

1991: The End of Apartheid



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South Africa Scraps Law Defining People by Race

BY MICHAEL WINES

When Antoinette Sithole and thousands of other teenagers gathered on the streets of Soweto, a sprawling black ghetto near Johannesburg, South Africa, on June 16, 1976, they had no idea they would change history.

They only knew they were angry:

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South Africa's race laws were abolished after a long, sometimes violent struggle

The government had ordered schools to teach all major courses not in English, but in Afrikaans, the Dutch-based mother tongue of the white rulers who had oppressed them their entire lives. After months of classes they could not understand, more than

10,000 of them staged a protest march.

Not an hour into the protest, the police opened fire on the unarmed crowd, killing at least 23. Students fled in panic, leaving fallen friends behind.

Almost instantly, South Africa erupted in rioting. What came to be

THREE YEARS after the end of apartheid, Sowetans celebrate Nelson Mandela's election as President in April 1994.

ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN/CORBIS



known as the Soweto uprising claimed nearly 600 lives over the next few months, including Antoinette's 12-year-old brother, Hector Pieterse. (The photo on this page of Hector's body being carried to a car, with Antoinette wailing alongside him, became a symbol of black South Africans' resistance to apartheid.)

Today, many believe that the bullets fired during the uprising delivered a mortal wound to apartheid, the government system that robbed millions of South Africa's nonwhites of their basic human rights. Apartheid would cling to life until 1991, when it was officially abolished, 15 years ago this June.

MINORITY RULE

Until that day in Soweto in 1976, apartheid—which means “separateness”—had seemed almost unassailable. A white minority had both dominated and segregated blacks and other nonwhites since the Dutch and British settled what is now South Africa in the late 1600s and 1700s.

But apartheid took an especially



ANTOINETTE SITHOLE shrieks as her brother Hector Pieterse's body is carried away during the Soweto uprising in 1976.

pernicious form in 1950 when the ruling Afrikaners, descendants of the original Dutch settlers, began passing laws forcing blacks and coloureds (people of mixed race) to live and work in restricted areas, and barred them from owning land outside those areas.

Nonwhites soon found themselves prisoners in their own land. They were educated only enough to perform basic labor in white-run industries. They could not socialize with whites,

PRESIDENT F.W. de Klerk & Nelson Mandela, 1990



have a voice in government, or even travel outside their designated areas without government approval. All blacks—who made up 70 percent of the population—had to carry “pass books” that recorded their movements, and could be arrested for inviting whites to their homes without approval.

MANDELA & THE A.N.C.

Secret police spied on black activists, and arrests, beatings, and even murders of dissidents were standard fare. One year after the events in Soweto, the leader of the South African Students Organization, Steven Biko, was beaten to death by government agents. Nelson Mandela, who led the military wing of the leading anti-apartheid group, the African National Congress (A.N.C.), was arrested and sent to jail with a life sentence in 1962.

Against this backdrop, black rage in South Africa didn't surprise

outsiders. “Suppose white American families were told that their children would be taught all their school subjects in French and Dutch from now on. Imagine that virtually all white children, regardless of ability, were given a different and inferior kind of education,” *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis wrote after the riots.

CONDEMNATION

But with the uprising, apartheid’s solid foundation began to crack. Unable to contain the rioting, the government slowly began to look for ways to divert black anger. It



ANTI-APARTHEID protesters at the White House in 1990

condemned the hated pass books but failed to abolish them; drew up a new constitution that gave some nonwhites a voice but still excluded blacks; tried to make all blacks citizens in separate semi-independent “homelands” within white-controlled South Africa.

None of it worked. The United Nations condemned apartheid in 1977 and imposed an arms embargo on South Africa. International sports groups banned South African teams, and many companies boycotted South African goods and services. The demand for Mandela’s release grew into a global campaign, and a leading

critic of apartheid, the South African Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

Along with the rest of the world, the United States condemned apartheid but was criticized by some in the 1980s for not doing enough to



APARTHEID LAWS kept white and nonwhite South Africans segregated.

end it. Instead of isolating South Africa’s rulers with economic and political sanctions, as many other nations had done, President Ronald Reagan’s administration tried what it called “constructive engagement”:

negotiating with white and black leaders to seek a peaceful end to apartheid.

Some opposed Reagan’s approach as too soft on South Africa’s government. Testifying before Congress in 1984, Tutu called the Reagan administration’s policy “immoral.”

U.S. PRESSURE

But the State Department official responsible for that policy, Chester A. Crocker, argues that critics did not know about the enormous pressure that the U.S. was placing on South Africa’s white leaders at the time, softening its public criticism of the government while privately demanding that it grant blacks

long-denied freedoms.

The Americans also hastened change, he said, by negotiating an end to crises in nearby Angola and Namibia, where South Africa’s leaders believed they faced military threats.

But it is important, Crocker says, to realize that the most important push for change in South Africa came not from outsiders like the U.S., but from within. “You need leaders to make peace,” he says. “It takes guts.”

Those leaders were South Africa’s last President under apartheid, F.W. de Klerk, and Mandela. Seeing that apartheid was not only isolating his nation, but robbing it of the talents of its black workers, de Klerk released Mandela from jail in 1990, ended restrictions on black political groups, and began negotiations toward democracy and majority rule.

PRESIDENT MANDELA

On June 17, 1991, South Africa’s Parliament voted to repeal the legal framework for apartheid. Three years later, Mandela was elected President.

While South Africa has made the transition to majority rule, it hasn’t always been a smooth ride.

Warfare among rival black groups in eastern South Africa followed the arrival of democracy, and the government has been battered by charges that it tolerates corruption and is slow to address the needs of millions of its poorest black citizens.

Antoinette Sithole, now a guide at Soweto’s Hector Pieterse Museum, named for her brother, says the struggle has been worth it. “I don’t think we expected things to be quick,” she says. “We have to learn the ropes.”

But “slowly,” she says, “we’re getting there.”

LESSON PLAN 3: COVER STORY

FYODOR SOZONTOV'S RUSSIA

**BACKGROUND**

Russia, the largest republic in the former Soviet Union, remains the world's largest country and one of its most powerful. Today, many in the West are wary of Russia's apparent slide back toward authoritarian rule. "Fyodor's Russia" provides a glimpse of life in Russia today through the eyes of a St. Petersburg teenager.

CRITICAL THINKING

- Direct attention to the fact that some of post-Communist democratic freedoms have been withdrawn or curtailed. Ask students why they think so many young people don't embrace democracy and 36 percent say they would prefer authoritarian rule.
- Tell students that there is no history of democracy in Russia. Further, many people saw their living standards fall and guaranteed employment disappear after the fall of Communism. The end of the Communist Party's authoritarian rule was one factor that allowed the increase in corruption the article describes.

WRITING PROMPT

- Assign students to write a five-paragraph essay in which they explain how their views of democracy and government are similar to or different from those of Fyodor Sozontov.
- Students should give specific examples to bolster their views.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Ask students for a few examples of how corruption hurts a society. (It raises costs for everyone. It weakens faith in government and other institutions. It rewards criminals.)
- If you were a young Russian male, would you pay a bribe to escape the military draft?

FAST FACTS

- Russia is the only industrialized country in which male life expectancy has fallen. Male life expectancy is now 59, compared to 63 in 1965 and 65 in 1987.
- Russia ranks 90 on a corruption measurement scale of 146 countries (0 means no corruption) in a survey by Transparency International, a German-based association that monitors corruption. (The U.S. ranks 18.)

WEB WATCH

www.cia.gov The Central Intelligence Agency provides a wealth of data on Russia. Click on World Factbook and scroll to Russia. Click on "People" for demographic information.

LESSON PLAN 4: HISTORY

1991: THE END OF APARTHEID

**BACKGROUND**

Beginning with their arrival in the late 1600s, white Europeans relegated the indigenous people of South Africa and other non-whites to a subclass with fewer rights. Apartheid laws, passed in 1950, led to a backlash by blacks and protests around the world. After a long struggle, apartheid ended in 1991.

DEBATE TOPIC

- Have students take sides on the U.S. response to apartheid.
- What are the pros and cons of economic boycotts of countries that curtail the human and civil rights of their citizens?
- (Supporters say economic boycotts force governments to change. Opponents say boycotts hurt people at the low end of the economic ladder the most.)

WRITING PROMPT

- Tell students to assume that they were one of the young black South Africans who took part in the anti-government protests in Soweto in 1976.
- Their job is to write a five-paragraph letter to a friend in which they argue why it's important to oppose apartheid and encourage their friend to join the protests against the white-ruled government.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think the minority white population was able to enforce apartheid for so long? (Whites controlled the police and military.)
- Why do you think the white government ordered black students to be taught in Afrikaans? (One reason was that whites wanted to weaken black identity.)

FAST FACTS

- In 1978, 13 years before apartheid officially ended, blacks had:
- 13 percent of South Africa's land, compared with 87 percent for whites.
- One doctor per 44,000 people, compared with one doctor per 400 whites.
- \$45 per year public expenditure per black student, compared with \$696 per white student.

WEB WATCH

www.apartheidmuseum.org South Africa's Apartheid Museum provides numerous links explaining all aspects of the country's apartheid era. Be sure to click on "Educational Resources."

1991: THE END OF APARTHEID > Pages 24-26

1. Which of the following people were among the first white settlers in South Africa?

- a Spanish
- b Italian
- c Dutch
- d German

2. In 1976, thousands of people in Soweto, a segregated black township, rioted

- a to protest their low wages.
- b after police shot unarmed black marchers who opposed the imposition of the Afrikaans language in black schools.
- c to challenge the government's jailing of Nelson Mandela.
- d to show their support for blacks in neighboring African countries.

3. President Reagan's strategy for ending apartheid was _____

4. Describe the nature or extent of education for South Africa's blacks during apartheid.

5. Which of the following actions could lead to a black person's arrest during apartheid?

- a reading white-owned newspapers
- b buying alcoholic beverages
- c attending religious services
- d inviting whites to their homes without approval

6. Nelson Mandela headed South Africa's largest anti-apartheid group, the

- a African Christian Democratic Party.
- b African National Congress.
- c Inkatha Freedom Party.
- d Black Africa Union.



IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Some Americans distrusted Nelson Mandela because the Soviet Union voiced support for him. Do you believe Mandela was wrong to accept support from a Communist country?
2. In 1995, Mandela's government set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Suspects who admitted to human rights abuses during apartheid received amnesty. Do you think this was the correct policy, or should all human rights violators have been punished?



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GAME SHOW

Use with articles identified.

The statements are answers to questions (modeled after the TV show *Jeopardy!*). Students must answer in the form of questions.

Divide the class into teams.

Read the statements.

Call on the first team with a hand raised.

Correct answer = 10 points

Wrong answer = -10 points
(And another team may respond for the same chance to gain or lose 10 points.)

STATEMENTS TO READ**FYODOR'S RUSSIA**

1. **Fyodor Sozontov's hometown.**
2. **Russia's capital**
3. **Country that collapsed in 1991**
4. **90 percent of young Russian men avoid this**
5. **Sozontov's field of college study**

THE END OF APARTHEID

6. **An anti-apartheid uprising happened here**
7. **Language of South Africa's former white rulers**
8. **Dutch and _____ settlers came to South Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries.**
9. **Blacks had to carry these documents.**
10. **South Africa's first black President.**

CORRECT RESPONSE

- What is St. Petersburg?
What is Moscow?
What was the Soviet Union?
What is the military draft?
What is forestry?
- What is Soweto?
What is Afrikaans?
What are British?
What are passbooks?
Who is Nelson Mandela?

ANSWER KEY**QUIZ 1 > PAGE TE 5**

1. five
2. The U.S. Census Bureau does not collect information on religion. *(Similar wording is acceptable.)*
3. [d] South Asian.
4. Europe's Muslims are on the economic and political fringes. American Muslims are more integrated. *(Similar wording is acceptable.)*
5. [c] abstain from eating during daylight.
6. [b] As a group, Muslims vote more regularly than most Americans.
7. the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

QUIZ 2 > PAGE TE 5

1. [d] male teens in high school.
2. [c] free-market capitalism.
3. [c] a widening gap between rich and poor.
4. Soviet bureaucrats decided what careers they would have. *(Similar wording is acceptable.)*
5. [b] Chechnya's attempt to become independent.
6. [d] Only about 37 percent of young Russians say they fully embrace democracy.

QUIZ 3 > PAGE TE 6

1. [c] Dutch
2. [b] after police shot unarmed black marchers who opposed the imposition of the Afrikaans language in black schools.
3. constructive engagement or negotiations. *(Similar wording is acceptable.)*
4. They were educated only enough to perform basic jobs in white-run industries. *(Similar wording is acceptable.)*
5. [d] inviting whites to their homes without approval.
6. [b] African National Congress.

GRAPH EXERCISE > PAGE TE 4

- | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| 1. [b] 49% | 3. [a] 27% | 5. 23% |
| 2. [a] 12% | 4. [c] 32% | 6. [b] 7% |

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