

SOUTH AFRICA

Who Provoked the Riots? by Harry S. Warner

Capetown, South Africa

WITH the aim of breaking all resistance—native, colored, or white—to *apartheid* (segregation) as the dominant factor in South African life, Justice Minister C. R. Swart has introduced a bill which would give the Malan government the right to suspend virtually all law in cases of loosely defined "emergencies." The government is also seeking passage of the so-called "whipping-post" law, which provides fines, jail terms, and the lash for any incitement to violation of any law, particularly one relating to *apartheid*. Both government proposals are termed "Malanazi" by the opposition; surely Hitler never wrested from the Reichstag powers more dictatorial or more destructive of democracy than these.

Everyone knows what Malan and his Nationalists mean when they speak of "emergencies." In the spring of last year the non-whites of South Africa, with the support and sympathy of democratic-minded whites, launched a campaign of passive resistance to the *apartheid* laws. For six months the movement spread peacefully; even witnesses for the Crown—including members of the special political branch of the Criminal Investigation Department—have since testified that the campaign was disciplined, non-violent, and directed not against whites but against "unjust laws."

Then suddenly, between October 18 and November 9 last year, violent clashes with the police took place in four widely separated localities—New Brighton in Port Elizabeth, the Denver Hostel in Johannesburg, the No. 2 Location in Kimberley, and East London. More than forty persons were killed, all but five of them non-whites killed by the police. Several hundred other non-whites were wounded. The exact number is im-

possible to establish, for in each instance the police, after restoring "order," made the rounds of the hospitals and arrested all persons they had shot, on the theory, apparently, that a bullet wound was proof that the victim had been rioting.

These are the "emergencies" in the minds of the supporters of the "Mala-



Alvin Katz

C. R. Swart

nazi" bills. Mr. Swart and his colleagues argue that the riots were "anti-white" demonstrations to be blamed on the leaders of the resistance campaign and on the English-language press which supported it. He and other ministers have also said that the riots were "extensions" of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya. They have given other, and still more contradictory, explanations. But slowly the real facts are coming to light, mainly as the result of investigations by lawyers engaged in defending persons arrested on charges arising out of the riots. And from these facts only one conclusion can be drawn—that the ultimate responsibility for the riots lies with the police and the deliberately provocative behavior of their chief, Minister Swart.

Let us deal first with Mr. Swart. On

November 2—after the incident at Port Elizabeth, but before the others—the Justice Minister made public this statement:

The police have instructions to take drastic action where there is a threat of a clash between Europeans and non-Europeans. They will strike when necessary and they will shoot when necessary. So called innocent bystanders should get out of the way when there are signs of trouble. If they are so innocent, what are they doing at trouble spots? The police have instructions to act and to act swiftly and they have my support. The organizers of the defiance campaign should heed this warning.

Note that this order requires the police to shoot, not in defense of their own or another person's life—the only time a policeman or anyone else is legally permitted to shoot—but when there is threat of a clash between Europeans and non-Europeans. Not even a clash, simply the threat of one. What amounts to such a threat is a question for the police officer to decide, and his decision will of course depend on how frightened or how trigger happy he happens to feel. If he thinks angry looks amount to a threat he is entitled to shoot.

On November 15, 1952, at a Nationalist Party meeting in the Free State, Mr. Swart said again:

I have instructed police officers not to wait until their men are killed or wounded in riots before they fire. They have been told to shoot first. The government will deal with the unruly elements with all the force at its disposal.

This conception of a shoot-first-and-talk-afterward police force is in line with Mr. Swart's way of thinking. On an earlier occasion he had said: "Only the police can save South Africa from chaos." After these reiterated instructions is it any wonder that the police soon found occasions to shoot? Is it any wonder that if no occasions arose they began to manufacture them?

In East London the trouble started when the police arrived to break up an

HARRY S. WARNER is the pseudonym of a South African who has been in close contact with the rapidly developing race problem there.

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open-air prayer meeting. Although there was a ban on meetings in the location, special permission had been granted by the Chief Magistrate to hold this one. While the preacher was reading from the Bible to a crowd of about two hundred, two lorries full of armed police drove up. The preacher was reading about the oppression of the Israelites. The officer in charge decided that he could not permit such subversive theology, and ordered the crowd to disperse within five minutes. The meeting immediately broke up. In less than two minutes, while people were walking away, he ordered a baton charge by the African constables and then a bayonet charge by the European constables. Shots were fired, and a man was killed. Almost everyone injured, whether by batons, bayonets, or bullets, had been attacked from behind. The police then climbed into their lorries and drove up and down the main streets of the location firing at anybody they saw and even into houses. One man was killed while sitting in his kitchen reading a newspaper. One man was killed and two wounded while having a beer party inside a house. Dozens were injured. A woman belonging to one of the religious sects, wearing a red robe and carrying a cross, came round a corner unaware that there was trouble. A policeman jumped off the lorry and ran a bayonet into her leg. Nobody attacked the police in any way—it would have been suicide to do so.

Mr. Gwentshe, the chairman of the African National Congress in East London, went to the police station and obtained permission to drive through the location in a car with a loud-speaker to calm the people. He returned to his house and was fitting the loud-speaker

to his car when he saw that the police had followed him. One took aim at him with a rifle; the bullet killed a man standing next to him.

Then the police again drove through the location, firing into the houses. This started the rioting, first stone throwing and later burning of buildings. It is believed that at this stage the Europeans were killed. The police did not stay to put down the riot they had stirred up. They could see that the municipal offices, a welfare center, and a church were burning, but they did nothing about it. By then it was evening. That night they stayed at the police station, which is on the edge of the location, and with guns propped on the window-sills fired into the streets.

At the Denver Hostel the police sniped at Africans standing on the balconies when there was no threat of disturbances. Earlier there had been some trouble; stones had been thrown and windows broken but nobody had been injured. Feelings were high in the hostel on that day because the municipality had raised the rents by 80 per cent and the tenants had decided not to pay the increase until they had made representations to the Native Affairs Department. One man did not abide by the decision and went to pay the sum demanded. A crowd tried to mob him, and he ran for safety into the superintendent's office. Then a crowd of tenants, joined by some people from a nearby beer hall, threw stones and broke windows outside the hostel.

When the police arrived, most of the people who lived in the hostel were standing on balconies around a quadrangle, watching the excitement. For half an hour nothing happened. Then

someone must have remembered Mr. Swart's orders, and suddenly there was a burst of firing. A man on the first balcony was killed, one on the second balcony injured. People disappeared into the rooms behind. The firing stopped, and the people thought that it was safe to come out. As they did so the police began picking them off. Again they disappeared and waited until they thought it safe to come out to attend to the dead and wounded. Again the police fired at them. All those killed were shot through the head.

To round off the day, the police arrested the three wounded men and the three leading figures—on the Tenants' Committee, two of whom were not even at the hostel that afternoon. All are being held on the charge of public violence.

At Kimberley there had been dissatisfaction about the management of the municipal beer hall, and a boycott had been organized. An argument took place with some Africans who wanted to enter the beer hall. A policeman hit a woman on the head with his handcuffs. This infuriated the bystanders and they began throwing stones; then they overturned and burned a municipal lorry parked nearby.

Arrival of a bus-load of police armed with rifles and sten guns put an end to the disturbance, but the police fired point blank into the crowd of Africans gathered around the beer hall. Then, as in East London, they drove through the streets of the location firing at anyone they saw and into the houses. Among those killed was a woman carrying a six-months-old baby on her back. Having stirred up the entire location, the police returned to the station, while furious mobs set fire to the location offices, the beer hall, and other buildings that bore evidence to the white man's administration.

At Port Elizabeth a railway policeman tried to arrest an African for failing to pay an extra charge for a tin of paint he was carrying with him on the train. An argument started, and a friend of the man came to his assistance. There was a scuffle, and the railway policeman pulled out his revolver and shot and killed the friend. This was witnessed by a crowd, mainly women, on the railway platform. People ran screaming into the location and spread the story. After a while

TO A SNAIL

Your sensitive exposed flesh as you pass
Might well disarm those deputies of doom
Who with tensed claw and beak agape
Spread menace from the air or through the grass.
But as a window hardens into glass
And so destroys the mullion whose design
Was its own tegument, you raise a shape
Of brittlest fiber upon fluid line,
Making your progress, like our human, crass
And death expected in that living room.

FRANCIS GOLFFING

several hundred Africans came out of the location to the railway station, some of them throwing stones. Police reinforcements arrived, and again they fired point blank into the crowd. Again they drove through the location firing into the houses. When they left, a furious mob ran through the location. They burned down the cinema and killed the owner and his son, they burned the post office and other buildings, and they killed a European bringing his workers home on a lorry.

There is one thing the police have learned from these events—how to stir up a riot. In all the locations and townships there is a feeling of dumb frustration and subdued anger which requires only a spark to set it off. In addition, there is a criminal element known as Tsotsis. These are mainly young gangsters who have been driven to crime

by slum conditions, poverty, and, most of all, the regulations concerning passes, which make it difficult for them to obtain work. They prey on their own people and often rob and assault the Europeans. When there are shootings and the people's anger is aroused, the conditions for these thugs to take control are created. Tsotsis then lead the violent outbursts of burning and killing. One would think that if the government genuinely wished to stop riots it would permit responsible African leaders like Mr. Gwentshe to exercise leadership in their communities. But that is not the policy of the government. Throughout the eastern province all the well-known leaders have been prohibited from attending "any gatherings." It is not clear whether this means that they are prohibited from standing in bus queues or attending cinemas, but it is certain that

they may not address public meetings. One of them has said: "The government is putting the Tsotsis in the leadership of the African people."

There are other signs that the government does not wish a responsible leadership to develop. In the western native areas of Johannesburg, where a gang of hooligans has dispossessed two hundred law-abiding families and forced them to live in an open square, no action whatever has been taken by the police. It is the government's policy to create as much unrest as possible and then to shoot down all who are involved. There is no other explanation for the events I have described. The passive-resistance campaign, peaceful, disciplined, and non-racial, was something it could not handle by ordinary means. So it decided to convert it from a passive into a violent campaign.

MARGARET SANGER

Back from India . . . by Mildred Gilman

MARGARET SANGER returned recently from a "birth control" trip that circled the globe. She crossed the Pacific by boat to Japan, flew to India, with stops at Hongkong, Bangkok, Singapore, and Ceylon; then from India she flew to Paris, and returned to America by boat, a trip that would have been strenuous for a woman half her age. She made dozens of speeches, shook thousands of grateful hands, visited many clinics, appeared at functions large and small in her honor, spoke at the Third International Planned Parenthood Conference at Bombay, and attended its nine days of sessions.

I talked with her in New York on her way back to her Arizona home, where I imagined she would rest after her breathless two months' trip. But rest was farthest from the mind of this vigorous little woman whose original

mission forty years ago, to bring relief to New York City slum mothers by birth control, has grown to encompass the whole world.

"I must get busy immediately organizing North America, including all of Canada, for the second meeting of the new International Planned Parenthood Federation, which will be held in Stockholm, Sweden, next August," she said to me briskly, with no thought of an interim for rest. "Japan wants the 1954 meeting. I was elected honorary president of the federation for North America at the Bombay conference. Lady Rama Rau is honorary president for the East." India, Japan, Sweden seemed no farther away to her than the Bronx must have seemed back in 1916 when she was fighting to establish permanent birth-control centers in Manhattan.

She told me of her pleasure at the warm reception she had received in Japan this time in contrast to the cold shoulder the militarists turned toward her in 1922 and the refusal of the

American occupation forces to admit her in 1950, despite the expressed wishes of the people. "This time there were actually loud-speaker trucks telling about the coming of Margaret Sanger to Japan. People flocked out of their shops and doorways. Children in school yards ran into the streets to learn what was going on. The trucks shouted, 'Sanger is here! She says no abortions. Sanger is here! She says no abortions!'"

India, like Japan, was an old story for Mrs. Sanger, who had attended the All India Women's Conference there sixteen years ago. At that time she helped to obtain adoption of a resolution demanding that contraceptive information and supplies be distributed by municipalities to their health departments, particularly to all midwives and visiting workers. This progressive step was taken despite the opposition of Gandhi. Mrs. Sanger feels that her earlier visit did much to lay the groundwork for India's acceptance of the recent conference, at which about five hundred

MILDRED GILMAN has been an educational consultant to the Planned Parenthood Federation for many years.

delegates from fourteen nations established the first world-wide planned Parenthood organization.

The Hindu religion has no injunctions against birth control, and the present limited opposition comes from a dwindling group of Gandhi's followers and a small number of Roman Catholics. "On my earlier visit," Mrs. Sanger said, "I found Gandhi most hospitable and friendly. We took long walks and had extended discussions in which I put forth my best arguments. We both agreed that families should be limited; he felt three or four children to a family were enough, but he insisted that intercourse, therefore, should be restricted to three or four occasions during the entire married life of the couple. He felt that women who wanted to control the size of their families should 'resist' their husbands, in extreme cases leave them. Needless to say his suggested 'methods' have had no success."

The spirit of Mahatma Gandhi lives on in modified form in the present Health Minister, who was one of his secretaries, and in an elderly woman named Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who was a devout disciple. The latter is a highly respected person who has done much good for India, but it is due to her influence that the four government-sponsored child-spacing clinics set up as experiments in India by Dr. Abraham Stone under the auspices of the World Health Organization have so far used only the "rhythm" method.

Mrs. Sanger found the younger doctors and public-health nurses eager to learn safer, better methods of birth control. More than half of the delegates from India to the Bombay conference were under thirty-five. Many were too poor to afford even the most modest hotels. Some had walked long distances to Bombay, lacking the money for railroad fare. Many reported that a few hundred rupees had been scraped together in their home villages to get the help of a doctor and set up a modest clinic. The conference hall "was jammed to the ceiling," the greatest interest being shown by the men.

"India's women," Mrs. Sanger continued, "under the leadership of the wonderful Madam Pandit, Lady Rama Rau, and others, have taken great strides toward independence, but it is still a land in which girls marry as children,



Margaret Sanger

passing at puberty from their father's domination to that of their husband. Laws for relieving the sad condition of India's widows, who may not remarry, and for allowing daughters as well as sons to inherit from their fathers are being pushed in the legislature, but there is strong opposition. Nevertheless, many changes are taking place. More young people are marrying for love instead of by parental decree. For the first time, in both Japan and India, I saw wives walking beside their husbands, no longer respectfully a few feet behind them. Some of the younger men even carried the babies on their backs."

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, vice-president of India, scholar, revered spiritual leader, and president of UNESCO, embodies perhaps more than any other person the spirit of the new India. In his opening address to the conference he dismissed as spurious the argument that birth control interferes with nature or is contrary to the will of God. "God is not an external despot or a sultan in disguise," he said. "What is civilization? Is it not progressive control of nature? To combat disease, pestilence, prolong the span of life—all these mean a fight against the drift of nature. Abstinence [counseled by Gandhi] is in essence a defiance of the edict of nature. . . . Intelligence is a divine gift, and it is up to us to use it in furtherance of social happiness and individual development."

According to Mrs. Sanger, "the widely held idea that illiterate villagers are uninterested in birth control and will

not take the trouble to practice it was one of the myths dissipated at the conference. Preliminary investigations of the attitudes of both urban and rural families toward limiting the family showed 75 per cent ready to accept it without any prior education or propaganda. Our own coworker, Mary Langford, who was in charge of one of the demonstration clinics, said that two men walked eighty miles to the clinic to learn a safe method of planning families."

One side activity of the conference which received almost no publicity because the problem is not associated with the Indians was the instruction asked for and given in the correction of infertility. "Infertility," said Mrs. Sanger, "is more of a tragedy to Hindus than to peoples whose religion does not glorify fertility. The family-planning movement is as interested in helping infertile mothers to have babies as it is in relieving the over-fecund."

The most important thing is that India, with a population of more than 360,000,000 people which is increasing by approximately 5,000,000 a year, recognizes the need to limit its numbers, for its own well-being and for the peace of the world. As in Japan, the government has sponsored steps to meet this need. The Indian consulate general in New York City reports that there are 200 birth-control clinics in 28 cities of 21 states of India, 15 of them being in the municipality of Bombay. And in his report to Parliament on the country's first five-year plan, presented last December, Prime Minister Nehru included a request for \$1,300,000 for family-planning clinics throughout the country. This request has since been approved. Results will be obtained more slowly in India than in Japan, Mrs. Sanger believes, owing to India's staggering illiteracy rate—about 90 per cent—and its many different languages and dialects.

In summing up Mrs. Sanger said, "I spoke to large, eager audiences in India as I did in Japan. I talked with individuals. I am convinced as never before that the problem is no longer one of acceptance; it is of developing one of the new contraceptives to the degree where it can be used easily by people in the most remote provinces, living in the most primitive conditions, but still eager to achieve the human dignity of planning their families."