

**Our way is dangerous because all life is dangerous. The way of Apartheid, call it baasskap or separate development, is the way of certain death. Hofmeyr was ten times the politician I am, but he expressed the truth in very unpolitical language. He said it was a choice between faith and fear. It still is.**

This faith we have expressed in our policies, which are as sensible a blueprint for the future as a party could produce. It is not only a universal suffrage which we regard as the inevitable future; it is a drastic revisal of our whole system of possession and privilege.

I agree with our National Chairman that our task is not easy. It is to continue the work we have begun, to win support for a non-racial society in which there is opportunity for all, and from which the grossest economic disparities will be removed.

**Our policies, and our sanity, may be needed sooner than we believe possible to-day.**

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## The Paarl Report — A Closer Look

FROM November 20 to 22, 1962, there were serious riots in Paarl, resulting in the deaths of at least seven people. Five of these were members of a party of African migrant workers who marched 4½ miles to town, where they attacked the Police Station and Gaol and other buildings. Two of them were young White inhabitants of Paarl.

A judge of the Transvaal Division of the Supreme Court, the Hon. J. H. Snyman, was appointed sole member of a Government Commission to inquire into the riots and their cause.

**Liberal Opinion** put six questions concerning the Inquiry, and the Report, which has just been published, to Mr. Edwin King, a member

of the Cape Bar, who represented Africans of Paarl and the S.A. Institute of Race Relations, before the Inquiry. We print them below, with his answers.

### THE BLAME

1. *Am I right in saying that the Report blames the riot on Poqo and the corruption of local officials, and rejects your evidence that it was the product of desperation caused by the Government's policy towards African migrant labourers?*

Not entirely. The Report does name Poqo as the immediate cause of the riot—and it was. A certain portion of the blame is attributed to corruption by local officials and there is no doubt that this did inflame African opinion.

However, the Report does not reject my criticism of the Government's policy regarding migrant African labourers; paragraph 161 states:

"They (the Africans) resent the control of their movements under the Influx Control Regulations"  
and further on the Report states that the restrictions on movement of the African are not understood by the bulk of the African people.

Measured terms, to be sure, but it should be remembered, firstly, that early in the Commission's sittings, Counsel for the Department of Bantu Administration and Development announced that neither he nor his clients were concerned to defend Government policy regarding Africans (which they presumably did not consider was "in issue") which made it somewhat academic to launch a full-scale attack on Government policy and, secondly, the bulk of my witnesses were for obvious reasons disinclined to attack the Government and, in any case, they represented the conservative element amongst African opinion who were not migrant labourers and had a certain security of tenure.

I conferred with scores of migrants, many of whom had just been released from gaol, and there is no doubt whatsoever that they bitterly resent influx control and the whole "Pass" system.

## AFTERMATH

2. *The Commissioner reported that Poqo has been "crippled" since the riot: if this is so, has the possibility of future disturbances at Paarl been minimised, or would you say that local grievances are still intense?*

I have no doubt that feelings in the Paarl location are still intense—the crippling of Poqo has made no difference. How could it? The reasons for Poqo's existence in Paarl still obtain. Up to now, almost a year after the riots, precisely nothing has been done to alleviate the suffering of the Paarl Africans.

One of the grimmest aftermaths of the riots was the wholesale "endorsing out" (i.e. returning of Africans to their so-called "homelands") of scores of men who had been arrested in the general rounding up of suspects after the riots and then released (some after months in prison) without being charged. These innocent men, most of whom had been in Paarl for years, were simply kicked out of Paarl for no better reason, presumably, than that they had lived in the single-quarters of the location, which had been the headquarters of Poqo.

The possibility of future disturbances has been minimised—for the time being, at least, because the Poqo organisation has been weakened, perhaps eliminated, in Paarl. Whilst the causes for grievance remain, however, so does the possibility of future trouble.

## WHITE AGITATORS

3. *Did the Inquiry produce any evidence to support Mr. de Wet Nel's allegation, made before it had commenced sitting, that "certain White agitators were behind the riots at Paarl"?*

Not as far as I know, although Counsel indicated at the hearing that all the evidence available to the Minister and on which he based his views would be placed before the Commission. This qualified answer may sound strange, but I must point out that the Commission adopted the unusual procedure of admitting "secret" evidence in the form of confidential information placed before it by the

Security Branch of the South African Police and which was not disclosed "in the public interest"; not only was it not possible to test his evidence in cross-examination, but it was also not possible to address argument on it.

However, although the Commissioner found that

"White persons were concerned in the subversive activities and with the violence which took place in the Transkei" there is no such finding with regard to Paarl and one can thus infer that in fact no such evidence was placed before the Inquiry.

The Commissioner's comment when the Minister's statement was brought to his attention is not inapposite:

"It is not only embarrassing to the Commission, it is also capable of embarrassment to the Minister himself for the views which he expresses may not be supported by the Commission's findings."  
They were not.

## RELEVANCE

4. *Would you comment on the relevance of the evidence taken in the Transkei? We could not escape the conclusion that an attempt was made by Counsel for the South African Police to give some substance to Mr. de Wet Nel's allegation, by leading evidence about Liberals being associated with the murder of chiefs and headmen, and with the Bashee murders, evidence which the Commissioner appears to have accepted without question.*

Because the Paarl riots were Poqo inspired and because the Commission was concerned to examine the nature and character of the Poqo organisation, evidence of its activities in the Transkei—or anywhere else—could not be described as irrelevant.

It was, I think, necessary and desirable for the Commissioner to present as full a picture as possible of the Poqo movement. To that extent too, I suppose, the participation of White persons in this militant African nationalist organisation is of sufficient significance to merit mention in the Report.

However the frequent reference to "liberals" in the evidence recorded in the Transkei (which, incidentally, was not tested in cross-examination) and the reiteration in the Report itself of the fact of this reference, only illustrates the unfortunate connotation which this term has acquired in South Africa. "Liberal" and "communist" are used today in very much the same breath, often to describe organisations which are essentially neither, but African nationalist.

### A.N.C. CONDEMNATION

5. *Was the Report's lengthy condemnation of the African National Congress based on evidence heard by the Commissioner? Do you consider this passage has any relevance to the riot and its causes?*

No oral evidence was placed before the Commission concerning the present position of the African National Congress. It was apparent from the start that Poqo and not the A.N.C. was the body behind the riots; indeed as far as I could ascertain, the A.N.C. is virtually non-existent in Paarl; it was discredited there years ago because of its moderation and ineffectiveness.

The ambit of the Commission was so wide ("the causes which gave rise to" the events at Paarl) that it is difficult to dismiss any matter concerning African political organisations as irrelevant. However, the passages in the Report dealing with the present condition of the A.N.C. can only with difficulty be construed as relevant to the riot and its causes.

The lesson of Paarl in this respect is that the effect of prescribing one organisation is to invite the creation of another, more extreme one, in its place; the need felt by the African for some means of expression of his frustrations and his ambitions is not removed by stroke of the Legislative pen.

### PAARL'S MESSAGE

6. *Do you agree with the words "that is the message of Paarl" which appear suddenly in capital letters just after the Commissioner had urged*

*"upon the Government something in the nature of a special drive" for better race relations? What do you think the "message", or the chief of them was? Did it reach the people of Paarl, White, Coloured and African? Has the Report done anything to give your idea of the message a chance of fulfilment?*

There were a number of "Messages of Paarl", chiefly:

(a) **No manipulation of the laws governing the lives of African migrant labourers will remove this festering sore. As long as man is denied freedom of movement, freedom to work where he wants to, is separated from his family and subjected to so many indignities and restrictions that he cannot begin to call his life his own, so long will the vast bulk of our African population be restive and dissatisfied.**

(b) **White South Africa is ill-equipped and unprepared to meet the sweeping and inevitable changes in the racial structure of the country. Here again this is not a question of legislation—I believe that you can as little force integration by legislative enactment as you can compel Apartheid. To this extent, an improvement in race relations is desperately necessary, but it must come from the people, not from Parliament; Parliament must echo the people's will.**

The message has reached the people of Paarl to some extent, yes. And we must be thankful for small mercies. There is an almost imperceptible, but nonetheless, significant change. People who have been brought up to regard Africans as an impermanent, menial adjunct to the social structure of the country are beginning to realise that they, the Whites, have to live with them, that the Africans have feelings, opinions, frailties and ambitions—that they are human beings.

It is difficult to say what has prompted this realisation. Fear, perhaps; perhaps resignation, perhaps even in genuine accept-

ance of past injustices and a desire to remedy them; but, if I, too, may be permitted capitals, THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE.

It is difficult to say to what extent the Paarl Enquiry has contributed to this. It certainly brought home the realities to many people who had previously been unaware of them, deliberately or otherwise.

**We must be not too sanguine; a happy South Africa will take longer to construct than ancient Rome! but I am hopeful that White South Africa is becoming aware of the challenge, and now that the time has come, we will not be found wanting. This I must believe; it is worth believing in and there is no alternate belief.**

### RELATED EVENTS

These questions refer only to the Inquiry itself, and not to other events connected with it. These events, which came to eclipse the Paarl Riots and the Inquiry, were:—

- The unexpected publication by the Commissioner of an Interim Report on Poqo, which contained allegations that White people, who pretended "to be Liberals or even members of the Liberal Party", were instigating Poqo violence. No supporting

evidence for these allegations has yet been produced and none was forthcoming at the Bashee River murder trial in early August—although it had repeatedly been implied in Parliament and elsewhere that such people as the Commissioner referred to were involved in some way in this attack.

- Press conferences and Parliamentary statements by the Minister of Justice, Mr. B. J. Vorster, which claimed the Interim Report as justification for the second General Laws Amendment ("No Trial") Bill.
- The Commissioner's surprising letter to Mr. Vorster (Annexure B to the Report) approving the Special Courts and 90-Day Detention clauses in the Bill.
- The support for the major part of the Bill by the official United Party opposition.
- The mass arrests and 90-day detentions which have followed the Bill's enactment.
- The apparent change in the Inquiry's course which led to its visit to the Transkei and the publication thereafter of the Interim Report.

None of these questions is covered by this article, but they certainly warrant separate, and full, treatment.