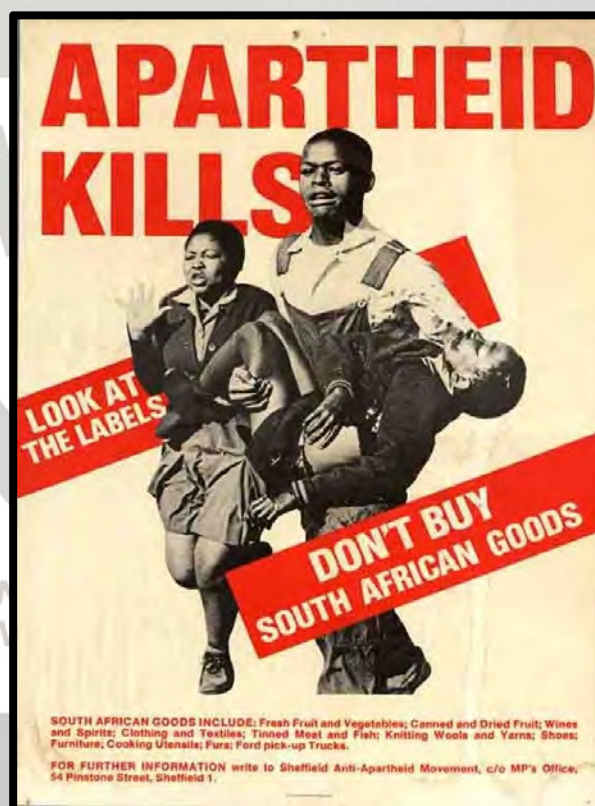


International Pressure on Apartheid South Africa, 1980-1989.



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Background, 1959-1977

Apartheid South Africa's *increasing crackdown on opposition groups* (eg. 1961 Sharpeville Massacre and the State of Emergency, police brutality during the 1976 Soweto Uprising, etc), its readiness to *invade and destabilize neighbouring states* and its *extensive military and political campaign to eliminate SWAPO in Namibia*, in late 1970s and early 1980s, led to growing international condemnation. For example: it led to the growth of the **Anti-Apartheid Movement** (AAM) in Britain (est. in 1959), Ireland (est. in 1964) and Europe—which called for sports, cultural, economic, consumer and academic boycotts against South Africa. Thus, in **1962**, as a direct result of pressure from the AAM, Apartheid South Africa **was banned from attending the Olympic Games**. When a New Zealand rugby team toured South Africa in 1976, twenty-eight African countries boycotted Montreal Olympics. In fact, in **1977** Commonwealth countries adopted the **Gleneagles Agreement, which called on all its members to cut all sporting ties with South Africa**.

Furthermore, in **1970**, **Frontline states, i.e. those bordering South Africa** (Zimbabwe, Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, etc.), **pledged their support for liberation movements in Apartheid South Africa**, by setting up military bases in their respective countries. That made, amongst others, President B.J. Vorster's "dialogue" with African states very difficult, and, therefore, failed to prevent Apartheid South Africa's growing isolation from Africa. Three years later, in **1973**, **Apartheid was declared a "Crime Against Humanity" by the UNO**, composed of a majority of Third World States, who in 1964 urged the Security Council of the UNO to apply sanctions against Apartheid South Africa. Hence, the UNO, in **1977**, **declared mandatory, the existing embargo on the sale of arms to Apartheid South Africa**.

And finally, foreign investment in Apartheid South Africa—on which the country heavily depended for much of its economic growth—also became increasingly expensive and uncertain in the second half of the 1970s. A growing sluggishness in the economy, coupled with concerns about political stability, caused most investors to seek out more attractive ventures for their capital in other countries. Foreign capital still flowed into South Africa, but it was primarily in the form of short-term loans rather than investments. In **1976**, for example, **two-thirds of**

foreign funds entering South Africa were short-term loans, usually of twelve month's duration.

1978-1989.

The first significant changes in the government policy occurred immediately after P.W.Botha succeeded B.J.Vorster as prime minister in 1978. His ensuing "top down" policy changes were, in essence, bent on "power sharing without losing control", entrenchment of "group rights", and on an adoption of a "Total strategy"—i.e. employment of military force and winning over minds and hearts in virtually every area, in particular the "subversive elements", of society—to counteract the perceived "total revolutionary onslaught" against White-dominated South Africa. That change—from dogmatic Afrikaner colonial supremacy, 1948-1978, to a military-controlled bureaucracy which implemented restricted political power-sharing among "White", "Coloured", and "Indian" leaders (Tri-cameral Parliament)—allowed business interests to cautiously ally themselves with the reformist Apartheid state in 1979.

However, internal/extra-parliamentary resistance of mid-1980s destroyed utterly the "Total strategy" tactics of the Botha government. The Tri-cameral parliament and African urban councils had been firmly rejected by the demand for "People's Power". The campaign to win the hearts and minds was in tatters, with thousands in detention without the prospect of a trial, and an occupying army in the townships. Internal grassroots resistance, and the AAM, therefore, spurred on the intensification of international pressure on the apartheid government in the mid-1980s, notably from prominent South African allies, in the form of the USA and Europe.

Hence, in **1983**, the **Release/Free Mandela Campaign**—supported by international artists and musicians—was instigated by the AAM, and called for the release of all political prisoners—in particular Nelson Mandela—by way of organizing marches and petitions. That coincided with the demands of liberation movements. Mandela now became an international symbol of the struggle against apartheid. Resolution to the crisis in Apartheid South Africa was, therefore, linked to his unconditional release.

Furthermore, in **1984**, forty USA companies pulled out of South Africa, with another fifty following suit in 1985. The anti-apartheid sentiment in the USA, was

fuelled largely by television coverage of ongoing violence in Apartheid South Africa, heightened demands for the removal of USA investments, the need to impose official sanctions, and **P. W. Botha's 1985 "Rubicon Speech"**, delivered in full glare of massive international publicity, which firmly **rejected any notion of majority rule or response to foreign pressure**. Consequently, loans granted to foreign/ /international banks in 1982, were now called in, with no facility for renewal. In 1985, Citi Bank announced it would no longer provide South Africa with loans, and a few months later, Chase Manhattan refused to roll over short-term credit and demanded that South Africa repay its debts in full. As a result, a **major financial crisis occurred**, in which the rand collapsed, inflation was fuelled, South African living standards were eroded, and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange was temporarily closed. Within a month, leading South African business directors were visiting the banned ANC in Lusaka. International condemnation of Apartheid South Africa grew even stronger in intensity, as prominent South Africans, like Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Dr Alan Boesak, called for tougher sanctions against apartheid South Africa. Consequently, in October **1986**, the **USA Congress**, overriding a presidential veto, passed legislation—the **Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act**—implementing mandatory **sanctions** against Apartheid South Africa. These included: the banning of all new investments, and bank loans, the ending of air links between South Africa and the USA; the banning of many South Africa imports; the prohibition of US ships from carrying oil destined for South Africa, and the withdrawal of large USA corporations such as General Electric, IBM, Coca-Cola, etc. That, almost immediately, led to a 50% drop in trade with apartheid SA. In fact, not only USA, but most **Commonwealth and European Community nations**, accelerated **disinvestment** (i.e. reduction or withdrawal of all forms of foreign capital) and **economic sanctions** (i.e. trade and financial restrictions). For example: they banned the sale of gold Krugerrands, and the importing of South African coal, iron and steel. Only **refusal of Britain's Thatcher government to follow suit** gave continued openings for South African trade and communication links. However, Barclays and other British companies disinvested in apartheid South Africa, as a direct result of AAM demonstrations outside the South African embassy in London. A **consumer boycott** also occurred against the buying of South African products in British shops by British consumers.

And finally, a **cultural boycott** was instituted by the British Actor's Union, Equity, when it banned British TV programmes and films and actors, from being screened and performed, in apartheid South Africa, respectively.

Furthermore, **by the 1980s, Apartheid South Africa was excluded from 90% of the world's sporting activities.**

And finally, through the work of the AAM, many universities, especially in Britain and Ireland, implemented an **academic boycott**, by refusing to work with South African universities, invite South African academics to conferences, or to conduct research overseas. For example: in 1986, South African academics were refused participation in the World Archaeology Conference in England.

How effective were these above-mentioned boycotts and sanctions?

Botha's "reforms" had been unable to overcome the efforts of economic isolation. Most Blacks, and increasing number of whites, were unemployed, or unemployable. New capital was lacking. Prices were rising and real wages were falling sharply. The relative national prosperity, which accompanied apartheid in the 1960s, had vanished forever. By the 1980s, most of the world's countries had imposed political, economic, and military sanctions on the Apartheid government. Sanctions imposed by the USA, the Commonwealth and European community nations, led within months to the South Africa's economy to being on the verge of an economic collapse. It could, therefore, not survive without sustaining its trade and financial ties to the West. Liberals and business leaders in the country, therefore, demanded reforms.

Thus, in May 1989, the Governor of the Reserve Bank admitted and warned that, if adequate political and constitutional reforms were not made, then South Africa, will more probably remain a capital-exporting and debt-repaying country for years, which will result in the slow raising of its standard of living.

Admittedly, the collapse of Communist states throughout eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union following the Gorbachev "revolution", the generally discrediting of socialism that seemed to accompany it; the militarily and financially weak ANC and its SACP allies, and the potential triumph of the free market ideology, not only removed the threat of the "Communist onslaught" that constituted a major part of "total strategy" thinking, but also influenced the Nationalist Party—obsessed

with the “*rooi gevaar*”—in its decision to abolish apartheid and negotiate a new dispensation with liberation movements, as White South Africans could no longer demonize the ANC and PAC as fronts for international communism.

However, it has taken the Nationalist Party almost two decades to recognize that political reform was a necessary pre-condition to any attempt at economic recovery. Without this, the continuing spiral of ever worsening poverty, disaffection and repression was inevitable, as to outside observers, and also in the eyes of growing number of “White” South Africans, apartheid stood exposed as morally bankrupt, indefensible and imperious to reforms.

Consequently, internal grassroots resistance and its call for tougher international sanctions and boycotts during the 1980s, totally isolated the apartheid government, and, therefore, was the final push that brought the Nationalist Party to near bankruptcy, and therefore, played no insignificant role in forcing F.W.de Klerk to the negotiating table.

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