

History Internal Assessment

Name: XXXXXX

School: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Candidate Number: XXXXXXXXXXX

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To what extent was Pieter Willem Botha an influence to the peaceful end of Apartheid?

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Section 1: Identification and evaluation of sources

This investigation will explore the question “To what extent was Pieter Willem Botha an influence to the peaceful end of Apartheid?” The two key sources I will look at come from a history professor and from a speech from Botha himself, which will give me two important different perspectives for my investigation.

Evaluation of source one

Eades, Lindsay Michie. *The End of Apartheid in South Africa*. Westport: Greenwood, 1999. *Questia Online Library*. Web. 1 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.questiaschool.com/read/15076722/the-end-of-apartheid-in-south-africa>>.

The origin of the source helps give it value because Eades is an expert in the field of history, lecturing at the University of Transkei in South Africa from 1989 to 1991 and being a history professor at Chowan College, East Carolina University and Greensboro College in North Carolina. As well as this, by being published in 1999, the author has been able to look at the subject more in depth and analyze the effects of such incident. Furthermore, the fact that Eades is not South African makes the analysis of the book more objective. However, the origin of this source also limits its value because, since it was not written during the apartheid era, some of the information might not be completely accurate. Likewise, the date of publication also limits its value because more information concerning the end of apartheid might have come to sight since it was published.

The purpose of Eades’ book is to go over the changes made to transform the government and the challenges that this new government faced concerning the end of apartheid as well as going through the divisions of the South African society. This is of value because a variety of primary documents, including F.W. deKlerk’s policies as well as Freedom Charters from politicians with knowledge on the topic, are of great use when exploring the causes to the end of apartheid. However, by focusing mainly on the changes made to transform the government, the author does

not make much reference to Botha himself; instead he focuses more on F.W. deKlerk's policies. As well as this, her basis of her analysis is based on official documents, not taking into account the possibility that these political documents are biased since politicians looked for positive publicity.

Evaluation of source two

Botha, Pieter Willem. *Address by State President P. W. Botha at the opening of the National Party Natal Congress, Durban, 15 August 1985*. Reproduced online in O'Malley, P. ed. *The Heart of Hope - South Africa's Transition from Apartheid to Democracy*.

<<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01600/05lv01638/06lv01639.htm>>

The origin of this source is valuable since it is a direct speech delivered by Botha in August 1985. Through this speech, the reader is able to understand Botha's view on apartheid and on the end of it. By being from the apartheid era itself, the source helps us analyze the situation of South Africa at the time. For example, the speech talks about why Botha did not want to release Nelson Mandela from prison despite lots of people wanting him to be released.

Anyhow, there are limitations to this source. The speech was delivered to the Cabinet but was also broadcast all over the world. Therefore it is possible then when putting it out to the public, the information might have been altered making his ideas sound different, probably making them more exaggerated. The purpose of this speech is to express Botha's views as prime minister and his ideas and opinion on apartheid. But the purpose might also be to present an image of himself as a strong leader to all of the people all over the world hearing his speech, which is important to remember when reading the speech.

Section 2: Investigation

Introduction

In his early years as leader of South Africa, Botha was seen as an activist and promoter of apartheid. Already by 1948, the National Party introduced acts making apartheid a legal fact (Eades, 1999: 157), and 30 years later Botha set a new constitution that limited the reform of apartheid policies (Gregory, 2006). Many newspapers in the late 1980's, including the New York Times, describe Botha as the "South African leader who struggled vainly to preserve apartheid rule" (Gregory, 2006). Yet in the end Botha started to become more flexible about the opposition of apartheid. He started passing some acts like legalizing interracial marriage (Radebe, 2006). This investigation will therefore look at the extent to which **Botha was an influence to the peaceful end of Apartheid.**

Botha's views on apartheid

Botha did not want to end apartheid (Bautista). He held racist views and speeches he gave, for example his famous speech in 1985, also suggest that he had no intention to end apartheid in South Africa and did not believe in the prosperity of the Black race in South Africa at the time. As a whole, Botha believed that his government was not doing anything wrong. Talking about voting he said, "I know for a fact that most leaders in their own right in South Africa and reasonable South Africans will not accept the principle of one-man-one-vote in a unitary system. That would lead to domination of one over the other and it would lead to chaos." (Botha, 1985) In this way, Botha thought that it was acceptable for there to be white dominance of the political system, but thought that changing the system to give everyone an equal vote would lead to "chaos". So, in years as State President, Botha was in favour of apartheid.

Botha's views towards apartheid seemed to be less strong later in his leadership. He started passing some acts like legalizing interracial marriage (Radebe, 2006). But these changes were more for practical reasons than because Botha's views on the wrongness of apartheid actually

changed. By this time “the situation had reached a crisis for apartheid and could not continue any longer” (Mati, 2007). Botha believed that he would have more supporters if he opposed the elimination of apartheid but abolished some small apartheid laws that satisfied the majority (Viljoen, 2013). When the country’s situation started to get worse and “Botha could not continue as Head of State, the National Party had intensive talks with the ANC to end apartheid in a peaceful manner” (Viljoen, 2013) committing to the Groote Schuur Minute (Eades 1999, 172). Botha realized that he would no longer have support against the opposition of apartheid and had to accept the freeing of Nelson Mandela and the need for a Cabinet representative of all South Africans (Giliomee, 2012).

The extent of Botha’s influence on the end of apartheid

Although he did eventually pass some laws against apartheid, the public did not see Botha as an engineer to the stop of apartheid. To an extent, Botha was almost obliged to try to end apartheid even though he did not really want to end it. By 1985, countries like France and the United States did not want to take risks of making business with South Africa, especially involving loans, investments and borrowing facilities (Giliomee, 2012). After Botha’s speech in 1985 this got worse, and many countries made even more severe restrictions on trading with South Africa. In this way, pressure from other countries made Botha have to be more flexible on apartheid and in the end was one of the reasons that made him have to resign.

The lack of influence of Botha on the end of apartheid is clear if Botha is compared to other people who had much more influence. Botha was succeeded by de Klerk, the last state president of the apartheid-era. De Klerk set more fundamental reforms than Botha and is therefore seen as more influential in the end of apartheid than Botha. When he became president, he wanted to introduce reform and address the problems of apartheid further than what P.W. Botha had done (Eades 1999, 165). As state president, de Klerk passed anti-apartheid laws whose “aim was totally new and just constitutional dispensation in which every inhabitant would enjoy equal rights, treatment and opportunity in every sphere of endeavor – constitutional, social and economic”(de Klerk 1990). Sources explain that de Klerk also took more radical changes such

as “the prohibition of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party and a number of subsidiary organizations being rescinded” (de Klerk 1990). This evidence shows that de Klerk was more influential in the end of apartheid because, unlike Botha, he believed in it. He helped pass laws and by 1994 apartheid was over.

Conclusion

With this information it is clear that Botha was not a primary influence in the peaceful end of apartheid mainly because throughout his entire career as state president, he did not believe in the end of apartheid. He thought that Black people were, and always would be inferior to the White race and therefore saw no reason to end this segregation. Even if he did pass some laws, there were none set by him that actually set the Black race and the White race equal to each other. At the end Botha almost felt obliged to help end apartheid. Furthermore, after Botha there were other politicians that were more influential than him in the end of apartheid, as was de Klerk. Under his rule, de Klerk passed a legislation that actually managed to put ends to apartheid.

Section 3: Reflection

During this research on Botha, the way of acquiring information has been one of the aspects that has limited the study. Amongst the ways used to investigate the topic are books written by historians and professors, interviews with Botha's advisors, and newspaper articles. Surely some become more reliable than others and it has been by reading many different perspectives that it has become clearer how accurate each source is on Botha's role in the end of Apartheid.

This study has highlighted the limitations some of the ways of acquiring information pose. First of all, considering books written by historians it is very important to keep in mind who writes the book and when it was written. Not only can the information be bias because of the personal views of the person who wrote it, but the date can also have an influence as more accurate information on the topic might appear after the book was published. For example, a book written during apartheid does not give the reader the immediate effects of the end of Apartheid.

Moreover, most books looked at do not only focus on Botha so the amount of information provided might not be enough to provide a solid argument about his role in the end of Apartheid. Similarly other sources, such as newspaper articles, have also proved to be somewhat unreliable. When reading newspapers articles it must be taken into account that journalists write their first impressions, mainly trying to please the readers. By deforming the information in a way that fits their objectives, the information on the research topic can be manipulated and changed providing the audience with a completely different view of the original facts.

Nevertheless, information obtained from first point of views tend to be particularly valuable. Many provide very trustworthy points that broader sources cannot provide. Primary sources may look into the topic to a greater extent and into the smallest details. This way of acquiring information becomes extremely helpful when, after having read different perspectives on the topic, the historian still does not know which argument to rely more on. In conclusion, this study has allowed me to realize how a historian has to categorize information and facts in order to reach solid arguments. After research, a historian has to choose to what extent the information he or she has obtained is reliable and how can it be helpful towards his or her study.

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Appendix 1

Transcript of interview with Mrs .Terry- Lynn Bautista

Although I personally knew PW Botha, I did know his wife (whom we called Tant'tije Elize) much better. Having lived in SA most of my life and being a journalist later on during the post-apartheid era. PW did not want to end Apartheid (Eng translation is “Separate Development”), it was FW de Klerk, who eventually ended it with the release of Nelson Mandela.

Appendix 2

Transcript of interview with Mrs. Viljoen

1. Why did Botha object to the elimination of apartheid in the first place?

He was hoping to survive the political differences in his party (National Party was divided between conservative and more progressive thinkers at that time) and was under the impression that he would have more supporters by opposing the elimination of apartheid.

2. How did Botha think he could survive apartheid? What was his main support?

He thought that he could make small amendments like the tri-cameral parliamentary system and abolish some apartheid laws to appease the majority. He was narrow minded enough to think that his international friends would continue to support the apartheid regime although at that time he should have read the writing on the wall. And of course he wanted to remain in power as Head of State. He was quite a person.

3. What did the White population think about Botha's policy on apartheid?

Although some extreme conservative pockets were against the abolishment the majority of whites agreed that apartheid was an atrocity that needed to end sooner rather than later. The degree of devolvement of power to the majority was of concern to some and how the minorities would be protected.

4. What was the decisive factor for the end of apartheid?

There are really many factors but when PW Botha got ill and could not continue to be Head of State, the National Party had intensive talks with the ANC to end apartheid in a peaceful manner. Mr. Mandela and FW de Klerk were instrumental in the end of apartheid.