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APARTHEID SPORT AND SOUTH AFRICA'S  
FOREIGN POLICY: 1976\*\*

by

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## I. THE EFFECTS OF SPORTS ISOLATION: MULTI-NATIONALISM vs. MULTIRACISM

On 22 April 1971, Prime Minister Vorster announced what appeared to be a new sports policy for South Africa. The announcement was clearly designed to convince the international sports bodies that South Africa's policy had changed. Careful examination of his statement, however, led to the inevitable conclusion that the primary change was one of semantics.

Instead of talking about multi-racial sport, Vorster talked about "multi-national sport." The policy based on the idea that South Africa is a country made up of several "nations" rather than several "racial groups". According to this policy, multi-racial sport would not be allowed on the club, provincial or national levels.

South African whites and blacks\* could compete against each other only as individuals in "open international events" but not as members of an integrated South African team. Vorster made a distinction between "open international events" (such as the Davis Cup, the Olympics, and so on) and "normal international events." Thus, black South Africans could not compete against a British touring team: in order to qualify as an open international event, several nations would have to compete. This was modified in 1974 when Dr. Koornhof, the Minister of Sport, said that South African sports bodies that had been suspended from international bodies could hold "multi-national" and "open international" events. Thus, they no longer needed competition with foreign teams to hold mixed events. Note that this applied only to sports where the South African bodies had been suspended. The intent was clear.

Another part of the policy was that countries with traditional ties with South Africa - such as Britain, New Zealand and Australia - could send multi-racial teams to South Africa to compete against separate white and non-white South African teams at segregated stadiums. Under this policy, no whites would be permitted to attend a match where an overseas team played against black South Africans. As a result, the touring British rugby team played against separate white, Coloured and African teams when they came to South Africa in May of 1972.

Finally, South Africa would send integrated teams overseas in only four events: the Olympic Games, the Davis Cup, the Federation Cup and the Canada Golf tournament. Even in these

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\* The term "black" includes people classified in South Africa as Coloured, Indian or African.

four exceptions, apartheid was still to rule at home: there would be no mixed trials for selection and the Springbok colors would not be awarded for such competition.

As Dennis Brutus, the long-time leader of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SAN-ROC) has frequently said of multi-nationalism, "it's a new name for the old game." Internal sports apartheid was the same.

The structure of black sport\*\* in South Africa also remained the same. Non-racial federations in each sport refused to cooperate with the policy of multi-nationalism and refused to accept the compromises offered by the white sports bodies prior to the name change. Since these federations refuse to affiliate to the white bodies in their code of sport, their members are ineligible to compete in the open internationals.

Other black sports federations remained affiliated to the white bodies in their codes of sport as they had in the past. These federations are not open to all racial groups but are either Coloured, African or Indian. They have cooperated with the policy of multi-nationalism and, as a result, their members have competed in open internationals. These federations maintain that the Government has been fair to the black sportsmen, as is evidenced by the amount of money spent on white and black sport in South Africa between 1965 and 1972. While the white minority makes up less than 25% of the population, R2,708,900 was spent on white sport; during the same period R102,150 was spent on black sport. On a per capita basis, this means that money spent on white sport was more than 120 times greater than that spent on black sport. This ratio has not changed in the last decade. In 1973, according to Mr. Koornhof's own figures, R644,461 was spent on white sport while only R24,650 was spent on African sport.

In March 1973, the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) assumed the leadership of the non-racial movement inside South Africa. It was headed by Norman Middleton and Hassan Howa, two of the leading figures in the non-racial movement for almost a decade. SACOS represented the non-racial bodies in swimming, soccer, table tennis, athletics and cycling, tennis weightlifting, rugby, cricket and hockey. Because of the new climate for change

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\*\* That is, sport as practised by African, Indian or Coloured sports groups.

within South African sport circles, SACOS was able to mildly criticize the official policies and not fear the reprisals that Dennis Brutus and others had faced ten years before.

Examples of the climate for change subsequent to isolation were two polls taken in 1971: in the first, 925 prominent South Africans were interviewed and a full 79% favoured sports integration; in the second poll, 276 out of 292 top white cricketers said they were prepared to play with or against blacks at the league level. It can easily be recalled that prior to December of 1969, only three or four leading white figures could be found who favoured integrated sports. Isolation had definitely taken its toll on support for Government sports policy.

One of the most publicized international open events in the period under study was the 1973 South African Games. The list of who chose to participate in the Games read very much like those who said they would support South Africa's continued international participation in sport: West Germany, Britain, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Austria and Rhodesia. Malawi was the only African nation represented there as it was the only Black nation to say it supported South Africa's continued participation prior to isolation.

The effect of the South African Games on international sports leaders - especially those from Europe - was exactly what the South Africans hoped for - praise for their progress. Typical of the European reaction was that of Baron Erik von Frenckell, a Finnish member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The Washington Post of 5 April 1973 reported that the Baron said:

"I believe this means that it will be only a matter of time before South Africa will again be admitted to the Olympic Games."

However, the militancy of South Africa's opponents has so far kept the question from being raised at the IOC.

The visit of Arthur Ashe to compete in the South African Open Tennis Championship was a important occasion for Ashe, who had been denied a visa three consecutive times prior to 1973. This was the first time that Ashe had applied since South Africa had been readmitted to the Davis Cup series in 1972 and the Government was not about to make itself vulnerable to the criticism it received when it banned Ashe in 1970 and was subsequently barred for the Davis Cup. While Ashe was criticized by most of the international sports boycott organizations for

going to South Africa and thus seemingly accommodating apartheid sport, he became something of a hero to black South Africans. While it might have appeared that a "revolution" had occurred in South Africa in that year of the Games and Ashe, those inside South Africa knew that apartheid sport was as strong as ever.

The world of apartheid sport was still filled with incongruities. Glen Popham, the Captain of the Springbok team, won the gold medal in the 1969 South African Games in karate. While Popham's team mates were awarded the Springbok colours for winning the silver and bronze medals in that competition, Popham was denied his medal because it was later discovered after the Games that Popham had been classified as a "Coloured person".

## II. INTERNATIONAL OPPOSITION TO APARTHEID SPORT

With the exception of the Davis Cup, South Africa has lost ground in its move to end sport isolation. Its largest losses came in its relation to its former sports allies, Australia and New Zealand.

1971 in Australia seemed to be a carbon copy of 1969-1970 in Britain. The 1971 South African rugby tour of Australia resulted in violence; arrests numbering between 500 and 700; an 18-day State of Emergency in the State of Queensland; a strike by 125,000 workers; and a cost for police protection estimated at R11,600,000. As in the 1969-1970 rugby tour of Britain, the 1971 tour of Australia did take place, but at a staggering cost beyond even those cited in the statistics above. By the time the tour ended, calls for the cancellation of the 1971 South African cricket tour of Australia had spread beyond those who had originally encouraged the disruptions during the rugby tour; the cricket tour was opposed by the Council of Churches, the Council of Trade Unions, most of the leading Australian newspapers, many leading citizens, as well as by the State Governments of South and Western Australia. Estimates for the cost of police protection for the tour ran to R40,000,000. When the federal Government refused to back the tour, the Australian Board of Cricket Control cancelled the tour shortly before it was to begin.

The 1973 South African rugby tour of New Zealand aroused more protests from HART (Halt All Racist Tours) and CARE (Citizens' Association for Racial Equality). Both organizations promised not to disrupt the tour if South Africa chose its team on merit, but when the South African Government refused to permit merit selection to take place, CARE and HART went ahead with their plans to mobilize the anti-apartheid forces. New Zealand's

then-Prime Minister, Mr. Norman Kirk, refused to cancel the tour but, at the same time, totally withdrew Government support for it.

More than half of the Commonwealth nations, led by the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA), threatened to boycott the 1974 Commonwealth Games scheduled in New Zealand if the tour went on as planned.

With violence also threatening the tour, Prime Minister Kirk was forced to ask for the tour to be cancelled. Mr. Kirk maintained this position when he announced on 1 November 1973 that he would not allow the 1974 Federation Cup Tennis Tournament - the women's equivalent of the Davis Cup - to be held in New Zealand because the International Lawn Tennis Federation (ILTF) insisted that South Africa be allowed to participate in spite of apartheid tennis in South Africa. However, this policy has now been reversed. A New Zealand rugby team is due to tour the country later in 1976 under New Zealand's new Government, led by Prime Minister Muldoon. Sports relations with South Africa were a major campaign issue in New Zealand's election in late-1975, with Muldoon campaigning on a platform of "no government interference in sports"(i.e. allow the South Africans to compete).

Protests in England continued. A new organization called Stop the Apartheid Rugby Tour (SART) was formed by a coalition of SAN-ROC leaders, including Dennis Brutus and former STST (Stop the Seventies Tour) leaders, including Peter Haim. SART was formed in an attempt to stop the 1975 British Lions tour of South Africa - a much more difficult task than stopping a South African side from coming to Britain. In fact, the tour did take place and it was the result of this tour that the South African Cabinet began consideration of whether or not to award Springbok colours to Black sportsmen and women.

According to the 15 July 1974 issue of Newsweek, the South Africans were humiliated by the British team as a consequence of not being able to use black stars. This is allegedly the reason for which the Cabinet agreed to take up the matter. This type of "change" might also be used as a gesture to illustrate Vorster's October 1974 speech in which he promised an end to racial discrimination. The liberation of Angola and Mozambique and current moves in Zimbabwe will serve to accelerate the need for gestures of this sort.

However, even if the South African Cabinet were to decide to allow Blacks to earn the Springbok colours in matches like

the British tour, the percentage of black players who would be eligible would still be almost insignificant. It certainly would not change the lot of more than 99% of the black South Africans who compete at the club, provincial and national levels. For those individuals, their lot in life as dictated by apartheid legislation, will remain the same.

### III. POLICY ALTERNATIVES: 1976

The importance of sport and "change" in South Africa becomes apparent only with the realization that sport is a reflection of the total society in South Africa.

For white South Africans, sport approaches the status of a national religion. While it is inconceivable that 79% of the whites would favour societal integration, it is a fact that 79% of the 925 South Africans recently polled favoured sports integration, no doubt as a result of being isolated from the international sports community. Even in sport this is quite incredible, bearing in mind that in the 22 years of National Party rule prior to isolation, there were, perhaps, five incidents in which white sportsmen or sports officials spoke up in favour of a change in the apartheid sports policy.

As a result of isolation, these sportsmen began to talk about multi-racial sport. This bore out what the leaders of SAN-ROC have said all along, namely that, left with no alternative, white South African sportsmen will begin to accept the elimination of apartheid from sport.

In 1976, South Africans are beginning to regain some sports contacts.

With the election of Prime Minister Muldoon, New Zealand seems ready to resume full sports relations. South Africa was allowed to participate in the World Softball Championships in New Zealand earlier this year. In June, New Zealand plans to send its rugby team to compete in South Africa. But all of this is not happening in a vacuum. The international Campaign Against Racism in Sport (ICARIS), SAN-ROC, HART, CARE, and the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid have all petitioned the new Prime Minister. The Supreme Council for Sport in Africa has instructed its member nations not to compete against New Zealand if the rugby team does participate there in June. This, of course, has further implications for the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games.

The second area of light for the white South Africans is in tennis. The Davis Cup nations and the ILTF have long supported South Africa as a result of a power structure dominated by the white Western states. South Africa will have a team in the Federation Cup matches in Forest Hills (New York) this year. There is also a move to expel Mexico because of their refusal to compete against South Africa in the Davis Cup. This move is apparently being led by the United States delegation. Third World and Socialist states are moving to expel South Africa from the ILTF. However, such moves have been overwhelmingly defeated in the past.

There are several things that can be done to hasten change in South African sports, and thus, in South Africa as a whole. These proposals centre on further international sports isolation and include:

1. Support for the Supreme Council and other groups determined to have the New Zealand rugby tour of South Africa cancelled immediately;
2. Support for the move to expel South Africa from the ILTF, which remains the last major international sports body allowing South African membership\*\*\*; and
3. Support for the move to have all the international sports federations including the International Olympic Committee admit the non-racial South African federations to their membership. If this is not possible then full observer status for these bodies should be encouraged. If as has been the case for the last two decades, the South African government refuses travel visas to the leaders of the non-racial bodies, then SAN-ROC could temporarily represent them.

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\*\*\* The absurdity of the ILTF position is best illustrated by its decision to award the 1974 Davis Cup to South Africa by default, after the Indian team refused to compete against South Africa in the final round of the competition because of its opposition to apartheid in sports.