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"SOUTH AFRICA FIVE YEARS AFTER SHARPEVILLE"

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On the 21st of March 1960, exactly five years ago today, over 2000 peacefully demonstrating men, women and children were shot at by the South African police. According to the government figures, 69 were killed, 135 were wounded. This is according to the Government. The police said they fired into the crowd because they were being attacked. Is it considerable that these people would have taken their wives and children along, to attack the police who were protected by barbed wire, by rifles, revolvers and machine guns and saracen armoured cars? Is it conceivable that these African men would have taken their wives and children to attack these well armed policemen when they themselves were armed only with such dangerous weapons as hats, coats and picnic baskets? Even more important than this is the evidence that 80% of those who were shot, were shot in the back. Here are a few sentences from a white eye witness account.

"The shooting started. We heard the chatter of a machine gun, then another, then another.

There were hundreds of women, some of them laughing. They must have thought the police were firing blanks.

One woman was hit about ten yards from our car. Her companion; a young man, went back when she fell. He thought she had stumbled.

Then he turned her over and saw that her chest had been shot away. He looked at the blood on his hand and said:  
"My God she's gone!"

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.

Still the shooting went on. One of the policemen was standing on top of an armoured tank and he fired his sten gun into the crowd. He was swinging it around in a wide arc from his hip as though he were panning a movie camera. Two other police officers were on the truck with him, and it looked as if they were firing pistols.

Most of the bodies were strewn in the road running through the field in which we were. One man who had been lying still, dazedly got to his feet, staggered a few yards then fell in a heap. A woman sat with her head cupped in her hands. The Africans carried no weapons. I looked very carefully and afterwards, I studied the photographs of the death scene. While I was there, I saw black corpses, shoes, hats and a few bicycles left among the black corpses.

Sharpeville was the epitome of a human tragedy which still sears our consciences today. At Sharpeville we had on one hand a great surge of moral indignation among a people fired by a deep sense of humanity and social justice -- and on the other hand, the insufferable arrogance of power, a consummate myth of racial superiority, avarice and blind prejudice.

But in another very real sense Sharpeville was a great triumph -- the manifestation of supreme courage and great heroism among a people suffering the ravages of human degradation to challenge the accumulated might of modern tyranny.

This was not just another political protest or demonstration. The country had known too many protests, and the apartheid rulers and their predecessors had grown utterly insensitive to them. The people themselves had grown weary of demonstrations and tired of cries of protest which if made too loudly could be silenced with blood and iron. Let us not labour under the illusion that Sharpeville was something new -- for fifty years the rule of white governments in South Africa had been a rule of violence. For fifty years the African majority had been dedicated to the principle of non-violence. In every instance the non-violent actions of the African majority had been brutally and violently suppressed. Scores of Africans had died at the behest of the God of white racialism. In 1920 when the famous leader Masabalala was held in the Port Elizabeth jail, 24 of the group of Africans who had gathered to demand his release were killed by the police and white civilians. In 1921 more than 100 Africans died in the Bulhock affair. In 1924 over 200 Africans were killed when the Administrator of South West Africa led a force against a group which had rebelled against the imposition of a dog tax. On the 1st of May, 1950, eighteen Africans died as a result of police shootings during the strike. There had been violence in 1957 when the women of Zeerust were ordered to carry passes, there was violence in 1958 with the enforcement of cattle killing in Sekhukhumland; there was violence in 1959 when the people of Cato manor protested against Pass raids. There was violence in 1960 when the government attempted to impose Bantu authorities in Pondoland. 109 Africans died in these disturbances. On the 21st March, 1960 69 unarmed Africans died at Sharpeville. How many more Sharpevilles will there be in the history of our country. How many more Sharpeville can the country stand without violence and terror becoming the order of the day? How many Sharpevilles have there been since the Sharpeville massacre? In 1961 there had been riots in Warmbaths and all this time the Trauskee had been a seething mass of unrest. Each disturbance pointed clearly to the inevitable growth among Africans of the belief that violence was the only way out. It showed that a government which uses force

to maintain its rule teaches the oppressed to use force to oppose it. How long will the Africans continue to be non-violent when the cost of white supremacy paid in black corpses is increasingly mounting? Realising that all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us by banning our political organisations, the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress, some of the Africans together with the whites, embarked on violent forms of political struggle and formed Umkonto We Sizwe the Spear of the Nation. Let me quote from the Manifesto of this organization published on the 16th day of December, 1961.

"The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices -- submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom."

These are the things that have happened. At every point, non-violence had been met with violence. The pretext of all this was anti-communism. The Nazi Minister of Justice, Mr. Vorster, has the power to "deem" any of his political opponents to be communists. South African Racism, he says is the last bastion of Western democracy in Africa. Under the pretext of being anti-Communist, the U.S. and the rest of the Western World is asked to support Vorster and Verwoerd's brutal, and racial tyranny -- Have we been reduced to this? -- Is the Western world so bankrupt of moral and political fibre that it has to rely upon a Nazi-type of racial tyranny to protect it in Africa? Is the Western World to condone Murder and brutality and the world's most vicious racial tyranny simply because these crimes are perpetrated under the guise of anti-Communism? Let us remember that the International Commission of Jurists said in 1963 and I quote --

"South Africa in its laws and procedures is copying some of the worst features of the Stalinist regime." Is this how we fight Communism?

One of the differences between Stalin and Verwoerd is that some of Stalin's laws could remain hidden. Dr. Verwoerd's laws are exposed for the whole world to see. All the world can see and read the laws by which the rule of law in South Africa was ended. The Sabotage Act of 1962 was not the worst, although that is bad enough, not only because of its completely arbitrary definition of sabotage but because in terms of section (b) of the Act - one of the basic principles of civilized law is violated. This principle is that a man is considered innocent until he is proved guilty, but under the Sabotage Act, the onus is upon the accused to prove his innocence. This Act defines any act from an act of war to writing a slogan on a wall or carrying a placard as sabotage with a minimum sentence of five years and a maximum sentence of death. Who would want to hang or go to jail for five years for carrying a placard or writing a slogan on a wall? Small wonder that the International Court of Jurists said that this Act reduced the liberty

of the citizen to a degree not surpassed by the most extreme dictatorship of the left or the right.

Even this kind of dictatorship was child's play compared to the 'No Trial Act' of 1963 with which South Africa finally crossed the frontier of terror. Any policeman could detain without warrant or without charge, anyone whom he even suspected of having intended to commit a political offence, for infinitely recurring periods of 90 days in solitary confinement. I am speaking from personal experience as a person who was detained under this law. This law also empowers the Minister of Justice to extend until death the imprisonment of those who have already served their sentences. This law was obvious in its intention. It was to outlaw the rule of law. "For what meaning is left to legal procedure if after trial and deliberate sentencing a prisoner can be kept in jail long after the set date of his release?" And what purpose can there be to a trial at all, if the Minister can simply ignore acquittal and imprison the accused from the Courtroom to the grave. Let the world not be deceived by the provisional suspension of the 17th clause of this act, let the world remember, especially today, Robert Sobukwe, who should have been freed two years ago -- whose sentence for organizing peaceful demonstrations ran its course and expired in 1963 but who is still today being held prisoner on Robben Island. There, according to the Minister of Justice he will continue to be held, until 'this side of eternity'. These are the kinds of laws protecting Western democracy in Africa. This is the country, described by the South African Information Service in today's New York Times and Washington Post as-- and I quote "A stable and Prosperous land, a reliable Western Country, in Africa with a promise of a bright future". Here South Africa is armed to the teeth with sten-guns, saracens, saber jets, welcoming her bright future. 'Here is this "stable and prosperous land" with African babies dying at the average of 300 to 400 out of every thousand babies born at 25 times the rate of white babies. Here is this stable and prosperous land with Africans with an average per capita income of \$109 per year, 1/16th of that of the whites. With thousands of political prisoners, numerous hangings; torture and mind breaking in the prisons, prisoners committing suicide to escape the gentle interrogation of the police, South Africa is anticipating her bright future. This is the reliable Western Country which is dominated by two convinced Nazis, Minister of Justice Dr. Voster, who was interned from September 1942 until January 1944 and was then placed under house arrest in Roberlson in the Cape until the end of the war, and Dr. Verwoerd, who according to the judgment of Justice Millin on the 13th of July 1943 "furthered Nazi propaganda in his newspaper Die Trausvaalev. With all fairness to Dr. Verwoerd he later defended his position by stating that the judgment had gone against him because the judge had been a Jew.

I could go on for hours on end describing the police - State tyranny of South Africa. I could spend other hours describing to you the Institutionalized slavery which reduces seven million people to mere labour units, without freedom of movement, without the right to a home, without the right to a family, without even the right to live with one's wife in 87% of the land of one's birth.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am not here representing any party line or any racial group from South Africa or anywhere else. I am here as a human being involved in a human struggle for elementary human rights for my fellow human beings. The struggle in South Africa is not between black and white but between justice and injustice, between the humanizing powers that God has released in this world and the dehumanizing forces that destroy the human spirit and the forces that lead us into true liberty. It is a struggle between the protagonists of racial domination and the advocates of racial equality. All our African leaders have displayed outstanding political responsibility and have throughout emphasized that all South Africans of whatever race should enjoy equal rights. To prove this let me quote three of South Africa's outstanding African leaders: Chief Lutuli, Nobel Peace prize winner, in his Nobel lecture delivered in December 1961 made this famous declaration -- I quote -

"The true patriots of South Africa, for whom I speak, will be satisfied with nothing less than the full democratic rights. In government, we will not be satisfied with anything less than direct individual adult suffrage and the right to stand for and be elected to all organs of government. In economic matters, we will be satisfied with nothing less than equality of opportunity in every sphere, and the enjoyment by all of those heritages which form the resources of the country which up to now have been appropriated on a racial 'white only' basis. In culture, we will be satisfied with nothing less than the opening of all doors of learning to non-segregatory institutions on the sole criterion of ability. In the social sphere, we will be satisfied with nothing less than the abolition of all racial bars. We do not demand these things for people of African descent alone. We demand them for all South Africans, white and black."

Robert Sobukwe at the Conference at which the Pan Africanist Congress was established in 1959 said that everybody, irrespective of colour or creed, who owes his only loyalty to Africa should be regarded as an African; and that there is only one race, the human race.

Nelson Mandela (of the African National Congress) who is now serving life imprisonment in Robben Island said "I am no racialist, and I detest racialism because I regard it as a barbaric thing, whether it comes from a black man or from a white man.

Ladies and gentlemen, the cause of emancipation in South Africa will prevail until we are free. We must win and we will win. The vast majority of the peoples of South Africa have not submitted and are not submitting to racial domination as is shown by the fact that thousands of the leaders of the campaign against apartheid have been hanged or serving life sentences, or languishing in South African jails banned under house arrest or have fled the country to organize outside. Manifestations of

violent resistance despite all efforts to crush and conceal them are now an uncreasingly common and indeed a natural aspect of life in South Africa. All this evidence suggests the inevitability of full-scale racial war unless the rest of the world intervenes NOW.

"The appeasement of the South African Reich may yet lead to an end as cruel and destructive as the appeasement of its German model did. However passionately Britain or any other state may desire it, South Africa cannot go a lonely way, its human crossions sealed off at its frontiers - the very existence of white supremacy is an insult and an incitement to the peoples of the non-white world. Another racial massacre in South Africa -- and who, since Sharpeville, does not expect one? - or a clash between the white forces of South Africa and the black forces of other African States may set off a colour conflict throughout the world. Doubtless, the Munich mind dismisses the prospect as unprofitable. Is the world to be so wrong and soostupid again?"