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Tom Lodge. *Sharpeville: A Massacre and Its Consequences.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xix + 423 pp. Illustrations, maps. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-280185-2.

Reviewed by Derek Catsam (University of Texas of the Permian Basin)
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Sharpeville in Context

Sharpeville. March 21, 1960. The place name has become shorthand for apartheid's atrocities. The date is often identified as one of the vital turning points in South African history. At least 69 dead. At least 180 and likely many more wounded and injured. The majority were shot in the back and in the side, indicating that the victims were running away from the police who opened fire on a largely Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) crowd gathered to protest the country's onerous pass laws. From Sharpeville emerged a draconian state of emergency, the rise of a fully-fledged South African security state, and a decade and a half of the effective crushing of the anti-apartheid opposition. Sharpeville shook South Africa and shocked the world.

Tom Lodge, a respected authority on twentieth-century South African politics, has, in *Sharpeville*, produced the most comprehensive history of the epochal events of that place and that day. But this book is about far more than simply the massacre that took place outside of Vereeniging. Instead, Lodge provides a kaleidoscopic contextualization of the event and its meaning. For if Sharpeville has become shorthand for apartheid's atrocities, the event itself exists within a context that reveals that those events represent far more than simply apartheid in microcosm.

In particular Lodge presents a full-fledged exploration of the role of Pan Africanists in anti-apartheid politics. The PAC pursued an aggressive and African-centered politics that were, in March 1960, still somewhat wobbly. The newly formed organization's reach and support paled in comparison with their rival, the African National Congress, whose views on nonracialism–their belief that South Africa "belongs to all who live in it, black and white"–the PAC saw as failing the black African victims of generations of segregation and apartheid.

In the run-up to the Sharpeville protest, local PAC cadres had to do more than a little arm-twisting to draw participants. Many of those who came to Sharpeville that day had been coerced into doing so. More than a few others attended for the festival atmosphere that they anticipated rather than out of any abiding commitment to Pan Africanist leanings. And yet the PAC represented a burgeoning sentiment in many quarters, especially those where the ANC seemed to be too quiescent, too timid, in the face of apartheid's totality. The assertive message of the PAC therefore resonated, particularly across both the Witwatersrand and the urban swaths of the Western Cape.

One of the book's major strengths is in its treatment of the sustained protest movement in Cape Town and the strength of the Pan-Africanists within that tradition. The history of the anti-apartheid struggle has long been centered in the Transvaal and especially Johannesburg. Whether it be the rise of the Young Turks of the ANC Youth League in the 1940s with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo in the forefront, the uprisings that spread from Soweto in 1976, the mass politicization that followed in the wake of the attempted implementation of the so-called reforms that included the Tri-Cameral Parliament in 1984, and of course Sharpeville in 1960, the vital role of the Witwatersrand looms large. And while it may be impossible to overstate the importance of that region in anti-apartheid protests, it has proven remarkably easy to understate the role of Cape Town. Lodge provides a vital corrective in his remarkable chapter on the Cape Town protests that occurred simultaneously and lasted far longer than the explosive but truncated events in Sharpeville.

Once Lodge covers the massacre and the events in Cape Town he attempts something both ambitious and problematic. He places Sharpeville in a sweeping historical context, ranging from the rise of the PAC through the rest of the apartheid era. He explores the aftermath of those awful events in an effective chapter that shows that

the steely and determined face that the National Party put forward masked real divisions not only among white politicians but also within the Afrikanerdom that made up the bulk of the apartheid government.

His chapter on international responses to the Sharpeville massacre amounts to a history of the anti-apartheid movement. And in this history Sharpeville ends up being the butterfly whose wings flap and cause the storm of divestment and protests and cultural and sporting boycotts. And in the process Sharpeville gets lost, at least in part because it would be wildly reductionist to draw a straight line from Sharpeville to the global responses to apartheid in the wake of Soweto sixteen years later. Sharpeville may have intensified anti-apartheid sentiment, but there was a nascent global anti-apartheid movement, as Lodge shows, before March 1960 and its real acceleration would happen not in 1960, but rather in the 1970s and 1980s. Sharpeville outraged the world. It clearly drew attention to the National Party government and to the evils of apartheid. It certainly helped to fuel antipathy to that regime. But no one event, not Sharpeville, not Soweto, not the 1985 Langa Massacre outside of Uitenhage, which took place on March 21, exactly twenty-five years after Sharpeville (and which Lodge, oddly, never mentions) can be seen as the fulcrum upon which the global anti-apartheid movement tilted.

In a lot of ways *Sharpeville* will stand as the best book on its subject, but because of Lodge's mission of placing the events of that day their larger place it will best supplement rather than supplant the existing books on that fateful day. Lodge builds on a vast literature but stands astride two books in particular.

In 1961 Ambrose Reeves, the bishop of Johannesburg, published *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa*. A long-standing critic of the apartheid regime and one of the most vocal critics of the events at Sharpeville, Reeves went into a self-imposed exile from his native land soon after the shootings that turned into a de facto official exile when he returned to South Africa and officials deported him within forty-eight hours. It is no wonder that the National Party and its henchmen recognized Reeves as a danger to their regime. As was always the case in the wake of atrocities in South Africa, the police, military, security forces, and government officials got to provide the official interpretation of events. In the case of Sharpeville that interpretation was that police, surrounded by an unruly and violent African mob numbering in the tens of thousands that presented a clear and present danger, opened fire in self-defense. Reeves tore this argument to shreds in *Shooting at Sharpeville*. His courage, determination, and persistence created a counternarrative that would prove invaluable to future historians, organizations such as the PAC and ANC, and the outside world. It is not too much of a stretch to say that without Reeves, Lodge might never have been able to write *Sharpeville*.

The second book that is essential in forming our understanding of the events at Sharpeville is Philip Frankel's *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and Its Massacre*. Frankel provides a thorough reconstruction of that day's events and his book remains the most thorough blow-by-blow. Perhaps ironically, one of the weaker aspects of Lodge's book is its treatment of the actual Sharpeville massacre itself. Frankel therefore remains essential to our understanding of the massacre and the success of his book serves as a reminder of the difficulties of pulling off a close reconstruction of historical events.

Nonetheless, *Sharpeville* is a remarkable and important book. But is not perfect. The book's biggest flaws manifest on the editorial side. The book is pocked with scores of typographical errors, formatting mistakes, and a range of too-frequent copyediting issues. At least in part Oxford University Press failed Tom Lodge on this front. A few mistakes creep into any book of several hundred pages. But the sheer number of errors, and especially errors of the same sort, serves to detract from the final work.

Lodge also makes some curious choices. His final two chapters (out of seven) are long, occupying more than a 100 pages out of just under 350 pages of text. In and of itself, this is not a problem. But both of these chapters contain excess fat. In an effort to provide a grand context for Sharpeville the last third of the book sometimes reads like an addendum to Lodge's legendary and essential 1983 book *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it draws focus away from the events at Sharpeville and occasionally Lodge appears to lose the plot before correcting course.

Lodge has not written the last word on Sharpeville, but he has produced a vital book that will serve as a springboard to furthering conversations about not only the events surrounding the Sharpeville massacre, but also South Africa in the 1960s more broadly, a period that, for all of Sharpeville's import and resonance, is still largely shrouded in historiographical misunderstanding. Lodge has helped to lift that shroud higher in a work of scholarship that will endure for many years to come.

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