Apartheid South Africa 1948 - 1980
Sources from The National Archives, UK

Adam Matthew
Primary sources for teaching and research
AN ONLINE RESOURCE
Overview

This is an essential resource for the study of the apartheid era in Southern Africa, sourced exclusively from The National Archives UK. It provides unparalleled analysis of South African politics, trade relations, international opinion and humanitarian dilemmas against a backdrop of waning colonialism and mounting world condemnation.

The content spans 30 years, from the election of the National Party in 1948 through to 1980; a period in which South Africa faced increasing international resistance and boycotts, internal strikes and violent demonstrations.

Previously restricted letters, diplomatic dispatches, reports, trial papers, activist biographies and first-hand accounts allow students and researchers to explore in detail the changing relationship of the South African government with its own people and with the wider international community.

All of the key events and people from this fascinating period are featured in files drawn from the British Foreign, Colonial, Dominion and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices.

International Relations

Both Britain and the United States had significant business and military interests in South Africa which often clashed with wider humanitarian issues. These aspects are well-documented and reveal the changing nature of international relationships with South Africa throughout the period. Documents, dispatches, telegrams and hand-written embassy notes reveal detailed perspectives on apartheid legislation.

The collection explores United Nations discussions and resolutions. International views on sanctions, arms embargoes, refugees, South Africa’s encroachment into South West Africa and the treatment of ethnic groups are vigorously debated. The views of Church Councils from Britain, Europe and across Africa are also represented, along with thorough examinations of Anti-Apartheid Movement campaigns and those of individual activists.

Highlights include:

- Implementation of the mandatory arms embargo against South Africa
- Expulsion of South Africa from the United Nations
- Supply of arms and military equipment from Britain
- South African trade relations, gold reserves and oil consumption
- Visit of Dr Henry Kissinger, US Secretary of State, to Southern African countries
- Discussions over the nuclear situation in South Africa
- Repercussions of apartheid on sport, including the Olympic Games
- Visit of British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and his ‘Winds of Change’ speech
- Reactions of neighbouring African nations to apartheid
- Angola and the South African Border Wars.
Internal Resistance and the Growth of Anti-Apartheid Organisations

Apartheid policies generated increasingly violent resistance throughout the 1960s and 1970s, culminating in mass strikes and the 1976 Soweto riots. Dispatches give detailed information on the formation and activities of the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and key figures within these organisations such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Potlako Leballo.

Included within the collection are full details of the judicial enquiry into the 1960 Sharpeville massacre and embassy reactions. Court records and transcripts of prominent trials also chart how the South African government dealt with political opponents, including numerous discussions over the confinement and treatment of political prisoners.

Forced Removals and Black ‘Self-Government’

The segregation and removal of black Africans into independent ‘homelands’ was a fundamental principal of apartheid. The collection documents the increasingly punitive restrictions placed on travel, education, work and political organisations and records African responses to Pass Laws, wages and labour issues and the banning and subsequent escape of individuals from South Africa.

Contemporary government sources from South Africa, Britain and the United States provide unique insight into the creation and organisation of the Bantustans, shedding new light on British reactions to forced removals and the independent state system.

Highlights include:
- Race relations, including the treatment of Indians and Seretse Khama’s marriage to a white British woman
- Educational reforms such as the mandatory use of Afrikaans and control of African schools
- Forced removals from Sophiatown to Soweto and of over 60,000 inhabitants from District Six
- Separation of public services and amenities such as buses, public toilets and post offices
- Refugees and the provision of political asylum in Bechuanaland, Swaziland, Mozambique and Basutoland
Key Features:

- Cross-searchable with all collections within Adam Matthew’s Archives Direct platform
- All printed documents are full-text searchable
- Follow the course of South Africa’s apartheid policies and associated events through the 1948-1980 interactive chronology
- View contemporary maps in the gallery
- Read Professor Colin Bundy’s fascinating essay *Awkward Relations*, charting the rise and fall of apartheid
- Popular searches offer quick links to important people, places and topics
- Browse links to carefully selected websites for further information on South Africa and apartheid.

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- Foreign Office Files for India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, 1947-1980
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