

## THE PATTERN OF BETRAYAL

THE recent visit of a United Nations Committee to South West Africa would have excited fluent speculation whatever form it took. The South African Government has, with unwavering arrogance, refused United Nations representatives permission to enter the Territory. It has treated the Fourth Committee with so corpulent a contempt as to make of the latter's deliberations a humiliating burlesque. It has ignored decisions of the General Assembly and snubbed the verdicts of the International Court. And when hard pressed, it has only had to sulk or stage a temporary withdrawal in order to induce all the proper noises of conciliation. It has learnt that it may do whatever it wishes with its mandate and get away with it. Why then, in the full flush of its effrontery, should it so suddenly have agreed to the visit of the United Nations Good Offices Committee?

It would be comforting to believe that the Government has begun to succumb to the pressure of world opinion. But the increasing virulence of its terror makes nonsense of the idea. If it considers it safe to continue laying waste the lives of the vast majority of its subjects, adding agony to agony till the act of living itself becomes a rebuke, why should its self-confidence stumble at continuing its assault on the non-White peoples of South West? Africa may stir in anger and hatred, and men and women everywhere regard it with disgust, but this has not saved the women of Zeerust from the batons and bullets of its police, or permitted the Indians to keep the businesses they have built and the homes into which they and their children have been born. The sudden concession of the Government to the United Nations is inexplicable—unless, indeed, it is no concession at all.

Speculation would doubtless have remained at this level of incipient suspicion if the Good Offices Committee itself had not given it rungs to climb. The actual visit of two of the three members to South West would have been ludicrous had its context been less cruel. Before their arrival in the Territory, the Press approached the Administration for details of their trip. But the Administration denied any knowledge of their visit, and the ineffaceable Mr. Louw, the Union's Minister of External Affairs, was on this one occasion too busy to be seen. Then suddenly, one day at the end of June, a

special South African Air Force plane touched down at Windhoek and discharged Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, of Britain, and Sr. Vasco Leitao da Cunha, of Brazil, into waiting cars, which carried them off speedily to a hotel in the city. There they refused, apparently on instructions, to sign the Visitors Book and shut themselves up in their rooms, presumably on instructions as well, lest the wrong people attempt to speak with them.

The following morning they were, it is rumoured, released for a while and taken on a stealthily conducted tour. One hopes that they spent a few fleeting moments in the Windhoek Location, though none of its inhabitants seems able to recall their visit. Perhaps, though, they were too carefully surrounded by servants of the Department of External Affairs to present much of a view. The Administration then informed the Press that they were going to Gobabis. And they left instead for Kietmanshoop.

Precisely what portion of South West Africa it was that the two United Nations representatives saw, no one but the Minister and his minions is able to say. Doubtless they were shown the recently completed £48,000 exhibition non-White hospital at Kietmanshoop, and the Administration has announced that they visited Okaukuejo and Namutoni in the Etosha Game Reserve. It is to be hoped that they caught a glimpse of a Herero, since it is, after all, the Hereros who have been troubling the ears of the Fourth Committee with their complaints. They certainly had no time during the three days of their stay to see the Paramount Chief who, as principal of South West's petitioners to the United Nations, one would have thought as deserving of a visit as the Etosha Pan or the inside of a Windhoek hotel.

It is difficult to believe that the United Nations representatives were unconscious of the violence that they were doing the faith and feelings of the non-White peoples of the Territory by ricocheting across the surface of South West in the way they did. They could hardly have doubted that their paper-back thriller movements would be noted and discussed by those men and women to whom United Nations Trusteeship offers the only escape from the unendurable. They have left behind them among the helpless peoples of the Territory a sense of abandonment, of backs turned finally upon their anguish. And they must surely have known that this would be so.

Why then did they come? Had they wished to find out something about South West, they would have been better advised to subscribe to the publications of the South African State Information Office and saved themselves the discomfort of travelling. Certainly their knowledge of the Territory would have been no less flimsy, nor their impressions less false, than now. They must themselves have realized that by seeing South West in this extraordinary manner they were not seeing South West at all. In accepting the Government's invitation, they must have accepted also the parody of investigation that they knew it entailed. What else have they accepted? The inevitability of South African rule?

It would be dangerous to predict the precise contents of the report that the Good Offices Committee is due to make to the General Assembly in September. But its general purport seems well enough known to South Africa's Minister of External Affairs to inspire him in advance with an unusual geniality towards the United Nations. Announcing in Parliament on July 15 that South Africa would return "with a strong delegation," to the General Assembly and full participation in the work of the United Nations, Mr. Louw stated:

*"On September 26 of last year, soon after the United Nations opened, I said in the course of a Press statement that obviously the policy of token representation could not be continued indefinitely, and that sooner or later South Africa would have to decide as to its future relations with the U.N. I added that the Union Government would more particularly be guided by the attitude of those delegations which in the past had not shown themselves to be actively hostile to the Union, even though, for various reasons, they may not have supported South Africa's stand on Article 2 (7) of the Charter.*

*"After the Assembly had convened, it was soon evident that among many Western delegations—and also certain Eastern delegations—there was a real regret that South Africa was no longer fully participating in the activities of the United Nations. These expressions of regret, and assurances of friendship, emerged in the course of talks during and since the last session of the Assembly, and they were reflected also in the tone of the debates on the South African items in the First and Fourth (Trusteeship) Committees respectively. . . . This was particularly evident in the discussions of the South West African issue. On the motion of the representative of Thailand, who was also the Chairman of the Fourth Committee, a resolution was adopted by a large majority, calling for the appointment of a Good Offices Committee, which would*

*discuss with the Union Government ways and means for arriving at an arrangement on the South West African issue. . . .*

*“Pending publication of the Committee’s report, I am not at liberty to give information regarding the discussion, and the most I can say is that throughout they were conducted in an amicable spirit, and that they covered a wide field. In view of the more reasonable and conciliatory attitude towards South Africa shown by a fairly large number of delegations, the Cabinet has agreed that the policy of ‘token representation’ has achieved its purpose, and that in the circumstances the Union should now return to full participation in the work of the United Nations with the hope that the improved sentiment towards South Africa would continue in the future.”*

The reason for Mr. Louw’s satisfaction is as apparent as the source from which he has obtained it.

Doubtless a number of motives conspire to persuade the Committee that the time for concession has arrived. The General Assembly can hardly allow the Union to continue snubbing its decisions on South West. The authority of the United Nations is fragile enough already, without the organization’s having to submit to the defiance of its gallery. The administration of South West Africa has become an annual abasement—the General Assembly is unable to persuade South Africa to submit, while the Afro-Asian bloc is unwilling to let it cease trying. Inevitably, the United Nations must either contemplate economic sanctions and, if these do not help, some form of military intervention, or succumb once and for all to South African intransigence.

An arrangement by which the South African Government would be permitted a free hand in South West, in return for the paper allegiance of officially doctored reports, would save the face of the General Assembly from further slaps while well enough contenting for the moment the Nationalist Cabinet. Incorporation would not be accepted in principle, but the practice would go undisputed. That the indigenous peoples of the Territory would as a result be finally betrayed to the terrifying lunacy of apartheid is not, after all, a matter of much moment in the moral manipulations of Cold War diplomacy. The Union is, decidedly, a fortress of anti-Communism, and its control of South West Africa can only be viewed with favour by the West. The Territory is rich in minerals of great strategic and industrial value, and the Union is well known for its accommodating attitude to the right kind of foreign investment.

It is to be supposed that the Afro-Asian nations will not easily swallow the sacrifice of South West. But effective opposition to any stealthy arrangement of the sort suggested can only exist side by side with a positive policy. Certainly the present farce cannot continue much longer. If the Union may flaunt its disregard of General Assembly decisions with impunity, the United Nations had better abdicate the luxury of discussing South West Africa at all. Motions of censure may conciliate the conscience of Asia, but they do neither the influence of the United Nations nor the position of the oppressed peoples of South West Africa any good.

A solution must be found but, in finding it, the General Assembly would do well to remind itself of Abyssinia and the last abject days of the League. For surely, if the non-White peoples of the Territory are betrayed to their oppression, they alone will not endure the anguish. On the grave of their trust, the United Nations itself will stand the tombstone.

### ROSALYNDE AINSLIE

THERE is little for us to add to the article by Miss Ainslie in this issue. Her story is her protest, as it is ours. Though we have publicly demanded one, no explanation has been offered by the Federal Government for its expulsion order. And that is not surprising. A government that has something to conceal would hardly confess to its fear of investigation. What does seem surprising though, is that such a government should expect to be believed when it claims that it is morally capable of ruling its subject peoples justly and in peace.

#### *Correction*

In the last issue, Mr. V. Pillay, author of "The European Economic Community and Africa," was described as a Lecturer at the London School of Economics. Mr. Pillay is a graduate of the School and not a lecturer there, and we must apologise for any embarrassment caused him by our error.