

## INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

PBM - 33  
 The Cape Coloreds, Part III:  
 Anti-European Organization

c/o J. M. Pennington  
 5, Elm Street  
 Houghton, Johannesburg  
 November 24, 1954

Mr. Walter S. Rogers  
 Institute of Current World Affairs  
 522 Fifth Avenue,  
 New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

One of the main leaders of the Cape Colored Community's split with Europeans and proposed alliance with Africans and Indians is Dr. Goulab H. Gool,<sup>1</sup> a Colored general practitioner with a high forehead, sarcastic attitude, pleasantly furnished house in a good suburb and a taste for classical music. Although he modestly droops his eyelids when you mention it, he is a powerful leader of the All-Africa Convention and the Non-European Unity Movement, two organizations which are about as far to the left as any organization can be without having to move underground. Personally, I would say that they are Communist-front organizations, pure and simple, or the nuclei thereof, but so far they have managed to avoid getting into serious trouble with the Minister of Justice.<sup>2</sup>

Gool didn't seem inclined to talk when we first met. I got the impression, from the kindergarten approach he used, that he considered the time we were scheduled to spend together as wasted in advance. But after a half-hour or so of light parrying, he finally decided to take my visit to his home seriously and we talked until late at night. In the early part of the conversation he adopted a few poses calculated to impress. For instance, he seemed to consider himself above all the petty squabbles and foolish decisions made by the rank and file of his own organization and all other major non-European organizations.

He sneered at Sam Kahn, Edward Roux, Brian Bunting and other liberal-minded, theoretical Communists as "opportunists, dreamers and quislings;" he dismissed Lituli, African National Congress President, as "frustrated;" he referred to the ANC itself as "stupid and ineffectual;" and he wrote off the South African Indian Congress as "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." He admitted that his own organizations were the best in South Africa, but added that even they made serious mistakes from time to time.

I couldn't help feeling, as Gool went through this tirade, that the only man in Africa with his head screwed on in the right direction was, apparently, Dr. Goulab H. Gool. His ideas were firm and uncompromising, although his way of presenting them was a bit disconcerting. He had a conversational habit of making a moderately funny statement, then laughing a high, hysterical laugh for an immoderate length of time afterwards. Often he laughed so long and, to me, pointlessly, that the thread of discussion would be snapped and we would have to hunt around in earlier conversation to find out where we were.

"It will be the best thing that can happen to the Colored people to have Mr. Strydom as the next Prime Minister," he said, hooking a footstool with a toe and

1. Mrs. Z. ("Sissie") Gool (PBM-32) was formerly married to Goulab's brother, Dr. A. H. Gool. They were divorced several years ago, however, and their political views are poles apart.
2. I judge the organizations by their newspaper, The Torch, which closely follows the Communist Party line. In it Russia is the only proponent of peace and the United States is Negro-hating and war-mongering.

and pulling it close to his arm chair. "We Coloreds will never amount to anything so long as we have that millstone, common roll franchise, around our necks. They say that Strydom is extremist. I hope so. For if he is as extreme as they say we will lose that silly vote, the Convention (All-Africa Convention) will gain more support, and we will be in a better position to organize with Africans." He propped his feet up.

"One of our big stumbling blocks is the distrust the Africans feel for us. Coloreds have always been so damned superior with the vote and bottles of brandy that it's no wonder the Africans don't believe there's a single Colored man in Cape Town who wouldn't abandon every principle for a ride on a bus with a European. But as soon as the Government lowers us to the status of Africans, then we can start to accomplish something. I hope they introduce pass laws for Coloreds." He cackled at that one, so long that there was no hope of retracing our steps.

We started on a new tack. "What do the All-Africa Convention and the Non-European Unity Movement stand for?" I asked.

"The All-Africa Convention," he began, sounding as if he were reading ponderously from a weighty manifesto, "does not believe in nor admit the possibility of cooperation between Europeans and Non-Europeans except on the basis of complete equality. That means that every man, no matter what his skin color, will have absolutely free choice in deciding where he will live, what girl he will marry, what work he will do, what education he will take up, whom he'll vote for, if he'll bother to vote at all--in fact, there will be no color bar whatsoever, in anything. Perhaps it is an extreme view--but it is the only view that means anything.

"If a Colored or African man or woman is willing to accept an inferior position in anything, it means that he or she must accept the concept of fundamental inequality. That we cannot accept. We understood long ago that the close feeling, or whatever you call it, between Europeans and Coloreds was just another kind of slave-mentality paternalism. A clean break between Europeans and Coloreds is what we need to organize, and the Nationalists, bless their hearts, are doing their best to see that we get it.

"We must reject Mrs. Ballinger, for all her good intentions, although she makes very pretty speeches on the Africans' behalf in Parliament, because she is part of the entire system of inferiority. In voting for her, Africans are accepting the concept that they themselves are so inferior that they are not capable of sitting in Parliament and taking part in debates. We must teach Africans not to vote for her at all, no matter how sincere she is. Lituli says he wants increased representation in Parliament. But what he means is that he is willing to accept the mandates of the Minister for Native Affairs in return for one or two more Mrs. Ballingers. He is an idiot."

The conversation continued in this vein for several hours--until 10:30, that South African witching hour when everyone born south of the Limpopo feels he must have a cup of tea or coffee. Together, Gool and I went into the kitchen and put the kettle on. Perched on a straight-backed chair beside the stove, a full cup of tea in front of him and more in the pot, Gool talked more calmly. "We are gaining ground, thanks to the Nationalists. I have no records of our membership, but I can tell you that we have gained considerable strength in the past five years or

so. Now, if we could only get the African National Congress to see the error of it's ways, we might accomplish something."

"What is the ANC doing wrong?" I asked.

"Among other things, their approach is all wrong," Gool said, pouring a second cup. "You and I know that politics is a science. We understand that in order to gain support for any sort of mass movement you must appeal to the masses on ground they know and understand. You know the ANC. You know what approach they use. They ask for votes for everyone. They say they are being denied a political voice in their own country. They say they believe in democracy and they understand democracy and therefore they want the Government to give them a little.

"But what is an African? Is he a democratic man? Does he understand what democracy means and does he know anything of the liberal tradition of western Europe? Certainly not. He is a peasant farmer living under the remains of a tribal system which teaches that the most important thing in the world is land. He is a man who comes to the city so that he can earn money to buy land. Or, if he already owns land, to embellish his land with some cattle and a wife.

"I know a man who tried to organize African trade unions on the Rand during the last war. The Government interned him under the War Emergency Regulations. Before he left, he told his African assistants to keep the organization running while he was gone. But what happened as soon as he went into the internment camp? His associates took all the money, went back to the reserves, and bought land. And when my friend came out of the camp he was very angry. 'I taught them all I knew,' he said. 'I trusted them. I don't understand how they could betray me.' To me, it was simple. He thought he had taught his assistants to believe in trade unionism. He forgot that they had come from the reserves--that they were peasant farmers with a natural craving for land of their own. He thought they were urbanized, sophisticated men when all they wanted was a few acres of earth and cattle to grow on it.<sup>1</sup>

"We must build an organization that will promise the Africans that few acres of earth. 'Forty acres and a mule,' you call it in the States. It is the only place to begin--from there we can branch out. There are detribalized Africans who are permanent workers in the cities. Those can be approached from the economic side, or perhaps even the liberal, democratic side. But as leaders we must teach our people one thing--to organize a popular organization you must offer something that appeals to the people. Perhaps to an educated, urbanized African that something is political power, but even that seems doubtful to me. We must go back to the land for support. Otherwise we will fail."

Back in the living room, Gool gave me several mimeographed pamphlets containing his own ideas for a non-European movement. "At first we must organize among Africans and Coloreds. That in itself is hard enough without trying to include Indians who are much more sophisticated than Africans and who would only join the organization on a basis of condescension. It will be hard for me to ignore the Indians--I spent my youth in India as one of Ghandi's young men who lived in the villages with the peasants and taught them to look to him as a leader.

1. The organizer in question, a European named Max Gordon, told me substantially the same story himself. Now in Cape Town, he cannot find work because of a blacklisting campaign being conducted by the Minister of Labor, Mr. Schoeman.

"Our own organizing will take as long or longer than Ghandi's. I myself plan to retire next year--I'm 50--to start a small school to train leaders as Ghandi taught me. People like Joe Jordan<sup>1</sup> will write our text books. It remains to be seen whether the young hotheads who are taking over the ANC and the South African Indian Congress now that the old moderates like Lituli are gone will give us time to develop. They may try to make good their boast of 'Freedom in our lifetime' by some kind of revolt or terrorism. That would put our whole program back several years."

It was almost midnight when I rose, picked up my pamphlet collection, and said good night. Gool walked into the front hall with me, still talking. "I think you have hold of something important," he said. "The Government is making a mistake, taking away our pointless little vote and refusing to let Colored men buy houses like this one. It is putting much too much opportunity into the hands of agitators like me. I only hope I'm a good enough agitator to take proper advantage of the opportunity." As we shook hands, he laughed at his remark in his high-pitched way. As the door closed behind me and I walked to my car he was still laughing, breaking the late-at-night silence of that suburban street.

As I drove home I thought about Gool's dreams. Here was an able man, a bit drunk with his own firm beliefs, who had taken part in a successful campaign in India. By his own admission he was too old to accomplish anything revolutionary in his own lifetime. But he was willing to give up a successful medical practice in order to pass on to younger men the political lessons he had learned as a young man from one of the ablest politicians of all time. The question that kept gnawing at the back of my mind was, Just how influential a man is Gool? What support does he command and what are the potentialities of his organizations?

The question was still gnawing the next morning as I drove into Cape Town to keep an appointment with Leo Marquard, South African Editor of the Oxford University Press, author of an authoritative book on South Africa (Peoples and Policies of South Africa), and veteran observer of political movements and trends. By inclination, he is a Liberal--which means, in South Africa, that he believes in many of the principles of Central African Federation partnership, including qualified general franchise. When I arrived at his office he had just finished giving an interview to one of Edward R. Murrow's television crews and was relaxing behind his desk with a cigarette.

Over tea, I asked if he knew of a precise method by which to evaluate non-European opinion and the influence of a non-European leader. I told him I had specifically in mind Gool, the All-Africa Convention and the Non-European Unity Movement.

"There is no precise method," he answered, "especially among the Coloreds. Their attitudes and feelings, like ours, are conditioned by their social and economic status. They are divided into many cliques, based on where they live, the size of

1. Joe Jordan is a young African who is a lecturer in Native Law and Administration at the University of Cape Town. He is an intense, gloomy young man full of the theories expressed by Gool and rather prone to consider any discussion of them as a sign of stupidity. His attitude is one of complete rejection of cooperation with Europeans. Gool said that as a writer of text books he will do well but as a leader in the field he would fail because he is too dogmatic. I agree.

their incomes and even the color of their skins. The only way to judge is to talk to as many people as possible, try to find out how well the person or organization is supported financially, and, if the group tries to organize some sort of protest or rally, see how effective the protest is. Once you've done all that, you must sit down and try to evaluate what you've found.

"In the case of the Gools, I'm sure you've discovered that the name is a well-known one in Cape Town. Both of the Gool brothers, Goulab and A. H., are able doctors and leaders of civic and political organizations. And Sissie, although she's only a Gool by marriage, has been on the City Council for so many years she's an institution. Of course, her father served as Councillor for years before she did, and that adds to the Gool prestige even though Sissie saw fit to divorce herself from the family a few years ago. You notice, though, that she still calls herself Sissie Gool."

As far as I or anyone else I talked to could tell, the All-Africa Convention and the Non-European Unity Movement seem to be well off. They put out The Torch, which is well-printed and which is published regularly, so there must be money somewhere. And they print pamphlets and rent halls and pay travel expenses for their representatives--undoubtedly someone is footing a good-sized bill.

Marquard said the only concrete example of a Convention or Unity Movement-sponsored campaign he could point out to judge effectiveness was the boycott of the Van Riebeck tercentenary celebrations held in Cape Town two years ago. The Non-European Unity Movement took the lead in urging that no non-European attend this "Herrenvolk Festival of Hate."<sup>1</sup> A large section of the stadium in which the Pageant of History took place was reserved for non-Europeans, but they remained empty throughout the celebrations. Marquard said that it was an effective boycott and Gool chortled that the Government lost £7,000,000 in entrance fees. Marquard also pointed out that perhaps it is an easy matter to convince an underpaid African or Colored not to spend five shillings to see a collection of floats and folk-dancing.

I found that all of the Colored people I talked to had heard of one or another of the Gool clan. Marquard's yard stick seems to indicate that the combination of the All-Africa Convention, the Non-European Unity Movement and the Gools are an important political package.

Opinion among Africans in Cape Town seems to be strong, as far as I could tell, against cooperation with Coloreds. What political loyalty there is seems to belong to the African National Congress. I spent a day in Langa, the principal Cape Town Native location, with members of the Langa Advisory Board, the Langa Vigilance Committee and an African social worker. The consensus of opinion seemed to be that Colored agitators were to be avoided. The social worker, Sidney Nachiqi, summed it up by saying that as soon as the Government made a few concessions to the Coloreds the Coloreds would pull out of any non-European movement leaving the Africans to face the music.

Gool, on the other hand, claims that in the past four years he has found himself being invited to address purely African meetings and to assume leadership in

1. This phrase was used in a paper read by Gool at the All-Africa Convention meeting at Queenstown in December, 1953.

various anti-European campaigns conducted by Africans. As Coloreds suffer more because of Nationalist policy, he says, their acceptance by Africans will grow.

The real situation must lie somewhere between the points of view of Gool and Nachiqi; i.e., although Africans have had little or no reason to trust Colored leadership in the past, the policy of the Government is such that the two population groups are beginning to find common cause.

As the common cause grows, so, presumably, will Gool and his organizations. Mrs. Betty de Grooth, Regional Secretary of the Institute of Race Relations at Cape Town, said that she had noticed a significant growth in the activities of the Convention and the Unity Movement. So had Dr. Van der Ross, Colored headmaster of Battswood secondary school for Coloreds. He was, I felt, frightened of the resistance movement he felt growing up among other Colored leaders, and although he was resentful of the disappearance of the Cape Liberal Tradition, he did not feel that an alliance with Africans and/or Indians was well-advised or promising. He felt there was still an opportunity to place the Coloreds' case before the Government.

Gool's reaction to Van der Ross's attitude was anything but complimentary. Yet I felt that Gool realized that one of the factors behind the recent growth of his organizations is the sort of mild reaction that a moderate like Van der Ross feels towards the Government's Colored policy.

At Sabra,<sup>1</sup> they say they aren't worried about the Coloreds. I spent two days with Sabra men, and we hashed the question out over cigarettes, coffee, lunch and dinner. They seemed to think it was just too bad that the Coloreds were growing resentful at the treatment accorded them by the Nationalist Government.

"Ah," they answered, "but you only talked to the liberals and the Communists. Didn't you talk to anyone at the Commissioner for Colored Affairs' office?"<sup>2</sup>

"Yes," I said. "I talked to a man named Bosman. But every time I brought up these questions he said that he was a civil servant and wasn't permitted to discuss politics."

"Well," came the response, "our contacts with Coloreds are not with the radicals and so-called leaders. Our contacts are with the average Colored person--the laborer and the clerk. They know nothing of all this political business and do not care to know. We think you are attaching too much significance to the views of the extremely thin skim of educated Colored men who have learned to talk politics and who hold themselves up as Colored leaders."

And, as an example of how difficult it would be for Coloreds to cooperate with Natives, they told me a story of a Colored gardener, a household servant in Stellenbosch, who refused to live in the same servants' quarters as a Native because the Native smelled bad. Every time I asked what practical reason there was for removing the Coloreds from the Common Voters' Roll and thereby giving these radical

1. Sabra is the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs, an Afrikaner Nationalist organization at Stellenbosch University. It's function is to draw up Afrikaner racial policy, based on apartheid as opposed to the liberal Institute of Race Relations.
2. The Commissioner for Colored Affairs does not have direct jurisdiction over Colored people. He acts as go-between for Colored Civic groups and Government agencies.

Colored leaders an opportunity to make trouble, they hedged.

"There shouldn't be any trouble at all," they said. "After all, we are not suggesting that they should be denied the vote altogether--they will be on their own voters' roll, electing many more representatives to Parliament than they do now. We admit there wasn't much danger in their presence on the Common Voters' Roll, but on principle, if apartheid is to work, we cannot have any non-Europeans, no matter how harmless, on a European voters' roll. Danger or not, they must go."

As Sabra believes, so believes the Government. It is plain that the Nationalists are willing to risk trouble with the Coloreds--and even risk the Coloreds turning for cooperation to other non-European population groups--in order to implement the ideal of apartheid. They firmly believe that the average Colored man does not care one way or another about the vote, the population register or the Group Areas Act. They firmly believe that the so-called leaders of the Coloreds are semi-educated, radical dreamers with no real influence and no real following. They firmly believe in their ideal of complete apartheid and they feel strong enough to put it over regardless of opposition. They seem to feel that Coloreds are much more like Africans than Europeans--that what little reaction there is to the end of three centuries of the Cape Liberal Policy will be of no consequence.

They do not take into consideration the fact that the Coloreds have been imitating and learning from Europeans for 300 years; that their general knowledge, European outlook and political experience equip them admirably to be leaders of an anti-European movement.

Perhaps they are right. Perhaps, as they say, men like Dr. Gool have no hope of gaining followers and influence and changing the course of South African history. But it has happened before, in other countries, from just as small beginnings. And as I read, week after week, little newspaper stories containing lists of trade union and political leaders who have been banned or named under the Riotous Assemblies or Suppression of Communism Acts, I cannot help but feel that people like those at Sabra are like a lazy householder who, when his home begins to crumble, fills the cracks with straw instead of trying to build a new house.

Sincerely,



Peter Bird Martin

Received New York 12/3/54.