



# The New African

## Providing for Sabotage

THE GENERAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL replaces one political paradox by another. It has removed the anomaly whereby four-fifths of the population of South Africa have been subjected to totalitarian control, while the remaining fifth was able to act as if it was part of a political democracy. But in the process of stifling opposition, it has created a situation in which violence and sabotage become increasingly likely.

When Mr. Vorster introduced the Bill, he seemed surprised at the amount of opposition that it had stimulated. In many ways, his amazement is easier to credit than the apparent astonishment of the Parliamentary opposition at the terms of the measure. After all, that same opposition—at a time when it still contained the present-day Progressives—had been content to allow the Government to take powers quite as far-reaching under the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act; and as a Government it had done much to found the system of tight control over the political and economic existence of millions of Africans.

Nearly all the powers which will enable the Minister to intimidate and suppress opposition under the new provisions were implied in earlier legislation, and connived at by a White Opposition which thought of them as applicable mainly to non-whites and their organisations. It is the sudden realisation that they may be applied elsewhere, and nearer home, that has presumably led to the furious emphasis that is being placed on the "rule of law" in a country in which this term has long been meaningless for the majority of the population.

Even if the Opposition is tainted, however, its fight against the Bill and all it stands for is important. It does at least provide some indication that the pattern of future resistance to Government dictatorship will have to recognise the common interests of all South Africa's people, if it is to succeed without violence.

And violence cannot be dismissed easily as a possible weapon of an increasingly desperate majority against a minority which has done much in recent months to show its own belief in force—through its emphasis on military power for "internal security." In a country in which political deprivation coincides very largely with inability to own property freely, the tendency to confuse political with economic privilege is inevitable. The removal of all legitimate means of political expression may mean that property will become the sole target of the dispossessed.

The results of such activity, born of frustration, could be so disastrous that only concerted action from abroad could bring about the return of sanity to South Africa.

It is fortunate that Dr. Carpio and the UN Mission on South West Africa were in the country to learn the details of the Bill at first hand.

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