

Introduction

Up Until 1961, South Africa used to be known as “The Union of South Africa”. That meant that although it was its own independent country, Queen Elizabeth II was still their monarch. At the time, South Africa was practicing Apartheid, which meant it enforced policies that supported and upheld racial segregation.

However, in 1960, South Africa held an only-white referendum to decide on whether the country should remain a monarchy, or become a republic. With a simple majority for the country becoming a republic, the prime minister (Dr. Verwoerd) went to London in 1961 and gave it formal notice. However, he requested to remain in the British Commonwealth (an association of formal British colonies). His request was however strongly opposed due to the Apartheid policies being committee.

Key Terms

The Union of South Africa

A country in Southern Africa, created in 1910 as a Dominion of the British Empire, but then gained full independence as a monarchy in 1931.

Apartheid

A legislation system that was created in 1948 which upheld racist policies and segregation laws against non-whites in South Africa.

Dominion

A political entity that had semi-independence under the British Empire. That meant that for the most part, they were self-governing and autonomous. But these countries were still part of the commonwealth, had the British monarch as their monarch, and if needed, the British parliament can pass any law they want in or regarding the dominion.

The Commonwealth of Nations

A political association of countries that were formerly territories or colonies of the British Empire who chose to maintain close ties.

Retribalization

The action of returning people back into divisions based on culture.

General Overview

Creation of the Union of South Africa

During European colonialism of Africa, there were 4 colonies for Britain in the land that is now South Africa. Cape, Natal, Orange River, and Transvaal. However, in 1908, a constitution for a new British Dominion made up of these four colonies was created during a national convention. This new country (The Union of South Africa) was created with its own parliamentary sovereignty, and executive power went to the Governor General (who also represents the British Monarch in the dominion) and his cabinet.

When the country was finally made, it was already very segregated, as parliament was only composed of whites, and blacks were not even allowed to vote in 2 states. They were retribalized, and statues caused racial separation in industries, homes, and even entire administrations. 'Influx controls' further pushed this by reducing black access to mainly white cities. Many jobs were reserved solely for white people, and according to the 1913 'Land Act,' blacks were prohibited from buying land in more than 90% of South African land and made it illegal for them to be sharecroppers. Laws also restricted the terms under which blacks could live in white-owned farms.

Disunity was a huge problem throughout the years, as violent conflicts arose frequently, caused by issues unresolved in the constitution and uneven economic growth between the whites and the blacks. The majority of conflict happened between white employers and black workers. An organization was formed to try and promote black equality (The South African National Native Congress - SANNC), but it did not do much.

The prime minister of the Union, James Hertzog, was one of the leaders who worked the hardest pushing towards greater equality. In his 'Representation of Natives Act' of 1936, he increased the land in which blacks could buy and reside in. He also helped pave the way for Britain's 'statue of Westminster' of 1931 which allowed any dominion the right to secede from the empire.

Creation of the Commonwealth

Ever since the British Empire allowed its territories to self-govern under the British monarch, these territories were referred to as the British Commonwealth of Nations. However, when India declared independence from Britain in 1947, the Commonwealth was redefined to include former territories and colonies as well. India's announcement in 1949 that it will no longer be a monarchy should have under normal conditions make it leave the Commonwealth, but Britain accepted as long as India accepts the crown as the symbol of the Commonwealth. This was also when the name changed from 'The British Commonwealth of Nations' to 'The Commonwealth of Nations'

Beginning of apartheid

One of South Africa's political parties were the 'National Party', they were an all-white government white very racist and white-only ideals. They won the general election with the slogan 'Apartheid', which translates to 'Apartness'. And as soon as they won, they began their apartheid policies. All non-whites (who were the majority of the population) were forced to live in separate areas from whites and use separate facilities. They did not only separate blacks from white, but they separated blacks from each other as well to decrease their political power.

2 years after they won in 1950, mixed marriages were banned, and a new act 'The population registration act' of 1950 started classifying people based on race into Bantu (black Africans), colored (mixed race), and white. They later added Asian (Indian and Pakistani) as a category. This classification system was known to sometimes split families.

80% of the land was set aside for the white minority, and all non-whites were required to carry documents authorizing their presence there. The government wanted to minimize contact between races, and so gave each race separate facilities, limited non-white labor, and made it illegal for non-whites to participate in government.

By 1958, the new prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd created 10 homelands for the Bantu (known as Bantustans). By separating the bantu, the government was able to claim that there was no black majority and reduced the chances of the blacks unifying, and now the bantu were further divided into their Bantustans. The government also forcibly removed bantu who lived in white-designated areas from their homes and land and sold it cheaply to whites. The government's devotion to apartheid was so dogmatic that non-white representatives of other countries were not even allowed.

Although apartheid was opposed by many groups (such as the SANNC, which changed into the African National Congress - ANC). In 1952 they organized a mass meeting where they burned their pass books, which the government broke up and arrested 150 people with high treason. In 1960, a associates of a branch of the ANC known as the Pan-African Congress (PAC) were fired upon when they entered a police station without their passes as an act of resistance. 67 of them were killed. This convinced the people that peaceful demonstrations will never end apartheid, and so military branches were establish for the PAC and the ANC, but they never posed a threat to the government.

Constitutional change of South Africa

In 1960, an all-white referendum decided with a 52% majority that the country should no longer be a monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as their monarch, but instead a republic. However, the people wanted South Africa to remain in the Commonwealth of Nations. Prime Minister Verwoerd then went to London in 1961 to give Britain formal notice.

When he requested for South Africa to remain in the commonwealth, it was strongly opposed by the other African states, as well as India, Malay, and Canada. As they would not

accept a country practicing apartheid into the commonwealth. Verwoerd eventually withdrew South Africa's application 'In the interests of South Africa's honor and dignity'.

Parties Involved

South Africa

When it changed its constitution to become a republic instead of a monarchy, it is facing a lot of opposition in its request to remain in the commonwealth because of its racism. Its apartheid policies has classified people based on race, and has different lands, reserves, and facilities for each race. It wants to either join the commonwealth under its conditions (which means it continues its apartheid policies) or not join the commonwealth at all.

The United Kingdom

The creator of the commonwealth of nations, and was the colonizer of South Africa before it became independent. South Africa's monarchy is also the monarch of Britain. Although Britain opposes apartheid, it does not want South Africa to leave the commonwealth and argued to let it in the Commonwealth, but other countries opposed that. Although Britain (as well as Australia) tried to encourage South Africa to change its racial policies and join, South Africa refused.

Malay

In 1960, when South Africa first held the referendum on becoming a republic, Prime Minister of Malay Tunku Abdul Rahman demanded the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth. He also quarreled with South African foreign minister Eric Louw.

Canada

Canadian prime minister John Diefenbaker publicly attacked South Africa's apartheid. He stated that the country could only rejoin the Commonwealth if it joined other countries in condemning racism. He said all this even though he was a great fan of Britain and did not want to defy its wishes of South Africa being let it, as he worried the issue would split the commonwealth.

The African National Congress (ANC)

An organization created by oppressed black people in South Africa to fight against injustice. It fights apartheid and conducted many meetings and demonstrations against it. However, after 67 peaceful protestors were killed in a police station, they created a military wing to attempt violent demonstrations as peaceful meetings did nothing against apartheid. The military wings however, did not pose much threat towards South Africa either.

Timeline

- **May 13 1910:** The Union of South Africa is Created
- **December 11 1931:** The statute of Westminster allows British territories to secede.
- **August 15 1947:** India gains independence and the Commonwealth of Nations is created
- **May 26 1948:** The National Party wins the South African general election, and apartheid begins.
- **July 7 1950:** The population registration act divides the population into whites, colored, and bantu.
- **October 5 1960:** South Africa holds a referendum and chooses to become a republic
- **March 8-17 1961:** South Africa requests to stay in the commonwealth during the prime minister meeting and receives opposition because of apartheid. Britain and Australia want to remain, but Canada, Malay, India, and many African countries want to reject its application

UN Involvement

- Question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the government of the Union of South Africa, 13 April 1961 (A/RES/1598(XV))
- The question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the government of the Union of South Africa, 28 November 1961 (A/RES/1663(XVII))
- The question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the government of the Union of South Africa, 6 November 1962 (A/RES/1761(XVII))

Evaluation of UN Involvement

- Resolutions 1598 and 1663 did not do very much in terms of ending apartheid in Africa. All it did was condemn South Africa's actions but never took any action towards actually ending it.
- Resolution 1761, however, did however tell countries to break diplomatic ties with South Africa and sanction it so to force it to stop apartheid. The sanctions however, were voluntary, and so not many countries actually sanctioned South Africa, which meant the resolution had little to no effect.

Possible Solutions

For the members of the commonwealth to economically sanction South Africa completely. This will further separate South Africa from the commonwealth, which if it really wants to join, will lower apartheid

For the UK not to allow South Africa to gain independence and become a republic, and so forcibly change its laws (possibly violating its own laws regarding dominions), ending apartheid. Only then will it be allowed to become a republic. Although this will force South Africa to remain a semi-independent dominion of Britain. South Africa will be pressured to stop apartheid.

For the UN to choose a city in South Africa to practice no apartheid laws, and if South Africa agrees to this trial, then the commonwealth will agree to let South Africa in the commonwealth, and if conditions in the city improve, improving South Africa's economy as well as the trade of the city, anti-apartheid will expand to another city.

Guiding Questions

1. Why does South Africa want to continue its apartheid laws?
2. When was there racist policies in COUNTRY?
3. How was South Africa as a British dominion?
4. What is the Commonwealth's stance on apartheid?
5. What benefits are there to joining the commonwealth?

Appendices and useful links

Contact Info

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