

Amandla awethu "the power is ours"

WHAT IS APARTHEID?

Apartheid, an Afrikaaner word meaning separateness, is the name given by the Government of the Republic of South Africa to its system of segregation, oppression, and exploitation. This system enables whites, who comprise less than one fifth of the population, to control the Republic's affairs.

When, in 1948, the National Party formed the government in South Africa, it created

a set of laws to perpetuate the racial segregation and white domination which already existed. These policies were articulated in terms of the doctrine of apartheid ("separateness"). The apartheid system was established on the basis of colonial conquest; thus, this history of racial domination and oppression began long before National Party rule in South Africa.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA

The first white settlers arrived in the extreme west of what is now known as South Africa from the Netherlands in the mid 17th century. Upon their arrival, the Khoikoi and the San who inhabited

the Cape Peninsula were dispossessed of their land and livestock. The superior armed forces of the white settlers were used to crush all resistance and to force the Africans into slave labour. The settlers also brought slaves to the area, namely, West Africans and East Indians.

As the settlers expanded and spread they met resistance; their military might, however, enabled them to push their way forward and to occupy most of the land. The decisive factor in their military victory was the arrival of British military forces after Britain gained control of the Cape from the Dutch in 1806.

It was only the beginning of this century, however, that saw the end of armed opposition of colonialism. By this time whites had gained control over most of the land. The former occupants had been reduced to the status of tenants or wage labourers, or forced off the land into reserves.

By the end of the 19th century, what is now South Africa was comprised of four territories under white colonial rule. Natal and the Cape were British colonies. The Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State had been established by Boers (Afrikaaners) most of whom had left the Cape after the British abolished slavery in 1834. In the two British colonies Blacks had limited political rights. In practice, however, there were administrative obstacles to overcome in exercising those rights in Natal, and in the Cape those rights were reduced sharply when the number of Africans that met the conditions of qualification rose sharply. In the two Boer republics Blacks had no rights at all. When the British prevailed in the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, British rule was established in all four territories. The territories were joined together in 1910 as four provinces under the Union of South Africa. By the Act of Union, Britain handed administration of the country to the local white population. The Union's constitution preserved the status quo as far as

restrictions on black rights. It also paved the way for the total removal of all parliamentary rights from Blacks.

In the three decades following the establishment of the Union, a white minority regime was consolidated throughout the country. The result was a racially segregated society with white domination in land ownership, administration, distribution of wealth, the legal system, and in all areas of social relations.

THE RISE OF BLACK MILITANCY

Industrialization was at the same time producing a Black urban working class. As early as 1922 the official reaction was a commitment to maintaining the migrant labour system. In response to increasing Black worker militancy and a growing membership in Black trade unions, the Afrikaaners found it necessary to devise means to effectively control Black labour and maintain the migrant labour system.

It was during the course of these developments that the National Party entrenched apartheid as a set of laws. New measures were introduced to perpetuate the subordinate position in society of the different sections of the Black community.

The closing of all parliamentary avenues for protest and dissent and the growing of the Black working class led to increased emphasis upon mass action, including strikes, protests, and demonstrations. The violent suppression of a strike by African mineworkers in 1946 was followed by the enforcement of segregation in trade unions and the outlawing of strikes by African workers. In the 1950 the Communist Party was banned.

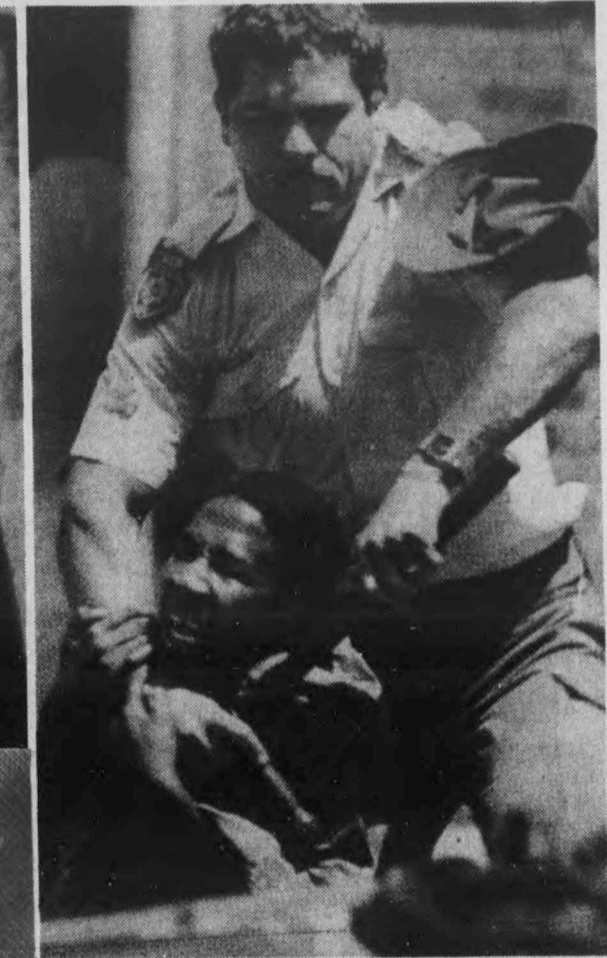
The apartheid regime's reliance upon force to maintain its power was clearly demonstrated in 1961, during the foundation of the white-minority Republic of South Africa. Only one year earlier a State of Emergency had been declared in response to mass demonstrations against the pass laws and in protest of the Sharpeville massacre of 69 peaceful protesters. The African National Congress and the Pan African Congress had both been outlawed and thousands arrested and detained under the emergency provisions.

On May 31, 1961 there were plans for demonstrations and strikes against the foundation of the Republic of South Africa, and a call for a "sovereign national convention" representative of all in South Africa to draw up a new non-racial and democratic constitution. The regime ordered a massive military mobilization in the final weeks of May in which thousands were arrested. The first of a long succession of laws for detention without trial was enacted and many political leaders were detained. This action led the liberation movement to the conclusion that armed struggle was unavoidable if freedom was to be achieved, and a new phase of resistance began. A decade of severe repression began in which great damage was inflicted upon the underground structures of the resistance, but by the 1970s the regime was again facing serious threats. The stranglehold by the white minority was slowly being weakened and legal opposition and open defiance were being re-established.

THE EFFECTS OF APARTHEID

For Blacks in South Africa nearly every aspect of life is regulated and limited by the State. Apartheid is the daily and unceasing experience of these people. The races live in separate districts and travel in different buses and trains. They attend different schools, churches, restaurants, cinemas, beaches, clubs, and sports events. They walk through separate doorways and use separate telephone booths and taxi stands. They go to separate hospitals and are buried in separate graveyards. There are even different hours for Whites and Blacks at libraries, zoos, art galleries and museums, and public gardens. There is no claim to a "separate but equal" South Africa. All facilities for whites are far superior to those for Blacks. African, coloured persons, and Asians are excluded from many kinds of employment and are limited to low paying menial occupations.

The Government of South Africa has refused to permit representation of the Black majority in Parliament and has severely restricted political opposition. It has forced thousands of Africans from their urban homes and sent them to live in distant reserves, and has proclaimed "ghettos" for people of mixed descent and Asians. Black leaders and thousands of others have been arrested, tortured, convicted, and imprisoned or executed



under harsh apartheid and security laws.

Even though Africans outnumber Whites by more than five to one, they are assigned by the Government to reserves which constitute only 13 per cent of the land. The reserves are considered as the "homelands" or "bantustans" for each of the so-called "national units" of the African population as defined by the Government. These "units" are the Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Pedi, Sotho, Shangaan, Swazi, Venda, Ndebele, and "others".

HEALTH AND EDUCATION UNDER APARTHEID

The health of Africans is inevitably harmed by their minimal incomes, restricted opportunities for employment and education, substandard housing conditions, and the low level of Government expenditure on health and medical facilities for them. Statistics show that there is one African, Coloured, or Asian doctor for every 45,000 persons among these groups, compared to one white doctor for every 370 Whites. Between 1968 and 1977 only 3 per cent of the doctors graduating from South African medical schools were African.

The infant mortality rate for Africans, one of the highest in the world, is 69 per 1,000 in urban areas, and 282 per 1,000 in rural areas. For Whites, the infant mortality rate is 12 per 1,000, one of the lowest in the world. Information on the life expectancy of Africans is no longer made available by the Government.

The Government believes that the cost of African education should be paid mainly by Africans, and it has increased their taxes accordingly. The Government spends about ten times more for the education of White children than for the education of Africans. School attendance is compulsory and free for White pupils; it is neither free nor compulsory for Africans. White and coloured pupils are provided with free textbooks in all grades; African pupils in secondary and high schools must pay in full for their own textbooks which could cost as much as many African workers earn in a month. The pupil to teacher ratio is 20 to 1 for whites and 47 to 1 for Africans.

A UNESCO report on apartheid stated that South African school books teach the Africans that they occupy an inferior position in society. White children are taught that Europeans are superior and that Africans are "primitive and barbaric".

This is the reality of life under the apartheid system.

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