PASS LAW CHANGES IMMEDIATE BUT LIMITED

[AN] *Last year 132,000 black South Africans were arrested for violating what are commonly known as "pass laws." For over 60 years, the complex maze of influx control legislation has governed where Africans can live, work, and travel. And the "pass books" they have been required to carry, which have differed markedly from the identity documents for whites, have become one of the most hated symbols of apartheid.*

When the South African government announced the abolition of the pass system on April 23, some effects were immediate, including the release of 245 prisoners serving time or awaiting trial for pass law violations. Officials promised to make no more arrests.

But the government also announced new, extensive emergency police powers that some critics said could lead to even more arrests. And the changes do not affect the segregated residential system enforced by Group Areas Act. From Johannesburg, **Zwelakhe Sisulu**, *editor of the* New Nation, *spoke with* Africa News *about the changes:*

AN: *What has been the impact of the government's announcement?*

SISULU: First of all, the scrapping of the influx control and the pass laws is bringing relief to people who are serving prison sentences on convictions of being without passes. To that extent there is relief, no question about that.

But as to fundamentals, the change does not take us any further. The government is going to use a more sophisticated form of control. They are scrapping the passes, but at the same time they will be introducing new identity documents.

Another point is that the government claims anybody is now free to move and live wherever they want to. But in the White Paper, in which the government abolished the passes, they made provisions that only those people who have houses in urban areas can live in those areas. In the past three years the government has initiated no housing development schemes in any black area in this country. So you have a situation where only those people who can afford to build their own homes will be able to live in urban areas.

The government has also tightened the so-called Squatters Act. It has made it very clear that it will take very stern action against people who move from the rural areas and set up squatter camps around the cities.

AN: *And how did people in the townships react to the news?*

SISULU: Reaction there has been one of indifference. I think the amount of suffering and bloodletting that is going on in the townships is such that things like the end of the passes and pass laws do not touch on the fundamental needs of the people.

One other point, I think it is significant that the

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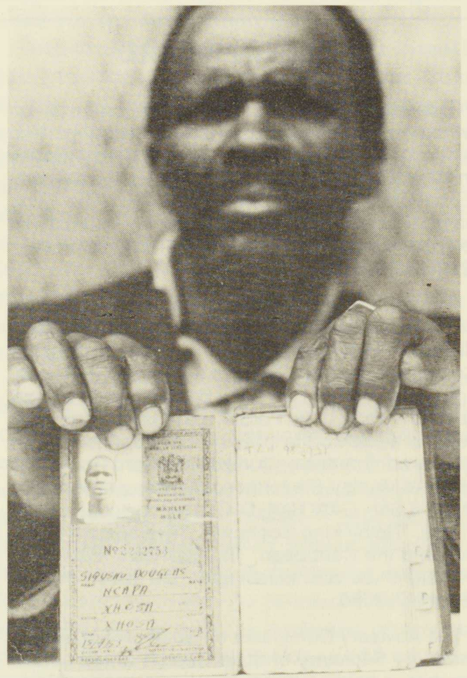

A South African holds his pass book, the document which until recently blacks in the country were required by law to carry at all times. */United Nations/CONTACT*

passes were abolished just a week after the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) [the new 450,000-member labor federation] announced plans to launch an anti-pass campaign. So it would seem that the government, fearing the immense support and popularity that such a campaign would have, decided to move ahead and scrap the passes.

AN: *So you think domestic pressure played a significant role in the government's decision. What about international pressure on Pretoria?*

SISULU: I think international *and* domestic pressures coincided to force the government to repeal the pass laws. The passes had become recognized worldwide as symbols of apartheid, and the government is hoping that by scrapping the passes it will create the impression of making fundamental changes within apartheid. ■

AROUND THE CONTINENT

NEW REBEL FRONT ROCKS KENYA

[AN] The current crackdown on dissidence in Kenya—including arrests, detentions and long jail terms—reveal the presence of an active underground movement opposed to President Daniel arap Moi, who survived an armed rebellion only four years ago. Moi came to power in 1978 following the death of Jomo Kenyatta, the nation's first post-independence leader.

Obscure until last month, the dissident group, Mwakenya, has quickly become a household name. It is an acronym for *Muungano wa Wazalendo wa Kukomboa Kenya*, which is Swahili for "Patriotic Front for the Liberation of Kenya." The Kenyan government claims that the society has been recruiting members through oath-taking, and that its main objective is the overthrow of the government by unlawful means.

The main charge brought against several of the accused persons is the possession or distribution of *Mpatanishi* (The Mediator), the group's journal that the state terms "seditious" and "subversive." A Nairobi court ruled that the periodical, together with other seized materials, were intended to cause disaffection against the government or bring it into contempt.

James Odingo Opiata, who was on April 10 jailed for four years for being a member of the secret group, reportedly said the political movement —organized in three-member cells—planned to hold its first congress before the end of this year. It was unclear how the group's organizers planned to secure government permission for the meeting because opposition parties are outlawed in Kenya.

Analysts in Nairobi say Mwakenya is a new name for an old movement. A local politician has even claimed that the publishers of *Mpatanishi* are the same as those who in 1982 published and distributed *Pambana* (Fight), another dissident mouthpiece—also termed "subversive"—that was implicated in the attempted coup of Aug. 1, 1982. *Pambana* appeared on the scene as the organ of a dissident group, The December 12 Movement, and was read mainly in university circles. [Kenya attained independence from Britain on Dec. 12, 1963.] A journalist, Wangondu Kariuki, was the only person convicted in connection with *Pambana* in 1982.

While Mwakenya is not ethnically-based, observers say it draws most of its support from the Kikuyu ethnic community. The movement was launched in Kikuyu, a small town near Nairobi. The Kikuyu, Kenya's largest ethnic community that inhabit the central province, have seen their control over government erode during since Kenyatta's death in 1978.

In 1976, Moi, a member of the minority Kalenjin community and then vice president, survived a campaign to deny him automatic succession in case Kenyatta died while still in office. In 1981, a Kikuyu businessman, Andrew Mungai Muthemba, was unsuccessfully prosecuted on charges of plotting a coup and Moi's death. In 1983, a leading Cabinet minister and member of Parliament for Kikuyu, Charles Njonjo—also a relative of Muthemba—was accused of plotting to oust Moi.

The president pardoned the former attorney general even though a judicial commission of inquiry upheld the allegations against him. Although he was never prosecuted, Njonjo was