

SHARPEVILLE AND AFTER
SUPPRESSION and LIBERATION in
SOUTHERN AFRICA



sharpeville march 21, 1960 Sixty nine Africans shot dead by police, hundreds injured and thousands arrested.

SHARPEVILLE. Symbol of the violence and racism of white South Africa. Symbol of white destruction of non-violent African protest. Symbol of the violent truth.

inside south africa In the Republic of South Africa the white 19 per cent of the population has total political and economic control over the 81 per cent African, Asian and "Colored" (people of mixed racial ancestry) majority. They also control 100 per cent of the land, 87 per cent of which is to be occupied by whites only. The remaining land (containing virtually none of the country's natural resources) is "reserved" for the 13 million Africans who comprise a cheap labor pool for white-owned industry and agriculture. The average per capita income of Africans is only 10 per cent that of whites in South Africa.

One main pillar of this system of apartheid (the forced inequality of racial groups) is the **PASS LAWS**. Every African is required to carry a pass (reference) book in order to work, move about, or live anywhere. Failure to produce a pass on demand is a criminal offence which results in imprisonment and fines for half a million Africans every year. It is the pass system which enables the white government to control the black majority with police state efficiency. To Africans the pass is a "badge of slavery."

the sharpeville massacre The pass laws became the focus of protest in 1960 for a newly formed African nationalist party, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), an offshoot of the older African National Congress (ANC). The PAC leader, Mengeliso Robert Sobukwe, sent out the call to action:

Sons and daughters of the soil, on Monday, March 21, 1960 we launch our Positive Decisive Action against the Pass Laws . . . Are we still prepared to be half-human beings in our fatherland or are we prepared to be citizens -- men and women in a democratic non-racial South Africa? How long shall we be called Bantu, Native, Non-European, Non-White, or stinking Keffir in our own fatherland? . . . How long shall we rot physically, spiritually and morally? How long shall we starve amid plenty in our fatherland? How long shall we

be a rightless, voteless and voiceless
11,000,000 in our fatherland?

The PAC plan was to mobilize the African people to march and to assemble at police stations without their passes thus inviting arrest. This was to be supported by a general work stoppage. If successful the jails would be full, the labor force would be cut, and the government would have to reconsider its policies. The protest was to be non-violent. Sobukwe said, "Our people must be taught now and continuously that in this campaign we are going to observe absolute non-violence . . . We are leading the vital, breathing and dynamic youth of our land. We are leading that youth, NOT TO DEATH BUT TO LIFE ABUNDANT."

More than a quarter of a million people responded to the call for civil disobedience throughout South Africa on March 21. At Sharpeville, an African "location" thirty miles south of Johannesburg, 5,000 or more Africans massed at the police station during the morning. Some people came thinking that they would hear some announcements related to an earlier police incident where tear gas and some shooting had occurred; others expecting a statement concerning passes. It was not an angry mob, but more like a celebration. There is no evidence that the police ever tried to find out why the crowd had gathered or had asked them to disperse. In mid-morning South African Sabre jets buzzed the crowd, and the police, now 300 in number, formed a line between the police station and a low wire fence surrounding the police compound. Some had automatic weapons which they were told to load. Five Saracen armored trucks moved into the crowd. The demonstration leaders asked the crowd to keep away from the fence, and several of them were arrested when the Special Branch (security police) came into the area. The crowd was noisy but not violent.

Then without warning, the police opened fire. When it was all over forty seconds later, 69 Africans were dead, 180 were wounded. The dead included eight women and ten children. The South African Government was quick to claim that the police had been charged by an angry mob, but Dr. John Friedman, Senior District Surgeon, later testified that 70 per cent of the victims were SHOT IN THE BACK. Eyewitness reports cite that the Africans had no weapons, and that none were found on the ground after the massacre.

Africans defied the pass laws and refused to work throughout cities in South Africa. Shootings occurred elsewhere as well. As demonstrations and marches continued, there was panic in

the land. Foreign investors began a rush to withdraw capital fearing further troubles, and South Africa's gold and foreign reserves dropped considerably. But the revolution did not come. The passive resistance campaign was brutally suppressed. After the Sharpeville massacre, the police went on arresting Africans, even some who were wounded and recovering in hospitals. In Nyanga, near Cape Town, the police were turned loose for four days with orders to whip every male African they encountered. "For sheer sadism," wrote Canadian correspondent Norman Phillips, "the closest comparison to what happened at Nyanga was when the Gestapo sealed off the Warsaw ghetto and began to annihilate it." The government soon declared a State of Emergency and on April 18, it banned the two major African movements, the PAC and the ANC, as unlawful organizations.

Sharpeville marks a time when some believed that positive change was imminent in South Africa. Why did it not occur? During the early 1960's after the Sharpeville debacle, the country underwent a severe financial crisis. But key international and American financiers did not lose confidence in the profitability of white racism. Thus the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, First National City Bank and others, including Charles W. Engelhard, the largest U.S. exploiter in South Africa, extended credit and loans thereby putting the South African economy back on its feet. During these years also the consortium of U.S. banks, led by Chase Manhattan, renewed a \$40 million revolving credit loan to the South African Government, and General Motors bought full page ads in the Johannesburg papers expressing confidence in stable future of South Africa.

The international community expressed horror at Sharpeville; American businesses expressed confidence, and objections were brushed aside by claims that U.S. business was really breaking down apartheid.

repression after sharpeville The popular claim of U.S. business that American support, economic or political, has moderated apartheid has no basis. During the last decade U.S. investment in South Africa has grown to about \$800 million and more than 400 American companies have affiliates or subsidiaries there. In that same period, the government has instituted more repressive measures so that today, South Africa is a worse police state than it was in 1960.

Following the panic of 1960, the government launched a brutal campaign of persecution, spearheaded by the then Minister of Justice who had been interned during World War II for pre-Nazi sympathies, and who is the present Prime Minister, B.J. Vorster. The campaign aimed to crush all African political opposition. Detention without trial,



SHARPEVILLE: "Hundreds of kids were running, too. One little boy had on an old black coat, which he held up behind his head, thinking, perhaps, that it might save him from the bullets. Some of the children, hardly as tall as the grass, were leaping like rabbits. Some were shot, too." (Humphrey Tyler, Africa Today, 5/60.)

house arrest, censorship, restrictions on movement and assembly, bannings - these were the legislative measures sanctioned by white South Africa. At the same time the last vestiges of non-white representation in government were ended, and the "Bantustan" theory of separate African tribal homelands both implemented and redefined to make black South Africans aliens

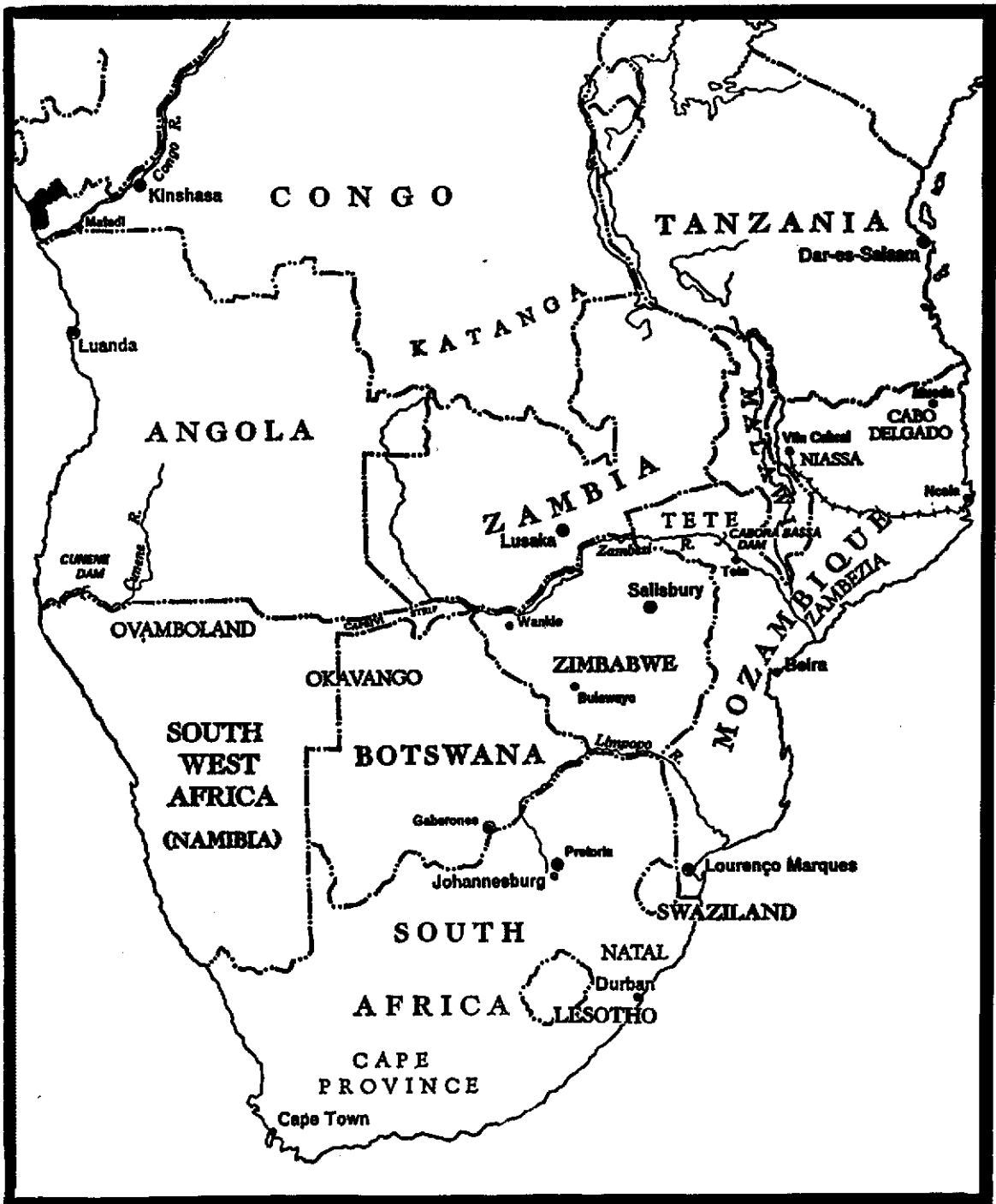
in their own country. The police were encouraged to use physical torture (electric and water), and mental torture (indefinite solitary confinement). Between 1963 and 1965 thousands of activists were jailed. Some had been informed on by the clever spy system created by the government; and others committed suicide or were murdered by the police. It was during this period that much of the leadership of the political movements was jailed in South Africa or forced into exile.

The South African Government now claims that all is peaceful, that the Africans have been won over and that they happily accept apartheid. The blatant untruth of this assertion can be documented in many ways. Inside South Africa there continues to be evidence, in spite of all the police have done, of an active political underground. The trials of alleged party members have occurred in the latter part of the 1960's, the final one of the decade being that of 22 Africans indicted under the Terrorism Act and said to be members of the ANC. The Terrorism Act is the latest of South Africa's repressive laws and was passed by the all white Parliament in 1967. Under the act persons can be detained indefinitely without trial. Terrorism is defined so broadly that it enables the government to arrest anyone it chooses. For example, an action which has the effect of "embarrassing the administration of the affairs of the State" can be defined as an act of terrorism. The minimum sentence is five years imprisonment, the maximum is death.

"Peaceful" states do not have to enact Terrorism laws. South Africa which has the world's highest annual execution rate can hardly be called peaceful. Police in peaceful states do not automatically use dogs for crowd control or shoot down laborers over a minor dispute.

Every day brings news of greater and greater repression in South Africa. News that South Africa, through her growing economic and military power, is moving to control the nations around her. South Africa has already incorporated South West Africa (Namibia) in defiance of the United Nations, and has sent military forces to help the Smith regime in Rhodesia. South Africa is also cooperating with colonial Portugal to suppress the Africans of Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique.

Every day also brings news that the struggle for liberation advances.



SOUTHERN AFRICA

the liberation struggle White South Africa has made peaceful protest futile and impossible. It has done everything in its power, a power bolstered by European and American capital and allies, to crush African resistance. But total suppression of the liberation struggle has failed.

On one front, the African National Congress has united forces with the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) and since August, 1967 guerrillas of both movements have been involved in joint actions against Smith's troops on Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) soil. Within South Africa itself evidence of PAC and ANC activities continue.

In the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea (Bissau), the armed struggle, initiated in 1961 in Angola, has provided new victories in all the territories. The Portuguese have been eliminated from vast areas which are now liberated and governed by the African peoples. In these zones the political movements, such as the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), have established new educational and health facilities, as well as structures of local commerce and government.

Military warfare has also begun in the northern regions of Namibia (South West Africa) where South Africa has placed air bases and extra border troops.

In all of the regions of military conflict, the enemy of the African peoples, Portugal Rhodesia and South Africa, is being aided by growing Western economic support or particularly in the case of Portugal, by military support.



But the fight for freedom and self-determination will continue.

Oliver Tambo, Acting President of the African National Congress, has said about his own country,

We fight for a South Africa in which there will be no racial discrimination, no inequalities based on color, creed, or race; a non-racial democracy which recognizes the essential equality between man and man . . . The power of government will rest in the hands of the majority of the people regardless of considerations of race. But our first and immediate task is to win over the power to rule our country as it should be ruled, that is, to replace the regime which consists of a White minority with a people's government enjoying the mandate from all the people.



**Building the
Revolution.**

**A Mozambican
guerrilla.**

future sharpevilles and international action

Change
in all of southern Africa will come as the struggle of the people develops. Sharpeville as a symbol of white violence still exists; Sharpeville as a symbol of black courage exists. The African struggle will naturally be influenced by the actions of the international supporters of the South African regime.

At this point the United States prefers vested economic interests based on a system of raw exploitation called apartheid, to self-determination. These interests mean U.S. diplomatic and perhaps even direct military support for South Africa at some point in time.

For all these reasons, we must act in solidarity with the growing struggle against injustice.

The world community, at the United Nations, has chosen March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations General Assembly has requested "all States to commemorate . . . 21 March . . . in solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa." An appeal by the U.N. Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid calls upon member states to relate to the people and to the movements in various concrete ways. It has called upon them to:

- contribute food, clothes, medicines, educational materials, and monies to the liberation organizations;
- help the movements disseminate information on their legitimate struggle;
- provide travel documents, employment and educational opportunities to refugees from South Africa.

The United States Government fulfills none of these requests, but the American people can and must help, both in relation to the liberation struggle and to acting against U.S. government and business collaboration in southern Africa.

how you can help

1. BECOME INFORMED AND INFORM OTHERS: Write to the following groups for information about southern Africa.

- American Committee on Africa
164 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10016
- Africa Research Group
P.O. Box 213
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
- U.N. Special Committee on Apartheid
Room 3580
United Nations, New York 10017

Subscribe to SOUTHERN AFRICA, a monthly news and analysis bulletin available from the University Christian Movement, Southern Africa Committee, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 752, New York, New York, 10027.

2. SUPPORT THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS: Send funds directly to the movements or via the Africa Defense and Aid Fund of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA). Books, clothes, medicines, and other items are needed as well. A list of speakers from the liberation movements is available from ACOA.

3. ON MARCH 21 COMMEMORATE THE SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE: Hold a public meeting or have a special fund raising event at your church, synagogue, club. March 21 should be set aside. People can contribute to the liberation struggle or to other needs of the opponents of racism. DEMONSTRATE OR HOLD A RALLY at South African offices (consulates, airways, tourist agencies) or hold an action focusing on U.S. support for South Africa at a government or corporation office.

4. BEGIN PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ACTION CAMPAIGNS. For information related to U.S. corporate activity in South Africa; models for action at universities; and other materials, write to the above groups.

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Prepared by the Southern Africa Committee, U.C.M., and the American Committee on Africa. Published by ACOA, 164 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016.

Outwardly things may go on in South Africa much as before. Visitors may find a booming economy, the white minority may seem secure in their privileged position for any foreseeable future, some urban Africans may have a higher living standard than formerly. But all this ought not to deceive anybody. The fact is that for the first time both sides in the racial struggle in South Africa are now committed to violence; the white minority to preserve the status quo; the non-white majority to change: change from a society dominated by apartheid to one that is non-racial in character.

(The Rt. Rev. Ambrose Reeves, The Sharpeville Incident and its International Significance)

