

The New African

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Nathan Shamuyaria, Zambawian author and politician, calls for fresh initiatives, in his country's hour of desperation, and Chukwu Akuegbo Onwu, writing from the Eastern Region, looks at Nigeria's predicament. In a special supplement on East African trends, Fenner Brockway, elder statesman of British socialism and colonial freedom, welcomes Tanzanian nationalisation measures and Reginald Herbold Green, now Economic Adviser to the Tanzanian Treasury, examines Kenya's blueprint for African socialism in action. In "Books & the Arts" writers and artists from Mali, Nigeria, Malawi, Sudan, South Africa are discussed, and a collection of drawings by Ibrahim Salahi is reproduced for the first time. March 21 is "International Day" - extracts from the United Nations statement on the day are published, and Matthew Nkoana, whose organisation, the Pan-Africanist Congress (South Africa) led the campaign in which the Sharpeville massacre occurred on March 21, 1960, describes the ferment of political ideas in the 'fifties, which led to these later events. Among shorter articles, Rev Arthur Blaxall, now of the Mindolo Ecumenical Centre, Zambia, continues his series on policies for the care of Africa's deaf and blind, and Words Words Words, the editors' monthly column on books and the Press, comments on current South African master-race theories.

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International Day

THE General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolution 2142 of 26 October 1966, proclaimed 21 March as 'International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination' . . . as it commemorated the anniversary of the massacre of peaceful demonstrators against racial discrimination in Sharpeville, South Africa, seven years ago. This tragic incident focused the attention of the world on the inherent dangers of apartheid and the evils of its philosophy.

The anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre is a particularly appropriate time to concentrate all efforts to keep the question of racial discrimination and apartheid before the conscience of the world. The events of 21 March 1960 should be a spur to energetic and decisive efforts to eliminate these inhuman practices. On that day, tens of thousands of Africans held peaceful demonstrations all over South Africa against the humiliating pass laws which restrict their freedom of movement and employment. In Sharpeville, an African location near Vereeniging, police fired at a peaceful rally of Africans killing sixty-eight persons and wounding nearly 200 others.

The Sharpeville demonstration was one of a series of protests against apartheid. Demonstrations, work stoppages, and the burning of passes took place all over the country. The work boycott on 28 March was reported to be 90 per cent effective. Thirty thousand Africans marched into Cape Town on 30 March in an amazingly peaceful and disciplined demonstration. These manifestations were met with indiscriminate violence and brutality by the police.

Scores of lives were lost. Langa and Nyanga, African locations near Cape Town, were surrounded by the police who prevented food from going in so that the workers would be forced by hunger to go back to work. Later the police went into locations and assaulted people who had remained at home.

These repressive measures shocked world opinion and brought home the urgent need for international action to eliminate the cause of the tragedy, namely, the oppression and humiliation of millions of people by a Government which practised racial discrimination as a state policy. Many Heads of State and Government, Parliaments, organizations, church groups, and individuals around the world voiced concern and condemned racism. Boycott campaigns were organized and funds were collected for the relief of the victims. The Sharpeville incident was a turning point in the United Nations consideration of the question of apartheid. There was hope at the time that world concern and the mounting tension in South Africa itself would lead to a re-assessment of policy and a change in the situation. Unfortunately, this hope was not fulfilled. The South African Government proceeded with more arbitrary laws, mass arrests, stronger repression and an intensive build-up of its military and police forces. The Sharpeville massacre must be regarded as a grim reminder, not only of the profound injustice of apartheid, but also of the fact that people who live under the system of apartheid have no prospect of liberating themselves from oppression, unless international opinion can be marshalled on their side and international action can be taken to liberate them.

THE Special Committee hopes, therefore, that the commemoration of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination will result in more effective action, at Governmental and non-Governmental level, to help terminate the dangerous situation in southern Africa.

(Extract from an appeal to non-governmental organisations, received 20 February by The New African, from the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of The Government of the Republic of South Africa,