

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE RIOTS AT  
SOWETO AND OTHER PLACES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

MORNING SESSION:

24th SEPTEMBER, 1976.

(NO AFTERNOON SESSION).

VOLUME 14

(Pages 529 - 583)

THE COMMISSION RESUMES ON THE 24th SEPTEMBER, 1976.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: M'Lord, I call Mr Mervin Kenneth Rees from the Rand Daily Mail as the first witness this morning.

MERVIN KENNETH REES: sworn states:

ADV. VAN GRAAN: You are the chief/<sup>crime</sup> reporter from the Rand Daily Mail? -- That is correct.

Can you perhaps give the Chairman of the Commission some information of what occurred on the 16th June in Soweto? -- On the morning of June 16 at about 10 or 11 a.m. I was informed by my news editor that there was rioting in Soweto and (10) I was told to go to the township with colleagues of mine, Mr Clive Emden, Mr Chris Smith and photographer, Mr Sonderling. We obtained permits to enter the area and arrived there between 11 and 12 o'clock. In the car with me was Mr Emden and we drove in from the New Canada side and turned towards what I believe is the Pfeni area. I did not know my way around the townships, but was directed by Mr Emden and we drove towards some smoke which we saw coming from a hill. We were stopped at an intersection by a group of Africans who told us to turn around and go back. They said that some Whites had been (20) killed by students and they said we would be killed if we went any further. They said that these students were only a block away. After being stopped a second time, we turned to the left and doubled back towards a group of policemen who had stationed themselves some distance away. These policemen were surprised to see us coming from that direction and said we would have been killed had we gone any further. The police told me that they had withdrawn from the area where apparently some people had been killed, two men, one of them a White man and apparently these bodies were still in a vehicle and (30) they said the police had been attacked at that scene and had

been forced to pull back because they did not have enough men.

CHAIRMAN: Can you perhaps give a closer description of the area where this happened? Do you think it was in the Pfeni area? -- That is right. It was beneath a hill where I later saw large groups apparently of Africans standing, assembled on this hill and apparently there was a school in that vicinity, but I could get no closer to the school. I know that it is roughly a short distance from the Pfeni Station.

Station. -- That is right. On the western side of Pfeni Station. (10)

Do you know whether there was a clinic close to the place where you were? -- No, I never saw a clinic. I know that we had to cross over a bridge as we doubled back. We came down a road and across a bridge and at that point there was a contingent of policemen who had one or two vehicles there and police with guns.

Can you remember the name of a - you cannot remember the clinic, but can you remember the name of a shop in that neighbourhood? -- The Maponya Shop and the Mapetla Garage. I never got that far. (20)

You did not get as far as Maponya Shop? -- No, I apparently got to an area within a block of where the students were moving down the hill and at that point these Black people who stopped us, urged us not to go ahead and said we would be killed, so we then turned to the left and doubled back and found ourselves coming across that bridge towards the police. So that was the furthest in fact that I got.

So it would appear to be more or less the area about which we had evidence yesterday.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: Yes. -- I think I was told that the Morris Isaacson School was somewhere in that vicinity. (30)

CHAIRMAN: And the Orlando West School, were you told that that was the one near the hill? -- That is correct.

Yes? -- I spent several hours at that particular site interviewing various Africans at the station in an attempt to find out what was happening and I noticed then that police brought in further reinforcements and a helicopter arrived.

In speaking to these people, did you speak to anybody who had taken part in the actual marching? -- No.

They were going in another direction? -- They were all concentrated in the other area. The people I was speaking (10) to, was for example one Black policeman who did not want to give me his name, who was in plain clothes and he was apparently off duty and he gave me a brief summary as he understood it, of the fact that there had been a demonstration and that there had been stones thrown, there had been shots fired and apparently two people had been killed, one of them a White man and apparently members of the West Rand Bantu Board and they had been travelling in a vehicle when they were apparently attacked. That was the sort of impression that I got, but no details as to what had actually precipitated the clash (20) between the police and the students.

You were there after the ... -- Correct.

.. first shots had been fired. -- Correct.

After that ... -- That is right.

... the only ... -- We did in fact also ... (both speaking simultaneously)

... the Commission is interested... -- Yes, we did in fact have African reporters who were present at the scene on the other side, so my area of interest was primarily to find out from the police what was happening. (30)

You were merely trying to get facts concerning the - what was/...

was happening. -- Correct.

And this is how you got the evidence of two people being .. -- Being killed, that is right. This was confirmed by police officers who said that they were unable to go to that particular area to recover the bodies because the students were attacking them and they said that they did not have enough protection and they did not have enough manpower with them at that time. Later a helicopter arrived at that scene, who apparently then tried to disperse by over-flying the area and throwing teargas canisters into the crowd below. (10)

Yes? -- I later went to the Orlando Police Station and spent the next few hours interviewing senior police officers at the police station as to what had happened and they told me - General Kotze told me that the police - in fact I think it was Brigadier Le Roux initially and he was later joined by General Kotze, told me that police had been stoned and that Whites had been killed and that there were approximately 20 000 students involved in this demonstration.

I do not suppose you could form any estimate at all? -- I had absolutely no idea as to how many people were involved in it. (20)

Yes? -- They were calling at that stage for reinforcements and various police officers told me that they had withdrawn from the area because they were hoping that by removing the police from the area, this might help disperse the students.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: Sorry to interrupt you. What impression did you get at that stage from the police? Were they prepared for a riot? -- I got the impression that they were not prepared for a riot.

What factors do you take into consideration to form that opinion? -- well, in the sense that they were repeatedly (30)



calling for assistance from other areas and they also appeared to be calling for firearms and for other weapons, presumably shields or helmets or whatever it was; they certainly did not have any of these things which I would have thought they would have had if they had expected it.

You may proceed. -- Various police officers also said that they regarded it as too dangerous moving about themselves in that particular area because they had ordinary police vans which they said were not adequate protection and these were being stoned. So it appeared to me that generally they (10) were not prepared for it and they indicated then that they had called for these hippo personnel carriers so that they could move about more freely in the area. In the course of the next few hours that I spent with the police, they did not seem too sure as to how to handle the situation.

Where was that? Was this at a police station? -- This was at the Orlando Police Station.

Orlando West Police Station? -- I know it was Orlando Police Station.

Can you perhaps tell us if it is situated in Orlando (20) West or East? -- I could not tell you that, I am not sure. It is simply known to me as Orlando Police Station.

O.K. -- They at that stage did not seem to know how to handle the situation, as I say and various police officers said to me that they obviously did not want to use force, if necessary, because this would seem to be - well, precipitate another Sharpeville-type attack, and they said particularly as school children were involved. But at the same time they pointed out that the crowd appeared to be out of control and they would possibly have to use force. I got the (30) impression at that stage they really did not know how to cope

with it.

Do you perhaps know the names of the people that you had spoken to? -- Yes, I spoke to various senior officers there. Brigadier Le Roux who is the divisional commissioner for Soweto, later Major-General Kotze from Johannesburg, the divisional commissioner arrived, I spoke to him; I spoke to Colonel Gerber, the divisional inspector for Soweto and Colonel Visser, the C.I.D. chief in Soweto, as well as various other, shall we say, junior officers who were present. So this information was given to me over a period of hours. (10) In fact I was at the Orlando Police Station from early midday until 7 o'clock the following night.

CHAIRMAN: You stayed there all through the night? -- Right through the night, although I was not at the police station all that time, I was basing myself in a house opposite, well, not far from the police station where there was a telephone and I was able to phone my reports through to my newspaper.

Were the circumstances, from what you could see in that part where you were, rather chaotic or not? -- It did not appear to be chaotic. The police were certainly not (20) running around as if the position was certainly out of control, but I certainly got the impression that they did not quite know how to handle the situation at that point in time because they did not ... (intervenes - speaking simultaneously)

By that you mean how to handle the fact of the presence of 20 000 school children... -- Correct. They obviously felt, if I may just explain a little further here.

Certainly. -- Several weeks before the riots started, I had checked a story for one of our African reporters and this revolved around the setting alight of a car at a school (30) in Soweto and a car apparently belonging to the police and I phoned/...

phoned Colonel Visser and asked him what the position was. He said it had something to do with the protest by children over the use of Afrikaans in the schools and the police had arrived at this school, there had been trouble, the police had been stoned and the car had been set alight and he explained that the police had withdrawn from that school in the home that this would disperse the children. I got the impression that this was exactly the same type of situation and the same decision had been reached by the police, to move away from the area where the trouble had broken out in order to perhaps hope that (10) the children would disperse by themselves. They felt, I think, that if the police were seen on the scene all the time, that it might just lead to further violence. Later in the evening at about 6 - 5 - 6 o'clock when the people arrived home in Soweto, it was very difficult then to get any further reports from the police. They said that they were not moving freely about the townships themselves, but they did indicate to me that looting was beginning to take place and there were numerous reports of arson coming in and - from throughout the townships and they said that tsotsis had apparently joined in with (20) the students or had taken advantage of the situation. During all of this time we had African reporters and photographers moving about the townships and we hoped obviously that they would be able to present that side of it. I returned to the office on Thursday night and wrote an article highlighting what I understood to be the background and problems of the police in dealing with the riots and I would like to hand that article in as an interpretation of the situation as I saw it at that time.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: M'Lord, I wish to hand a copy of that (30) article in as EXHIBIT 29. There is a copy attached to that



report in front of you.

CHAIRMAN: Is that the one of the 18th?

ADV. VAN GRAAN: That is correct.

CHAIRMAN: The one which 'Armed thugs demand money'? -- No, 'Dilemma of the police: what to do'

This is then the report that you sent to your paper which was published on the 28th? -- It was published on Friday the 18th.

I meant the 18th, yes.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: Can you perhaps give us a brief summary of the contents of the report? -- The report basically is (10) to the - highlights I think the confusion as to precisely what had happened to precipitate the shooting or stoning incident when the police and the students clashed and it goes on simply to explain that various witnesses claimed that the police had first fired the shots; police on the other hand said that shots had been fired after stone throwing incidents. It details some of the background at Orlando Police Station and the situation there and my impressions as to the fact that they were not equipped to handle a full-scale riot. It describes how police reinforcements were brought in (20) late on Wednesday and I think it includes comments from policemen at the scene and one of these is a quote from an officer who said that their dilemma throughout 'if we use force on the children then we will be accused of being heavy-handed' and another more junior police officer said that they should bring the politicians and he mentioned I think Treurnicht and Botha to see what they had caused, what trouble they had caused. I also mentioned that the police felt that another problem for them was that it was too dangerous for them to go near the youngsters at that stage. Not only did they lack the (30) manpower, but they did not carry guns in this country for firing

rubber bullets, nor did they have helmets with visors for protection and the fact that these additional forms of equipment were brought in and that I think sums up the contents of the article.

Was it possible to get information from the police about these activities in Soweto? -- I found on the first day or two the police in their obviously difficult circumstances because I do not think they knew themselves precisely what the casualties were, were reasonably helpful in the sense that they said that one or two people had been killed (10) initially, there had been numerous casualties; they did not know the total amounts involved. There was a somewhat confused situation, but the following morning Colonel Gerber released to me the latest casualty and death figures which were based on apparently the police finding bodies in the township throughout the night which they said may or may not have been caused by the police; certainly some of them had apparently - some of the victims had been attacked and killed by rioters or looters in various incidents in the township. And the first few days I think, well, shortly after that the (20) police gave us a pretty comprehensive background in terms of the number of vehicles that had been stoned and set alight, buildings that had been damaged, but this took some time for the police to collate. I must say that ever since then I believe that the police release of figures or statistics has been hopelessly inadequate.

Can you perhaps comment on that? -- Well, one of the problems I think that I have experienced in that subsequently when the police warned white reporters not to go into the township, we found that we were relying on our African (30) reporters to cover the events from day to day and they would come/...

come back with varied reports; reports of police actions or police brutality or shooting incidents, whatever the nature of it was and we would then try and check these details with the police and at that point in time it was handed on to me as being the crime reporter on the Mail to check these details and I found that it was virtually impossible to get police to refer specifically to details or give accurate casualty figures. We found the hospitals too in the same position; they refused to release details of the total number of casualties or identify victims and this lack of communication has in fact (10) got steadily worse ever since the start of the riots and today we do have a line of communication through General Kriel at Police Headquarters in Pretoria, but again it is a very detached line of communication and we find that the figures even now of arrests, casualties, deaths, injuries, damage to property are hopelessly inadequate.

CHAIRMAN: Do you think that this may be because of the fact that it is a very wide area and that they themselves probably ... -- I am sure that the police have many problems in terms of collating information, but at the same time I think that (20) the individual police officers at the scenes of these incidents have not been in a position to give details because they have to pass them through headquarters and it would appear to us that there is a certain amount of scepticism as to perhaps the accuracy of such figures.

From your point of view, scepticism on your part or on their part? -- Well, on our part in the sense that we hear of people being shot and then police saying well nobody was shot. The inability to check out then whether in fact there are bodies or victims. (30)

Do you have difficulty in checking too? -- In fact not only

myself/...

myself, but I think journalists .. (intervenes)

No, I mean generally. -- Generally.

Journalists have difficulty in checking. -- Correct.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: Would you say that speculation was a result of this lack of communication between the reporters and the policemen? -- Yes, I think that there probably has been a lot of speculation, particularly from Blacks and this is my impression or feedback from Black reporters. They tend to believe or did believe that shortly after the riots erupted that there were far higher casualties and the death figure was far higher than the figure that was actually being given out by the police. Whether this is true or not, nobody knows. (10)

Did the fact that the Black people took away some of the dead bodies, add to this inability to ascertain the correct figure? -- I do not know that I could really answer that. I do not know the circumstances in which bodies were picked up and where and how and how the police set about gathering figures.

CHAIRMAN: You see, the evidence up to date is that in many cases on the withdrawal of the rioters or students or marchers or whatever it is, these people were inclined to take with them their injured and even those who had died. -- I did experience this from the police when we put to them for the total numbers of casualties initially, they pointed out that a lot of the victims had been removed privately and they could not say exactly how many of these people they would have to later check with the hospital to get those details. They also pointed out at the beginning that one of the major problems was that other crime was still taking place in the townships, in other words, there was still the normal weekend or nightly stabbing incidents which may have resulted in death, (20) (30)



which were not necessarily attributable to the riots.

I am trying to think of difficulties too. Some of the clinics were destroyed and police must have difficulty in finding out for example when a particular person was taken to a clinic or whether he was ever taken to the clinic because as far as can be ascertained at the moment in certain cases there are no records or whatever records there were, have been destroyed. I would imagine that would also create some difficulty. -- I must be honest, I know very little about the hospital or clinic side of it. Primarily I have tried (10) with colleagues to obtain updated and official statistics from the police and we have just found that as time has gone by, those figures have become less and less meaningful and it is impossible today to work out any totals or estimates.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: M'Lord, I know that we are busy presenting evidence about Soweto, but may I ask your permission to present some evidence about Alexandra.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, just before you do that. When you spent that night at the police station, at Orlando Police Station, did you see any bodies? -- I saw numerous people with injuries (20) and I think it was only the following morning that I saw bodies at the Orlando Police Station and there were three or four bodies lying in a courtyard adjoining the police station and they lay in the sun.

In the sun? -- Yes, on the grass next to the - I think the one entrance to it which would presumably be the Black enquiry office or charge office and they lay outside there for some time. But I could not - in fact I am not too sure exactly how many bodies there were, there were 2 or 3 possibly lying on the ground. (30)

ADV. VAN GRAAN: Was that on the evening of the 16th? -- No, that/...



that was on the morning of the 17th.

And were you perhaps there at Orlando Police Station on the evening of the 17th? -- I was there until approximately 6 o'clock when there were further incidents on the main road leading towards New Canada and we were given a police escort because there had been trouble on that road and they were stoning cars and setting them alight.

CHAIRMAN: Was this 6 o'clock in the morning? -- 6 O'clock on Thursday night.

On the Thursday night. -- That is correct. I was (10) there from midday on the Wednesday until 6 p.m. approximately on Thursday night.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: So you did not spend the night at the Orlando Police Station of the 17th? -- No, not the 17th.

CHAIRMAN: You spent the night of the 16th there. -- The night of the 16th.

And it was on the morning of the 17th that you saw bodies. -- On the morning of the 17th. The previous day I had seen casualty victims, various Whites, one or two Whites who had come in who had been stoned, one or two Blacks with their (20) cars' windscreens shattered and they were covered in blood and they were taken off for treatment.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: Was it permitted to enter the premises of the police station? -- Yes, I had free movement in the police station. In fact, the police were extremely cooperative at that stage.

M'Lord, I have no further questions on Soweto.

CHAIRMAN: Now you want to go to the other incident?

ADV. VAN GRAAN: To Alexandra, yes.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, I think the main evidence on Alexandra (30) is due on Monday. So there wouldn't really be any objection,

well, it is not a question of objection, but it would not disrupt the continuity very much if this witness does give evidence about Alexandra.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: You went to Alexandra Township on Friday, the 18th June, 1976? -- That is correct, at approximately 9 o'clock in the morning. There were reports of trouble from the township and there were various fires taking place when I arrived there. I was there as a result of this trouble, until the early hours of Saturday morning.

CHAIRMAN: That would be the 19th. -- The 19th. Again (10)  
I was based largely at the police station in Alexandra except for one or two tours of the townships when I joined police convoys. We were warned that it was again too dangerous for Whites to move about the township. I think the first trip I made into the township was to a bottle store which had been looted and set alight. I do not know exactly what address it was.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: Who was in command of that trip? -- I could not tell you offhand. There were a large number of C.I.D. men.

Can I perhaps ask, was it perhaps Colonel Slabbert? (20)  
-- Not in that particular instance, no, it was not. This was a convoy of police vehicles comprising C.I.D. men in plain clothes who were not in riot uniform and they were carrying rifles and they drove through the township to the scene of a bottle store which had been looted and burned out and we spent a short while there while the police looked through the debris and we took photographs and I then returned to the police station with them, but there were no incidents at that stage involving riots. I saw no rioting whatsoever. Later in the day at about midday, a report was received at the Alexandra (30)  
Police Station by the police that a group of Indians or some  
Indian/...

Indian people were being attacked in a store in the township. This had apparently been brought by somebody on foot, this message and again I joined the police convoy and we drove through Alexandra. There were several police vehicles and ourselves in the middle and on that occasion it was my impression that the rioting was being caused by men and a certain number of women, not many but mainly men who appeared to be older than students. They certainly were not students as far as I could see, although there may have been among them students, I got the impression that they were very much (10) older than students. On this particular occasion we drove through Alexandra from west to east - I do not know the name of the street - and we were stoned and the police convoy was stoned. I think several stones hit our car and a brick hit the door and we travelled on for some distance and suddenly the convoy stopped and the police leaped out of their vehicles and pointed their firearms at people in the street, but there were no shots fired. Apparently at that point in time a bullet had been fired at Colonel Slabbert's car. Colonel Slabbert was the head of the Riot Squad. I only later discovered, he (20) told me that a shot had been fired, it had struck the roof of his car and I examined the mark in the roof and this was apparently why he had stopped at that point in time.

CHAIRMAN: Fired from or fired by? -- It would have been fired directly into the convoy from the face on, but who it was fired by he did not seem to know. He said merely there had been a shot fired which had struck his car and he had then stopped and the police had jumped out of their vehicles and obviously they could not establish who had fired the shot and they got back in and proceeded to this address where the Indians (30) had been attacked.

This is on a new part of the evidence. Could you perhaps give me - can you recollect at all more or less what the time was when you undertook this journey, this convoy? -- This was approximately midday, between 12 and 1 o'clock I would think, on the Friday.

On the 18th? -- On the 18th. There were fires going throughout the township at that stage.

Yes, I think I interrupted you. You were driving really towards is it Vasco da Gama Street? -- That is correct, that was the address in which these Indian people were (10) apparently trapped in two trading stores.

That is the street where the Indian stores are virtually all on the ... -- On the northern-most border of Alexandra Township.

That is right, but they are all on the one side of the street. Is that correct? -- No, there were only two trading stores, both of them on the northern side of Vasco da Gama Street, facing into Alexandra Township. It is in fact the very last street in Alexandra Township.

But are there a number of shops or only two? -- Only (20) two and behind these two shops, I gather, were the homes of the Indian traders.

No doubt when I hear further evidence, I will be able to place it, but on the inspection we came to - I do not know whether it was Vasco da Gama Street, but a street which the Indian shops were all on the one side; I took it to be north/north-west, you know, somewhere like that, side of the street. In other words, I took it to be nearest part to the main road, the Johannesburg/Pretoria main road. -- That in fact would have been on the western side on the Louis Botha Avenue side. (30)

That is right. -- This is in fact on the northern side

which/...

which borders onto the veld between - which separates - the veld which separates Alexandra Township from Marlborough and the White suburbs.

I have it now.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: I want to go back in point of time to that moment when you entered Alexandra and observed the so-called older students. -- Yes.

Did you see any placards or Black Power signs given by them? -- I must be honest, I did not see any placards and I did not see any Black Power signs, but mainly because as (10) we suddenly came across people lining the streets, one of the occupants of the car shouted that my window was open and I saw these bricks and stones coming at us and was trying to roll this up, so I must admit I was not really looking at any signs.

CHAIRMAN: I had omitted - I wonder if we could just break away from this particular point - I had omitted to ask you whether on the 16th and the 17th you had seen placards in the streets of Soweto? -- No, I saw no placards at all in the area that I operated in; nothing at all. (20)

You were behind of course. -- I was behind in the police... (both speaking simultaneously)

Did you see any Black Power signs? -- I think I did on the Thursday evening when I left the township and I saw people lining the street and at that point there were various people giving Black Power signs. That was near a garage which faces onto the main road leading from New Canada to Orlando, where apparently there had been trouble and there were police patrols along that section of the road and I saw several groups of people giving Black Power signs, yes. (30)

Did you see drivers of vehicles giving the Black Power



sign? -- No, not at that point, no.

To go back to Alexandra again and to Vasco da Gama Street. -- Well, when we arrived there, there were two stores alongside one another and as we pulled up, I saw a large group of Africans who had surrounded the store which was not burning; one of these were well under blaze, but the other one was totally surrounded or appeared to be totally surrounded by a large group of Africans. When they saw the police convoy arriving, they started running away, scattering in various directions. Some of them carrying goods which I assumed (10) to have been looted from the other shop. The Riot Squad policemen left from their vehicles and opened fire with rifles at the Africans as they ran away and they fired for only a matter of a few seconds and I believe that as a result of that 3 or 4 people died in that particular incident; one of them a Black woman who lay in Vasco da Gama Street not far from the store. She fell face down in the road and two men apparently who were shot behind the store where they were apparently trying to break into a window and I gather another body, but where exactly that man was shot, I do not know. (20)

ADV. VAN GRAAN: What impression did you get? Were the policemen firing at a particular person or at random? -- They fired at random, I gather to disperse the looters who had surrounded the store. That was my immediate impression. That they were not firing at any one individual but that they simply left from their vehicles and as the people ran away, they opened fire and I think Colonel Slabbert said 'that is enough' and that was after a second or a few seconds and they immediately stopped firing and chased after these people with batons and attempted to arrest as many as possible. (30)

CHAIRMAN: Was it known or suspected at that stage that the  
Indians/...

Indians who lived behind the place that he was still there or that he was in the building? -- Only according to the information which I later was told and this was that the information that had been received at the police station, was that this Indian family was trapped and barricaded in their house and they had been surrounded by looters and the police, when they arrived there, presumably believed that they were still in the house at that stage.

Did that turn out to be so later? -- It turned out to be so, because immediately after the shooting and immediately (10) after they had arrested a lot of people from the yard at the back of the shop where the house is, they had gone in there and Riot Squad policemen came out, dragging a lot of people and put them in the police vans and at that point an Indian man and his wife and family emerged from the house and they were crying and were slightly hysterical, saying that the police had saved them. They then showed us the front of the store where there was large burglar-proofing and steel gates which had been apparently torn away in the attempt to get into the store. (20)

What was your impression of the age of the people who were busy with this particular ... -- I got the impression that they were all ages. They were not particularly youths or not particularly older people, they were an assortment of people. In fact my immediate impression was that it was just a question of people trying to loot a shop.

To see what they could get. -- Correct.

This was not a case where people were in - school children were in their school uniform? -- No.

Can you remember any? -- I cannot recall seeing any- (30) one in school uniform.

Yes? -- The police arrested quite a few people, I am not too sure exactly how many and chased after them with batons and then led them over to the police vehicles and several of the men who had been grabbed, tried to run away and were chased by the police again and some of them were forcibly dragged off to the police vans. I did see an incident in which Colonel Slabbert reprimanded one of his men for using unnecessary force with a baton against one of these people and shortly after that .. (intervenes)

What was your general impression of the conduct (10) in arresting and stopping the looting? The conduct of the police. -- I think they were very efficient. They moved very quickly and very efficiently. I think there was a certain amount of violence, but I think they were dealing - my impression was that they were dealing with a violent situation at that particular point in time.

I am asking this in relation to Soweto, but in fact you had not seen. -- I had not seen, correct.

Here you found efficiency in this particular incident. -- In that particular incident, yes, they appeared to be (20) very efficient in fact and, you know, the way in which they piled from their vehicles, the way in which they opened fire, and immediately stopped and then chased after people and rounded them up and other than the one incident, as I say, where a police officer was beating the one chap over the head with a baton and was reprimanded by Colonel Slabbert, there were no other incidents which I would have thought were unnecessarily brutal or violent. And then for the rest of the day, after we had returned to Alexandra Police Station, there were various other incidents in the township, apparently (30) shootings, but I was not present at any of those incidents and merely/...

merely picked up information from the police as to what was in fact happening with various stores being stoned and arson. There were also at that point reports of an attack being made across the Louis Botha Avenue on a roadhouse which the police went to. I never fully established what had happened there exactly, but I gathered there had been some trouble with Blacks at that roadhouse.

A roadhouse across Louis Botha Avenue? -- That is right, that is called the Pickin' Chicken Roadhouse.

On the left-hand side of the road. -- Correct. And (10) there had also been another incident opposite the Wendy Wood Shops where an African was arrested apparently when he started throwing stones and the police rushed to the shopping centre and arrested this man, but he was by himself. On the front page of the Rand Daily Mail of Saturday, June 19, we carried a photograph of one of the people shot dead at this Indian trading store. She was unidentified and described as a school-girl, although police said later that she was much older. She had not been formally identified by the police to us.

Is this the woman you spoke of before? -- Correct. (20) Shortly after that I was surprised when the 'Vaderland' carried a story and a reproduction of our photograph, suggesting that we had actually posed that photograph. The police admitted when I then went to them that she had obviously been killed but said that to their knowledge she was certainly not a schoolgirl, she was much older than a schoolgirl. I think ever since then I have not really been involved in the actual coverage of events in the townships, other than acting as the link with the police to obtain official statistics and information about the unrest from Police Headquarters. (30)

MR VAN GRAAN: I have no further questions to ask. I do not



know if Mr Rees wants to elaborate on some particular aspect.

CHAIRMAN: One of your main difficulties would be - would seem to have been the - well, difficulty of getting information from the correct source of any particulars. -- That is correct.

Well, I say correct source, but the source closests to the ... -- That is right. One of the problems I think we experienced was that, although there were various officers involved at the scenes of trouble, nobody was in fact either prepared or in a position to actually release details even if they were in possession of these details, simply because(10) they were busy trying to cope with the situation at that particular point in time.

Have you experience of the fact that the falsity of information in these instances may lead to all sorts of rumours? Do you have personal experience of that? -- Yes, I think so.

Did it happen in this particular case? Do you know? -- It is difficult to know because I tend to have been involved in the point that I was receiving information from so many different sources that it is impossible to say how much of that was hearsay or in fact eye-witness accounts and to (20) then in fact try and confirm such information, has been an impossible task. The end result is one has had to sort of publish stories or information, presenting it as unconfirmed.

You have no actual experience of rumours being spread? -- No, no, I do not. Other than colleagues of mine who have said that the speculation in the townships is that the death figure is perhaps considerably higher than that given out by the police.

That sort of information you did get? -- I have received that sort of information, yes, from colleagues of mine. (30)

Anything further? -- No.



I have no further questions at this stage. When I have heard the other evidence relating particularly with regard to Alexandra, I shall see if it is necessary to ask you to come again, otherwise thank you very much.

NO FURTHER QUESTIONS.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNS FOR TEA.    THE COMMISSION RESUMES.

MR VAN GRAAN:    M'Lord, I want to call the second witness today, Mr Mat Manyana, from the Rand Daily Mail.

MATTHEW BOYI MANYANA:    sworn states:

ADV. VAN GRAAN:    You are a reporter from the Rand Daily (10)  
Mail? -- That is correct.

Where were you on the 16th June, 1976? -- I was on a country assignment in Piet Retief. I came back in the evening.

Of the 16th? -- Of the 17th.

And were you assigned to cover events in Soweto on the 17th? -- Yes, but with specific reference to the Orlando Police Station.

And did you go to the Orlando West Police Station on the 17th? -- Orlando Police Station, yes.

Orlando Police Station. -- Yes. (20)

Can you perhaps give us some information about your observations there? -- With me was this colleague who has since joined our morning group newspaper.

Who was the colleague? -- In Port Elizabeth. Zwelake Sisulu.

Can you perhaps spell the name? -- Z-w-e-l-a-k-e, the surname is S-i-s-u-l-u.

You may proceed. -- I was driving at the time and as we moved along the Soweto highway about 15 kilometres from town, there was this group of people who I later inferred was (30)  
thugs, accosting motorists returning home.

Did/...

Did they only warn White people or some Black people too? -- Well, at the time it was predominantly African people, motorists who had formed this convoy way back home and these various groups carried all sorts of weapons ranging from knives, broken bottles as well as stones. As we were moving along we were forced to make this Black Power sign as a passport to safety, I will put it that way, because those who failed to do as ordered would be stoned, that goes for the vehicles as well.

What was the time more or less at that stage? -- (10)  
That was about 6 o'clock.

Proceed. -- From time to time motorists would be stopped during which money would be demanded by these various gangs. I happened to be the victim of this robbery when two youths walked up to our car, while others stood in front of it. One placed this knife against my chest while the other thrust it against my throat. While I was busy going through my wallet which contained R1 notes as well as R5 notes, trying to find out if I could come across some silver, the one man nearest to me snatched the wallet. I saw other people being robbed (20) at the time and as we moved along the whole experience became more frightening because various groups would come to us, with what they called donations for the kids who had died. Well, the colleague of mine parted with 50 cents, yet earlier before the actual robbery on me, we had parted with some money, 50 cents each. Well, it went on like that and sometimes travelling along was virtually impossible for some people lay in the middle of the street to make sure that motorists were unable to drive on.

These kids who were demanding the money, were they (30) scholars? -- Obviously not.

Why/...

Why do you say obviously not? -- Judging by the manner in which they were dressed. And I would like to point out it was not only them alone, there were grownups as well. The ages could range between 21 to 26.

Did you perhaps observe the burning of buildings or vehicles or anything else? -- At the time we drove past this Combi which was burning.

At what time did you arrive at the Orlando Police Station? -- We were at the police station at about 6,45, I am not certain about this time. (10)

Did you enter the premises there? -- No, we parked just outside the police station where we joined our colleagues, Mike Dutfield and Robert Botha.

Were they already there? -- Yes, they were already there, waiting for - I mean to get into our car because they did not have transport at the time. Mike Dutfield was in charge of the team.

Can you give the Chairman a description of your experience there during the night of the 17th? -- We had parked our car almost directly opposite the police station, the charge (20) office entrance. Whilst still seated in this car, a number of people were being brought inside the place, both Black and White in camouflage kit. Some of these people appeared to be limping and others seemed to have been wounded in the legs.

Yes? -- At that stage as they were moving into the charge-office, others struggled, they were moving in obvious difficulty because of pain I assume, they had to lean on others for support.

Were they escorted by policemen? -- Yes, they were being escorted by policemen. (30)

Did you get the impression that they were arrested? -- Yes, because/...

because at one stage those who had not been severely injured, were forced to run, literally run as they walked, as they moved in pairs into the charge office.

Yes, you may proceed. What else did you observe there? -- Later towards - as the night wore on, a group of about 20 youths were also led to the charge office. They looked scared at the time. They were running into the charge office.

What was the time then? -- It could have been about 9,30.

Yes. -- 10 o'clock at night. They were running in pairs. The police kept assaulting them with batons. (10)

By how many policemen were they escorted? -- About 6 to 8 policemen.

African policemen or White policemen? -- Africans and Whites.

Yes, and what did they do with them then? -- After some time the same group of youths were taken out of the charge office and led to an open ground nearby where next to which about 8 corpses were lying uncovered.

Yes and then? -- In the process they were forced to hop for about 20 minutes. (20)

What do you mean by hop? Doing exercises? -- Well, it could be both I think. They were hopping there, they were forced to hop for about 20 minutes and while they were doing so, police would assault them and I heard a policeman say: Yes, this is Black Power, this is Black Power.

In what way did the policemen ... (intervenes)

CHAIRMAN: Wait a minute. Where were the corpses? On open ground? -- Yes, on the ground just near the entrance to the charge office.

Inside the charge office? -- No, outside the charge (30) office.

Had/...

Had you seen these bodies before? -- When we drove in I had seen them.

Were they covered? -- They were uncovered.

What had to be done with them? These 20 youngsters came out and they had to do what? -- To hop in this way, they kept jumping up and down.

What did they have to do with the corpses? -- The corpses were still lying there at the time. After hopping for about 20 minutes, they were ordered back into the charge office. At a later stage a mortuary van came and by that time (10) corpses had piled up.

They were taken out and shown the corpses? -- No.

These youngsters. -- No, they were not shown the corpses. They were forced to hop, jump, do some exercises as the Prosecutor had said.

Oh, I see. This had nothing to do with the corpses? -- Not at that stage.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: M'Lord, I just want to remind Mr Manyana that I am not a Prosecutor. -- I beg your pardon.

Do you think that the policemen took the children (20) deliberately to that place or scene where the corpses lay down? -- Well, I cannot do the thinking for the policemen; it could have been otherwise..

But what was your impression? -- Perhaps to punish them. I do not know. That was the impression I gathered. Because it was cold at that time, it was in the middle of winter.

In what way did the policemen assault the children? -- Beating them up with these batons and rubber hoses almost indiscriminately about the body.

How many policemen were there? -- There were quite a (30) number of them. There could have been 6 or 4.

Could/...



Could you see if they were Black or White policemen? --  
The policemen seemed to carry out this operation severely,  
these were the Black cops.

CHAIRMAN: Were they Black? -- Yes, the Black policemen.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: And when did they enter the charge office  
again? -- After they had hopped for about 20 minutes.

Yes. -- That is when this mortuary vehicle arrived.

So what was the time at that stage then? -- It could have  
been just before midnight or just after midnight.

Was it possible for you to hear these policemen (10)  
discuss some things there? -- No, it is just for the noise, no,  
I could not hear what was being discussed, except for people  
who were screaming almost throughout the time I had been there.

Can you elaborate on that point? -- People were screaming  
in the charge office and I could hear sounds like those of  
these - while these people screamed and at that stage I heard  
someone say: ja, moer hom, moer hom'.

Did a mortuary van arrive during the night of the 17th  
to remove the bodies? -- It could have been on the night of  
the 17th or just after midnight when the vehicle arrived. (20)

What happened then? -- The same group of 20 youngsters  
was taken out of the police station for the second time to do  
the hopping exercises again.

Yes? -- By that time bodies which had been lying on the  
ground uncovered, I mean the figure for the bodies had  
increased.

Yes, and then? -- After these youths had exercised, it  
could have been for another 20 minutes, they were ordered back  
into the charge office and almost immediately out again to  
load these corpses onto the waiting mortuary van. (30)

Who instructed them to carry the corpses to the van? --

The/...

The police.

Could it have been the driver of the mortuary van? -- Well, the driver of the mortuary van who was clad in a white dustcoat was standing nearby, near the van at the back of the van after the rear doors had been opened.

Did you perhaps count the bodies? -- I did not actually count the bodies, but I could observe there were about 15 bodies at the time.

No further questions, M'Lord. -- While the bodies were being loaded, the mortuary van driver kept kicking the (10) youths. There were 4 youths to one body. Two would carry the corpse from the front and others holding - and two others holding the legs and they literally dumped each body into the mortuary van. The attendant who was the driver, who was wearing a white dustcoat, would punch these youths and kick them. The whole experience was quite frightening to me.

CHAIRMAN: Did you write a report for your newspaper about it, or did you give information? -- I wrote the report, that is myself and Zwelake Sisulu, but we could not mention everything in this report. (20)

I have got the report here in front of me and I just want to ask you a few questions just to make things definite. Now, according to the report in the Rand Daily Mail of the 19th, this happened after midnight. Could that be correct? -- It is possible.

Could it have been? -- I am not quite sure about the time.

Then as regards the shouting of pain, there is only one reference to that in the report and that reference is the following: 'Earlier in the night, a single African prisoner, about 30 years old, was taken from the station into the (30) yard by three African policemen. Shortly after he disappeared

into/...

into the darkness, cries of pain were heard.' Do you remember that incident? -- No, I cannot remember a specific incident.

Have you got the report there? -- Yes, I have got it with me.

It is the very last paragraph. -- Yes.

Now, that is not the incident that you referred to when you spoke about such words as you heard them say 'moer hom' or you heard the noise of the sjambok. -- Yes.

That does not refer to this incident? -- No.

Do you know why the other report is not included in (10) this? -- Well, it could have been because of space in this newspaper.

The length of time of this incident is somewhat different in the report, but that is a matter of estimate; I do not think that is important. But you see, if the Commission wants to get to the bottom of this, it needs more definite information about the time. Now, I think you say that you arrived there about 9,30 that night. Is that correct? -- Where? At the police station?

At the police station. -- No, it was earlier than (20) 9,30. It was about 6,45 - 6,30, I am not certain.

You arrived - that is quite right, you say you arrived at 6,45, I am sorry. It was at 9,30 you say that the 20 youths were brought out. -- Yes.

You say that could have been as late as midnight? -- It could not have been as late as midnight because this happened more than once.

They were brought out twice, you say. -- Yes, twice.

If the Commission has investigation done, would it have to be over the period say from 9,30 to after midnight? (30) -- I think so, yes.

What/...

What were you doing there all the time? -- We were observing what was going on, that is myself and my colleagues. Mike Dutfield was in .. (intervenes)

They had no transport. Did I understand you correctly? -- The idea was to join them in our car since they had been left without transport.

They had been left without transport. -- Yes, after the chief crime reporter I think had left the scene.

When did you actually bring them back? -- Pardon?

When did you bring them back? -- We worked there (10) throughout the night until about 12 noon the next day.

Did you use your car for transport at all during that time? -- No.

Did you go to any particular place in Soweto? -- No, we kept parked on that spot almost throughout the night and the morning.

Did you see - you saw the Black policemen who ordered them to carry the bodies. Is that correct? To load the bodies into the mortuary van. Is that correct? -- I saw the police. I do not think I made any specific reference as to the (20) nationality of the police who ordered the youths to carry the bodies.

Who did it? -- It could have been both Black and white cops, but they were the policemen who had ordered them.

Sorry, I do not quite understand you. Who did you see actually ordering them to pick up the bodies and put them in the van? -- The policemen.

The police? -- Yes.

Were they Black or White? -- I do not remember whether they were Black or White, but they are the policemen, that (30) I can remember with precision(?).

I think the report - yes, the report says that it was at 3 a.m. when they were made to load the corpses into the mortuary van. The third-last paragraph and the time is in the one just before that. According to the report there were White police officers walking past. Can you remember at the time of the loading whether you saw any police officers there? -- There were police officers at the time of the loading.

Were there White police officers? -- I think when we mentioned police officers walking past, those police officers had nothing to do with the ordering of the loading of the (10) bodies into the mortuary van. I mean so many incidents were happening at the time when these corpses were being loaded into this van. Almost simultaneously people were screaming from time to time inside the charge office.

Inside? -- In the charge office, yes.

This is so an important a statement, I cannot understand why it was left out of the report that people were screaming inside and only this one incident was referred to. I have already put it to you, in the very last paragraph. In any event, you say that you do not know whether the police (20) officers were White or Black who ordered them to carry the bodies. -- That I cannot remember.

But you did see white police officers walking past. -- They were walking up and down from time to time while the screams went on.

Yes, about the screaming I have asked you, but about the loading, when the loading took place, did you see the police officers? -- They were standing nearby. The loading was not far from the police station entrance. I mean, the entrance into the charge office, I would say the door at the (30) charge office.

Did/...



Did you see the reference to the White police officers is in the second-last paragraph. -- 'Throughout this episode, White police officers were walking past, witnessing what was happening.' Not necessarily in relation to the loading. I think we mentioned this in relation to what was happening as to the beatings up, the screaming.

Is there any reference to the beating up until the last paragraph? I am not talking about the hitting and running, making them hop, making them exercise. Apart from that is there any reference to beating them inside the police station until the last paragraph of the report? -- No, I cannot see any. (10)

One realises that this was apparently more - it says 'staff reporters' so there was more than one man responsible for this report. It was not just one man's comment, it was more than one. -- Yes, but we had agreed.

It was a report made up of what they had said, what three people had said. Is that right? -- That is correct.

Anything further you wish to bring to my notice? -- No. (This witness spoke very indistinctly). (20)

NO FURTHER QUESTIONS.

ADV. VAN GRAAN: Edele, ons wil graag nou 'n derde getuie roep, mnr.

verklaar onder eed:

ADV. VAN GRAAN: U Edele, voordat ons die getuienis aanbied, wil ek net graag vra of u nie 'n bevel sal maak dat die getuie se identiteit nie bekend gemaak sal word in die pers nie.

VOORSITTER: Is dit wat u wil hê? -- Ek verlang dit omdat ek tot 'n groot mate ook eie opinies gaan uitspreek en 'n ontleding gaan probeer aanbied wat, indien ek dit in die koerant sou doen, my redakteur die geleentheid sou hê om dit goed of af (30)

te/...