



Pan Africanist Congress of Azania

Office of the Chief Representative to the United States and the Caribbean
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SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE

OR

ANTI-PASS POSITIVE ACTION CAMPAIGN

MARCH 21, 1960 - MARCH 21, 1983

March 21, 1960 - March 21, 1983, exactly 23 years now, and despite the two decades and three years the wounds and scars opened at Sharpeville, Langa and Nyanga are still fresh in our minds. The blood of 69 men, women and children spilt at Sharpeville and the hundreds wounded and maimed for life have yet to be forgotten. These men, women and children who laid down their lives for freedom from apartheid slavery have become heroes and martyrs. They are a reminder to all of us Azanians and all the freedom, justice and peace-loving mankind that the cause for which they fell continues till final victory is won so that their sufferings and sacrifices are vindicated.

Sharpeville Massacre now observed internationally as "The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination" was the outcome of the DECISIVE ANTI-PASS POSITIVE ACTION CAMPAIGN, conceived, launched and led by the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania under the leadership of the late MANGALISO SOBUKWE -the defier of the undefiable. The campaign is part of the unfolding and expanding program of action of the PAC whose ultimate goal is the overthrow of settler colonialism of the white minority and Western imperialism implanted in our country.

The campaign was an open challenge to and frontal attack against the whole system of white minority domination and white supremacy by the oppressed and exploited African majority under the courageous and militant leadership of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). The PAC was barely eleven months old in the arena of struggle when this campaign was launched yet shook the very foundations of the last bastion of Western colonialism, racialism and imperialism.

The reaction of the racist police and soldiers was brutal and ferocious. 69 men, women and children were mowed down with machine guns, saracens (armored cars) and helicopters. This cold-blooded murder of unarmed African men, women and children brought an end to a long and overdue era of non-violence and passive resistance. It ushered in the era of armed confrontation.

This campaign plunged racist South Africa into a crisis that created a revolutionary situation; to deal with this situation, the racist authorities declared a state of emergency. This empowered them to prohibit gatherings of even five people, impose curfews, impound publications, search premises, arbitrarily arrest, detain, intimidate and torture the African population. At the dawn of March 30 and days that followed, a total of 18,000 Africans were arrested under the emergency regulations. Among those arrested were MANGALISO SOBUKWE-- leader of the PAC, the entire leadership and thousands of PAC rank and file activists. On April 8, the PAC was declared an illegal organization by proclamation #119, published the same day. This piece of repressive legislation also affected the ANC and other organizations. The press was muzzled and journalists and editors prosecuted for publishing statements deemed subversive in terms of the emergency regulations.

The situation became tense as the response and involvement of the African workers and other sections of the African population gained momentum. Even those who initially opposed the campaign as premature and ill-organized joined it by jumping on the bandwagon. In Langa and Nyanga (Cape Town) Philip Kgosana, a PAC regional leader and student militant led 30,000 protestors to the racist parliament. The settler minority and the imperialist exploiters were at a loss. Panic and fear spread the length and breadth of racist South Africa and the loss of confidence in the system hitherto considered as stable crept in. The cracks of the "Granite Wall" appeared in the Johannesburg stock exchange that fell to its lowest since 1932. 48 millions pounds fled the country of apartheid colonialism. Foreign reserves plummeted to their lowest and the system was on the verge of collapsing when U.S. monopoly banks came to its rescue. Passes were suspended for a time to give the racist authorities respite.

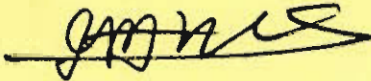
On April 9 an assassination attempt was made on the life of the racist Premier, Dr. H. Verwoerd, while opening the Rand Easter Show. He was shot twice in the head by a white farmer who was later declared insane and died in prison. This incident deepened the crisis situation. There was total confusion and division in the ranks of the ruling white minority. The liberal wing that suggested a deal with the African majority was immediately suppressed and the extreme right-wing took command of the situation and intensified the repression and suppression of the campaign.

This, in short, is the Sharpeville Massacre, precisely the Anti-Pass Positive Action Campaign, a decisive and historical step in the implementation of the Unfolding Programme of Action of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. This campaign was preceded by the Status Campaign whose aim was to build self-confidence, self-reliance, courage and fighting capacity among the African masses, to enable them to wage a consistent and determined struggle for national liberation, self-determination and social emancipation. The unfolding and expanding program of action of the PAC has now entered its final phase of armed

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confrontation aiming at the overthrow of settler colonialism of the white minority and imperialism. This phase was opened by the Sharpeville Massacre and reaffirmed by the Soweto Uprising. In this connection the Founding-President of the PAC, MANGALISO SOBUKWE, observed that... "in Sharpeville we overcame the consequences of disobeying colonial laws... Soweto has been a lesson in overcoming the fear of the gun. And now that the white man relies on the gun and we too can get it, confrontation is inevitable..."

Izwe Lethu!



MOLEFE IKE MAFOLE

Chief Representative to the U.S. and the Caribbean.

March 18, 1983