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QUESTION OF NAMIBIA

Letter dated 16 May 1973 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am directed to convey to you the strong objections of the South African Government to the publication Namibia Bulletin, No. 1/73, which was issued recently. It is apparently the intention to issue this Bulletin on a quarterly basis.

An explanatory paragraph on the cover page states that the first issue has been published pursuant to a decision of the General Assembly requesting the Secretary-General to publicize certain matters relating to South West Africa. The presumption therefore is that responsibility for this publication rests with the Secretary-General. Whether or not this is in fact the case, the Secretary-General's cachet has undoubtedly been accorded the publication and its contents by the explanatory paragraph.

The publication is riddled with distortions, misrepresentations and, in some instances, outright falsification of the facts. Two examples will suffice to show this.

Thus there is the statement on page 7 that "a few days after the encounter with the guerillas, South African troops in retaliation invaded Zambian territory". This statement is an outright falsehood. It refers to an incident which Zambia brought before the Security Council in October 1971. After considering the facts the Council was unable to substantiate Zambia's allegation and there is nothing whatsoever in the findings of the Council nor in the outcome of its debate at that time which can justify the statement. It may therefore well be asked how the "Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia", which was responsible for this falsehood, can make such a categorical statement in the face of the Security Council's findings.

As regards the Advisory Council, it is alleged on pages 8 and 9 of the Bulletin that:

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"Mr. J. de Wet... has been rounding up so-called representatives of the 'homelands' authorities and other Namibian groups to take seats on the Advisory Council...

"....

"These disturbances /the alleged riot in Katutura/ indicate that tempers are running high over the proposed Advisory Council. Some groups have acceded under pressure to participate; others have refused to have anything to do with this Council."

The Secretary-General has been kept fully informed of the purpose of the Advisory Council, its composition and the method of nomination of representatives. No one was "rounded-up" and no one was put under any pressure whatsoever to serve on the Council. On the instructions of the Prime Minister, each population group was afforded the free and unfettered opportunity to nominate representatives. The groups which accepted the invitation did so of their own free will, and those which rejected it presumably also did so of their own free will. By far the great majority of groups accepted the invitation. The alleged disturbances in Katutura were not connected with the Advisory Council.

A foot-note on page 6 indicates that the section "Inside Namibia" emanates from the Office of the so-called "United Nations Commissioner for Namibia". The record of the "Council for Namibia" (which is serviced by the said Commissioner and his Office) in the matter of the South African Government's contacts with the Secretary-General is an unfortunate one. Since the inception of the contacts in February 1972 the Council appears to have done its utmost to sabotage them. The material contained in the section concerned is a further illustration of this. If this Bulletin does nothing else, it casts serious doubts on the credence to be attached to the utterances or writings of the "Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia". The fact that it is the dignity and prestige of the United Nations which is affected by the misrepresentation of facts and the use of intemperate language seems to be of little concern to the responsible officials.

It is unfortunate, however, that such a publication should have been issued at precisely the time that the South African Government was involved in delicate contacts with the Secretary-General on the question of South West Africa.

I have the honour to request circulation of this letter as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) C. F. G. von HIRSCHBERG
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
