

Apartheid in South-Africa



Apartheid means in Afrikaans «to live to part». During forty three years, South-Africa lived in discrimination. The Dutch settlers decided to set up a system which allowed them to control the power, mining and wealth of the country. All the people who were not «white» were considered as citizens of lower breed.

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I. Originally : the colonization of South-Africa

A. The Dutch colonization and the British recovery in the XIIIth C

Even if apartheid was established in 1948, racial discrimination in South-Africa existed for nearly 3 centuries.

Before the europeans' arrival, several tribes lived in wild South-Africa: "the Bantus", "The Khoikhois" and "The Bushmen". In the XVIIth century, the Dutch colonized the country beginning by the Capearea. During this period, the europeans imported thousands of slaves from Madagascar and Indonesia. It's at the end of the XVIIIth century that the English began to colonize South-Africa. More than 900 000 british moved into this land. In 1814, the United Kingdom controlled definitively the Cape colony and english became the official language in 1822. Slavery was abolished in 1833, then tousands of Boers emigrated inland.



B· The boers war (1835-1910)



The Boers war denotes two conflicts in South-Africa at the end of the XIXth C century between the British and the Boers. The Boers were the descendants of the first Dutch, German and French settlers, in South-Africa. « Boers », farmer in dutch, refers to the whole white community of Afrikaans language and Calvinist religion they were called later Afrikaners. The first Boers war took place from 1880 to 1881 and the second from 1899 to 1902. At the end of the second conflict, the two Boer republics lost their independence and were integrated to the British empire. The 2nd boers war was very cruel : a lot of families and their slaves were gathered round in camps where diseases and starvation killed many people.

II. Apartheid (1948–1991)

Colonized by the Dutch in the XVIIth C century and dominated by the British in 1910, South-Africa had a heavy past of racial discrimination when Apartheid took place. The government was only formed by Whites who represented only a little minority within the population, mainly composed by Blacks, Indians and Coloureds.

A. The policy of Apartheid

The policy of the national party was to found a system of separation. Apartheid was a social, economical and geographical system of division of the south-African territory. The population was separated into four racial groups : the Whites, the Indians, the Coloureds and the Blacks. A vertical separation between the four official ethnic groups was established progressively in all areas.

Many laws, rules and regulations were set up during the 50's. There were more than 80 laws passed. Here are the main laws :

- Prohibition of mixed marriages (1949)
- Prohibition of sexual relations between « whites » and « no whites » (1950)
- Classification of the population according to its race (1950)
- Suppression of communism (1950)
- Group areas act (1950) (law about separated residence)
- Separate representation of voters act (1951)
- Reservation of separate amenities act (1953)
- ...



B· Education under Apartheid



In 1953, South Africa adopted the Bantu Education Act. Its principal measure consisted in creating separate schools. The Bantu education policy had for objective to form the black and coloured youths in an unskilled job and to ensure prosperity to the Whites.

In the Bantu schools, Blacks received an education in their native tongue but education remained limited to the native tongue and in farming for the boys, in dressmaking for the girls. They wanted to make future farmers without any mathematical knowledge. The black education was different from that of the white one and of a lesser quality. In 1956, school segregation applied to the universities too. Because of an important absenteeism of the young blacks, education became compulsory.

In white schools, the education policy installed by the nationalists consisted in replacing the dominance of english with that of the Afrikaans language and culture.

In fact, the policy of this period imposed to the native population to learn dutch, english and afrikaan. This policy neglected deliberately south-african languages.

C. The struggle against Apartheid

To face up to more and more segregationist laws, the ANC (the African National Congress) main organization of defence of the Blacks in South-Africa and its young leader, Nelson Mandela, replied first of all by a peaceful campaign of protest (petitions, demonstrations, ...), then by civil disobedience. In 1960, after the Sharpeville massacre, Nelson Mandela, leader of the ANC adopted armed struggle. Arrested two years later, in 1962, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. He pursued his fight from his cell becoming the symbol of the fight against apartheid. On June 27th, 1995, the Congress of the multiracial people adopted the Freedom Charter asking for the abolition of any discriminating policy.



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In parallel, the international community, at the instigation of the United Nations, condemned more and more the South-african government and tried to soften its policy by sanctioning it by various ways (prohibition to buy african products and raw materials, ...)

From 1984, the insurrection gained. The acts of violence linked to clashes, with the policeor between black organisations, made a hundred victims. In 1986. The state of emergency was declared in the whole territory, with strict control of the south-african and foreign press. The international and media pressure, stronger and stronger, was however going to lead the government to come out of apartheid.

III. *The end of Apartheid*

A. The creation of a new South-Africa

In 1989, Frederik De Klerk became president after Pieter Botha and confirmed his reformist intentions. After having negotiated secretly with the ANC, he announced to the parliament the legalization of this organisation and the release of its leader, Nelson Mandela. June 30th, 1991, Apartheid was officially abolished. A transitional constitution was set up to insure a progressive handover of power to the black majority. In 1993, Nelson Mandela was rewarded for his long battle and for his actions led with F. De Klerk. Both recieved the Nobel prize for peace. On May 9th, Mandela wass elected by universal suffrage the first black president of South Africa.

B· Nowadays

However, the abolition of the segregationist system and the institution of the universal suffrage didn't remove suspicion and prejudice. Even if the differences of treatment were reduced and there was no material trace of the Apartheid, Blacks and Whites mingle a little. The new policy of positive discrimination (Affirmative Action) doesn't make the unanimity within the white community which consider themselves discriminated. As for the Blacks, they remain particularly affected by social inequalities in South Africa where 48% of the population live under the poverty line and where the distribution of income stays one of the most unfair in the world.



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In conclusion, still today, this difficult period has an influence on the country. Subsequently after the election of Nelson Mandela in 1994, poverty decreased but racism is still present even if it is now a black government. Most of the wealth is still in white hands.