

QUOTES FROM KANNEMEYER

(The Kannemeyer Commission Report on the police action which resulted in 20 deaths at Langa, Uitenhage, on March 21st, was published too late to allow for a comprehensive assessment of it in this issue of Reality. We hope to carry such an assessment in our next issue. In the meantime we publish here some quotes from the Report.)

1. "20 people were killed by police fire in the incident. Of those killed 5 were females and 15 were males. Their ages vary from 11 years to 50 years. Nine of the deceased were 16 years old or younger." (p. 80)¹
2. "35 of the total of 47 dead and injured were shot from the rear. Of these, 5 also had wounds to the front of their arms, shoulders and chests and 1 had an injury to the sole of his foot." (p. 89)
3. "During the period 8 March to 10 March, twenty three incidents of arson and eighteen of stone throwing occurred in the Black townships of Uitenhage and Despatch Six Blacks were killed as a result of action taken by the police against rioters during this period." (p 12)
4. Capt. Goosen of the Security Branch had obtained magistrates' orders prohibiting funerals on Saturdays, Sundays, Public Holidays and March 18th (on 14th March) and at all times other than 0800 to 1400 on Sundays (on 20th March) — in effect, prohibiting funerals, as the first order was not rescinded by the second. "It would seem that Capt Goosen used section 46 of the [Internal Security] Act for a devious purpose." (p 161).
5. Despite the law that "firearms or other weapons likely to cause serious bodily injury or death shall not . . . be used to disperse a gathering until weapons less likely to cause such injury or death have been used and the gathering has not been dispersed" (Section 49 of the Internal Security Act), "One can only conclude that this [failure to issue birdshot and the substitution of S.S.G. — a lethal buckshot] was the result of a policy deliberately adopted." (p 165)
6. "The remarks attributed to the police at Maduna Square [where the people assembled to go to the funeral] are, if the evidence is accepted, particularly disturbing because they were provocative and would have been likely to incite the crowd to retaliation and violence. They are the very type of remarks which the members of a patrol whose duty it was to maintain law and order should refrain from making and show a serious lack of discipline." (p 138) "It must be accepted that these remarks were made at the square." (p 139)
7. "While it must be accepted that some, probably only a few, members of the crowd had improvised weapons of sorts with them the [police] evidence suggesting that the majority were armed must be rejected as exaggeration." (p 38)
8. "The Commission, . . . is of the view that his [Capt Fouché's] decision to make a stand where he did and his subsequent order to open fire were understandable and that he cannot be criticised therefor." (p 156)
9. "Pentz's description of the weapons he saw people carrying when he was at Maduna Square would seem to be exaggerated" (p 31)
10. "Asked if he (Sgt Lekuba) had seen weapons he replied that he saw none and that if they had been carrying weapons as described by Pentz, he would have seen them." (p 33)
11. The Commission "is forced to the conclusion that the police evidence — except for that of Lekuba — is exaggerated in regard to the weapons carried." (p 37)
12. Bucwa (the boy on the bicycle who was in the front of the procession on his way, he claimed, to work) was "at or near the head of the procession when he was shot . . . and . . . the police evidence explaining the presence of the bicycle on the scene after the shooting must be rejected." (p 69) "This immediately leads to the question why the police do not admit this. One can only assume that if the warning shot had had what appeared to be fatal effects, it may well be understandable for an attempt to be made to conceal this fact." (p 70)
13. "Fouché says that those behind the front ranks came on even after those in front had been shot down." "The conclusion must be reached that the majority of the shots fired by the crews of the two Casspirs, were fired after the crowd had begun to disperse and run away." (p 90)
14. "The inevitable conclusion is that the stone attack as described by Fouché and his men was fabricated in order, in part, to justify the shooting. Fouché eventually admitted that the shooting was not caused by this stoning." (p 119)

Notes

1. All page references are to "Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Incident which Occurred on 21 March 1985 at Uitenhage" RP74-1985, commonly known as the Kannemeyer Commission, since Judge D.D.V. Kannemeyer was the Chairman and sole member of the Commission. □