Your notes

GCSE History: revision notes

South Africa: from union to the end of apartheid, 1948–94

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Start here: setting up apartheid, 1948–54

- South Africa was already segregated in 1948: Black South Africans had few rights and little land. In the 1948 election the National Party, supported mostly by Afrikaners, won by promising **apartheid** ("separateness").
- The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) banned marriage between races. The Population Registration Act (1950) classified everyone as White, Coloured, Indian or Black. The **Group Areas Act** (1950) gave each race its own areas, leading to forced removals, such as Sophiatown in Johannesburg.
- **Pass laws** made Black South Africans carry a pass book to be in white areas. The Separate Amenities Act (1953) segregated beaches, buses and parks. The Bantu Education Act (1953) gave Black children an inferior education designed for low-paid work.

The growth of apartheid, 1955–59

- "Petty **apartheid**" separated everyday life: entrances, benches and toilets. "Grand **apartheid**" separated where people could live.
- Hendrik Verwoerd (prime minister from 1958) planned for Black South Africans to belong to separate "homelands" (**Bantustans**). The Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) set them up, so the government could claim Black people were citizens of the homelands, not of South Africa.

Resisting apartheid, 1955–78

- The African National Congress (ANC) led peaceful protest, such as the Defiance Campaign (1952). In 1955 the Congress of the People adopted the **Freedom Charter**, which called for equal rights. 156 leaders were charged in the Treason Trial (1956–61) and all were found not guilty.

- At Sharpeville in March 1960, police opened fire on a crowd protesting against the **pass laws** and killed 69 people. The ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress were banned, and the world began to criticise South Africa.
- The ANC set up an armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), in 1961 to carry out sabotage. Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment at the Rivonia Trial (1964) and sent to Robben Island.
- Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement encouraged pride and self-reliance. In June 1976 students in Soweto protested against being taught in Afrikaans; police shot at them and hundreds were killed in the unrest that followed. Biko died in police custody in 1977.

P W Botha and de Klerk, 1978–94

- P W Botha tried to reform **apartheid** to save it: Black trade unions were allowed (1979), the mixed marriages ban (1985) and the **pass laws** (1986) were scrapped, and a Tricameral Parliament (1984) gave seats to Coloured and Indian South Africans, but none to Black South Africans.
- The United Democratic Front (1983) led protests, the townships rose up and church leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke out. Botha declared a State of Emergency (1985–90). Many countries imposed **sanctions** and boycotts. Far-right Afrikaners, such as the AWB, opposed any reform.
- F W de Klerk became president in 1989. In February 1990 he unbanned the ANC and released Mandela. The remaining **apartheid** laws were repealed in 1991, and in 1992 white voters backed reform in a referendum.
- Despite violence, negotiations succeeded. Mandela and de Klerk shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. In April 1994 the first election open to all races was won by the ANC, and Mandela became president.

Key terms

Apartheid	The system of racial separation in South Africa from 1948 to the early 1990s.
Pass laws	Laws forcing Black South Africans to carry a pass book to be in white areas.
Group Areas Act	The 1950 law giving each race its own areas to live in.
Bantustans	The "homelands" set up for Black South Africans under grand apartheid.
Freedom Charter	The 1955 statement of equal rights adopted by the Congress of the People.
Sanctions	Penalties, such as trade bans, used to pressure a country to change.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

Your notes

1. Which party won the 1948 election in South Africa and introduced apartheid?
2. What did the Population Registration Act (1950) do?
3. What did the Group Areas Act do?
4. What happened at Sharpeville in 1960?
5. What was Umkhonto we Sizwe?
6. Why did students in Soweto protest in 1976?
7. Who led the Black Consciousness Movement?
8. Who left out Black South Africans from his Tricameral Parliament?

Answers

1. The National Party
2. Classified everyone by race
3. Gave each race its own areas to live in
4. Police shot and killed 69 people protesting against the pass laws
5. The ANC's armed wing, Spear of the Nation
6. Against being taught in Afrikaans
7. Steve Biko
8. P W Botha

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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