***Rise of the Apartheid in South Africa***

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As in many events in history no single act is the cause, there are many events that contribute. This is the case for the apartheid in South Africa lasting from 1948 until 1994. In South Africa the struggles were between the Afrikaners and British, European colonies, and also between the coloured, Indian and black people who resided in this region. These conflicts were over valuable resources, land, race, political ideologies, colonial supremacy and power.

The first Dutch settler landed in South Africa in 1652. The leader was Jan van Riebeeck, a Dutchmen, “representing the Dutch East India Company, [and who] founds the Dutch East India Company” 1 and the Cape Colony. For about the next one hundred and eighty years the Dutch spread out over the area building settler towns and villages. Then, in 1806 the British started occupying the region of South Africa as one of their many colonial holdings, and took over from the Dutch. In 1852 the Dutch were granted a “limited self-government” 2 by the British. The “Afrikaner Boers left the Cape [on] the Great Trek” 3 heading to the Transvaal region to create their Orange Free State. This move did not create any conflicts between the British and the Dutch until, in 1880 a war broke out between the two settler groups. This was the first of the Anglo-Boer wars, the Transvaal War, where the British were victorious. This war was fought over the land that the Boers were residing on. The British wanted the Transvaal because they had already conquered the Zulu Nation which surrounded the Transvaal, so the British declared themselves as rulers of the Transvaal. The Boer’s, descendents of the Dutch settlers, did not like this, especially when the British started excessively taxing the Afrikaners. In response they gathered forces and won back their independence from the British.

During the time prior to the second Anglo-Boer war, diamonds and gold were found in the Transvaal. Both of these resources had great value to any ethnic group so the British again tried to conquer the Orange Free State in 1899. Besides resources there was a conflict over “political ideologies of imperialism and republicanism” 4. With the British victorious against the Afrikaners in 1902, eight years later the Union of South Africa was formed. With the formation of the Union if South Africa the Dutch Orange Free State was no longer. Even after this war there were still struggles between the British, the Boer’s, indigenous tribes, and coloured South Africans for leadership of areas all throughout South Africa as well as the whole of South Africa. These struggles were the reason it took eight years for the country to be named the Union of South Africa. Struggles occurred not only between the Dutch and the British who were the only ethnic groups in power but, also between both of these European groups for main regions of South Africa. The black people were excluded from all of these negotiations as each of the groups wanted “a unified political movement that would challenge the exclusion “ 5 of them.

With these new found resources, gold and diamonds, and the British settlers in power, the black people were manipulated by laws to be labourers. For example, the British passed the “Mines and Works Act [of 1911 which] reserved certain skilled jobs exclusively for whites”  6. A couple years later the Natives’ Land Act was passed which meant that no African could own any land outside of their designated reserves which were also designated for them by the British. Similar acts were passed over the next few years segregating the Boers and British from the Indians, coloured people, and the black people.

During the time that the British were in control a few political parties arose, in “1912 the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) [was] founded” 7, the South African Party (SAP) in 1914, the National Party in 1914 and the Communist Party of South Africa in 1921. The SANNC was founded on January 8, 1912; it had “the aim of increasing the rights of the black South African’s” 8. The precursor to this political party was a group of black delegates who drafted a Union Constitution at the South Africa Native Convention which was sent to England and the British made no changes were outlined in this Union Constitution. The South African Native National Congress was formed in part, due to the lack of say that the black people were receiving during the negotiations which led to the formation of South Africa and in contacting the British government. The black people also kept feeling that there was a need for a permanent political party. This political party was to represent the blacks nationally and continue to object to the discriminatory laws forced upon them for the European settler’s convenience. These wants and needs are what led to the formation of the South African National Congress by “Pixley ka Isaka Seme, a well educated attorney and author Solomon Plaatje. The SANNC was later renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923 and is the political party in power today in South Africa. The National Party “dedicated to policies of apartheid and white supremacy” 9 and was able to do so by being elected from 1948 until the early 1990’s. This party was founded by J. B. M. Hertzog, who also was the leader. This party was formed as the Boer’s response to the British’s South African Party, who wanted an English and Afrikaans speaking white nation. The National Party was only focused on Afrikaner wants such as promoting their language, culture, and breaking out from British power. The National Party also had an outlook on the non-European groups that was more extreme than the British. This outlook of, segregation was a “fundamental principle [of ensuring] the supremacy of the European population in the spirit of Christianity [was to] utterly reject any attempt to mix races” 10. In 1924 the National Party formed a coalition with the Labour Party as they had similar ideas and both were supported by the white labourers. Their extreme outlook in regards to segregation led to the apartheid developing when they come to power.

On May 26th, 1948 the National Party won the South African General elections on the political platform of racial segregation, or in Afrikaner, apartheid meaning apartness. This meant that “DF Malan becomes Prime Minister” 11 and Hendrik F. Verwoerd were able to start the implementation of apartheid. The National Party started apartheid by building upon earlier laws that had been put in place by the British. Later during the next year they started implementing their own laws to increase the amount of racial segregation. One of the first laws that they passed was the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages, which was later followed by many others. These acts increased segregation greatly in particular the Population Registration Act which required all South Africans to carry an ID card which stated their information in particular their race. This helped the authorities who were white, keep everyone segregated and to stay in their designated areas set out by the government.

In the 1950’s other problems arose between all the ethnic groups in the aspects of language and racism. The main languages of South Africa before the apartheid were English and a variety of indigenous but with the National Party in power Afrikaans was the language to be spoken. With the segregation increasing so was the racism toward the blacks mainly but also to the coloured people and Indians. The segregation of land was split into small black communities with white areas to keep the black people separated. The Afrikaner government set up the land this way so that the black people were unable to get together in large groups or even contact each other. This was to prevent an uprising of the black people against the government. Despite the National Party’s effort the ANC began its Defiance Campaign in 1952. This campaign saw 8, 500 of its members placed in prison for disobeying peacefully segregation laws. From this campaign the Coloured People’s Congress Alliance was formed with Nelson Mandela as the leader. Also the Indian population who had the right to vote under British rule were no longer able to.

Even with the Defiance campaign still going the government continued to pass segregation laws. Some of which forced more black people off their land so the white people could use it. The continuation of implementing these laws caused the black people to suffer. Now there was a mass act of defiance in 1956 when twenty-thousand females decided to march to the Union Building in protest of the passes that everyone was required to have. Four years later there was another mass protest in Sharpeville in late March. This protest turned into a massacre when police opened fire on them “resulting in 69 people being killed and 180 wounded” 12 mainly on their backs. Shortly after the Sharpeville Massacre all black political parties were banned. Again in 1976 another uprising occurred when Soweto students who were only being taught in Afrikaans many were shot by police.

In efforts to continue gaining their own power the National Party breaks away from England, no longer being a part of their Commonwealth in 1961 later the same year it becomes a republic. In 1962 Nelson Mandela is sentenced to life in prison due to his efforts to stop the apartheid. Also in 1962, the United Nations tells its members to stop all economic and military relations with South Africa in hopes the apartheid policies will be reversed. Policies with similar motives and restrictions are implemented over the next twenty or so years.

Leading up to the 1994 elections in South Africa the National Party had a referendum to see if their new course, of desegregation, was approved by the voters, whites only were allowed to vote at this time. The National Party’s idea of desegregation was approved by the voters. In the 1994 general elections, “millions lined up before dawn [with almost all of them] about to cast their first ever ballot in a democratic election” 13 and almost unanimously voted Nelson Mandela of the ANC to be the prime minister of South Africa. With a new constitution in place it was hopeful that the transition would be a successful one, and in the beginning it was. This election put an end to the apartheid in the government but not throughout the country. For example, ownership of the “land remains the most contentious issue” 14 because many different people believe that they are the rightful owners of the land.

There was no one solitary cause of the apartheid there were many, some even dating back to many years before the apartheid even started. Even when the idea of apartheid was in place it continued to be developed for many years until the United Nations stepped in to try and stop the racial segregation that was going on. They did contribute to the end of the South African Apartheid as did the National Party, the African National Congress and the people who resided in South Africa.

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