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Genocide Masquerading: The Politics of the Sharpeville Massacre and Soweto Uprising

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in
History.

By
Jessica Forsee

Under the mentorship of *Dr. Cathy Skidmore-Hess*

ABSTRACT

Apartheid South Africa represented a paradox as a US ally and human rights pariah. “Genocide Masquerading” uncovers the implications of US foreign policy on the rise and decline of apartheid, looking specifically at the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre and the 1976 Soweto Uprising. By comparing Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Ford, and Carter foreign policy responses, this thesis creates a comparative analysis of how effective, or ineffective, the United States was during pivotal moments in apartheid history. This thesis will not only expand on the developing South African literature but add to the conversation of international aid, diplomacy practices, and North-South relationships.

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Finally, this thesis is owed to those in South Africa all those years ago and today, fighting for representation. It is my hope that this thesis sheds a light on your struggle. Ubuntu, friends.

“I cannot believe that this world body, the United Nations, could stand by, calmly watching what I submit is genocide masquerading under the guise of a civilised dispensation of justice.” - Oliver Tambo, exiled President of the African National Congress in an October 8, 1963 speech to the United Nations’ Special Political Committee of the General Assembly¹

Introduction

For over fifty years, South Africa’s apartheid government held state power. Its state sanctioned violence represented an anomaly in the post-war liberalism of the second half of 20th century. The state that aided in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be charged with the two of the most notable episodes of racially targeted violence. Two pivotal events, the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and the Soweto Uprising in 1976, respectively, altered the course of United States-South African relations. Both the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising demonstrate the United States and the United Nations failure to respond effectively to the public outrages of the apartheid regime. After Sharpeville, US Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy failed to establish a consistent foreign policy in opposition to the apartheid regime that was not influenced by Cold War politics. The Eisenhower administration actually deepened military ties. Even in the UN, the US stifled attempts by the African-Asian bloc to check the apartheid state to preserve its Cold War alliance. In the aftermath of the Soweto Uprising, US Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter would utilize similar political rhetoric and take no real action towards the apartheid regime. Conversely, by establishing Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of

¹ Oliver Tambo, “Appeal for Action to Stop Repression and Trials in South Africa” (1963), in *Oliver Tambo: Apartheid and the International Community*, ed. E.S. Reddy (New Delhi: Namibia Foundation Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1991).

South Africa, the UN took action against the Pretoria regime.² The US foreign policy response to the apartheid regime conforms to the Cold War policy of supporting white capitalism over black liberation. However, the rise of these same black liberation movements within the US and South Africa eventually forced substantive change. A US foreign policy focused on Cold War diplomacy and lack of a significant international pressure by Western States on the apartheid regime encouraged the growth of South African resistance both in the US and South Africa.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter introduces central ideas that surround the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising as well as incorporates the official US and UN position. The works that informed the background information of this project provide the clearest historiographical understanding of Sharpeville, Soweto, and US and UN reactions. The apartheid government of South Africa was a controversial foreign policy consideration that ten United States Presidents had to address. Each did so differently, and the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre and the 1976 Soweto Uprising marked shifts, either minute and latent or immediate and overt, in foreign policy towards the Pretoria regime. Cold War politics, the American Civil Rights Movement, UN pressure, and armed resistance in South Africa contributed to how apartheid and US governments interacted with one another. The spatial location of Sharpeville in American politics allowed the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations to create superficial reprimands, thereby engendering an internal South African resistance. Soweto exposed further gaps in US foreign policy

² The Pretoria regime refers to the apartheid South African government and the Nationalist Party. These terms will be used interchangeably.

despite the success of the American Civil Rights Movements and growing international attention to South Africa' human rights abuses. The existing literature provides individualized responses to US-South African relations rather than a cohesive comparative analysis of the two infamous events.

The common trend of comparing American and South African race experiences was a critical element of anti-apartheid movements. Nicholas Grant notes the impact of Little Rock on Eisenhower's handling of apartheid and the indirect effect it had on the Pretoria regime's theoretical defense of apartheid on the international stage.³ Pretoria watched as the US fumbled the international reaction to Little Rock in 1957 and used it as a lesson to prepare for the impending day when racial supremacy was not an acceptable policy. One critical lesson Pretoria learned was the ability to twist the UN's foundational principle of self-determination and state sovereignty as a protection from international scrutiny.⁴ Grant builds upon Cary Fraser's earlier arguments that Eisenhower was sensitive to aligning with South Africa because their race relations made them a liability in the emerging American Civil Rights Movement.⁵ Grant then concludes that Sharpeville's high publicity on the international stage demonstrated a similar Little Rock situation that did not sit well with the majority of Americans.⁶ This analysis of 1950's US-South Africa relations informs readers of Eisenhower's reaction towards the apartheid government in the aftermath of Sharpeville as the US and South Africa struggled to handle domestic race relations with international criticism looming.

³ Nicholas Grant, *Winning Our Freedom Together: African Americans and Apartheid, 1945-1960* (USA: University of North Carolina Press, 2017): 58-62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵ Cary Fraser, "Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock: The Eisenhower Administration and the Dilemma of Race for US Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 2 (2000), 240.

⁶ Grant, 61.

Existing literature fails to focus on a comparative analysis of the Sharpeville and Soweto incidents, yet each provide vital research in case studies and foreign policy analysis. Many post-apartheid historians' works argue that the Cold War played a pivotal role in American policy towards South Africa.⁷ The domino theory was key in the US involvement of Southern Africa, especially in regards to Angola and Mozambique whereby the Soviet Union-backed regimes were seen as enemies of the apartheid state and as the "capitalist" stronghold in Africa, South Africa presented itself to US as an ideological ally. Eisenhower, as George White argues, allied with the apartheid government for aid during the Korean War.⁸ As an outpost to prevent the spread of Communism in Africa, white Afrikaners, while isolated, had the mineral resources of gold and uranium critical to US proxy wars.⁹ This further adds to the wake of inaction that follows Eisenhower's successors. The reaction to Sharpeville also highlights Eisenhower's sensitive relationship with apartheid.

White acknowledges the inaction of the Eisenhower administration and the National Security Council by recalling that meetings pertaining to Sharpeville, often revolved around how the US will handle African affairs, not the immediate impact of 69 black South African deaths.¹⁰ Furthermore, White notes the positive Western-centric reception of the apartheid government despite the increasing human rights violations by the regime on African people.¹¹ T. J. Noer further delves into Eisenhower's problematic

⁷ For more analysis of US Cold War Policies in Africa, see the following cited works of Hyman (2015), van Wyk (2010), George White (2005), Borstelmann (2001), and Noer (1985).

⁸ George White, *Holding the Line: Race, Racism, and American Foreign Policy Towards Africa, 1953-1961* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005): 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹¹ White, 101-102.

response to Sharpeville using the example of countering bureaucratic responses from the State Department and the White House. Noer recalls how State Department Press Officer Lincoln White's press release that condemned the violence and offered US support for the rights of black South Africans to express their grievances that was not cleared by his superior, the Secretary of State Christian Herter.¹² Noer's explanation of this lack of consensus within the Eisenhower administration correlates with White's argument that the US policy in 1960 was more concerned about the policy implications of Sharpeville and not the rise of a police state. In that same vein, many post-apartheid historians are critical of Eisenhower's response to Sharpeville. Thomas Borstelmann states that Eisenhower chose strategic military and economic advancements with Pretoria over racial equality.¹³ Under Eisenhower, there was never a moral outcry for the end of apartheid from US foreign policy; rather, apartheid was a necessary evil to aid the fight against Communism.

For Noer, Cold War politics was the central cause of US-South Africa complications and the Kennedy presidency epitomized this push and pull. Noer argues that while Kennedy was progressive compared to predecessors, in terms of racial representation in the makeup of his administration and decries of human rights abuses, there was still serious inaction towards apartheid.¹⁴ Coupled with the tension within his own administration on what to actually do with Pretoria, Kennedy's tenure was comprised of unfulfilled, half-hearted promises to inefficient policies. Noer recalls

¹² T. J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (USA: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 54-55.

¹³ Thomas Borstelmann, *Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, (USA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 128.

¹⁴ Noer, 126.

Kennedy's shifty attitude towards Pretoria in having to deal with domestic pushback for sanctions and international pressure to align with UN-back sanctions and embargoes.¹⁵ Zoe Hyman adds to Noer's criticism of Kennedy's inaction towards South Africa demonstrates a sign of silent compliance with apartheid as opposed to supporting the presumed communist terrorist anti-apartheid groups that will be later discussed.¹⁶ Kennedy clearly struggled in creating a domestic consensus to South African relations and the attempts to make significant foreign policy change were not fulfilled.

The literature existing on the Sharpeville massacre is fairly consistent in relaying the specifics of the event and in explaining the rise of armed anti-apartheid resistance.

Tom Lodge's book on Sharpeville has a complete account of the origins, details, and implications of Sharpeville. Sharpeville's effect on the apartheid regime has often been casted as the turning point where resistance group like the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-African Congress (PAC) were banned and went underground.¹⁷

Interestingly, Vineet Thakur states that the massacre was an excuse to ban these groups but does not expound on this claim.¹⁸ Following this logic, there should be more literature pertaining the deliberate action by the South African Defense Unit on the people in Sharpeville.

Where Thakur falls short in explaining his accusatory claim, Lodge notes the deliberate cover up by police immediately following the shootings wherein reports of

¹⁵ Noer, 128.

¹⁶ Zoe Hyman, "'To have its cake and eat it too': US policy toward South Africa during the Kennedy administration," *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 8, no. 2 (2015), 140-141.

¹⁷ Borstelmann, 127.

¹⁸ Vineet Thakur, "Foreign Policy and its People: Transforming the Apartheid Department of Foreign Affairs," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 26 (2015): 525.

witnesses included claims of weapons being placed in the hands of the fallen.¹⁹ So why is the horrific event of March 21, 1960 considered as one of the major turning points of apartheid history, when it could be classified as a white supremacist victory? The answer lies in the underground workings of apartheid resistance that did not have the official support of the United States in 1960, only superficial speeches and promises. Thomas Borstelmann further criticized Eisenhower as a sympathizer for the white South Africans while hoping for racial progress in Atlanta, in reference to his claimed American Civil Rights support.²⁰ This analogy best describes US foreign policy in the wake of Sharpeville. As the US was grappling with its own race problems in 1960's, Eisenhower and his predecessors justified the weak response to Sharpeville by qualifying the black protestors as Communist agitators that could not be helped until Eisenhower fixed its domestic problems.

There exists an intrinsic relationship between South African anti-apartheid resistance and the American Civil Rights Movement, and it is therefore impossible to discuss America's role in apartheid politics without acknowledging the domestic leadership. A key push by various African-American Civil Rights leaders was for economic sanctions and boycotts of South African made goods that were revitalized after the Sharpeville Massacre, though many had different theories on how to achieve this goal.²¹ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X's efforts each are a testament to the African-American anti-apartheid movement in America to the dichotomy of ideas on how

¹⁹ Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 106.

²⁰ Borstelmann, 127.

²¹ Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 14, 36.

to force change in US apartheid policy, which paradoxically often merged together. King drew inspiration from the ANC President Albert Lutuli and consistently cited his peaceful efforts in speeches across the globe as an early relationship that was likely developed when Lutuli came to visit King's father church in Atlanta, Georgia.²² Nesbitt's analysis of King's relationship with anti-apartheid resistance is further complicated by the rise of armed struggle in the wake of Sharpeville; yet he continued to claim the struggle for race equality was equal in importance to both African-Americans and black South Africans.²³ Malcolm X was no doubt influential in the black nationalist branches of US anti-apartheid movements. In several instances, Malcolm X called upon the West to recognize their power in dismantling apartheid through economic sanctions, one notably being at an Organization of African Unity Head of State summit in 1964, a position also shared by King.²⁴ This was a move of solidarity as he was surrounded by African heads of state in a forum that focused on improving Africa's place on the world stage. Malcolm X serves as a counter to the inaction of US officials. While not the focus of this paper, literature detailing the efforts by US anti-apartheid leaders are worth noting because of the context they serve as pressuring US leaders.

The underground and rise of armed resistance through the form of Spear of the Nation, an ANC branch, in the 1960's was critical to the eventual fall of apartheid and is a testament to the black South African resolve against the white supremacists. In the eyes of some historians, the immediate political exile period and the formation of *Umkhonto*

²² Nesbitt, 31. Also see the work of Lewis V. Baldwin, *Toward the Beloved Country: Martin Luther King, Jr. and South Africa* (Cleveland, Pilgrim Press, 1995), 8-10.

²³ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 57-61.

weSizwe, Spear of the Nation, is where the substantive anti-apartheid organized resistance began amongst black South Africans. For Janet Cherry, *Umkhonto weSizwe* represented a popular resistance front that many black South Africans endorsed as a viable opponent to the oppressive regime.²⁵ The sabotage campaign headed by *Umkhonto weSizwe*, however, created strife within the apartheid resistance despite the conventional narrative of unity in their efforts. Paul Landau furthers this claim that *Umkhonto weSizwe* caused conflicts within anti-apartheid leadership by relying on previous historians' work. Most influential from Landau's work is a commentary on conflict between then ANC-President Albert Lutuli, MK leader Nelson Mandela, and the Communist South Africans in terms of how armed struggle would proceed. Both Cherry and Landau note that the traditionally pacifists ANC members, like Lutuli, were actually supportive of armed resistance after Sharpeville.²⁶ Further analysis of *Umkhonto weSizwe* will further explain the hesitance of US involvement in supporting the anti-apartheid movement in the Sharpeville chapter that follows.

Similar to the US reaction to Sharpeville, the United Nations would fall short on taking a stand against apartheid despite the best efforts of the African bloc in the General Assembly. This ineffective diplomacy lies primarily in the US and United Kingdom's power within the Security Council in carefully navigating the negotiations of sanctions and embargoes. Simon Steven's recent work regarding South Africa provides an analysis of the relationship of key anti-apartheid leaders and the UN in the crafting of economic

²⁵ Janet Cherry, *Spear of the Nation (Umkhonto weSizwe): South Africa's Liberation Army, 1960's-1990's*, (USA: Ohio University Press, 2011), 13.

²⁶ Cherry, 20; Paul Landau, "The ANC, MK, and 'The Turn to Violence' (1960-1962)," *South African Journal of History* 64, no. 3 (2012): 540.

sanctions and arms embargoes resolutions.²⁷ As Sharpeville gained international attention, the ANC saw an opportunity to decry the need for global economic sanctions spearheaded by the UN yet faced the critical obstacle of universal adherence.²⁸ Stevens argues that the increased African representation in the UN created optimism for anti-apartheid sanction advocates as the UN was becoming “an anti-colonial majority.”²⁹ The African bloc within the General Assembly became a significant UN coalition; however, the overwhelming veto power of the United Kingdom and US hindered any multilateral economic policies regarding South Africa.

Another important analysis of the UN and US role in South Africa is Ryan Irwin’s latest book, analyzing 20th century apartheid politics and its legitimacy during the rise of international liberalism through in the UN.³⁰ Irwin follows Stevens’ similar assertion that the attempts to apply pressure on the Western states post-Sharpeville was only marginally influenced by anti-apartheid resistance groups.³¹ The groups focused efforts on fostering domestic US supporters and pressured the creation of UN special political committees.³² Irwin’s claims are compared to independent findings in the sections that focus on Kennedy’s foreign policy, the Nixon-Kissinger policy that would shape Ford’s attitude to Pretoria, and, most importantly, the evolution of the UN action against South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s.

²⁷ Simon Steven, “Boycotts and Sanctions against South Africa: An International History, 1946-1970,” (PhD diss., Columbia University, New York City, 2016), 176-240.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

³⁰ Ryan Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 141-142.

³² *Ibid.*

The role of anti-apartheid leaders within the ANC in prompting UN action worked well in keeping South Africa on the UN agenda. Stevens centralizes his argument through the ANC figures such as Albert Lutuli and the tension over the rise of violent resistance as a means to maintain UN attention.³³ As Lutuli continued to preach economic sanctions as a means to a peaceful transition from apartheid, Stevens makes the significant claim that Lutuli was not a proponent of the establishment of MK.³⁴ This is a typical analysis of Lutuli's relationship with MK's creation as a Christian man who frequently opposed violence; it was other ANC figures, primarily Nelson Mandela, that took the charge in creating a violence resistance group within the ANC. This claim was recently refuted in the works of scholars who focus on Lutuli.³⁵ Nonetheless, the later operational planning of MK was, according to Stevens, prompted by the successful Resolution 1761 passage, led by the African bloc, that called for serious boycotts of South African goods and the end of trade with the apartheid state.³⁶ Later resolutions would dilute this harsh rhetoric with non-mandatory arms embargoes and inspecting bodies that the US and UK would support within the Security Council as a way to delay substantive multilateral sanction resolutions.³⁷ As the Sharpeville Massacre gained worldwide attention, the international organization entrusted in maintaining international peace would stand by its founding principle of state sovereignty despite the international and domestic cries for reproach.

³³ Stevens, "Boycotts and Sanctions against South Africa: An International History, 1946-1970," 210.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

³⁵ See the work of Robert Trent Vinson, "Albert Luthuli's Private Struggle: How an Icon of Peace Came to Accept Sabotage in South Africa," (2018).

³⁶ Stevens, "Boycotts and Sanctions against South Africa: An International History, 1946-1970," 224-225.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 231-233.

The late 1960's and early 1970's was known as the high apartheid years wherein increased militancy of the government, expansion of Bantustans, and diminished local Black control of political affairs became the norm.³⁸ In this interlude period came the infamous Rivonia Trial where Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, another ranking ANC member, were imprisoned and apartheid occupied South West Africa, modern day Namibia. Though both are not the focus of this project, each inform what the apartheid government was rapidly evolving to: a totalitarian state with sights set on exerting control throughout the region.

Yet another turning point in apartheid history was the Soweto Uprising in June 1976. This marks a significant shift in US foreign policy, particularly on the part of President Carter; but as Soweto occurred during President Ford's tenure, the tradition of insignificant response to egregious human rights violations continued. Current existing literature, like works on Eisenhower and Kennedy, criticizes the lack of effort to create serious policies in sanctioning Pretoria. Borstelmann claims that the lack of policy was due, in part, to Ford's attention to the independence wars in Angola and Rhodesia, similar to Eisenhower's Congo preoccupation.³⁹ In the months leading to the Soweto Uprising, Noer asserts the critical role of Henry Kissinger in shaping Ford's communicative relationship with Pretoria Prime Minister Vorster in the Rhodesia transition, something that was in the works since Nixon's term.⁴⁰ This relationship would obviously hinder

³⁸ For more analysis on the high apartheid period, see the following cited works: Dubow (2015) and Gurney (2009).

³⁹ Borstelmann, 238; Noer, 244.

⁴⁰ Borstelmann, 241; Noer, 244.

serious penalties by the Ford administration in the aftermath of Soweto onto the apartheid regime.

President Carter, however, brought a reinvigorated vision to US foreign policy towards South Africa. Some historians revere Carter for bringing the humanitarian crisis of apartheid to the US front pages, yet still criticize him for not doing enough in the form of sanctions. Alex Thomson notes Carter's administration vocally criticized Pretoria yet was weak at making serious sanctions against the apartheid government.⁴¹ Thomson does, however, note Carter's one clear effort to curb the apartheid government that extended the United State Import-Export Bank facilities upkeep for 42 months.⁴² Carter represented a barely noticeable but still important catalyst in the course of US foreign policy towards apartheid. Carter's efforts and struggles to create policy towards the apartheid regime is analyzed further within the Soweto Uprising chapter.

Moving beyond the Sharpeville Massacre, the South African authorities tightened security around the state and the political tensions within the country mounted. As the Black Consciousness Movement began, political parties exiled abroad, and the systematic imprisonment of anti-apartheid resistance leaders and supporters in cases such as the infamous Rivonia trials. Many credit the wave of underground workings to the continued resistance to apartheid.⁴³ The works of these scholars, however, neglect critical background information of previous demonstrations by youths in other areas against the apartheid regime. Julian Brown's recent work illuminates this traceable history of youth

⁴¹ Alex Thomson, "The Diplomacy of Impasse: The Carter Administration and Apartheid South Africa," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21 (2010): 115.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ See the works of Robert Kinloch Massie's *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* and Baruch Hirson's *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Soweto Revolt- Roots of a Revolution?*

grassroots resistance, without the aid of older, established political mechanisms to carry their message.⁴⁴ These differing claims of the roots of the Soweto Uprising is what makes placing it difficult, as youths without obvious outward support of older, more established resistance parties demonstrated against the forced education mandates of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction.

Rather than the Soweto Uprising being just an explosive expression of pent up anger, Brown argues that the beginnings of youth resistance started in the universities and carried through to the primary schools as dialogue was exchanged between school children that followed the ideology of Black Consciousness.⁴⁵ Brown goes further to assert that the Soweto Uprising and the violence that continued in the weeks after June 16 was completely different from previous demonstrations because it was impossible to avoid the apartheid state role in the deliberate execution of black children. This claim, however, ignores the growing role of international anti-apartheid groups that developed after the Sharpeville Massacre played in ensuring apartheid remained a key conversation in the US and the UN agendas. The final chapter of this project analyzes the international and United States community reactions to the Soweto Uprising. The Soweto Uprising is significant in the same vein of Sharpeville: both are horrific events that caught international tension to exposing the world's compliance with apartheid while forcing internal reflection of anti-apartheid tactics from fringe groups that influenced the ANC cause.

⁴⁴ Julian Brown, *The Road to Soweto: Resistance and the Uprising of 16 June 1976*, (USA: Boydell & Brewer, 2016).

⁴⁵ Brown, 158.

The works cited throughout this chapter were critical to establish a consensus of where the historiography is currently at in understanding the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising. Further chapters will continue to build on these works and reference them in greater detail. Often the primary documents cited within these chapters were utilized by these authors. A different interpretation is provided with the special interest in creating a comparative analysis where the Sharpeville and Soweto victims and actors are central to the conversation even when not necessarily the focus of political leaders. One thing is clear from the review of these works: the role of the US and the UN in apartheid politics that surrounded these atrocities is complex and the real victims were lost amongst the diplomatic negotiations. It was the pressure groups that ensured the question of apartheid remained on the international agenda.

To fully understand the complexities of these events and their effects, key actions by US foreign policy advisors, UN envoys, South African apartheid politicians, and resistance figures are analyzed within this paper. This project relies primarily on the works of past historians and political theorists which often conflict with one another in the motivations of the US, South Africa, and UN regarding apartheid and such disparities are analyzed in a literature review. The following chapters highlights recently declassified material, archival databases of apartheid resistance, and US and UN archives which contribute to the discussion of apartheid foreign policy relations during two coined turning points.

Chapter 2: A Day in March

In efforts to understand the impact of the Sharpeville Massacre on US foreign policy, it is important to clearly grasp the fundamental details of the tragedy that would

shape the apartheid regime narrative and, by proxy, US foreign policy. As part of a Pan-African Congress (PAC) effort to resist the inherently discriminatory pass book laws, PAC leader Robert Sobukwe led a hastily composed nationwide campaign by gathering local PAC branches, where they went to the nearby police stations in their area without their pass books and deliberately got arrested.⁴⁶ The Sharpeville PAC branch was not alone in the protest against pass books, yet what made the protest in Sharpeville unique was the mass participation and the state polices' violent reaction.

On March 21, 1960, protesters gathered around the Sharpeville police precinct at approximately around 8 AM.⁴⁷ The PAC Task Force deliberately pressured the shutdown of transportation leaving Sharpeville so workers could not go to work that Monday morning by harassing bus drivers.⁴⁸ The logic of this move was to further demonstrate to the apartheid government that if black Africans could not work because they were arrested, then the entire state was at a virtual standstill in terms of economic production.⁴⁹ This lofty idea was partially achieved by cutting off transportation lines, thereby forcing workers to participate in the protest. The leaders of the Sharpeville PAC branch were two brothers, Nyakane and Job Tsolo, and each played an evident part in the organization of the protest.⁵⁰ The Tsolo brothers encouraged Sobukwe to come to Sharpeville to participate in their protest in efforts to bolster more support for the local black

⁴⁶ Petrus Tom, "Sharpeville: March 21, 1960," Federation of South African Trade Unions, <http://disa.ukzn.ac.za/fwaug8515627624000040aug198523>.

⁴⁷ Tom Lodge, 93.

⁴⁸ Ambrose Reeves, *Commission of Enquiry into the Occurrences at Sharpeville (and other places) on the 21st March, 1960: Submissions Presented to the Commission on Behalf of the Bishop of Johannesburg*, vol II, 36-37.

⁴⁹ Lodge, 64.

⁵⁰ Muriel Horrell, *A Survey on Race Relations in South Africa* (South Africa: South African Institute of Race Relations: 1961), 56-58.

population. Sobukwe would avoid the forthcoming tragedy by participating in the Orlando protest and getting arrested there.⁵¹ The absence of notable leaders like Sobukwe, however, did not hinder the protest by the Sharpeville branch.

In the official South African government Commission on the Sharpeville shootings, there were a claimed 20,000 participants.⁵² Bishop Ambrose Reeves, who was not in Sharpeville but would soon visit the township after, interviewed locals and looked at photographs taken throughout the day. Following this, he claimed it was more likely that 5,000 people participated in the protests surrounding the police station.⁵³ The discrepancy over the numbers is critical when understanding the alibi that police would immediately construct after they fired live ammunition. It is easier to claim defense when the police are outnumbered. Much of the official account, published in late April by P. J. Wessels, provides various accounts and eyewitness testimony that discredit the PAC's nonviolent appeals and depicts the apartheid police as restrained and acting in self-defense.⁵⁴ The atmosphere of the crowd is also not agreed upon. In an address to the House of Assembly, Verwoerd claims the crowd had quickly began to riot.⁵⁵ Yet again, there are countering reports from eyewitnesses and photographs that document a joyous environment where people gathered in song, laughter, and smiles in front of the police station.⁵⁶ There were later reports by a journalist, Humphrey Tyler, who saw the crowd as

⁵¹ Lodge, 89

⁵² Reeves, 37.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ P.J. Wessels, *Report on the Commission Appointed to Investigate and Report on the Occurrences in the Districts of Vereeniging (Namely, at Sharpeville Location and Evaton), and Vanderbijlpark, Province of the Transvaal, on 21st March 1960, April 13, 1960*, University of South Africa Institutional Repository.

⁵⁵ Reeves, 38

⁵⁶ Wessels, 91.

“amiable,” of women crying out, “Izwelethu,” our land, in Xhosa.⁵⁷ The difference between crowd estimates and attitudes not only demonstrate a lack of consensus within the documents but a conflict over the Sharpeville narrative.

To add to the disparities between the protestors and police, the Sharpeville police leaders failed to agree on negotiating with the Tsolo brothers. This was, in part, due to the leader of the incoming reinforcements, Lieutenant Colonel Pienaar, and his refusal to meet with the outside crowd and discuss the situation with anyone.⁵⁸ Reeves, looking back on this lack of communication, makes the claim that this critical connection could have made a difference in police-protestor relations as the day continued.⁵⁹ Further discrepancies within the apartheid police force in communicating is analyzed in in a later subchapter on how the apartheid government handled the Sharpeville community post-March 21.

Over the span of eight hours on March 21, the protestors who gathered in front of the precinct voiced their anger at the racial prejudice they experienced, demanded arrest for lacking the derogatory pass books, and many were then deliberately executed or injured by the state. This type of state behavior was not surprising under apartheid rule, but the scale and publicity of the violence in a single instance is what surprised many. In the aftermath of Sharpeville came the consolidation of the African National Congress (ANC) in their messaging & tactics of resistance, all brought forth by pressure from the PAC, and the awakening of the international masses to question the legitimacy of

⁵⁷ Action Youth, “Sharpeville Day,” *Arise Vukani* Vol. 2 No. 3 (1987), *Digital Innovation South Africa*.

⁵⁸ Reeves, 42.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

apartheid rule. Sharpeville was the first step in this new future where Black South Africans would dramatically shift state policy.

2.1 Learning the Hard Way: The Apartheid Response to Sharpeville

Recovering from the public backlash from the first mass atrocity was a difficult field to navigate for the South African government. For the apartheid police, the first strategy regarding Sharpeville was a deliberate cover up of evidence in the hours after the shootings. In the messaging and framing of the massacre, the apartheid government was careful to shift blame to the protestors. In one *New York Times* report, the South African High Commission's statement claimed the demonstrators fired the first shots, and the police were forced to open fire to avoid "even more tragic results."⁶⁰ This report was given to the *New York Times* five days after the shootings on behalf of the South African Ministry of External Affairs.⁶¹ This statement asserts a very serious accusation that the protestors were armed and creates a narrative of defensive tactics by the Sharpeville police. However, later reports by the South African government would complicate the details of Sharpeville. More malicious intentions were quickly executed in effort hide in the aftermath of Sharpeville by the police. In one report, Lieutenant Colonel Pienaar was quoted saying, "If they (black South Africans) do these things they must learn the hard way."⁶² As the same Lieutenant Colonel in charge of bringing in reinforcements, Pienaar's statement directly goes against the self-defense narrative and shifts the intentions of police officers to deliberate harm in efforts to curb the protestors and aligns more with the evidence of the police cover up.

⁶⁰ AP, "South Africa Replies," *The New York Times*, March 26, 1960.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² AP, "50 killed in South Africa as Police Fire on Rioters," *The New York Times*, March 22, 1960.

P. J. Wessels' report, completed on June 16, creates Pretoria's own version of the truth that would work to discredit the further resistance efforts to change apartheid policies and garner international support. Wessels discredits witnesses multiple times throughout the report. Perhaps most notable is the character attacks on Job Tsolo, who Wessels identifies as the leader between him and Nyakane. Noting a PAC meeting, Tsolo stated, "We are ready to destroy white domination... there is no freedom without bloodshed," Wessels asserts that PAC leaders made no attempt to quail the violent tendencies of its followers.⁶³ This is where Tom Lodge's later analysis of PAC meetings and understanding of police infiltration of PAC membership plays a significant role.⁶⁴ It is likely that Tsolo was aware of possible police spying on the meetings and rationalized that if the police knew how serious the PAC was in protesting the passbooks then they would gain their respect as citizens protesting their government. Therefore, Wessels claim that all PAC leaders were deliberately publishing campaigns that endorsed violence against the police is fraudulent because it neglects to see the theorizing by PAC leaders.

Most notable about the aftermath of Sharpeville is the forced exile of all Black political parties and the shift to underground resistance. The language of the previous bans played a significant role in further establishing Pretoria as a West-friendly African state on the international stage. Beginning with the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950, the apartheid government wanted to control any rogue ideas against the state. It would be future Prime Minister B. J. Vorster who added that this Communism Act included former members of the Communist party.⁶⁵ This a critical point in apartheid

⁶³ Wessels, 19.

⁶⁴ Lodge, 63, 101.

⁶⁵ Government of the Union of South Africa, "Suppression of Communism Act," 1951, *O'Malley Archives*.

politics because it created the precedent of targeted banning of individuals that Pretoria finds troublesome and further utilized post-Sharpeville.

After Sharpeville, any organizations deemed communist or rebellious towards the government was banned in efforts to secure the state. This Unlawful Organizations Act specifically named the ANC and PAC in their legislation and anyone associated with the organizations were imprisoned.⁶⁶ Later legislation continued to connect resistance organizations to communism. Pretoria passed the 76th amendment to the General Laws known as the Sabotage Act in 1962 that allowed for the 90-day imprisonment of anyone suspected to be sabotaging the state.⁶⁷ Sabotage was broadly defined to allow for targeted policing of prominent resistance leaders, like Nelson Mandela who was imprisoned based on this legislation. What is worth noting is that a portion of international community saw the faulted argument. The London-based, *New African*, newspaper demonstrated the futility of going after the ANC and PAC in the name of stopping communism because the communist party had no interest in ending racial oppression.⁶⁸ Despite this fact, seen later in the analysis of the US and international reaction, the belief that resistance forces had ties to communism justified the continued relationship with the capitalist-defending apartheid regime.

2.2 The Assassination Attempt on Verwoerd

Only weeks after the events in Sharpeville, South Africa was once again central to the international stage when Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd nearly died in an

⁶⁶ Government of the Union of South Africa, "Unlawful Organizations Act," 1960, *O'Malley Archives*.

⁶⁷ Government of the Union of South Africa, "Sabotage Act General Laws Amendment Act No. 76," 1962, *O'Malley Archives*.

⁶⁸ *The New African*, "Communism Come-back?," Aug 1962.

assassination attempt. The relationship between the assassination attempt and the aftermath of Sharpeville are intrinsically connected. The assassination attempt provided an out for the government to ignore the racial violence and focus on restoring the image of a functioning state with an injured leader.

Reports stated that an increase of police presence in Johannesburg was the first increase since the “presence crisis nearly three weeks ago.”⁶⁹ No longer were the events of Sharpeville mentioned except in allusions or in passing. The days following the assassination attempt, the *New York Times* involved a full page spread on the event, including a report on Verwoerd’s work in constructing apartheid, English Queen Elizabeth II’s well wishes for recovery, and calls by the apartheid government for a return to normalcy.⁷⁰ It was more noteworthy, at least within the US, to discuss the assassination attempt on a white man than the deliberate and consistent oppression of blacks in that same country. The Verwoerd 1960 assassination attempt is worth mentioning because the attempt allowed the state to ignore the racial tragedy of the Sharpeville Massacre. In the wake of this near Afrikaner tragedy, the South African government was able to momentarily shift away from the international pressure of legitimizing apartheid after Sharpeville. Verwoerd was, effectively, a near martyr for the Nationalist cause.

2.3 The South African Problem: The US Response to Sharpeville

US foreign policy towards South Africa in the 1960’s supports Eisenhower’s complacent attitude towards the apartheid government. Eisenhower’s relationship is

⁶⁹ AP. “South African Premier is Wounded by White Assassin at Fair in Johannesburg,” *The New York Times*, April 13, 1960.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

founded in the need for a militarily sound, anti-communist relationship with an assumed stable African state during the tumultuous time of African statehood. The immediate reaction of the US was partly influenced by Lincoln White's notable statement of deploring the action and acknowledging the typical protocol of not commenting on "internal affairs of governments with which [the US] enjoys normal relations," but the mass loss of life forced the US to comment.⁷¹ White's statement was impromptu and not cleared by Secretary of State Herter. Both Eisenhower and Herter viewed the statement as a mistake. Herter would call the statement, "a breach of courtesy," between South Africa and the US.⁷² Eisenhower used the unique imagery of fat already in the fire and it was too late to publicly retract the statement.⁷³ The White Statement highlights the lack of consensus the Eisenhower White House had on South African relations, and this shocking massacre exposed such inconsistency.

The worries of Eisenhower and Herter's regarding White's statement was met when Philip Crowe, the US ambassador to South Africa, telegrammed Herter warning that the Afrikaners felt as though the statement was made at their expense in order to gain favor with Black South Africans.⁷⁴ This blowback presented a potentially problematic foreign relations situation especially when South Africa and the US were in the middle of negotiating a secret base establishment for a missile and satellite outpost in the region.⁷⁵ Only after the US carefully worded their contact with South African officials and

⁷¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume XIV, Africa* (Washington: Government Printing Office), Document 344.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume XIV, Africa* (Washington: Government Printing Office), Document 345.

⁷⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume XIV, Africa* (Washington: Government Printing Office), Document 353.

spearheaded moderate UN resolutions did the Nationalist party feel secure in their relationship. Yet it is important to note that rebuking South African police neglect in Sharpeville was never Eisenhower's priority. For him, it was more important to secure an anti-communist stronghold in an emerging, fledgling continent. A stable Africa would also maintain US attention in Southeast Asia as US involvement in Vietnam was escalating concurrently.

Those within the Eisenhower administration differed on the potential impact of Sharpeville on domestic and international policy. Crowe claimed that the eventual radicalization of Blacks after the massacre would create a "dangerous and explosive situation," that would counter to US interests in the region.⁷⁶ Crowe, later in the same document, posits that continued repression of non-whites coupled with the radicalization could turn the state into a warzone.⁷⁷ Those endangered US interests were the natural resources and capital that Eisenhower was so keen to protect such as uranium and gold. In the CIA's July 1960 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), South Africa was predicted to become an isolationist state.⁷⁸ These worries were met when South Africa voluntarily left the British Commonwealth after a 52% white only referendum in October.⁷⁹ The UN General Assembly would later in 1974 vote to suspend South Africa's participation.⁸⁰ An isolated and potentially civil war endangered state did not make for a good trading ally on

⁷⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume XIV, Africa* (Washington: Government Printing Office), Document 347.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, *Special National Intelligence Estimate: Short-Term Prospects for South Africa*, by the Director of Central Intelligence, July 19, 1960

⁷⁹ Leonard Ingalls special, "Republic is voted for South Africa; Verwoerd Victor; Record All-White Poll Backs Move to End Allegiance to the British Crown," *The New York Times*, October 7, 1960.

⁸⁰ Kathleen Teltsch, "South Africa is Suspended by UN Assembly, 91-22." *The New York Times*, Nov 13, 1974.

the African continent and Crowe represented the few in the Eisenhower White House who were hesitant towards allying with Pretoria.

Countering the bleak predictions of some Eisenhower advisors, there were some that show an opportunity to advance US assets in the region. CIA Chief Allen Dulles claimed at a National Security Council meeting that the massacre and radicalization of Blacks presented an opportunity to smuggle arms to the “natives of South Africa,” to undermine the white government.⁸¹ This would not have been unprecedented in US Cold War policy but typically this theory would be implemented in support of capitalist rebel groups to overthrow communist regimes. As such, no further evidence shows that Dulles’ idea was executed. For the white US public, the Blacks of South Africa were communist while the Nationalist party was the stronghold of capitalism on the dark continent. Dulles’ thinking proves significant as a part of the US government that was in favor of at least a weaker white rule in South Africa, not perhaps full equal rule. Yet again Dulles’ statement highlights a focus to advance US assets by selling to both parties of the racial war in South Africa, why not benefit from this animosity?

Sharpeville’s impact was not unnoticed by the candidates in the upcoming 1960 election. While on the campaign trail when Sharpeville happened, Kennedy’s advisors knew how crucial it was to garner support by presenting him as a foreign policy expert. In a campaign brief to help Kennedy formulate a position on African independence, Professor Fred Burke called for Kennedy to remain focused on Africa stating, “the future

⁸¹ T. J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (USA: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 139.

of America is bound up with the future of Africa.”⁸² Kennedy released a public statement that strongly criticized the South African government for their continued oppression of the black majority.⁸³ This type of language, of course, was rolled back once Kennedy entered the White House.

Upon entering the White House, Kennedy was concerned with the rhetoric of peace rather than the practice of it. In preparing for Kennedy’s address to the UN 18th General Assembly, Kennedy focused on the context of how to include human rights in the speech.⁸⁴ Kennedy chose to end the meeting shortly after this statement. This short transcript encompasses Kennedy’s rhetorical support for improved human rights in the world therefore it is acceptable to infer that Kennedy had that same weak focus on the practical application of human rights in specific regards to apartheid South Africa.

Kennedy’s administration dealt with an array of issues surrounding South Africa. Given the emerging role of the UN, the pressing need for uranium and gold, and a demand by military experts to secure a stronghold in Africa the Kennedy White House, similar to Eisenhower, failed to spur real change in the apartheid policy simply because it was not a clear focus of the administration. It is easy to assume that Kennedy sought a fair human rights situation in Pretoria but, similar to other Kennedy decisions, the public image of the White House was more important than substantive actions.

The South African problem grew even more difficult in the wake of Sharpeville in the international institution of peace. As the Afro-Asian bloc began to draft resolutions

⁸² Briefing Paper for Senator Kennedy, by Professor Fred Burke. *Papers of Papers of John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers*. Presidential Campaign Files, 1960. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁸³ Remarks of Senator John F Kennedy, March 26, 1960. *Papers of Papers of John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers*. Presidential Campaign Files, 1960. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁸⁴ Strategy at the 18th General Assembly, Sept 9, 1963. *William Brubeck Personal Files*, Box 387 A, South Africa 9/63-11/63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

rebuking Pretoria, Kennedy's team continued to cite that international sanctions could not be placed on a state that did not pose an international threat.⁸⁵ Thus continuing respect for the UN founding principle of sovereignty throughout the Cold War. The May 1963 creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) created worries in the UN US Mission. G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams, as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, was the first one of Kennedy's best and brightest to see that the Addis Ababa conference would complicate US-UN relationships regarding South Africa by moving it to a Chapter VII discussion: actions with respect to threats to the peace.⁸⁶ In that instance, the OAU entered the General Assembly in July 1963 ready to dismantle apartheid on the international stage and disregarded Western traditions of appeasing South Africa through trade.

Two components to US-South African relations were already previously discussed during the Eisenhower administration: military and minerals. In the aftermath of Sharpeville, Kennedy's administration would attempt to minimize trade relations with the apartheid government due to the pressure from African states. Kennedy's State Department and National Security Council explored the possibility of canceling the uranium and other mineral trade agreements. The Executive Office of the President argued for a gradual decrease in mineral procurement to be leveled in 1970.⁸⁷ Others were concerned that cancellations would lead the South Africans to trade uranium to the

⁸⁵ UN Policy for the Next Security Council Meeting on South Africa, October 1963. *William Brubeck Personal Files*, Box 387, Security Council 10/63-11/63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁸⁶ Memo to Dean Rusk from G. Mennen Williams, US Policy Towards South Africa, June 1963. *William Brubeck Personal Files*, Box 387, South Africa 3/63- 8/63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁸⁷ Possible South African Reactions to Proposals to Cancel or Alter the US Uranium Purchase Contract. *William Brubeck Personal Files*, Box 387 A, South Africa Uranium. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

Soviets or Chinese.⁸⁸ Soapy was worried a continued economic partnership with South Africa would invite retaliation against the US.⁸⁹ Such debate continued through September 1963 but Kennedy continued the uranium trade with Pretoria to ensure a Western alliance and a continual supply for the nuclear weapons.⁹⁰ This facet of US-South African relations during Kennedy's tenure proved not surprising during the Cold War. Kennedy justified that buying from the capitalist stronghold in Africa was better than that stronghold selling to the Soviet enemy, despite the fact the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed a month prior.⁹¹

In the wake of African decolonialism, Kennedy frequently struggled to take the neutral middle road between the African nationalists and the white colonial powers. Encompassing the hurdles of the Kennedy administration, further insight into Kennedy's stance comes from a phone conversation in July 1963 with George Ball, his Undersecretary of State at the time. Kennedy was preparing for his phone call with Julius Nyerere, eventual Tanzanian President and founding member of OAU, when he remarked to Ball that he will appease Nyerere. The topic of the conversation was siding with the Afro-Asian bloc on UN sanctions and limiting uranium purchases and other trading with apartheid, to which Kennedy stated he would tell Nyerere he's considering it in order to curry favor with the African nationalist.⁹² Like Eisenhower, the struggles to preserve an

⁸⁸ Comments upon the NBC staff memo of July 25 re South African uranium. *William Brubeck Personal Files*, Box 387 A, South Africa Uranium. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁸⁹ Memo to the President from G. Mennen Williams. *William Brubeck Personal Files*, Box 387 A, South Africa Uranium. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁹⁰ Note from Myer Feldman to Dean Rusk, September 23, 1963. *William Brubeck Personal Files*, Box 387 A, South Africa Uranium. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁹¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (USA: Penguin Books, 2005), 81.

⁹² Telcon Record between the President and George Ball, July 16, 1963. *The Personal Papers of George W. Ball*, Box 7, South Africa 7/27/61-10/31/63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

economic and military relationship with apartheid was fraught with backlash from oppositional forces. However, in Kennedy's frequent attempts to establish amicable relations with new African states, he often appeared more hypocritical than trustworthy.

This regular obstacle is seen further in Kennedy's official position towards South African resistance groups. Department of State Executive Secretary William Brubeck wrote to Kennedy's National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy that while the US has done nothing to support the communist-dominated ANC, they have also not given aid to the anti-Communist force of the PAC.⁹³ This anti-Communist stance of the PAC is likely from the State Department special report in which pages are dedicated to the Communist influence over the ANC while the PAC favored a more African-based consensus regarding organization despite its weaker positioning on the international stage.⁹⁴ This carefully calculated support for the comparably weaker political party is further informed by Kennedy's need to safeguard his image as a man of peace while trading with the apartheid regime.

Soapy focused on preserving a positive Kennedy image in Africa relations while the tense race relations in the US continued. In a telegram to the President, on the eve of the controversial Export-Import Bank loan of \$9.8 million to Pretoria, Soapy warned of the potential fallout if Kennedy approved of the loan. Soapy claimed it would engender a race war that was far more complex and dangerous than the East-West divide they were

⁹³ Memo to McGeorge Bundy from William Brubeck, October 29, 1963. *William Brubeck Personal Files*, Box 387 A, South Africa 9/63- 11/63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁹⁴ National Strategy Series: South Africa, October 28, 1963. *National Security Files*, Countries, South Africa, General, National Security Strategy Series "South Africa" 10/28/63 Box 159A, National Strategy Series. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

experiencing with the Soviet Union.⁹⁵ By attempting to shift US foreign priorities, Soapy explains the apartheid policy in Cold War terms. This telegram came soon after the infamous 16th Street Baptist Church bombing where the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan murdered four black schoolgirls. Soapy included in the telegram that approving the loan would prove, “particularly unfortunate” given recent domestic politics.⁹⁶ This telegram epitomizes Kennedy’s relationship with apartheid. Kennedy was essentially stuck safeguarding US economic and geopolitical interests versus criticizing apartheid policies. How could Kennedy give \$9.8 million dollars to a white minority ruled state mere days after a white supremacist group bombed a black church in Alabama? Quite simply he could on the premise of protecting America’s national security. A similar issue with the Export-Import Bank would arise in Jimmy Carter’s presidency, as discussed in the literature review chapter.

For such a horrific event, Sharpeville did not make substantive changes to US policies despite the efforts of pressure groups in the UN and domestically. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy worked within the scope of the Cold War and by Cold War standards, 69 Black South Africans were marginal compared to the military advantages of a white-ruled African ally. Throughout the late 1960’s and into the 1970’s, the Afro-Asian bloc continued to challenge the UN and dwindle by US stance on state sovereignty or the veto power. Sixteen years after Sharpeville came new US leadership, shifting power in the UN, and a sound apartheid resistance force that was faced with yet another catalyst in apartheid rule: the Soweto Uprising on 1976.

⁹⁵ Memo to the President from G. Mennen Williams. William Brubeck Personal Files, Box 387 A, South Africa Uranium. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁹⁶ Memo to the President from G. Mennen Williams.

Chapter 3: “The powder keg” in June 1976

The South Western Township, Soweto, in 1976 was an overcrowded, under resourced township which was not a unique story for the South African townships that surrounded Johannesburg. One difference between Sharpeville, peaceful and small in comparison to Soweto township, and Soweto was the township’s perception to white South Africans. Though Sharpeville was the model township, Soweto did not hold such accolade.⁹⁷ Soweto was known for its urban population that travelled into Johannesburg for work, high crime rates, and overwhelming youth population.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the apartheid state, while flourishing in the high apartheid period as black opposition went underground and apartheid was unchallenged, continued to encroach on life in these townships when the government reformed local administrative offices that took further control away from black South Africans and diminished their ability to self-govern.

The Soweto Uprising represents a split in the narrative, as discussed in Chapter 1. The current ANC narrative perpetuates the hegemony of the ANC, even in exile, they directed the youth protests, further claiming the “Party that Ended Apartheid,” identity.⁹⁹ Interestingly enough, while the narrative of Sharpeville was changed by the apartheid government, Soweto continues to be a pinnacle of the ANC’s identity as the anti-apartheid party. Control of the narrative or the memory of Soweto, however, is not the focus of this paper though it is critical to understanding the documents of the domestic reaction to Soweto.

⁹⁷ Hirson, 3-4.

⁹⁸ David Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, Ltd., 2009), 151.

⁹⁹ Hirson, 327-9.

From its inception, Soweto's student-led protest had an entirely different organization style and method than Sharpeville. According to Julian Brown, the Soweto Uprisings were sophisticated and, perhaps most surprisingly, grassroots organized. This in-depth organizational structure is credited to the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) of early 1970's and its creator, Steve Biko. Steve Biko's theory of Black Consciousness swept through the South African youth population, from grade school to university level, and is what made the Soweto Uprising and its subsequent protests possible. Essential to Black Consciousness was the belief that to end the oppression of apartheid, blacks had to shed the internal feeling of inferiority.¹⁰⁰

Echoing Biko's sentiments that black inferiority is felt shared with South Africa's Indian and Colored populations, Oliver Tambo claimed Black Consciousness reflected, "the consciousness of the rights of man."¹⁰¹ The youth of South Africa were receptive to Black Consciousness as multiple student organizations arose from Biko's theory of equality.¹⁰² The South African Student Organization (SASO), as one of the central student groups, was central to energizing Soweto youth. As an organization that countered the multiracial demographic of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), SASO strengthened black identity through publications that celebrated blackness.¹⁰³ SASO was, in retrospect, was essential to the development of the Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC) as it became the central organization around BCM. Ironically, SASO garnered national attention because the apartheid government

¹⁰⁰ Steve Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity," *Humanity* 4, no. 1: 1972.

¹⁰¹ Oliver Tambo interview with E.S. Reddy, Mar 1, 1977, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/interview-oliver-tambo-luanda-after-summit-meeting-presidents-frontline-states-and-southern>, SAHISTORY.ORG.ZA.

¹⁰² For more information on student group formations under apartheid see Macqueen's "Students, Apartheid and the Ecumenical Movement in South Africa, 1960-1975," (2013).

¹⁰³ Steve Biko, "I Write What Like: We Blacks," *SASO Newsletter*, 1969. Digital Innovation South Africa.

elevated its platform through the courts. In the May 1975 case where thirteen SASO members, known as the Pretoria Thirteen, were arrested under the Terrorism Act of 1967, for organizing a celebration of Mozambique independence.¹⁰⁴ Similar to the Defiance Campaign's influence over the 1960 passbook protests, this attention that SASO garnered from the courts would inform the works of the SSRC in organizing against the Bantu education reforms.

The Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974 prompted immediate backlash by students, parents, and educators. Changes to the education system in the townships came from the Minister of Bantu Education, Michiel Botha. The language medium changed from English to Afrikaans, otherwise known as the language of the oppressor. This language change deliberately disadvantaged black schoolchildren as English was, despite all efforts by the apartheid government to elevate the Afrikaans language, the main language of South African business and, "essential for any youth who wanted to find a place inside the economy."¹⁰⁵ These early student protests and walk outs were frequent but inconsequential compared to what would occur June 16, 1976.

On that June morning, nearly fifteen hundred schoolchildren gathered at 7:30 AM, after hasty organization on June 13 when Tebello Motapanyane assembled the Action Committee within SSRC, with plans to march from Orlando West Junior Secondary School, one of three secondary schools in Soweto, to the Orlando Stadium.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ The Pretoria Thirteen, Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa, May 1975, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-1C11; Ron Christenson, *Political Trials in History: From Antiquity to the Present*, 1st ed., (USA: Transaction Publishers, 1991): 85-86.

¹⁰⁵ Hirson, 177.

¹⁰⁶ Tebello Motapanyane, "How June 16 demo was planned," interview by South African Students Movement, *Digital Imaging South Africa*, January 1977, http://psimg.jstor.org/fsi/img/pdf/t0/10.5555/al.sff.document.int19770100.032.009.741_final.pdf.

Motapanyane, in an interview nearly six months later, asserted that the youth of South Africa believed in “positive action,” like the armed struggle of *Umkhonto weSizwe* and attacking police even if they did not have arms.¹⁰⁷ As more students in nearby schools were told of their assigned walk out schedule by the Action Committee, the crowds grew as police surrounded children holding signs that read, “Down with Afrikaans,” or “Afrikaans is oppressors language.”¹⁰⁸ Reports of violent contact between police and students were not reported until 10 AM where exiled anti-apartheid activist Baruch Hirson reports students took to damaging property and storefronts in the area.¹⁰⁹

Specifically outside Orlando West Secondary school, conflicts began around 10:30 AM when a policeman threw a tear gas cannister to a group of students singing ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrica,’ a notable anti-apartheid freedom song, while another fired on them thus ensuing panic in the crowd, as reported by Sophie Tema from *The World* newspaper.¹¹⁰ This violence continued in the township for several days, where blacks were seen fleeing into official buildings, burning them, and attacking police while the police and reinforced paramilitary contingents came into the township with the same armored cars used in Sharpeville to root out the violence.¹¹¹ The official number of dead protestors was 176, while the number of casualties were well over 500 as reported by the apartheid government.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Tebello Motapanyane, “How June 16 demo was planned.”

¹⁰⁸ Hirson, 181.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 182-3.

¹¹⁰ Brown, 165-8.

¹¹¹ Hirson, 184.

¹¹² Republic of South Africa, “Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere from the 16th of June 1976 to the 28th of February 1977,” Northwestern University Libraries.

Taking control of narrative in Soweto was made more difficult by the very fact that gaining control over the township would not be easy for apartheid officials as riots continued in the weeks succeeding June 16. For Motapanyane, in recalling the events, he remained steadfast that the motive for protest was the change of language of instruction to Afrikaans, describing it as the spark to the powder keg, already poised to explode.¹¹³ In the days that followed, worldwide reports of riots drew attention to the structural damage by Soweto youth and the apartheid government attempt to exert totalitarian control over the township through border control, presence of military grade equipment, and checkpoints.¹¹⁴

3.2 “The Black Man knows his place:” The Apartheid Response to Soweto

While the national radio broadcast at 9 pm on June 16 said Soweto was “under complete control,” the apartheid police continued to monitor the Soweto youth in the months after June 16.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Prime Minister Vorster made sure to immediately call attention to culprits as black students who are, “destroying their own amenities,” while “law and order are more important,” to Vorster than anything else.¹¹⁶ As the rioting continued and organizations continued the calls for the end of oppressive policies in the coming months, apartheid’s attempt to regain control of Soweto proved difficult. The first case of apartheid’s attempt came with the ban of mass funerals of the Soweto victims organized by the Black Parents Association. For the grieving families, the Minister of Police’s refusal to allow public funeral services for the victims of the Uprisings was a

¹¹³ Tebello Motapanyane, “How June 16 was planned.”

¹¹⁴ John F. Burns, “South Africa Toll Rises to 58 Dead; Nearly 800 Hurt,” *The New York Times*, June 18, 1976.

¹¹⁵ John F. Burns, “6 Die in South Africa Riot After Black Student Protest,” *The New York Times*, June 17, 1976.

¹¹⁶ AP, “Text of Vorster Statement,” *The New York Times*, June 19, 1976.

way to hide apartheid responsibility for the children's murders. Instead of following these bans, Soweto youth held demonstrations at the internment sites of fallen youths and often times, altercations arose between youth and police while families and friends chanted phrases such as, "We shall overcome," and police fired shots.¹¹⁷ The processing of grief could not be silenced, and neither could the demands for equality.

Similar to Sharpeville, the need to seize control of the narrative came from the commissioned report to detail the events of Soweto that was released on July 2. The Commission of Inquiry into the Riots of Soweto and Other Places in the Republic of South Africa During June 1976 report was the central apartheid response to the Uprising and done solely to justify the government's treatment of black South Africans.¹¹⁸ Comprised of 69 volumes of reporting, the Cillie Commission did everything it could to shift blame from the Soweto police forces to the rioting youths. In the compiling of evidence, Cillie often cites the unwillingness of witnesses to come forth with information on recent arrests for fear of victimization, though stands by the government's official policy of releasing prisoners in a timely manner.¹¹⁹ This official policy held the release of prisoners not convicted but, as acknowledged by Internal Security Act No. 79, this policy quickly turned into a tool of monitoring the voices of activists by imprisoning them with no foreseeable release date.¹²⁰ While altercations continued during the following months, the police deterred people willing to come forward to the Commission. This deliberate police deterrence, however, was not ever highlighted in the state report.

¹¹⁷ Hirson, 207-208.

¹¹⁸ The Inquiry will be referred to as the Cillie Commission, after Justice Cillie who compiled the report over a number of months.

¹¹⁹ Cillie Commission, 4.1.5-7.

¹²⁰ Government of the Union of South Africa, "Internal Security Act No. 79," *O'Malley Archives*.

The Commission further detailed a central figure in the Soweto Uprising, Hector Pieterse. Pieterse was a twelve-year-old boy who joined in the protests with his friends and sister. The photograph of a boy carrying Pieterse's lifeless body almost immediately became a worldwide symbol of the brutality of apartheid. The Cillie Commission responded to news stations' claims that Pieterse's death was a cold blood murder by stating that Pieterse was a victim of a stray bullet, not intended for him.¹²¹ All of this, despite the fact that Pieterse was shot in the back and after the photograph circulated, the young man depicted as carrying Pieterse had fled South Africa to avoid police questioning.¹²²

Like the reaction to Sharpeville, the apartheid government sought complete control over Soweto, however, Soweto would never fully be returned to full apartheid control. As key figures were chased into exile, the Minister of Justice, Jimmy Kruger, used government censorship and overreach to further disband anti-apartheid groups that participated in the Uprising and shut down *The World*, a black controlled magazine in the Republic in 1977.¹²³ While the Cillie report concluded the Uprising was not the result of an oppressive government, the imprisonment and eventual murder of Steve Biko reminded anti-apartheid activists of this incredibly false statement.¹²⁴

3.3 The Problem with Allies: The US Response to Soweto

President Gerald Ford's handling of the Soweto Uprising was complicated not only by his altogether weak foreign policy practices in the age of emerging statehoods

¹²¹ Cillie Commission, 3.6.13.

¹²² Hirson.

¹²³ Brown, 181.

¹²⁴ Cillie Commission, 30.3.2.

and rise in Middle East conflicts but further by his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger's, relationship with apartheid leaders. To briefly overview the US-South African relations prior to the Uprising, Ford had high hopes of Kissinger working with Prime Minister Vorster via ambassador Botha to normalize the situation in Angola as Cubans were being sent to fight alongside rebel fighters.¹²⁵ The ever popular domino theory was further applied in the Angola crisis for fears that if Cubans were able to seize control of Angola, they could easily take Namibia which was still occupied by South African forces.¹²⁶ This close reliance on South Africa as an ally is worth of further analysis because it explains the US' lackluster response to the Uprising.

The US role in Southern Africa was best epitomized by Kissinger's conversations with apartheid leadership. In June, Kissinger and Vorster discussed how to use South African infrastructure to limit the capabilities of Rhodesian resistance fighters and monitor the outcome of Rhodesian leadership changes while maintaining South African hegemony.¹²⁷ The South African structural sabotage practices ranged from deliberate corruption within Mozambique private railways and severing telecommunications lines within Botswana, all done to disadvantage exiled anti-apartheid leaders in neighboring states.¹²⁸ Vorster justified his administration's actions by saying, "That's Africa," to mean anything goes when your state has the superior resources and maintains regional hegemony.¹²⁹ It's clear that Kissinger and, by proxy, Ford had no intentions of severing

¹²⁵ National Security Council (NSC) Meeting Minutes, April 7, 1976. Box 2, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Digital Collections.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Vorster, June 23, 1976. Box 20, "Memorandums of Conversation," Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Digital Collections.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Vorster, June 23, 1976.

ties with their South African ally, even after another state-sponsored massacre. This propping up of a friendly state in Southern Africa is even further highlighted by Kissinger's May conversation with Botha stating, "we are not trying to reform you..." but rather, "history is against you, but we want to buy some time at least."¹³⁰ While Ford's administration acknowledged the continued rise of African statehood, they willingly sustained an archaic system of oppression by supporting South Africa. Ford's excuse for maintaining relations is best described in his conversation with Kissinger the day of June 16 with, "what we are trying to do is overcome things like this," this being a direct response to Kissinger's explanation of the Soweto Uprising as apartheid officials managing to kill more rioters.¹³¹

Upon the news of the Uprising, the US Mission to the UN took a counter approach by conforming to UN consensus to condemn South Africa through the US ambassador Albert Sherer, Jr. In the June 19 statement, Sherer called for harmony in South Africa in a Security Council resolution condemning the apartheid actions in Soweto while making an importance distinction that such condemnation does not mean the endorsement of Article VII of the UN Charter action, the use of military force to maintain peace within a state by the Security Council.¹³² While promoting peace in the UN, the US continued the advantageous relationship with apartheid under the Ford administration, just as it had under Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy.

¹³⁰ Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Botha, May 23, 1976. National Security Council Memorandum of Conversation Collection, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Digital Collections.

¹³¹ Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Ford, June 17, 1976. National Security Council Memorandum of Conversation Collection, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Digital Collections.

¹³² The Department of State Bulletin, Vol. LXXV, No. 1933, 59-60, July 12, 1976. Department of State Bulletins Collections, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Digital Collections.

Moving beyond the analysis given in the Literature Review, President Jimmy Carter's presidency posed unique rhetoric stance on apartheid similar to President Kennedy. In an early 1977 interview with publishers and broadcasters, Carter claimed to have an evolving policy in transitioning South Africa to majority rule.¹³³ Carter surrounded himself with human rights activists in his cabinet leadership, which helped further signal to apartheid officials that the former Governor of Georgia was willing to take substantive steps towards racial progress. Andrew Young, US ambassador to the UN, criticized the African-bloc demands to repeal South African membership as a "propaganda weapon," that would not foster social change in Pretoria.¹³⁴ Young's verbose call for UN action while offering realistic solutions in private business encouragement to challenge apartheid was not unique to the rest of Carter's administration.

Vice President Walter Mondale, similar to Henry Kissinger under President Ford, was the key in communicating Carter's push for peace to Vorster while still maintaining stable transitions in Rhodesia and ending occupation in Namibia. In a May 1977 meeting, Mondale reminded Vorster of the US' own struggle with equality which informed the Carter belief that full and successful democracy is only possible with full participation.¹³⁵ Mondale and Vorster further debate this American notion of equality while struggling to encompass South African cultural diversity to which Pretoria leadership articulates the idea that they, the Afrikaners, had vastly improved economic opportunities for Indians

¹³³ Jimmy Carter, "Interview with the President Question-and-Answer Session with a Group of Publishers, Editors, and Broadcasters," April 15, 1977, The American Presidency Project.

¹³⁴ Graham Hovey, "Conflict in U.N. is Doubted by Young," *The New York Times*, January 14, 1977.

¹³⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Third Meeting between Vice President Mondale and Prime Minister Vorster, May 20, 1977, Walter F. Mondale Personal Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, Digital Collections.

and Blacks in South Africa compared to the previous British controlled regime.¹³⁶

Mondale proposed several policy plans regarding South Africa each with a focus on international cooperation through the UN. Mondale utilized the international organization to maintain frank US hegemony over Southern Africa by ensuring a strong US stance against apartheid while placating the apartheid ally during the regime turmoil in Rhodesia.¹³⁷

This duality in the relationship was obvious early in the Carter administration when cabinet members discussed how to handle Rhodesia and concurrently advocate for human rights shifts in Pretoria. In countering Kissinger's more permitting attitude with Vorster, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski called for an end of illusion building policy and more overt demands for change.¹³⁸ This shift came when discussing potentially breaking from European allies on UN resolutions on South African sanctions arose in pair with growing African bloc demands.¹³⁹ These demands ranged from full mandatory embargoes advocacy to pursue a new international economic order.¹⁴⁰ The truth of the Rhodesia matter came when it proved hypocritical of a human rights espousing Carter administration was urged majority rule in Rhodesia while working with the apartheid regime as noted by UN Ambassador Donald McHenry.¹⁴¹ This

¹³⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Third Meeting between Vice President Mondale and Prime Minister Vorster, May 20, 1977.

¹³⁷ Memorandum for the President from Vice President Mondale, April 21, 1977, Walter F. Mondale Personal Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, Digital Collections.

¹³⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XVI, Southern Africa, Document 265.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XVI, Southern Africa, Document 264.*

¹⁴¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XVI, Southern Africa, (Washington: Government Printing Office), Document 265.*

interconnected problem of UN recourse for change were externalized in tense conversations between Carter officials and Pretoria leaders.

Brzezinski reminded Botha, while discussing the role of the US in Rhodesia, that the demands for majority rule by black South Africans were legitimate and the growing need change social conditions in South Africa meant the US had to sustain the fundamental stance of Carter's administration.¹⁴² This staunch perspective in Carter's cabinet, however, would hinder any serious US-led change inside South Africa. Though not the immediate focus of this chapter, it is important to regard the shortcomings of Carter's promising administration post-Soweto. Further echoing Alex Thomson's work explored in Chapter One, Carter's demands transformed into a stalemate in diplomacy. This stalemate was foreshadowed immediately in the early days of the administration when, in that same January conversation with Brzezinski, Botha stated, "In South Africa we have never shared power."¹⁴³

The Soweto Uprising was a missed opportunity for the Ford administration and the further hinderance of diplomacy of Carter. Ford was intent on allowing open discussion between Kissinger and apartheid and Carter's hard rhetoric would proactive a cold shoulder from Pretoria when asked to change its ways. While the apartheid government continued to ignore the demands for revisions, it would not be Ford or Kissinger that lead with rhetoric for change. That was seen clearly when Kissinger explained the Uprising as a moment when rioters were killed again by apartheid police rather than noting the overwhelming number of schoolchildren amongst the dead. Carter,

¹⁴² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XVI, Southern Africa*, (Washington: Government Printing Office), Document 261.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

however, proved no better when unable to converse with South Africa without making them defensive of their apartheid policy as a way to maintain power in their state. These two extremes did not mirror the US reaction to Sharpeville exactly as Kennedy's rhetoric paled in comparison to Carter's and Eisenhower's conflictual cabinet lacked the messaging tactics that Kissinger had monopolized. Nonetheless, while the US appeared stronger in the UN, with progressive ambassadors like Young and McHenry in supporting the anti-apartheid forces, Carter's regime did not bring the end of apartheid nor the further empowerment of local anti-apartheid groups. Change in South Africa would come not from the official channels of US diplomacy, even into the 1980's with more conservative policies of subtle economic appeasement like Reagan's constructive engagement.

Chapter 4: Living in “a World of Extraordinary Change:” Conclusions

Apartheid as a concept, practice, and government juxtaposed the US position during the Cold War as an enemy of the USSR and an ally of a human rights oppressive state. The Sharpeville Massacre of March 21, 1960 demonstrated an inconsistency in US foreign policy within the Eisenhower administration while President Kennedy's half promises failed to reconcile Cold War practices with human rights rhetoric. South Africa, with its vital minerals to US nuclear proliferation and economic advantages, was never truly criticized under President Eisenhower even as the US civil rights movement was beginning to gain international attention. Kennedy's inability to generate holistic sanctions against apartheid meant that the Cold War alliance was maintained while appearing progressive.

In maintaining the Cold War relationship, the years after Sharpeville gave rise to further state oppression in South Africa which reached another fever pitch in 1976 with the Soweto Uprising. Countering Eisenhower with a clear consensus of governance led by President Ford and Henry Kissinger, the US remained a public supporter of strong allies in tumultuous negotiation and subtle criticizer of apartheid. President Carter, though weak in delivery, vastly outweighed Kennedy's rhetoric through direct challenges in the UN and in official meetings with apartheid officials.

Soweto posed the international world with the question of whether black students were unquailed rioters and if so, were apartheid local and national officials justified in the state of emergency implementation attempts to seize control over the townships. While Sharpeville involved mostly working-class adults, the primary victims in Soweto presented a critical injunction for the US as apartheid officials could not hide behind the bullet ridden bodies of schoolchildren. Kissinger ensured a temporary appeasement of the international community through his continued meeting with Botha and Vorster with detailed talks on the optics of these meetings. President Carter and his officials were in stark contrast in President Ford. While Kissinger alluded to the eventual decline of apartheid with Vorster, Brzezinski told Botha to accept the, "world of extraordinary change," where apartheid-US relations were no longer possible, even while South Africa was playing a key role in regional negotiations.¹⁴⁴ The chance at this change was not achieved under Carter.

¹⁴⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XVI, Southern Africa*, (Washington: Government Printing Office), Document 261.

While the discussion of the fall of apartheid is not central to this paper, it is important to note the moments where the decline could have started. In the case of March 21, 1960 and June 16, 1976, both Sharpeville and Soweto had the potential to unequivocally challenge apartheid as a form of governance and promote governmental reform. But neither happened. Instead, the precipitation of oppression through wide sweeping criminal acts, further inclusion of Cold War alliances, and stifling of the African bloc in international organizations ensured that a system of oppression, that the US denounced, would thrive.

The apartheid was able to hide its acts of genocide through international legitimization and US backing. In the age of the Cold War, the enemy was never the capitalist friend in Pretoria but the Soviet Union and as such, apartheid was able to masquerade, to borrow from Oliver Tambo's phrasing in the beginning, its human rights abuses as a sovereign state. This does not necessarily mean that the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising were simply tragic events. Rather each served as US foreign policy reflection points that exposed inconsistencies, superfluous rhetoric, and corrupt, albeit advantageous, partnerships to the US and international public to debate and push towards more progressive changes that would succeed Cold War politics.

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