

TEACHING "APARTHEID" IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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There are probably few topics today more emotionally-laden than "apartheid" and few topics as controversial in the history classroom. In handling the topic with pupils with backgrounds as divergent as the affluent northern suburbs of Johannesburg and those in the remote rural regions of the province, one must be careful to stick to historical principles and not be carried away by emotion, tempting though that may be. One needs to evaluate the policy objectively, looking clearly at both sides of the topic, though one's conclusions do not necessarily have to conform with the clear median line between "for" and "against". This article aims at giving some background to the vexed question of "apartheid" and at giving some ideas as to teaching strategies for this topic.

ORIGINS

South Africa's international image is synonymous with one word: "apartheid". What does the word mean and how has the policy evolved historically?

From the start of white settlement in South Africa, there have been people who wished the races to live together and people who wished them to live apart. Jan van Riebeeck planted his thorn hedge to keep the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape out (and remnants of this hedge survive at Kirstenbosch and along the peninsula as a reminder of this.) Governor Sir George Grey favoured integration at the Cape, during his period in office (1854 - 1861), whilst Sir Theophilus Shepstone wanted a policy of segregation during his period of office in Natal, (1848 - 1875).

When Hertzog broke away from Botha's South African Party at the end of 1913, he described his policy towards other races as one of "segregation" or "trusteeship". Smuts preferred to speak of "separation". In the 1948 election, Malan proclaimed the new policy of "apartheid" as the panacea for all South Africa's racial problems.

In teaching this section, it is important to define the word "apartheid" and to make it clear how it differs from the segregationist policies practised before 1948. Obviously one's definition will differ depending on whether one is defensive or propagandist. The word first entered the Afrikaans language in 1943. In a speech in January 1944, Malan explained his republican ideal as a quest for the "safety of the white race and of Christian civilization by the honest maintenance of the principles of apartheid and guardianship." Jean Branford's dictionary of South African English defines the word simply as meaning "separateness" and distinguishes between "grand" apartheid, which refers to separate development as a major political policy and "petty" apartheid which refers to matters such as separate entrance doors, park benches and other amenities.

The National Party was at pains in 1948 to emphasise the positive Christian side of the policy as the following definition taken from the 1948 election illustrates:

"The policy of apartheid is a concept historically derived from the experience of the established white population of the country and in harmony with such Christian principles as justice and equity. It is a policy which sets itself the task of preserving and safeguarding the racial identity of the white population of the country, of likewise preserving and

safeguarding the identity of the indigenous peoples as separate racial groups, with opportunities to develop into self-governing national units."

Worldwide, however, the term "apartheid", has increasingly become a synonym for brutal racial discrimination. Mrs Margaret Ballinger (M.P.) described the policy in the House of Assembly in 1948:

"The policy appears to me as simply and obviously a cheap labour policy. As such, in its long-term range, it is essentially oppression and I do not see how anybody can defend it as anything else."

FACTORS WHICH LED TO THE APARTHEID POLICY

1. Black Urbanisation

During the Second World War, black urbanisation took place on a massive scale. The United Party government under General Smuts appeared to turn a blink eye to this urbanisation and there was a huge reduction in pass arrests during the war. The United Party seemed uncertain whether to scrap segregation altogether or to extend it. The Fagan Commission appointed by Smuts in 1946 to investigate black urbanisation came to the conclusion that "the idea of total segregation is utterly impracticable; secondly, that the movement from country to town has a background of economic necessity ... it cannot be stopped or turned in the opposite direction." (Paragraph 28 of the Fagan Report.)

Black urbanisation became a major issue in the 1948 election and as the dimensions of the problem grew, many whites came to the conclusion that segregation had failed and a new policy had to be found.

The Sauer Commission, which had been appointed by the National Party, suggested that "apartheid" was a solution to the problem posed by black urbanisation. The Commission believed that not only could black urbanisation be checked, but indeed, reversed.

2. Afrikaner Nationalism and white security

The victory of Malan's National Party in the 1948 election was a victory for Afrikaner nationalism. Apartheid, as a policy, evolved as an uncompromising answer to the challenges posed to Afrikaner Nationalism by the numerically superior black population. By keeping the races apart, the language, culture and traditions of the Afrikaners would be preserved. Above all, white security would be maintained.

3. African Nationalism

The Second World War had resulted in an awakening of black nationalism and a desire for equality and national autonomy amongst the black people of South Africa. The political aspirations of these people would have to be satisfied in some manner. The apartheid strategists believed that the new policy would take into account the national, social and political aspirations of the black people.

Malan said that the apartheid system was not designed to oppress any racial group but was intended to increase racial harmony and to promote pride in and respect for the customs and traditions of each racial group. The concept was based on the assumption that different races cannot live together as an integrated community and that each group should therefore be allowed to develop along its own traditional lines in its own area and to the utmost of its ability. Verwoerd, as Minister of Native Affairs in Malan's government was at pains to emphasise the positive and constructive nature of apartheid. He believed that by lessening contact as far as possible between whites and other racial groups that causes of friction would be removed. Critics of the policy argue that the policy was designed to keep other races subservient to the white minority in perpetuity.

Post-1948 differs from pre-1948 in that segregation became institutionalised. After 1948, the National Party formalised and tightened up age-old practices. Apartheid governed every aspect of life: economic, social and political.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN 'APARTHEID' AND 'SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT'

In 1948, Malan was given a mandate by the white electorate to proceed with the policy. Thus, apartheid came into being in practice in South Africa. It should be noted at this point that a distinction should be made between "apartheid" and "separate development". The former, as described above in the "origins" of apartheid, was the practice followed by Malan and Strijdom from 1948 to 1958. When Verwoerd became Prime Minister in 1958, he altered the policy to one of "separate development", which had a somewhat different focus. Apartheid separated; separate development provided a whole new system of developing the various Black ethnic groups. The tribal base of these groups was emphasised, thus dividing the country into various political homelands, split ethnically from one another along the lines of Hertzog's 1936 Trust and Land Act legislation. Thus, South Africa, effectively became split into a number of nations, each (theoretically) having the ability and potential to one day becoming independent, and (again theoretically) able to take their places amongst the other nations of the world. Of course, the split was not an even one. The whites would control some 86,3% of the land once consolidation of the homelands was completed (which never happened) and the blacks would control some 13,7%. This effectively ruled out any idea of equality. The major proportion of the land, the developed and industrialised areas and the control of the mineral resources, remained largely in white South Africa, making sure that this nation would stay the most viable, with the other countries being dependent on it for revenue, if the other countries took the step of requesting independence. So intricate was the division that the homelands (or independent states) were split into many areas: Natal became a patchwork quilt representing the borders of the white province and Kwazulu, with the whites retaining most of the control of the developed areas of the coast. Phenomena such as the rise of the casinos and the influx of wealth from these could not have been foreseen by Verwoerd, but despite these, separate development whilst appearing to be an equal system, actually left most of the strategic cards in the hands of the whites.

The real difference between separate development and apartheid was that the former built on to the latter: a system evolved which appeared to a number of whites as being the real permanent solution to their problems. Apartheid was a temporary measure of separation; separate development was a system that provided hope for the future, by leaving a large part of the land permanently under the control of the whites, to preserve their heritage. It thus appealed more to many whites as a more positive approach than the essentially negative policy of apartheid.

STRATEGIES OF TEACHING

There should be no difficulty at all in opening with a discussion of the various terms: most pupils will be more than happy to give their opinions on the matter, even if much of the discussion is loosely structured around the general race relations beliefs of adolescents. What is extremely important at this point, is for the teacher to be impartial: he should listen to the discussion carefully and try to steer a neutral, and if possible, non-committed course; he must let proponents of all views have their say so as to keep all their interests alive. To put down or suppress any theory or point of view at this stage will merely alienate that group from further discussion and possibly make them hostile to the teaching of the rest of that section. It is very important to let the pupils see that there is more than one side to the question - one is often tempted to see no further than one's own point of view.

Having hopefully evoked interest by this discussion and having slipped in clear definitions of the terms of "apartheid" and "separate development" as mentioned above, it is likely that someone will have asked (or can be prompted to ask), "Where did all this start anyway?" This would be an appropriate time to go into the origins of the term, as outlined in the first part of this article. This could be done by means of a hand-out, or a reading of some suitable part of the textbook. A hand-out is really preferred as this will enable the teacher to focus on what he/she believes is the most important set of origins. Ideally, pupils could research the origins of apartheid, but practically, with the length of the Matric syllabus, this may not be considered viable at this time.

It might be useful to provoke further discussion on the policy at this point before going on to mention the legislation: some cartoon or video extract (e.g. Source Material A and B - or Robert Kirby's extract of the "Bantu" in his video "Brave New Pretoria".) The object here is to focus discussion on the various Acts passed to enforce apartheid: once again, it is stressed that all relevant points of view should be listened to and commented on.

This is a good point to head for the kernel of the topic: the laws that brought about the system of apartheid. It would consume too much space to discuss them all in detail in this article, but a basic outline will be given. Some teachers prefer to discuss them chronologically, others thematically, but the end result is the same: the route is up to the teacher. Essentially what the pupils should understand is that the laws were created as a system: and they should be studied as this and not in isolation. As a system, they worked effectively together: it was a whole policy, not piece-meal legislation, as had been practised by earlier governments.

The major laws in this section which should be handled in detail are: The Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Act, the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act (surely the cornerstone and key section of the legislation) the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, the Bantu Authorities Act, the Bantu Education Act, the Pass Laws (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act), the Separate Amenities Act, the Resettlement of Natives Act, the "Locations in the Sky" Act, the Industrial Conciliation Act, the Arrangement of Black Labour Relations Act, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, the ironically entitled Extension of University Education Act, the Broadcasting Amendment Act, the Transkei Constitution Act, the Homelands Citizenship Act and the Constitutional Act.

This seems to be an awfully large number of Acts (as indeed it is), but some idea of how the pieces of the apartheid/separate development jigsaw puzzle fitted together is necessary. Some will obviously be handled in more detail than others, and there may well be other Acts mentioned by the teacher that are not listed here. What the pupils should know however, is that the Acts exist, when they were passed, what the major content and principles of the various Acts are and where they fit together into

the whole system. One could present these Acts as boardwork or on the overhead projector, to be written down for memorisation of salient points, or they could be presented in the form of a handout. It is not recommended that the pupils try to summarise this section alone, as it is quite complex and would require some teacher guidance. Whatever method is used, the teacher should go through the Acts with the pupils, explaining the basic points clearly and showing the inter-relationship amongst the Acts.

It would then be useful to go on to the mapwork component of the territories involved as homelands. It is a relatively easy map, and on it, the pupils should be able to name the homelands created under apartheid and separate development, name the tribal group that was intended to live there, possibly the capitals as well. To round off their knowledge, it would be useful to know as well (though it came after 1970), those homelands that became independent and when they achieved this independence. Diligent students could also turn their attentions to the original and current leaders of the homelands.

Having seen the Acts and the geographical locations, it would be as well now to discuss the economic aspects of apartheid. A number of factors such as the land division and relative dependence of the states have probably been mentioned already. Issues such as the Investment Corporations to help the economic viability of the homelands should be discussed. The terms of "migrant labour" (probably quite familiar from Std 9 history) and "border industries" could be discussed as well.

At this point, minor detail could be added if time permits: e.g. the role of Commissioners-General, tribal chiefs etc. One needs to get a clear picture of the whole, but must avoid at this point confusing the pupil with too much detail, as he probably has much by this time!

At this point, it would be appropriate to consider the lot of the Coloureds and Indians under this system. A detailed handling should be given of the removal of the Coloured vote and the passing of the Separate Representation of Voters' Act. This was a major constitutional struggle in South Africa and the importance of this aspect should be emphasised. The failure of the government to pass legislation it felt was so important, the packing of the Senate and the rise of the Torch Commando: all this contains

the elements of high drama, which would do well in a narrative format, accompanied by notes or having notes taken whilst the story is told. The disintegration of the United Party during this period, which was later accentuated by the break-away forming the Progressive Party in 1959, should also be shown.

From this point, one could move briefly to the formation of the Coloured and Indian Representative Councils. These could be handled in a brief, diagrammatic and non-nonsense fashion, showing the aims behind these, their functions and operation and final success or failure. In the long-term, they were not destined to survive, being superseded by the tricameral parliament.

A large amount of factual content has now been handled and it might be wise to test it by means of some text or exercise to check that the content has been absorbed before moving on to the next section. Whether or not this is done, it would be important to give some stimulus material leading in to the reaction to the government's policies.

This last section is crucially important and cannot be left out if one wishes to have anything of a full understanding of the policies. To see simply one side of the story would be historically incorrect. The vast majority of the black population opposed these policies and it is necessary to know how and why this opposition occurred.

At present, this section might regrettably be unfamiliar to many of the practising white teachers and to the white pupils, but there would be a heightened awareness of it in the black community. Thus, some good preparation may well be necessary before going into it. Since the changes of 1990 and the relaxation of political censorship laws, there are many books available on this matter, at most local bookstores. Pivotal to the whole question is the role that was played by the ANC., so some reading of the history of this body, esp. from the formation of the Youth Wing in the 1940s, is essential. At this point, the methods of handling the section would be many: again, a narrative, note-taking method, or a narrative method accompanied by a hand-out, might be

favoured. Others might favour a source-based approach, by including a document study of e.g. the Freedom Charter: (Source Material D.) Points that should be emphasised are: the change in tactics in the ANC ranks in the early 1950's (and the reasons for these, moving from peaceful protest to defiance), the Defiance Campaign of the 1950s, the Freedom Charter, (possibly the formation of the Progressive Party), certainly the formation of the PAC and its ideals, the killings at various places around the country, esp. Sharpeville and its international implications, the banning of the ANC and the PAC and the start of the underground struggle, the Rivonia Trial and the exile of the resistance movements by the time 1970 comes. To round off the picture, one could look briefly at the 1976 Soweto riots, the death of Biko, and later developments, though they are not, strictly speaking, in the syllabus. Some good visual material is available here: e.g. "Nelson Mandela and the Rise of the ANC" and "Have You seen 'Drum' Lately?"

CONCLUSION

To round off the section, one needs some assessment of the policies of apartheid and separate development. Again, this may be a general discussion, but hopefully a well-informed one, knowing the work taught. Some conclusion should be reached as to the success or failure of these policies: possibly an open-ended conclusion may occur, although most serious writers seem to believe that the policies failed.

In a perfect teaching world, it would be very useful to have unlimited time to teach this section. In practice, with the pressure of other topics in the Matric syllabus, it would probably not be allocated more than 3 weeks. But it is important to give it at least this amount of time if one is to understand it properly. One must see it as an important section of the syllabus for the examination, but also in preparing pupils for life. After all, an understanding of these topics is essential to function effectively as an adult in modern-day South Africa.

"Freedom Charter of the Congress of the People", 26 June 1955

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people; that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we the people of South Africa, black and white together - equal, countrymen and brothers - adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing nothing of our strength and courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The people shall govern!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws ...

All national groups shall have equal rights!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs ...

The people shall share the country's wealth

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole ...

The land shall be shared among those who work it!

Restriction of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land redivided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger ...

All shall be equal before the law!

No one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial ...

All shall enjoy equal human rights!

The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organize, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children ...

There shall be work and security!

All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers ...

The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened!

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace ...

There shall be houses, security and comfort!

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

South Africa shall be a fully independent state which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations.

There shall be peace and friendship!

Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here: "These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty."

(Van Jaarsveld, F.A. Honderd basiese dokumente by die studie van die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis)