European ships heading to the Far East began stopping on the South African coast for supplies.

The **Sharpeville massacre** occurred at the police station in the [South African](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa) [township](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Township_(South_Africa)) of [Sharpeville](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharpeville) in [Transvaal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvaal_Province).

After a day of demonstrations against ***pass laws*** (which severely limited the movements of not only [black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_people) African citizens, but other peoples as well by requiring them to carry pass books when outside their homelands or designated areas) a crowd of about 5,000 to 7,000 protesters went to the police station. The [South African Police](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Police) opened fire on the crowd, killing 69 people. Sources disagree as to the behaviour of the crowd; some state that the crowd was peaceful, while others state that the crowd had been hurling stones at the police, and that the shooting started when the crowd started advancing toward the fence around the police station. There were 289 casualties in total, including 29 children. Many sustained back injuries from being shot as they fled.

In present-day South Africa, 21 March is celebrated as a public holiday in honour of human rights and to commemorate the Sharpeville massacre.

A racial institution named **Apartheid was established** by the National Party that governed [South Africa](http://www.blackpast.org/entries-categories/south-africa) until 1994.  The term, which literally means “apartness,” reflected a violently repressive policy designed to ensure that whites, who comprised 20% of the nation's population, would continue to dominate the country.

**The second Boer War** (or, as scholars call it, the South African War) opposed the British Empire to the Boers of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. The discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand Rehion of Transvaal was the basic cause of the Second Boer War. This led to an influx of foreigners (called *uitlanders* by the Boers) into the Boer republics (the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.) The gold strike in the Transvaal was very significant, with the potential of making the South African Republic the most powerful country in Africa. But the Boer population was too small for full exploitation of the strike, which is why foreigners were reluctantly allowed in. Fearing that these uitlanders would usurp political power, the Boer republics passed laws that made them in effect second-class citizens, which inevitably led to tension and unrest. The war broke out and resulted in British victory.

**Nelson Mandela was elected president of South Africa**. That same year, apartheid was officially abolished.

Tribes of hunter-gatherers known as the San, or **Bushmen, began moving into South Africa**. To this day, many San still live around the Kalahari Desert in the northwest, much as their ancestors did.

**The Great Trek** was an epic, adventurous eastward migration of Dutch-speaking settlers. About 15,000 Voortrekkers (people of Dutch extract) moved out of the British Cape Colony across the Gariep (Orange) River into the interior of South Africa, travelling by wagons. Their ‘Great Trek’ was a rejection of the British philanthropic policy with its equalization of black and white at the Cape, and of the political marginalisation they experienced on the eastern Cape frontier.

The British united four colonies in the region and created South Africa.

Wars in Europe left the British in control of the Cape Town colony.

After 27 years behind bars, Mandela was freed by **President F.W. de Klerk.**

**The first Boer War**, also named the Transvaal Rebellion broke out as Boers from the Transvaal region revolted against the British annexation of 1877. Indeed, the conflict arose between the British colonizers and the Boers of the Transvaal Republic because:

* the Transvaal was annexed by the British in 1877
* the British Empire kept expanding and gained momentum
* the Boers had problems with the Transvaal government
* The Boer were strongly opposed to British rule in the Transvaal

The war resulted in defeat for the British and the second independence of the Transvaal Republic.

The Netherlands established the southern city of **Cape Town**, and Dutch farmers, called **Boers**, began settling in the areas around the city.

On December 10 of that year, **State President**[**F.W. de Klerk**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederik_Willem_de_Klerk)**and**[**Nelson Mandela**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson_Mandela)**are jointly awarded the**[**Nobel Peace Prize**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Peace_Prize) for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa. Mandela and de Klerk have reached agreement on the principles for a transition to a new political order based on the tenet of one man-one vote. By looking ahead to South African reconciliation instead of back at the deep wounds of the past, they have shown personal integrity and great political courage.

Nelson Mandela, the head of the anti-apartheid **African National Congress,** was given a life sentence in jail for “terrorist” activities.

The **Soweto uprising** was a series of [demonstrations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demonstration_(protest)) and protests led by black school children in [South Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa). Students from numerous Sowetan schools began to protest in the streets of [Soweto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soweto) in response to the introduction of [Afrikaans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrikaans) as the [medium of instruction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medium_of_instruction) in local schools. 20,000 students took part in the protests. They were met with fierce [police brutality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police_brutality). The number of protesters killed by police is usually given as 176, but estimates of up to 700 have been made. In remembrance of these events, 16 June is now a public holiday in South Africa, named [Youth Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_Day#South_Africa).