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CENTRAL TALKS AND FEATURES
TOPICAL REPORTS

=SHARPEVILLE REMEMBERED=

= by Candace Piette (s) Ext 2177 =

TAC NO. 20127

NARR: 30 years ago today [21st March 1960], 69 people were killed and 180 wounded in the black township of Sharpeville in South Africa. They were shot down in a hail of bullets by the South African police while taking part in a peaceful protest against the hated Pass Laws, which made it compulsory for every black to carry a registration book and move only within certain areas. Candace Piette looks back at the Sharpeville massacre and its aftermath.

TAPE: BAND 1 Gunfire. (Act. from BBC2 "Sharpeville 30 years later" 17/03/90)

REP: On Monday, 21st March 1960, gunfire was heard in the black township of Sharpeville. The victims had been involved in peaceful protest against the Pass Laws. Barbara Masekela, Secretary of the ANC (African National Congress) for Arts and Culture, explains why the Pass Laws were so resented:

TAPE: BAND 2 Masekela (Act. details as B1)

You could not get a house unless you had a pass. You could not register your children for school unless you had a pass. You could not get a job unless you had a pass. You could not travel from one area to another unless you had a pass. Because you were black you had no right to be anywhere. The Pass Laws reinforced that. They were a form of enslavement.

REP: The campaign against the Pass Laws in Sharpeville was organised by the the newly formed liberation movement, the Pan Africanist Congress. Their strategy was to burn pass books and force the police to arrest them in defiance of the Pass Laws. This was part of a country-wide campaign of passive resistance. On the day of the

massacre, there were signs that the police were already informed of the PAC's plans to march on the police station. Modieli Mabane was watching from the door of her house on the morning of the 21st:

TAPE: BAND 3 Mabane (details as above)

I was standing at the door, quite nervous, when two white policemen called me next to the fence. When I got nearer they asked me to give them water. I took a jug and glass and I took the water. So after they drank they said to me, "Where is your husband?" I said "My husband has joined the crowd. They said "You know, at two o'clock we are going to start shooting" .

RFP. At the police station, the crowds had gathered. As they sang and danced outside, the PAC branch secretary, Nyakane Tsolo went in, demanding to be arrested:

TAPE: BAND 4 Tsolo (details as above)

The colonel who was the commander of the police there, came in. And I saw him lining up his police and I even heard him saying that they should load their guns. And they loaded their guns.

TAPE: BAND 5 Gunfire (details as above)

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RFP: The police shot people in the back as they ran away and used high calibre bullets which caused devastating injuries. Peter Mtumelang was shot in the knees and lost the use of both legs.

TAPE: BAND 6 Mtumelang (details as above)

2-10
Children were screaming around the street, crying, those who were not shot, crying for their mothers, there was screaming, some others were injured, crying, running away. Some other policemen were busy shooting at those children.

LRFP: By now the ground was littered with the wounded , bleeding profusely. No one knew what to do. Modieli Mabande stood by in a state of shock:

TAPE: BAND 7 Mabande (details as above)

Then out of nowhere, a cloud came from this direction, a pitch-black cloud. Then on the dead bodies, it rained. All

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the people who were dead, they were cleansed. There was no
stain left on the tar road. That is a miracle which happened
that day.]

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REP: Since March 21st 1960, the Sharpeville massacre is commemorated
in the township ever year. For many people, it marked a turning
point between the passive attitudes of the 50s to the armed struggle
and active opposition of the 60s, 70s and 80s. In the furor that
followed, the South African government was condemned by the
international community. They were forced to suspend the Pass laws,
although these were not abolished until 1986. The first wave of
economic sanctions were imposed and strikes rocked the country. 18,
000 people were detained under new emergency regulations and press
restrictions were imposed. The ANC and PAC went underground and the
armed struggle began.
But for some, the painful memories of Sharpeville are more
personal. Nyakane Isolo, the man who led the people to the police
station in Sharpeville:

TAPE: BAND 8 Isolo (Details as above)

I knew, some of these people that are dead. Here are my
friends people who were older than me, who brought me up, who
saw me growing up in Sharpeville to be a young man of 19 years.
Here are girls, some of them were even girlfriends, who were
killed by the police in front of my eyes. Here are people who
believed that I was leading them to freedom and here they died
before they even saw that freedom, of enslavement.

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Author:- Candice Piette

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