27, para. 219. (Emphasis in the original).
116. See chapter nine, below.
117. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 300.
118. See chapter eleven, below.
119. Union of South Africa, Administrator's reports, 1938, U.G. 20-39, 1939, p. 78; 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, p. 183; South West Africa, 'Report of the South West Africa Native Labourers Commission, 1945-'48', Windhoek, c. 1948 (undated).
120. SWAA A73/22, Annual Report 1941, para. 841.
121. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 284.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 285; Gordon (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 269.
123. Gordon (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 268.
124. See, for example, Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

Chapter nine

THE CRISIS IN OVAMBOLAND

The period between, and including, the depression and World War II was not only crucial for the direction in which contract labour was channelled but also saw phenomenal growth in the rate of migration. As already noted, the period prior to the depression was distinguished by the ability of Ovamboland and other recruiting areas to resist the pressures for migrant labour. The establishment of recruiting organizations in the mid-1920s did little to improve the flow of labour and the slight increase in migration between 1926 and 1928 probably had more to do with climatic conditions in the sending areas than with the efforts of the labour organizations.¹ However, following the partial recovery of the colonial economy after the drought and depression, migration rates reached higher levels than ever before under South African rule. This occurred in spite of large numbers of migrants being directed into the agricultural sector - an option which had been vigorously resisted in earlier periods. The early years of World War II saw a short-termed decline in recruitment which was associated with a decrease in the demand for mine labour as well as the competition provided by recruitment for the Native Military Corps. From 1943, however, the flow of migrant labour from the north increased substantially and from then on showed a strong and consistent upward trend.²

These broad trends in the flow of migrant labour suggest that the rapid increase in migration rates following World War II were a continuation of a tendency which first manifested itself in the period immediately

following the depression. This tendency in turn is consistent with the escalating crisis which overtook Ovamboland from the late 1920s, and which witnessed the progressive disintegration of precolonial political and economic structures. Although this chapter will be devoted to an examination of some of the dimensions of this crisis, the limitations of this study allow only a brief outline of what was undoubtedly a highly complex process.

Colonial policy and the preservation of "traditional" structures

The crisis in Ovamboland, the major source of migrant labour in Namibia, was essentially a product of the strains imposed on Ovambo social formations by the demands of colonial administration and the needs of the colonial economy. At the basis of these strains lay a fundamental contradiction in colonial policy which enforced the isolation of the northern regions and the preservation of indigenous ("traditional") political and economic structures, while at the same time extracting migrant labour, enforcing colonial authority, and allowing the Christianization of these regions. In consequence while Ovamboland and other northern regions were subjected to the undermining influences associated with colonialism, they were prevented from making the transition to a new form of society.

Although the creation of isolated and dependent migrant labour reserves was a common feature of colonial rule in southern Africa, the degree of isolation imposed on Ovamboland and other northern regions in Namibia represents a special case. Not only was movement between these northern areas and the police zone strictly controlled, particularly after 1936, but the "Thirstbelt" between the police zone and the northern areas put further obstacles in the way of unauthorized contacts between the two

regions. With the exception of the stores established by CDM and the Endola Company, traders were not allowed into Ovamboland, and it was only in the 1950s that the first licences were granted to Ovambo traders. CDM which held a monopoly over trading in Ovamboland from the mid-twenties until the establishment of the Endola store in 1939, had from the beginning made it explicit that its main purpose in establishing stores in Ovamboland was to encourage migrant labour. It was therefore opposed to any form of trade or bartering other than the exchange of consumer goods for cash.³ The CDM stores were taken over by SWANLA after the amalgamation of the two recruiting organizations in 1943.⁴ In spite of pressures from the Permanent Mandates Commission, the administration showed little enthusiasm for the production of cash crops and the opening up of markets for produce from Ovamboland. Limited experiments with rice, soya beans, millet and groundnuts were attempted in the late 1930s, but were largely abandoned because of the poor rains and the outbreak of World War II.⁵ Furthermore the export of cattle to the police zone was prohibited.⁵ With the exception of illegal trade in fowlstuffs with the Portuguese - a trade which was necessarily circumscribed by its illegality and the wariness of the administration for potential gun-runners - Ovamboland's only source of cash was migrant labour. The situation is succinctly summed up by Richard Gordon who maintains that "Ovambo peasants had to resort to subsistence farming rather than cash cropping by constraint rather than choice."⁶

The institution of "indirect rule" in Ovamboland and other northern territories may be attributed to a number of factors, including administrative expedience, the specific labour demands of the colonial economy and colonial ideologies. As the Germans had not conquered Ovamboland

and the Ovambos were both well-armed and well-organized, "indirect rule" provided the most convenient strategy for a colonial administration which was already undermanned.⁷ The situation was summed up by the Secretary for South West Africa in 1925:

To attempt to introduce any radical changes immediately would only cause endless trouble and dissatisfaction if not actual rebellion, and as the tribes as a whole are law-abiding and peaceful, there is no need to affect any such change.⁸

The retention of pre-colonial structures in Ovamboland also suited the needs of both mines and farmers for a cheap, unskilled and relatively docile labour force. The mines showed a distinct preference for Ovambo and Angolan labourers rather than police zone or South African labourers who were considered to be "spoilt" or "corrupt."⁹ Farmers also favoured the employment of "raw" Ovambos and tended to equate the movement of labour from the rural to the urban areas with "detrribalization". For both employers and officials, blacks who still lived "in accordance with native customs", were:

as a rule ... more amenable to authority and required less supervision than those who, after years of contact with Europeans, have lost much that was good in their old code and acquired some of the vices connected with civilised centres.¹⁰

The decline of food production and the contract labour system

Although Ovamboland had been subjected to the strains of colonial rule from at least the beginning of South African rule in Namibia, a crucial turning-point was reached in the 1930s. Not only were the movements of Ovambos and other northerners more strictly controlled after 1936, thus blocking off the options of out-migration and proletarianization, but the combined effects of drought and depression precipitated a severe food crisis from which the already vulnerable indigenous economy did not

fully recover. Already in 1928 the drought had resulted in heavy stock losses and food shortages which could only be met with the aid of the administration. Conditions were so bad that many Ovambos resorted to eating their seed.¹¹ The drought, and consequent food shortages, continued until the floods of 1933/34 when crops were once again destroyed, this time by locusts. The wet conditions also encouraged the spread of diseases, especially malaria "which in some parts raged like an epidemic".¹² There was also an outbreak of the plague in Ovamboland during the height of the drought. The district surgeon for the area reported in 1934 that drought and famine had "left the Ovambos a debilitated nation scarcely fit to face a year of abnormal rainfall, which resulted in malaria being exceedingly prevalent".¹³

The coincidence of drought and depression resulted in a diminishing demand for labour in the police zone, thus blocking the last means of escape from the drought and famine, and resulting in a shortage of cash in Ovamboland. Contract workers were discharged in large numbers from the mines, and recruiting in Ovamboland and Okavango was curtailed.¹⁴ With increasing colonial expansion and control in both Namibia and Angola pre-colonial strategies such as out-migration and the acceptance of servitude to other groups not affected by drought, were no longer feasible and had been replaced by labour migration to the colonial economies. The Finnish Mission Society, for example, reported in 1932 that "the want of money and clothes became greater and greater. For this reason the men want to go to the south to try and find ... work. But it is difficult to find work."¹⁵

A further consequence of the depression was to lower the wages of migrant workers in the period immediately following the drought. Because

of the scarcity of jobs, labourers were forced to accept employment at almost any wage.¹⁶ This was particularly true for contract workers, because of the increasing importance of settler farmers as employers of contract labour following the depression. The channelling of increasing numbers of migrant labourers into the agricultural sector after 1936, substantially reduced their wages. This was not only a result of the significantly lower wages paid by farmers, but also of the changes in the classification system in response to the labour needs of the agricultural sector. As contract labourers were paid according to their classification with "C" labourers receiving the lowest wages, the larger the percentage of labourers classified in the "C" category, the lower the general wage of contract labourers.

Prior to the depression, migrant labourers from the northern areas had successfully resisted recruitment as farm labourers, and the vast majority had been absorbed by the mines which, until the depression, held a position of unchallenged dominance within the colonial economy. Following the depression, the decline of mining, the increasing importance of agriculture and the social and economic crisis in Ovambo-land combined to force northern migrants into the agricultural sector. The available wage data allow only a rough assessment of what these changes meant for contract labourers. During the 1920s the average monthly wage of mine labourers was about £1-5-0, while that of farm labourers was about 12/6.¹⁷ In 1939, when increasing numbers of northern migrants were being channelled into settler agriculture, the average monthly wage for farm labour was about 15/3, while the equivalent wage for mine labourers was about £1-11-8.¹⁸ Therefore, on the basis of these figures, reclassification as a farm labourer entailed a

drop in wages of at least 50 per cent.

However, the above averages include the wages of both contract and police zone labourers, and as the administrator himself pointed out, in general lower wages were paid to contract labourers.¹⁹ The minimum wages of farm labourers might therefore provide a more realistic basis for comparison. In 1939 the average minimum wage for the various districts was about 8/7 for farm labourers and £1-4-7 for mine labourers, i.e. the average minimum wage on the mines was nearly three times higher than that on the farms.²⁰ The discrepancy between the wages paid to local labourers and those paid to contract labourers is also reflected in figures provided by the administration for the district of Windhoek in 1948, which indicate that while local labourer were paid an average wage of £2 and a minimum wage of £1-10-0, contract labourers were paid an average wage of 15/- and a minimum wage of 9/-.²¹ Before 1949 the wages of migrant labourers were further reduced by the deduction of 15/9 from their total wages for the bus fare between Ondangwa and Grootfontein.²² In general, the decline in the income of contract workers at this crucial stage for Ovamboland, meant an increasing transfer of labour resources from the indigenous economies to the colonial economy. It is hardly surprising then that the increasing prosperity of settler agriculture was accompanied by a reciprocal decline of the Ovamboland economy.

Colonial however, were confident that with more regular rainfall, the production in Ovamboland would return to pre-depression levels. In spite of the "below average" crops reaped in 1936 and the low level of grain reserves in Ovamboland, the administrator remained convinced that "(a)nother two or three years as satisfactory; as that

under review should see the Ovambos once again in the sound position²³ enjoyed by them before the famine and depression commenced in 1928."

By 1939, however, Ovamboland was again in the grips of a severe food shortage and the administration had once again to provide relief. There was an increase of diseases as a result of the famine and a number of Ovambos died of anthrax after eating diseased meat.²⁴ As the Finnish Mission Society pointed out in a rather oblique manner, as well as the failure of crops because of poor rains,

the economical (*sic*) conditions in South West proper became worse, and many Ovambos came back with very few or no savings. The shortage of these main resources of the economic life of the Ovambo people has meant that they have had to struggle a lot in the past year to get enough food-stuffs to live on.²⁵

As the number of contract labourers decreased only marginally between 1938 and 1939,²⁶ the decline in their savings must be attributed to a drop in the average wages earned. This is borne out by the increase in the number of "C" labourer from 47 to 61 per cent of the total labour complex²⁷ between 1938 and 1939. It was essentially the mines and not the agricultural sector which were affected by the outbreak of the war and the uncertainty that preceded it, and this helped to produce a further shift in the migrant labour force from mining to agriculture.²⁸

While reserves of food stored in the "tribal trust" granaries were, according to the administration, able to avert starvation in Ovamboland during the drought of 1941, "famine conditions prevailed",²⁹ and food reserves were again running low by the end of that year. A poor crop was reaped in 1945, and the following year the food shortage in Ovamboland once again became serious, compelling the administration to provide relief.³⁰ By 1946 the administrator was forced to concede that

"gradual" changes had been taking place in the indigenous economies of northern Namibia, and that these areas were no longer "self-contained in the sense that they have no problems as to the disposal of surplus products nor do they need to import from elsewhere their essential requirements."³¹ Although the perception of Ovamboland as previously "self-contained" was part of the colonial mythology, the administrator's remarks imply a recognition, however partial, of the fundamental changes taking place in the area as a result of colonial penetration and incorporation (as a labour reserve) into the colonial economy. By the 1950s some areas were barely able to meet the food needs of their populations during years of good rainfall.³²

Pressures on land resources

The decline of food production in Ovamboland has to be seen against the background of increasing land pressures and the undermining of pre-colonial structures of production and social control. As noted earlier, there were already signs of overcrowding in Ukuanyama which straddled the border with Angola, in 1924.³³ Land pressures were not solely a result of natural population increases, but also of the influx of Angolans fleeing Portuguese taxation and forced labour.³⁴ With the redrawing of the boundary between Angola and Namibia in 1927, "considerable portions of Ukuanyama, Ombalantu and Eunda were lost to Angola. The administrator reported in 1928 that the majority of Ovambos were "anxious to migrate to the Mandated Territory, but the problem of accommodating them is rendered difficult by the inadequacy of water supplies in Ovamboland."³⁵ While out-migration to the police zone was strictly controlled, there is no evidence that the administration attempted to restrict the influx from Angola. If anything, it appears that migration

from Angola was encouraged in order to expand the potential migrant labour force. By 1932 the Ukuanyama area was already so "congested" that the administration was forced to begin opening up a new zone to the north-east of the main settlement area. Work on this extension of Ukuanyama territory proceeded through the 1930s and was rapidly settled by people from the core settlement area. In 1937 the administrator reported that the

influx of natives has increased tremendously during recent years and if the inhabited area is not extended the position will soon be reached where the country cannot adequately feed the population.³⁶

If anything, the evidence already cited indicated that Ovamboland was already experiencing difficulties in feeding its population. Furthermore, by the administrator's admission, work was proceeding slowly and difficulties were being experienced in the "waterless parts" of the extension zone. There are also indications that other areas were also being affected by land shortages. In 1931, for example, the Ondonga laid claim to a share of the area being developed for the Ukuanyamas. By the first half of the 1940s the administration was forced to concede that the extension of Ukuanyama was failing to meet the needs of the expanding population:

Unless more suitable territory can be found in the eastern Ukuanyama the administration will have to consider other means of providing grazing lands for the stock of these natives. This stock now has to be grazed in Portuguese territory. It is felt that unless something can be done to meet the requirements of the many owners in this respect, many of them will be forced to trek across the border to settle in Angola.³⁷

Further difficulties arose at the end of World War II when the option of migration to Angola was further circumscribed by stricter border controls imposed by the Portuguese colonial authorities. The failure of

the scheme to ease population pressures by opening up new land should be seen in the context of the different productive capacities of land in Ovamboland. The majority of the population had always been concentrated in the *oshana* or floodwater zone, and expansion could therefore only take place in the largely waterless periphery of the productive, but over-populated *oshana* areas. The development of the peripheral areas, however, required large inputs of capital and technology which had to be drawn from the "tribal funds". Besides the inadequacy of this source of financing,³⁹ the "tribal funds" were provided in cash or grain by the Ovambos themselves, and thus served as a further drain on the money and food resources of the area. The aridity of the peripheral area forced an increasing emphasis on stock-raising rather than cultivation. Stock farming in turn required far more extensive areas of land and was periodically threatened by droughts and endemic stock diseases.⁴⁰

Taxation and disarmament

In spite of its efforts to check overcrowding in some areas, the administration was not above using the food shortages to consolidate its control over Ovamboland. In 1929, for example, the administration took advantage of the drought and famine in Ovamboland to introduce taxation which the Ovambos had previously succeeded in resisting. The administrator commented that from an administrative point of view, the drought was "perhaps ... a blessing in disguise".⁴¹ Initially all Ovambo men were taxed five shillings a year, but the tax had to be suspended soon after because of the shortage of cash during the depression. When it was reintroduced, the Ovambos were allowed to pay in either cash or grain. The grain collected in this way was used to meet later food shortages. The administration also took advantage of the famine in the

early 1930s to disarm some of the Ovambos by exchanging food for rifles. In 1931, for example, the Native Commissioner for Ovamboland reported that he had exchanged 1 052 rifles for 150 bags of mealie meal.⁴² Disarming of the Ovambos had begun in 1917 when the Ukuanyama king, Mandume, was defeated, but it was considerably accelerated during the 1930s, especially after the military action against the Ukuambi in 1932 and the Ondonga king in 1937. The administrator was able to announce in 1939 that "all the Ovambo tribes can be considered to be disarmed".⁴³ The disarming of the Ovambos together with legal restrictions on hunting further limited the source of food available in Ovamboland. It was reported in 1939, for example, that game of all species was steadily increasing.⁴⁴

Besides these economic consequences, disarmament of the Ovambos also had important political implications. The arms possessed by the various Ovambo groupings had acted as an inhibition to more blatant colonial intervention and had allowed better armed groupings a certain degree of political leverage and independence. King Ipumbu of the Ukuambi, for example, had been able to defy colonial authority consistently until his overthrow in 1932, because the administration realized that any show of force on its part would be met by strong, armed resistance.⁴⁵

The undermining of the authority and power of the Ovambo kings in turn had important consequences for the system of production in Ovamboland. On an obvious level, kings and headmen were functionaries of the colonial state within the context of indirect rule, and the undermining of their independence clearly facilitated the introduction of policies which favoured the interests of the colonizers rather than those of the Ovambos. The indigenous authorities, for example, played a vital role

in the recruitment and "disciplining" of contract labourers.⁴⁶ In particular, the councils of headmen (*Jenga*) which were introduced when the kingships of Ukuanyama and Ukuambi were abolished, were, because of their pliability, highly favoured by the colonial authorities. For example, a government ethnologist reported that headmen

are so conditioned by tradition that they blindly obey the ruler ... If they do not execute their duties they can be dismissed from their posts. A simple question for information from the Commissioner is, under circumstances taken up as an instruction and executed.⁴⁷

However, pre-colonial political authorities, and in particular the Ovambo kingship, played a central role in regulating production in Ovambo-land before colonization. As Moorsom and Clarence-Smith point out, the powers of the kings were linked to the ecological conditions of the area. As the kings were called upon to predict the beginning of the rainy season, they decided when planting would begin. Furthermore, the kings had control over the distribution and use of land, exercised ultimate administrative and judicial authority, organized corvée labour, and were responsible for the preservation of trees.

In an area where climatic conditions were so precarious, these activities were essential for the survival of the whole community and legitimated a certain degree of centralisation.⁴⁸

Changes in the political structure may therefore be expected to have repercussions at the productive level of these communities, and in particular to influence a community's cohesiveness and its ability to meet ecological contingences.

The role of missionaries

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s colonial officials associated with Ovambo-land expressed concern about the erosion of the authority of the

indigenous political leaders and the disintegration of the wider social formation. The contradictions in the roles of administrative officials who were expected to incorporate pre-colonial institutions into the colonial framework while "preserving" these institutions, were initially met by placing the blame for the progressive disintegration of pre-colonial structures on the missionaries. The missions undoubtedly played a major role in the transformation of Ovamboland. Gordon maintains that Ovamboland has the highest density of Christians in Africa.⁴⁹ However, although the Finnish Mission Society first established itself in Ovamboland in 1870, it was only with the extension of colonial control over the area that it was able to make a significant impact. In 1910 the mission had only 2 000 members in Ovamboland, but membership increased rapidly as South Africa consolidated its control over the area, increasing from about 8 000 in 1920, to 23 000 in 1930, 37 000 in 1940, 64 000 in 1950, and 118 000 in 1960.⁵⁰ In 1924 the Finnish mission was joined by the Anglican and Roman Catholic missions and this, according to the Native Commissioner for Ovamboland, resulted in "fresh competition" for converts between the different denominations.⁵¹

Initially there was close co-operation between the missionaries and the administration. The missions were expected to support and assist colonial policies, and to encourage migrant labour, and the evidence suggests that they generally complied with these expectations, particularly as they were dependent on the administration for subsidies.⁵² From the beginning of the 1930s, however, the administration came into increasing conflict with the missionaries in Ovamboland, and in 1932 legislation was introduced to obtain tighter control over the missions through the allocation of sites for mission stations, churches and schools.⁵³ The

basis for the conflict between missions and administration was rooted in the administration's belief that the increasing influence of the missions was responsible for the subversion of both tribal authority and system of food production in Ovamboland.

It was argued that the missions had created "a rift" between Christians and non-Christians and that they were undermining "tribal" authority by the proliferation of schools. Both missions and mission schools not only provided an alternative focus for loyalties to those of the "tribal authorities", but in some cases actually set up semi-judicial bodies to settle criminal and civil disputes between church members. This had alarmed the kings and headmen who had complained to the administration that their authority was being undermined by the missionaries.⁵⁴

The missionaries were also held responsible for the undermining of the economic and food production systems in Ovamboland. As Moorsom has argued, "a diverse and highly integrated mode of subsistence" had developed in Ovamboland by the mid-nineteenth century.⁵⁵ The primary unit of production was the family, and production depended on a sophisticated division of labour which was largely sexual. Productivity, the amount of land cultivated and the efficiency of the division of labour, were at least partially dependent on the size of the family unit. Polygamy and matrilineal kinship were crucial for production not only in relation to the size of the production unit, but also in terms of the external labour a household could call upon during large-scale activities such as planting and reaping. An important feature was that the head of the family could call on the labour of his wives' *epatas* (matrilinial clans) to supplement the labour of the household. The administration argued that the missionaries were undermining food production (and, incidently,

the system of succession) by subverting both polygamy and the kinship system. The missions also reduced labour time by disapproving of work on Sundays, and on religious and mission holidays. Moreover, the missions' disapproval of beer-drinking interfered with the system of co-operative labour provided under the kinship system because it was customary⁵⁶ for working parties to be provided with food and beer.

The cumulative effect of the mission influence, it was argued, was to break down pre-colonial and economic structures, undermine the self-sufficiency of the family as a productive unit, and turn the Christian convert into "a weak link in the all important organisation of food production".

The last two famines prove conclusively that the Christian kraals were the first to be affected and most of the bigger heathen kraals needed no assistance at all.⁵⁷

What was missing from the administration's account of the erosion of pre-colonial structures, however, was the part played by its own policies in the destruction of Ovambo self-sufficiency in food production. While there is some truth in the assertion that Christianization created new needs (for Western clothes, for example) migrant labour policies had required the establishment of trading stores in Ovamboland, with the specific purpose of stimulating such needs.⁵⁸ Soon after the establishment of the first store in Ondonga by CDM (the largest employer of migrant labour at that time), the administrator reported that Western clothing was "becoming more and more evident amongst natives in the country. The local store of the Ondonga Trading Company induces natives to invest their earnings in clothes."⁵⁹ Migrant labour clearly also posed a threat to the labour resources of Ovamboland, particularly as

migrant labourers were away on contract for at least 12 months and were therefore unable to co-ordinate their work in the colonial economy with the seasonal demands of agricultural production.

Moreover, the missions were only able to subvert pre-colonial structures and practices with the help of the colonial authorities, while the requirements of colonial control were of themselves often responsible for undermining indigenous authority and destroying the cohesion of the wider social formations. These two points are clearly illustrated by the military campaign against the Ukuambi under King Ipumbu in 1932 and the punitive expedition sent against King Martin of the Ondonga in 1939.

Political underdevelopment: undermining indigenous authority

Following the defeat of the Ukuanyama and the death of their king, Mandume, in 1917, resistance to colonial intrusion in Ovamboland became centred on the Ukuambi king, Ipumbu. Like Mandume, Ipumbu tried to neutralize the disruptions of colonial penetration by centralizing power in the kingship and responding swiftly and ruthlessly to any internal challenge to his authority.⁶⁰ He also readily defied the colonial authorities and was prepared to back up his defiance by force of arms. In consequence, and like Mandume, he was regarded as a "cruel" and "despotic" ruler by the administration. Within two years of the overthrow of Mandume, Ipumbu was causing "officials and missionaries endless trouble".⁶¹ In 1921 Ipumbu sent a raiding party into Ukuanyama territory which burned down a kraal and captured a woman who had fled from Ukuambi. As a result of the raid, the administration imposed a fine of 20 cattle. In spite of various ultimatums from the administration, Ipumbu refused to pay the fine, and instead sought allies among the Ukuanyama, and attempted to import arms from the polize zone. By June

1923 reports were circulating in Ovamboland that the Ukuambi were preparing for war. After issuing a further ultimatum, the administration decided to send a punitive expedition consisting of levies from the Ongangas and the Ukuanyamas, against Ipumbu. However, as the Ondonga did not provide the promised levies, the expedition was abandoned, and negotiations were resumed. Although the Ukuambi king finally did hand over the required cattle (which, he said, the administration should regard as a gift), he refused to surrender any of the arms in the possession of his people. The administration regarded this incident as a "serious blow" to its prestige.⁶²

Further defiance of colonial authority followed. When the administrator visited Ovamboland in 1925, Ipumbu deliberately kept him waiting for more than two hours. The Ukuambi king also successfully opposed the formation of a "tribal trust fund" for his area and the imposition of taxes on his people. Furthermore, he refused to co-operate with the colonial authorities in the conservation of trees and game:

(O) n one occasion when the Native Commissioner expressed a wish that palms in a certain place should be preserved, he (Ipumbu) promptly gave instructions that all the palms could be destroyed ...⁶³

However, it was Ipumbu's conflict with the missionaries in Ukuambi which brought matters to a head. There had been long-standing conflict between the Finnish missionaries and the Ukuambi king, particularly over the *ohango* (puberty rites for girls), and before 1932 the Native Commissioner for Ovamboland had on several occasions advised the missionaries to withdraw from Ukuambi "as they will have constant trouble with Ipumbu who lives in mortal fear that his authority will be undermined."⁶⁴ In December 1931 a woman whom Ipumbu wished to marry, fled and was given

sanctuary by the missionaries. It was later claimed that the woman, Nekulu, was Ipumbu's daughter and that the marriage was therefore contrary to tribal custom. Ipumbu demanded the return of Nekulu, and with a band of 200 or 300 armed men threatened to kill the missionaries and burn down their station. Although shots were fired and a church service was broken up, the missionaries were not directly harmed, and were able to smuggle Nekulu out of Ukuambi.

While the administration believed that the missionaries in Ukuambi had acted in a "high-handed manner" and demanded that they be replaced, it also decided to impose a fine of ten cattle on Ipumbu. The Ukuambi king, however, refused to pay the fine, and after the delivery of the usual ultimatums, it was decided to take military action against him. As intelligence reports showed that Ipumbu intended to fight, the administration decided to first send aeroplanes and an armoured car into Ukuambi. After an initial bombing and machine gun demonstration by the aircraft failed to intimidate Ipumbu, the abandoned kraal and cattle of the Ukuambi king were bombed. Ipumbu attempted to flee to Angola, but was prevented from crossing the border by the Portuguese authorities, and was eventually captured and exiled to the Okavango area.⁶⁵

King Martin of the Ondonga provides a stark, and instructive, contrast to Ipumbu. Martin was among the first Ovambo kings to be converted to Christianity and he actively collaborated with the colonial authorities from their arrival during World War I. Although Martin was initially applauded for his "co-operation" with the colonial authorities, the administration soon lost patience with his weakness and apathy towards affairs of state. King Martin, the administrator declared only two

year. Before the campaign against Ipumbu, "has not sufficient strength of character to conduct affairs in a vigorous manner" and was "inclined to follow the line of least resistance":

Very forceful chiefs are often somewhat difficult of management and the weakness of Martin, now that the Administration has a strong hold over the natives of Ovamboland, is perhaps more of a blessing than otherwise.⁶⁶

In 1936, however, the administrator sent a "strongly worded warning" to Martin threatening "that if he did not pull himself together, it might be necessary for the administration to remove him and to substitute a tribal council".⁶⁷ The threat appears to have had some effect because in 1939 Martin made a last and futile attempt to assert his authority as king by refusing to surrender to the colonial authorities, two Ondongas who had been accused of murder. To hand over the men, Martin said, would undermine his authority, particularly as one of the accused was heir apparent to the kingship. The administration's response was to send a special police patrol and three aircraft to Ovamboland which succeeded in intimidating Martin into handing over the accused who were then sent for trial in Grootfontein.⁶⁸ Thereafter Martin settled back into his old lethargy, and the following year the Native Commissioner for Ovamboland remarked, with characteristic lack of insight, that it was Martin's "indifference to discipline as also that of his headmen which has lost them so much authority in the past."⁶⁹

Thus on the political level also, the 1930s marked an important turning point for Ovamboland. By 1939 the colonial authorities had successfully employed force against the three largest political groupings in Ovamboland. If the defeat of the Ukuanyama in 1917 had left indigenous political leaders some room to manoeuvre, the military action against Ipumbu

and Martin left no doubt that all avenues for Ovambo leaders to assert their authority independently of the colonial authorities had been closed. At the beginning of the decade the Ukuambi and the Ondonga were the best armed of the Ovambo groupings, and the military action in 1932 and 1939 allowed the colonial authorities the opportunity to disarm not only these two groupings but also other smaller groupings.

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The contrasting examples of Martin and Ipumbu - who represent a kind of Scylla and Charybdis of "indirect rule" - clearly illustrate both the contradictions in the administration's policy and the narrow options this policy allowed indigenous leaders in Ovamboland. Under the circumstances, the collapse of pre-colonial political structures might have opened the way for extensive changes and the closer integration of Ovamboland into the world economy. In spite of the administration's massive intervention, however, colonial ideology required the preservation of indigenous structures. The result was that the options of change were themselves restricted and that the social forms which emerged were markedly rigid, and bore less resemblance to pre-colonial structures than to the ideological assumptions of the colonizers.

In terms of the dominant colonial ideology, the Ovambo kings and other rulers were essentially perceived as "tyrants" who ruled Ovamboland without consideration for the interests or desires of their subjects. Under colonial rule this pre-conception became a reality. The kings and headmen were reduced to mere functionaries within the colonial administrative system, and lost all accountability to their people. As Gordon has shown, political power in the pre-colonial setting was carefully regulated by a series of checks and balances which integrated pre-colonial authorities into the religious frameworks of their social

formations. Furthermore, abuses of power could be counteracted by deposing the offending ruler or by migration to another area. However, colonial rule not only undermined the religious bases of Ovambo social formations, but entrenched kings and headmen (provided they obeyed the colonial authorities) in new positions of power. Individual mobility, both within the beyond Ovamboland, also became increasingly difficult.⁷¹

Changes in the land tenure system

Of particular importance were the changes introduced into the system of land tenure under colonial rule. Although documentation of the development of the land tenure system in Ovamboland is limited, the information that is available provides a suggestive outline of the changes that took place. Under pre-colonial conditions, all land was regarded as the "property" of the kings who administered it in the interests of their subjects. While grazing land was used on a communal basis, arable land was allocated to individuals for use during their lifetimes, the size of the plot being determined by the requirements and standing of the allottee. On the death of the usufructee, the land went to his heir, although the king had to be notified and sometimes stepped in to exercise his right of disposal. Variations to this pattern existed in the smaller political groupings which did not have kings, and where ownership and rights to land appeared to have been more individualized.⁷²

A crucial aspect of the land tenure system and the changes introduced during the colonial period revolves around the allocation of land and the benefits accruing to indigenous political authorities by means of their control over land allocation. Gordon maintains that during the

pre-colonial period land-rights were obtained and retained "in exchange for tribute or service".⁷³ In 1929 the administration reported that in Ondonga, Ukuambi, Ukualuthi and Ongandjera payments of stock to kings and headmen for the allotment of land had become a general practice. The administration's account of this practice, however, suggests that payments for the rights of land were an innovation.

This is a departure from the general custom. In almost every other tribe no payment of any sort is required, the principle being that the Chief has to provide land for his followers and they in turn have to obey him in all things and to place not only their services but also a portion of their crops at his disposal should he require it.⁷⁴

While this statement leaves room for interpretation, the administration was clear on one point, namely, that payments for land allocations were "usually quite nominal". Subsequent accounts of the land tenure system in Ovamboland, however, reveal that after 1929 payments required for the allotment of land increased and had finally reached a level which was anything but "nominal". The available information is, however, too sketchy to be able to plot the rise in the price of land or to determine when the price began increasing. Olivier indicates that the "price" of wards or *omikunda* (a sub-division of the district, consisting of about 10 to 12 plots) in the early 1900s was between 6 and 8 cattle plus between £10 and £20 in cash, while plots were allocated for the price of a cow and a small sum of money. He maintains that at some (unspecified) time in the past the price of a ward had been 2 cattle and a quantity of "royal beads"

Totemeyer, on the other hand, gives the "price" of *plots* in 1972 as ranging between R20 (about £10) and R200 (about £100).⁷⁵ In spite of these payments, land continued to revert to the headmen after the death

of the usufructee, and could then be "resold". In Ukuanyama, for example, all arable land was divided into eight districts or *oilongo* each under a principal headman. The headmen in turn divided their districts into a number of *omikunda* (wards) and allocated these for specified payments to sub-headmen, who then allocated plots, also for a price, to householders. As the value of land increased, so did the number of wards in the various districts. In 1951 there were 308 wards in Ukuanyama, but the number of wards steadily increased to 333 in 1956, and 376 in 1965. Because the proliferation of wards, and thus sub-headmen, was becoming politically unwieldy, the administration attempted to reduce the number of wards. It failed to accomplish this reduction, however, largely, it seems, on account of the resistance of the headmen.⁷⁶

Under this system of tenure, land thus became an increasingly important source of income for the headmen and their entrepreneurial allies the sub-headmen. Prior to 1967 kings and headmen were not paid by the colonial authorities, but supported themselves by appropriating a portion of the fines they imposed, by the gifts they received, and, presumably, from payments that accrued from the allocation of land.⁷⁷ Attempts to reform the land tenure system in the early 1970s not unexpectedly, met with resistance from the indigenous leadership. In spite of the strong body of opinion favouring reform, however, the right to allocate land was simply transferred from the headmen to the newly constituted Ovamboland "government" in which indigenous leaders were already heavily represented. The salaries of headmen were subsequently increased to compensate them for the loss of income that had previously accrued from land.⁷⁸ Gordon maintains that the changes in the system of land tenure made it increasingly difficult for Ovambo farmers to subsist

from cultivation, and that pastoralism was increasingly adopted as an alternative means of subsistence. The need for cash to buy cattle in turn, encouraged migrant labour. However, given the ecological constraints on Ovamboland, stock farming could be a hazardous undertaking. Furthermore, grazing areas were limited and by the 1950s further expansion was no longer feasible.⁷⁹ The only remaining alternative was thus to rely on migrant labour, or on the limited number of jobs offered by the churches and schools in Ovamboland. In a survey conducted in the 1970s, Tötemeyer found strong opposition to the existing land tenure system among teachers and religious leaders in Ovamboland, as well as among the Ovambo residents of Katatura, the black township in Windhoek.⁸⁰

Conclusion

To sum up, it has been argued that increases in the rates of migration from Ovamboland were linked to a severe and escalating crisis which overtook the region from about 1930. The crisis was a product of not only the disintegration of pre-colonial structures, but also of the failure of new forms of integration to emerge. The crisis was initially precipitated by a severe drought in conjunction with the great depression of the early 1930s. While the drought had a direct impact on food production in Ovamboland, the combined effects of drought and depression on the colonial economy also introduced important structural changes in the migrant labour system which resulted in increasing numbers of Ovambo migrants being forced into the colonial agricultural sector at considerably reduced wages. At the same time the influx of refugees from Angola and the limitations placed on expansion by colonial boundaries, increased pressures on the land available for cultivation and stock-

raising. The 1930s also witnessed the destruction of the last remnants of authority and independence of pre-colonial political structures, and the incorporation of indigenous leaders as administrative functionaries within the colonial framework. Although essentially dependent on the support of the colonial state, missionaries also contributed to the process of disintegration, both by undermining the authority of the kings and eroded the organization of production. The new forms of political authority that emerged under colonial tutelage were not only ill-suited to performing the regulatory functions that political authorities had exercised in the pre-colonial economy, but also affected changes in the land tenure system which further undermined the system of production.

Endnotes for chapter nine

1. From 1925/26 the rainfall in northern Namibia was consistently below average, and by 1928 had precipitated a serious drought with chronic food shortages and stock losses. See, for example, J.H. Wellington, *South West Africa and its human issues*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 43.
2. See Table 8.2, above.
3. ADM 3823/3 (6), Native Labour Recruiting Conference, 1/9/24; Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, p. 170; R.J. Gordon, 'Variations in migration rates: the Ovambo case', *Journal of Southern African Affairs*, 3, 3, 1978, p. 238.
4. SWAA A73/26, Native Affairs, Annual report for the year 1945.
5. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1932, U.G. 16-33, 1933, p. 75; Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 283.
6. Gordon, *op. cit.*
7. M.J. Olivier, *Inboorlingbeleid en administrasie in die mandaatgebied van Suidwes-Afrika*. D.Phil. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1961, p. 195; Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1922, U.G. 21-23, 1923, p. 10.
8. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
9. ADM 3823/3 (6). See, for example, 'Synopsis of proceedings at adjourned meeting of representatives of mining industry', 13/11/23.
10. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1921, U.G. 32-22, 1922, p. 12.
11. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1928, U.G. 22-29, 1929, p. 59. See also Administrator's reports, 1929, U.G. 23-30, p. 59; 1930, U.G. 21-31, pp. 70-71 and 87; 1931, U.G. 17-32, p. 64; 1932, U.G. 16-33, p. 80.
12. Finnish Mission Society Report, in Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1934, U.G. 26-35, 1935, p. 57.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 72. See also pp. 75-76.
14. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1930, U.G. 21-31, 1931, p. 91.
15. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1932, U.G. 16-33, 1933, p. 80.
16. See Rhenish Mission Report, Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1934, U.G. 26-35, 1935, p. 55.
17. R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment, contract labour and worker consciousness in Namibia, 1915-72', *Journal of Southern African*

Studies, 4, 1, 1977, p. 67.

18. Calculated from figures provided by Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, pp. 219-220.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.

21. SWAA A50/188/13, Administrator's report, Native Affairs, 1948. See also SWAA A50/188/12 (4), Native Affairs, Annual Report, 1947.

22. J.D. Rheinallt Jones, *Administration of South West Africa: welfare of the indigenous people*. Johannesburg: S.A. Institute of Race Relations, circa 1952, pp. 13-14.

23. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1936, U.G. 31-37, 1937, p. 109.

24. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, pp. 122-126.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

26. See Table 8.2, above.

27. See Table 8.7, above.

28. See chapter eight, above.

29. SWAA A73/22, Annual report, 1941.

30. SWAA A73/26, Native Affairs, Annual report for the year 1945; Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1946, U.G. 49-47, 1947, p. 18.

31. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1946, U.G. 49-47, 1947, p. 22.

32. Moorsom, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

33. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, 1925, p. 28.

34. Moorsom, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

35. Union of South Africa, Administrator's reports, 1928, U.G. 22-29, 1929, p. 4; 1927, U.G. 31-28, 1928, p. 45.

36. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1937, U.G. 25-38, 1938, p. 62.

37. SWAA A50/188/1. Ovamboland Annual Report, 1944. See also Union of South Africa, Administrator's reports, 1932, U.G. 16-33, 1933, p. 75; 1934, U.G. 26-35, 1935, p. 52; 1935, U.G. 25-36, 1936, p. 47, 1937, U.G. 25-38, 1938, pp. 61-62; 1938, U.G. 20-39, 1939, p. 55.

38. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-280 and 282; Moorsom, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-64.

41. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1929, U.G. 23-30, 1930, p. 64; Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

42. SWAA A266/26, Native Commissioner, Ovamboland - Secretary, 8/1/31.

43. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, p. 167.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

45. See below.

46. See, for example, SWAA A73/26, Native Affairs, Annual report for the year 1943.

47. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 275. See also Olivier, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-198.

48. G. Clarence-Smith and R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and class formation in Ovamboland, 1844-1917', in R. Palmer and N. Parsons, (eds.), *The roots of rural poverty in central and southern Africa*, London: Heinemann, 1977, p. 98. See also R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and class formation: the origins of migrant labour in Namibia, 1815-1915', in T. Adler (ed.), *Perspectives on South Africa: a collection of working papers*, Johannesburg: African Studies Institute, 1977, pp. 3-49.

49. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 284, estimates that 90 percent of the Ovambo population were practicing Christians by 1966.

50. Moorsom (*Journal of Southern African Studies*), *op. cit.*, 79; Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 285; Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1937, U.G. 25-38, 1938, p. 63.

51. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1937, U.G. 25-38, 1938, p. 63.

52. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 284; Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1926, U.G. 22-27, 1927, pp. 107-108.

53. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1937, U.G. 25-38, 1938, pp. 63-64.

54. *Ibid.*; SWAA CC62, Native Commissioner, Ovamboland - Secretary, 15/6/32.

55. Moorsom (*Journal of Southern African Studies*), *op. cit.*, p. 58.

56. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1937, U.G. 25-38, 1938, pp. 52 and 64-66.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

58. See chapter eight above.

59. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1926, U.G. 22-27, 1927, p. 45.

60. SWAA A266/1, Native Commissioner, Ovamboland - Secretary, 8/7/32.

61. SWAA CC62, Administrator - Prime Minister, 2/9/32. See also A312, Item 76, 'Notes re: Behaviour of Chief Ipumbu, Ukuambi area, Ovamboland', undated.

62. A312, Item 76, 'Notes re: Behaviour of Chief Ipumbu...'; SWAA CC62, Administrator - Prime Minister, 2/9/32; A312, Item 39, Resident Commissioner, Ovamboland - Secretary, 28/12/22 and 'Statement, Ukuambi refugee headman, Festus', 28/12/22.

63. SWAA CC62, Administrator - Prime Minister, 2/9/32.

64. SWAA CC62, Native Commissioner - Secretary, 23/1/32.

65. SWAA CC62, Administrator - Prime Minister, 6/9/32; Native Commissioner - Secretary, 23/1/32; Administrator - Holm, 4/2/32; Administrator - Rev. V. Alho, 4/3/32.

66. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1930, U.G. 21-31, 1931, p. 69.

67. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1936, U.G. 31-37, 1937, p. 47.

68. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, pp. 38 and 163-165.

69. SWAA A266/1, Ovamboland Monthly Reports, 18/1/40; SWAA A50/188/6, Native Affairs Report, 1941.

70. Union of South Africa, Administrator's reports, U.G. 21-31, 1931, p. 68; 1933, U.G. 27-34, 1934, p. 43.

71. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281; Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1929, U.G. 23-30, 1930, pp. 98-100.

73. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 281. It may be questioned whether Gordon does not draw too close a relationship between land rights and the rendering of tribute and services to the kings. The powers and functions of the kingship suggest that the payment of tribute and the provision of corvée labour were integrated into a more general system of reciprocal obligations and duties, and were not simply tied to the allocation of land.

74. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1929, U.G. 23-30, 1930, p. 100.

75. Olivier, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138; G. Töttemeyer, *Namibia old and new: traditional and modern leaders in Ovamboland*. London: C. Hurst, 1978, p. 16. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 281, has taken his figures from Olivier.

but (possibly on account of a misprint) gives a figure of R440 instead of R40 as the upper limit of the price of a ward.

76. Olivier, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-199.

77. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

78. Töttemeyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78.

79. Gordon, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-282.

80. Töttemeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

Chapter ten

ETHNIC AND INDIGENOUS INPUTS: HERERO LEADERS AND THE 'TROOP' MOVEMENT

The relevance of indigenous culture

Within the past few decades concepts of ethnicity or "tribalism" have undergone a variety of transformations associated with changing intellectual trends. Early approaches which accorded ethnicity and "tribalism" a central place in the study of pre-colonial and contemporary African societies or which stressed the "primordial" basis of these variables, ¹ have come under attack for their theoretical and ideological assumptions. As a result new perspectives have been developed which have relegated ethnicity to a more peripheral role and which have attempted to locate it within a broader context of socio-economic change precipitated by colonial and capitalist penetration.

Radical theorists, in particular, have approached the issues of ethnicity or "tribalism" - in the words of John Saul - "as one would approach a minefield". ² In terms of the new perspectives, "tribalism" has been conceived of as "a dependent variable", ³ as the manifestation of "false consciousness", ⁴ and as a disguise for class interests. ⁵ As with earlier conceptions of ethnicity or "tribalism", these later approaches were not altogether divorced from ideological considerations, and at least some of them may be seen as a response to requirements of Third World unity in the face of the devisive strategies of colonial and imperial interests. ⁶ However, the major theoretical difficulty with approaches which see ethnicity as exclusively a dependent variable or as the product of class conflict and manipulation is, quite simply, that

classes and other interests cannot manipulate or exploit ethnicity unless there is "something" to manipulate or exploit. Saul has expressed this more elegantly:

Analysis is required of the very availability of those elements which can coalesce, "situationally", into an expression of political ethnicity - some explanations, too, of the availability of significant numbers of the population to rally to such identifications.⁷

However, the issues raised in debates like these go well beyond such questions as the status of ethnicity as a dependent or independent variable. What is at stake is not merely the existence, or persistence, of ethnic identifications, but also the relationship between expressions of ethnicity and pre-colonial structures and values. As Basil Davidson has argued in relation to African nationalism, there has been a marked tendency in African historiography to overemphasize the impact and dominance of Western inputs, and thus to neglect the contributions of indigenous or pre-colonial communities. Western or European notions of nationalism were preceded by pre-colonial concepts of community and nationhood, and African history can have little meaning without some understanding of them:⁸

(T)here can be no sense in considering the phenomenon of nationalism as being somehow apart from the responses of indigenous culture. In as far as nationalism has acquired real substance, this is because the masses have breathed life into it.⁹

In much the same way as attempts to tie the origins of African nationalism to colonial and missionary influence detract from the contributions of Africans themselves,¹⁰ so do contemporary attempts to explain African resistance purely in terms of class conflict and the penetration of capitalist relations of production.¹¹ What is distinctively African has

tended to be lost in the application of concepts and modes of analysis derived from European and other non-African experiences. Similarly, while there may be some potential tensions between ethnic identifications and national or class-based unity, there is no necessary incompatibility between ethnic and national identifications,¹² nor even between ethnic and class identifications. A man may consider himself a Namibian, an Ovambo and a migrant worker without falling victim to an identity crisis.

In Namibia ethnic mobilization, particularly by the Hereros, played a central role in the creation of the mass-based national liberation movement, both by keeping alive anti-colonial resistance at a time when national organization was not feasible, and by providing one of the building blocks of the nationalist movement. Ethnic resistance in fact provided the essential continuity between the first phase of popular resistance in the early 1920s and the creation of the nationalist movement in the late 1950s.

The consolidation of colonial control after 1925

With the disintegration of popular resistance following the suppression of the Rehoboth rebellion in 1925, the way was opened for consolidation of colonial control over the indigenous population of the police zone. Although most of the legal and administrative groundwork for this control was laid during the 1920-24 period, it was only implemented in the period that followed. The year 1925, for example, was crucial for the establishment of the reserves - a central feature of the evolving system of control. The Native Reserves Commission had first met in 1921, but it was only in 1925 - after the administration had resolved the issue of black squatters in Rehoboth and had overcome the resistance of the

Hereros to the new reserves that most of the recommendations of the Reserves Commission were implemented.¹³

Although the major aim of the system of control introduced into the police zone was to ensure a supply of labour for the colonial economy, and in particular for the agricultural sector, the reserves were to play a key role. As outlined in the first part of this dissertation,¹⁴ the large-scale dispossession of Hereros and Namas and the destruction of their pre-colonial political and social structures during the German colonial period, had created problems of social stability which militated against colonial control. A degree of social reintegration was therefore necessary in order for the colonial state to secure adequate control over the labour force - even if such integration held the danger of more effective resistance by the colonized. The policy of "indirect rule" through indigenous authorities had proved both effective and economical in Ovamboland, and it was hoped that a similar system could be instituted in the police zone. The Native Reserves Commission of 1921, for example, recommended the incorporation of indigenous authorities into the administrative system of the police zone:

Whilst we do not of course advocate a return to traditional rule, we consider that the old Native system might to a great extent be usefully applied through more personal control by approved officials than has been the case hitherto. This system has worked inexpensively and satisfactorily in Ovamboland...¹⁵

The administration had made use of indigenous authorities in the police zone to communicate its decisions and policies from the beginning of South African rule in 1915. However, it soon became apparent that the disintegration of pre-colonial political and social structures was too advanced in the police zone to allow for the institution of a system

similar to that in Ovamboland.¹⁶ Instead, the colonial authorities made provision (in Proclamation No. 34 of 1924) for the establishment of boards of headmen in the reserves and advisory boards for the black townships in the urban areas. These structures were in turn incorporated within a broad legal framework which clearly defined the functions and duties of chiefs and headmen and provided the administrator and his representatives in the Natives Affairs Department with sweeping powers. In terms of the Native Administration Proclamation (No. 15 of 1928) and Government Notice 60/1930, not only were the indigenous authorities defined as administrative officials, but the administrator assumed "all the political power and authority which, according to the laws, customs and usages of Natives, are held and enjoyed by any supreme or Paramount Native Chief".¹⁷ The administrator was given the power to appoint or dismiss any person as chief or headman and was legally entitled to define or alter the boundaries and composition of "tribal" groupings, whether to divide these groupings into different parts or to amalgamate different groupings into a new "tribe". He could order the removal of any tribe, part of a tribe, or individual to any part of the territory, and could call on indigenous authorities to supply armed men or levies for the defence of the territory or for the suppression of rebellions. The administration was not, however, subject to any court of law when exercising the power conferred on it by proclamation.

The reserves also served a number of other purposes. Relaxation of the ban on stock-raising during the military period had resulted in a substantial increase in the numbers of black-owned stock, which in turn required the allocation of land.¹⁸ Furthermore, the administration was strongly opposed to the influx of large numbers of blacks into the urban

areas, as well as to the towns becoming distribution centres for black labour. The major need for labour in the territory was on white farms, while employment opportunity in the towns were limited. It was also contrary to colonial policy to allow the towns to become a refuge for the unemployed and the unemployable. In particular, the creations of reserves would allow the administration to shift the responsibility for the care and economic support of children, the aged, and the sick to the black population of the reserves. That the administration did not regard the reserves as an alternative to wage labour, was made clear by the Secretary for South West Africa, who told the Herero leader, Frederick Maharero, in 1923 that

the reserves naturally must not be looked upon as a place where people can be idle. That is where we want you to keep your stock, where you can keep your families and the people who are too infirm and weak to work, but all strong young men and women should work....19

The intentions of the administration are also clear from the location of reserves during this period. M.J. Olivier, a Native Affairs official who was later to become Commissioner-General of South West Africa, maintained in 1961 that there was no doubt that the reserves were located in such a way as to serve the labour needs of each district.²⁰ The only districts which were not near reserves were Luderitz, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay which, because of their location in the Namib, supported only marginal agricultural activities, and whose industries were more dependent on contract labour. In spite of these functions, the reserves were not insignificant both as a means of livelihood for a substantial part of the population and as a basis for political mobilization. This was so even though less than 20 per cent of the black population of the police zone lived in the reserves between 1928 and 1955.

TABLE 10.1 : DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK POPULATION IN POLICE ZONE,
21
1928-1955

YEAR	TOWNS	"WHITE" RURAL AREAS	RESERVES	TOTAL	RESERVES AS % OF TOTAL
1928	23 929	63 042	19 966	106 937	18.7
1930	26 558	55 189	18 856	100 603	18.7
1936	18 493	69 379	21 830	109 702	19.9
1946	30 020	73 307	24 487	127 814	19.4
1955	48 967	92 780	27 594	169 341	16.3

The position of the Hereros in the reserves

While the percentages of people living in the reserves might appear low, the number of people who had ties with the reserves was probably substantially larger, because many of those who kept stock in the reserves supplemented their incomes by working in the colonial economy. More important, however, was the uneven distribution of ethnic groups in the reserves. In 1955, for example, Hereros made up 58 per cent of the total reserve population. During the same year 51 per cent of the total Herero population in Namibia was in the reserves. The predominance of Hereros in the reserves goes back to at least 1927, when of a total reserve population of 13 893, 8 204 or 59 per cent were Hereros. As indicated in Table 11.2, other Police Zone ethnic groups had far smaller percentages of their total populations in the reserves. The majority of the Nama reserve population lived in areas which had been allocated to them by the German colonial authorities. For example, 57 per cent of the total Nama reserve population was in the Berseba (1 197 people) and Bondels (953) reserves, both of which were recognized by German treaties. A few remaining Nama reserves were extremely small and accommod-

ated populations of fewer than 400 people.²⁴

TABLE 10.2: ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN THE POLICE ZONE, 1955²⁵

ETHNIC GROUP	URBAN AREAS	RURAL AREAS	RESERVES	TOTAL	RESERVE POP AS % OF GROUP POPULATION	% OF TOTAL RESERVE POPULATION
Namas	5 409	21 629	37 700	30 808	12.2	13.7
Basters and Coloureds	7 179	11 469	1 156	19 804	5.8	4.2
Hereros	6 864	8 637	16 126	31 627	51.0	58.4
Ovambos & Okavangos (in police zone)	14 191	21 437	342	35 970	1.0	1.2
Damaras	13 169	19 064	5 055	37 288	13.6	18.3
San	327	8 556	642	9 525	6.7	2.3
Others	1 828	1 988	503	4 319	11.6	1.8
TOTAL	48 967	92 780	27 594	169 341	-	99.9

Although the mixed population of most of the reserves makes it difficult to isolate the incomes of the various ethnic groups, the data presented in Table 11.3 shows some interesting trends. It is clear, for example, that, with the exception of Berseba, the predominantly Nama reserves had an average income in 1956/57 which was considerably lower than that of the predominantly Herero reserves. The same holds true for the Damara reserve of Okombahe, which had also been inherited from the German period. In 1927 a Damara headman, Alpheus Harasemab, had complained to the administration that although the Damaras had for years been promised a new reserve, they had largely been neglected when the reserves were

allocated.²⁶ According to the calculations of the assistant native commissioner in 1935, the Hereros, with a population of 25 348, had been allocated 2 998 968ha. against 335 920ha. for the 23 275 Damaras in the territory. Thus with a population which was only slightly larger than that of the Damaras, the Hereros had been allocated more than eight times the land. The assistant native commissioner maintained that this unequal distribution of land had resulted in the Damaras "congregating in abnormal numbers in the urban areas".²⁷ However, while there were twice as many Damaras as Hereros in the urban areas, their urban population accounted for only 27,3 per cent of their total numbers. The great majority of the Damaras, 61,5 per cent of their total number, were on white farms.²⁸

All the data presented so far shows that the Hereros enjoyed an unchallenged dominance within the reserves. While there are indications that the Hereros were able to achieve these gains through skilful negotiation and the pressures they were able to bring to bear on the colonial authorities,²⁹ it is also probable that their strong position within the reserves allowed them to forge a powerful political base. Although the various Herero reserves were scattered throughout the territory, their existence allowed for mobilization on a communal basis, as well as providing a focus for the political identifications of Hereros in the towns and on the white farms. As Table 10.2 illustrates, the Hereros were far less dependent than other groups on employment in the colonial economy, and in particular on farm labour. While the overwhelming majority of Namas, Damaras, San, Basters and Coloureds were scattered and isolated on white farms, only 27 per cent of the Hereros were farm labourers.³⁰ As government-recognized indigenous leaders were allowed greater freedom of movement, the various reserve headmen were provided

with the opportunity to organize on an inter-reserve basis. It is also likely that there would be less tension between the indigenous leadership foisted on the police zone populations by the colonial authorities, and a reserve-based population like that of the Hereros. Although pre-colonial structures had been radically transformed by colonial intervention, the reserves offered greater possibilities for re-establishment of pre-colonial values, symbols and structure than the more proletarianized conditions in the towns and on the farms.

Furthermore, the colonial authorities not only encouraged, but demanded organization on an ethnic basis. The failure to achieve at least the appearance of ethnic or "tribal" unanimity (as perceived by colonial officials) considerably weakened the bargaining position of non-Hereros in the police zone. This is clearly illustrated by the administration's attempts during the 1920s and 1930s to establish a reserve for the Damaras who were regarded as being over-represented in the urban areas. During negotiations with Damara leaders in Windhoek, Native Affairs officials insisted that "the Damaras"³¹ should arrive at a collective decision before a reserve could be allocated to them.

It is not much use one man coming today and another tomorrow, you must be unanimous before your views can be submitted to the Government.³²

This proved an insurmountable obstacle to the Damaras who were divided into various factions. One of the Damara leaders expressed his frustration with the administration's insistence on unanimity:

I am speaking for myself. We do not combine or we have not yet come together. There are many Damaras. I do not know today whether the Damaras of Rehoboth, Gobabis and Okambahe have (chosen) places.³³

Because of the failure of Damara leaders to reach consensus, the plan for a new Damara reserve was shelved and not raised again until the mid-1930s, when disagreement between the different Damara factions once again complicated negotiations with the administration.³⁴ Although small additions of land were made to the Okambahe reserve in the 1940s to accommodate some of the Damaras who lived in the Windhoek district, the land provided was insignificant in relations to that given to the Hereros. By 1955 fewer than 14 per cent of the Damaras were in reserves.

TABLE 10.3: INCOME FROM AGRICULTURE FOR THE NAMIBIAN RESERVES (1957)³⁵

RESERVES	AREA(ha)	ETHNIC GROUPS	POPULATION (1957)	TOTAL INCOME OF RESERVE FROM AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE (1957)	AVE INCOME PER FAMILY FROM AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE		
					1957	1956	1956/7
Aminius	554 800	Mainly Hereros	3013	R107 024	R146	R182	R164
Berseba	596 992	Mainly Namas	2135	36 520	91	218	155
Bondelswart	174 505	Mainly Namas	1560	10 840	38	25	32
Epukeiro	997 840	Mainly Hereros	2489	86 770	193	202	197
Frantzfontein	57 188	Mixed	939	26 882	168	123	146
Gibeon	39 192	Mainly Namas	707	8 740	65	34	49
Neuhof	20 034	Mainly Namas	145	2 356	79	-	-
Okambahe	433 164	Mainly Damaras	2954	39 086	60	75	68
Ojohorongo	360 000	Mainly Hereros	3080	127 524	131	153	142
Otjiltuo	411 024	Mainly Hereros	1921	64 782	176	129	153
Otjimbingwe		Mainly Hereros					
	91 021	and Damaras	1355	32 248	117	119	118
Ovitoto	61 194	Mainly Hereros	1483	23 184	77	168	122
Soromas	23 573	Mainly Namas	182	1 154	27	39	33
Tses	254 587	Mainly Hereros and Namas	1310	69 804	207	15	111
Warmbad	14 500	Mainly Namas	541	7 900	71	47	59
Waterberg East	1 287 680	Mainly Hereros	4312	36 776	113	100	106

Origins of Herero dominance

The political responses of the Hereros, particularly in relation to land claims, present a stark contrast with those of the Damaras and other

police zone groupings. They were able to present a united and well organized front to the colonial authorities, which neatly dovetailed with colonial preconceptions of "tribal" unity and unanimity. Without risking a military confrontation with the colonial state, they had consistently brought pressure to bear on the colonial authorities during the first ten years of South African rule in Namibia. Throughout this period there had been fears in official and settler circles that the Hereros would precipitate a general rebellion in the territory.³⁶ The Hereros had played a leading role in the Garvey movement and had been instrumental in introducing Garvey's ideas of black unity to the Namibian countryside. Of all the non-Baster groups involved in the Rehoboth rebellion, the Hereros had been the most active, and 218 of their number (as opposed to 75 Namas and 50 Damaras) had been arrested in the aftermath of the rebellion.³⁷ A major motive of the administration in creating and extending the reserves after 1925 was to accommodate the predominantly Herero squatters who had established themselves in Rehoboth prior to the rebellion. Furthermore, Herero communities in various parts of the territory had on several occasions actively defied colonial authority, particularly in relation to cattle branding and other stock-related regulations.³⁸

Of considerable importance was the strong resistance of the Hereros to being moved out of the temporary reserves in the Windhoek district in the early 1920s. As all the land of the Hereros had been expropriated by the German colonial authorities after the 1904-07 wars, the military administration of the new South African regime had created a number of temporary reserves for Herero stock-owners. However, as the Hereros had rapidly accumulated stock after the relaxation of the ban on black

stock-owners, these reserves were soon overcrowded and overstocked, and the straying of reserve stock onto neighbouring white farms had become a serious source of conflict.³⁹ The administration's response to this conflict was to order the inhabitants of these reserves to move to new areas which were of inferior quality. However, the Herero inhabitants of these reserves, under the able leadership of Hosea Kutako, refused to move and repeatedly petitioned the authorities over the land question. When their petitions failed to achieve concrete results, they sought the assistance of an attorney in Windhoek, a move which caused considerable agitation among top administrative officials, who strongly resented what they perceived as "interference by Europeans in matters concerning Native Affairs".⁴⁰ Although in the mid-1920s the administration eventually succeeded in forcibly removing the Hereros from these reserves,⁴¹ the various pressures that had been brought to bear on the administration had undoubtedly sensitized it to the land claims of the Hereros.

The greater effectiveness of the Hereros in wresting concessions from the colonial authorities may be attributed to a number of factors. In chapter one of this dissertation it was argued that of all the groups in the police zone, the Hereros had had the most cohesive social and political structures during pre-colonial times. The relatively greater cohesion of Herero communities was related to their occupation of some of the best grazing lands in Namibia and the sophistication of their pastoral strategies.⁴² Moreover, the incursions of Nama raiders from the south during the late pre-colonial period and the intervention of the German colonial authorities in the pre-1904 period had also contributed to greater cohesion and centralization of the various Herero groupings. In particular, the 'divide and rule' policies of Theodor Leutwein had resulted in the ascendancy of Samuel Maharero as the "para-

mount chief" of the Hereros.⁴³ After the suppression of the 1904-07 rebellion, Maharero had fled to Bechuanaland where he died in 1923 and was succeeded by his son, Frederick. As Frederick Maharero and his followers in Bechuanaland were refused permission by the South African authorities to return to Namibia, the Herero chief had appointed Hosea Kutako, a former adviser of Samuel Maharero, as his representative and regent in the territory. Although tensions - which were later to develop into major cleavages - still existed between the different Herero groupings, the presence of Frederick Maharero across the border in Bechuanaland provided a symbol of unity for the diverse Herero communities in Namibia, while at the same time preventing him from becoming identified with a particular faction. This to a large extent also helped to free Hosea Kutako, who acted in the name of Frederick Maharero, from being identified with a particular Herero community.

The strong unity and cohesion of the Hereros should also be seen against the background of the trauma of the 1904 rebellion which had resulted in the extermination of up to 80 per cent of their people, the expropriation of all their land and livestock, and the destruction of their political and social institutions.

Before the South African occupation of the territory, Hereros had already begun slowly drifting back to their former areas and secretly re-establishing a political leadership.⁴⁴ They had also made use of Christianity as a means of social reintegration. Following the relaxation of some of the harsher aspects of German policy after 1915, the Hereros concentrated their energies into accumulating livestock and rebuilding their shattered social and political institutions. The magistrate of

Otjiwarongo reported in 1920 that the Hereros were "straining every nerve to acquire large and small stock" so that they could "again become independent and relieved of the necessity of working".⁴⁵

There was also a marked tendency among the Hereros during this period to withdraw as far as possible from contact with colonial institutions and to isolate themselves from Western influences. For example, the magistrate of Rehoboth stated in 1927 that "the Hereros, although all having European names and being nominally attached to some Christian denomination or other are tending to go back to their original tribal customs..."⁴⁶ During this first phase of South African rule, there were many indications of the Hereros reviving pre-colonial religious beliefs, and missionaries in the territory frequently complained of the Hereros' resistance to Christianity.⁴⁷ As late as 1942 the administration's representative in the Waterberg East reserve maintained that the Hereros

have deliberately cut themselves off from all outside influences and want to live their lives in their own air-tight compartment where nothing may penetrate from outside. They realise that the Government has the power to penetrate this compartment, and for this reason they placate it by grudgingly allowing it some say in their affairs, but they will not take the Government into their confidence...⁴⁸

Until the 1930s the Hereros also resisted Western education for their children, and, according to the administration and the missionaries who ran the schools, were the only police zone grouping not eager for education.⁴⁹ In contrast to the Namas, the Hereros had very few children at school in the 1920s, and between 1924 and 1926 the number of Herero children at school actually declined.

TABLE 10.4 : DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE
POLICE ZONE, 1924-1926⁵⁰

YEAR	NAMAS	HEREROS	OTHERS
1924	1 759	303	383
1925	2 014	281	453
1926	2 287	263	429

he administrator's report for 1930 noted that the "Hereros are on the whole opposed to having their children educated", while in 1931 the Inspector of Native Education reported that the

Hereros are continuing to show very little sympathy for the advantages of education. The suspicion that the schools are established with the sole intention of making the natives more useful servants of the Europeans cannot be removed by persuasive efforts from the minds of the conservative and proud Herero race.⁵²

The political responses of the Hereros after 1925 must also be seen against the background of the failure of popular resistance in the earlier period and the proven military superiority of the colonial state. After 1925 the various indigenous groupings in Namibia moved away from earlier attempts to forge a national resistance movement and instead concentrated their efforts on realizing small-scale, sectional interests.⁵³ The military superiority of the colonial state was accepted and there appeared to be little alternative but to work within the framework provided by the colonial authorities. However, for the reasons discussed above, the Hereros were in a stronger position than any of the other ethnic communities in Namibia to wring concessions from the colonial authorities, and to create the necessary structures and symbols to forge a strong political base.

Thus far this discussion has focused on the general thrust of Herero politics and on those features which distinguished the Hereros from other ethnic groupings in the police zone. However, although they shared a common history and relationship to a pre-colonial form of production, the Hereros in 1925 were by no means a homogeneous group. While the majority of Hereros lived in, or had ties with, the reserves, a substantial part of their number had settled in the urban areas and on white farms. Furthermore, although the quantities of livestock owned by individuals in the reserves was strictly controlled by the authorities, there were significant inequalities. A series of ethnological studies⁵⁴ conducted in the late 1950s, showed considerable disparities in the ownership of stock by Hereros in the reserves. According to a study published in 1954, only 52,3 per cent of Herero reserve stock-owners possessed more than 15 head of cattle.⁵⁵ It was essentially these wealthier stock-owners who were able to sell stock on the open market, while the poorer Hereros relied chiefly on the sale of dairy products.

A breakdown of the income of the various reserves in 1957 shows that the sale of stock was a far more substantial form of income than the sale of dairy products. In that year stock sales for all the reserves in the territory realized R622 420 as against R81 410 for the sale of dairy products.⁵⁶ It is also likely that the greater part of the sum earned from the sale of dairy products went to the owners of the larger herds. Inequalities in the distribution of cattle is a common feature of pastoral communities that have been penetrated by capitalist relations of production. As Konczacki points out, the breakdown of indigenous redistributive mechanisms generally opens the way for the concentration

of wealth in the hands of a dominant cattle-owning class, particularly in those situations where grazing and water resources are limited.⁵⁷

Although many of the Hereros working on farms wished to settle in the reserves,⁵⁸ this was not always possible as most of the reserves were already overstocked.⁵⁹ The control of reserve boards by the chiefs and headmen therefore put considerable power in their hands, because the boards were, in conjunction with administrative officials, able to control the movement of people into the reserves. There had been complaints, for example that the boardmen of the Ovitoto reserve in the Okahandja district had opposed applications for the introduction of stock into the reserve by people other than their relatives and friends.⁶⁰ There were also instances where political opponents of the chiefs and headmen were removed from the reserve on the recommendations of the indigenous leadership.⁶¹

The Herero indigenous leadership

These differentiations in the Herero population gave rise to two distinct, but related trends in the responses of the wider Herero grouping to colonial rule during the post-1925 period. The first of these trends coalesced around the indigenous leadership which had been incorporated into the colonial administrative structures. The response of this grouping involved a degree of collaboration with the colonial state and attempts to wrest concessions from the authorities by working within colonial structures. A second category of responses was closely tied to the more proletarianized and "detrribalized" Hereros in the towns and on the farms, and was represented by the movement known as the *Otjiserando* (Red Band Organisation) or "Truppenspieler" (play-soldiers). The so-

cial functions of the *Otjiserandu* were complex and will be examined in some detail below, but essentially the organization catered for the personal security, welfare and recreational needs of the Hereros outside the reserves, as well as offering covert and symbolic resistance to both the colonial authorities and the indigenous leadership. Both of these strands made use of pre-colonial symbols to create social integration and mobilize support, and during the 1930s and 1940s were involved in a struggle with one another for control of these symbols.

Although the strategy of the indigenous leaders involved a degree of compromise and collaboration, their role was not purely collaborative and they were able to wrest some important concessions from the colonial authorities. The influence of these leaders was also not restricted to the reserves, because they played an important role in the towns where they were particularly influential on the location advisory boards which had been set up by the colonial authorities. Men like Aron Mungunda, who had been president of UNIA in Windhoek and had played a prominent role in spreading Garveyism in the countryside, and Clemens Kapuuo⁶² (Senior) another leader of the Garveyist movement in the early 1920s, were important and long-standing members of the location boards and maintained close contact with the indigenous leadership in the reserves. Mungunda continued to play an accommodative role with the colonial authorities until the 1960's, even after the emergence of the nationalist parties.⁶³

Petitioning of the administration by the Herero indigenous leadership had begun in the early 1920s and continued through to the late 1940s when the creation of tribal councils formalized the process. There was a continuity in the demands and grievances expressed by the indigenous

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leaders in their meeting with administrative officials. These demands reflected both the broader interests and aspirations of Hereros within and outside the reserves and the more specific and sectional interests of the dominant cattle-owning class within the reserves. The latter is most clearly illustrated by the consistent demand that grazing fees be replaced by a standard poll tax. As grazing fees were based on the number of stock owned by an individual, a poll tax would not differentiate between the wealthier and poorer stock-owners, and would clearly be in the interest of the larger stock-owners. Other issues which came up repeatedly were land claims, in particular demands for the return of the traditional areas of the Hereros, protest against the pass laws, and the demand for higher wages, particularly for farm labourers.

Besides their success in acquiring more land than any of the other ethnic groups in the police zone, the Herero leadership was able to extract a number of other concessions from the administration. One area in which the Hereros were able to achieve considerable success was that of education. In spite of their initial resistance to Western education,⁶⁵ from 1932 Herero leaders began putting pressure on the administration to open government schools in the reserves. Thus in 1932 the administrator reported that the

Hereros who all along had shown great indifference in educational matters sent a deputation in the course of the year to express their dissatisfaction with the existing schools. In these schools Herero was taught. They did not want that. They wanted their children to learn English, Afrikaans and German. They also wanted the school to go up to Standard VI. They did not want them to stop short at Standard II.⁶⁶

Further representations were made in 1933, and by 1935 the first government school for blacks in the territory was opened at Rietquellie in the Aminius reserve.⁶⁷ This was followed by the establishment of government

schools in the Waterberg East Reserve in 1940, and in Epukiro in 1944.⁶⁸ Both these reserves were also predominantly Herero. By 1962 there were 22 government schools for blacks in the territory, ten in the urban areas and twelve in the reserves. Of the twelve schools in the reserves,⁶⁹ nine were in predominantly Herero reserves.

Although on the surface the Herero indigenous leadership appeared to be playing a typically collaborative role, their relationship with the colonial authorities was far more complex and subtle, and provided a striking contrast with that of the Ovambo kings and headmen. While co-operating with the administration on some issues, usually in order to gain certain concessions, the Herero leaders challenged the administration on other issues. For example, when the South West Africa Commission visited the various reserves in 1935, Hosea Kutako, as Herero spokesman, offered the most articulate and searing condemnation of South African rule in Namibia. In response to a question by the Commission's chairman whether the situation in Namibia had not improved following the South African takeover from the Germans, Kutako replied:

The Union government rules and operates in the same way as the German government did when it took away our freedom (vir ons gevange geneem het). The situation is such that today we say that the Union government still treats us badly ... It is still the same government as that of the Germans.⁷⁰

Kutako went on to develop parallels between South African and German rule, arguing that although the black people in Bechuanaland and Basutoland had been brought under British rule, they had not, like the black Namibians, lost both their land and their freedom. Although the people had been given reserves, their movement was severely restricted and they were treated as "prisoners". Kutako did not restrict himself to the

grievances of the Hereros, but referred to the injustices suffered by all blacks in the territory. Blacks had been shot, hanged and beaten to death by whites without the courts taking any action. The whites, he said, called the blacks "kaffirs" and beat them "because kaffir means beat to death" ("want kaffer meen slaan dood").⁷¹ Kutako completed his speech by focusing on specific issues such as the low wages paid by farmers, the grazing fees, and the low prices paid for stock.⁷²

The response of the Ovambo kings and headmen to the question of the Commission provide a vivid contrast. King Martin of Ondanga declared that he was "satisfied" with South African rule:

I have been under the Union Government for a long time and I am still under the Union Government and I am pleased.⁷³

In much the same way the headmen of the Ukuanyama expressed their satisfaction with South African rule, maintaining that the colonial system of government was "very much better" than that which had existed during pre-colonial times.⁷⁴ While the Nama, Damara and Tswana leaders interviewed by the Commission expressed grievances, these were specific and in no way matched the articulate and politically-conscious arguments of the Herero leader.⁷⁵

The administration's response to the increasingly explicit opposition of the Herero leaders was to attempt to tie them more firmly into the colonial administrative system and to groom them to take their place in its scheme for a system of tribal councils. In 1909 seven of "the most influential Hereros", including Hosea Kutako, Nikanor Hoveka and Aron Mungunda, were sent on a visit to the Transkei and Ciskei, to observe the working of the Transkei Bunga and to visit such institutions as Fort Hare, the Fort Cox and Tsolo agricultural schools, and the Lovedale

76 mission. As the administrator points out, the major aims of the visit was to show the Hereros

the progress Natives in the Union have made under European guidance, and we also hope that the visit will counteract the propaganda which has recently been spread in the Territory with the object of alienating their loyalty.⁷⁷

In his speech to the Bunga, Kutako made the purpose of the visit even clearer. when he said that the delegation had been sent to the Transkei
you conduct your debates, to see with our own eyes what the
done and is doing for the benefit of the people living in this
territory, in order that we may, when our Administration in South West
Africa institutes a similar system, know to what end we will be
working".⁷⁸

Shortly after the return of the Herero delegation to Namibia, the administration promulgated the Natives' Trust Fund Proclamation (No. 23 of 1939) which provided for the establishment of tribal funds and tribal councils. In the words of the administrator, the purpose of the tribal council would be

to educate the Natives along the lines which have proved so successful in the Union to participate in the government of their own people. It is also felt that the Council will take the place of unofficial Councils which have been formed by the natives to enable them to express their feelings, and will provide a means whereby those natives who are inclined to be agitators and hotheads can be influenced by older and wiser men.⁷⁹

A tribal trust fund was established for the Hereros soon after the promulgation of the proclamation and it was planned to institute similar funds for the Namas, Damaras and Coloureds in 1940, but with the outbreak of World War II further implementation of the proclamation was postponed.⁸⁰

At the end of the war, however, some other considerations were to delay still further the implementation of the administration's plans, particularly in relation to the Hereros. Immediately after the war, the Hereros were to play a crucial role in organising resistance to South Africa's attempt to incorporate Namibia into the Union.⁸¹ The administration therefore turned its attention to the Damaras, some of whom had supported incorporation,⁸² and who formed a less organized and cohesive group than the Hereros. The Damara Tribal Council was thus launched towards the end of 1947, some three years before a similar body was created for the Hereros.⁸³ A Nama council was launched in 1953.

Negotiations between the administration and Herero leaders between 1947 and 1950 provide important insights into the directions that administrative politics and Herero politics were taking. At a meeting in the Waterberg reserve in 1947, for example, the chief native commissioner clearly expressed the administration's anxiety about the increasingly nationalist role that was being taken by Herero leaders. He stressed that the Hereros represented only a tenth of the total black population of the territory, "there were other tribes in the territory much stronger and better organized and it was sheer nonsense for the Hereros to make out that they were leaders of all Natives of South West Africa".

Hereros were free to express their opinions but they must speak the truth. It was the job of only the Prime Minister, His Honour (ie. the administrator) and the Chief Native Commissioner to speak on behalf of all the Natives of South West Africa ... They (i.e. the Hereros) were free to speak their minds at any meeting with officials but should speak them as Hereros or as representatives of particular Reserves.⁸⁴

It is clear from this and other meetings that the administration hoped to neutralize nationalist tendencies by fostering ethnic identities by means of tribal councils and ethnically consolidated reserves. At the meeting with Hereros in 1947, the native commissioner had gone on to say that he would like to see each tribe with its own "headquarters" where the administration could consult leaders who would speak on behalf of their tribe.

They must be a nation having a seat somewhere. He did not want them scattered over different Reserves so that he did not know where the people really were ... He wanted to create national consciousness. Each tribe should have certain authorised areas in a certain place where they live ... Part of his idea of asking for more land was to bring the Natives together in larger areas.⁸⁵

The native commissioner also announced that the wages of headmen would be increased to fit in with their duties. He left little room for doubt about what these duties were. Headmen "were employed by the Administration and in fact were part of the Government", he said.

It is clear from these and other comments of administrative officials, that the basis for the Odendaal Plan of the mid-1960s was already being created in 1947. The Odendaal plan which provided the blueprint for self-governing "homelands" in Namibia, merely extended and rationalized an administrative system which was created in the late 1940s. Although the Herero leaders allowed themselves to be incorporated into this administrative system, they were not unaware of the direction in which politics were developing in Namibia. At a meeting between the administration and Herero leaders in 1949, for example, the Herero leader Joshua Kamberipa asked for the inclusion of representatives of other ethnic groups in their meetings with the administration. He said he had been approached by Damaras and Namas in Windhoek who wanted to know why

the administration did not hold meetings with all inhabitants of the territory. Although he had not been approached by the Ovambos, he also favoured including them within the conference. Kamberipa was supported by a representative from the Tses who said that Namas in the reserves had wanted to know why they were not included in the meetings. The native commissioner, however, made it clear that he was not willing to consider including members of other ethnic groups in the meetings.⁸⁶

The Otjiserandu

By the late 1940s not only were the Hereros displaying increasingly nationalist tendencies, but they were also more unified as a group than ever before. The "second strand" of the Herero movement which was associated with the more proletarianized members of the population who lived outside the reserves, had by this time been largely incorporated within the structures created by the indigenous leaders - and may well have contributed to the more militant and nationally-oriented strategies adopted by the Herero leadership in the post-World War II period. The origins and development of this "second strand" of the Herero and related movements, however, remain to be examined.

Following the suppression of the Rehoboth rebellion and the demise of the LNA and the ICG, the only significant form of organization by the colonized in Namibia were the tribal authorities sanctioned by the colonial state, and a variety of loosely structured organizations popularly known as the "truppenspieler" movement. These organizations were to play a major role in the reintegration of the indigenous population outside the reserves and in continuing the traditions of resistance of the early 1920s. Although little is known about the origins and early activities of the movement, all indications are that it came into being

shortly after the Herero rebellion of 1904, and that its early membership was exclusively or predominantly Herero.⁸⁷ The movement first came to the notice of the South African authorities in 1916. In that year reports were received by the magistrate of Okahandja "that Hereros were organising some kind of military movement". The authorities had taken immediate steps to suppress the organization, but by May 1917 it was reported to be operating once more, and, according to the Okahandja magistrate, seemed "to have extended very widely". Frequent complaints had been received from farmers that African labourers were performing military drill on the farms at night and in consequence had been unfit for work the following day. Enquiries by the magistrate revealed that the majority of Africans in the neighbourhood were in touch with the movement.⁸⁸

Documents seized by the authorities revealed that the movement had organized itself into military and political ranks that correspond with those of the German colonial authorities. At the head of the movement was Eduard Maharero, who had taken on the rank of Kaiser. Other ranks included 'His Excellency, the Governor, Von Beimling', 'State Secretary', 'Treasurer', 'Lieutenant-colonels', 'Majors', and so forth. The ranks not only coincided with those of the German colonial authorities and military forces, but some of the leaders actually assumed the names of German personnel associated with the colony such as Leutwein, Francke and Von Estorff. The Okahandja magistrate's attitude to the organization was ambiguous. On the one hand, he maintained that as far as he could understand it, "the whole thing is a childish game of make-believe on a big scale". On the other hand, he stated that "the movement indicates that very considerable organization has been carried out and

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this might at any time have a dangerous tendency". He noted that although the movement appeared to be decentralized with each local organization having a 'Kaiser' of its own, men were transferred from one 'regiment' to another, and the organizations sometimes provided financial assistance to men from other regiments. The organization kept control over its members by issuing military passes and collecting funds which were used to pay funeral expenses, make financial provision for the widows of deceased members, and pay the fines of members convicted in the courts:

Any man from another district producing a letter from the commander of this district or satisfying the local commander of his needs is helped from local funds.⁹⁰

The magistrate reported that regiments existed in Karibib, Waterberg, Omaruru, Oujjo, Swakopmund, Windhoek, Keetmanshoop, Luderitz and Okahandja. Members of the movement usually wore uniforms modelled on those of the German colonial forces.

In response to this report, the Native Affairs Department sent out instructions to the district magistrates "to notify all Natives that this drilling must forthwith be discontinued, that the existence of their military associations cannot be countenanced and that these should immediately be disbanded, failing which stern measures will be taken against all those who disobey this order."⁹¹ Although there are few references to the "truppenspieler" movement in the administration's files between 1917 and 1927, it would appear that the authorities did not succeed in completely eradicating the organizations because reports of drilling were received from Gobabis in 1919 and Luderitz in 1922.⁹² There are also indications that the "truppenspieler" organizations were absorbed into the wider resistance movement that manifested itself between 1923 and 1925. For example, Eduard Maharero, who was 'Kaiser'

of the organization in the Okahandja district, played an important role in the resistance of the early 1920s and in 1922 was elected chairman of the local branch of UNIA.⁹³ There is evidence also that the movement was active during the Rehoboth rebellion of 1925. It was reported after the rebellion that the Hereros involved in the rising had been members of a military organization and that their leader, Festus Kandjou, held the rank of lieutenant-colonel. After the Hereros were removed from the *Gebiet*, Kandjou who eventually became one of Hosea Kutako's principal⁹⁴ advisers, had abandoned what he called "dangerous child's-play".

Although the available evidence is sketchy, it would seem that prior to the establishment of the reserves, there was little differentiation between the indigenous Herero leaders and the para-military movement. With the creation of the reserves, the older and more established Herero leaders withdrew from the 'troops' and were incorporated into the indigenous leadership based in the reserves, leaving the troop organization in the hands of the younger men in the towns and on the farms. The Native Affairs Department in Windhoek reported in 1927 that "the Herero organization, or 'troop', exists all over the territory and consists of young men of the tribe. None of the responsible men or leaders are implicated or take any part in it and, as far as can be gathered, look on the troop societies as an attempt on the part of the younger people to amuse themselves".⁹⁵ There are also indications that the movement began to take root more firmly in the police zone in the post-1925 period.⁹⁶ The revival of the "Truppspieler" movement at this time is consistent with the collapse of the defiance of the early 1920s and the withering of millenarianism associated with the Garveyist movement. While the "truppspieler" movement did not openly challenge the colo-

nial authorities, it provided for the expression of resistance in a covert or symbolic manner and offered an alternative status hierarchy and source of authority to that of the colonial society. Furthermore, it provided group solidarity, social security and entertainment for those who did not go to the reserves after 1925.⁹⁷ Without actually risking an armed confrontation with the authorities, the movement maintained the necessary military structures and discipline to meet the contingency of rebellion, should the opportunity arise. In 1927 the superintendent of the Waterberg East Reserve drew the administration's attention to the potential threat of the troop movement:

In case of necessity (Rebellion or Defence) the Hereros can be mobilised under their local officers for the various districts in which they reside. They keep in touch with each district by post and other means.⁹⁸

The Okahandja ceremony

The revival and rapid growth of the movement in the 1920s can also be traced back to the ceremony associated with the burial of Samuel Maharero in Okahandja in August 1923. Maharero had died in exile in March 1923, but with the permission of the colonial authorities his remains were brought to Namibia and buried with full indigenous rites near the graves of his father and grandfather on 26 August 1923. An estimated 3 000 Hereros participated in the ceremony which included a procession of 150 men on horseback and a band, followed by hundreds of men on foot. With no inkling of the role that the ceremony was to play in the history of resistance in Namibia, about one hundred whites, including top government officials, attended, and a Union Jack was even provided to drape the coffin of the Herero leader. The colonial authorities clearly had ulterior motives in attending the ceremony because the Secretary for South West Africa delivered a funeral oration on behalf of

the administrator in which he stressed the need for co-operation between whites and blacks with "each rendering his help in the form permitted by his present status"⁹⁹ - a thinly veiled appeal to the Hereros to accept their assigned role as labourers and subordinates within the colonial framework.

This seemingly banal event was to have far-reaching implications for the development of resistance in Namibia - the extent of which could not even have been foreseen by the Hereros who participated. It was to become to Namibia, what Gandhi's Salt March of 1930 represented to India, "a symbol of imperishable power over the imaginations of men".¹⁰⁰

Following the 1923 ceremony, the 26 August became a national day for the Hereros in which thousands annually made pilgrimages to Okahandja to pay homage to the Herero leaders and participate in the march to the graves. It was at this first ceremony that the indigenous symbols of the Hereros - associated with Maharero, the red scarves or bands, were revived. The red scarves had been worn by the Hereros as a symbol of unity and loyalty, particularly in times of war. They date back at least to the days of German colonial rule before the 1904 rebellion,¹⁰¹ and in all probability had their origins in pre-colonial times.¹⁰²

Although Ngavirue claims that the *Otjiserandu* (Red Band Organization or "Truppspielers") was "called into being" in order to organize the 1923 ceremony, documentation clearly shows that the movement was in existence some time before 1923 and that it was renamed Red Band or *Otjiserandu* in that year.¹⁰³

What cannot be doubted, however, is that the burial ceremony provided considerable impetus to the movement. The annual parades and rituals were particularly important because they allowed the various 'troops' to assemble and to display publicly their uniforms, military regalia and marching skills.¹⁰⁴ The Okahandja ceremony also

provided a basis of unity for the diverse elements of the Herero population, bringing together the reserve-based Hereros and the more proletarianized people from the towns and farms. The crucial symbolic significance of the ceremony was eventually to lead to a struggle between the Herero indigenous leaders and the *Otjiserandu* for control of these powerful symbols.¹⁰⁵

The Okahandja ceremony, however, held implications not only for the Hereros, but also for other ethnic groups in the territory. The wearing of red bands by the Hereros was to lead to the revival or invention of indigenous symbols by other groups, such as the white head scarf of the Witbooi Namas and the green enblems worn by the Damaras.¹⁰⁶ The Herero ceremony was also to have an impact on the Ovambos, not only in the formation of Ovambo 'troops' in the police zone, but also in the attempts of Ovambos to create a similar ceremony around the Ovambo king, Mandume, who died during the battle against the colonial forces in 1917.¹⁰⁷ Even more important, 26 August has become a commemorative day (Namibia Day) for all Namibians identified with the struggle against colonialism. On 26 August 1966 - exactly 43 years after the original funeral ceremony for Samuel Maharero - the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) launched its guerrilla war against the South African forces in Namibia.¹⁰⁸

The Herero ceremony was, however, already creating anxiety in colonial circles in the 1920s. The missionary and historian, Heinrich Vedder, dwelt on this threat to colonial society in an ethnographic study of the Hereros first published in 1928:

On the 26th August of each year a great Heathenish anniversary is held at these three graves, (ie. the graves of Samuel

Maharero, his father and grandfather) to which all Herero men of the neighbourhood flock, on horseback if possible. On this occasion a military review is also held at which the new and old leaders of the people show themselves in all their glory. This turn of affairs is very regrettable. If the Hereros would only allow themselves to take the place assigned to them in South West, they could rank as the foremost people amongst the native races of the country ... As it is they are a source of anxiety both to the Government and to the European settlers.¹⁰⁹

A number of reports in the late 1920s linked the *Otjiserandu* to overt military aims. It was reported in 1928, for example, that the visit to the territory of Johannes Maharero, one of the sons of Samuel Maharero, had resulted in increased drilling in the Waterberg East reserve.¹¹⁰ In 1929 it was reported that Johannes Maharero had addressed a meeting in the Otjiwarongo district, where he had said that, in view of the suffering of the Hereros under South African rule, it would be better to die.

I must now do my father's work. Like he has died, I too must die.¹¹¹

Johannes Maharero warned the assembled Hereros to be on the alert (wakker en versigtig). Another report linking the *Otjiserandu* with overt military aims originated from the Tses reserve in 1928. According to a police informer, the possibility of war was discussed at a meeting of Hereros in the reserve. The meeting was addressed by the highest ranking officer of the local branch of the *Otjiserandu* who was alleged to have said that as the authorities had been unable to redress the people's grievances, they should prepare themselves for war. The informer stated that messages had been sent to various parts of the reserve to call together people, and that after the meeting a parade was held at which the *Otjiserandu* leader had instructed the men in the use of firearms.¹¹²

The ethnic composition of the various 'troops' in the different districts varied. Although it would appear that the majority of these organizations were ethnically exclusive, some of the 'troops', particularly during the 1920s, had mixed memberships. In 1927, for example, the 'troop' in the Outjo black township included both Hereros and Damaras. In Windhoek on the other hand, the Hereros, Damaras and Ovambos had separate 'troops'. Similarly, in Luderitz there were three organizations, one for Hereros, one for Ovambos, and a third with Damara and Nama members.

¹¹³ It appears, however, that the ethnically mixed 'troops' were exceptions and that by the mid-thirties, most, if not all the 'troops', were ethnically exclusive. The assistant native commissioner reported in 1935 for example, that "every tribe, with the exception of the Union Section, has a troop".¹¹⁴

The struggle between the Otjiserandu and indigenous leadership

From the mid-1930s conflict began to develop between the troop organizations on the one hand, and the Windhoek location advisory board and reserve-based Herero leaders on the other. The conflict appeared to be related to the different relationships which the two parties to the conflict had with the colonial authorities. While both the location and the reserve boards formed part of the colonial administrative structure, the troop organization operated outside these structures. The conflict between the troop movement and the Windhoek location advisory board had begun as a conflict between the 'troops' and the Windhoek location superintendent, Captain Octavius Bowker. Leaders of the troop movement had approached the locations board to ask for their aid in securing the dismissal of Bowker and his township police. As the boardmen refused to lend their support to such a move, the 'troops' instituted a campaign

against the sitting boardmen and attempted to have them voted out of office. The troop movement had also made contact with Hosea Kutako in the Aminius reserve, asking him to use his influence with the colonial authorities to have Bowker and his men removed from office. ¹¹⁵

Bowker reported that there had been "feverish excitement" during the location board elections of January 1935. Herero voters had stormed the polling office and assaulted one of the electoral officials. Bowker maintained that he also had been assaulted in the fray, and that the troop movement had "organized" the incident. The troop movement, he said, was

making a bid for governmental power, and I am supported in this by a message from Hosea Kutako, headman of the Aminius reserve, asking me to take steps to extend the term of office of the present board on the grounds that the Truppspieler intend making a bid at the next elections to get their men into office. There appears to me to be an element of danger in this cleavage and if we can heal the breach quietly yet firmly I think it will be as well to do so.¹¹⁶

That Kutako sided with the location board against the troop movement is hardly surprising, not only because the reserve authorities and the boardmen were part of the same power structure, but also because Kutako's brother, Aaron Mungunda, was a prominent member of the Windhoek board. ¹¹⁷

At a meeting of the Windhoek location advisory board in 1935, Herero and Damara representatives maintained that their authority was being undermined by the troop movement. Under Bowker's guidance the board unanimously passed a motion calling on the administration to put a stop to the movement. ¹¹⁸ Soon after this, the colonial authorities embarked on a campaign against the *Otjiserandu*. Enquiries about the leader of the organization, Festus Katura, revealed that, although he had a registered

contract and had paid his pass fees, his registered employer had left Windhoek more than a year before, and that since then he had been "unemployed". Katura was therefore prosecuted under section 16 of the Native (Urban Areas) Proclamation, which empowered the administration to remove any black person from an urban area who was "habitually unemployed and adjudged to be an idle or disorderly person". However, the magistrate who tried the case found that although Katura was unemployed, he was not "idle or disorderly", and therefore declined to issue an order for the removal of the *Otjiserandu* leader.¹¹⁹ Subsequently, Katura and other leaders of the troop movement were warned that although the administrator had agreed to their removal from Windhoek, he had decided to give them "one more chance". Any further interference in "matters which did not concern them" would result in their immediate removal from Windhoek. 'Troop' leaders in the employment of the administration were also warned that "further participation by them in agitation would result in their dismissal".¹²⁰ At the beginning of 1936 the administration had also prohibited military drilling and the wearing of uniforms.¹²¹

These measures of the administration increased tensions in the Windhoek location, and during the course of 1936 Hosea Kutako was asked by the administration to intervene. Kutako was, however, unable to affect a reconciliation, and produced letters to show that the conflict had spread to the r. The letters which emanated from the headquarters of the in Windhoek, were addressed to both the indigenous leadership. Members of the *Otjiserandu* in the Aminius reserve. Kutako maintained that following the arrival of the letters, his authority had been resisted by members of the movement, and asked the admini-

nistration to take action against them.¹²² In their letter to Kutako, the *Otjiserandu* leaders said that they were being oppressed, and asked the Herero tribal leaders to provide them with "a flag (or banner) to carry".¹²³ Kutako interpreted the letter as a taunt because it implied that he had been partly responsible for the administration's measures against them and asked him what "symbol" he could provide to replace that which had been prohibited by the authorities.

Kutako complained to the colonial authorities again in May 1937. He reported that the *Otjiserandu* frequently held meetings in the Aminius reserve and that he was never informed of these meetings. The movement had also spread to the schools in the reserve.¹²⁴ In 1938 Kutako maintained that the situation was rapidly deteriorating. He said that the people in Aminius refused to attend the meetings he called, and that a similar situation existed in Windhoek. The banning of drilling and uniforms was not sufficient, he said. The movement itself should be banned. Members of the *Otjiserandu* would only obey their own leaders.

They are trying to make a government of their own. In the reserve they have their own officers to whom they listen. They do not listen to me.¹²⁵

Kutako also maintained that the *Otjiserandu* had undermined his authority and influenced other leaders in other reserves. With the exception of Nikanor Hoveka of the Epukiro reserve, other Herero leaders refused to attend the annual meetings called by Kutako in Windhoek in April every year. This state of affairs had come about as a result of the opposition of the *Otjiserandu*.

I know why they do not come, they know I and Nikanor are loyal to the government and that we are not in favour of the troops. The people have left me. The leaders of the movement in Windhoek which is the centre of all the trouble, should be deported.¹²⁶

Kutako went on to refer to the annual ceremony in Okahandja on 26 August, and maintained that he had initiated this ceremony.

It is not our true custom to hold ceremonies at the graves of chiefs. It was not done in the old days. Samuel Maharero asked before he died that he be buried at Okahandja. To that the Government agreed. Then I went and asked the government if I could have a day every year to go to the grave and have a meeting. This was granted. We didn't go there in accordance with Herero custom. We went there every year as an occasion to show our loyalty to the Government and our thanks for the benefits they had given us ... I asked for the day at Okahandja and now I ask for it to be taken away, and my people told that when they behave themselves again and are thankful for what the Government has given them, they can have their Day back.

What was involved here was essentially a struggle between the *Otjiserandu* and Hosea Kutakop represented the more conservative and collaborative indigenous leadership, for control over the symbols of the Herero people. By identifying himself with the colonial authorities, Kutako was able to manoeuvre them into assisting him in establishing his dominance over these symbols. In 1939 members of the *Otjiserandu* in Aminius were ordered to leave the reserve. When they refused to comply with this order, the administration sent a special police patrol to Aminius to enforce the evictions.¹²⁷

The *Otjiserandu* attempted to defend itself by appealing to the colonial authorities.¹²⁸ By raising funds in order to employ lawyers, and by attempting to increase the membership of the organization.¹²⁹ Another strategy was to hold "pray meetings" instead of drilling sessions, but even this aroused the suspicions of the colonial authorities.¹³⁰ Resistance to the colonial authorities therefore increased, and as World War II drew closer, there was a revival of millenarianism in which the troop movement played a central role. With the approach of war and the estab-

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lishment of a branch of the Nazi Party by German settlers in
Namibia,¹³¹ the uniforms and military traditions which the troop move-
ment had borrowed from the Germans assumed new significance for both the
colonial authorities and the 'troops' themselves. Various reports rea-
ched the administration to the effect that "truppspielers" had been
seen together with known Nazis, that 'troops' had displayed the German
flag, or that blacks had been seen giving the Nazi salute.¹³² Rumours
were also circulated among the black population that the Germans would
soon return to take over the administration of the country. These
rumours had much in common with the millenarian expectations of the
early 1920s,¹³³ except that the "Americans" were now replaced by the
"Germans". For example, deputations of black mine workers in the
Omaruru district had on at least five occasions in 1937 and 1938 approa-
ched the mine management to enquire when the South African authorities
would be leaving the territory as they had heard that the Germans were
taking over.¹³⁴

The administration's response to these activities was to increase its
repression of the movement. In July 1938, for example, the chief native
commissioner recommended that the movement be banned. He felt that the
organization was dangerous because of the opposition it had offered to
tribal leaders and local authorities. The minds of members of the
movement, he said, were

agitated by such questions as 'Who is Master here, the German
Consul or the administrator?'¹³⁵

While the recommendation of the native commissioner was not implemented,
various other measures were adopted to restrict the activities of the
movement. In 1939 and 1940 the wearing of uniforms and marching at the

Okahandja ceremony was prohibited and in 1941 this ban was extended to the wearing of red tabs.¹³⁶ Attempts were also made to incorporate the leaders of the movement into the existing colonial structures. In 1940 two leaders of the troop movement were elected to the Windhoek location advisory board.¹³⁷ By 1946 there were four recognized members of the movement on the township board. The inclusion of members of the *Otjiserandu* on the board was part of the strategy pursued by the location superintendent, Captain Bowker:

In order to re-educate members of the Red Band and convert them to a policy of co-operation with other sections of the native community, I have consistently endeavoured to bring about their representation on this Board ... To show that this experiment has proved very successful, I may mention that on 21st August 1946, at a meeting of the Board, a resolution was proposed by one of the four Red Band representatives pledging support to the Government's policy.¹³⁸

Although pockets of resistance remained, particularly among the younger members of the *Otjiserandu*,¹³⁹ the main body of the Herero troop movement was gradually incorporated into the formal colonial structures, and ceased to exist as a threat to either the colonial state or the tribal authorities. After the war the activities of the *Otjiserandu* were restricted to the celebration of 26 August and the welfare functions of a mutual aid society.¹⁴⁰ The indigenous leadership of the Hereros was therefore able to regain control over communal symbols and strengthen its position within the Namibian social formation. It was from this position of strength that the Herero leadership launched its assault on South Africa's attempt to incorporate Namibia into the Union. The Hereros were the only communal grouping in Namibia to offer unanimous resistance to the incorporation bid, and, as Ngavirue suggests, it was more than a coincidence that the first Herero petition to the United Nations was signed at Okahandja on the eve of 26 August.¹⁴¹

Damara and Ovambo 'troops'

While other communal groups in the police zone also had troop organizations and employed symbols similar to those of the Hereros, their efforts were largely derivative of those of the Hereros. That other groups closely imitated the symbols and activities of the Herero organization is a tribute to the strength and efficacy of the *Otjiserandu*. By the same token, however, the troop organization of other groupings were considerably weaker than their Herero counterparts, and consequentially were less successful in resisting the pressures brought to bear upon them by the colonial state.

The derivative nature of other troop organizations is probably also connected to the greater self-consciousness these organizations displayed of their social aims and functions. Although of all the troop organizations, the *Otjiserandu* is the best documented, there is no indication in the available evidence that at any time members of the organization were prepared to state openly that they were involved in anything more than recreational and welfare activities. The troop organizations of the Damaras, on the other hand, provide a striking contrast. Troop organizations existed among the Damaras at least since 1918. In that year the rivalry between two Damara factions in the Windhoek locations had erupted into violence, and had attracted the attention of the colonial authorities. Subsequently investigation showed that each faction possessed a 'troop' organized into military ranks and subjected to drilling and other military discipline. When tensions arose between the two factions, the 'troops' had been mobilized, and in the fighting that ensued twelve people were injured, two of them seriously.

However, the "Green Band" organization of the Damaras came into existence in about 1931. According to the secretary of the organization, Frederik Gaeb, the Damaras of Okambahe had begun "wearing this green band since, 1931, the day we laid the tomb stone of our late Chief".¹⁴³

While Gaeb denied that his organization had any "political" aims, he was quite explicit about its social functions. He stated that the organization had been founded at a "meeting of the nation, those who could not attend, wrote to state that they were in agreement with the formation of such an organization."

I think that this organization is making the nation more independent for in earlier years we were just like sheep and goats, and now we have become people who have been educated by the white people, and I want us to stay civilised as the white people taught us. The "Green Band" (sic) is a school to keep children together and the "Green Band" is a symbol to keep the nation from dwelling from one another and the Green Band has opened the eyes of the people so that we can now see that we were in darkness.

... since the Green Band was brought among us we are all bound up as one nation, not like in earlier years when a young man had to abandon his mother's home, and is then called upon to start another tribe away from his family when he took a wife.¹⁴⁴

Troop organization also existed among the Ovambos in the police zone. In 1938, for example, the administration discovered that Ovambos in Windhoek were holding annual memorial services on the anniversaries of King Mandume's death.¹⁴⁵ These services took place in the grounds of the Mandume Campaign Memorial, which, ironically, had been erected by the colonial authorities to commemorate the white troops who died in the battle against the Ukuanyama. Although the Ovambos involved in the ceremonies disclaimed any link with the Herero *Otjiserandu*, an adminis-

trative official pointed out that "their imitation of the latter's method is apparent"¹⁴⁶ Further enquiries by the authorities revealed that similar organizations existed in other parts of the police zone, and that these had been in existence from at least 1928. When the tribal authorities in Ovamboland were consulted, they requested that Ovambo troop organizations to be brought under tribal control. It is clear that the Ovambo tribal authorities felt threatened by the existence of these organizations in the police zone, as they offered an alternative authority structure to those of the kings and headmen. For example, King Martin of the Ondonga described the organizations as "the work of small men. They hold meetings and dress up so as to impress others and make others believe that they are big."¹⁴⁷

Following these consultations, the tribal authorities, the organizers of the Ovambo 'troop' in Windhoek were compelled under Section 1(d) of Proclamation 15 of 1928 to return to Ovamboland for at least three months.¹⁴⁸ In Ovamboland they were placed "directly under the influence of the leading Headmen".¹⁴⁹ Following the disciplining of the 'troop' leaders by the tribal authorities, the acting native commissioner in Ovamboland reported that "the stay here of these two men has been most beneficial to them and they will return to Windhoek prepared to work under and in co-operation with the Department and will give no further trouble."¹⁵⁰ Subsequently, an Ovambo organization was instituted in Windhoek under the strict control of the assistant native commissioner¹⁵¹ and superintendent of the Windhoek location.

Attempts were also made to bring Ovambo organizations in other parts of the police zone under colonial control. According to the authorities, a number of troop organizations and a "box fund" (benevolent association)

existed in Luderitz. The latter organization is of some interest because its leaders, Thomas Ndili and Silas Paulus, both had histories of defying the administration. Ndili had previously come into conflict with the authorities when he refused to pay the tribal trust fund tax and had also helped to organize a petition against Proclamation 29 of 1935 which empowered the administration to deport any "northern or extra-territorial nati" from the police zone.

Furthermore, he had previously been sentenced for forging passes, breaking curfew regulations and failing to pay the tribal trust fund tax. Silas Paulus had been prosecuted for "resisting or obstructing the police". In 1937 the administration had been ordered the repatriation of Ndili to Ovamboland after labelling him an "agitator".¹⁵²

While the organizations and symbols of the Damaras and Ovambos proved less resilient and influential than those of the Hereros, the former were not without consequence for the development of resistance in Namibia. Winter, for example, noted in 1977 that the Ukuanyamas justified stealing from whites by referring to thefts as "mourning Mandume".¹⁵³ In the 1980's elements of the old 'troop' traditions still survive, not only in the strictly observed annual tribal ritual of the Hereros at Okahandja, but even in the ranks of the South West Africa People's Organization. At SWAPO's 1981 celebration of Namibian Day in Windhoek, for example, the old 'troop' traditions found expression alongside more Westernized forms of festivity such as drum majorettes and a jazz band, as the following newspaper commentary witnesses :

Members of the SWA Police task force in camouflage uniforms watched from a distance on Saturday as SWAPO's "Namibian Police", carrying firearm toys and homemade replicas, jived in the dust of Katutura township.¹⁵⁴

Explaining the 'troop' movement

This brief description of the Namibian troop movement raises a number of questions about how this phenomenon is to be interpreted, and about its origins and ultimate social functions. Ngavirue, for example, regards the activities of both tribal authorities and the 'troop' movement between the two world wars in essentially negative terms. He sees the period as characterized by social activities which were not "particularly harmful" to the colonial authorities and which involved the substitution of more overt ("externalized") political activities "for purely escapist and millenarian modes of adjustment".¹⁵⁵ More specifically, he describes the revival of pre-colonial symbols as a form of "internalized collective behaviour" and the military drilling of the 'troops' as an "energy-absorbing activity".¹⁵⁶ In reaching these essentially negative conclusions, Ngavirue has drawn on the work of Harold Lasswell, and in particular on Lasswell's distinction between "internalized" and "externalized" forms of social behaviour.¹⁵⁷ However, even Lasswell's theoretical framework suggests a more positive picture of movements like the *Otjiserandu*, than Ngavirue is prepared to concede. While Lasswell attaches little political importance to "internalized" behaviour which is depicted largely in terms of psychological adjustment, he does go on to suggest that membership of associations may encourage overt political activity.¹⁵⁸ This in itself suggests that the distinction between "internalized" and "externalized" behaviour is an artificial one.

A more fruitful, although related approach is based upon observed similarities in the social behaviour and psychological responses of concentration camp prisoners and members of oppressed communities. This approach which originated from the work of Bruno Bettelheim on Jewish prisoners in Nazi concentration camps,¹⁵⁹ sees certain forms of imita-

tive, submissive and even childlike behaviour as a form of psychological adjustment to absolute domination. It has been applied to modern "mass society",¹⁶⁰ repressive societies in general,¹⁶¹ slave plantations,¹⁶² and to the dance associations or Beni *ngoma* of eastern Africa.¹⁶³ In particular, these explanations have focused on the identification of German concentration camp prisoners with the SS, and their attempts to imitate the uniforms, rituals and manner of their oppressors. There are some suggestive parallels between such responses and the origins of the "Truppienspieler" movement in Namibia. On the most obvious level, the adoption of the names and titles of German officials and officers, German uniforms and drilling procedures, mirrors the behaviour of concentration camp prisoners. The establishment of the first "troops" in 1906, immediately after the defeat and near extermination of the Herero people, is also consistent with the concentration camp thesis. Although information on the 'troops' during this period is scanty, later developments suggest that the Hereros, who suffered more severely than any other group during the 1904-07 wars, were the main instigators of the troop movement. Moreover, the majority of Herero and Namas who survived the wars were initially interned in concentration camps under conditions which were no less severe than those of the Nazi camps,¹⁶⁴ while the form of colonial society that came into being after 1907 in many respects reproduced the conditions of a concentration camp.¹⁶⁵ As in the Nazi concentration camps, the colonial authorities deliberately broke up the social organization of conquered groups, reducing them to "an atomized, homogenous, and helplessly degraded mass".¹⁶⁶ In much the same way Namibian society between 1907 and 1915 finds its parallels with the concentration camps in the dispossession, brutalization and forced dependence of the colonized on their colonial masters.

While the origins of the troop movement appear to be consistent with the concentration camp thesis, the later development of the movement fits less well. Although the troop organizations appear to have been most active during the period of South African rule, for the most part they retained their German characteristics, and as such existed as a threat rather than an accommodation to colonial rule. In spite of the disapproval and prohibition of the South African authorities, the 'troops' persisted in their activities. In general, members of the troop movement adopted a defiant, rather than a conforming or reconciliatory attitude to colonial authority. Furthermore, while certain features of the troop movement were clearly imitative, the movement also drew on pre-colonial symbols and values as well as introducing innovative practices such as the ceremony at Okahandja. This does not mean, however, that the concentration camp thesis has no explanatory value for the 'troops' phenomenon. Although the formation of the troop organization might originally have entailed imitation and accommodation, there is no reason why these organizations should not have adopted new or additional aims and functions as they were subjected to new conditions, or recovered from the traumas of the 1904-07 wars.

Analysis of the activities of the various Namibian 'troops' shows that their social functions were complex and may have varied not only over time, but also between the different organizations. On one level, the 'troops' were a source of entertainment, of escape from the oppression of colonial existence, and a means of releasing energy in play. That there was an element of 'play' or entertainment in the troop movement does not detract from its significance. As Ranger notes, it is necessary to distinguish between "the ludic and the ludicrous",¹⁶⁷ as playing

also its serious aspects. Besides providing entertainment, the 'troops' served vital welfare functions, providing essential social services for the emerging proletariat scattered over the farms and towns of the police zone.

Beyond this "practical" provision of entertainment and social services, the troops also offered a degree of social security and comradeship in the profoundly repressive and alienating environment.

On another level, the 'troops' became the source for an alternative status and authority structure to that provided by the colonial authorities and partially collaborative tribal leaders. That the hierarchies constructed by the 'troops' corresponded to the ranks of the colonial society is not as important as their existence *outside* the original colonial status order. Moreover, the 'troops' allowed some satisfaction of the needs for status and recognition of personal worth within a degrading racial order in which blacks were allowed no other status than that of servants and inferiors of the white population.

On yet another level, the troop movement served important political functions. In a situation in which the options of overt resistance to the colonial authorities were closed, organizations like the *Otjiserandu* provided a challenge to colonial supremacy, which by the very nature of its covert and symbolic forms was more difficult to eradicate than more direct forms of resistance. The potency of military power lies not only in its direct application, but also in its existence as a threat. While the direct use of military force always entails costs and risks, the demonstration or threat of the use of military power reduces the risks

and costs of warfare, but may be just as effective. This had been clearly demonstrated by the colonial authorities in the 1922 to 1925 period, not only in the military action taken against rebel groups, but also in the bombing demonstrations.¹⁶⁸ The objection may be raised that while the colonizers' demonstrations of military power could be backed up with real military force, this was not the case with the "Truppspieler" movement. However, while the indigenous people did not possess the military hardware, they had a clear advantage in numbers. Furthermore, the real power of the troop movement lay not so much in its actual or potential military capabilities, but in its ability to generate potent symbols and myths. Georges Sorel pointed to the immense power of myths which allowed the formulation of alternative futures and which "enclose with them, all the strongest inclinations of a people, of a party or of a class".¹⁶⁹

Benito Mussolini who drew heavily on the work of Sorel was able to demonstrate the validity of the latter's ideas when in 1922 he seized power by creating the myth of a revolutionary movement. As Peter Calvert observes, Mussolini's 'March on Rome'

was a veritable masterpiece of illusion. For one thing, no one marched, and the leader himself arrived comfortably by train in a sleeping car. But the illusion was none the less effective for having been carefully worked out.¹⁷⁰

The use of symbols and myths to challenge and undermine colonial authority helps to illuminate yet another facet of the "truppspielers" political role - the forging of symbols and myths which provided the basis for Herero unity and political mobilization. It is perhaps in the creation of a common ethnic or national identity that a clue may be found to the popularity of para-military forms of organization in colonized societies. In a recent study of ethnicity, Anthony Smith has

argued that warfare and military organization are decisive factors in the creation of ethnic identification and unity:

Indeed, of all the factors that have gone into creating and sustaining ethnic identities, war has been the most potent and, perhaps the most neglected.¹⁷¹

The hypothesized relationship between warfare and group unity makes the use of pre-colonial and colonial military symbols and practices more comprehensible. These symbols and practices provided not only for group discipline, social hierarchies and chains of command, but mythologized earlier wars against colonial authorities and other enemies. In this way the requirements of unity created by real wars could be reproduced by means of myths or symbolic acts without incurring the costs of actual warfare.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the symbols employed by the troop movement and the Herero tribal leadership were not exclusively military, but encompassed crucial references to the pre-colonial past. For the Hereros, the ceremony associated with the burial of Samuel Maharero involved not only the opportunity for military displays or even the reminder of past struggles against colonialism, but symbolized the continuity of Herero identity in previous ages. Samuel Maharero was buried alongside the graves of his father and grandfather, and the annual celebration in Okahandja were therefore held not in honour of a single leader, but rather of a 'dynasty' that extended into the distant past. Moreover, the burial of Maharero at Okahandja, his former capital, served as a reminder of the former territory of the Hereros and reinforced their demands for the return of their traditional areas. The combination of these various elements - both military and politico-

historical - may be seen as representing the "myths of group origins and group liberation" of the Herero people. Smith accords a central place to such myths for the survival of ethnic groups.

The more striking and well-known these myths of group formation and group deliverance, the greater the chances for the ethnic group to survive and endure; and, conversely, the less vivid its sense of uniqueness and the greater the likelihood of dissolution.¹⁷²

The 'troop' movement of Namibia was by no means an isolated phenomenon in the Third World. It shared significant similarities with other associations, cults and movements in Africa and elsewhere. There are important parallels between the "truppenspieler" and movements like the Beni *ngoma* of east and central Africa,¹⁷³ the Ninevites of the Transvaal,¹⁷⁴ and the Melanesian cargo cults.¹⁷⁵ In spite of the diversity of forms, these movements were essentially products of colonial incursions and the transition from pre-colonial and pre-capitalist formations to industrialized and capitalist formations. All these movements also made use of and manipulated symbols to achieve a variety of ends. Charles van Onselen has traced some suggestive parallels between the ninevites and the "social bandits" described by Eric Hobsbawm.¹⁷⁶ In his concluding remarks, however, Van Onselen rejects the parallel because of the fundamentally different aims of the Ninevites and Hobsbawm's "social bandits". While a comparative study of these different movements has yet to be done, it might tentatively be suggested that the similarities between the various organizations and cults should be sought in their manipulation of symbols and their appeals to popular traditions of resistance to and defiance of colonial authority, rather than in the specific ends to which these means were put. To focus on the aims rather than the underlying causes of such movements may be similar to neglecting etiology for symptomatology.¹⁷⁷

The process of consolidation and revitalization that had taken place under the tutelage of the tribal leaders and in the ranks of the *Otjise-randu*, and finally the unification of these two strands of Herero nationalism, had by 1946 transformed the Hereros from a fragmented and defeated people into a major political force in Namibia. This is clearly illustrated by the role of the Hereros in leading opposition to South Africa's attempts to incorporate Namibia into the Union at the end of World War II. Besides their strong position in the reserves and in Namibia in general, the Hereros also had the advantage of well established links with neighbouring Bechuanaland (later Botswana). Following the defeat of the Hereros in the 1904 war, a large body of Hereros under the leadership of Samuel Maharero, and later his son, Frederick, had fled to Bechuanaland and established themselves there.¹⁷⁸ The Bechuanaland Hereros were to play a central role in forging links between Namibians and sympathetic political organizations in South Africa, and in preparing the groundwork for Herero and other petitions to the United Nations.

The incorporation issue

South Africa had ambitions of incorporating Namibia as part of its own territory even before the granting of the mandate by the League of Nations. However, opposition to annexation led by America's President Woodrow Wilson had resulted in a compromise which provided for a C-Mandate in terms of which South Africa would administer Namibia as an integral part of its own territory. South Africa had based its claims for incorporation of Namibia on its close political and economic ties with Namibia and its administration of the territory during World War I.

It was a claim which was regarded with sympathy in many quarters; Lloyd George supported and even expected eventual incorporation, and even Wilson did not reject it out of hand,

but said it must wait "until the day when the true wishes of the inhabitants could be ascertained. It was up to the Union of South Africa to make it so attractive that South West Africa would come to the Union of its own free will.¹⁷⁹

Elements of the settler population in Namibia had favoured incorporation into the Union as early as the 1930s. In particular the South African component of the white population was spurred on to demand incorporation by the rise of Nazism in Germany and the increasing agitation of both European and Namibia-based Germans for the return of the territory to the former colonial power.¹⁸⁰ Germany continued to press its claims for incorporation until the outbreak of World War II in 1939. The eventual defeat of Germany and the dissolution of the League of Nations, and therefore the mandate system, after the war, opened the way for South Africa to press once more for the incorporation of Namibia. Instead of placing Namibia under the trusteeship system that had been created by the United Nations to replace the Permanent Mandates Council, South Africa announced that it would consult the inhabitants of Namibia about the future of the territory.¹⁸¹ These "consultations" took place between December 1945 and April 1946,¹⁸² and were to mark the beginning of a new phase of resistance by Namibians to South African rule.

In May 1946 the South West African Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution in favour of incorporation.¹⁸³ "Consultations" of the black populations proceeded along other lines. Essentially, only the "tribal authorities" were consulted, and, as Goldblatt points out "their views were attributed to all members of the tribes including newborn babes".¹⁸⁴ Although Smuts attempted to justify this to the United Nations by claiming that for the indigenous people "the tribe is the recognised political unit" and that any other form of consultation would

"not have resulted in a valid or free expression of their wishes",¹⁸⁵ in terms of the Native Administration Proclamation of 1928¹⁸⁶ the "tribal authorities" were little more than functionaries of the administration and could be appointed or dismissed by the colonial authorities at will. Only Africans in the reserves were "consulted", while the majority of police zone blacks who were in the urban areas and on farms, were simply disregarded.¹⁸⁷ The consultations were conducted by government officials and, according to Michael Scott, no attempt was made to explain what the United Nations or the trusteeship system were, or what incorporation¹⁸⁸ would entail. In terms of the evidence assembled by Scott, the "consultations" were heavily biased in favour of South Africa, and included the following statement:

They will perhaps like to know now whether you yourselves the inhabitants of the Mandated Territory would like to be under the Union *and retain your rights*, and whether you would like to be governed by another nation whose names I have named, which want now to constitute the United Nations.¹⁸⁹

Further doubt was cast on the validity of the "consultations" by the South African government's refusal to allow observers from either the British or the South African Institutes of Race Relations to visit the territory during or immediately after the "consultations".¹⁹⁰ Under these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that the authorities were able to come up with a massive vote "in favour" of incorporation. (See Table 10.3).

In spite of the dubious nature of the "consultations", Table 10.5 reveals some interesting trends. For example, the vast majority of those "in favour of incorporation" lived in or were associated with the northern areas, where the "tribal authorities" had been most successfully incorporated into the administrative structure. According to Olivier,

the Ovambos and "Okavango" in the police zone (ie. mainly migrant workers) had not been "specially consulted" and were therefore simply assumed to be in agreement with the "tribal authorities" in Ovamboland.¹⁹² The majority of the Namas and Damaras had not been consulted, presumably because most of them were labourers in the towns and on farms. Most important, however, was the solid front presented by the Hereros in their opposition to incorporation. In spite of the small proportion of Namas and Damaras "consulted", nearly half had "voted" in favour of incorporation. The figures show that not only had the Herero indigenous leaders presented a united front in the face of government pressures, but had also succeeded in persuading the colonial authorities that they represented all Hereros, both inside and outside the reserves. Whatever status is accorded to the "consultations", that the Hereros were able to register such a massive "vote" (82 per cent of the total against incorporation) against South African rule, is a significant achievement.

TABLE 10.5: RESULTS OF "CONSULTATIONS" WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, 1945/46/191

IN FAVOUR OF INCORPORATION	
Ovamboland	128 760
Okavango & Western Caprivi	25 000
Ovambos & "Okavangos" in Police Zone*	21 750
Kaokoveld (excluding Hereros)	5 990
Basters and Coloureds (including Rehoboth)	19 450
Namas: Bondels, Franzfontein, Hoachanas,	
Krantzplatz and other reserves	1 320
Damaras: Okambahe, Otjimbingue and other reserves	3 090
Others	1 950
	208 850

AGAINST INCORPORATION

Namas: Berseba, Soromas and other reserves	2 810
Damaras' Aukeigas and other reserves	1 690
Hereros (all areas)	27 350
Others	1 670
	33 520

NOT CONSULTED

San	9 330
Namas	19 100
Damaras	25 560
Others	2 800
	56 790

When approached by government officials in connection with the incorporation issue in 1946 the Herero leaders had asked that representatives of the "five great powers" (America, Britain, Russia, China and France) should be present when they gave their answer. When this was rejected, Hosea Kutako had asked for four representatives of the Hereros to be allowed to go to the United Nations. This too was refused, and the Herero leaders decided to send a cable to the United Nations in which they declared the opposition of "the whole Herero nation" to incorporation. When they were later rebuked by the Secretary for South West Africa for going "behind the back of the Government", Festus Kandjou, who signed the telegramme to the UN replied :

We did not go behind the Government's back, but asked permission from the Government. We were denied that permission.193

By this time opposition to South Africa's incorporation bid was gathering in other centres. In January 1946, Dr A.B. Xuma, president-general of the African National Congress in South Africa had sent a cable to the UN protesting against the proposed incorporation and in the latter half of that year, after establishing contact with Herero leaders in Namibia,

had gone to New York to lobby UN delegates.¹⁹⁴ In April 1946 six Tswana chiefs in Bechuanaland had sent a memorandum to the British government expressing their opposition to incorporation and asking the British to make representations to the UN for them. The Tswana chiefs feared that they would be completely encircled by South Africa and cut off from access to the Atlantic. As Xuma pointed out on behalf of the Tswana chiefs, they felt that the annexation of Namibia would be "the thin end of the wedge for their subsequent incorporation through physical encirclement leading to economic strangulation and ruin".¹⁹⁵ It was through the Tswana chiefs that Frederick Maharero first established contact with the missionary Michael Scott and asked him to go to Namibia, where in 1947 Scott helped the Herero leaders draw up a petition for the United Nations. Although Scott also took statements from other groups in the police zone, it was essentially as a representative of the Hereros that he began lobbying delegates of the United Nations in New York towards the end of 1947. While the petition and its accompanying documents referred to the problems and grievances of other communities, for the most part they dealt with specifically Herero grievances, and in particular with demands for the return of areas formerly occupied by the Hereros. The petition also demanded that Frederick Maharero and other Hereros living in exile in Bechuanaland should be allowed to return to Namibia, that the Herero people should be reunited in one area, and that Namibia should be placed under the trusteeship system. The Hereros were adamant that South Africa should not be allowed to continue ruling Namibia, and suggested that if it was not possible to place the country under the trusteeship system, it should be made a protectorate of either Britain or the United States.¹⁹⁶ Scott was finally granted an official hearing by the United Nations in

November 1949 and continued petitioning the world body throughout the 197
1950's.

Although the thwarting of South Africa's incorporation bid played a major role in the revival of resistance to colonial rule in Namibia, the impact of the petitions of the Hereros and other parties on the United Nations should not be over-estimated. The UN General Assembly rejected South Africa's proposal for incorporation as early as December 1946, nearly a year before Scott began lobbying the world body. Cockram maintains that the United Nations rejected the South African proposal largely because of opposition to colonialism within the organization itself and because of certain tactical errors of Smuts who presented South Africa's case to the UN.¹⁹⁸ However, Smuts tactical errors would have been of little consequence without the initial opposition of UN members, including the United States, to the attempt to annex Namibia. Smuts' was aware of this opposition even before he presented his case to the world body. In September 1946, for example, he sent a confidential telegramme to his deputy, J.H. Hofmeyr, stating that a

direct claim for incorporation or annexation runs grave risk of defeat and should be avoided, if possible. Incorporation is not really necessary, as our rights of administration and legislation of the territory as an integral part of the Union cover all practical purposes and our main object is to avoid coming under a trusteeship agreement ... We should therefore avoid the risk of applying for incorporation on U.N.O.'s approval of South West Africa's request, as that may not be granted, and should rely on our existing rights under the Mandate and govern South West Africa as a part of the Union.¹⁹⁹

On the day of the General Assembly's vote on the incorporation issue, Smuts reported to Hofmeyr that

(o)ur going here is very hard and feeling against South African policy on both the Indian and South West African question is wide and strong. But colour policies are most unpopular in the United States of America and in a world

assembly like U.N.O., and the atmosphere is chilly all round. The only bright spot is the discreet support that the United Kingdom is giving us, especially on South West Africa.200

Although the Herero's stand against incorporation may have had no significant influence on the decision of the United Nations, it was decisive for the development of resistance in Namibia after 1946. Not only did the frustration of South Africa's bid for annexation represent the first substantial symbolic victory for anti-colonial forces in the territory, but it opened the way for further petitioning of the world body and suggested new possibilities of resistance. Furthermore, it created new ties and contacts with anti-colonial forces in South Africa, Bechuanaland and the United States. In general, the outcome of the incorporation issue represented a shift in the balance of resources between colonial and anti-colonial forces. While the power of the colonial state remained intact, it had revealed that it was not totally invulnerable. Moreover, the struggle over the incorporation issue had disclosed the existence of allies outside Namibia, who might help to tip the scales further in favour of anti-colonial forces in the territory. While defiance of South Africa's authority had not been totally absent between 1925 and 1946, forms of political activity among the colonized during this period clearly demonstrate the acceptance of the futility of overt resistance to the colonial state. With the entrance of the United Nations into the Namibian situation, it was almost as if the millenarian dreams of the early 1920s were being fulfilled. In time, however, petitioning of the world body would be shown to provide no real solution to the Namibian problem. Nevertheless, this form of protest would help to prepare the ground for the emergence of new types of resistance.

Endnotes for chapter ten

1. Clifford Geertz, for example, conceived of "primordial attachments" in terms of the "givens" of social existence. "One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer, *ipso facto*, as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself". C. Geertz, 'The integrative revolution: primordial sentiments and civil politics in the new states', in C. Geertz (ed.), *Old societies and new states: the quest for modernity in Asia and Africa*. London: Free Press, 1963, p. 109. For a brief review and critique of primordialism see S. Greenberg, *State and race in capitalist development*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980, pp. 13-16.
2. J.S. Saul, *The state and revolution in Eastern Africa*. London: Heinemann, 1979, p. 391.
3. See, for example, R. Melson and H. Wolpe, 'Modernization and the politics of communalism: a theoretical perspective', *American Political Science Review*, 64, 4, 1970, pp. 1112-1130.
4. A. Mafeje, 'The ideology of tribalism', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9, 2, 1971, pp. 253-261.
5. R.L. Sklar, 'Political science and national integration: a radical approach', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 5, 1, 1967, pp. 1-11.
6. Namibia itself provides a clear example of how colonial interests have attempted to neutralize national resistance by activating ethnic cleavages.
7. Saul, *op. cit.*, p. 397. See also D. Goldsworthy, 'Ethnicity and leadership in Africa: the "untypical" case of Tom Mboya', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 20, 1, 1982, pp. 107-126; Greenberg, *op. cit.*; M.E. Burgess, 'Ethnic scale and intensity: the Zimbabwean experience', *Social Forces*, 59, 3, 1981, pp. 601-625.
8. B. Davidson, *Africa in modern history: the search for a new society*. Harmondsworth Penguin, 1981, pp. 43-54.
9. B. Davidson, 'Questions about nationalism', *African Affairs*, 76, 302, 1977, p. 44.
10. P. Walshe, for example, launches into his study of African nationalism in South Africa with the view that: "The origins of African political consciousness in southern Africa can be traced back to the first half of the nineteenth century, to the impact of Christian missionaries and the development of a non-racial constitution in the Cape." P. Walshe, *The rise of African nationalism in South Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, p. 1. See also Davidson (1977), *op. cit.*, p. 40.
11. Although it may be contended that the "new" Africa which emerged from the colonial period was constructed on the ruins rather than the

foundations of pre-colonial formations, the "ruins" may in themselves merit examination. For example, although contemporary ethnic identities may bear little resemblance to pre-colonial communal identities and may also be intermeshed with class and other cleavages, myths and symbols which are rooted in the pre-colonial past can continue to play a major role in societies which have been transformed by colonial and capitalist penetration.

12. See, for example, Burgess, *op. cit.*

13. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1925, U.G. 26-26, 1926, p. 109.

14. See chapters 1-3, above.

15. Cited by M.J. Olivier, *Inboorlingbeleid en administrasie in die mandaatgebied van Suidwes-Afrika*. D. Phil. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1961, p. 182.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 287.

17. SWAA A50/79, Native Administration Proclamation No. 15 of 1928. See also SWAA CC62 and Oliver, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

18. See chapters 2 and 3, above.

19. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 256 and 116.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 16. As Ovambo and other migrant workers have been included in these figures, the percentages of reserve population should be slightly higher than those indicated in the table. In 1936, for example, the reserve population represented 20 per cent of the total population (excluding migrants) and 16 per cent (including migrants). Oliver, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-256.

22. See Table 10.2.

23. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1927, U.G. 31-28, 1928, p. 50. See also Administrator's reports, 1928, p. 56; 1929, p. 56; 1930, p. 66; 1931, p. 94; 1939, p. 212.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 33. The Berseba Namas had been allowed to retain their reserve by the Germans because they had not joined in the Nama-Herero wars of 1904-07. Although the Bondelswarts were among the first to rebel against German rule in 1903, they had been able to negotiate a treaty with the German colonial authorities in 1904, whereby they were allowed to retain a part of their former territory.

25. Olivier, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

26. SWAA A50/13/9, 'Proposed new Damara reserve,' 5/11/25.

27. SWAA A50/13/9, Assistant Native Commissioner - Chief Native Commissioner.

28. *Ibid.*

29. It was reported, for example, that during the visit of the South African prime minister and the governor-general to Namibia early in the 1920s, the Hereros had "crowded out" the other groups, and that Nama and Damara representatives had subsequently asked for interviews with the administrator so that they could also have an opportunity to put their demands to the authorities. SWAA A50/13 (1), Native Affairs, Windhoek - Native Commissioner, 19/1/25.

30. See Table 10.2.

31. While colonial notions of "tribal" entities were generally distorted, their expectations of a collective decision from the "Damaras" was particularly absurd. Even Vedder who was himself steeped in colonial ideology, conceded that the Damaras had "no real tribal community" or chieftainship. H. Vedder, 'The Berg Damara', in C. Hahn, H. Vedder and L. Fourie, *The native tribes of South West Africa*. Cape Town: Cape Times, 1928, p. 42. See also chapter one.

32. SWAA A50/13 (1), 'Notes of meeting with representatives of Damaras in connection with allocation of a reserve for Damaras', Windhoek, 4/6/26.

33. *Ibid.* The Damara leader was referring to the choice of an area for a reserve.

34. SWAA A50/13 (1), Administrator - Native Affairs, Windhoek, 11/8/30; Native Affairs, Windhoek - Native Commissioner, 7/7/30.

35. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

36. See above, especially chapters 2, 3, 6 and 7.

37. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1924, U.G. 33-25, 1925, p. 13.

38. See chapters 6 and 7 above.

39. ADM 2163/3, Superintendent of Locations - Native Affairs, Windhoek, 8/3/17 and 17/3/18; Native Affairs, Windhoek - Secretary, 15/10/18 and 4/9/19; Acting Magistrate, Windhoek - Secretary, 18/1/22. See also chapter 3, above.

40. See, for example, Memorandum from Native Commission to Administrator, undated, circa June 1922; James O'Reilly, Windhoek - Administrator, 24/6/22 and 29/6/22.

41. See, for example, M. Scott, *In face of fear*. Johannesburg: M. Scott, 1948, pp. 58-9.

42. See chapter one, above.

43. See, for example, H. Bley, *South West Africa under German rule 1894-1914*. London: Heinemann, 1967, pp. 50-62; H. Drechsler, 'Let us die fighting': the struggle of the Herero and Nama against German imperialism (1884-1915). London: Zed Press, 1980, pp. 84-96; J.H. Welling-

ton. *South West Africa and its human issues*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 185-188.

44. See chapter one, above.

45. ADM 567/2, Magistrate, Otjiwarongo - Secretary, 9/6/20.

46. Union of South Africa. Administrator's report, 1927, U.G. 31-28, 1928, p. 38.

47. Union of South Africa. Administrator's reports, 1930, U.G. 21-31, 1931, p. 84; 1932, U.G. 16-33, 1933, p. 80; H. Vedder, 'The Herero', in Hahn, Vedder and Fourie, *op. cit.*, pp. 163 and 205-208.

48. G. Wagner. 'Some economic aspects of Herero life.' *African Studies*, 13, 3-4, 1954, p. 129.

49. See, for example, Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1928, U.G. 22-29, 1929, p. 57.

50. Union of South Africa. Administrator's reports, 1924, U.G. 33-25, 1925, p. 47; 1925, U.G. 26-26, 1926, p. 51; 1926, U.G. 22-27, 1927, p. 57.

51. Union of South Africa. Administrator's report, 1930, U.G. 21-31, 1931, p. 53.

52. Union of South Africa. Administrator's report, 1931, U.G. 17-32, 1932, p. 41.

53. Z. Ngavirue (*Political parties and interest groups in South West Africa: a study on a plural society*. Ph. D. thesis, Oxford University, 1973, pp. 246-247 and 258) makes a similar point, even though he tends to dismiss the popular resistance of the early 1920's as insignificant.

54. See Union of South Africa, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Ethnological Publications, No. 42: *A study of Gobabis district*. (O. Köhler) pp. 79-80; No. 43: *A study of Omaruru district*. (O. Köhler) pp. 88-99; No. 40: *A study of Karibib district*. (O. Köhler) p. 47; No. 38: *A study of Okahandja district*. (G. Wagner) pp. 43-44. Pretoria: Government Printer, 1959, 1959, 1958 and 1957.

55. G. Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

56. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

57. Z.A. Konczacki, *The economics of pastoralism: a case study of sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Frank Cass, 1978, p. 53. The rise of a dominant cattle-owning class in neighbouring Botswana which has a similar ecology to Namibia, has been well documented. See, for example, J. Parson, 'Cattle, class and state in rural Botswana'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 7, 2, 1981, pp. 236-255; L. Cliffe and R. Moorsom, 'Rural class formation and ecological collapse in Botswana'. *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 15/16, 1979, pp. 35-52; J.D. Holm, 'Liberal democracy and rural development'. *African Studies Review*, 25, 1, 1982, pp. 83-102.

58. Enquiries by ethnologist Gunther Wagner, for example, revealed that "most Herero consider employment on a farm either as a temporary expedient when conditions in the reserves are favourable ... or as a more prolonged but still transitory arrangement by which to assemble a herd cit., p. 128.

59. Ibid.

60. *Union of South Africa, Ethnological Publications, No. 38, op. cit., p. 36.*

61. *In 1939, for example, members of the Otjiiserandu who opposed Hosea Kutako were compelled by the police to leave the Aminius reserve. See below.*

62. See chapter six, above.

63. Ngavirue, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.

64. See, for example, A312, Item 75. 'Deputation of Ovaherero to meet his Honour The Administrator, at 10 am on Tuesday 4th September 1923'; SWAA A50/51 *passim*; Ngavirue, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-260.

65. See above.

66. *Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1932, U.G. 16-33, 1933, p. 48.*

67. *Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1935, U.G. 25-35, 1936, p. 40.*

68. *Union of South Africa, Administrator's report 1938, U.G. 20-39, 1939, p. 102; Union of South Africa, Ethnological Publications, No. 44, A study of Otjiwarongo district. (O. Köhler) Pretoria: Government Printer, 1939, p. 50.*

69. *Republic of South Africa, Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs, 1962-1963, R.F. 14-64, Pretoria: Government Printer, 1964, pp. 227-229.*

70. *State Archives, Pretoria, K21, Archives of the Secretary of the South West Africa Commission, 1935, vol. 7, p. 473.*

71. Ibid, p. 470.

72. Ibid., pp. 480-481.

73. Ibid., p. 512.

74. Ibid., pp. 534-535.

75. Ibid., for example, pp. 482-487. See also *Union of South Africa, Report of the South West Africa Commission, U.G. 26-36, Pretoria: Government Printer, 1936, pars. 26-30.*

76. See account of visit in *Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, pp. 130-131.*

77. SWAA A50/122/1, Administrator - Chief Native Commissioner, King Williamstown, 8/4/39.

78. SWAA A50/122/1, Hosea Kutako's speech to Bunga, undated.

79. Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, p. 134.

80. Ibid.; Olivier, op. cit., pp. 191-192.

81. The Herero role in opposing incorporation is discussed below. At a meeting with administrative officials in 1947, Kutako remarked that the petitions sent by the Hereros to the United Nations had soured relations with the authorities. SWAA A50/51, 'Notes of meeting held by Mr. J. Meser, the Chief Native Commissioner, with Herero leaders at Okakarara in the Waterberg East Reserve on 26th and 27th May, 1947'.

82. See, for example, Olivier, op. cit., pp. 79-80; SWAA A50/13/10, Letter from Damara leaders, Okombahe, 9/8/47. In their letter the Damara leaders declared: "It is the word of the inhabitants of Okombahe we stand with you for you even at U.N.O." (Emphasis in original).

83. Olivier, op. cit., p. 192; SWAA A50/13/10, 'Notule van 'n vergadering yehou op 1 September 1947 te Okambahe deur mnr. J. Meser, die hoofnatuurelëkommissaris, met verteenwoordigers van die Bergdamara-stam'.

84. SWAA A50/51, Notes of meeting with Herero leaders, Okakarara, 26-27 May, 1947.

85. Ibid.

86. SWAA A50/13/10, 'Aantekening van vergadering van die leiers van die Herero-stam op 27 en 28 September 1949 te Epukiro'.

87. SWAA A50/59, Military Magistrate, Okahandja - Secretary, 19/5/17; 'Interview with Truppenspieler leaders', 4/10/27; Statement, Festus Katula-Katura, 20/12/40. The most frequently mentioned date for the formation of the troop movement was 1905.

88. SWAA A50/59, Military Magistrate, Okahandja - Secretary, 19/5/17.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. SWAA A50/59, Monthly circular, Native Affairs Dept.: 'Military movements amongst natives', June 1917.

92. SWAA A50/59, Military Magistrate, Gobabis - Secretary, 18/8/19; Magistrate, Luderitz - Secretary, 7/2/22; Hans Joel, Luderitz - Administrator, 2/1/24.

93. See chapter six above.

94. SWAA A50/59, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Native Commissioner, 29/10/27.

95. SWAA A50/59, Native Affairs, Windhoek - Native Commissioner, 20/7/27 and 4/10/27.

96. SWAA A50/59, Magistrate, Rehoboth - Native Commissioner, 29/10/27; SWA Police, Kalkfeld - Magistrate, Otjiwarongo, 21/12/27. The latter document states that the "Truppspieler" began organizing themselves into a strong movement at the end of 1925. Vedder maintained in a book published in 1928 that "almost all male Hereros are linked together as members of a great military organization and that everyone knows exactly to what rank he belongs - private, corporal or general." Vedder, 'The Herero', op. cit., p. 163.

97. See, for example, SWAA A50/59, Native Affairs Dept., 'Interview with leaders of Windhoek troop', 4/10/27.

98. SWAA A50/59, Superintendent, Waterberg East Reserve - Magistrate, Otjiwarongo, 29/10/27.

99. Windhoek Advertiser, report 29/8/23, cited by Ngavirue, op. cit., p. 261.

100. Vincent Sheean cited by W.L. Shirer, Gandhi: a memoir. London: Abacus, 1981, p. 96.

101. Bley, op. cit., p. 56.

102. Ngavirue, op. cit., p. 264. According to the leader of the Otjiserandu in 1946, the members of the organization chose the name "Red Band" because in wars with the Germans and other African communities in earlier times, the Hereros had always worn a red band on their heads or around their arms. SWAA A50/59, Statment, Fetus Katura, 20/23/46.

103. Ngavirue, op. cit., p. 264. See also fn 86, above.

104. Because of the disapproval and prohibitions of the colonial authorities, the troop organizations usually drilled in secret, often late at night.

105. See below. The ceremony of 26 August has survived till today. See, for example, O. Levinson, 'Hereros march to Okahandja', Times of Namibia, 1, 4, September 1977, pp. 2-3.

106. Ngavirue, op. cit., p. 262-266. Also see below.

107. For a brief account of the events that led to the death of Nandume, see chapter eight, above.

108. SWAPO, 'Namibia: people's resistance, 1670-1970'. Race and Class, 22, 1, 1980, p. 33.

109. Vedder, 'The Herero', op. cit., pp. 163-164.

110. SWAA A50/59, Superintendent Waterberg East Reserve - Magistrate, Otjiwarongo, 19/6/28.

111. SWAA A50/51, Report of Police Constable Lazarus Schroeder,

Otjiwarongo, 16/3/29.

112. SWAA A50/59, Sworn statement, Thomas Gabriel, Keetmanshoop, 4/2/28. No action was taken by the authorities as they were unable to substantiate the informer's statement. While it is possible that the events described by the informer were invented, it is also unlikely that the inhabitants of the reserve would have been prepared to admit to the police that they had considered taking up arms against the authorities. For example, the Native Affairs Department at Tsumeb reported in 1927 that because "the Hereros do not confide in members of other tribes and that they are of a very secretive dispositions, it has not been found possible to obtain any definite information" (on the troop movement). SWAA A50/59, Native Affairs, Tsumeb - Native Commissioner, 15/12/27.

113. SWAA A50/59, Magistrate, Outjo - Native Commissioner, 2/11/27; Native Affairs, Windhoek - Native Commissioner, 20/7/27; Superintendent, Luderitz Location - Native Affairs, Luderitz, 20/12/27.

114. SWAA A50/59, Assistant Native Commissioner - Chief Native Commissioner, 13/12/35.

115. SWAA A50/59, Statement, Stephanus Hoveka, 26/11/35; Location Superintendent, Windhoek - Town Clerk, 27/11/35

116. Location Superintendent, Windhoek - Town Clerk, 26/11/35; Assistant Native Commissioner - Chief Native Commissioner, 13/12/35.

117. See chapter six, below.

118. SWAA A50/59, Advisory Board Minutes, Windhoek 26/11/35. Mungunda, for example, maintained that "the organization does not recognise the authority of the advisory boards. They are hostile to the properly constituted authority in the location ... The young men obey the orders of an officer in the organization in preference to boardmen."

119. SWAA A50/59, Assistant Native Commissioner - Chief Native Commissioner, 20/1/36; Magistrate's court record, 14/1/36. As a result of the outcome of this case, the administration amended the Native (Urban Areas) Proclamation (No. 34 of 1924) so that anyone who was shown to be "habitually unemployed" could be ejected from the urban areas.

120. SWAA A50/59, Memo. dated 21/10/36.

121. SWAA A50/59, Assistant Native Commissioner - Chief Native Commissioner, 13/10/36.

122. Ibid. The administration believed that Kutako was being opposed by the Otjiserandu because he was a "government man".

123. SWAA A50/59, "Headquarters", Windhoek - Kutako, 7/1/36. See also H.S. Tjibo - Herero leader, Aminius, 23/1/36; Red Band leader, Windhoek - Red Band leaders, Aminius, 14/2/36.

124. SWAA A50/59, 'Notes on proceedings: Meeting (Hereros) held at Government buildings on 5/5/37'.

125. Ibid. See also 'Notes on interview on 9/5/38'.

126. Ibid.

127. SWAA A50/59, G.F.M. Huko et al. - Honourable Groups M.P.E.W.Z and M.P.E.S.H., Kakutuata, 22/3/39; SWAA A50/51, Deputy Commissioner, SWA Police - Superintendent, Windhoek Location, 3/9/42; Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, pp. 38 and 132-133.

128. SWAA A50/59, F. Kaatura et al. - Chief Native Commissioner, 15/8/38.

129. SWAA A50/59, G. Huko - Honourable Groups, Kakutuata, 22/3/39.

130. SWAA A50/59, Statement, Hesekeil Kaundje, Windhoek, 18/6/38; Assistant Native Commissioner: 'Minutes of a meeting between Assistant Native Commissioner and leading Truppspielers', Windhoek, 21/7/39.

131. See, for example, Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, pp. 14-28.

132. SWAA A50/59, Statement, J.J. Breitenbach, Ondundu, 21/4/37; Statement, J.D. Thomas, Ondundu, 21/4/37; Commandant, Police District No. 3 - Commissioner, SWA Police, 26/4/38; Commissioner, SWA Police - Secretary, 3/5/38; J.D. Thomas, Ondundu - Trollope, 18/5/38; Assistant Native Commissioner - Chief Native Commissioner 4/3/39.

133. See chapter six above.

134. See SWAA A50/59, Statement, J.D. Thomas, Ondundu, 21/4/37; J.D. Thomas - Trollope, 18/5/38.

135. SWAA A50/59, Native Commissioner - Secretary, 6/7/38.

136. SWAA A50/51, Administrator - Native Commissioner, Okahandja, 19/6/39; Administrator - Magistrate, Okahandja, 15/10/40; Magistrate, Okahandja - Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek, 18/10/40; Administrator - Magistrate and Native Commissioner, Okahandja, 13/11/40 and 29/7/41.

137. SWAA A50/59, Superintendent, Windhoek Location - Additional Native Commissioner, 9/7/40.

138. SWAA A50/59, Statement, O.C. Bowker, Windhoek, 31/12/46.

139. In 1946, for example, the older and more established members of the Otjiserandu appealed to the administration to exclude what were referred to as the "Young Turks" from participation in the Okahandja ceremony. It was alleged that these "Young Turks" were admirers of Hitler and were keen to differentiate themselves from other members of the organization.

140. Ngavirue, op. cit., p. 273.

141. Ibid.

142. See SWAA A50/73, 'Faction fight in Windhoek location, 1918'.

143. SWAA A50/13/10, Frederik Gaeb - Magistrate, Omaruru, 21/6/38. Gaeb was employed by the administration as an interpreter-messenger and this was used to bring pressure to bear on him to dissolve the "Green Band" organization.

144. Ibid.

145. The Ukuanyama king, Mandume, was killed by South African forces in a battle in Ovamboland in 1917. See chapter eight, above.

146. SWAA A50/135, Acting Native Commissioner, 'Ovambo organizations in the Police Zone', undated (circa, May 1938).

147. SWAA A50/135, 'Native Commissioner, Ovamboland - Trollope, 24/4/38. See also Native Affairs, Oshikango - Native Commissioner, Ondongwa, 21/4/38. While the tribal authorities in Ovamboland were prepared to tolerate benevolent or welfare societies, they were completely opposed to the wearing of uniforms and the holding of memorial services for Mandume.

148. SWAA A50/135, Administrator - Titus Namuye, Windhoek, 23/5/38; Administrator - Isaac Ndjatapo, 23/5/35; Administrator - Assitant Native Commissioner, 23/5/38.

149. SWAA A50/135, Native Commissioner, Ovamboland - Chief Native Commissioner, 15/10/38.

150. Ibid.

151. SWAA A50/135, Assistant Native Commissioner - Chief Native Commissioner, 24/7/39. See also constitution of the "Omibili Jovambo".

152. SWAA A50/135, Criminal convictions, Thomas Ndili and Silas Paulus, Luderitz, 8/7/38; Assistant Native Commissioner, Luderitz - Chief Native Commissioner, 8/7/38; SWAA A50/75, Hirsekorn and Jorrison - Chief Native Commissioner, 8/3/37; Assistant Native Commissioner, Luderitz - Native Commissioner, Luderitz, 12/3/37. It is not known whether Ndili was actually repatriated, and, if he was, how he returned to Luderitz.

153. C.O. Winter, Namibia. Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977, pp. 107-108. Although Winter's account of Mandume's death bears little resemblance to documented accounts, it does suggest that various myths have become associated with the Ukuanyama king. According to Winter's account, Mandume's head was "hacked off" after his death and was buried in or near the Mandume Campaign Memorial in Windhoek. Although this is unlikely, as a myth it could serve to transform a colonial memorial into an anti-colonial one.

154. The Star, 31/8/81.

155. Ngavirue, op. cit., p. 247.

156. Ibid., p. 261.

157. H. Lasswell, Politics: Who gets what, when, how. New York: Peter Smith, 1950, pp. 207-230. Essentially, Lasswell argues that political acts are "externalized" acts which change the social environment. "Internalized" acts, on the other hand, are of little consequence politically

because they usually "leave the overt environment unchanged".

158. Ibid., p. 216.

159. B. Bettelheim, 'Individual and mass behaviour in extreme situations'. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 33, 1943 pp. 417-425.

160. B. Bettelheim, *The informed heart: autonomy in a mass age*. New York: Free Press, 1960.

161. B. Moore, *Injustice: the social bases of obedience and revolt*. London: Macmillan, 1978, pp. 64-77.

162. S.M. Elkins, *Slavery: a problem in American institutional and intellectual life*. Chicago: university of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 1970, pp. 103-115.

163. T.O. Ranger, *Dance and society in eastern Africa 1890-1970: the Beni ngoma*. London: Heinemann, 1975.

164. See, for example, Drechsler, op. cit., pp. 207-214.

165. See chapter 1, above.

166. Moore, op. cit., pp. 64-65. *The description is of Nazi concentration camp inmates.*

167. Ranger, op. cit., p. 4. *The historian Johann Huizinga suggested that there was an element of liberation in play. "Play only becomes possible, thinkable, and understandable when an influx of mind breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos". J. Huizinga, Homo ludens. London: Paladin, 1971, p. 22.*

168. See chapters 4-7, above

169. G. Sorel, *Reflections on violence*. New York: Collier, 1961, pp. 124-145.

170. P. Calvert, *Revolution*. London: Macmillan, 1970, p. 95. See also R. Collier, *Duce! The rise and fall of Mussolini*. London: Fontana, 1972.

171. A.D. Smith, *The ethnic revival*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 174. *The connection between warfare and ethnic assertion or unity is related to such factors as the training, mobilization and interdependence of people in times of war, the impact of war propaganda, the acquisition or defence of territory and the need for the centralization of political and social authority.* Smith, op. cit., 174-178.

172. Ibid., p. 65.

173. Ranger, op. cit. *It is perhaps significant that of all the variations of the Beni movement, those in German East Africa/Tanganyika appeared to have had the most obvious military characteristics and most closely resembled the Namibian troop movement.* Ranger, op. cit., pp. 36, 54 and 61-62.

174. C. van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, Vol. 2: New Nineveh. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982, pp. 171-201

175. See, for example, P. Worsley, *The trumpet shall sound: a study of 'cargo' cults in Melanesia*. New York: Schocken Books, 1968; G. Cochrane, *Big men and cargo cults*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

176. E. Hobsbawm, *Bandits*. London: Delacorte Press, 1969. For an application of the idea of social banditry to Africa, see A. Isaacson, 'Social banditry in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Mozambique, 1894-1907: an expression of early peasant protest', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4, 1977-78, pp. 1-30.

177. In this respect Lasswell's scheme may be useful because it suggests a continuity between criminal or "anti-social" activities and more overt political activity. See Lasswell, op. cit., pp. 212-213.

178. See chapter 1, above. Nicheal Scott estimated that there were about 15 000 Hereros in exile in Bechuanaland in 1946. M. Scott, *In face of fear*. Johannesburg: M. Scott, 1948, p. 1.

179. R.W. Imishue, *South West Africa: an international problem*. London: Institute of Race Relations, 1965, p. 5. See also pp. 2-5; G.H. Cockram, *South West Africa Mandate*. Cape Town: Juta, 1976, pp. 29-57.

180. See, for example, Cockram, op. cit., pp. 101 and 164-192; Union of South Africa, *Administrator's reports*, 1934, U.G. 26-35, 1935, p. 5; 1936, U.G. 31-37, 1937, p.4; 1939, U.G. 30-40, 1940, pp. 14-28.

181. Cockram, op. cit., p. 211.

182. Ngavirue, op. cit., p.243.

183. Cockram, op. cit., p.122.

184. J. Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa from the beginning of the Nineteenth Century*. Cape Town: Juta, 1971, p. 249. According to the figures provided by the South African government after the "consultations", 128 760 Ovambos were supposed to have been "in favour" of incorporation in Ovamboland. However, according to the administrator's report for 1946, the total population of Ovamboland was 126 418 in 1945 and 147 890 in 1946. Of the latter figure, 74 050 were classified as children. See Table 11.5 and Union of South Africa, Administrator's report, 1946, U.G. 49-47, 1947, p. 3. As Dr A.B. Xuma acidly remarked, allowing "children and infants" to vote was a "practice that is not permitted even among white South Africans, the most privileged of the privileged". A.B. Xuma, *South West Africa: annexation or United Nations trusteeship?* New York: H.A. Naidoo and S. Rustonjee, November, 1946, p. 25.

185. Cockram, op. cit., p. 223.

186. See above.

187. See, for example, letter by Z. Thomas, Keetmanshoop in Xuma, op.

cit., pp. 31-32.

188. Scott, op. cit., pp. 64 and 77-78.

189. Ibid., p. 72 (emphasis added). See also Cockram, op. cit., pp. 223-224; Xuma, op. cit., pp. 24-25. According to Scott, the additional native commissioner told a meeting of blacks in Windhoek in 1946 that if the UN took over the administration of the territory, "it would mean that the people from these countries such as the Indians for example who could live on the smell of an oil rag ... would come to South West Africa and take away the trade and livelihood of the Europeans and Africans". Scott, op. cit., p. 78.

190. Scott, op. cit., pp. 73-74; Xuma, op. cit., p. 25.

191. Olivier, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

192. Ibid.

193. Scott, op. cit., pp. 74-77 and Herero petition, pp. 3-6. See also undated cable by F. Kandjan (Kandjou) - Secretary, United Nations, in Xuma, op. cit., p. 20.

194. Xuma, op. cit.; T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*. Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1977, p. 313.

195. Xuma, op. cit., p. 0. See also Cockram, op. cit., p. 239. The Tswana chiefs' fears of "economic strangulation" and eventual incorporation into South Africa were not without basis. At the time of Union, the possibility of incorporating the three British protectorates, Bechuanaland, Basutoland, and Swaziland, had been considered, but the issue was postponed because of disagreements over the black franchise. However, both the British and the South African governments believed at the time that the three protectorates would eventually be incorporated into the Union, although the growing unpopularity of South Africa's racial policies and the vigorous opposition of the indigenous populations of the protectorates were major obstacles. In an attempt to break down the resistance of the BLS protectorates, South Africa had in 1924 introduced minimum weight restrictions on imported cattle. As Bechuanaland was at this time heavily dependent on its cattle exports to South Africa, the restrictions dealt a significant blow to its economy, bringing down cattle exports by more than 20 per cent. The weight restrictions were only lifted in 1941 when South Africa experienced a beef shortage. See C. Colclough and S. McCarthy, *The political economy of Botswana: a study of growth and distribution*. London: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 14-19; A. Sillery, *Botswana: a short political history*. London: Methuen, 1974, pp. 120-125.

196. Scott, op. cit. See especially, 'Petition from the Herero, being African Native Inhabitants of the Mandated Territory of South West Africa'. See also Cockram, op. cit., pp. 240-242.

197. See Cockram, op. cit., pp. 246-247.

198. Ibid., pp. 226-229.

199. University of the Witwatersrand Library, Hofmeyr Papers, DJ, SA

Legation, Paris - Secretary for External Affairs, Pretoria, 24/9/46. By "South West Africa's request", Smuts is referring to the outcome of the incorporation "consultations" in the territory.

200. Ibid., SA delegation, New York - Secretary for External Affairs, Pretoria, 12/11/46.

Chapter Eleven

THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF CONTRACT LABOURERS AND THE FORMATION OF THE
OVAMBOLAND PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATION

While groupings like the *Ojiserandu* and the Herero indigenous leadership played a significant role in keeping resistance alive between 1925 and 1958, and in preparing the ground for a mass nationalist movement in Namibia, they did not take the initiative in launching the nationalist organizations. Their basis of mobilization was too narrow to allow for anything more than an aggregation of distinct ethnic interests. The formation of the nationalist organizations was to depend instead on two groupings which had a clearer class basis and were more directly related to the developing capitalist economy in Namibia. Both of these groupings adopted political goals and strategies which were broader and more militant than those of the indigenous Herero leaders and similar ethnically-based communities.

They also affected a more definite break with pre-colonial and symbolic forms of organization and mobilization, modelling themselves more closely on political organizations in South Africa. As these two groupings began to take the initiative in challenging the colonial state, the focus of resistance shifted away from the reserves to the urban and industrial areas. This was to transform the nature of politics in Namibia, breaking it free from the dominant indigenous leadership and precipitating a new form of confrontation with the colonial state. The politically weaker of the two was constituted by politicized elements of a marginal and largely urban-based petty bourgeoisie which entered into

an uneasy and short-lived alliance with the Herero indigenous leadership to make up one of the two distinctive components of the nationalist movement. The emergence and role of this grouping in the nationalist movement will be examined in the next chapter.

The social position of contract workers

The basis of the second component was constituted largely by migrant or contract workers from beyond the police zone. In section three of this dissertation, the origins and growth of the contract labour system were examined in some detail, and will provide a basis for the ensuing analysis of the social consciousness and political responses of Namibian contract workers. It was argued, for example, that as a result of the developing crisis in Ovamboland caused by the undermining and disintegration of pre-colonial political and economic structures, migrant labour became a necessity for increasingly larger numbers of Ovambos. However, the crisis in Ovamboland coincided with crucial changes in the colonial economy which saw the decline of mining and a corresponding growth of settler agriculture. These changes not only meant that increasingly larger numbers of northern migrants were channelled into agriculture, but also that settler farmers played a central role in the shaping of the contract labour system that developed in the 1930s and 1940s.

The combination of changes in the colonial economy and sending areas had profound implications for the migrant labour force and the development of its social consciousness. The pressures caused by food shortages in the sending areas were reinforced by increasingly repressive legislation and the rationalization of the contract labour system which destroyed the last vestiges of autonomy and choice open to contract labourers.

The wages of migrant labourers dropped absolutely during this period, further increasing the need for external income in the disintegrating pre-colonial economies of Ovamboland and other sending areas². The drop in the price of contract labour was accompanied by a corresponding drop in status of contract labourers in the eyes of both the settler and the indigenous populations of the police zone. Vinna Ndadi's account of his experiences as a contract labourer vividly illustrates this point: "As in Mariental, I had no girl friends. Ovambo girls in Windhoek, even prostitutes, looked down on contract workers".³

Fendleton found a similar situation during his research in Windhoek in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He established, for example, that contract labourers received the lowest wages of all black workers in Windhoek. He also found that in the rating (by township residents) of 45 "occupations" according to prestige, "Ovambo contract workers" were rated second lowest, only above newspaper vending, a form of work normally reserved for schoolboys.⁴ Although Namibian nationalism had by this time advanced considerably, contract workers were "not considered by others nor by themselves to be townsmen". Because they were migrant workers who lived in a compound physically separated from the more permanent township residents, they did not take part in Katutura's social life. "Most Katutura Africans tried to avoid coming into contact with them. Apart from the shops, primarily the only place in Katutura where they go is the municipal beer hall. A few Damara women go to the beer hall and in exchange for beer teach contract Ovambos how to dance; some of these women are also prostitutes. Relationships which develop between contract-Ovambos and Katutura women are usually not permanent. If a contract-Ovambo marries a local African woman, he must take her to

Ovamboland when he returns. Ovambos are unwilling to do this since many already have wives in Ovamboland, and few townswomen would be prepared to go to Ovamboland⁵. A clear distinction was drawn between "contract-Ovambos" and "town-Ovambos". While "town-Ovambos" were generally well thought of by the Africans of other ethnic groups, "contract-Ovambos" were considered "trouble-makers"⁶. Contract labourers also found themselves increasingly subjected to physical violence on the isolated farms.

Recent analyses of contract labour in Namibia have, either directly or by implication, linked the contract labour system to the industrial sector and the involvement of foreign capital in this sector⁷. Richard Moorson, for example, characterized the Namibian economy as "a classic example of 'resource imperialism'".

Investment in production has come overwhelmingly from foreign sources, and has remained under foreign control. It has also been dominated by either transnational corporations or capitalists from the colonial economy.⁸

Essentially Moorson attributes the system of labour repression in Namibia to South Africa's attempts to attract foreign investors by creating conditions in the territory for the maximization of profits.

At best, such attempts to attribute the extreme repressiveness of contract labour in Namibia to the requirements of foreign industrial capital represent a simplification of a far more complex situation. In particular, they ignore or underestimate the central role of settler agriculture in the creation of the contract labour system. This misplaced emphasis is largely a product of the pattern of research on migrant labour in Namibia. Studies of labour migrancy and the contract system in Namibia have for the most part concentrated attention on

contemporary developments, in particular those immediately preceding and following the 1971/72 contract workers' strike, and, to a lesser extent, on the origins of labour migration in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁹ During both of these periods mining held a dominant position within the colonial economy, and either monopolized or took the major share of migrant labour. The pattern of research has thus tended to obscure the crucial period in the 1930's and 1940's when migrant labour from the north was transformed from a response to temporary ecological crises, to a permanent economic necessity for increasingly larger numbers of northern Namibians. It also obscures the key role played by agriculture not only in shaping the contract labour system, but in the complex of events which led to the politicization and radicalization of the contract labour force. While the importance of industry particularly in shaping the political responses of migrant labourers, should not be underrated, an understanding of the essentially coercive nature of the contract labour system is not possible without an appreciation of the economic marginality of settler agriculture and its heavy reliance on the state.

Contract labour and resistance

Collective protest and resistance of Namibian migrants labourers has a long history. Robert Gordon, for example, has documented a strike,¹⁰ involving Ovambo labourers among others, which occurred in 1893. In the chaotic conditions that followed South Africa's occupation of the former German colony, Ovambo migrant workers forced into the colonial economy by a severe drought appear to have resorted to strikes, stoppages and desertions with marked frequency in 1915 and 1916.¹¹ While strike and other incidents of labour protest did occur between 1916 and

the beginning of World War II,¹² they appear to have been relatively sporadic and resolved with relative ease by employers and authorities. From about 1939, however, the frequency of strikes and other labour disturbances appears to have increased significantly. Gottschalk, for example, reports two strikes on Namibian mines in 1939.¹³ During 1941, when there was a severe drought in the northern areas and the supply of contract labour exceeded the demand, there was a series of strikes by Ovambo mine and railway workers in various parts of the territory. The largest of these occurred at the CDM mine at Oranjemund where more than 300 contract labourers went on strike and a police detachment had to be sent from Alexander Bay before the authorities could gain control over the situation. All those who participated in the strike were fined or imprisoned.¹⁴ Further strikes occurred on the diamond mines in 1946. At the Bogenfels mining area near Lüderitz discontent over rations led to two strikes within a few days of one another. Police reinforcements were despatched from Lüderitz to the mining area during the second strike, but when they attempted to arrest the leaders of the strike they were surrounded by the other strikers who demanded the release of those arrested. Although the police managed eventually to get the arrested men into the local lock-up, the others remained outside all night. At first all the strikers refused to return to work, but after pressure was applied, all but 47 resumed work. These 47 were immediately arrested, but continued to resist the police by declining food and refusing to be searched or to enter the cells. A few months later a further strike involving 850 contract workers broke out at Oranjemund.¹⁵

Strikes occurred almost annually during the intervening 13 years before the formation of the nationalist organizations. The Tsumeb copper mine which had closed down during the war, resumed production in January 1947

and faced its first strike five months later.¹⁶ Another strike involving 2 000 workers occurred at Tsumeb the following year after the fatal shooting of a contract labourer.¹⁷ In 1949, following reports of unrest among contract workers, the native commissioner for Ovamboland was sent on a tour of Luderitz, Walvis Bay and Swakopmund in order to resolve differences between contract workers and their employees.¹⁸ Although he recommended the repatriation or transfer of a number of "agitators" and "communists" from both Luderitz and Walvis Bay, discontents continued to fester among the contract workers, and in May 1950 erupted into a strike in which a policeman was stabbed while trying to arrest a striker.¹⁹ Strikes occurred in the 1950s in Luderitz, Walvis Bay, Tsumeb and at various mines in other parts of the territory.²⁰ Desertions also increased during the mid-1940s.²¹ In 1947 the deputy commissioner of police finally reached the conclusion that "the Ovambos" were "becoming dissatisfied".²² In response to subsequent enquiries, by the Secretary for South West Africa, the native commissioner in Ovamboland noted that:

Natives from Ovamboland have always caused trouble in the Police Zone during the past years. They do not cause any trouble or disturbances in their tribal areas, and it seems to me that they are being influenced to cause unrest on a large scale in the Police Zone now, by some person, or persons, who may be known to the Police.²³

Although the available documentation of labour actions in Namibia is by no means complete, the broad patterns outlined above are indicative of fundamental changes in the responses of contract labourers to the contract labour system. This raises questions about both the nature and causes of such changes. Moorsom has conceived of these changes as a development in the class consciousness of migrant labourers. The consciousness of migrant labourers, he argues, is derived from their involvement in two "modes of production", but as their dependence for income

shifts from agricultural production to wage labour, so their objective class interest is transformed from a predominantly peasant to a predominantly proletarian status.²⁴ Although Moorsom sees this "critical turning point" as coming for most contract workers in the 1950s and 1960s,²⁵ rather than the 1930s and 1940s, his explanation is suggestive.

Economic growth and labour practice after World War II

There are a number of both general and specific reasons why changes in the social consciousness of Namibian contract workers should be associated with the Second World War and the period that immediately followed it. The disintegration of socio-political and economic structures in Ovamboland in the period immediately preceding the war and the consequent increase in the supply of migrant labour have already been explored in some detail. These changes in turn need to be seen against the background of the growth of the colonial economy and the steady erosion of South Africa's legal claims to Namibia. Olivier has described the growth of the Namibian economy after World War II as "phenomenal" (*fenominaal*),²⁶ and this is confirmed by the general trends of the gross domestic product between 1925 and 1956.²⁷ In the eighteen years between 1925 and 1942 there was hardly any sign of growth in the GDP, and the combined effects of the depression and the war (particularly on mining) helped to produce a GDP in 1942 (£6.1 million) that was slightly smaller than those of 1926 (£6.2 million) and 1927 (£6.3 million). From 1943, however, the GDP grew steadily reaching £10.9 million in 1946, £19.4 million in 1948, £43.3 million in 1952, £52 million in 1954, and £72.3 million in 1956. Economic growth was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the settler population and in the amount of land occupied by white farmers. As Table 11.1 shows, the

territory experienced its greatest influx of white settlers in the period between 1946 and 1951.

TABLE 11.1 : GROWTH OF SETTLER POPULATION, 1913-1938²⁸

Year	Size of settler population	Average growth rate per year
1913	14 830	
1921	19 432	3,9 (1913-21)
1921	24 115	4,8 (1921-26)
1936	30 941	2,8 (1926-1936)
1946	37 858	2,2 (1936-1946)
1951	49 930	6,2 (1946-1951)
1958	66 000	4,6 (1951-1958)

The allocation of farms to white settlers followed a similar pattern. Following the war, large numbers of new farms were allocated. On account of heavy settlement during the two World Wars, little land was available in the central plateau region and settlers were increasingly pushed into the marginal areas of the Kalahari sandveld and periphery of the Namib. The aridity of these areas demanded large farms, and between 1945 and 1959, 11,1 million hectares of land were allocated.²⁹ Many of the new settlers entered the territory in the period immediately following the war. Between the end of the war and 1948 for example, 345 demobilized soldiers and 184 other settlers were allocated 338 farms under the Rehabilitation and Land Settlement Schemes.³⁰

TABLE 11.2 : ALLOCATION OF SETTLER FARMS, 1904-1970³¹

	1904	1913	1938	1960	1970/71
Number of farm units	458	1331	3305	5216	4842
Area (million hectares)	4,8	13,4	25,6	39,0	36,0

The end of the war not only saw the recovery of existing mines after the severe decline precipitated by the depression and the war itself, but also the establishment of new mines and other industries. Between 1946 and 1956 mining's contribution to the GDP increased from £1.7 million to £31.3 million.³² Prior to the war the only secondary industries which employed substantial numbers of labourers were the fishing and canning factories on the coast and the creameries in the central and northern parts of the territory.³³ With the increase in South African and other investment, several new industries were established, and the fishing and canning industry, in particular, expanded enormously and became a major centre for labour unrest and organization. It was in the fishing and canning factories of Luderitz in the early 1950s that the Food and Canning Workers' Union of South Africa established the first trade union in Namibia after the demise of the ICU in the 1920s. The FCWU branch established by Ray Alexander from the Union's head office in Cape Town, did not last long under the pressures brought to bear on it by the state. However, large strikes were mounted by contract labourers in 1952 and 1953. These were ruthlessly crushed by the authorities, and in 1953 several workers were shot dead.³⁴ The canning factories of Walvis Bay also became a major centre of industrial strife, and it was here that one of the strongest branches of the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) was established in the late 1950s.³⁵

In very general terms therefore the overall growth of the Namibian colonial economy after World War II resulted in increases in both the demand for labour and the actual labour force and was closely associated with the growth of collective resistance and labour organization during the late 1940s and 1950s. According to Olivier, the increasing demand

for labour resulted in "all kinds of competition and malpractices" (*allerlei mededinging en wanpraktyke*) among employers to secure labour.³⁶ However, the growth of labour consciousness and political organization among contract workers can only be adequately understood if the different sectors of the colonial economy and their specific labour requirements are differentiated. The labour shortage during the 1950s provides a vivid illustration of this. SWANLA waiting lists for contract labourers give some indication of the relative labour shortages in the different sectors of the economy. In 1954, for example, the mines had placed orders for an additional 400 labourers, industry and the urban areas 500 labourers, and farmers 15 000 labourers. While the figure for farm labourers was probably grossly inflated - Olivier estimated that the real farm labour shortage was in the region of 10 000 - these figures nevertheless demonstrated the major differences in the labour requirements of the various sectors.³⁷

However, the full implications of this labour shortage and its impact on the consciousness of contract labour can only be understood against the background of the development of the colonial economy between the Great Depression of the early 1930's and the Second World War. It was during this period that settler agriculture experienced its greatest growth and "rose from survival to moderate affluence".³⁸ The growth of commercial agriculture coincided with both the collapse of mining (which had previously absorbed the major part of the contract labour force) and with the significant increase in the supply of migrant labour from Swaziland and other northern areas. Until the end of World War II when the mining industry finally recovered from the impact of depression and war, settler agriculture was free to absorb the majority of migrant labourers. Indeed, contract labour played a major role in the "take-off" of settler

agriculture by substantially reducing its labour costs.³⁹ The contribution of labourers to the growth of agriculture is acknowledged in several official reports. In 1948, for example, the Native Labour Commission attributed the "popularity" of contract workers among farmers to "the fact that such labourers can be procured at wages much below those demanded by local natives, and the additional fact that the Extra-territorial and Northern labourers were recruited for a minimum period of 13 months and, if they were willing, for a period not exceeding 25 months":

Any interference with the flow of these extra-territorial and Northern Labourers to the farming industry must have serious effect on the national economy, which is as dependent on the prosperity of the farming community as the economy of the Union is dependent on the prosperity of its Gold Mining Industry and perhaps even more so.40

In spite of the substantial improvement in the financial position of settler farmers after 1935, they continued to be vulnerable, particularly with the fluctuating climatic conditions of Namibia. Their survival continued to depend on state support, and at times of drought, depressed prices for agricultural produce and epidemic stock diseases, state financial support was essential to keep farmers from bankruptcy.⁴¹

However, even more than financial aid, settler farming was dependent on the state for the supply and control of its labour force.

The most crucial aspect of state support was the provision of farm labour ... The viability of settler agriculture was from the start built upon the exploitation of the labour of black Namibians. This exploitation has partly taken an indirect form through agriculture subsidies funded through tax on profits generated by black workers in other sectors of the economy, and through the hidden subsidies of peasant men and women forced to service the migrant labour system. More directly it has bound large numbers of black workers to the most poorly paid and repressive conditions of wage-labour of any sector of the commercial economy.⁴²

The continuing marginality of settler agriculture and its heavy dependence on servile labour, is further illustrated by the virtual collapse of commercial agriculture in Namibia in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The combined effects of a severe drought, declines in the demand and prices of agricultural products, and the easing of restrictions on labourers from beyond the police zone had precipitated a severe crisis for settler farmers in the territory.⁴³ Moorsom maintains that it is doubtful whether, even under more favourable conditions, settler farming is economically viable:

Indeed, if the rancher's personal income is deducted from the net profit at the prevailing rate for middle managers or civil servants, the average return on ranch capital becomes nil or even negative in most years.⁴⁴

Although the profitability of commercial agriculture is in general low, there are major differences between farmers. In 1978, for example, the estimated return on capital invested in agriculture varied between 8.1 per cent for those in the top 20 per cent income bracket to 2.2 per cent for those in the 50-60 percentile.⁴⁵

The Long-Term Agriculture Commission reported in 1948 that there was little likelihood of commercial farming reducing its labour needs by mechanization,⁴⁶ and the large-scale introduction of fencing and camps in order to reduce labour requirements was only accomplished during the course of the 1960s.⁴⁷ Farmers were therefore heavily dependent on the essentially coercive nature of the contract system. Coercion was not only evident in the comprehensive battery of laws and regulations governing contract labour, but also such "informal" devices as the manipulation of the "medical" classification system,⁴⁸ and the institutionalization of violence in the relationship between farmers and labourers.

Ndadi's account of his experiences as a farm labourer, for example, shows that beatings - sometimes with the active collaboration of the police - were an integral part of the system of control over farm labourers.⁴⁹ As contract labourers were given no choice of employers and were tied to their jobs by their contracts, the system itself encouraged the use of violence, particularly on the isolated farms.⁵⁰ Although violence was also present in the relationships between labourers and overseers in the urban and industrial settings, it appeared to be far less prevalent, and labourers were in a far stronger position to protect themselves.⁵¹

Alternative employment opportunities and labour mobility

The economic growth that characterized the post-World War II period held a number of important implications for agriculture. Not only did the influx of new settlers increase the competition for labour within the farming sector, but the recovery of mining and the establishment of new industries created avenues of employment which had not been available to contract workers before the war. It has already been shown⁵² that from at least the beginning of South African rule migrants had strongly resisted farm labour and had shown a distinct preference for working on the mines - in spite of the unhealthy conditions and heavy death rates on both the diamond fields and copper mines at that time. According to the report of the Native Labour Commission, contract and other labourers interviewed had consistently rated mine labour above any other form of labour. Witnesses had expressed "fairly general satisfaction" about employment in the towns, but some had complained that the wages were far too low. Farm labour, on the other hand, had elicited "a chorus of complaints about wages, housing and food".

It would not be overstating the case to say that the natives

of South West Africa are unanimous in their criticism of the low wages paid to farm labourers and that there is a strong body of criticism of the bad housing conditions and unsatisfactory feeding on many farms.⁵³

An even greater threat was posed by the emergence of the South African mines as an alternative source of employment for northern Namibian labourers. As the mines had enjoyed a virtual monopoly over contract labour before the depression, the decline of mining during the early 1930s had resulted in an over-supply of potential recruits. In order to maintain the flow of labour, the administration had therefore approached the Rand mines through the Department of Bantu Administration in 1934, and arranged for the South African mines to take on 1 000 labourers per year as an "experiment". By 1935, the partial recovery of the Namibian mines and the increasing interest of farmers in migrant labour resulted in the termination of this arrangement with the South African Chamber of Mines. However, the interest of the South African mines in this potential source of labour had been aroused, and in 1939 the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENELA) opened a recruiting station at Mohebo (Shakawe) in Bechuanaland near the Okavango border. In 1940 the copper mines at Tsumeb had ceased production on account of the war, and although negotiations were begun with WENELA to find employment for the 1 800 retrenched labourers, the majority of these labourers were recruited into the Native Military Corps (NMC).

Following the demobilization of NMC recruits in 1943, the administration once again entered into negotiations with WENELA. By this time, however, the higher wages offered by the South African mines had already created a strong flow of labour to the WENELA recruiting station in Bechuanaland. In an attempt to regain control over this flow of labour,

SWANLA concluded an agreement with WENELA in terms of which it would recruit a fixed number of labourers for the South African recruiting organization. The agreement only came into operation in 1947, and in 1949 it was revised so that only Angolans would be recruited for the South African mines.⁵⁴ These attempts to gain control over the flow of labour to South Africa largely failed, however, because Namibian labourers continued to find their way to the WENELA recruiting station in Bechuanaland and after 1949, to pass themselves off as Angolans at the SWANLA recruiting station at Runtu in the Okavango area.⁵⁵

These developments had profound implication for both the contract labour system and consciousness of migrant labourers. For settler agriculture in particular, the South African mines represented yet another threat to their already diminishing labour supply. The South African mines paid higher wages than those in Namibia,⁵⁶ although this was well balanced by the various risks, hardships and financial costs associated with the journey from Ovamboland to the recruiting stations in Bechuanaland and the Okavango region.⁵⁷ Furthermore, as farm work was the least desirable form of labour, any loss of labour to the territory as a whole would eventually filter down to the farms. Because the farmers had become dependent of cheap contract labour and were unable or unwilling to raise wages, the only resource open to them was to call for greater coercion and control over the contract labour system. From 1945, for example, machinery was created to trace and arrest deserters in Ovamboland and greater use was made of the headmen to maintain control over returning contract labourers.⁵⁸

For the contract workers themselves the implications were even more far-reaching. Not only did recruitment by the South African mines offer an

escape from (and therefore defiance of) the arbitrary system of job allocation managed by SWANLA, but it also served as a means of political education for those labourers who were able to go to South Africa. Particularly for the Ovambos and other northerners who were isolated from even the police zone by the "red line" which had been in existence since the German colonial period, the access afforded to South Africa was a major breakthrough. As Solomon Mifima, one of the founders of the Ovamboland People's Organization who was recruited by WENELA in 1952, put it, before the second World War "there was a sealed door to the outside world".⁵⁹ Mifima maintains that seeking employment in South Africa was a form of revolt against the Namibian contract system and the monopoly held by SWANLA, but, even more important, access to South Africa served to "open the eyes" of those able to escape the isolation and restrictions imposed on all Ovambos and other northerners. The new opportunities afforded by this means of escape was to lead directly to the formation of the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) which in turn was to provide the basis of Namibia's most important nationalist organization, the South West Africa People's Organization, SWAPO.

The impact of the contacts with South Africa and other parts of the world afforded by both recruitments into the Native Military Corps and contracts with WENELA was evident to the colonial authorities soon after the war. In 1945, for example, the native commissioner at Runtu expressed the opinion that the "granting of permission to Ovambos to enlist in the Native Military Corps was . . . a mistake":

The efforts of certain Native soldiers, some of whom have been to the Union, to cause trouble, and upset the tribal system of government in the Northern Native Territories were immediately frustrated, and it was fortunate that the Administration asked for, and obtained, the discharge of SWA Native details who caused the trouble, before these men could

become a menace to SWA.

In 1947 it was reported that of the 7 471 labour recruits which had passed through Runtu in that year, 5 054 had gone to the Reef and only 1 517 had taken contracts within Namibia.

Most of these recruits return in due course and introduce a certain amount of propaganda to these tribes, but as the Chiefs are conservative, evil doctrines are quickly and firmly repressed. About six cases came to my attention in which repatriates showed disrespect to the Chiefs, to this Office, or to my Native Assistants. One said that there were thousands of Natives in the Territory and that one lonely Native Commissioner could be defied with impunity.⁶¹

For those labourers who were not able to go to South Africa, a variety of other strategies were available. In spite of the arbitrary and coercive nature of job allocation,⁶² various strategies were devised for avoiding certain categories of labour and even specific employees. The deputy commissioner of police in the territory reported in 1948, for example, that there had been numerous instances of labourers refusing to go to certain employers, even when they had no previous experience with them. In those cases where labourers had been compelled to accept such employment, the result was "invariably desertion".

It would appear that the natives keep one another informed of the conditions under which they work at the various employers. A large number of employers in South West Africa must be known to the Natives in their territories. It is obvious that once an employer has a bad name amongst the Natives, employees desert from him without further reason.⁶³

Contract labourers used similar techniques to avoid farm labour in general. The Native Labour Commission witnessed a vivid example of this at a "recruiting parade" in Ondongwa. The Commission reported that there were 500 labourers waiting for contracts at Ondongwa, of which only about 100 were able to find employment on the mines. When the remaining labourers were offered jobs on farms, "about a dozen youths

aged 14 and 15 years" were prepared to accept contracts.

An adult boy (sic) who was about to come forward was laughed at by his companions to such an extent that he shame-facedly retired into the ranks.⁶⁴

Desertion also became an increasingly common strategy in the 1940s.⁶⁵ For those labourers who found themselves isolated on the farms or in domestic employment, desertion was often the only recourse available. Here too there is evidence that contract labourers often acted as a group rather than as discrete individuals. For example, the deputy commissioner of police reported in 1948 that where an individual labourer had a grievance and decided to desert, it often happened that "the other natives without any reason whatever accompany him".⁶⁶ Deserters were also dependent on informal networks of contacts in the towns who would provide them with accommodation and other assistance while they looked for jobs.⁶⁷ Before the establishment of formal organizations in the late 1950s, contract labourers had developed a high degree of solidarity and group consciousness. A vivid illustration of this was provided by an official report on contract labourers in Walvis Bay in 1950:

The Ovambos tend to band themselves together as one man under one or two spokesmen to face criticism or make decisions and it appeared to me that no individual opinions were allowed, this attitude sometimes reached ridiculous proportions as, for instance, when some labourers were required for overtime work they refused to do it unless all the Ovambos at the work concerned were given the same amount of overtime work. This banding together under one or two spokesmen seem to me to be very dangerous as it may put the whole labour force in the hands of one or two agitators who could cause a great deal of trouble ...⁶⁸

The social consciousness of contract labourers

This sense of unity and solidarity had been described in some detail by Robert Gordon, who has termed it "brotherhood".⁶⁹ Essentially, "brotherhood" consisted of a comprehensive system of mutual support both in

and outside the work situation, as well as a system of obligations and controls aimed at securing uniform collective responses to pressures from employers and authorities. The informal structures of "brotherhood" provided an essential basis for the launching of the OPO in Namibia. Ndadi's account of the formation of the OPO branch in Walvis Bay in the late 1950s, for example, clearly shows how informal structures that had been established previously, provided an essential basis for the establishment of the branch. Indeed it could be argued that the OPO merely formalized and coordinated informal structures which were already in existence.⁷⁰ In much the same way, Sam Nujoma's organization of Ovambos in the Windhoek contract labourers' compound before the arrival of the OPO from Cape Town,⁷¹ was in all likelihood based on the bonds of "brotherhood".

An adequate understanding of the social consciousness of contract workers in Namibia must take into account not only their dual involvement in the subsistence and wage economies, but also their employment in both industrial and agricultural sectors. Fluctuations in the different sectors of the economy and the system of labour allocation meant that the majority of migrant labourers would have some experience of farm labour, or at the very least would face the threat of being allocated a job in agriculture. From 1948 SWANLA adopted a ruling that all new migrants would have to spend at least one term as farm labourers.⁷² Thus besides helping to shape the contract labour system, settler agriculture had an even more direct impact on the majority of contract workers. This in turn meant that even when a majority of contract labourers were involved in other sectors of the economy, the dismal wages, appalling conditions and underlying violence of farm labour would be an integral part of their experience,⁷³ and thus have a uniformly

radicalizing effect on all contract workers. Moreover, the attempts of the colonial state to reserve part of the colonial labour force for agriculture, brought contract labourers into direct conflict with the state. Ndadi points out that "breaking contract" or desertion was essential for the survival of contract workers in Namibia, and as it was the function of the state to enforce contracts, conflict became inevitable, and helped to expose the essentially political nature of the contract labour system.

While the degree of conflict between contract labourers and industrial employers was less intense and the latter, particularly the larger mines, were in a position to make concessions to prevent conflict from disrupting production, the industrial setting provided far greater opportunities for collective resistance and organization. The farm labour force was scattered in small groups throughout the territory and was thus extremely vulnerable to the blatant coercion of the commercial agricultural sector where beatings were meted out by employers and district police at the first signs of "insolence". Although there is evidence that farm labourers acted in unison, their most effective, and in some cases only, recourse was desertion. Industry, on the other hand, concentrated labourers not only in large work groups, but also in vast, often overcrowded compounds which allowed little, if any privacy and made the workers' survival and personal security dependent on one another. This concentration afforded opportunities for collective resistance and organization which were not available to farm labourers. Although strikes and other forms of resistance often met with severe repression,⁷⁴ contract workers were at times successful in wresting⁷⁵ concessions from employers by means of collective action. The abili-

ty, and therefore greater willingness, of large industrial concerns to compromise or grant concessions to their labourers in order to prevent disruptions of production or avert revolutionary challenges, however, served at least partially to neutralize the challenge of the industrial labour force.

Although Marx correctly anticipated the effects of homogeneous, concentrated mass labour on class consciousness, he underestimated the political acumen and economic power of the upper class. Rather than wait for the inexorable workings of the dialectic to produce their own gravediggers, the industrial upper class have been willing to deploy their considerable economic power to subvert radical leadership and to divert revolutionary movements into reformist channels ⁷⁶

The other vital aspect of Namibian contract labourers' complex social identity, their involvement in both a wage-labour sector and in a residual subsistence economy, also held important implication for the development of their social consciousness and political responses. By positing a "critical point" at which the contract worker's "balance of objective class interest transfers from peasant to proletarian status", ⁷⁷ Moorsom avoids rather than confronts the ambiguities inherent in the status of Namibian migrant workers. While it is clear that the dependence of increasingly larger numbers of Ovambos on wage-labour that followed the progressive disintegration of the pre-colonial economy, had a significant impact on the social consciousness of contract labourers, the fact remains that no matter how great this dependence, they were forced to return to their sending areas at the end of their contracts. The rigorous system of laws and extensive policing ensured that the existence of the towns would be extremely tenuous and in all probability self-perpetuating. ⁷⁸

The necessity of returning to their "home areas" imposed a number of constraints on contract labourers. No matter how small their involvement in agricultural production in these areas, contract labourers who returned to the reserves were subject to the ideological and political constraints of land-based subsistence economies. Although controversy still surrounds the issue, the low level of political consciousness and inherent conservatism of the peasantry and other subordinate land-based classes under the majority of circumstances, has been commented upon by many writers.⁷⁹ The constraining influence of ideology and political authorities in Ovamboland is consistently borne out by Ndadi's account of his experience as a contract labourer and SWAPO militant. For example, after being arrested for breaking his contract, Ndadi escaped from the police largely because of his fear of the tribal authorities in Ovamboland:

For breaking my contract I'd surely have been charged again at Ondangwa, under another set of laws, then taken to our headman at Ouhongo. He would then have had to punish me, and it was this I feared most.⁸⁰

The attitude of Ndadi's father to his activities as an OPO organizer is also revealing:

My father was angry; he did not want me involved in politics. "Nothing good will come of it! When I learned you were in prison, I was sick. We've all been very unhappy." ... My father asked if I was going to continue my political activities in Ovamboland. "Yes", I said. "Well, you'll find it's different here than in Walvis Bay. We know of only two OPO people, an old man named Kahumba and Hermann Ja Toivo. Hermann isn't allowed to speak at public meetings, so there is really just this one old man. No, Vinnia, there is not much you can do here".⁸¹

Other constraints specific to migrant labour undermined the political power of Namibian contract labourers. The very nature of the contract labour system ensured that there was a constant turnover of labour so that work groups were constantly changing, with new migrants arriving

and other leaving. Furthermore, the structure of the contract labour system in Namibia meant that labourers were constantly changing their jobs. While the solidarity of "brotherhood" may have partially compensated, the constant turnover undermined any attempt at long-term formal organization. Moreover, while contract labourers were concentrated in large groups in the police zone, after the termination of their contracts they would be dispersed over large areas in their reserves. Jeffery Paige had argued that the vulnerability of and structural constraints on migrant workers make it more likely that they will adopt a revolutionary nationalism than organize on a purely class basis. Because of the political vulnerability imposed by structural constraints such as those described above labourers will attempt to align themselves with other classes and political groupings in order to establish a more stable and secure political base.⁸² Both the need for political support from other sources and the essentially nationalist orientation of Namibian contract labourers are illustrated in the formation of the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) and its transformation into the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

Ironically, the very rigours of the contract system and the rigid control exercised over the lives of contract workers helped to create the conditions for the launching of a political movement which was to challenge not only the contract system, but the state itself. As Anthony Giddens has argued, all power relations are reciprocal, no matter how asymmetrical the distribution of power is.

Power relations are always two-way; that is to say, however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her a certain amount of power over the other. Those in subordinate positions in social systems are frequently adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some

degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of those social systems.⁸³

As the foregoing analysis of contract labour in Namibia has shown, the harshness and rigidity of the contract labour system contributed to the elaboration of a number of strategies upon which the survival of the individual migrant labourer often depended. Through an informal but efficient communication network, contract labourers kept one another informed on conditions in various parts of the country. As a group, migrant labourers also became adept at desertion and evasion of the police. Furthermore, the rigid distinctions between different ethnic groups and the ethnic segmentation of labour, encouraged the assumption of alternative ethnic identities - a strategy which wreaked havoc with the authorities' unrealistic conceptions about the supposedly obvious differences between various ethnic groups.

The formation of the Ovamboland People's Organization

It was essentially because of the institutionalization of such tactics that a relatively large group of Ovambo contract labourers came to settle in Cape Town in the 1950's. The mere presence of these labourers in Cape Town was remarkable. With the exception of a small minority of Ovambos and other northerners who had managed to obtain rights of residence in the urban areas, northern Namibians were not even allowed into the police zone without contracts. Shortly after World War II a limited number of Namibians had been recruited for mine labour in South Africa, but this arrangement had been terminated in 1949. After this WENELA was only allowed to recruit Angolans for labour on the South African mines. In order to gain access to South Africa, Ovambos had to make their way (usually by foot) to the WENELA recruiting station at Runtu in the Okavango region. There they would pass themselves off as Angolans in

order to qualify for labour contracts on the South African mines. In order to reach Cape Town, they would have to desert from the mines before their contracts had been completed. Once they had reached Cape Town, they would once again have to assume false ethnic identities. Many of those who settled in Cape Town passed themselves off as coloureds, and some even managed to have themselves registered as such.⁸⁴

The existence of "brotherhood", the informal network of communication and solidarity between Namibian contract labourers, may also be seen as a product of their disadvantaged position, of their inferior status, their isolation in compounds and the strict regulations governing their lives. Yet, this sense of solidarity and comradeship helped to lay the basis for mobilization of the OPO, first in Cape Town and later in Namibia. Resource mobilization theories have stressed the importance of pre-existing solidarities and symbols in the mobilization of social movements:

The mobilization potential of a group is largely determined by the degree of pre-existing group organization. Groups sharing strong distinctive identities and dense interpersonal networks exclusive to group members are highly organized and hence readily mobilized ... By providing prior solidarities and moral commitments, these identities and networks provide a basis for the operation of collective incentives.⁸⁵

By the mid-1950s about 200 Ovambo labourers had gathered in Cape Town, under the leadership of Hermann Ja Toivo, an Ovambo ex-serviceman who had moved to Cape Town in the early 1950s.⁸⁶ The vast majority of these Ovambos had, like Toivo, been recruited for the South African mines and deserted before completing their contracts. They were attracted to Cape Town because of its distance from the Transvaal mines and its reputation

as one of the "more liberal cities in South Africa".⁸⁷ Once a community of Ovambos had begun forming in Cape Town, its existence also served to attract other contract labourers to Cape Town.⁸⁸

Emil Appolus, a young aspirant journalist from southern Namibia who became the first non-Ovambo to join the group, reports that they formed a "closely knit community", which catered for the social security and recreational needs of its members.⁸⁹ Although conditions in Cape Town represented a considerable improvement on those in Namibia, the Cape Town group nevertheless led a precarious existence. Their presence in South Africa was illegal and they daily faced the prospect of arrest and deportation to Namibia. A small fund to which all members of the group contributed, was therefore established to provide for the welfare and security of the group of former contract labourers. When one of their number was arrested under the pass or other laws, the fund was used to secure his release.

Every Sunday members of the group would meet at a barbershop in Somerset Road. From there they would go to the Grand Parade to listen to the political speeches which were informally delivered there on Sundays. This, according to Appolus, was where they received their political education. It was probably also where Toivo first established contact with leaders of the Congress of Democrats and the Liberal Party.⁹⁰ When Appolus arrived in 1956, Toivo was already well known to prominent Cape Town socialists like Brian Bunting, Sam Kahn, Fred Carneson, Solly Sachs and Jack Simons, and liberals like Patrick Duncan and Randolph Vigne.

In particular, members of the Congress of Democrats appear to have been influential in politicizing Toivo's group and advising them on forming a

political organization. Their advice was not, however, immediately acted upon. Although members of Toivo's group realized the need for a popular political organization in Namibia, they felt constrained by their weak financial position and the vulnerability of their illegal status in South Africa. They therefore delayed launching a formal organization, and it was only after a tape recorded petition to the United Nations brought Toivo to the attention of the South African police, that the step of forming a political organization was taken.⁹¹

There is therefore a modicum of truth in the accusation of the former South African prime minister, John Vorster, that SWAPO "was born in Cape Town, as the child of four communists, viz, Jack Simons, Ben Turok, H. Sacks (sic) and Fred Carneson."⁹² However, while the role of the Congress of Democrats should be acknowledged, a number of other influences were also involved in the decision to launch the OPO. Solomon Mifima who first arrived in Cape Town in 1953 and who stayed with Toivo in Langa, maintains that contact had been established with the whole congress movement, and that, in particular, the example of the African National Congress (ANC) was a powerful influence in the Cape Town group. The Toivo group had also had contact with members of the Liberal Party, and SWANU officials later alleged that the South African Liberal Party had significant influence on SWAPO because of "the effective grip it (the Liberal Party) had on the Cape Town SWAPO branch".⁹³

In additions to these South African political groupings, the Toivo group established links with a number of other politicized Namibians, like Mburumba Kerina, a Namibian student who in 1956 joined Michael Scott as a petitioner at the United Nations. It was probably at Kerina's insti-

gation that Toivo decided to send a petition to the United Nations in 1958.⁹⁴ The Cape Town group had also had contact with a number of Namibian students who were studying in South Africa. Perhaps the most important of these was Jarietendu Kozonguizi, president of the South West Africa Student Body and a member of the ANC who was later to become the first president of the South West Africa National Union (SWANU). While studying at the University of Cape Town in 1957, Kozonguizi stayed with Toivo and Mifima in Langa and had frequent discussions with the Toivo group, at which the possibility of launching a Namibian political movement was a frequent topic.⁹⁵ When Toivo was deported from South Africa at the end of 1958, he and Kozonguizi travelled together to Namibia and met with political leaders in Windhoek and Keetmanshoop to discuss the establishment of a political movement for Namibia. Their discussions were a major step in the process that led to the launching of the nationalist movement in 1959. The Cape Town group also had contact with the Namibian student Otilie Schimming and her husband Kenneth Abrahams (a member of the Unity Movement), who attended their house meetings and addressed them on such issues as the mandate.⁹⁶

Besides the variety of influences that played a role in shaping the OPO and later SWAPO, there is also evidence that the influence of white socialists on the OPO was limited by their superficial interest in Namibia. Emil Appolus, for example, maintains that while members of the Congress of Democrats did attempt to politicize the Namibians with whom they came into contact, in general their involvement in South African politics ensured that their interest in Namibia was "very peripheral".⁹⁷

The actual launching of the Ovamboland People's Organization and the roles of different leaders in its formation is subject to both confusion

and controversy. Some accounts refer to the existence of both an Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC) and an Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO).⁹⁸ Accounts also differ as to whether Toivo was present when the organization was launched, and considerable controversy surrounds the role of Sam Nujoma in helping to bring the OPO into being. At least a part of the confusion surrounding these issues appears to hinge on the existence of both formal and informal organizations in Cape Town and Windhoek. It has already been shown how the Cape Town group had developed into a closely knit social unit which had formed a fund to cater for the welfare of its members. Although this grouping wished to form a political organization, it held back because of the precarious legal situation of its members. This did not, however, prevent members of the group from discussing the formation of a political movement which initially they planned to name the Ovamboland People's Congress because of their association with the Congress Movement in Cape Town. In formal terms, however, the OPC never came into existence. When the Cape Town group eventually decided to launch a political organization, they opted instead to call it the Ovamboland People's Organization, because at that time the South African congresses were coming under increasing attack from the authorities and the Namibians felt that to use the word "Congress" in the name of their organization would attract unnecessary attention from the police: "It was in 1958/59 that the OPO was formed.⁹⁹ The OPC was just a suggestion. It was never actually formed."

The event that precipitated their decision to form a political organization was Toivo's deportation from Cape Town, after the Ovambo leader had sent a tape recorded petition to the United Nations. Immediately after the presentation of the petition to the UN, Toivo was interrogated by

the police and given 72 hours to leave Cape Town. It is likely that, as Appolus maintains, the OPO was formally launched only after Toivo's departure from Cape Town, but that, as Appolus himself acknowledges, prior to this an organization had "already existed in all but name,"¹⁰⁰

Toivo was made president of the organization, with Jacob Kuhangua as secretary-general and Andreas Shipanga, Emil Appolus and Solomon Mifima on the executive. The constitution of the OPO was modelled on that of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party, which Appolus had copied from a book in a Cape Town library. Nkrumah's nationalist aims of "freedom and independence" were made the aims of the OPO, and even the motto of the CPP was adopted by the Namibian organization.

Given these nationalist aims, the choice of the name, Ovamboland People's Organization, appears anomalous. Appolus maintains that the founders of the OPO soon realized they "had made a mistake, that the name OPO was wrong. Even when we were talking about the name, many people in our group objected to it".¹⁰¹ However, it was finally decided to include a reference to Ovamboland in the name because the members of the organization intended to return to Ovamboland to organize there. That the OPO subscribed to nationalist aims for its inception, is confirmed by other leaders associated with its formation. Kozonguizi, for example, who was in Cape Town at the end of 1958 and participated in "lengthy discussions" with the Toivo group, maintains that there was agreement that the ultimate aim of the group was to establish a "national movement". The strategy, however, was to begin with regional organizations which would finally be fused into a national body.¹⁰²

Essentially, they envisaged the establishment of a South West African National Congress with regional Congresses for Namaland (South), Damaraland (Central), and Ovamboland (North), on the same pattern as the African National Congress in South Africa with its provincial Congresses.¹⁰³

Kozonguizi stresses that the idea of regional congresses contained within a national "South West Africa People's Congress" was not intended to accommodate tribal or ethnic sentiment, but purely for administrative purposes, given the vastness of the country and the difficulties of communication and organization on a national basis.¹⁰⁴

These claims are borne out by the actions of Toivo and Kozonguizi when they left Cape Town together in December 1958. The plans to launch a national political organization which Toivo, Kozonguizi and other members of the Toivo group had formulated in Cape Town were presented to Namibian leaders in Keetmanshoop and Windhoek. At their first stopover, in Keetmanshoop, Toivo and Kozonguizi entered into discussions with a newly formed organization called the Society for the Advancement of the African People in South West Africa (SAAPSWA). Their aim was to persuade leaders of the Society to launch a "Nama and People's Congress". Although the SAAPSWA leader, Philip Musirika, agreed to this suggestion,¹⁰⁵ apparently nothing came of it.

Toivo and Kozonguizi then proceeded to Windhoek separately, because they feared that if they travelled together they might be intercepted by the police. While in Windhoek, Toivo stayed with Clement Kapuuo, a Herero school teacher and member of the Chiefs' Council who was later to succeed Hosea Kutako as leader of the Herero people. During the discussions in Windhoek, plans for a national political organization were formulated. Among those who attended these talks were Toivo, Kozonguizi, Kapuuo (who chaired the meetings), Levy Nganjone and Frans Akuenye.¹⁰⁶ In conjunction with the Chief's Council, it was agreed in

principle to launch a national political organization. Kozonguizi was to be employed as a full-time organizer under the guise of being secretary to Chief Kutako. Toivo, on the other hand, was to proceed to Ovamboland to organize there.

The Native Affairs Department was, however, strongly opposed to Toivo returning to Ovamboland, as they felt that he would be "more dangerous" in Ovamboland which was the territory's major labour reserve. They therefore attempted to persuade him to remain in Windhoek. This attitude of the colonial authorities finally convinced the nationalists that Toivo should go to Ovamboland. When Toivo defied their orders and proceeded north, he was arrested in Tsumeb and after being detained there was escorted to Ovamboland where he was placed under house arrest under the supervision of Chief Johannes Kamonde of the Ondonga.¹⁰⁷ According to Vei, the "arrest of Toivo and other developments" ¹⁰⁸ temporarily checked the progress towards the launching of the National Movement". Until his second arrest in 1966 and subsequent imprisonment, Toivo remained under house arrest and police surveillance, and was never ¹⁰⁹ given a free hand to organize in Ovamboland.

Sam Nujoma and developments in Namibia

Thus far this account of the formation of the OPO has dealt exclusively with the role of the group based in Cape Town. Although this group was ultimately responsible for the formal launching of the OPO and for linking the organization into the broader nationalist movement, developments in Namibia prior to 1959 were of vital importance, particularly in helping to create an effective political base for the OPO in Namibia. By the time the Cape Town group took steps to establish the movement within the territory, a basis had already been created for launching a

political movement among contract labourers in Namibia.

It has already been shown how the long history of resistance among contract labourers and the phenomenon of "brotherhood" were important in laying the foundations of political consciousness and action among these workers. However, a number of specific developments and interventions helped to crystalize the more general sense of solidarity and political awareness that had developed in the compounds. In 1954, for example, the grievances of contract workers were focused on a specific issue by the intervention of two Ovambos, Eliaser Tuhadeleni, an early spokesman for contract labourers and later a SWAPO leader, and Theophilus Hamuntubangela, an Anglican priest. The issue revolved around the police road blocks set up at Namutoni, where all returning contract labourers were searched and goods confiscated without compensation. In particular resentment was aroused by the arbitrary nature of the confiscations, which appeared to be based on the colonial authorities' assessments of what was really "needed" in Ovamboland.

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In January 1954 Tuhadeleni made written protests to the police about these confiscations. When this failed to produce results, Hamuntubangela collected evidence of the confiscations from workers and sent a letter of protest to the UN in April 1954. Hamuntubangela also asked the UN to place Namibia under the trusteeship of Canada. The following year Hamuntubangela was brought to trial in Ovamboland, but received such enthusiastic support from people attending the trial that the authorities backed down and instead arranged for the priest to be recalled to Windhoek by his church. In Windhoek Hamuntubangela continued to play an active political role, holding meetings with political leaders

like Sam Nujoma, until he was deported back to Ovamboland by the authorities in 1958.¹¹¹

Very little has been written about the political role of Sam Nujoma in the pre-OPO period, and, strangely, even SWAPO publications on the nationalist movement¹¹² have been silent on this important phase of Namibian political history. While some members of the Cape Town group (like Solomon Mifima and Andreas Shipanga) dispute that Nujoma played any significant role before 1959, a number of the other nationalist leaders (such as Kozonguizi, Ngavirue and Appolus) have attested to the significant role played by Nujoma. The latter accounts appear more reliable, however, not only because they corroborate one another, but also because Kozonguizi and Ngavirue were more favourably placed to monitor developments in Windhoek than either Mifima or Shipanga who were based in Cape Town.¹¹³

According to Kozonguizi,¹¹⁴ Nujoma had been politically active from about 1954 when he approached the Chiefs' Council through Clement Kapuuo, at that time a teacher at the St Barnabus School where Nujoma was attending night school. Kozonguizi maintains that Nujoma felt guilty about the collaborationist role of the Ovambo chiefs and headmen, and that he looked to the Herero leadership for guidance in his political activities. When the Chiefs' Council decided to make its influence felt in the elections of members of the advisory board, Nujoma was called upon to organize the votes of the Ovambo contract labourers in Windhoek.¹¹⁵ It was largely through Nujoma's efforts, Kozonguizi maintains, that the contract labourers of the Windhoek compound became politically conscious.

Appolus' account closely corroborates that of Kozongulzi. When Appolus arrived in Namibia in 1959, Nujoma had, without the benefit of a formal organization, already organized the Windhoek-based contract workers into a significant political force. The Ovambo leader was working closely with the Chiefs' Council and enjoyed a close relationship with Chief Kutako.¹¹⁶ Nujoma's activities included holding regular meetings in the Windhoek compound (where grievances against the contract system were expressed and the contract workers politicized), collecting money for a fund to assist contract workers, and encouraging labourers to attend night school. These activities had attracted the attention of the authorities, and as a result Nujoma was dismissed from a number of jobs he held. Appolus claims that when he arrived in Windhoek in 1959, no white businessman was prepared to employ Nujoma because of his political activities and that he therefore worked for a black businessman who owned a shop in the Windhoek location. Various attempts had also been made to remove Nujoma from Windhoek, but as he had been born in an urban area in the police zone, the authorities were not sure where to send him.

It would therefore appear that when the OPO was moved from Cape Town to Namibia, a political base had already been established among migrant workers in Windhoek. Leaders of the Cape Town group had become aware of their isolation soon after Toivo's departure from Cape Town. Early in 1959, for example, they wrote to the South West Africa Progressive Association¹¹⁷ in order to consolidate their links with the territory. In April 1959 Jacob Kuhangwa, Solomon Mifima and Emil Appolus moved to Windhoek and opened discussions with Sam Nujoma, the Chiefs' Council and the Progressive Association. Again all these groupings were in agree-

ment about the need for a nationalist movement in Namibia. In the same month Sam Nujoma and Jacob Kuhangua officially launched the OPO in Namibia. Membership cards which had been printed in Cape Town were distributed and attempts made to extend the activities of the new organization beyond Windhoek. Nujoma played an important role in establishing support for the OPO in other urban centres like Walvis Bay and Otjiwarongo.

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However, before examining the development of the OPO and its eventual transformation into SWAPO, it is necessary to turn to the events which led up to the launching of the South West Africa National Union (SWANU), and in particular to examine the origins and role played by the third major grouping involved in the launching of Namibian nationalism, the intelligentsia.

Endnotes for chapter eleven

1. See chapter one, above.
2. See chapter eight, above.
3. V. Ndadi, *Breaking contract: the story of Vinnia Ndadi*. Richmond: LSM Press, 1974, p. 28.
4. Pendleton, *Katutura: a place where we do not stay*. San Diego: San Diego University Press, 1974, pp. 57 and 62-63. Although Pendleton did his research in the late 1960s and early 1970s, his findings substantiate earlier accounts of attitudes to contract workers. See, for example, Ndadi, *op. cit.* Attitudes to contract workers were likely to have improved in this later period because of the advancement of the nationalist movement and the less dominant role of settler farming during this period.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
7. See, for example, G. Cronje and S. Cronje, *The workers of Namibia*. London: International Defence and Aid fund for South Africa, 1979; R. Green and K. Kiljunen, 'The colonial economy: structures of growth and exploitation', in R. Green, M.-L. Kiljunen (eds.) *Namibia: the last colony*. London: Heinemann, 1981, pp. 30-58; D. Innes, 'South African capital and Namibia', in Green, Kiljunen and Kiljunen (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 59-86; R. Moorsom, 'Labour consciousness and the 1971-72 contract workers' strike in Namibia', *Development and Change*, 10, 2, 1979, pp. 205-231; R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment, contract labour and worker consciousness in Namibia, 1915-1972'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4, 1, 1977, pp. 52-87.
8. Moorsom (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 205. In a more recent study, Moorsom places greater emphasis on the role of agriculture in shaping the contract labour system: "The viability of settler agriculture was from the start built upon the exploitation of the labour of black Namibians and repressive conditions of wage-labour of any sector of the commercial economy." R. Moorsom, *Transforming a wasted land*. London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1982, pp. 32-33.
9. One of the few major studies which devotes attention to the crucial 1930s and 1940s period is the unpublished Ph.D. thesis of M.J. Olivier, *Inboorlingsbeleid en administrasie in die mandaatgebied van Suidwes-Afrika*. (University of Stellenbosch, 1961).
10. R. Gordon, 'A note on the history of labour action in Namibia', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 1, 10, 1975, pp. 7-17.
11. About 150 Ovambo labourers employed by the Kahn mine at Arandis went on strike in March 1916 after a headman was assaulted by a white miner. (ADM 12/14) Delays in payment of wages by the Railways had also resulted in a 'great deal of discontent, strikes, desertions and refusals to work' among migrant workers in 1915 and 1916. See, for example, ADM 2794/2, Native Affairs, Karibib - Native Commissioner, 13/11/15; ADM

419/4, Secretary - Assistant Director, Railways, 4/3/16.

12. K. Gottschalk, 'South African labour policy in Namibia 1915-1975'. *South African Labour Bulletin*, 1-2, 1978, pp. 90-91.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

14. Other strikes during 1941 occurred at the Abenab mine in Grootfontein (April), the Krantzberg mine, Omaruru district (July), and on the railways in the Mariental district (December). SWAA A73/22, Annual Report, 1941; SWAA A396/1, Deputy Commissioner, SA Police, Pretoria, 20/6/46.

15. SWAA A396/15, District Commandant, Keetmanshoop - Deputy Commissioner, Windhoek, 4/3/46; SWAA A396/1, Deputy Commissioner, Windhoek - Commissioner, 20/6/46.

16. SWAA A396/1, Deputy Commissioner, Windhoek - Chief Native Commissioner, 28/1/48.

17. Gottschalk, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

18. SWAA A50/22, Native Commissioner, Ovamboland - Chief Native Commissioner, 22/7/49.

19. SWAA A396/1, Magistrate, Swakopmund - Chief Native Commissioner, 12/5/50.

20. Gottschalk, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

21. See, for example, SWAA A73/20, Annual Report: Native Affairs, 1945; SWAA A396/1, Deputy Commissioner, Windhoek - Chief Native Commissioner, 9/9/47.

22. SWAA A396/1, Deputy Commissioner, Windhoek - Chief Native Commissioner, 9/9/47.

23. SWAA A396/1, Native Commissioner, Ovamboland - Secretary, 10/10/47.

24. Moorsom, 1979, *op. cit.*

25. These issues will be discussed in greater detail below.

26. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

27. See Table 8.6 in Chapter 8.

28. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

29. Moorsom, *op. cit.*, p. 30. See also Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

30. South West Africa, *Report of the South West Africa Native Labourers Commission, 1945-1948*. Windhoek: Unie-Volkspers Beperk (subsequently, Report of Native Labourers Commission).

31. Moorsom, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

32. See Table 8.6.

33. Report of Native Labourers Commission.

34. Moorsom (1979), *op. cit.*, pp. 214-215. Although it has sometimes been suggested that there was a connection between the establishment of the FCWU in Luderitz and the contract workers' strikes of 1952/3, this does not seem to be the case. Detailed examination of the records of the Union held at the University of Cape Town, show no link between the Union and the strikes. It is also clear from correspondence between the Luderitz branch and the Cape Town head office, that the Namibian branch was for the most part inactive or only marginally active, in spite of constant encouragement from the energetic Ray Alexander. See also University of the Witwatersrand Library (Church of the Province Archives), AH 646, DC 2.10, South African Trade Union Congress, *Affiliated Unions: Food and Canning Worker's Union*, R. Alexander - General Secretary, SAT&LC, 25/10/49 and 4/1/50; R. Alexander - Secretary for South West Africa, 8/9/52; AD 1175/A11, Food and Canning Workers' Union Collection, Minutes of Second Quarterly Branch Delegates Conference of the FCWU, Cape Town, 6/7/52 and 5/7/53.

35. See, for example, Ndadi, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-69.

36. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 301-302. Farmers tended to requisition larger numbers of labourers than actually required to impress on SWANLA the urgency of their labour needs.

38. Moorsom (1982), *op. cit.*, p. 31.

39. The large-scale introduction of contract labour into settler agriculture may have reduced farmers' labour costs by up to 50 per cent. In the Windhoek district in 1948, for example, it was reported that local (police zone) labourers were paid an average wage of £2 per month and a minimum wage of £1-10-0, while contract labourers received an average wage of 15/- and a minimum wage of 9/-. SWAA A50/188/13, *Annual Reports, Native Affairs*, 1948. Similarly, it was reported from Mariental that while contract labourers were paid 9/- per month for the first year and 13/- and upwards thereafter, local labourers received a minimum wage of £1. SWAA A50/188/10, *Annual Report of Native Affairs, Mariental District*, 1947. See also chapter nine, above.

40. Report of Native Labourers Commission; See also South West Africa, *Report of the Long Term Agriculture Policy Commission 1948*. Windhoek: Verenigde Pers, 1948. (subsequently, Report of Agricultural Policy Commission).

41. See, for example, Moorsom, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-45. The easing of restrictions on northern labourers, may be seen as part of a general shift by the colonial state away from the dominance of farming interests in the territory. See Moorsom (1982), *op. cit.*, p. 44.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

45. *Ibid.*
46. Report of Agricultural Policy Commission, para 217.
47. Moorsom (1982), *op. cit.*, p. 33.
48. See chapter 8.
49. Ndadi, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-24. See also Report of Native Labourers Commission, p. 52.
50. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
51. See, for example, Ndadi, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-59.
52. See chapter eight above.
53. Report of Native Labourers Commission, p. 35. These general sentiments are repeatedly confirmed by Ndadi's account of the contract labour system. Jobs on the mines and in industry were eagerly sought after by migrant labourers. In spite of his own negative experiences in a canning factory in Walvis Bay, Ndadi recalls his disappointment when in the early 1950s he found "no openings in the good industrial jobs like mining and fishing". Ndadi, *op. cit.*, p. 49. See also pp. 24, 34, 46 and 53.
54. Olivier, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-311, Report of Native Labourers Commission, pp. 44-51.
55. See, for example, R. Gordon, *Mines, masters and migrants: life in a Namibian compound*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1977, pp. 40-41.
56. Report of Native Labourers Commission, p. 1.
57. SWAA A73/26. The trip to and from Nohembo took four weeks on foot either way' and contract labourers were charged 'exorbitant prices' for food along the way.
58. SWAA A73/26 - Native Affairs, Annual Report for the year 1945.
59. Interview, Solomon Mifima, 23/8/79.
60. SWAA A50/188/10. Annual Reports, 1945, Report of Native Commissioner, Runtu, 22/2/45.
61. SWAA A50/188/12, Annual Reports, 1947.
62. Ndadi, *op. cit.*, for example, related how a labourer was beaten up for refusing a contract.
63. SWAA A396/1, Deputy-Commissioner, SAP, - Chief Native Commissioner, 28/1/48.
64. This illustrates that the avoidance of farm labour was more than an individual response and that group pressures existed for all adult contract labourers to boycott farm labour. Report of the Native Labour Commission, p. 17.

65. See, for example, SWAA A73/26, *Native Affairs, Annual Report, 1945*.
66. SWAA A396/1, *Deputy Commissioner SAP - Chief Native Commissioner, 20/1/48*.
67. See Ndadi, op. cit.
68. SWAA A396/1, *Office of Administrator - Chief Native Commissioner, 17/10/50*.
69. R.J. Gordon, *Mines, masters and migrants*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1977, pp. 101-142; See also Moorsom (1979), op. cit., pp. 212-214.
70. Ndadi, op. cit., pp. 55-65.
71. Interview, Emil Appolus, 23/4/78.
72. Olivier, op. cit., p. 300.
73. Jefferey Paige, for example, has argued that, dominant classes which are dependent on land for their income are usually associated with a static agricultural product, and therefore tend to generate zero-sum conflicts with subordinate classes. J.H. Paige, *Agrarian revolution*. New York: Free Press, 1975, p. 23.
74. See, for example, account of strikes during 1941 and 1946 above.
75. See, for example, Ndadi's account of the contract workers' "go-slow strike" in a Walvis Bay canning factory in 1959. Ndadi, op. cit., pp. 55-59.
76. J. Paige, *Agrarian revolution*. New York: Free Press, 1975, p. 49. See also Greenberg, op. cit.
77. Moorsom (1979), op. cit., p. 209.
78. See, for example, Ndadi, op. cit.
79. See, for example, I. Roxborough, *Theories of underdevelopment*. London: MacMillan Press, pp. 91-93; Paige, op. cit., pp. 23-40; B. Moore, *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, p. 475.
80. Ndadi, op. cit., p. 43.
81. Ibid., p. 83. See also pp. 84-106 for an account of the various difficulties faced by political organizers in Ovamboland.
82. Paige, op. cit., pp. 60-70.
83. A. Giddens, *Central problems in social theory: action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*. London: MacMillan, 1979, p. 6. See also pp. 149-150.
84. Interviews with Emil Appolus, Windhoek 23/4/78, 24/4/78 & 26/1/80

(subsequently, Appolus interviews); Interviews with Solomon Mifima, Windhoek, 23/8/79; 29/8/79 & 8/1/80 (subsequently, Mifima interviews). Andreas Shipanga, for example, assumed the name Cloete, in order to pass as a Coloured.

85. J.C. Jenkins, 'Resource mobilization theory and the study of social movements', Annual Review of Sociology, 9, 1983, p. 538.

86. After being demobilized from the Native Military Corp, Herman Toivo studied at the St Mary's Mission School, one of the few schools in Ovamboland where English was taught. Although he was trained as a teacher, Toivo did not remain long in Ovamboland, but instead was recruited at the WENELA recruiting station at Runtu in 1949 or 1950. After a short term on a South African mine, he went to Cape Town where his first job was as a railway policeman. Solomon Mifima who first met Toivo at the St Mary's Mission, maintains that Toivo did not exhibit any political inclinations while at the mission, and that he became politically active only after going to Cape Town and coming under the influence of South African political movements.

87. Mifima interviews.

88. Mifima and Appolus interviews.

89. Appolus interviews. Appolus who had just completed his schooling in the Transvaal, joined the Toivo group in Cape Town in 1956.

90. Appolus interviews.

91. Ibid.

92. J.H.P. Serfontein, Namibia? Randburg: Fokus Suid Publishers, 1976, p. 159. Vorster went on to claim that these "four listed and acknowledged communists" made Sam Nujoma the leader of the organization. This claim is highly improbable because Nujoma was never a part of the Cape Town grouping and appears only to have established contact with the Toivo group after the formation of the OPO.

93. Kozonguizi Documents, No. 25, p. 7; Interviews with Jarientendu Kozonguizi, Windhoek, 7/12/78; 8/12/78 & 27/8/79 (subsequently, Kozonguizi interviews). Kozonguizi maintained that a letter he had addressed to the SWAPO group in Cape Town was replied to by Ernest Wentzel of the Liberal Party. He also claimed the Liberal Party had paid the passage of most of the SWAPO members who went abroad from Cape Town and that many of the SWAPO members from Cape Town possessed Liberal Party cards.

94. Appolus interviews.

95. Kozonguizi interviews.

96. Mifima interviews.

97. Appolus interviews.

98. See, for example, G. Töttemeyer, South West Africa/ Namibia. Randburg: Fokus Suid Publishers, 1977, p. 62; J.H.P. Serfontein,

Namibia? *Randburg: Fokus Suid Publishers, 1976, pp. 144-5.*

99. *Nifima interviews. See also Appolus interview and A. du Pisani. SWA/Namibia: the politics of continuity and change. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1986, pp. 146-7.*

100. *Appolus interviews.*

101. *Ibid. See also Du Pisani, 1986, op. cit., p. 146-7.*

102. *Kozonguizi interviews.*

103. *Kozonguizi Documents, No. 1, p. 2.*

104. *Kozonguizi Documents, No. 3, p. 4 & No. 4, p. 7. According to Nifima (interview with writer), prior to Toivo's departure from Cape Town, "the idea was that Toivo form the Ovamboland People's Congress, Kozonguizi the Herero People's Congress, and later (the two would) come together as one organization."*

105. *Z. Ngavirue, Political parties and interest groups in South West Africa: a study of a plural society. Ph.D thesis, Oxford University, 1973, p. 295; H. Vei, South West African National Union. Windhoek: SWANU National Headquarters, undated (subsequently, Kozonguizi Documents, No. 6), p. 1.*

106. *Kozonguizi Documents, No. 4, p. 7. Kozonguizi reports that "a notable absentee was Sam Nujoma who happened to be on a visit to Ovamboland. In fact at the time he was setting the ball rolling organising the movement against the puppet chiefs in Ovamboland parallel to the activities in Cape Town."*

107. *Kozonguizi Documents, No. 3, p. 4; No. 1, p. 2; No. 2, p. 3-4 and No. 4, p. 7.*

108. *Kozonguizi Documents, No. 6, p. 1. Vei was probably referring to the departure of Kozonguizi for the UN.*

109. *Kozonguizi interviews.*

110. *Nifima (interview with writer), for example, maintains that scented soaps were confiscated because colonial officials regarded such imports as "inappropriate" within, what they conceived of, as "traditional" Ovambo culture.*

111. *SWAPO, To be born a nation: The liberation struggle in Namibia. London: Zed Press, 1981, p. 172. SWAPO, 'Namibia: people's resistance, 1670-1970'. Race and Class, 22, 1, 1980, p. 139; Nifima interviews; Ngavirue, op. cit., p. 289.*

112. *See, for example, SWAPO, 1981 and 1980, op. cit.; H.L. Hamutenya & G.H. Geingob, 'African nationalism in Namibia', in C.P. Potholm & R. Dale (eds.), Southern Africa in perspective. New York: Free Press, 1972.*

113. *Although both Kozonguizi and Ngavirue were students in South Africa during part of this period, they regularly returned to Windhoek during*

school and university holidays. The accounts of Mifima and Shipanga may also be suspect because as members of the breakaway "SWAPO-democrats", they are bitterly opposed to Nujoma.

114. Kozonguizi interviews.

115. Members of the Windhoek board were considered collaborators by politically conscious Namibians, and it was therefore decided to try to elect boardmen who would be more sympathetic to the cause of anti-colonialism.

116. Nujoma had been drawn to the Chiefs' Council by its prestige and the solidness of its support. Appolus interview. The good relationship between Nujoma and the Council was later to pay significant political dividends, as well as playing a major role in the relationships that developed between the different factions of the nationalist movement. See chapters 12 and 13.

117. See chapter 12.

118. See, for example, Ndadi, op. cit.

Chapter twelve

THE ROLE OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE LAUNCHING OF SWANU

Urbanization in the post-World War II period

Economic growth after the war not only increased the demand for contract labour, but also created the conditions for increasing urbanization of the black population of the police zone. Between the two world wars rigorous pass laws had tightly constrained the growth of a permanent urban labour force, so that between 1930 and 1936 the number of blacks legally in the towns actually decreased from 26 500 to 18 500. Although tight control continued to be exercised over the influx of blacks into the towns, the post-World War II period saw significant increases in the urban black population which rose from 30 000 in 1946 to 49 000 in 1955. Whereas in 1936 only 14,1 per cent of the black population of the police zone lived in the towns, this percentage reached 25,1 in 1951 and 33,6 in 1960.² The channelling of contract labour to the farms following the Great Depression also played a role in this process of urbanization. Prior to the 1930s, farmers had relied almost exclusively on police zone labour, but with the introduction of contract labour to the farms, the settlers had rapidly replaced their existing labourers with cheaper contract labourers from the northern parts of the territory. Because the majority of reserves were already overcrowded, many of these displaced labourers were accommodated in the towns.³ In conjunction with the labour needs of the rapidly expanding white urban population, black urbanization was a product of impoverishment and pressure on the land in the reserves, higher wages and a greater variety of jobs in the towns, and the existence of better education facilities in the

towns.⁴

The new urban environment was to play a major role in the transformation of political responses to colonialism and in shaping the organizations that emerged after World War II. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the OPO was at first essentially an urban organization, having its origins in a foreign city and then spreading to Windhoek and other urban areas in Namibia, before establishing a significant base in Ovamboland. All the major political and quasi-political organizations that came into being after World War II had roots in the urban areas. In particular Windhoek which, according to Pendleton⁵ had always dominated the urban areas and accounted for an average of 32 per cent of Namibia's urban population, was to become the centre of the nationalist movement that emerged towards the end of the 1950s.

Besides the organizational advantages of a more concentrated labour force and increased opportunities for political contacts and the exchange of ideas (as discussed in the previous chapter), urbanization held a number of other important implications for political mobilization and confrontations with the colonial state. Perhaps the most significant of these was the opportunity to transcend narrow ethnic identities and parochial leadership. Prior to 1959 major manifestations of resistance in the urban areas had been restricted to specific industrial settings, and because of the ethnic divisions of the labour force had been largely restricted to specific ethnic groupings. Similarly, in the predominantly ethnically-exclusive reserves, opposition manifested itself along ethnic lines. As demonstrated in the first section of this dissertation, a major aim of the colonial authorities in establishing new reserves in the police zone was to counteract the increasing unity of anti-

colonial protest during the early 1920s. In this respect the reserves' policy proved remarkably effective not only in dispersing the black population in remote areas of the police zone, but also in maintaining (or more accurately, renewing) ethnic identities and strengthened the influence of indigenous leaders. Furthermore, because of the concentration of ethnic groupings in specific areas and the administration's insistence on dealing only with "ethnic" leaders, protest tended to coalesce around parochial issues.⁶ While ethnic and indigenous leaders like those of the Hereros continued to challenge the administration, they had a vested interest in maintaining the ethnic basis of political organization.

Enforcing ethnic segregation in the towns was far more difficult, although not completely beyond the capacities of the colonial authorities. The administration had, for example, been relatively successful in isolating northern contract workers from the more permanent black residents of the towns. Although attempts were also made to segregate other ethnic groups, the mere concentration of people in urban settings reduced the effectiveness of such measures. Furthermore, black townships were subjected to the most appalling neglect with little or no planning and provision of services. The resulting physical disorganization not only made it difficult to impose ethnic zoning on townships, but also hampered the administration's attempts to exercise control over these settlements.⁷

Not only did urbanization provide new opportunities for political mobilization, it also helped to intensify the contradictions in colonial policy and escalate conflict.⁸ As Paul Maylam pointed out in relation

to South Africa, some of the most fundamental contradictions of apartheid are to be found in the city. A major contradiction in both South Africa and Namibia was the attempt to keep urban areas as a domain of whites without endangering the flow of labour to these areas. This contradiction was at least partly responsible for the neglect of black townships and the preference for migrant labour, but it also played an important role in the creation of a strict regime of regulations governing movements between towns and other areas. With the expanding labour needs of the towns, such regulations became a major source of conflict between authorities and colonized. An impression of the prominence given to control over movement may be obtained from the table of the most common criminal prosecutions of Africans in the urban areas of Windhoek in 1969. This clearly demonstrates that even in the late 1960s the most common source of prosecution of urban blacks in Namibia (as in South Africa) related to the control over movement :

TABLE 12.1 : CRIMINAL OFFENCES OF AFRICANS IN URBAN AREAS IN 1969⁹

Offence	Number of offenses	Fines (\$)	Days in jail
1. In location without permission	2 155	24 536	23 833
2. Longer than 72 hours in urban area without pass	797	17 903	26 140
3. Rent due	443	4 852	6 292
4. Transgression of registration laws	441	1 607	2 884
5. Providing illegal accommodation	381	1 500	803
6. Failure to produce service contract	199	788	1 130
7. Extra-territorial and northern African illegally in urban areas	168	2 888	4 570

Following the rapid growth of the urban population in Windhoek and other towns during and immediately after World War II, greater emphasis was placed on urban planning, on securing land for the expanding white population, and achieving greater control over the black work force and

its urban settlements. Previously control had been maintained by keeping the urban black population to an *absolute minimum*, but as the economy expanded and the labour needs of the towns grew, colonial policies had to be adapted. As happened in South African towns, urban local authorities became increasingly concerned about health conditions in the squalid and neglected black urban settlements. Maynard Swanson¹⁰ appropriately named such responses the "sanitation syndrome, a widespread phenomena in the colonial world of the late nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries in which the metaphor of disease and infection became an almost universal currency for the conception and discussion of race questions and social policy". Fears of contamination reached a high point in Windhoek in the 1950s when urban expansion brought white and black housing into close proximity of one another. The authorities' attempts to move residents of the old location to a new township and the resistance they met represent a significant point in the political history of Namibia. Not only did resistance to the removal provide the first major issue taken up by the newly formed nationalist organizations shortly after their launching in 1959, but it also represented a transition in the style of political mobilization in that it transcended parochial issues and united a broad cross-section of groups and classes in a confrontation with the colonial state.

Education and the development of an intelligentsia

Urbanization was significant in yet another respect. It provided a setting in which a stratum of intellectuals, alienated from indigenous practices and impatient with the political style of indigenous leaders, could establish themselves and gain a following. Philip Foster¹¹ has argued that in the African context access to education may have a greater influence on social differentiation and inequality than ownership of

the means of production:

In considering matters of inequality and social differentiation in sub-Saharan Africa we might find it more useful to study who controls the means of access to schooling, and its concomitant rewards, than to look for those who own the means of production.

While Foster may overstate the case, the impact of Western education as a means of differentiation has often been underestimated, particularly in those settings where material production and exchange have been monopolized by colonial or foreign interests. Even within the context of colonial Africa, Namibia represented an extreme example of white monopoly over commerce and production.

While a small group of black traders existed in the territory in the mid-1940s, their position in the urban areas was extremely tenuous and the majority therefore operated in the reserves.¹² The authorities who considered all blacks as "temporary" residents in the urban areas, devised various methods to discourage black traders in general, and in the urban areas in particular. In terms of Proclamation No. 18 of 1927, for example, the granting of credit to blacks was prohibited, and black traders were only exempted from the provisions of the proclamation in 1949.¹³ Even after 1949, however, the granting of trade licences remained dependent on the discretion of the colonial authorities. With the blocking of commerce as a means of social differentiation and mobility differentials in education assumed greater importance.

Although the authorities also adopted a discouraging attitude to black education,¹⁴ pressures from the Permanent Mandates Council and from some black communities, particularly the Hereros after 1930, resulted in some small concessions in this area.¹⁵ The most important of these were the

establishment of government schools mainly in the Herero reserves and provisions for trainee teachers to attend secondary schools in the Union in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁶ It was essentially the products of these schools who during the 1940s and 1950s came to fill the ranks of the politically-active section of the petty bourgeoisie. This grouping might perhaps best be described as an intelligentsia, because their higher level of education was both their most distinctive characteristic and the basis of their claims to political leadership.

Access to education was also very unevenly distributed between the southern and northern sectors of the colony. In 1958, for example, the Commission of Enquiry into Non-European Education noted that "in certain respects South West Africa actually has two systems of Native education: (i) the system within the *Police Zone*, and (ii) the system in the *Northern Native Territories* (beyond the Police Zone)". Although both areas were under the control of a single government department, there were

substantial differences between them with regard to local control, courses of instruction, inspection, subsidies, the training of teachers and their conditions of service, examinations and promotions and even with regard to the application of certain educational principles.¹⁷

The discrepancy was particularly apparent in the case of subsidies. In terms of figures provided by the Commission, in 1958, 9 969 African children attended schools in the police zone, of which 1 268 were in government schools and 8 701 in state-aided mission schools. Subsidies provided for police zone school children amounted to £127 823. During the same year, 18 350 children were enrolled in schools in the northern areas, but only £36 117 was provided for their education. This meant in effect that while an average annual subsidy of about £12-16-5 was

paid out for each police zone pupil, approximately £1-19-4 per pupil was¹⁸ provided for the northern areas. Other disparities between the two regions were noted by the Commission. For example, teachers in the northern areas received approximately half the remuneration of their colleagues in the police zone.

Evidence of educational differentiation within the police zone is less clear, and this issue was not raised by the 1958 education commission. In terms of crude numbers, the three major groupings of the police zone, the Damaras, Namas and Hereros, appeared to have equal access to education.¹⁹ In relation to the quality of education, however, significant differences existed between the Hereros and other groupings in the police zone. The most important of these differences related to the establishment of government schools in the Herero reserves.

The inferior quality of education provided at mission schools has been widely commented upon. For the missionaries, and in particular those belonging to the Rhenish mission which was dominant in the police zone, the primary aim of mission schools was not so much education *per se* as Christianization. Together with limited funds and teaching personnel, the essentially religious aims of mission education ensured that academic standards remained low and bore little relevance to the economic needs of the black population. Under the German colonial regime education of the black population was entirely in the hands of the missionaries, and although the South African authorities introduced a measure of state control in the 1920s, the management of black education was left in the hands of the missionaries. Two of the major complaints against the mission schools was that they only offered classes until standard

two and that they used the venacular as medium of instruction.

With the exception of government schools for coloureds, no provision was made for the establishment of state schools for blacks until the 1930s when pressure from the Permanent Mandates Commission and from Herero leaders prompted the administration to establish schools in the reserves. Prior to this, however, Herero leaders had in 1932 been able to secure the establishment of an Herero school in Windhoek with classes up to standard six - a considerable improvement on the normal mission schools which only offered four years of education. Although this school was also managed by the Rhenish Mission Society, it was established in response to a request from the colonial authorities.

The establishment of government schools in the Herero reserves from 1935 may also be attributed to the competence of the Herero indigenous leadership. Further representations regarding the inadequacy of mission schools were made by Herero leaders in 1933 and 1935, and as a result the first government school for Africans was established at Rietvelde in the Aminius reserve in 1935. The syllabus used was based on that of black schools in the Cape. The school was provided with a hostel, offered classes to standard six, and initially lessons were taught in English.²¹ Because pupils were experiencing difficulty with English, the medium was later changed to Afrikaans, although English continued to be taught as a subject in the higher classes. Further government schools were established in the predominantly Herero reserves of Waterberg East and Epukiro in 1940 and 1944 respectively. By 1962 there were 12 government schools in the reserves and nine of these were in predominantly Herero reserves.²² The impact of these schools on the educational level of Herero school children may be gauged from the table

below:

TABLE 12.2: DISTRIBUTION OF HERERO, NAMA AND DAMARA SCHOOL CHILDREN
23
AMONG MISSION, STATE AND TEACHER TRAINING SCHOOLS, 1958

	Mission schools	Government schools	Teacher training schools	Total
Hereros	1087 (60%)	641 (35%)	79 (4%)	1807
Namas	2446 (97%)	6 (0,2%)	57 (2%)	2446
Damaras	3126 (91%)	189 (6%)	104 (3%)	3419

The table illustrates not only that a significantly larger proportion of Herero school children were in government schools, but also in absolute numbers Herero children made up nearly 77 per cent of all children in government schools, in spite of being the smallest of the three ethnic groups. The above data also indicates that the Hereros had the relatively largest proportion of students in training colleges. Figures are unfortunately not available on the number of black students who attended schools in South Africa, but it is reasonable to assume that because of the higher standard of education in government schools, pupils from these schools were in a better position to obtain access to South African schools. This appears to be confirmed by the prominent political role played by Herero students who attended schools and colleges in South Africa.

The nature of the educational system in Namibia was to have a formative impact on the structure and political responses of the intelligentsia that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s. Discrepancies between the educa-

tional systems applied in the northern and southern sectors of the territory and the relative advantages enjoyed by the Hereros were to ensure that the emergent intelligentsia would be predominantly from the south, and particularly powerful among the Hereros. This in turn was to lead to a power struggle between the intelligentsia and the Herero indigenous leadership. While the indigenous leaders had established their power-base predominantly in the reserves, the intelligentsia concentrated their efforts on the towns, and were particularly strong in Windhoek, the major urban setting in the territory.

Of all the groups that helped to forge Namibian nationalism, the intelligentsia were the most vociferous nationalists. Their existence as a political grouping and the brand of their nationalist ideology need to be seen against the background of the educational system which produced them and the conflict generated with the indigenous leadership. As a product of the missions and the colonial state, the education system was relatively independent of indigenous institutions of socialization vested in the family and indigenous religious practice. Thus, besides providing a new basis for socialization, the educational system partially insulated those involved in it from control by the dominant indigenous leadership. With the extension of the educational system new jobs were created for the emergent intelligentsia who had access to pitifully few other opportunities in the racially stratified economy. Besides their gains in prestige, teachers were able to escape the control exercised by the indigenous leadership over agricultural activities in the reserves. Furthermore, their skills were not only prized by the general populace, but were also useful to the indigenous leadership.

Members of the Herero intelligentsia were therefore initially co-opted into the institutions of the indigenous leadership where they assisted with the drafting of petitions, the reading and translating of newspapers, and even the drafting of constitutions. In spite of lacking ascriptive criteria of leadership such as age and birth in the dominant clans, members of the intelligentsia were able to gain access to the organizational structures, and therefore sources of power, of the indigenous leadership. As Gouldner²⁴ points out, the Western school system not only contributes to the distancing of students from "localistic interests and values", but introduces them to a critical "culture of discourse in which claims and assertions may *not* be justified by *reference to the speaker's social status*", and this has the effect of undermining existing authority. Even in situations where colonial authorities attempt to mould the educational system to suit their needs, it is unlikely that they could completely suppress the features of critical discourse inherent in the western schooling system.

The very limitations of the Namibian educational system in some respects actually favoured the politicization of the emerging intelligentsia who had to be sent to schools in South Africa because they could not obtain an adequate education in Namibia. Schooling in South Africa held a number of implications, including the greater distance put between students and socializing and controlling agents in Namibia, the increased status, expectations and aspirations of those students privileged to be schooled outside the territory, and, most important, contact with *political organizations and ideologies* in South Africa. Changes introduced by the gradual extension of Western education in Namibia were of course reinforced by the associated processes of urbanization, industrialization and secularization. In particular, the growth of the

urban areas in the post-World War II period provided a setting in which the intelligentsia could consolidate its support. Not only were the larger urban settlements removed from the indigenous leadership with their power base in the reserves, but they provided new job opportunities (both in and outside education), and brought together different ethnic groups, cross-cutting, and therefore weakening, indigenous and ethnically-based forms of authority.

The linkage between the Namibian intelligentsia and ideologies of nationalism can be traced on a number of different levels. In common with the group of migrant workers in Cape Town, the intelligentsia was exposed to a variety of external political influences and ideologies, the most important of which were nationalist in orientation. South African political organizations, and in particular the African National Congress²⁵ which provided a model for Namibian nationalism, were influential in shaping Namibian nationalism in the 1950s. Also important were nationalist movements in other parts of the territory, and especially the Ghanaian nationalism of Kwame Nkrumah.²⁶

Besides the contacts afforded by schooling in South Africa, the intelligentsia in general experienced greater exposure to external political influences through their literacy and new modes of discourse. Gouldner, for example, has argued that the "new culture of discourse" associated with western education and reinforced by the "communication revolution" and advances in printing technology, has meant that "definitions of social reality available to intellectuals may derive increasingly from distant persons, from groups geographically, culturally, and historically distant ... and may therefore diverge greatly from any local environ-

ment in which they are received." ²⁶ The availability of such alternative definitions may in turn lead to unfavourable contrasts with, and ultimate rejection of, definitions promoted by dominant local groups. For example, the Namibian intelligentsia was especially critical of the political caution of the indigenous leadership and the trust the latter put in the United Nations.

Such tensions were intensified by the specific contradictions of the intelligentsia in relation to both the colonial state and the indigenous leadership. Most accounts of African and other Third World intelligentsias stress the politicizing effect of the conflict between the training and expectations of Third World intellectuals on the one hand and demand ²⁸ for their skills (the availability of jobs) on the other. It is likely that in a rigidly stratified settler colony like Namibia such tensions would be most intense. ²⁹ The position of the intelligentsia contrasted sharply with that of the indigenous leadership who in spite of their opposition to the colonial state, were integrated into the colonial administrative structure and received some recognition from the colonial authorities. Furthermore, the indigenous leadership, and in particular the Herero Chief's Council, enjoyed considerable prestige and political support among blacks who were opposed to colonialism. As a newly-formed stratum and small minority, the intelligentsia had only marginal support, a fact which was often totally out of keeping with their political ambitions and expectations.

The intelligentsia therefore saw its political role as not only challenging the colonial state, but also undermining the indigenous leadership. In order to achieve the latter goal, it made use of two distinct, but related strategies. Firstly, utilizing a modernization ideology, it

argued that the indigenous leadership was "backward" and that "modern" organizations required educated leadership. The ideology of modernization (with its rigid dichotomy between a positive "modernity" and a negative or "backward" traditionalism) comes out clearly in Zedekia Ngavirue's account of the conflict surrounding the formation of SWANU.

The aim of the chiefs' council was to have an organisation which they could guide. In other words, their intention was to graft the *modern* machinery of a mass organisation upon the *traditional* system of authority. The S.W.A.P.A. people aimed at creating a new movement with new symbols, transcending *traditional* loyalties.³⁰

Ngavirue goes on to argue that the majority of indigenous leaders "had no formal education, and there was a belief that a *modern* organization required educated personnel".³¹ The ideology of modernization therefore provided an ideal rationalization for the intelligentsia's claims to the leadership of the national movement.

The second prong of the intelligentsia's assault on the political power of the indigenous leadership was to challenge the latter's basis of political mobilization by accusing it of "tribalism".³² In place of this "tribalism", the intelligentsia posited an essentially state-based nationalism. In this way the intelligentsia sought not only to discredit the indigenous leadership as "tribalist" and "backward", but, in keeping with its ideology of modernization, to project themselves as the real leaders of a "modern" non-tribal rationalism. The dominance of evolutionary conceptions of social change has often led to such claims being accepted at face value. Pendleton,³³ for example, argued that the failure of the Namibian nationalist movement to achieve unity was due to conflicts "along ethnic lines".

The most frequent reason for conflict has been over leadership, often centering around the refusal of Hereros to accept the leader-

ship of people of other ethnic groups.

At best, such ascertations are simplifications of the complex patterns of inputs that made up the nationalist movement. While it was true that Herero leadership mobilized on an ethnic basis, that it was often preoccupied with parochial issues, and that it relied heavily on ethnically-exclusive symbols, the accusation of ethnic chauvinism ("tribalism") is contradicted by its willingness to work together with other ethnic and political groupings (including the OPO and SWAPO) ³⁴ its keen interest in the political activities of the ANC in South Africa, and the active role it took in launching SWANU. As argued in the introduction to this dissertation, ethnic identifications do not necessarily exclude broader national (or class) identifications. Thus while the power of the Herero Chiefs' Council was mainly derived from an "ethnic" political base, it was also actively involved in launching the national movement. In effect what the intelligentsia was demanding was a complete and abrupt break with past forms of political mobilization which would not only destroy the political base of the indigenous leadership, but would make the intelligentsia (with its superior education) the sole candidates for leadership of the national movement. This was clearly unacceptable to the indigenous leadership and also to the OPO/SWAPO which would initially align itself with the Chief's Council against the intelligentsia.

The African Improvement Society

At first the intelligentsia was closely associated with the Herero indigenous leadership. The African Improvement Society (AIS) which was launched by the first generation of Herero intellectuals, for example, acted as a kind of "secretariate" to the Herero Chief's Council, helping

the indigenous leadership to draft petitions, acting as interpreters and translators, ³⁵ reading newspapers for illiterates, and helping to politicize the population. The AIS was launched in Windhoek in November 1946, under the wary eye of the administration which feared that the new organization might follow in the footsteps of the Universal Negro Improvement Society of the early 1920s. ³⁶ It was conceived of by its founders as essentially a "cultural" body and, according to its constitution, aimed "to improve the Africans in all lines of progress (especially in the lines of Education and Culture)". ³⁷ "What is meant by 'to improve the Africans', Heaven only knows", the manager of the Windhoek locations wrote to the Chief Native Commissioner:

It is conceived that the committee may interpret improvement as meaning scrapping all Governmental control and the introduction of laws framed by the Africans themselves; in the present unsettled mental condition of our natives it is difficult to determine what they want. ³⁸

The fears of the administration appeared to be unwarranted, however, as besides acting as auxiliaries for the Herero Chief's Council of Hosea Kutako and the broader Chiefs' Council (which incorporated the council of the Nama leader, David Witbooi), the AIS failed to play an overt political role. For the most part, the society restricted itself to fund-raising, running a night-school and a not altogether successful business venture. The last perhaps betrays the class basis of the AIS. To some extent, the activities of the AIS coincided with those of the Bantu Welfare Club (BWC) which was established in 1934 by the wife of the Windhoek location superintendent, Captain Octavius Bowker. ³⁹ The two organizations differed substantially, however, in relation to their origins and goals. While the BWC was a creation of the colonial authorities and was founded with the object of "the guiding of native thought into healthy channels", ⁴⁰ the AIS was self-initiated and has been seen

as a product of cultural nationalism.⁴¹

The majority of the society's members were school teachers, businessmen and officials of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church. Many of them had attended schools and training colleges in South Africa and therefore enjoyed a higher standard of education than the majority of black Namibians.⁴² All the members of the first executive of the organization were Hereros,⁴³ and, according to Kozonguizi,⁴⁴ so were "almost all its members" during the period of its existence. Although the AIS deliberately avoided open involvement in politics, its members were to become involved in the political activities of the Herero Chief's Council, and a number were later to assume prominent positions in the political organizations established after 1959. Clemens Kapuuo (vice-president of the AIS), for example, was to succeed Hosea Kutako as leader of the Hereros and president of the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO). David Merero (treasurer) was to become an executive member of SWAPO, while Bartholomeus Karuaera (president) and Berthold Him'muine (secretary) both played prominent roles in Herero politics.⁴⁵ According to Kozonguizi, the leading AIS members had by the fifties become "the backroom 'boys' of the Chiefs". As many of the AIS members were teachers and consequently could not openly participate in politics, they confined themselves to translations and the drafting of petitions for the chiefs.⁴⁶

This group were to play an important role in bridging the gap between the younger people and the elders and it was this development which by 1959 culminated in attempts to form a National Political organisation.⁴⁷

Until its dissolution with the move to Katutura in 1960,⁴⁸ the AIS remained a select clique, with its membership never exceeding twenty. According to its founding vice-chairman, Desiderius Mukuri, the general

aim of the association was to help Africans adapt to change, to attain a higher standard of "civilization". Although the explicit aims of the association were educational and cultural, a number of its members regarded the AIS as a means of generating capital to establish themselves as businessmen.⁴⁹

Towards this end, the AIS bought an old house in the Windhoek location rebuilt it, and established a small cafe which was run first by Anania Munoko and later by David Merero. In 1950 the association applied for permission to publish a newspaper to be called *Ondjerera* (Light). The newspaper was to be published in Nama, Herero and English.⁵⁰ It is not known, however, whether permission was granted, or the newspaper published. In spite of its low-keyed role and its dominance by Hereros, the AIS was not without significance. Although it did not directly challenge the Herero Chief's Council, it helped to define a role for the intelligentsia distinct from that of the indigenous leadership.

The South West African Student Body

The role of challenging the power of the indigenous leadership was to be left, however, to a younger generation of the intelligentsia. By the early 1950s the number of Namibian students at schools and colleges in South Africa had increased significantly. Inspired by the upsurge of black protest which culminated in the Defiance Campaign, these students organized themselves into the South West Africa Student Body (SWASB) in 1952.⁵¹ Hamutenya and Geingob,⁵² dismiss both the SWASB and its successor organization, the South West African Progressive Association (SWAPA), as elitist associations of "quasi-intellectuals". The membership of the SWASB was minimal, they argue, and because it did little to

extend its influence to African schools, its support remained marginal. Although there is some truth in this charge (Kozonguizi who was president of the SWASB, confirmed that the organization enjoyed limited support, and that both the student organization and SWAPA were more like social clubs than political organizations), the SWASB cannot be dismissed so easily. In spite of the exclusiveness of its membership, the student organization played a key role in propagating the idea of a mass nationalist organization for Namibia. The African National Congress provided the model for such an organization, and, as Kozonguizi states, the founders of the SWASB were aware that the effectiveness of the ANC was at least in part a product of it being organized on a national basis and that support was mobilized on a grassroots level.⁵³ Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that the SWASB would have been able to achieve much had it opted to mobilize school children throughout Namibia. In addition to the difficulties created by having its most important leaders in South Africa for the larger part of the year, the SWASB would have faced severe repression from the state had it attempted an overt political role. In spite of its low-keyed role, the colonial authorities refused to register the Student Body as a recognized organization, and some of the leaders of organization were victimized. For example, Zedekia Ngavirue, secretary of the SWASB, was expelled from the Okahandja Training School, and Kozonguizi lost his government loan and bursary after he had sent a letter on behalf of the SWASB to the United Nations.⁵⁴ To involve themselves in direct political actions, would also have brought the SWASB into conflict with the Chief's Council.

Like the AIS the stated aim of the SWASB was "to promote the educational and cultural advancement of African people in S.W.A."⁵⁵ The student

organization, however, differed in one substantial respect from the AIS, in that it rejected the political style and leadership of the Chief's Council. According to Kozonguizi, the decision to form the SWASB was a direct result of the disillusionment of Namibian students with "the pious resolutions of the United Nations" on the Namibian issue. "The students felt that not much assistance would be coming from abroad without organization at home".⁵⁶

The Student body grew out of the impatience of the younger generation with the "talking shop" nature of the United Nations activities, and a rejection of the tribal basis in the politics of the country. Apart from the stress on educational matters, the body was to provide a platform through which ways and means could be revised to promote national unity and active political organisation at home. The tribal barriers had to be broken down and national consciousness infused in the people on a much broader basis than that of the Chieftainship.⁵⁷

As seen by Kozonguizi therefore, the role of the SWASB is not so much to make direct political gains, but to prepare the ground for a nationalist movement. The real significance of the SWASB was as a forerunner of other organizations, of first SWAPA and then the South West Africa National Union (SWANU). It allowed members of the embryonic intelligentsia to acquire political skills, devise new strategies and perhaps most important to establish a political identity separate from the indigenous leadership. In terms of leadership and ideology, the SWASB was not a distinct organization, but rather the first phase in the political evolution of the Namibian intelligentsia. After only three years in existence, the SWASB broadened its base to become SWAPA. Four years later, it was essentially the SWAPA leadership which launched SWANU.

Individual members of the SWASB also played a key role as catalyst and go-betweens for the different elements that were finally to make up the

Namibian nationalist movement. In particular Kozonguizi was to emerge as a central figure who besides being president of the Student Body, was a member of the Chief's Council, retained close contact with the Toivo group in Cape Town, and even held a minor position in the ANC while he was a student at Fort Hare. Another executive member of the SWASB who was to play an important, but controversial, role was Eric Getzen, or Mburumba Kerina as he later became known. Kerina who initially served as secretary-general of the SWASB and petitioned the UN on behalf of the student organization, is credited with being a co-founder of SWAPO and with bringing the name "Namibia" into currency.⁵⁸ In spite of his rampant ambition and the suspicion he aroused in order to obtain a passport to study in the United States,⁵⁹ Kerina played an influential, if short-lived, role in the nationalist movement. From the United States Kerina kept up an extensive correspondence with nationalist leaders, and it was on the basis of this correspondence that the authorities were later to claim that Kerina had almost single-handedly engineered the resistance to the removal to Katutura. For a short period Kerina served as national chairman of SWAPO and it is alleged that it was on his suggestion that Sam Nujoma transformed the OPO into SWAPO.

The South West Africa Progressive Association

By 1955 members of the SWASB felt their organization should not be restricted to students,⁶⁰ and they therefore launched the South West Africa Progressive Association (SWAPA), an organization with somewhat wider membership and aims than the student organization. Continuity between the SWASB and SWAPA is, for example, illustrated by the latter's aim to campaign for better education for blacks and to advise black students on how to secure admission to schools and colleges in South

Africa. Although SWAPA still represented a small and exclusive membership, it allowed for a wider definition of the intelligentsia by including all those with some claim or aspiration to a higher education and not merely students. Moreover, besides the aims of educational and cultural advancement embraced by the SWASB, SWAPA's aims encompassed⁶¹ both political and economic advancement. The formation of SWAPA may therefore be seen to represent a movement away from cultural nationalism to a more explicitly political nationalism, and the creation of a political base for the Namibian intelligentsia.

According to Kozonguizi,⁶² the leadership of the SWASB realized that to be effective it was necessary to spread their activities to the people and to accommodate members who were not students. The decision to extend the activities of SWAPA beyond the specialized focus of a student organization increased the tensions between it and the Chief's Council. The more explicitly political aims of SWAPA served to widen the gap between the intelligentsia which "stressed the need for political organization at home and called for a national organization to spearhead the movement for liberation", and the council of Chiefs which now included representatives of other tribes and "demanded United Nations' intervention as the first step towards self-government for South West Africa."⁶³

Most of its (SWAPA's) members were young people whose attempt at National organisation was looked upon with some suspicion by the older generation around the Chiefs.⁶⁴

Among their aims were "the promotion of cultural, political and economic advancement of the people of SWA" and "the destruction of tribalism".⁶⁵ The younger people who had been imbued with a strong sense of nationalism, "felt that the primary political task in SWA should be the promotion of national unity":

The abhorrence of tribalism on the part of the younger generation was reflected in the foundation of the SWA Progressive Association which amongst other things aimed at the destruction of tribalism and the promotion of cultural, political and economic advancement of the people of SWA.⁶⁶

The association was headed by Uatja Kauketu (who was later to become vice-president of SWANU) and Tunguru Huaraka (secretary-general). According to Kozonguizi, it was during the many group discussions of SWAPA that the idea of establishing a purely political organization to spearhead the liberation of Namibia took root in Namibia. Kozonguizi conceived the idea of establishing a national political organisation to the Chief's Council which responded favourably to his suggestion.⁶⁷

Kozonguizi had joined the Chief's Council at the invitation of Kutako in 1954: "I felt that accepting this (invitation) would bridge the gap between the older people who believed mainly in petitions, deputations and conferences with authorities of the Native Affairs Department, and the younger generation which was growing impatient of the 'talking shop' nature of the United Nations activities." Kozonguizi saw it as his task to "preach the gospel of nationalism to the Chief's Council, whilst assisting the Council with the drafting of petitions and statements to the UN or to the press."⁶⁸

Between 1955 and 1958 "extensive consultations" took place amongst the various Namibian political groupings with a view to launching in Namibia a counterpart to the African National Congress of South Africa:

From the beginning there was tacit and later open recognition of the close link between the liberation struggle in SWA and that in South Africa itself... (C)onsultations were carried on amongst the following groups: Advisors of Chief Hosea Kutako of the Hereros, representatives of Chief Witbooi of the Namas, leaders of the Ovamboland People's Congress in Cape Town, the African Improvement Society, SWAPA, and the Society for the Advancement of African Peoples in SWA. The SWA African Teachers Association and the SWA Coloured

Teachers Association were approached but declined to take part in what they termed 'politics' on the grounds that they were 'civil servants'.⁶⁹

Kozonguizi also maintains that the ANC served as a general model for the major political leaders in Namibia in the late 1950's. Interest in the ANC was not limited to the intelligentsia, but extended also to the Herero indigenous leadership. In 1957 Kozonguizi, with the financial aid of supporters of the Chief's Council registered for a law degree at the University of Cape Town. One of the purposes behind this was that Kozonguizi (who was at this time a member of the Chief's Council) should find out all he could about the ANC. While a student at the university of Cape Town and later at Port Hare, Kozonguizi actively participated in the "field activities" of the ANC in order "to acquire experience of political organization".⁷⁰ In Cape Town Kozonguizi boarded with Herman Toivo and Solomon Mifima in Langa, thus establishing close ties with the group of Namibian migrants who were to launch the OPO. His contact with Prof. Jack Simons at the University of Cape Town also allowed him access to the Congress of Democrats and a variety of other political organizations.⁷¹ Besides their interest in the ANC, Herero leaders were also aware of the interest of radical international organizations in Namibia. In 1957, for example, Kozonguizi together with Rev. Bartholomeus Karuaera and Levy Nyanjone were delegated by Chief Hosea Kutako to represent Namibia at the first All-African People's Conference in Accra, but were unable to attend because they were refused passports by the South African authorities.⁷²

The expulsion of Toivo from Cape Town at the end of 1958, accelerated the development of the nationalist movement. Immediately after Toivo's deportation, those who had been left behind in Cape Town decided to

launch the OPO. At the same time Toivo and Kozonguizi entered into negotiations with political groupings in Keetmanshoop and Windhoek. Plans to launch a national movement were presented to the Chief's Council by Toivo and Kozonguizi in November 1958, and the agreement of the Council secured on the understanding that the chiefs would be the patrons of the new national front.⁷³ Toivo was to proceed to Ovamboland to organize there, while Kozonguizi was to help organize the movement in Windhoek. However, Toivo was arrested on his way to Ovamboland, and at the beginning of 1959 the Chief's Council decided to send Kozonguizi to New York to petition the United Nations alongside Michael Scott.⁷⁴ Toivo's arrest and Kozonguizi's departure for New York delayed the launching of SWANU.⁷⁵ It is likely that the absence of these two major figures (both of whom were familiar with South African forms of political organization and who had been instrumental in introducing the idea of a unified liberation movement to political groupings in Namibia) added to the confusion and rivalry that was to characterize the launching of the nationalist movement.

The South West Africa National Union (SWANU)

With the departure of Toivo and Kozonguizi, members of the Chief's Council and the *Ozahaze* took responsibility for the launching of the national movement. They established a constitutional committee incorporating members of the Chief's Council, the AIS and SWAPA, to prepare the groundwork for the new movement.⁷⁶ In addition to forming the constitutional committee, the Chief's Council took responsibility for keeping the people informed of developments, and even the name "SWANU" was proposed by Clemens Kapuuo, a prominent member of the Chief's Council and the eventual successor of Hosea Kutako.

In spite of the prominent role played by the indigenous leadership in laying the foundations of the national movement, early attempts were made by the intelligentsia to exclude them from an influential position in the organization launched in the latter half of 1959. At the first election of SWANU office holders in August 1959, the intelligentsia took advantage of the absence of Clemens Kapuuo and Levy Nganjone to take all the major executive posts, including the presidency which went to Uataja Kaukuetu, the SWAPA leader. Kapuuo was ill at the time and was thus unable to bring his considerable influence to bear on the meeting. Nganjone, who was favoured by the Chief's Council as the leader of SWANU,⁷⁷ was away in the north of the territory, working as a research assistant to a government ethnologist. Nganjone had indicated that he was prepared to resign his post as a teacher in order to occupy an executive position in SWANU. All government employees, including teachers, were prohibited from taking political office, and this excluded many of the more educated supporters of the Chief's Council.⁷⁸ As a result of the intelligentsia's control over the election meeting, members and supporters of the Chief's Council were assigned inferior positions on the SWANU executive.

In consequence, the results of the August elections were strongly contested by the indigenous leadership. When negotiations between the Chief's Council and the newly elected SWANU executive failed to produce any tangible results, however, members of the Chief's Council under the leadership of Kapuuo threatened to organize a new national front called the "South West Africa National Organisation (SWANO)". Kozongulzi maintains that Sam Nujoma had pledged his support to Kapuuo's new organiza-

⁷⁹ A series of heated public meetings followed in which the intelligentsia charged that the "tradisonalists" were trying to bring the new organization under the sway of Kapuuo.⁸⁰ Kapuuo's supporters on the other hand maintained that they were opposed to the manner in which the elections had been conducted, arguing that major sections of the population such as the Ovambos and the Damaras had been excluded.⁸¹ Although the intelligentsia continued to charge Kapuuo with undermining SWANU, they backed down and agreed to new elections.

The second election of SWANU office holders took place on 27 August 1959. Supporters of the Chief's Council together with Sam Nujoma and his OPO contingent opted to vote for Kozonguizi as president. Kozonguizi appeared to be an ideal compromise candidate for the presidency because not only had he been closely associated with both the intelligentsia and the Chief's Council, but it was reasoned that as he was abroad he "could not be associated with the day to day planning of any of groups" represented in SWANU.⁸² What was not taken into consideration, however, was that with the president out of the country, the SWANU constitution empowered the vice-president to assume the president's duties and functions.⁷³ With the support of both the Chief's Council and the OPO, Kozonguizi was elected to the presidency with a substantial majority.⁸⁴ As Kaukuetu, who also stood for the presidency, received the second highest number of votes, he was automatically elected vice-president.⁸⁵ The remainder of the posts were fairly evenly distributed among the various political groupings represented in SWANU. Uaseta Mbuha, a former SWAPA leader, became secretary-general, Isascor Kambatuku (Herero Chief's Council) assistant secretary, Louis Nelengani (OPO vice-president) national treasurer, and Nathan Mbaeva (Chief's Council) propaganda and organizing secretary. Additional executive

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members (without specific portfolios) included Sam Nujoma (president of the OPO), Augus Gariseb (a Damara leader), Aaron Kapere (advisor of Chief Kutako), John Muundjua (executive member of SWAPA), and Emil Appolis (a founder of the OPO).⁸⁶

Although the second election ensured that the different groups that constituted SWANU were more evenly represented on the executive, it did little to defuse the conflict that arose after the first election. With Kozonguizi out of the country, Kaukuetu who had been elected vice-president, remained the effective leader of SWANU, maintaining the intelligentsia's control over the organization. To add to the confusion, the OPO was not dissolved, even though Sam Nujoma and Louis Nelongani (president and vice-president of the OPO respectively) were elected to the SWANU executive. Kozonguizi maintains that it was not until Nujoma arrived in New York in July 1960 that he and Nelongani ceased to be members of SWANU.⁸⁷

Considerable confusion surrounded the relationships between the different organizations. As originally conceived of by Toivo and Kozonguizi,⁸⁸ the OPO was to have been a regional branch of a broader nationalist or "umbrella" organization. Although SWANU was originally constituted as the projected umbrella organization, no attempt was made to define the relationships of existing organizations to it. Solomon Mifima, one of the founder members of the OPO, maintains that "from the beginning there was confusion" about the roles and functions of the different organizations. Although members of the OPO served on the SWANU executive, the OPO continued to function as an independent organization:

In those days people considered themselves as belonging to one camp. They just regarded themselves as colleagues, people fighting for independence, but they didn't realize the importance of independent organizations.⁸⁹

Failure to specify the relationships between the different organizations constitutionally was compounded by the absence of the president of SWANU, as Kozonguizi himself testified:

What has been lost sight of is that S.W.A.N.U. was formed as an umbrella organisation. The various groups were not dissolved but on its Executive served people from all groups ... I was elected President because it was convenient as I was abroad and could not be associated with the day to day planning of any of the groups. Whilst it was easy to elect an absentee President it proved it was convenient to an umbrella organisation to have a President who was not on the spot. It didn't take long before the groups reasserted themselves. The Chief's Council could not get on with the S.W.A.P.A. youth. On the other hand KERINA was urging SAM NUJOMA to go it alone as O.P.O.⁹⁰

Conflict first became manifest between the Chief's Council and the SWANU executive. Soon after the formation of SWANU, a number of letters were signed and statements issued on behalf of "Chief Hosea Kutako - SWANU & OPO". Kozonguizi maintains that although "in the main these statements were not objectionable the practice constituted a bad precedent. The Vice-President of SWANU in consultation with the executive decided that his name would not be used without his knowledge after some members of the Chief's Council had said that SWANU was expected to function under Chief. This caused strained relations between the members of SWANU and some members of the Chief's Council."⁹¹ The situation was made worse by the fiercely independent and sometimes tactless reactions of the SWANU intelligentsia, who even during the days of the SWASB and SWAPA had been openly antagonistic to the indigenous leadership. As Ngavirue points out, Kaukuetu's "apparent resolve to demonstrate that S.W.A.N.U. would not be a satellite (a term his group often used) to the traditional institutions, seemed to puzzle even some ordinary conserva-

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tive people who had no special case against S.W.A.N.U." ⁹²

The Chief's Council's belief that it had a right to speak on behalf of SWANU was not completely groundless. The Council had originally agreed to support the launching of the national movement "on the understanding that the chiefs would be the patrons of the projected national front". ⁹³ Furthermore, the original constitution of SWANU stated that the first aim of the organization was "to fight relentlessly to achieve United Nations' International Trusteeship, and ultimately attain and maintain self-determination for the people of South West Africa *and their Chiefs*". ⁹⁴ This reference to the chiefs was simply edited out of the constitution in the early 1960s, without the knowledge of most members of the SWANU executive. ⁹⁵ As Ngavirue, himself an intellectual and member of the SWANU executive, remarked, the "S.W.A.N.U. radicals, for their part, seemed to have forgotten even the fact that their party was originally founded by the chiefs".

Within the first few months of its existence, therefore, SWANU was subjected to tensions which threatened to tear it apart. The cracks that had appeared in the organization, however, were temporarily papered over towards the end of 1959 in the crisis that developed around the Katutura removal. The various factions of the national movement were forced to bury their differences in order to offer united resistance to the colonial authorities' attempts to move the inhabitants of the Old Location to the new township of Katutura. ⁹⁶ The unity achieved was, however, to be short-lived. Even before the confrontation of nationalists and colonial authorities culminated in the shootings of December 10, Kerina who had not joined SWANU, had written to Nujoma urging him to

change the OPO into a national organization, and the conflict between the Chief's Council and the intelligentsia in SWANU was to reach new heights in the events that followed the shootings. The authorities subsequent repression of nationalist movement and the flight into exile of many of the most important nationalist leaders were also to place new obstacles in the way of reconciliation between the different factions.

The Katutura Removal and Windhoek Shootings

As suggested above, resistance to the Katutura removal represents a significant point in the political history of Namibia not only because it provided the first major issue taken up by the newly formed nationalist organizations, but also because it involved a transition from rural and ethnically-based resistance to urban trans-ethnic resistance. However, in addition to marking a turning point in the general direction of resistance, the Katutura removal and the various reactions it elicited were to become an important source of politicization and an enduring symbol of resistance and repression reminiscent of South Africa's Sharpeville.⁹⁸ Gerson Veil,⁹⁹ for example, maintains that "almost overnight the political consciousness of the people soared to a new height and the national unity among the various tribal groups was an established fact." While Veil clearly overstates the case, resistance to the Katutura removal and the reaction of the authorities served as a potent source of politicization and mobilization, especially for the black population in Windhoek and other urban areas. At least in part, the Katutura removal owed its power to mobilize resistance to resentment built up over several decades of rural removals and the frequent deportations of individuals from the towns.⁹⁹

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