

A South African Correspondent reviews the State of the 'Campaign' by 11.13.

"I must tell you something ~~about~~ the terrible riots that have taken place during the past few weeks, one in Port Elizabeth followed by two big ones at Kimberly and East London. The cause of all these riots is the trigger-happy policemen who provoke the people. Whilst we have taught the people in our volunteer corps to avoid trouble with the police, the masses outside the volunteer corps are not as wise. Everyone of these riots has started off with the shooting of some African, and that one death ~~inflames~~ the people to such an extent that they retaliate. There is no evidence that they are inspired by agent-provocateurs who are aiming at discrediting the Defiance Campaign. They are spontaneous, and I think from a political point of view they are a symptom that we are not keeping pace the feelings of the people. The people are sick and tired of the Malanites and like all people naturally want what they think is a short cut.. Our duty is to direct this feeling along channels that will aid us in the fight.

The Kimberley riot started from a fight between Africans in a beer-hall, and by the time the police arrived it had become an anti-police movement. The rioters burnt out the Bantu-Batho Hall, the municipal offices, the creche, etc in No.2 Location. The Executive Committee members of the local branch of the African National Congress were placed under arrest and charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. Dr Letele and others are now also under arrest.

In East London some Africans had gone to the District Commandant of Police to ask for permission to hold a meeting. Prior to this, Swart, the Minister of Justice, had invoked the Riotous Assemblies Act and banned all meetings in the districts of Port Elizabeth, Peddie, East London, King Williams Town, Uitenhage and later on Kimberley. Now the East London people sought and obtained permission to hold the meeting. At some stage during the proceedings, police arrived in trucks and rushed up to the man conducting the service and snatched the Bible from his hand. They looked at it and left apparently satisfied. A few minutes later they returned and the African police accompanying them started a baton charge after the people had been given five minutes in which to disperse. In the course of the scuffle three people received from bayonets which the European police, who by now had joined the charge, carried. The Africans ran away and police got on their trucks and there followed a few minutes of terror. The police as they drove through the location (African township) were just firing wildly into houses, at any people on the streets and killed a number of Africans. This meeting took place at the Bantu Square at Tsolo, but the shooting went on right through the other locations not involved in the affair up to Duncan Village. The people decided to retaliate and they did so, wounding three policemen and killing two European civilians. Then they turned on the municipal buildings and on churches which had not supported the campaign, etc.

It is of course not possible to stop this kind of thing because the only people who could do so--the leaders--are banned from attending meetings and the meetings themselves are banned.

In Port Elizabeth the strike called to protest against the imposition of the ban on meetings and the curfew was one hundred percent successful. The whites are mad and Port Elizabeth resembles a city during war time... with police, armoured cars, patrols, searchlights, aeroplanes, etc. But we refuse to be intimidated. The whites are getting themselves into a state of panic. Shopkeepers in the Reserves (African reservations) are leaving for the towns..in order to create this atmosphere of a South Africa on the verge of revolution. The intention is to enable the government to proclaim a state of emergency and then to take drastic action against the A.N.C.

It is being subtly suggested by liberals and openly by the Nats that we are responsible for the riots. And it is argued that to restore the position we must call off the campaign. But to call off the campaign would rob us of all bargaining power and would be a tacit admission of complicity in the riots. Why would the riots which were caused by the police exercise a moral compulsion on the A.N.C. to call off the Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws. These riots mean the Campaign must go on. It is the Government which must call off its campaign of apartheid and race hatred against the Africans and their allies. We will intensify the campaign and not call it off. We are defending all those people who have been arrested in connection with the ~~campaign~~ riots. Those people are having a raw deal and the whites are actually suggesting that because the A.N.C is taking up the legal defence of those arrested, they must be connected with the riots. We have discussed this matter and our attitude is that wherever Africans are in difficulties, the A.N.C. must be with them. We feel the wrong people have been arrested for causing the riots, and that the police and Swart (the Minister of Justice) who is egging them on are the guilty parties. Anyway the situation is tense, with the Africans calm and confident under their clear-headed leadership and the Whites jittery, panicky and race mad. Our organisation is powerful enough and our beliefs and ideology strong enough to sustain our people through any crisis. ~~xxxxl~~

The latest action of Minister Swart is that he has issued an order on fifty-two leaders in the Cape not attend any gathering. These orders were served last Saturday. It is not clear what is a gathering and as far as the Communism Act is concerned the persons concerned are now not entitled to be with their families. 'Gathering' in terms of the Act means "any gathering, concourse, or procession in, through or along any place, of any number of persons having a common purpose, whether such purpose be lawful or unlawful". You can see what a ridiculous situation this is. Anyway the movement will go on.

The number of volunteers who have gone into action since June 26 is now nearer eight thousand. The riots are not worrying us at all. As long as the campaign organised by Congress is non-violent and its army of volunteers is carrying on the fight in the proper manner, we are satisfied. There seems to be a feeling that the death of six Europeans is the most vital political event that has occurred in South Africa. The death of many more Africans is not regarded with so much concern. Well, to us the lives of our people are important and to render their sacrifice a worthy one, we must fight for a society in which riots of this type will be a thing of the past.

The need is for money and still more money. The movement has become so big now and expenses are ~~xx~~ heavy. ~~xxxxxx~~