

“Barbed-Wire Boks”: The Long Shadow of the 1981 Springbok Tour of New Zealand and the United States of America

by
Sebastian Johann Shore Potgieter

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Supervisor: Prof. Albert Grundlingh

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

In 1981, during the height of apartheid, the South African national rugby team, the Springboks, toured to New Zealand and the United States of America. In South Africa, the tour was expected to reopen the doors to international competition for the Springboks after an anti-apartheid sporting boycott had forced the sport into relative isolation during the 1970s. In the face of much international condemnation, the Springboks toured to New Zealand and the USA in 1981 where they encountered large and often violent demonstrations as those who opposed the tour attempted to scuttle it. For the duration of the tour, New Zealand was plunged into a divisive state of chaos as police and protestors clashed outside heavily fortified rugby stadiums. In South Africa, those bleary-eyed rugby fans who braved the early morning hours to watch the historic live broadcasts of the matches were greeted with extraordinary scenes: rugby fields being combed for glass shards, fishhooks, and nails scattered by anti-tour protestors; a pitch invasion at Hamilton forcing the cancellation of the Springboks' match against Waikato; and the infamous Auckland test, dubbed the 'flour-bomb' test. While the tour matter polarised New Zealanders, there were only minor disruptions during the USA leg of the tour as rugby was still a relatively unknown sport to most Americans. Although the tour events were a rude awakening to many white South Africans on the hostilities abroad towards the apartheid regime, the country's racist policies remained unyielding. However, the tour had repercussions for South African rugby and reflected how desperate establishment rugby had become to stave off total isolation. While the tour is frequently mentioned in work on the sporting boycott era, it is rarely assigned the significance it deserves. Using hitherto untapped archival material this thesis concerns an in depth discussion on the 1981 tour, what it revealed about South African rugby at the time, and in particular how the tour had a large hand in bringing about South African rugby's total isolation in the 1980s.

Opsomming

In 1981, tydens die hoogtepunt van apartheid, het die Suid-Afrikaanse nasionale rugby span, die Springbokke, getoer na Nieu-Seeland en die Verenigde State van Amerika toe. In Suid-Afrika was dit verwag dat die toer die deur vir Springbok-rugby sou oopmaak nadat 'n anti-apartheid sport boikot die spel in relatiewe isolasie in gedwing het tydens die 1970's. In die gesig van baie internasionale veroordeling het die Springbokke in 1981 getoer na Nieu-Seeland en die VSA en is gevolglike deur groot en dikwels gewelddadige optogte teen die toer gesteur. Nieu-Seeland is vir die duur van die toer in chaos in gedompel terwyl polisie en betogers buite versterkte rugbystadions gebots het. Suid-Afrikaners wat die vroeë oggendure getrotseer het om die historiese lewendige uitsendings van wedstryde te kyk is deur buitengewone beelde gegroete: rugbyvelde wat ondersoek word vir glas skerwe, vishoeke, en spykers gestrooi deur anti-toer betogers; die afstel van die Springbokke se wedstryd teen Waikato in Hamilton as gevolg van betogers wat die veld beset het; en die Auckland toets, ook bekend as die 'meel-bom toets'. Terwyl Nieu-Seelanders diep verdeel was oor die toer was daar aansienlik minder ontwrigtinge tydens die VSA deel van die toer aangesien rugby nog relatief onbekend was vir Amerikaners. Al was die toer 'n skok vir baie wit Suid-Afrikaners oor die vyandelikhede in die buiteland teenoor die apartheidsregering, het die land se rasistiese beleide onwrikbaar gebly. Die toer het, alhoewel, gevolge gehad vir Suid-Afrikaanse rugby en het weerspieël hoe desperaat die land se rugby geword het om totale isolasie te voorkóm. Die toer word dikwels na verwys in werke oor die sportboikot era maar word selde met die beduidende belang toegeken wat dit verdien. Deur gebruik te maak van argiefmateriaal sal hierdie tesis 'n indiepte bespreking voer oor die 1981 toer, wat dit geopenbaar het oor Suid-Afrikaanse rugby op daardie stadium, en in besonder hoe die toer bygedra het tot die rugby isolasie van Suid-Afrika tydens die 1980's.

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Chapter One

Theoretical Framework

In July 1981, the South African national rugby team, the Springboks, departed on a three-month long rugby tour of New Zealand and the United States of America. The tour took place during the height of the anti-apartheid sporting boycott, which had attempted to isolate South African sports teams since the 1960s. Those who supported the boycott believed that if the generally sport-mad white South Africans could be isolated, it would place sufficient pressure on the Nationalist South African government to abandon its racial supremacy policies. The tour would see the Springboks return to New Zealand soil for the first time in 16 years, while the USA leg of the tour featured the first test match between the Springboks and USA Eagles.

However, from the start the tour was plunged into disarray as violent anti-apartheid, anti-tour demonstrators attempted to stop the tour in its tracks. In order to prevent the Springboks and their opponents from being attacked by angry mobs the tour was forced to operate under strict security. However, despite the exhaustive security measures there were still incidents, some of which have been etched into public memory of the tour. In Hamilton, the Springboks' match against Waikato was called off after 400 demonstrators occupied the field and a small aircraft threatened to crash into the main grandstand. In Auckland, the third and decisive test match between the Springboks and All Blacks was plagued by a light aircraft dropping bags of flour onto the field and players. In the USA, the historic test match between the Springboks and Eagles was played in secrecy and a day ahead of schedule in order to deter any protests from interrupting the final match of the tour.

The tour was heralded as South African rugby's first merit selected Springbok team to tour to New Zealand. South Africa's white rugby fraternity had hoped that the inclusion of Errol Tobias, South Africa's first black Springbok would calm tensions surrounding the tour. However, anti-apartheid supporters of the 1980s were less concerned with the integration of South African sport than they were about the removal of apartheid in its entirety. Accordingly, Tobias' presence was dismissed as political window dressing and certainly did not aid in softening attitudes toward the touring South Africans.

In South Africa the tour was coined a 'pioneer's tour'. It was believed that the supposed multiracial makeup of the team would prove to world rugby that the game in South Africa had made definitive steps toward achieving fully integrated sport. In doing so, the South

African Rugby Board was responding to the criticism levelled against South African sport in the 1970s. Those who advocated a sporting boycott against apartheid South Africa during the 1970s had stipulated that sport needed to be non-racial before the country's return to international sport would be considered. However, the SARB were slow to come to terms with this and were hampered by a government that was slow to initiate change. Thus, by the time South African rugby adhered to these non-racial demands, the boycott had changed its focus.

The sporting boycott had revealed sport to be a successful place to apply pressure to the apartheid government. The boycott was particularly effective when it came to placing pressure on South African rugby. As the game held near religious status amongst Afrikaners, the white regime was willing to make certain concessions to ensure that international rugby continued. However, granting concessions to rugby only legitimised beliefs that sport could pressure the apartheid government into making changes. In essence, sport, and particularly rugby, was confirmed as an effective avenue of approach to pressurise the apartheid regime.

Therefore, when the 'multiracial' Springboks arrived in New Zealand and the USA in 1981, they discovered that non-racial sport no longer held the weight it had in the 1970s. For the South African Rugby Board, 1981 looked like the year that would see off the fears of rugby's total isolation. A bumper year awaited the Springboks as they took on Ireland, New Zealand, and the USA, with further prospects of a Welsh tour and an Australian tour in 1982. However, following the events that transpired in New Zealand and the USA and the ripples they caused, South African rugby found itself truly isolated for the duration of the 1980s. Between 1981 and 1992 (by which time the formal dismantling of apartheid was underway) the Springboks only played against one of their traditional rivals. The SARB was forced to invest in costly 'rebel tours' by the New Zealand Cavaliers and South Sea Barbarian in order to feed the country's rugby lust.

The events during the 1981 tour had made governments and rugby bodies around the world weary of competing against the Springboks. By the 1980s, the international spotlight had turned onto South Africa and anyone seen to be competing with the 'racists' would face repercussions. After the mayhem attracted by the Springboks in New Zealand in 1981, it was unlikely that their competition would be sought out, particularly as it came with the added risk of civil unrest. The Springboks had become a liability to any potential host, and for as

long as the South African government perpetuated apartheid, this would be unlikely to change.

For most of the 1980s, the South African Rugby Board was forced to dictate its own future. The South African government was facing its own challenges amidst increasing international and domestic pressure to remove apartheid. What's more, the government did not intend to remove apartheid merely so that the Springboks could return to international competition. In order to try to stay afloat in international rugby, the SARB was forced to find its way around the challenges posed by apartheid. Following the cancelation of tours by Wales, Australia, France, New Zealand, and the British and Irish Lions, the SARB made alternate arrangements. The afore mentioned rebel tours by the New Zealand Cavaliers (1986) and South Sea Barbarians (1987) were among the strategies the SARB implemented to stave off the impending isolation. However, amidst the speculation of player payments and the bypassing of the International Rugby Board in the arranging of these tours, the SARB wound up tarnishing its own reputation and losing numerous of its rugby allies. The rebel tours left South African rugby more isolated than it had been prior to them.

For most of the 1980s, South African rugby was stuck in a rut. The lack of regular international competition had a detrimental effect on the game in South Africa. Both player and spectator numbers were diminishing as the domestic Currie Cup tournament could not fill the void left by international tours. SARB President, Danie Craven, needed to reassess the path the Board was on if the game was to survive in South Africa. In 1988, perhaps in a moment of desperation (or realisation), Craven entered into negotiations with the exiled African National Congress. Recognising that South Africa was unlikely to re-enter international rugby without the blessing of the ANC, Craven approached the Congress executive. Upon the ANC's recommendation, the SARB began an amalgamation process with the South African Rugby Union. The SARU, whose executive had been present as the negotiations, was an ANC affiliate and claimed to be South Africa's only true non-racial rugby body. Unsurprisingly, the negotiations were met with fierce resistance from the South African government, who labelled Craven a traitor. It took until 1991 for the two rugby bodies to amalgamate, forming the South African Rugby Football Union. By 1992, amidst the start of the dismantling of apartheid, South African rugby was readmitted to international competition. South Africa hosted New Zealand and Australia, effectively marking the end of the sporting boycott against rugby.

For this thesis, an intensive study of the 1981 Springbok tour is undertaken. In doing so, this work will attempt to bridge the knowledge gap which exists on the tour. It will be illustrated that the 1981 tour was the tipping point of tensions in New Zealand over sporting ties with South Africa. Dating back to the 1960s, New Zealanders grew increasingly uneasy with the continuation of rugby ties between the Springboks and the All Blacks amidst apartheid. By the late 1960s, unease had turned to protest and, consequentially, forced the cancellation of two All Black tours to South Africa. By the time the Springboks arrived in New Zealand in 1981, attitudes toward South Africa had become openly hostile and led to the violent demonstrations during the tour.

Furthermore, the 1981 Ireland tour of South Africa is discussed as a prelude to the New Zealand and USA tour later that year. The Ireland tour revealed how desperate the SARB had become to secure the New Zealand tour. The SARB designed the tour as a public relations exercise in hope that the Irish team would spread an optimistic image of South Africa on their return. This, it was believed, would help to secure the New Zealand tour and stave off the brewing storm.

The tour itself is also discussed in detail. Despite the anti-apartheid nature of the tour demonstrations in New Zealand, other factors affected the severity of protests. For many New Zealanders the tour became a proxy through which to deal with matters pertaining to their own society. The heavy-handed policing of the tour and the government's reluctance to intervene in the tour all added to further inflaming the situation. The USA leg of the tour is also discussed, despite being of less importance to South Africans. The magnitude of the events in New Zealand overshadowed the American leg, despite it also being plagued by anti-apartheid demonstrations. Furthermore, the question is raised of whether the American tour was perhaps of political significance to the South African government. South Africa was in need of rekindling its relationship with the USA. During the Cold War era, South Africa felt itself to be under threat from expanding communist forces in southern Africa, making the need for a powerful western ally invaluable. This section, however, only raises the plausibility of the tour as a political foray based on the evidence at hand. A further self-standing study is required to shed light on the matter.

The final chapter of the thesis concerns an extensive discussion of the ramifications the tour caused for South African rugby in the 1980s. Ultimately, the tour had a large hand in isolating South African rugby. In order to try to offset this isolation, the SARB were forced to

implement numerous initiatives to keep the country's rugby afloat internationally. However, most of these initiatives failed and, as was the case with the rebel tours, generally left the SARB worse off. As is mentioned earlier, it was under these circumstances that Danie Craven entered into negotiations with the ANC on how South African rugby could be rectified. Ultimately, the ripples caused by the 1981 tour can be traced to this point, after which new forces began to dictate the path South African rugby followed.

The 1981 tour was a watershed moment for South African rugby. This is rarely acknowledged by other work in this area of history. This thesis is one of the first pieces of extensive academic work to be conducted solely on the 1981 tour. While the tour is often referred to in work on the sporting boycott era, it is rarely assigned the significance it deserves.

A Literary Overview of the 1981 Springbok Tour of New Zealand and the USA

Rugby in South Africa has drawn significant attention in academia. During the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s, the game was used to inculcate burgeoning societal values to the Afrikaner people. Consequently, the game came to be regarded as the hallowed sport of the Afrikaner nation. This history is well documented and continues to draw interest in academia. Furthermore, the sporting boycott era has been equally well documented. The boycott era, spanning the period of some thirty years between 1960 and 1990, remains one of the largest areas of historical interest on South African sport and continues to churn out research on a regular basis. As the national sport of the Afrikaner nation, rugby has drawn ample studies, particularly on how the sport operated during the boycott era. Isolating South African rugby was regarded as key to the boycott's success, as the game was imbued with social and cultural significance to Afrikaners. While much has been written on South African rugby during the boycott era, very few works have endeavoured to explore the significance of the 1981 tour and its ramifications. As shall be illustrated, the 1981 tour is frequently mentioned as a dark moment in South Africa's rugby history, but is rarely accorded further importance.

Paul Dobson, former official historian of the South African Rugby Board, has written prolifically on South African rugby history. Dobson's *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry: South Africa vs. New Zealand* (1996), *Rugby in South Africa* (1989), and *Doc: The Life of Danie Craven* (1994) covers the boycott era and refers to the 1981 tour. In *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry*, Dobson records the history of Springbok-All Black encounters. The book starts with the first

official test between the two teams in 1921, and concludes with the 1995 Rugby World Cup, where the Springboks defeated the All Blacks in the tournament's final. When writing about the 1981 tour, Dobson reminisces on some of the more unusual features of the tour. The pitch invasion at Hamilton and the 'flour-bomb test' in Auckland are discussed, as well as the generally torrid time the Springboks had at the hands of the New Zealand protestors. Ultimately, though, Dobson provides a recollection of the tour but does not provide any discussion on the ripples caused by the tour. While Dobson's only discusses the tour, this thesis will highlight how the tour ramifications had a large hand in isolating South Africa rugby in the 1980s. Furthermore, Dobson discusses the 1985 All Black tour cancellation and 1986 Cavaliers rebel tour. However, Dobson does not acknowledge the role the 1981 tour played in both of these events. This thesis will illustrate that, in fact, the 1981 tour was integral to the cancellation of the 1985 All Black tour of South Africa and ensuing Cavaliers rebel tour.

The second of Dobson's listed books, *Rugby in South Africa*, ranges beyond the South Africa-New Zealand rivalry. Instead, *Rugby in South Africa* concerns a general history of the game in South Africa between 1861 and 1988. Once again, Dobson's book covers the sporting boycott era and refers to the 1981 tour. However, the book refers chiefly to the on-field activities of South African rugby during the allotted period. Perhaps, then, the greatest difference between this thesis and Dobson's work is where the focus lies. This thesis will focus primarily on the events that took place off the field. While mention is made of certain matches, this work focuses predominantly on how facilitating rugby tours during the boycott era were detrimental to Springbok rugby.

However, Dobson's books were not meant to be profound analytical works into the rugby isolation period. Instead, these books ascribe more to the 'coffee-table book' type of history, something that is easily accessible to people interested in the history of South African rugby. Although Dobson's books do provide good accounts of the difficulties South African rugby faced during the boycott era, they do not elaborate extensively on the 1981 tour. Fundamentally, they do not discuss the 1981 in depth, the circumstances that led to the events on tour, or link the 1981 tour to South Africa's rugby isolation in the 1980s. In essence, Dobson's books provide the reader with a good chronological recollection of events with enough information to understand the context wherein the documented rugby matches took place.

The New Zealander, Grant Harding, and South African, David Williams, have also contributed to the literature on the South Africa – New Zealand rivalry. Their book, *Toughest of Them All* (2000), is a similar book to Dobson's *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry* as it provides the reader with a history of the rivalry. Naturally then, the 1981 tour does feature in *Toughest of Them All*. As Harding was a student in New Zealand during the 1981 Springbok tour, he provides a useful first-hand perspective of how many New Zealanders experienced the tour. However, Harding does not elaborate on the long term effects the tour had on either New Zealand or South Africa. Furthermore, the book does not discuss the tour from a South African perspective. In Harding's chapter, "1981: When Sport and Politics Mix", he outlines that apartheid was the catalyst for the demonstrations during the tour. However, Harding does not delve deeper on how the tour became a proxy through which many New Zealanders aired their frustrations with their own society. This was a major feature of the tour and certainly had the effect of inflaming the demonstrations.

However, the general approach of *Toughest of Them All* towards the 1981 tour seems to suggest that political problems had made rugby difficult, but ultimately could not stop it. The following extract from Harding's chapter provides an insight on his approach to the tour:

“Despite the 5000 protestors outside the ground, the 2000 police and the barbed wire, it had been a match of quality. Most of the typical features of a New Zealand – South Africa Test...”¹

It must be noted, however, that Harding and Williams' book also ascribes to the 'coffee-table book' type of history. The book mentions key moments in the history of competition between South Africa and New Zealand but does not identify the sort of causal links that are important to this thesis. For instance, Harding does not elaborate on whether the 1981 tour demonstrations had any long-term effects on either South Africa or New Zealand. Furthermore, in both *Toughest of Them All* and *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry*, the 1981 tour and subsequent event are discussed as products of the restrictions the sporting boycott placed on South Africa sport.

Ultimately, this thesis highlights several points on the 1981 tour that are not acknowledged by Harding and Williams. For instance, Harding and Williams do not demonstrate that the events that unfolded in New Zealand during the 1981 tour can be traced to the growing

¹ G. Harding, D. Williams: *Toughest of Them All*, p. 116.

unease many New Zealanders felt toward their country's sporting ties with South Africa. Impatience with apartheid had been growing in New Zealand since 1965, when H.F. Verwoerd banned Maoris from playing in South Africa. Furthermore, this thesis argues that some notable features on the South African rugby landscape in the 1980s – the 1985 All Black tour cancelation; the rebel tours; and the country's exclusion from the first Rugby World Cup (RWC) – should be considered as part of the 1981 tour ramifications.

Another author who has written prolifically on boycott era rugby in South Africa is John Nauright. In *Sport, Cultures, and Identities in South Africa* (1997), Nauright discusses the origin of the sporting boycott, as well as why rugby was of such importance to the boycotters. As the book's title suggests, Nauright addresses sport in general and does not only focus on rugby. However, Nauright devotes a brief section to the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand. Nauright provides a good discussion on the significance of the tour events, and particularly on how it influenced white South Africans. While Nauright discusses the 1985 All Black tour, 1986 Cavaliers tour, and 1987 RWC, he too does not link these events to the ripples of the 1981 tour. Nauright's take on the 1981 tour, however, creates the impression that this tour was of greater importance to South African rugby than any tour preceding it.

However, as a study of sport in South Africa, ranging from its imperial origins until after the collapse of apartheid, Nauright's book does tend to condense information. For this thesis, rugby in the 1980s is of importance in order to trace the extent of the 1981 tour ripples. Nauright, however, is relatively brief in his discussion on this period and does not elaborate on certain key features this thesis intends to expand on. However, the book provides a good historical recollection of mainstream South African sport and the complexities of the sporting boycott.

Furthermore, Nauright has co-written a book with David Black, titled *Rugby and the South African Nation*. In their chapter, "Springbok-All Black Rugby, Sanctions and Politics, 1959-92", Nauright and Black provide an excellent discussion on the boycott era history between the Springboks and All Blacks. The chapter discusses the difficulty of sustaining a rugby relationship, particularly after H.F. Verwoerd in 1965 banned Maori's from touring South Africa with the All Blacks. Furthermore, the chapter refers to how the All Black-Springbok relationship (particularly after 1981) threatened to, and in several cases succeeded in, plunging the Olympic and Commonwealth Games into jeopardy. In particular, numerous African countries boycotted the 1976 Summer Olympic Games due to New Zealand's

presence at the games. New Zealand had provoked the ire of many African nations when the All Blacks toured South Africa shortly after the 1976 Soweto uprising. The 1978 Commonwealth Games was also boycotted due to New Zealand's presence. The 1981 tour also very nearly led to boycotts at the 1982 Commonwealth Games and 1984 Summer Olympic Games. While Nauright and Black do provide a great deal of insight on the sporting boycott era and the difficulties faced by Springbok-All Black rugby, they do not provide a great deal of analysis on the 1981 tour. Importantly though, they do contend that the events during the tour came as a rude awakening to white South Africans on the hostilities abroad toward the apartheid regime. This will be elaborated on at a later stage.

The sport boycott era has also yielded a significant number of journal articles. In his article, *Hitting Apartheid for Six: The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott*, Douglas Booth discusses the effectiveness of the sports boycott's ability to apply pressure on the Nationalist government to implement reform. Although Booth's article discusses sport in general, he does pay special attention to rugby during the boycott. The article argues that the increasing liability of Springbok tours abroad and the eventual abandonment of international rugby ties with South Africa added to doubts about the viability of apartheid. Booth's article also discusses how the objectives of the sports boycott continually shifted. This is significant to this work, as it will be demonstrated that the SARB were late to come to terms with these changing objectives. Consequently, the Board would implement initiatives that could no longer relieve the pressure of the boycott. Although Booth comments on numerous aspects of the boycott that are relevant to this thesis, he also does not discuss the 1981 tour in any significant depth or establish causal links between the 1981 tour and South African rugby's isolation in the 1980s.

Others who have written articles on the sporting boycott include Bruce Kidd (*The Campaign against Sport in South Africa*), Rob Nixon (*Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott*), and Paul Martin (*South African Sport: Apartheid's Achilles Heel?*). These academics have contributed substantial discussions to the sporting boycott debate, usually in order to assess how effective the boycott was in dismantling apartheid. While the sporting boycott on its own could lead to the dismantling of apartheid, the boycott did contribute to growing white insecurities about the sustainability of the regime. While these academics provide useful insights and information regarding the boycott, they tend to provide a general overview of the period. While most of these articles mention the 1981 tour, they do not

regard it as an event with particular significance and therefore do not provide any sort of discussion on it.

Several of the Springboks who toured to New Zealand and the USA in 1981 have also penned their memoirs of the tour. Theuns Stofberg's *Stories from the Touchline* (2016), Rob Louw's *For the Love of Rugby* (1987), Wynand Claassen's *More than Just Rugby* (1985), and Errol Tobias' *Pure Gold* (2016) all deal with the issues of the 1981 tour. These recollections are first-hand accounts of the players' perspective of the tour and often provide information that could not be found elsewhere. However, as Claassen and Louw's books were authored in 1985 and 1987 respectively, they do not cover the full extent of the period this thesis proposes to focus on, which ends in 1992. On the other hand, Tobias and Stofberg's books are written in 2015 and 2016 respectively, meaning there is a 35-year gap between the events and their recollections thereof. Thus, it is always a possibility that information has gone astray in their recollections or that their interpretations of events have been altered as time has moved on. Furthermore, as these books are meant as memoirs, they do not provide a great deal of interpretation of events or place them into historical significance.

While in South Africa there have been limited publications on the tour, there have been numerous works published in New Zealand on the tour. Geoff Chapple's *1981: The Tour* (1984) provides an account from the perspectives of those who protested against the Springbok in New Zealand during the tour. The majority of the information used to compile Chapple's work was collected from an anti-tour organisation and therefore has a very specific agenda in its approach to the tour. The book, however, elaborates predominantly on the New Zealand perspective of the tour and therefore does not provide much use to this thesis. This work centres on how the tour events were received in South Africa, as well as the ramifications the tour had for South African rugby in the 1980s.

Another work on the tour from a New Zealand perspective is Thomas Newnham's *By Batons and Barbed Wire* (2003). Newnham discusses the anti-tour protests that took place in New Zealand, but specifically those that took place in Auckland. As Newnham himself was an anti-tour protestor greatly involved in the demonstrations, the book has a very specific agenda with regard to the way in which the tour is remembered. However, as was the case with Chapple's book, Newnham's work does not pose much relevance to this thesis as it focuses predominantly on the effects the tour had on New Zealand. The book does not provide a discussion on how the tour contributed to South African rugby's isolation in the 1980s.

Ross Meurant has also published on the tour. His book, *The Red Squad Story* (1982), traces his own experiences as a police officer during the tour. Meurant was a member of the Red Squad, who protected the Springboks in New Zealand. Meurant's book provides a good recollection of the tour events, as well as how New Zealand police officers regarded the significance of the tour to New Zealand society. However, as Meurant's book was published in 1982 his narrative does not include a long-term discussion of the repercussions of the tour.

Ultimately, these authors do not assign the 1981 Springbok tour the significance it deserves. Although each of the authors discusses the tour in their own way, they do not regard the tour as the watershed moment it was for South African rugby. These authors tend to discuss the tour events as being indicative of the pressure that apartheid and the sporting boycott was placing on South African rugby. However, they do not identify the long-term impact the tour had on South African rugby.

Thus, there exists a knowledge gap in the existing literature on the tour. Although the tour is frequently mentioned in work on the sporting boycott, it is rarely assigned the significance it deserves as a watershed moment for South African rugby. None of the above-mentioned work provides an in-depth discussion on the tour events, elaborate on what brought about these events, or whether there were any ramifications for South African rugby following the tour. Due to the bizarre events that took place during the tour, it has become commonplace to use the tour to sensationalize the boycott era and the difficulties faced by South African sport.

It is here where this thesis will set itself apart from other work. This thesis will illustrate that the 1981 tour events were the final stage in a process that started in the 1960s as New Zealanders grew increasingly uncomfortable about their sporting ties with South Africa. While the tour events had an immediate and very visible impact on New Zealand, the effects the tour had on South Africa were prolonged over the 1980s. Ultimately, the ripples caused by the 1981 tour finally isolated South African rugby. With the onset of isolation, something that the SARB had been able to avoid for almost two decades, the rugby establishment was forced into new strategies to save the game in South Africa. These strategies were usually short-lived and counterproductive to the SARB and ultimately only further isolated the Board from world rugby. Furthermore, this thesis will argue that events such as the 1983 International Rugby Media Congress, the 1985 All Black tour cancellation, the 1986 Cavaliers tour, and eventual 1988 meetings between the SARB and ANC were all ways through which the SARB attempted to combat the ramifications of the 1981 tour.

Problem Statement and Methodology

The significance of the 1981 Springbok tour is generally understated. The tour is often referred to in order to illustrate the suffocating conditions the sporting boycott placed on South African sport. However, the tour itself is rarely studied. It remains unacknowledged that the tour events had their own unique causes and that the tour itself influenced the future of South African rugby. Therefore, this thesis argues that the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand and the USA was a watershed moment in South African rugby. The 1981 tour is closely studied for how it influenced on South African rugby, and not merely as a by-product of the greater sporting boycott. Previous research has tended to lump the 1981 tour into general discussions on the sporting boycott era.

This thesis elaborates on why rugby was targeted by the sporting boycott, and specifically why the Springbok-All Black contest became significant to the boycott. Furthermore, while the Springbok tour was the catalyst for the demonstrations in New Zealand, it will be shown that these demonstrations took on a different significance during the tour. New Zealand's own domestic issues came to the surfaces during these demonstrations and certainly added to the ferocity of the protests against the Springboks.

Furthermore, the 1981 tour contributed significantly to South African rugby's isolation in the 1980s and early 1990s, something which is rarely acknowledged. Following the tour, the Springboks were labelled as a liability. The New Zealand and USA tours had proved that a touring Springbok side could attract significant social unrest and, consequently, deterred rugby nations around the world from extending an invitation to the South Africans. The isolation that gripped South African rugby in the 1980s forced the SARB to implement some decisive changes. These changes ultimately resulted in Danie Craven meeting with the ANC to try to relieve the pressure on South African rugby.

With regard to methodology, this thesis utilises qualitative data, the majority of which are primary sources. Newspaper articles form a large component of the research collected for this thesis. While newspaper articles can provide in depth information on events taking place at the time, they can also offer insight into the prevailing attitudes of the time. The Cape based Newspaper, *Die Burger*, which was widely regarded as the mouthpiece of the Cape National Party, provides a good source of 'establishment thinking'. The more liberal *Cape Times* is also used as way to juxtapose the views of the more conservative *Die Burger*. Furthermore, several articles from the *Rand Daily Mail* are used in order to provide a perspective that was

openly hostile towards apartheid and the NP. *The Times* (England) is also used in order to provide a useful international perspective on the 1981 tour.

However, the majority of the research used in this thesis is archival material. The South African Rugby Board Archive, housed at Stellenbosch University, has yielded the majority of the research used to substantiate this work. This thesis is the first piece of work to utilise this archive to substantiate an argument on the 1981 tour. The material in this archive ranges from personal letters, to official correspondences between international rugby boards, to SARB meeting minutes, to newspaper articles and provides an excellent insight into the internal workings of the SARB. This archival research permits one to delve deep into the background machineries of the Board and presents information that was generally not available to the public. Thus, archival material provides an accurate insight into what was going on in the South African Rugby Board between 1981 and 1992.

This thesis has also made use of interviews with some of the Springboks who took part in the 1981 tour. Interviews with former Springbok Captain, Theuns Stofberg, and former Springbok loose-forward, DeVilliers Visser, were conducted in order to gain a players' perspective on the tour. However, as there is a 35-year gap between the tour events and the players' recollection thereof, there is always a possibility that information has gone astray or that subsequent events have led to a reinterpretation of their recollections.

Furthermore, there have been several Springboks who have published on their experiences during the 1981 tour. As some of these works were published soon after the tour, they provide reliable and original information as there was a short time-lapse between the tour and the publication of their recollections. While former Springboks, Wynand Claassen and Rob Louw, published their recollections in 1985 and 1986 respectively, others such as Theuns Stofberg and Errol Tobias have only recently come forth with their recollections of the tour. However, while not discounting the value of Stofberg and Tobias' contributions, a lengthy period has elapsed between the event and their recollections thereof. However, these works do still provide valuable insight into the tour, particularly with regard to the players' perceptions on why the demonstrations were taking place.

This thesis has also made use of numerous secondary sources, particularly journal articles and books. These sources have predominantly been used in the first part of the thesis during which an overall discussion on rugby during the sporting boycott is presented. This secondary literature has formed the basis of providing the reader with an informed overview of the

general conditions leading up to the 1981 tour, as well as South African politics in the 1970s and 1980s. However, virtually no secondary sources correlate with the central argument this thesis presents. Thus, the majority of the evidence used to substantiate the claims made in this thesis is derived from primary sources, with any secondary sources merely playing an ancillary role in this work.

Structure

This thesis consists of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. In the second chapter, the reader is introduced to the significance of rugby to Afrikaner Nationalism, as this is valuable in understanding why the sporting boycott became obsessed with isolating rugby. This chapter also sheds light on why the ruling National Party were willing to grant certain concessions to rugby in the 1960s and 1970s in order for to maintain international rugby ties. Furthermore, this chapter provides the reader with a general overview of the conditions faced by South African sport under the sporting boycott and, specifically, how the boycott affected South Africa-New Zealand rugby relations. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion on the state of rugby and the boycott in the years immediately leading up to 1981.

Chapter's three, four, and five all deal with South African rugby in 1981. Chapter three starts with a discussion on the 1981 Ireland tour of South Africa, the first time the Irish team had been on South African soil in 22 years. For the SARB, however, the Ireland tour presented a way to secure the upcoming New Zealand tour. The Board used the tour as a public relations exercise to ensure that the Irish team would report favourably on South African rugby with the conclusion of the tour.

Chapter four discusses the New Zealand leg of the 1981 tour and the chaos that ensued at the hands of demonstrators. The chapter illustrates the extent to which New Zealand society was divided over the tour. Furthermore, this chapter discusses how the tour became a vehicle through which many New Zealand's voiced opposition to their own domestic troubles. As a result, the ferocity of the protests increased to the extent that the New Zealand government deemed the tour a matter of maintaining law on order.

Chapter five discusses the largely unknown Springbok tour of the USA. The America leg of the tour was of less importance to South African rugby enthusiasts and was somewhat an anti-climax after the riveting New Zealand tour. However, despite rugby being somewhat unknown to Americans, the Springboks were still targeted by potentially dangerous anti-

apartheid demonstration. The team faced threats, such as the use of bombs, which resulted in drastic steps to protect the team but ensuring the tour proceeded. In order to prevent any disruptions to Springboks' match against the USA Eagles, the game was played ahead of schedule and in absolute secrecy. However, this chapter also raises the question that the USA tour may well have taken place for reasons other than rugby. The South African government was facing what it believed to be a communist inspired onslaught from southern Africa and was in dire need of western allies. Based on the evidence at hand, tour may well have been a way of extending a hand of friendship to the USA newly elected President, Ronald Reagan, of the Republican Party. Historically, the Republican Party had taken a softer line towards apartheid South Africa, making it likely that Reagan too would be more sympathetic to South Africa than his Democrat predecessor, Jimmy Carter, had.

The final chapter of the thesis concerns the large hand the 1981 tour played in isolating South African rugby in the 1980s. The chapter illustrates that South African rugby came to be regarded as a security risk internationally as a touring Springbok side was likely to draw mass demonstrations on tour. Furthermore, following New Zealand Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, violating the *Gleneagles Agreement* by allowing the Springboks to tour in 1981, the agreement was tightened up. To ensure that no Commonwealth nation engaged in sport with South Africa, transgression of the *Gleneagles Agreement* would now be punished, which include the possibility of expulsion from the Commonwealth Games. As the majority of South Africa's traditional rugby rivals were from Commonwealth nations, the SARB found itself with relatively few rugby allies.

Staring isolation in the face, the SARB was forced to come up with new ways to keep itself in the international rugby realm. The SARB became involved with three organisations, *Freedom in Sport*, *Stop Politics in Rugby*, and *Free Nation New Zealand*, who abhorred political involvement in sport. These organisations regarded the Springboks as being a victim of political interference in sport and attempted to aid the SARB in returning to the international rugby scene. In order to achieve this, these organisations attempted to promote a multiracial image of the SARB as evidence that apartheid had been removed in rugby.

Furthermore, the cancelation of the 1985 All Black tour and subsequent rebel tours are also discussed as ripples caused by the 1981 tour. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the SARB were forced into marketing South African rugby, which was rapidly waning in popularity and quality. As South African rugby received little assistance from the South

African government in offsetting isolation, Danie Craven was forced to take the matter into his own hands. In what the SARB called its 'African initiative, Danie Craven turned to the ANC for help on how South African rugby could return to international competition, essentially identifying that the future of South Africa rested with the ANC.

Chapter Two

Sport in Society and a General Overview of the Conditions

Leading up to the 1981 Tour

“Analysis of a nation at play reveals the stuff of its social fabric and value system, and tells us much about other facets of political and economic life”.²

The 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand and the United States of America must be regarded as one of the most important tours undertaken by a Springbok team, as it was a watershed moment for South African rugby, the ripples of which could be felt deep into the 1980s. The tour must not, however, be seen as an isolated incident but instead as the final stage in a series of developments created by the increasing emphasis the anti-apartheid sporting boycott placed on putting a stop to South Africa-New Zealand rugby relations. It can be argued that the events that unfolded in New Zealand during the 1981 tour were already set in motion by the late 1950s, as New Zealanders became increasingly uncomfortable with the exclusion of Maoris from All Black teams when touring South Africa, as per the South African government’s request. Every contest between the South Africa and New Zealand since has involved a measure of controversy surrounding the sustained relationship with a racist regime.

Therefore, in order to comprehend the ferocity of the 1981 tour events in New Zealand and to understand that these events were a long time in the making, it is necessary to have a sufficient understanding of the years leading up to the tour. Furthermore, as this thesis will discuss the effects the 1981 tour had on South Africa over the course of the 1980s, it is necessary to recognize the symbolic significance of rugby to Afrikaner nationalism. Understanding this relationship goes a long way toward explaining white South Africa’s astonishment at the 1981 tour events and subsequent isolation. Therefore, a brief section is devoted to understanding how the game came to symbolise national pride and power for the Afrikaner nation. The penultimate section of this chapter concerns a discussion on the international anti-apartheid sporting boycott. The boycott was implemented against South Africa in an attempt to pressurize the South African government into scrapping its racist laws. Although the sporting boycott impacted heavily on a number of South Africa’s amateur

² J. W. Loy, G.S. Kenyon: *Sport, Culture and Society: A Reader on the Sociology of Sport*, p. 14.

sporting codes, this section will focus specifically on South African rugby under the boycott and how they boycott faced difficulties in isolating the game.

Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion on the rugby relationship between New Zealand and South Africa in the years immediately preceding the 1981 tour, as well as how it became increasingly difficult to maintain this relationship. From the early 1960s, New Zealanders started to question the morality of sustaining rugby ties with South Africa. Consequently, New Zealand protests against this contest started to gather momentum. In the 1960s, New Zealanders demanded that Maori's no longer be excluded on All Black tours to South Africa. By the 1970s, protests had shifted their focus and demanded non-racial sport in South Africa before the All Black-Springbok rivalry continued. Finally, by the 1980s protests condemned apartheid and called for it to be scrapped. However, rugby contests between South Africa and New Zealand continued despite these protest. Consequently, New Zealand became a kingpin in the sports boycott due to the value South African rugby placed on sustaining contact with the All Blacks. As Danie Craven noted in the late 1980s, "without the All Blacks it is just not rugby".³

A Second Religion: Rugby and Afrikaner Nationalism

There has been no shortage of written material on the relationship between rugby and Afrikaner nationalism. For white South Africans, particularly Afrikaners, rugby transcended the traditional significance of a sport and became part of the identity of their society. Although the saying that rugby is the Afrikaners' second religion is perhaps exaggerated, it does capture the prominence of the game in Afrikaner society. Thus, when rugby became the target of the international sporting boycott, it was more significant than just preventing the Springboks from touring overseas. International rugby was a way through which Afrikaner nationalism could demonstrate its symbolic power to the world, and with the boycott, chances to do this grew scarce. Furthermore, the way in which Afrikaner nationalism permeated rugby is significant in understanding why the game came under fire from the boycott movement. As the sacred game of Afrikaners, rugby was targeted on a greater scale than any other sport, and particularly the country's rugby ties with traditional rivals like England and New Zealand. Despite the best efforts of the boycotters, the game took much longer to isolate than any other South African sport. This was largely due to the Nationalist government's

³ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Danie Craven's responds to questions from Haruhisa Kodaira, Chief Editor of Rugby Magazine Japan, no date available.

willingness to make certain concessions to rugby in order to secure Springbok rugby's place on the international circuit.

When assessing the symbolic significance that developed between rugby and Afrikaner society in the twentieth century, the notion that '*it is just a game*' does not hold substance. Like the Afrikaners, numerous other societies have found a cultural and nationalistic outlet in sport (often in one specific sport). The way in which a society plays sport – and the sport they choose to play - reflects the social and cultural values that society regards highly.⁴ For Afrikaners, a society that by the start of the twentieth century had little shared history or commonality, rugby served as a cultural initiative that brought people together. The sport helped to create and reinforce Afrikaner societal values and sketched them as something desirable, as exhibited by those playing the game. In his analysis of nationalism through sport, Matti Goksøyr writes: “sport seems to be the carrier of claimed implicit virtues highly regarded in the home country”.⁵ For Afrikaners the virtues of rugby extended far beyond the field. The game was believed to foster good moral values amongst its participants. One does not have to look far to identify the sort virtues that Afrikaners took from the game – discipline, strength, determination, teamwork, endurance. The fact that Afrikaners excelled at the game to the point where they were regarded as among the best in the world at rugby certainly aided the sport being adopted as the society's national sport.⁶

Those who excelled at the sport came to be national heroes, fine specimen who embodied the best virtues of the Afrikaner people. The prestige embodied in the game is evident when considering the political campaigns of rugby idols Dawid de Villiers and Kobus Louw. Both De Villiers and Louw had donned the Springbok jersey in their time as players and used their social status associated with their rugby success as a means to gain support amongst white South Africans for their respective political campaigns.⁷ With the social prestige associated with being a top rugby player, it is not surprising that numerous Springboks, and other high-ranking Afrikaner rugby players, were recruited into the *Broederbond*. The *Broederbond*

⁴ J. W. Loy, G.S. Kenyon: *Sport, Culture and Society: A Reader on the Sociology of Sport*, p. 14.

⁵ J. Nauright, S.W. Pope (ed.): *Routledge Companion to Sports History*, p. 283

⁶ A national sport implies that it is the sport in the country which, amongst other things, draws the largest following and has the greatest number of active participants. If this was to be accurately applied in apartheid South Africa it would most likely have been soccer which would be the country's national sport. However, with a white Afrikaner government in power the national sport came to reflect that sport which was most popular amongst Afrikaners, making rugby the South Africa's national sport.

⁷ J. Nauright, D. Black: *Rugby and the South African Nation*, p. 62.

was an organisation consisting of the society's most influential Afrikaners – dubbed the 'Super Afrikaners' - and “strove for the ideal of an everlasting and separate Afrikaner nation...and the promotion of Afrikaner interests”.⁸ The *Broederbond* shared a close-knit relationship with the National Party and became a major, but subtle force in the cultural wellbeing of Afrikaner society. With the prerogative of the *Broederbond*, it attempted to capture those who held the most esteemed positions in Afrikaner society. Naturally, rugby managers, coaches, board members, and players, particularly national or provincial players made up significant numbers of *Broeders* (Brothers).

In attempting to create a national identity for a collection of people who otherwise did not have much in common, the white South African government of the 1930s and 1940s used rugby as a tool through which to create a sense of national identity. The game was stripped of its British legacy and remoulded as Afrikaners made the game their own. Rugby became something which people could unite in and develop a sense of commonality. As a cultural expression of Afrikaner society the game developed close ties with the nationalist government who viewed it as a way to reinforce the sense of Afrikanerdom as a powerful, disciplined, and enduring society, as was depicted by those playing the game. In his analysis on rugby and Afrikaner nationalism Albert Grundlingh writes that “the rugged aspects of the game could easily be equated with a resurgent and rampant Afrikaner nationalism.”⁹

Furthermore, rugby was used by the Afrikaners to outdo the British Empire at their own game, making rugby a powerful nationalistic mechanism in shaking off the shackles left by the British colonialism. With the desire to create an authentic Afrikaner culture in the 1930s and 1940s, much of Afrikaner nationalist intent was directed toward “a more prosperous future, free from British domination.”¹⁰ Writing on the relationship between rugby and Afrikaner nationalism, David Black and John Nauright have made the point that the game enabled Afrikaners to “indulge their continued animus towards the sons of the British Empire”.¹¹ These hostilities also manifested themselves in South Africa – such as with derby's between the Afrikaans Stellenbosch University and the English University of Cape Town – as well as on the test arena where the Springboks' competed against England and the British and Irish Lions. These contests took on significance beyond the field. They became a

⁸ J. Nauright, D. Black: *Rugby and the South African Nation*, p. 62.

⁹ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes: Sport and Leisure Practices in Modern Afrikaner History*, p. 61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ J. Nauright, D. Black: *Rugby and the South African Nation*, p. 62.

way for Afrikaners to express the symbolic power of their emergent society. The dominance of Springbok rugby served Afrikaner nationalism well, particularly in its success over the British Empire. The Springboks could stake a claim to be the best in the world, something that very few facets of Afrikaner society could do. Thus, the dominance of the Springboks came to serve as a form of “ethnic self-esteem” to the Afrikaner nation.¹² This serves as the prowess of sport – it is ignored that a 15-man rugby team beat another 15-man rugby team, but instead one nation has beaten another nation. With the history of conflict and domination of the British Empire over Afrikaners, such successes meant a great deal more than a sporting victory to the Afrikaner society. The success of Afrikaners at rugby and the resounding successes of the Springboks on an international scale “came to symbolise both the actual and potential achievements of the Afrikaner people”.¹³ In essence, support rugby in South Africa transcended merely supporting a popular pastime.

Although it has been observed that nationalistic tendencies emerging when supporting a national sporting side are not indicative of general nationalistic/patriotic tendencies, in South Africa, this was different. In his book, *Potent Pastimes*, Albert Grundlingh notes: “support for the Springboks was on the same continuum as membership of the National Party”.¹⁴ There was a particularly strong correlation between the values of rugby and the values of emerging Afrikaner society. The fact that rugby, by and large, attracted conservative and authoritarian types further aided the development of Afrikaner culture as it “reinforced values like respect for perceived tradition, rules and authority, integral to the nationalist movement, and at the same time encouraged certain cultural conformity”.¹⁵

South African Rugby and the International Sporting Boycott

The international sporting boycott against South Africa refers to the movement that lasted from approximately 1960 until 1992, during which time foreign governments, sporting bodies, and anti-apartheid organisations attempted to isolate South African sport from all international competition. Along with limited economic sanctions, arms embargos, cultural and academic boycotts, it was hoped that isolating South Africa sport would be able to place sufficient pressure on the white government to abandon its apartheid policy. Although the

¹² A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 69.

¹³ J. Nauright, D. Black: *Rugby and the South African Nation*, p. 61.

¹⁴ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 64.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

sporting boycott alone could not have forced the removal of apartheid, the movement was relatively successful in isolating South African sport. This isolation was enough to force the Nationalist government of the 1960s and 1970s to implement certain concessions to sport.

However, the movement struggled to isolate South African rugby. Due to the value of rugby to the Afrikaner society, the white government had a stake in ensuring that the game continued to compete internationally and were thus willing to take certain steps in order to safeguard rugby. Many of the concessions the government granted to South African sport during this period were born out of a desire to keep the country's rugby going. Cricket, the other major white sport that was isolated by the boycott, was predominantly a game played amongst South Africa's English citizens. With an Afrikaner oriented government at the helm, cricket did not receive the same concessions rugby did, as is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the Basil D'Oliviera affair in 1968.¹⁶

By the latter half of the 1960s, the international movement to isolate South Africa sport had focused its gaze on rugby and the game found it increasingly difficult to keep its head above water. In 1960, an all-white All Black team - adhering to the Nationalist government's request of not including Maoris on such tours - came to South Africa. The tourists were met with a degree of protest action by the South African Sports Association (SASA)¹⁷, as well as by the African National Congress Youth League, who protested against the exclusion of Maoris and the tour as a violation of the sporting boycott.

However, perhaps one of the more telling events to take place during the sporting boycott, as will be elaborated on at a later stage, was the cancelation of the 1967 All Black tour of South Africa after the Nationalist government once again refused to allow Maori's to tour with the All Blacks. A measure of protest against the exclusion of Maoris on South African tours had been developing in New Zealand since the late 1950s. By the time plans were being made for the 1967 tour, New Zealand's Labour government had intervened in the situation and had

¹⁶ In 1968 Basil D'Oliviera, a talented coloured cricketer who had left South Africa due to apartheid, was selected to represent England on a tour of South Africa. D'Oliviera was, however, banned from coming to South Africa by B.J Vorster, SA Prime Minister and the same man who earlier that year had allowed future All Black rugby tours to SA to include Maoris. Vorster's reasoning was that D'Oliviera was a political selection meant to humiliate the South African government. England responded by cancelling the tour, an act that heralded the onset of SA cricket's isolation as by 1970 the International Cricket Council had placed a moratorium on tours to South Africa.

¹⁷ The South African Sports Association was the first non-racial domestic umbrella organisation which lobbied to have international sport federations withdraw their recognition of their whites-only South African affiliates. The SASA was succeeded in the 1970s by the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) and the South African Council of Sports (SACOS).

insisted that the All Blacks would not be authorized to tour South Africa unless a fully representative side was selected, in essence a side which included Maoris. However, the South African government was unyielding in its policies and consequently the tour was cancelled.

The cancellation of the 1967 tour was followed by a violent tour of Britain and Ireland in 1969/70. On this tour, the Springboks caught a glimpse of the sort of international loathing that had developed towards white South Africans because of apartheid. The demonstrations the Springboks encountered in the United Kingdom were some of the worst they would experience during the sports boycott. The “Stop the Seventy Tour” campaign was heralded as one of the most successful mass-action campaigns in post-war Britain.¹⁸ Writing on the “Stop the Seventy Tour” campaign – but which is certainly applicable to the 1981 tour - Martin Nixon makes the point that one of the crucial features of the sporting boycott was its ability to grip the media “by generating spectacle”.¹⁹ The violent clashes between protestors and police in Swansea during the 1969 Springbok rugby tour were widely publicised. So too was David Wilton-Godberford’s threats of releasing a ravenous locust plague on England’s major playing fields if the 1969 Springbok tour went ahead. The infamous “flour-bomb test” between the Springboks and the All Blacks at Eden Park, Auckland, in 1981 is another example hereof. These uncanny events had the knack of drawing substantial media coverage, which in turn further publicised apartheid as the catalyst for these acts of protest.

Following an equally violent tour of Australia in 1971, the Springboks found their touring prospects had somewhat dried up as the team became regarded as a liability and risked attracting civil unrest. However, ample teams still toured to South Africa to play the Springboks. Over the course of the next ten years, South Africa played all of its traditional rivals bar Australia, who were the only team to sever their ties with the South African Rugby Board. South African rugby was proving exceptionally difficult to isolate. With the SARB being a founder member of the International Rugby Board it had been able to use its historically strong international standing to counter any attempts to have the Springboks removed from international competition.²⁰ Furthermore, with the Springboks being regarded as one of the foremost teams in world rugby, it would be difficult to justify their exclusion

¹⁸ R. Nixon: “Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott,” *Transition*, (Vol 58), 1992, p. 58.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ D. Booth: “Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, (Vol 38), 2003, p. 479.

from the international circuit, as this would surely affect the progression of the game. To exclude the best from world rugby would mean not only affecting South Africa, but the game in general. This became a lingering question, particularly after South Africa was excluded from the first two Rugby World Cup (RWC) tournaments in 1987 and 1991 respectively. Questions were raised over whether a true world champion could be crowned while South Africa, who would have been one of the favourites to win the RWC, was excluded.

Ultimately then, South African rugby became the last of the country's major sporting codes to be internationally isolated, with tours neither leaving from nor coming to the country. John Nauright points out that by the early 1970s South African sport had become as sealed off as a faulty nuclear reactor, whereas rugby only felt true isolation by the late 1980s, particularly following the 1981 tour of New Zealand.²¹ It was, however, a comparably brief isolation, as by 1992 the Springboks had returned to the international fold with tours by first the All Blacks and then Australia, who had last played South Africa in 1971.

Although the sports boycott operated fundamentally as an anti-apartheid effort, on several occasions the movement redefined its objectives, and it was only in the 1980s that the boycott made an outright demand that apartheid be scrapped before South African sport could return to normal. Douglas Booth makes the interesting observation that each time the National Party adhered to the requests of the boycott the movement would redefine their objectives in a manner that exceeded what the South African government was willing to implement at the time.²² Thus, when the boycott first started in the 1960s, its initial requests were that the government deracialize sport before the country's sportsmen could return to the international fold. In essence, the boycott dangled the carrot of readmission in front of the Nationalist government, but every time the government implemented changes the carrot would be whipped away in an attempt to force continued change.

By the start of the boycott in the 1960s, organisations like SASA had rallied to not have South African sportsmen isolated, but instead to see that "all South Africans be given a fair chance to compete on merit and ability".²³ They viewed the sports boycott as a means through which to bring about non-racial sport, which would see black athletes being able to

²¹ J. Nauright: *Sport, Culture and Identities in South Africa*, p. 146.

²² D. Booth: "Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott," *Journal of Contemporary History*, (Vol 38), 2003, p. 482

²³ *Ibid*, p. 483.

compete on the same fields as their white counterparts. On the question of racial mixing during sport, the Nationalist government adopted an uncompromising stance:

“whites and non-whites could not play mixed sport in South Africa; mixed teams could not compete abroad either; foreign teams touring South Africa to play whites could not contain non-white players; non-white sportsmen from abroad could compete in South Africa, but only against non-whites.”²⁴

The development of the South African Council of Sport (SACOS) in 1973 as a successor to SAS served to further the sporting boycott as the Council became one of the prominent voices in the fight to isolate South African sport. Initially, SACOS was not as radical as the Black People’s Sport Council (which was born out of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s and which strongly opposed all negotiations and contact between black and white athletes until South Africa had been normalized). However, it became more politically active in the late 1970s under President Hassan Howa, who coined the phrase ‘no normal sport in an abnormal society’. SACOS came to be recognised (along with SANROC in London) as the sports wing of the anti-apartheid movement. Importantly, as SACOS radicalised, it changed its initial stance that sport could transcend race and politics and began to promote the notion that sport could not achieve anything while the society was grossly unequal.

Under Howa and Sam Ramsamy of SANROC, SACOS launched an international awareness campaign that under no circumstances would non-racial sport be able to remedy the abhorrent social conditions that made up South Africa society. Even if black South Africans were integrated into establishment sport, this would not alter the fact that they “suffered mass unemployment and poor living conditions, inadequate health services and transport, housing shortages, inferior education and subsistence wages”.²⁵ SACOS’s new drive changed the boycott, as it now no longer centred only on deracializing sport, as it had in the 1960s and 1970s, but instead, by the 1980s, had turned on the apartheid policy. Perhaps the greatest impetus to SACOS’s new course of action was the 1976 Soweto uprising, during which a number of the protesting youths were injured or killed by South African police. The event caused ripples internationally and fostered the belief that apartheid needed to be fought through any means possible. The multiracial sport carrot that had been dangled in front of the

²⁴ P. Martin: “South African Sport: Apartheid’s Achilles Heel?,” *The World Today*, (Vol 40), 1984, p. 235.

²⁵ D. Booth: “Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, (Vol 38), 2003, p. 483.

South African government for most of the 1970s had once again been whipped away. Instead, it was replaced with an ultimatum: apartheid needed to be removed before South African sport would be readmitted internationally.

However, some of the events taking place within South African sport also precipitated the intensification of the boycott during the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, the cancelation of the 1967 All Black tour to South Africa provided significant impetus to the boycott. As the National Party had a stake in international rugby with South Africa continuing, they were willing to implement certain concession to ensure this. By 1968, newly appointed South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, allowed future All Black teams to include Maoris on their South African tours. This was the first concession of its kind for South African sport and society. Fundamentally, Vorster was permitting racial mixing during white South Africa's most prized and most watched sporting fixture. The significance of the decision is perhaps best displayed when considering that the concession resulted in the first of two splits in the NP when Albert Hertzog, a conservative MP, and his followers broke away to form the *Herstigte Nasionale Party* (HNP). The fact that the government was seen to be willing to grant a concession to sport which clashed with their strict racial segregationist doctrine opened the door to further sport based protest.

Perhaps, though, the irony of the matter remains that the government was not granting this concession due to pressure from the sports boycott, but instead a concession to ensure that it did not lose one of its oldest allies, New Zealand. Nevertheless, the 1967 tour cancelation was seen to have struck a nerve in Afrikanerdom, which the boycott took as a sign that sport, and particularly rugby, was an area where pressure could be applied. Arguably, from this point onwards the boycott shifted much of its attention to try to isolate South African rugby.

Subsequently, protests against apartheid sport, particularly rugby, escalated in from 1967 onward and forced the National Party reassess its sporting policy. Consequently, the government developed the "Multi-National Sports Policy"²⁶ in 1971. While this policy did little to alter the existing order – and, if anything, only further compounded the separateness of South Africa's racial groups - it did further exemplify that pressure on sport could bring about a degree of change in the policies of the South African government. By the late 1970s,

²⁶ The Multi-National Sports Policy entailed that each 'nation', which essentially meant each race, could develop their own representative teams that would then play against other 'nations'. Thus, white teams would play black teams and so on. However, it did not mean that members of different races could play together for the same team.

sustained pressure on South Africa's establishment sport had forced the government to legalise multiracial sport. This meant that anyone from any race was eligible to join any sports club and could legally be selected for South Africa's national representative sides.

South Africa – New Zealand Rugby Relations during the Sports Boycott

The events that took place in New Zealand during the 1981 Springbok tour were not simply spontaneous. Instead, they were the result of New Zealanders growing increasingly uneasy over a number of years with their country's willingness to compete against the Springboks. Although between 1967 and 1981 the Springboks and All Blacks only met in eight tests, the NZRFU did not sever its ties with the SARB, meaning that communication channels to arrange tours remained open. Many New Zealanders regarded those matches that did take place between the two nations as a violation of the sporting boycott and as condoning apartheid.

Perhaps the tipping point for many New Zealanders was when the All Blacks toured South Africa shortly after the June 16, 1976, Soweto uprising during which a number of protesting schoolchildren were killed by police. The event sent shockwaves around the world and shored-up anti-apartheid attitudes. Many New Zealanders found it inexcusable that the All Blacks would still tour to South Africa despite such atrocities occurring. The 1976 tour was also the second time that the All Blacks had toured to South Africa shortly after an incident where there had been a mass killing of anti-apartheid protestors. The All Blacks had toured to South Africa shortly after peaceful protestors were massacred outside the Sharpeville police station on March 21, 1960. It seemed, though, that the tour to South Africa in 1976 was a bridge too far for many New Zealanders as they condemned the tour and any future tours between the two nations while apartheid remained in place. Perhaps, then, the 1981 tour became, amongst other things, an outlet for the antagonism harboured by many New Zealanders toward South Africa following the events of 1976.

Historically, South Africa and New Zealand have had little reason to be connected to one-another. Trade between the two countries has been minimal and, other than their political ties to the Commonwealth, there has been little to bring the two countries together.²⁷ Yet rugby has served to bind these two societies. Through rugby, these two societies developed a closer bond with one-another than either developed with any other rugby playing nation. For as long

²⁷ J. Nauright: *Sport, Culture and Identities in South Africa*, p. 146.

as the two nations have played the game they have competed against one-another, with the first official test between the Springboks and All Blacks taking place in 1921 in Dunedin, New Zealand. Reflecting on his childhood and growing up with stories of the Springbok-All Black rivalry, 1981 Springbok captain, Wynand Claassen, writes that:

“Even in these childhood games our series were always closely contested with the All Blacks allowed to win at least one test, but with the Springboks going on to win the rubber. Certainly, it was here that the All Black dream was born and it never left me.”²⁸

Errol Tobias, South Africa’s first ‘black’ (technically coloured) Springbok writes that: “After all, it is the dream of every player in the green and gold to come up against the Kiwis.”²⁹ The game has served as a major social event in both New Zealand and South African. Perhaps New Zealand’s willingness to exclude Maoris from South African tours prior to 1967 and South Africa’s willingness to break apartheid customs to allow Maoris to tour the country after 1967 can be seen as a measure of the value each society placed in maintaining rugby ties with the other. Through their rugby ties these two societies came to develop a sense of mutual respect for one-another. Afrikaners came to regard the All Blacks as “excellent species of manhood, strong and hardened by manual labour in a harsh climate...”³⁰ While the Springboks were viewed by New Zealanders in much the same terms. They were the descendants of the rugged *voortrekkers* who had etched out an existence in an unforgiving landscape.

Furthermore, rugby became a way for two relatively isolated societies to stamp their mark on a global scale. After the All Black in 1905 and the Springboks defeated England in 1913, the two British territories came to be regarded as the best in the world at the game, something few other facets of either society could claim. As Paul Dobson put it, “...rugby is the most noteworthy thing that happens [in New Zealand].”³¹ The same comment certainly rings true for Afrikaner culture, as outside of the mining industry there was nothing else Afrikaner society could claim to be internationally dominant at. In their pursuit of world rugby supremacy, South Africa and New Zealand have met each other more frequently than they

²⁸ W. Claassen: *More Than Just Rugby*, p. 22

²⁹ E. Tobias: *Pure Gold*, p. 84.

³⁰ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 82

³¹ P. Dobson: *Rugby’s Greatest Rivalry: South Africa vs. New Zealand, 1921-1995*, p. 20.

have played any other team. Although a world cup tournament was implemented in 1987, whenever the Springboks and All Blacks met the world title was understood to be on the line.

Tours between the two nations were eagerly anticipated years ahead of their arrival and the disappointment of cancellations during the apartheid era (as happened in 1967, 1973, and 1985) were unrivalled. Under apartheid, though, rugby relations between the two nations proved increasingly difficult to maintain. By the start of the 1960s, many New Zealanders were questioning their country's sustained contact with the racist South African regime. New Zealand had its own legacy of racial tensions (dating back to New Zealand's colonial era), and maintaining contact with the openly racist South African regime seemed to be at odds with their country's commitment to non-racialism. Significant aspects of New Zealand national identity were based on egalitarianism and racial harmony, with rugby and its multiracial character being regarded as proof of the successful assimilation within the society.³²

However, it has been contested New Zealand truly was the egalitarian society it considered itself to be and whether racial tensions existed in reality. There is cause to suggest that racial tensions did in fact exist within the New Zealand society. James Liu and Duncan Mills note that "New Zealanders are far less racially tolerant than their outside attitudes would lead an outside observer to believe".³³ Although the New Zealand historian, Keith Sinclair, points out that New Zealand in the twentieth century had relatively good race relations (in comparison to South Africa, South Australia, and South Dakota) he concedes that:

"[Maoris] are proportionately under-represented in executive and professional groups, and at universities. They are worse off in terms of most measurable indices of social status and prosperity. On average, they earn less money, live in worse houses and have less income than Europeans. They enjoy worse health."³⁴

Despite the lack of institutionalised discrimination (such as that which existed in South Africa), New Zealand's colonial legacy left disparities and conflicts within its society, particularly when it came to matters relating to land ownership. For much of the 1970s and

³² Liu and Mills quoted in A.D. Grainger *et al.*: "Postcolonial Anxieties and the Browning of New Zealand Rugby," *The Contemporary Pacific*, (Vol 24), 2012, p. 267.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 271.

³⁴ K. Sinclair: "Why are Race Relations in New Zealand better than in South Africa, South Australia, or South Dakota?," *New Zealand Journal of History*, (Vol 5), 1971, p. 121.

1980s land claims were a majorly controversial matter in New Zealand society, forcing Bill Rowling's Labour government to institute the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975 to investigate alleged transgressions of the *Treaty of Waitangi*. The Treaty (signed on 6 February 1840 by various Maori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown) underlined that Maori tribes would accept British sovereignty in return for the rights of British citizenship. Most importantly, though, the Treaty guaranteed the protection of Maori tribal authority and the continued possession of traditional lands, fisheries, and forests. The Maori claimants of these transgressions came into conflict with non-Maori property holders accused of being in possession of traditional land which had been guaranteed by the Crown during the 1840 Treaty. The Treaty itself, however, disturbed New Zealand *Pakeha* (Settlers or New Zealanders of European descent), many of whom regarded it as a form of ethnic discrimination and were uncomfortable with the "endless dwelling on the past" by Maoris.³⁵ The emerging tensions brought about by the land claims coupled with New Zealand's Nationalist government continuing to abide by the South African customs of excluding Maoris from All Black rugby tours gave the distinct impression that perhaps New Zealand was not the egalitarian nation it prided itself on being.

Initial protests over the exclusion of Maoris from South African tours concerned only a small section of the New Zealand society. However, protests grew substantially in the 1970s as the overall sports boycott shifted its focus to achieving non-racial sport in South Africa. The South African governments' continued request that the NZRFU selected an all-white All Black side for South African tours lead to the first measure of protest against in the maintenance of rugby ties between the two countries. Despite the growing protests over the exclusion of Maoris from the 1960 All Black tour to South Africa, the tour went ahead as New Zealand Prime Minister, Walter Nash, had a policy of non-interference in sporting matters. Perhaps, as 1960 was an election year, Nash believed that stopping the tour could jeopardise the re-election of his Labour Party (the Labour Party still lost the election to the National Party). The NZRFU too had chosen to persist with the tour. The Union attempted to justify the exclusion of Maoris by declaring that they believed it would be a degrading experience for Maoris to tour to apartheid South Africa.

By 1960, anti-racism was a growing force in New Zealand (and, perhaps, in the rest of the world when considering the widely publicised civil rights movement in the USA).

³⁵ R. Mulgan: "A Race Relations Lesson from across the Tasman," *The Australian Quarterly*, (Vol 68), 1996, pp. 79-80.

Consequently, the 1960 tour attracted the first considerable protests on New Zealand's willingness to 'play ball' with the racist South African regime.³⁶ However, these initial protests in New Zealand were not explicitly directed at the apartheid government but rather at the New Zealand government's willingness to permit the exclusion of Maoris on the request of the racist South African government.³⁷ By not intervening in the matter of rugby tours, the New Zealand government seemed to be refusing to condemn apartheid while their own country faced burgeoning racial issues. As a result, the 1960 tour protests took on an overtly racial character.

The 1960 tour demonstrations were known by their mantra of "No Maoris, No Tour", coined by the *Citizens' All Black Tour Association* (CABTA), who were responsible for coordinating the protests.³⁸ CABTA officials had attempted to meet with leading rugby official in the NZRFU in order to dissuade them from touring South Africa until Maoris could be included on such tours. However, no such meeting materialised and the tour went ahead, even after a petition with over 162,000 signatures (of a population of two million adults) opposing the tour was handed over to the government.³⁹ The SARB had held the NZRFU to its contractual obligations to proceed with the tour, arguing that the cancelation of the tour so soon before kick-off would not permit the SARB enough time to arrange an alternate tour. While the 1960 protestors failed to have the All Black tour called off, their initiative did serve to bring greater consideration to the Maori questions and kept the matter alive. In 1967, the New Zealand government took formal action to oppose the exclusion of Maoris on South African tours.

With the 1965 Springbok tour of New Zealand looming, the question over maintaining contact with apartheid South Africa was once again raised in New Zealand. The question over whether Maoris would be able to tour to South Africa in the future was once again the center of attention. The Springboks were greeted in New Zealand by measure of protest organized by the *Citizens' Association for Racial Equality* (CARE). The Auckland based organization would be one of the biggest instigators of protest action during the 1981 tour. While touring with the Springboks in 1965, the SARB Chairman, Danie Craven, was at pains to make overtures to the NZRFU and New Zealand government that he would see to it that

³⁶ G. Harding, D. Williams: *Toughest of Them All*, p. 73.

³⁷ J. Nauright: *Sport, Culture and Identities in South Africa*, p. 146.

³⁸ R. Thompson: "New Zealand: The Issue of Apartheid and Sport," *Africa Today*, (Vol 17), 1970, p. 13.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Maoris would be able to tour South Africa in the future. Craven had gone to New Zealand to try and patch up any residual feelings of resentment toward South Africa over the Maori question.⁴⁰ Under Craven's supervision, the 1965 Springboks tried to restore a sense of good faith between Maoris and Springbok rugby. The team was captured in the press holding Maori babies, rubbing noses with old Maori women (a sign of respect in Maori culture), and doing traditional Maori dances.⁴¹

However, while in the Springboks were in New Zealand in 1965 their future dealings with the New Zealanders was dealt a telling blow. Back in South Africa, Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd, delivered what came to be known as the 'Loskopdam Speech'. During the speech, Verwoerd indicated that Maoris would not be allowed to tour with New Zealand sides if they intended on playing against white South Africans. Verwoerd, credited as the 'architect of apartheid', stated that:

“Our standpoint is that just as we subject ourselves to another country's customs and traditions without flinching, without any criticism and cheerfully, so do we expect that when another country sends representatives to us they will behave in the same way, namely not involving themselves in our affairs, and they will adapt themselves to our customs.”⁴²

After refusing to comment on the Maori question for some years, Verwoerd now made the stance of his government abundantly clear. Consequently, the speech hardened New Zealand attitudes toward South Africa. Since its ascension to power in 1960, the Nationalist New Zealand government had refused to implement sporting sanctions against apartheid. The New Zealand government had justified this by claiming that closer working South Africa could help to curb apartheid.⁴³ Now, should the New Zealand government and NZRFU have yielded to Verwoerd's demands, New Zealand may well have found its professed racial harmony in jeopardy. With a planned All Black tour of South Africa in 1967 looming, the New Zealand government would need to act swiftly to offset any race-based conflict the tour might attract amongst New Zealanders.

⁴⁰ L. Cleveland: "The New Zealand Scene," *The Australian Quarterly*, (Vol 42), 1970, p. 105.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² I. Wilkins, H. Strydom: *The Super Afrikaners: Inside the Afrikaners Broederbond*, p. 239.

⁴³ P. Utting: *Lessons from the Movements of Australia and New Zealand* (14 April 2015).

Perhaps fearing that left to its own devices, the NZRFU would adhere to Verwoerd's demands and proceed with an all-white All Black tour, the New Zealand government intervened in the matter. Speaking on the proposed 1967 tour, New Zealand Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, stated: "as we are one people we cannot be fully and truly represented by a team chosen on racial lines."⁴⁴ Unless Maoris were allowed to tour South Africa with the All Blacks from 1967 onwards, it would be difficult to justify maintaining rugby ties with the South Africans. Although Verwoerd was assassinated in 1966, the South African government refused to bow on the Maori question and consequently the NZRFU, under pressure from the New Zealand government, cancelled the 1967 All Black tour of South Africa.

It should be noted, however, that the protests that started in the 1960s and culminated in the cancellation of the 1967 tour were protests aimed at the New Zealand government and NZRFU, rather than at apartheid South Africa. The acceptance by the NZRFU and government of apartheid sports customs had been the catalyst for the growing protest movement in the 1960s. Although the 1967 tour cancellation coincided with the growing momentum of the international sporting boycott of apartheid South Africa, the New Zealand protests were primarily concerned with ensuring racial harmony and equality in their own country. New Zealand demonstrators came to see South African sporting customs as potentially harmful to their country's burgeoning racial issues. Thus, their primary concern was bringing about a change in New Zealand's adherence to these racist customs. However, this changed in the 1970s, as New Zealand protests became increasingly anti-apartheid. The events during the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand are essentially the pinnacle of these protests.

By canceling the 1967 All Black tour, New Zealand had managed to force the hand of apartheid. By 1968, new South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, had amended the country's policy of forbidding Maoris and South African whites from competing against one another on South Africa soil. Vorster henceforth permitted New Zealand to send a "fully representative team of the best players available" on South Africa tours.⁴⁵ Vorster's only reservations were that these players not be too dark, there not be large numbers of them, and that these players not be selected with a political motive. While Vorster's decision was in no way a step towards dismantling apartheid, it was a significant concession as it parted ways

⁴⁴ L. Cleveland: "The New Zealand Scene," *The Australian Quarterly*, (Vol 42), 1970, p. 106.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

with the *Verwoerdian* style of grand-apartheid that disallowed any form of racial mixing. The concession meant that rugby, one of the bastions of Afrikaner power, would henceforth be engaging in racial mixing with Maoris during All Black tours, something that would have had Verwoerd turning in his grave. Vorster's concession was also made to ensure that South Africa kept its oldest rugby ally in a time where the international sporting boycott was managing to isolate more and more of South Africa's sporting codes. In this regard, the concession worked as the New Zealand government permitted the NZRFU to send a Maori speckled All Black team to South Africa in 1970.

However, the 1967 tour cancellation and subsequent concession by Vorster had provided the international sporting boycott with considerable legitimacy. Although the sporting boycott had not been directly responsible for Vorster granting a concession to New Zealand, the future presence of Maoris on South African fields was heralded as a victory for the boycott. By granting a concession to Maoris to tour with the All Blacks to South Africa, Vorster had legitimized the claims by those advocating the boycott that pressure on white sport could bring about a certain measure of change to apartheid.

By the start of the 1970s, the international sporting boycott had gathered substantial momentum. By 1970, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced a moratorium on international tours to and from South Africa. Furthermore, that same year South Africa was formally expelled from the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The 1970s also heralded a change in the objectives of the boycott. While the 1960s had been spent gathering sufficient support to isolate South African sport, by the 1970s the objective of the boycott was to deracialize South African sport before the country could return to international competition.

By the time of the 1970 All Black tour of South Africa, demonstrators in New Zealand had taken up the mantle of the sporting boycott. Demonstrators demanded non-racial sport in South Africa before sporting contact between New Zealand and South Africa could resume. Many New Zealanders felt that by participating in sport against South Africa, their government was condoning the sort of racially discriminatory practices that had been removed from their own society. The campaign against the 1970 tour reasoned that by maintain rugby ties with South Africa, New Zealand appeared to be an "acquiescent partner in the philosophy of apartheid".⁴⁶

⁴⁶ L. Cleveland: "The New Zealand Scene," *The Australian Quarterly*, (Vol 42), 1970, p. 108.

Although in 1968 Vorster formally allowed Maoris to join the All Blacks on South African tours, that same year the New Zealand Federation of Maori Students passed a resolution opposing the 1970 All Black tour of South Africa. Amongst Maoris, new forms of opposition toward South Africa developed, as they demanded that no Maori sportsmen should be able to play on a field where no South African of color was allowed. Although these first forms of opposition were directed at deracializing South African sport, they marked the first forms of opposition to the apartheid system. This opposition would grow during the 1970s until it became an outright condemnation of apartheid by the 1980s. The opposition of Maori students echoed most of New Zealand's Labor MPs, who feared that New Zealand could attract unwanted ramifications from sustaining contact with South African rugby. Together, these became some of the first voices to denounce the 1970 tour. However, more were to follow.

With the success of their 'no Maoris, no tour' campaign, CARE now demanded a moratorium on sporting ties between New Zealand and South Africa. Their first port of call was attempting to stop the 1970 All Black tour of South Africa. This time around, though, CARE's campaign received much wider support as university professors, students, Maori leaders, church leaders, and members of parliament attached themselves to the campaign.⁴⁷ Furthermore, CARE established links with the London-based South African anti-apartheid organization, SANROC, who had become one of the foremost bodies advocating the sporting boycott. CARE also invited Dennis Brutus, former President of SANROC, to New Zealand. Once there, Brutus undertook an extensive tour of the country, speaking to schools, church groups, public rallies and meetings, universities, and even appeared on radio stations and television to try to discourage sport with South Africa.⁴⁸ Brutus also met with the New Zealand Federation of Labor and the Executive of the National Council of Churches, but was refused an audience by the NZRFU, who considered him a troublemaker.⁴⁹

In 1969, the anti-tour campaign formed the umbrella body *Halt All Racist Tours* (HART). The organization was established in order to incorporate all opposition groups to the tour into a united front.⁵⁰ Over the next 10 years, HART became the center of New Zealand anti-South African sentiments. By the time the Springboks arrived in New Zealand in 1981, HART had

⁴⁷ T. Newnham: "No Side for Apartheid: A Diary of Protest," *Africa Today*, (Vol 17), 1970, p. 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

developed into a substantial organization and coordinated mass protests against the touring Springbok team.

By 1969, anti-tour protests had become an established feature in New Zealand. By this point, three major groups had emerged as leaders in the anti-tour movement, namely trade unions, churches, and Maoris. The question over the 1970 tour had caused rifts within Maori society, as the older Maori councils supported the tour while the younger Maori student organizations strongly opposed the tour. While there was not unanimous opposition from New Zealand's church groups towards the tour, the National Council of Churches did come out strongly against apartheid and believed that the 1970 tour should be closely monitored in terms of how it would affect race relations in South Africa. The tour had been justified in New Zealand political and rugby circles as having the ability to breakdown racial barriers that existed in South Africa.

With the 1970 tour drawing nearer, protests took a more sinister turn as a last gasp effort was made to have the tour called off. In early 1970, All Black trial matches in Christchurch, Palmerston North, and Wellington were met with demonstrations. Although initially peaceful, protestors in Wellington were arrested after invading the field with banners proclaiming 'Resist Racist Rugby'. In an adjoining field, a man was arrested after he poured petrol over himself and threatened to set himself alight if the tour was not called off. In May 1970, a firebomb was thrown through a window of the Auckland Rugby Union, one of the strongest advocates of the tour, causing extensive damage to the property. By June, massive demonstrations were taking place in the streets of Wellington.⁵¹ These acts illustrated that many New Zealanders possessed the motivation to mount fierce protests over the South African matter, as it proved to be a burning topic, in some cases quite literally.

Ultimately, however, those who opposed the tour could have little success if the New Zealand government did not join the fray. The government remained the only body who could see to it that the NZRFU cancelled the tour. Despite intervening in the 1967 tour issue, New Zealand Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, did not deem it necessary to become involved in the 1970 tour matter. The government maintained that the tour did not pose any serious political implications to their country, and that therefore it was not their place to become involved in the matter. Although the New Zealand Labor Party passed a resolution in 1970 opposing the

⁵¹ T. Newnham: "No Side for Apartheid: A Diary of Protest," *Africa Today*, (Vol 17), 1970, p. 11.

tour, they were not in a position to do anything about it. Thus, the NZRFU had relative autonomy over its own business and the 1970 tour of South Africa proceeded.

The 1970 anti-tour campaign marks a definitive shift in New Zealand protest politics. While protests in the 1960s had concerned the exclusion of Maoris on South African tours, protests in the 1970s believed there should be a moratorium on sporting ties with South Africa until the country implemented non-racial sport. Upon closer inspection, a shift in the dynamics of the protests soon becomes apparent: while the 1960s protests concerned a matter which was considered integral to the wellbeing of New Zealand society, by the 1970s, these protests had shifted their concern to the struggles of black South African under apartheid, albeit only to achieve non-racial sport. By the time the Springboks toured New Zealand in 1981, the objective of New Zealand protestors had once again changed as they no longer advocated only the desegregation of South African sport, but of the society as a whole. The protests in New Zealand mimicked the overall trend in the international sporting boycott as this too called for non-racial sport in the 1970s and a non-racial society in the 1980s.

Although the 1970 All Black tour went ahead, newly elected New Zealand Prime Minister, Normal Kirk, called off a scheduled Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1973. Kirk, a member of the Labor Party, which had come out strongly against the 1970 All Black tour, refused to allow the Springboks to tour New Zealand unless they selected a team on genuine merit.⁵² Upon request that South Africa field a racial mixed team SARB President, Danie Craven, gave an unequivocal response:

“I am not going to allow multiracial trials to take place. If we simply run off and stage multiracial trials against lawful policy then we become anarchists like the rest of them.”⁵³

Craven’s response likely cost his country the tour. However, Kirk had also been deterred by the fact that Christchurch was scheduled to host the 1974 Commonwealth Games, something which the Springbok tour may well have turned into a political football. By 1973, India, along with thirty African Commonwealth countries, had indicated their intentions to boycott the games should the New Zealand government not take immediate steps to halt the proposed Springbok tour.⁵⁴ Furthermore, a report by New Zealand police chief on the potential for the

⁵² “S African rugby chief rejects mixed trials,” *The Times* (England), 22 February 1973, p. 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ “Indian threat on NZ games,” *The Times* (England), 8 February 1973, p. 8.

greatest eruption of violence New Zealand had ever known should the tour go ahead was enough to seal the tours fate as it was duly called off by the NZRFU. The police report seemed to be a sign of what was to come as the next time the Springboks would travel to New Zealand was in 1981.

By 1975, both the SARB and NZRFU had set about planning an All Black tour of South Africa for 1976, as the 1973 tour had been labelled as ‘postponed’. It seemed that for the time being, a Springbok tour of New Zealand was not probable as it would draw demonstrations. Thus, it became a much more viable option for South Africa to host tours, as there was less likelihood of disruptions to such a tour. However, both Craven and Jack Sullivan, NZRFU President, acknowledged that the upcoming New Zealand general elections in November 1975 would play a role in whether the proposed 1976 tour would take place.⁵⁵ While the New Zealand Labour Party had traditionally opposed sporting contact with South Africa, the National Party was less likely to prevent the All Blacks and Springboks from playing each other.⁵⁶ A victory for Bill Rowling of the Labour Party would most likely mean that the tour would not take place as under previous incumbent, Norman Kirk, the party had seen to it that the 1973 tour did not take place.

In South Africa, there was an air of desperation around the tour. The sporting boycott was going from strength to strength in isolating South African sport and South Africa’s oldest rugby ally was on the brink of cancelling a third tour in nine years. However, there were reports Craven had thrown a spanner into the works of the New Zealand general election. CARE accused Craven of publically indicating that if a change in government in New Zealand permitted a Springbok–All Black tour, that the SARB would be willing to exchange the proposed All Black tour of South Africa for a Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1976. This was, of course, dependant on whether the National Party came to power in New Zealand. A newspaper report published the following telegram sent to Craven by CARE:

“Airmailing you police report proposed 1973 Springbok tour predicted greatest outbreak of violence in New Zealand history. Is it your intention to provoke this? If not, why blatantly intervene in New Zealand election campaign?”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ South African Rugby Board Archive (Stellenbosch University), Collection Newspaper Clipping. “Elections key to Bok tour,” *The Argus*, 21 July 1975.

⁵⁶ “New NZ voters may sway result in today’s election,” *The Times* (England), 29 November 1975, p. 6.

⁵⁷ SARB Archive, Collection Newspaper Clippings. “Dr Craven spurns NZ accusation,” *Cape Times*, 24 July 1975.

Craven's only response was that the telegram would end up in his wastebasket. To Craven's relief, the National Party were successful in their election to power, making a Springbok-All Black rugby contest more likely. While still Prime Minister, Bill Rowling had met with Jack Sullivan to request that he reconsider the tour. However, this was to no avail. By July 1975, the NZRFU confirmed that the proposed tour of South Africa would be going ahead. Perhaps the biggest boost for the tour, though, was the fact that a multiracial South African team was fielded against a touring French side in 1975 at Newlands. Albert Ferasse, President of the French Rugby Board, had pressured Craven to field a multiracial team. After initial rebuffs by Piet Koornhof, Minister of Sport, the match was authorised.⁵⁸ The match afforded those in New Zealand who supported sporting contacts with South Africa a chance to justify sustained contact. Sport, it was reasoned, could provide a way to facilitate racial mixing, thereby kicking away one of the struts of apartheid.

At the eleventh hour, however, the tour was plunged into jeopardy as shortly before the All Blacks were scheduled to arrive in 1976, South African police had gunned down protesting school children in Soweto, one of South Africa's biggest calamities in the twenties century. The incident escalated anti-South African feelings around the world, but still the All Blacks controversially toured South Africa barely a month after the fatal Soweto uprising. The tour "precipitated a major peacetime international crisis for New Zealand" as the country was censured for the tour.⁵⁹ The 1976 Montreal Summer Olympic Games were boycotted by African nations in protest at the presence of New Zealand athletes. For white South Africans, however, the tour and particularly the series victory over the All Blacks provided some relief in the ever-darkening South African scene. "Thank God for the All Blacks" commented one South African journalist, "at least disaster has not taken to the rugby field yet."⁶⁰

However, there was a sense after the 1976 tour that things may no longer be the same between the All Blacks and Springboks. A quote from New Zealand newspaper, *The Dominion*, published in *The Times* (England) summed up the speculations:

⁵⁸ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 101.

⁵⁹ "Springboks and All Blacks – end of an era," *The Times* (England), 21 September 1976, p. 7.

⁶⁰ "Springbok victory shines in darkening S African scene," *The Times* (England), 7 August 1976, p. 5.

“Whatever the image of South Africa when the dust settles, it seems clear that the Ellis Park referee [after the final test of the 1976 series] blew the whistle also on Springbok-All Black encounters as they have been known for 50 years.”⁶¹

The Dominion made a valid point, as the next time the Springboks and All Blacks would meet was in 1981 under the harshest conditions ever to befall a rugby series. The sides would meet again in 1986, although not as the All Blacks but as the Cavaliers, as the so called ‘rebel tours’ became the only way for South Africa to secure international competition.

By 1977, the South African government started to reformulate its sporting policies. The failure of the government’s Multi-National Sport policy in alleviating the pressure the international boycott was putting on South African sport, had left it with little alternative but to reconsider multiracial sport. By 1977, Danie Craven was permitted to hold mixed national trials, drawing on players of colour from the black South African Rugby Association (SARA) and coloured South African Rugby Football Federation (SARFF). By 1978, the three bodies had amalgamated to form the South African Rugby Board, though the white body still dominated the arrangement.⁶² Following the conclusion of the 1976 All Black tour, New Zealand Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, commented that the only way the Springboks would be welcomed back to New Zealand was if they selected a side on merit.⁶³ Certainly, after the amalgamation of the three rugby bodies the infrastructure existed to choose a merit selected Springbok-side (which, fundamentally, came down to selecting a multiracial Springbok-side). Thus, for the Craven and the SARB the inclusion of players of colour in top level rugby provide a way back into New Zealand and a way to satisfy the sporting boycott’s demands for non-racial rugby.

However, the extent to which Springbok teams of the 1980s could be considered as representative sides is questionable. While Errol Tobias was selected in 1981 as South Africa’s first Springbok of colour, it took until 1984 before a second player of colour could don the green jersey when Avrill Williams was selected to play against the touring England side. Williams and Tobias were the only players of colour to play for the Springboks in the 1980s. One would be hard pressed to consider Springbok rugby in the 1980s as representative of South African society with multiracial sport. Despite the fact that Tobias and Williams

⁶¹ “Springboks and All Blacks – end of an era,” *The Times* (England), 21 September 1976, p. 7.

⁶² A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, pp. 101-102.

⁶³ “Springboks and All Blacks – end of an era,” *The Times* (England), 21 September 1976, p. 7.

were able to prove themselves as world-class rugby players, they were labelled by the opponents of apartheid as ‘window dressing’, inclusions which were meant to take the political heat off of Springbok rugby.

In 1980, the Springboks received an invitation from the NZRFU to tour to New Zealand the following year. Even after approving the 1977 *Gleneagles Agreement*⁶⁴, an agreement by Commonwealth governments to discourage sporting contact between their own country’s athletes and South Africa, Robert Muldoon insisted that a merit selected Springbok-side would be welcome in New Zealand. The changes made in South African rugby in the late 1970s were considered extensive enough to invite the Springboks. In 1981, a merit-selected Springbok-side arrived in New Zealand, albeit with Tobias as the sole player of colour and Abie Williams as a coloured assistant manager. The tour was a violation of the *Gleneagles Agreement* and the international sporting boycott. The implementation of multiracial sport and the consequential first merit selected Springbok team was hailed by those in New Zealand who supported contact with South Africa as further evidence that sport could build bridges amongst South African people. While the governing New Zealand National Party formally opposed the tour, it had very loosely applied the *Gleneagles* principle of ‘discouraging’ sporting ties with South Africa. Muldoon had refused to cancel the tour as he believed this to be a violation of the basic freedoms of citizens. However, the tour caused such ramifications for both New Zealand and South African rugby that the next time the Springboks and All Blacks would face each other was in 1992, by which point the South Africa government had started formally dismantling apartheid. Essentially, as this thesis will illustrate, the ripples of the 1981 tour resulted in the degradation and isolation of South African rugby over the course of the 1980s.

Conclusion

By the start of the 1960s, an international sporting boycott was implemented against apartheid South Africa. It was believed that, by isolating the generally sport-mad South Africans, sufficient pressure could be placed on the government to re-examine its apartheid policies. Although a sporting boycott alone could not have succeeded in forcing the

⁶⁴ The ‘Gleneagles Agreement on Sporting Contact with South Africa’ had been initiated by the Commonwealth nations in order to support the sporting boycott of South Africa. While the agreement did not force governments to sever their ties with South African sport, it was unanimously agreed that these governments should do everything in their power to discourage their sporting bodies from competing against South Africa. As by 1977 most major South African sports had been isolated for some years, the agreement was largely directed at putting a stop to South African rugby, and particularly its ties with New Zealand which it valued above all else.

Nationalist government to scrap apartheid, it was a way to deliver a blow to the soft underbelly of Afrikaner nationalism, particularly if South African rugby could be isolated. The symbolic value of rugby to Afrikaner nationalism meant the government had a stake in it continuing, and were thus willing to implement certain concessions to ensure that the game remained in the international fold. Thus, rugby would not be easily isolated and in fact was only truly isolated in the 1980s, by which point most other South African sports had been isolated for well over a decade. However, the boycott was able to bring about some change in South Africa, as first the Multi-National Sports Policy and then the implementation of multiracial sport can be attributed to pressure from the boycott. By implementing these changes, the South African government had hoped to alleviate some of the pressure the boycott was placing on South African sport. During the 1970s, those who advocated the boycott had demanded that South Africa implement non-racial/multiracial sport before the country's sporting bodies could return to international competition. However, as the government implemented these changes the boycott changed its objectives and demanded that only when society was free of apartheid could South Africa compete internationally. Thus, by the time the Springboks arrived in New Zealand in 1981 demonstrators were not demanding non-racial sports, but a non-racial South African society.

The international sporting boycott against apartheid provided South Africa and New Zealand with the increasingly difficult task of sustaining their historic rugby ties. The fact that an All Black tour cancellation in 1967 was able to extract the first concession from the Nationalist government served to legitimise claims that sport, and particularly rugby, as an area where pressure could be applied to the apartheid regime. For the most part, the sporting boycott invested a lot of energy in putting a stop to Springbok-All Black rugby encounters as this was white South Africa's most prized contest. For those New Zealanders who opposed apartheid, the sporting boycott became one of the few ways through which to do so. New Zealand and South Africa did not engage in major trade or have particularly strong diplomatic ties. Arguably, rugby was the most significant thing that took place between the two countries.

Although the South African government had granted Maoris permission to tour South Africa from 1968 onwards, this did not allay the building pressure that had been mounting in New Zealand over the sustained contact with a racist regime. Increasingly violent protests surrounding the 1970 All Black tour of South Africa and the prospect of never before seen violence if the Springboks toured New Zealand in 1973, led many New Zealanders to question the feasibility of sustaining contact with South Africa at all costs. However, the

NZRFU refused to break ties with South Africa under the auspices that sport could build bridges amongst South Africa's racial groups. Consequently, the All Blacks toured South Africa in 1976, only a month after numerous protestors were gunned down by police during the Soweto uprising. New Zealand faced an international backlash for the tour as anti-South African attitudes – and anyone who played ball with them – skyrocketed after the events in Soweto. The next time the two countries would meet on a rugby field was in 1981, a tour which had significant ramifications for both New Zealand and South Africa.

Chapter Three

Preparing for New Zealand: The 1981 Ireland Tour of South Africa

“Whether we agree with mixed teams or not, we have to decide whether we want tours or not”.⁶⁵

For South Africa’s rugby enthusiasts 1980 and 1981 looked like the years that would finally see off the fear of total isolation. Rugby fans were greeted with the news that tests would be played against the British and Irish Lions, France, South American Jaguars, Ireland, the USA, and the biggest of them all, a three month Springbok tour to New Zealand, including three tests against the All Blacks. It seemed that with the breaking of the Springboks’ sixteen-year hiatus from New Zealand soil things were starting to regain some semblance of normality for South African rugby after the struggles of the 1970s. Despite growing hope in rugby circles that the isolation period was beginning to wear off, Fritz Eloff, SARB vice-president, thought otherwise. Eloff cautioned that despite a relatively busy season in 1980, it was too early to be optimistic, considering that the Springboks were still not welcome in the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and Argentina.⁶⁶ By depriving South Africa of regular and strong international tours, the boycott damaged the country’s rugby.

However, with the amalgamation of the SARA, SARFF, and SARB in 1978 came hope that multiracial rugby would be cultivated in South Africa, thus helping to allay the international conscience on playing rugby against South Africa. After all, the sporting boycott had insisted that South Africa needed to implement multiracial sport before it could return to international competition. In the years surrounding the first mixed national rugby trials in 1977, Craven had certainly been active in trying to bring about greater racial integration in South African rugby. This, in part, had to do with the fact that in 1977 Craven had travelled to London to meet with Peter Hain, one of the coordinators of the demonstrations against the Springboks in the UK in 1969/701, and a prominent figure in the sporting boycott against South Africa.⁶⁷ Hain had handed Craven a list of reforms as a starting point before lifting of the sporting

⁶⁵ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Itinerary Irish Tour,” no date available.

⁶⁶ “Eloff warns of isolation,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 February 1981, p. 13.

⁶⁷ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 102.

boycott could be considered.⁶⁸ Craven emerged from the meeting with the realisation that progress in South African rugby would not be made unless there was dialogue between the countries rugby playing people.

Craven's initiative to set up the Rugby Advisory Council with representatives from three of South Africa's four rugby bodies (the South African Rugby Union refused to participate in negotiations until the removal of apartheid) helped to establish fluid contact between these bodies and opened the doors to the 1978 amalgamation of the white, black, and coloured rugby bodies. The following year the South African Barbarians became the first multiracial team to tour outside of South Africa as they played in Wales, England, and Scotland.⁶⁹ The team consisted of eight white, eight black, and eight coloured players with Chick Henderson as manager and Dougie Dyers from the SARFF as coach. While the team was the first of its kind for South Africa, it still drew substantial criticism as many people saw it as a front to soften attitudes towards the proposed 1980 British and Irish Lions tour of South Africa, something admitted by the SARB rugby chiefs in later years.⁷⁰ However, despite the Barbarians tour being criticised in the UK as 'political window dressing' it was still an encouraging sight to many around the world. Ten years ago in South Africa, it would have been illegal for players of different races to play together.⁷¹ In truth, the steps made toward integrated rugby in South Africa, for whatever purposes, were significant and were certainly head-and-shoulders above any other sector of South African society in doing so. South Africa's rugby future was looking up.

Selling South African Rugby to the World: the 1981 Irish Tour of South Africa

Upon return from South Africa as a guest of the SARB for the 1980 British and Irish Lions tour, Jimmy Montgomery, outgoing president of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU), was quoted as saying: "I believe we should support rugby in South Africa and should go on the proposed tour at the end of next season."⁷² Montgomery stressed that during his stay in South Africa he saw no trouble with the society and that therefore contact with South African rugby

⁶⁸ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 102.

⁶⁹ E. Tobias: *Pure Gold*, p. 54.

⁷⁰ "The Irish tour and the big political battle to keep politics out of sport," *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 February 1981, p. 7.

⁷¹ E. Tobias: *Pure Gold*, p. 55.

⁷² SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.2: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Unclassified newspaper article titled "Munster out of Irish Five".

should be pursued if that game was expected to survive in South Africa. Montgomery adopted a stance which had become commonplace amongst rugby officials around the world, that rugby was at the forefront of change in South Africa and that therefore the game should be supported. Montgomery's view was certainly in contrast with many of the reports coming out of South Africa during the Lions tour. James Ross, President of the Scottish Rugby Union, wrote to Danie Craven that although the tour went ahead unhindered it was apparent that South Africa still had significant problems.⁷³ Similarly, a number of Irish journalists who covered the British and Irish Lions tour in South Africa came to the verdict that the changes that had been made in South African rugby were purely cosmetic "and made no difference to the basic injustice of apartheid."⁷⁴ A journalist from the *Irish Times* wrote that the tour "would do nothing to help the non-white players...it would inhibit the essential march toward bringing some semblance of justice to the game there."⁷⁵

However significant South Africa's problems were in 1980, it did not deter South African and Irish rugby bodies from discussing a possible Irish tour of South Africa in 1981, thereby breaking Ireland's 20 year absence from South African fields. Harry McKibben, President of the IRFU, set about probing Irish political territory regarding contact with South Africa. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the SARB learnt that following McKibben's meeting with Brian Lenihan, Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs, McKibben was advised that the Irish government would discourage any contact with South African rugby.⁷⁶ The Irish government feared that sporting contact with South Africa would endanger their international reputation, perhaps after witnessing how New Zealand had fallen out of favour internationally after the 1976 All Black tour of South Africa. Thus, the government would attempt to persuade Irish rugby administrators not to go ahead with the tour.⁷⁷ However, McKibben assured Craven that the

⁷³ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.2: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Unclassified newspaper article titled "Munster out of Irish Five".

⁷⁴ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Memorandum circulated by the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement titled "Rugby in South Africa" sent to the SARB by the South African Director-General of Foreign Affairs and Information, 26 November 1980.

⁷⁵ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Memorandum sent to the SARB by the Director-General of Foreign Affairs and Information titled "What the Irish press said about the Lions tour 1980," 26 November 1980.

⁷⁶ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Memorandum sent to the SARB by the Director-General of Foreign Affairs and Information titled "Ierse Rugby Toer Na Suid-Afrika," 26 November 1980.

⁷⁷ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Memorandum sent to the SARB by the Director-General of Foreign Affairs and Information titled "Ierse Rugby Toer Na Suid-Afrika," 26 November 1980.

Irish government would not take any significant steps to see that the tour was cancelled. Lenihan had informed McKibben that, despite Irish government's reservations on the tour, there was no question of official action, such as impounding players' passports.⁷⁸ However, in order to pressure the IRFU not to accept the invitation from South Africa, a government grant to the IRFU, amounting to R24,550, would be withdrawn.⁷⁹ Furthermore, it was stipulated by the government that no State employee selected for the Irish side would be given special leave to go on the controversial tour.⁸⁰

The Irish government was, however, not the only force the IRFU would have to contend with over the tour issue, as the country had developed a substantial anti-tour, anti-apartheid movement with a significant following. As news about the possibility of an Irish tour spread, the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement (IAAM) compiled a comprehensive memorandum to be sent to the IRFU, which it endorsed as the truth behind rugby in South Africa. The anti-tour memorandum provided a good insight into the prevailing conditions in South Africa and South African rugby (in comparison to some of the other documents, both pro and anti-South African, which were coming out of the rest of the world). This can be put down to the fact that Kadar Asmal, an exiled South African activist and close friend of Nelson Mandela, had founded the IAAM and chaired it.

In order to shore up support against the tour, the IAAM circulated a flyer depicting the sketched outline of a police officer about to bring down a baton on the head of what can only be assumed to be a black South African.⁸¹ The caption to the flyer reads: "If you could see their national sport, you might be less keen to see their rugby."⁸² The IAAM called on rugby officials, players and supporters, and the government to impress on the IRFU to abandon the proposed tour for moral reasons. The IAAM also advocated support for South Africa's true non-racial rugby body, the South African Rugby Union, which had refused to become affiliated to the SARB as it believed the Board was not doing all it could to ensure non-racial rugby.⁸³

⁷⁸ "Rugby plans under fire on two fronts," *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 March 1981, p. 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Flyer circulated by Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement sent to the South African Rugby Board on 26 November 1980, titled "Isolate Racist South African Rugby".

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

For the SARB, the mounting opposition in Ireland posed potential problems in securing the tour. With South Africa having no diplomatic ties with Ireland at the time, the IRFU was left to fight for the tour on its own. Upon the insistence of McKibben, the SARB executive decided that it would be worthwhile to send some of their representatives to Ireland to present a more favourable version of what was being done in South Africa to develop multiracial rugby. It was decided that Chick Henderson, manager of the multiracial Barbarians side that travelled to the UK in 1979, would travel to Ireland to try and combat the negative publicity the IAAM had been giving the tour. Henderson would travel to New Zealand later in 1981 to perform a similar task. Ultimately, though, and despite government reservations on the tour, the opposition in Ireland did not prove formidable enough and an Irish tour of South Africa was duly scheduled for May of 1981, consisting of eight matches.

For the SARB, though, the Irish tour, and to a larger extent the New Zealand tour later in 1981, was of importance that transcended rugby. In a confidential SARB document regarding the itinerary of the Irish tour, Danie Craven makes the following statement:

“As I see things we have been given grace in that we can still prove to the world during the Irish and New Zealand tours that we are on the right road as far as public opinion and ourselves are concerned.”⁸⁴

For the SARB the start of the 1980s had resembled the first sort of rugby normality since sanctions were applied against South African sport. For South Africa’s rugby enthusiasts the series against Ireland and New Zealand in short succession and coming on the back of a French and Lions tour must have warranted the thought that international rugby competition was returning to normal for South Africa. However, the SARB were cautious with their jubilation. If South African rugby hoped to shrug off the fear of isolation, the Ireland and New Zealand tours would need to be an advertisement for how South African rugby had changed for the good. As can be inferred from the above extract, Springbok rugby, as a representative of South African society, would have to illustrate that the country was on the right path and hopefully thereby deliver a telling blow to those who advocated sanctions.

Realising that much attention would be on South Africa during the Ireland tour and on the opinions of the returning Irish team, the SARB hailed the tour as a “pioneer’s tour”.⁸⁵ The

⁸⁴ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Itinerary Irish Tour,” no date available.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

tour was coined this because the SARB emphasised the need for the tour to feature mixed rugby teams to play against Ireland. The SARB were painfully aware that unless South African rugby made a concerted effort to feature mixed rugby more prominently on tours the Board could lose further international faith. After all, the sporting boycott had requested that multiracial sport needed to take place in South Africa. Thus, if the SARB could feature mixed teams against touring opposition it would certainly look like the Board was committed to integrated rugby.

Perhaps also weighing on the mind of Danie Craven and others, was the fact that although a tour of New Zealand had been organised, it was not yet a done deal. A large and wide spread anti-tour movement had developed in New Zealand that was hell-bent on stopping the Springbok tour later that year. In addition to this, there was increasing international pressure on Robert Muldoon, New Zealand Prime Minister, from the Commonwealth and African states to call off the tour as it was a violation of the *Gleneagles Agreement* and the sporting boycott.

Therefore, the Irish tour took on more significance than it otherwise would have. The SARB believed that if the Irish team could be seen to be playing against mixed teams, it could open up the opportunity for further international tours. The Irish tour itinerary states that: “If touring teams can, therefore tell the world that they will be playing mixed teams they have a case in their favour and ours.”⁸⁶ Thus, if Ireland could illustrate to the world that on an official tour of South Africa they would be playing racially mixed teams, heralding the future of South African rugby, a climate more conducive to touring could be fostered. Similarly, if the NZRFU could make the case that Ireland had played against mixed sides in South Africa, a sign of change in the country, it may serve to justify their invitation to South Africa for a tour of New Zealand.

Despite the changes implemented by the SARB to facilitate mixed rugby, these changes were still criticised internationally as being purely ‘cosmetic’. There is, perhaps, a truth to this, as it remains a moot point whether the SARB would have had the same drive to implement multiracial rugby had it not been under international pressure to do so. Although by the late 1970s multiracial rugby was a legal reality, it was predominantly implemented at senior level amongst provincial and national teams, while club and school rugby remained largely

⁸⁶ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Itinerary Irish Tour,” no date available

segregated. With regard to the development of multiracial teams, the SARB commented that: “Whether we agree with this or not, we have to decide whether we want tours or not.”⁸⁷ To field racially mixed teams against Ireland might well have served to relieve the pressure on the forthcoming New Zealand tour and possibly even relieve overall international pressure on Springbok rugby.

The Irish tour therefore became increasingly significant to the SARB as it was hoped that the strategies implemented for this tour would, firstly, secure the New Zealand tour, and secondly, help in shoring up international confidence in South African rugby. The idea was to have the Irish team return home with an optimistic outlook on South African rugby as foreshadowing change in the greater South African context. This sentiment is perhaps best captured in the message Danie Craven delivered to the Springboks before their first test match against Ireland. During this message, Craven stated that: “For those of us who carry rugby close to our hearts, the result of the match is not as important as the result of the tour.”⁸⁸ The Irish team would also be toured around the Cape, and Cape Town in particular, where “they will observe the good relationship due to the change existing in this province.”⁸⁹ Arguably, the Cape had the greatest levels of transformation in implementing multiracial rugby, and while race relations in the rest of the country were faltering, coloured and white rugby players in the Cape seemed to have found common ground through their affinity to the game.

Thus, the Irish team was not toured around other provinces in the same manner because the levels of integration were not of the same standard as in the Cape. The white Transvaal and Free State rugby fraternities had been less willing to implement multiracial rugby or even to compete against ‘non-white’ rugby teams. In 1980, numerous white Eastern Transvaal schools had refused to allow their players to take part in the national Craven-Week, a youth developmental tournament, because a SARFF-Schools team had been entered for the first time.⁹⁰ The incident led the *Rand Daily Mail* to report that the SARB was misleading world rugby by stating that the game had become multiracial, as there was clearly still great

⁸⁷ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Itinerary Irish Tour,” no date available

⁸⁸ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Boodskap deur die President vir die eerste toets teen Ireland,” 30 May 1981.

⁸⁹ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Itinerary Irish Tour,” no date available.

⁹⁰ SARB Archive, Collection Newspaper Clippings. “Transvaal-unie hou hom uit Craven-twis,” *Die Burger*, 10 March 1981, & “Wedstryde net vir wit,” *Die Burger*, 1 March 1982.

resistance to integration at grass roots level.⁹¹ Thus, what the Irish team were shown in the Cape did not truly reflect the rugby scene in South Africa, but this was the image that the SARB had hoped the Irish would convey to the world upon their return home.

A further strategy developed by the SARB to get a favourable review from the Irish team, albeit an unusual one, boiled down to the fact that “the more matches a touring team wins the better they feel”, according to the tours itinerary.⁹² Coming into the tour, Irish rugby was in somewhat of a slump. After having been expected to win the northern hemisphere’s Five Nations Championship in 1981, the team capitulated without recording a single victory. Thus, apart from two tests against the Springboks, the Board scheduled matches for the Irish team against the likes of the Combined Mines XV, the President’s Trophy XV, the Gold Cup XV, and the S.A Country XV ‘B’, all of which were either racially mixed teams or teams of colour. The thinking behind this was that the Board could kill two birds with one stone by having the Irish team play mixed teams or teams of colour, and would most likely be able to rack up victories against these teams, which were not accustomed to the calibre of rugby a national side would play. The results were, to say the least, somewhat surprising as Ireland lost six of their nine matches, including a narrow single point loss to South African Country XV ‘B’ side.

Whether the average South African was aware of the strings the SARB was pulling behind the scenes of the Irish tour is unlikely. For many South African it must have seemed that rugby was returning to normal. They were most likely wholly unaware of the lengths to which the SARB was going in order to secure tests. What the Ireland tour demonstrates is that the Board was desperate to secure tours. Tours provided an opportunity to demonstrate how far South African rugby had integrated, which, it was hoped, would have upshot of relieving some of the pressure on South African rugby. With integration having achieved its highest levels thus far by 1981, the Board felt that this was their best opportunity in some time to try to regain the faith of the international rugby community. In a sense, the central focus of the Board during the Ireland tour was not the rugby at hand, but securing the rugby to come. Securing the New Zealand tour would have been weighing heavily on the minds of Craven and others. Thus, not only were the Irish matches being used to test potential

⁹¹ “Dare Craven say ‘not guilty’ now?,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 7 March 1981, p. 5.

⁹² SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Itinerary Irish Tour,” no date available.

Springbok combinations for their New Zealand tour, but also to provide New Zealand's pro-tour faction with some ammunition against their anti-tour counterparts.

The Build Up: Preparing from New Zealand in 1981

By 1980, the SARB and NZRFU were engaged in talks over the possibility of a Springbok tour of New Zealand the following year. Later that same year the NZRFU extended a formal invitation for the Springboks to tour New Zealand in 1981. This would be the Springboks' first tour to New Zealand in 16 years and only their second overseas tour since the protestor plagued tour of Australia in 1971. By 1980, Jim Frazer, president of the NZRFU, started testing the waters for the feasibility of a tour. Frazer requested that a report be written by the two non-white rugby bodies affiliated to the SARB, the SARA and SARFF, on the status of integrated rugby in the country. John Cupido, Vice-President of the SARFF, was the first to respond to Frazer. In a report, titled "Progress toward the normalisation of rugby in South Africa as seen by the SARFF, the national controlling body of coloured rugby", Cupido urged Frazer that the isolation of rugby could not fix the social problems in South Africa and that those advocating isolation must be either misinformed or uninformed about the situation in the country.⁹³ Curnick Mdyesha, Secretary of the SARA, also responded to Frazer with a report. Although Mdyesha criticises the lack of development of black rugby, he also urges Frazer that isolation is not the way forward for South Africa.⁹⁴ Frazer did not, however, request a report from the non-racial SARU, a non-affiliate of the SARB, who would undoubtedly have provided a highly critical report of rugby in South Africa.

As affiliates of the SARB, though, the reports by the SARA and SARFF were perhaps more flattering of the status of rugby normalisation in South Africa than it truly was. In 1982, a report titled "Sport in the Republic of South Africa" by the Human Sciences Research Council illustrated that there was still a chronic shortage of sporting facilities in South Africa. The report stated that the capital did not exist to maintain the majority of sports facilities, let alone build new ones.⁹⁵ Both Cupido and Mdyesha could not have failed to comprehend, though, that their reports could be integral in securing the Springbok tour of New Zealand. It

⁹³ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. "Progress Toward Normalisation of Rugby in SA as seen by the SARFF, National Controlling Body of Coloured Rugby," 20 November 1980.

⁹⁴ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Copy of report by C.G. Mdyesha of the SARA sent to the SARA titled "S.A. Rugby Association", 27 November 1980.

⁹⁵ Human Sciences Research Council. *Sport in the RSA: Main Committee Report*, p. 87.

is perhaps also conceivable that Cupido and Mdyesha knew that the white SARB Executive would be seeing these reports and that if a critical report cost South Africa the New Zealand tour, it could lead to withholding benefits from the two non-white bodies.

These reports would serve as ammunition for Frazer through which to defend the NZRFU's invitation to the Springboks. Thus, a critical report by SARU, who were regarded by those who advocated the sporting boycott as the only true non-racial rugby body in South Africa, would provide further pressure on the NZRFU to not invite the Springboks. However, if Frazer could show the anti-apartheid, anti-tour lobby a report written by the two non-white rugby administrator advocating a case against isolation, it could form a seminal piece in the NZRFU's bid for a tour to go ahead.

With the conclusion of the Irish tour of South Africa, it seemed a given that the New Zealand tour would take place. The invitation to the SARB by the NZRFU had been condemned internationally, as well as by many New Zealanders who believed that playing rugby with South Africa would only serve to prop-up apartheid, but was not enough to deter the two rugby bodies. A full Springbok side under the management of Johan Claassen and Coach Nelie Smith was scheduled to depart for New Zealand in late July 1981. The prospect of the tour brought excitement to both countries. South African newspapers were abuzz with reports and statistics weighing up the odds of a tour victory, speculating on how the wet weather would affect the Springboks, and what role refereeing would play in the encounters. Foreign correspondents for South Africa newspapers worked tirelessly for any inside information regarding the All Blacks team selection. In the month before the tour, the Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*, publish on a daily basis articles such as “*Waikato warns Springboks*”, “*All Blacks no better*”, and “*All Black eight weaker than in 1965*” [Translated]. The breaking of the Springboks' 16-year hiatus from New Zealand caused a stir in both countries, but perhaps a little more so in New Zealand.

While New Zealand's rugby public were gripped by rugby fever, an anti-tour movement had been developing since the 1970s and had amassed a substantial following by 1981. This movement was kick-started in 1980 by Prime Minister Robert Muldoon's refusal to intervene in the tour, thus violating of the Commonwealth's *Gleneagles Agreement*. Many New Zealanders felt that by allowing the tour to go ahead, Muldoon was opening up the country to an international backlash. For those who opposed the tour for moral reasons, contact with

South African rugby was tantamount to support for apartheid, as the tour would alleviate some of the pressure that sanctions were apply to South Africa.

While Muldoon was often quoted as saying that he did not want the Springboks in New Zealand, upon closer inspection there may well have been a specific agenda to his refusal to intervene in the tour.⁹⁶ For New Zealand, 1981 was an election year and Muldoon knew that at least half of the country's population were in favour of the tour, which meant that the tour could potentially become an electoral matter. While Muldoon conceded that the tour could pose potential problems for the re-election of his Nationalist Party, it was likely that he would draw significant votes from those who supported the tour and, in particular, votes from rural New Zealand.⁹⁷ According to one New Zealand journalist, Muldoon was short of votes from rural areas.⁹⁸ Much of New Zealand's rural districts consisted of passionate rugby communities which were pro-tour in 1981, and thus by letting the tour continue, Muldoon could potentially gain votes from these districts as he would be seen to be standing up against those who were trying to intervene in the tour.⁹⁹

The sight of mass mobilisation in New Zealand against the tour left South Africa's rugby enthusiasts with a creeping sense of unease. South Africans were greeted on a daily basis with newspaper articles or images of anti-tour protests in New Zealand, some of which numbered near 30,000 protestors. One reader of *Cape Times* pointed out that the tour: "...would be like gate-crashing at a party. If one is not invited to a party, one should not push one's way in. We are clearly not welcome in New Zealand and should not subject our players to unnecessary humiliation."¹⁰⁰ Those who had lived through the 1969/70 tour of the United Kingdom were well aware of the effect that protestors could have on rugby. However, despite the reality of the growing anti-tour campaign in New Zealand, *Die Burger* assured its readership that protest action in New Zealand was continually suffering setbacks in their plans to disrupt the tour. When the newspaper reported on anti-tour protests in New Zealand, it always had the added comfort that these protests were half the size of the ones a week earlier. Readers were also informed that the tour venues had been selected with the purpose

⁹⁶ "Muldoon: The 'Boks will do us no good," *The Sowetan*, 11 March 1981, p. 9.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ "Stay away from NZ," *Cape Times*, 24 March 1981, p. 10.

of not playing more than three matches in any vicinity where protestors could be a problem.¹⁰¹ It was believed that by structuring the tour in such a manner it would force protestors to continuously be on the move, which would surely have a detrimental effect on their numbers.

For *Die Burger*, the increasingly visible Communist element amongst the New Zealand protestors was alarming. As the mouthpiece of the Cape NP, *Die Burger* reflected the governing party's anxieties over Communism. White South Africa, as the last remaining westernized nation in southern Africa, believed itself to be in the midst of a battle against a growing Communist presence, both internally and externally. A number of South Africa's neighbours in southern Africa had adopted broadly Communistic ideologies. Others were fighting civil wars against insurgents backed by Communist nations. With regard to the liberation struggle within South Africa, the ANC also espoused broadly Communistic ideologies and had received support from the Soviet Union after being exiled from South Africa. This led the NP to believe that South Africa would be engulfed in Communism should the ANC gain a foothold in the country. Reflecting on the 1980s, former state President, Nelson Mandela, wrote that:

“The National Party accepted the most hide-bound of the 1950s Cold War ideology and regarded the Soviet Union as the evil empire and communism as the work of the devil.”¹⁰²

However, the South African government, in order to explain away certain happenings, particularly on sporting grounds, also made use of the Communist rhetoric. When South Africa was barred from the 1968 Olympic Games and eventually expelled from the International Olympic Committee in 1970, it was put down to the large Russian contingent in the IOC working against the country and its ties to the USA. Similarly, protestors against the Springboks in the UK in 1969/70 were dismissed as a bunch of Communist troublemakers. In New Zealand in 1981, the Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ) was anti-tour and thus become a visible element in the protests surrounding the tour. *Die Burger* reported that during a rally in Auckland the CPNZ were distributing anti-South Africa pamphlets, which condemned the mineral rich country for using apartheid to create cheap slave labour and as a country that was of great strategic importance to Ronald Reagan's USA (one of the few

¹⁰¹ “Toer-teenstanders vuisvoos,” *Die Burger*, 3 July 1981, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰² N. R. Mandela: *The Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 641.

countries with whom South Africa still had a good relationship).¹⁰³ Thus, the by now familiar struggle in South Africa between the West and Communism was displaced to New Zealand, where the Springboks would have to contest with the Communist hordes trying to disrupt the tour.

While white South African newspapers were putting on a brave face for their readership that the tour would go ahead, the SARB were well aware of some of the difficulties the tour could face. Danie Craven had been in regular correspondence with NZRFU officials, and in particular with Ron Don, Auckland Rugby Union President, over the matter of potential tour disruptions. Don, and the Auckland Rugby Union, had been amongst the most vocal pro-tour supporters in the months leading up to the tour, a position that soon had Don labelled as “Enemy Number One” by the anti-tour movement.¹⁰⁴ Don had informed Craven that large tracts of New Zealand society were turning against the coming tour. He claimed that the majority of New Zealand newspapers “[had] made an organised combined effort to stop the tour” and that they were printing on a daily basis anti-South Africa propaganda in an effort to turn opinions against the tour.¹⁰⁵ However, Don remained adamant that although some problems with “Communist inspired” protestors were to be expected, the police would quite easily be able to deal with demonstrations.¹⁰⁶

Despite Don’s optimistic statement in April 1981 that “we won the battle...the tour is on”, it was not yet a done deal that the Springboks would tour. Shortly before the Springboks’ scheduled departure for New Zealand, South Africans learnt that an appeal had been lodged with the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (NZHRC) to stop the tour from going ahead. The appeal, which had been lodged by HART, the largest of the anti-tour groups, contended that the tour was not in the best interests of New Zealand society and could well have an adverse effect on race relations in the country. The appeal targeted the outlawing of the decision to grant visas to the Springboks, without which the tour would not be able to take place. Quoting a legal source in New Zealand, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that: “the commission may be obliged, under two international human rights accords, to rule that the

¹⁰³ “NS kwaad oor jong betogers,” *Die Burger*, 4 July 1981, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. Letter to Danie Craven from Ron Don regarding the 1981 tour, 15 April 1981.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

government must withhold entry visas from the Springbok players and officials”.¹⁰⁷ As New Zealand was a signatory of the 1969 United Nations convention to eliminate all racial discrimination, as well as a signatory of the *Gleneagles Agreement*, the NZHRC would attempt to prove that by allowing the Springboks to tour, Muldoon would be contravening two agreements to which New Zealand had pledged itself.¹⁰⁸

With the court’s verdict pending, South Africans heard that the NZRFU would also be convening an emergency meeting during which a final decision on the feasibility of the tour would be taken. Many New Zealanders felt certain that the NZRFU would come to its senses and call off the tour as a matter of national security. Fortunately for the SARB and South Africa’s rugby public, neither the Human Rights Commission, nor the NZRFU found any reason for the tour to be called off or even delayed, despite the quite apparent effect it could have on New Zealand. The news came as a welcome relief to Craven who, despite being adamant that he had never doubted that the tour would take place, must have had his heart in his mouth in the early weeks of July as he witnessed New Zealand society become increasingly agitated over the tour. On July 11, less than two weeks before the Springboks were scheduled to depart for New Zealand, the NZRFU committed to proceeding with the tour. For the first time since the invitation was extended to the SARB in 1980, South Africans could feel supremely confident that the tour would take place. Robert Muldoon, although confessing his disappointment in the decision of the Rugby Union, reiterated that it was not his place to intervene in the tour, which essentially meant that there were no obstacles to the tour going ahead.

For New Zealand’s anti-tour movement, the court appeal and NZRFU emergency meeting had been a great disappointment, as both had fallen through and the tour seemed destined to continue. In a last gasp effort to try and deter the tour from happening, large protests took place in Auckland, Christchurch, and Wellington. Many of these gatherings were characterised by the physical altercations that took place in the streets between pro- and anti-tour groups, essentially foreshadowing what would become a weekly occurrence while the Springboks were in New Zealand. In Christchurch, protestors wrote anti-tour slogans against the walls of the Canterbury rugby office in blood.¹⁰⁹ There was also a hunger strike by Christchurch protestors who had been arrested for unlawful protesting and were refusing to

¹⁰⁷ “Rugby plans under fire on two front,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 March 1981, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ “Hof in NS beslis nou oor toer,” *Die Burger*, 9 July 1981, p. 3.

pay bail.¹¹⁰ However, in spite of these last minute difficulties the tour was scheduled to go ahead.

Despite their failure in preventing the tour, protestors were not deterred as their new objective now became the duration of the tour. John Minto, national Chairman of HART, released a statement promising that the demonstrations during the tour would be a protracted endeavour during which protesters would do their worst.¹¹¹ The New Zealand government had given the police full discretion over either shortening or cancelling the tour if it became a matter of national safety. Essentially, this painted a target on the police, as protestors knew that if they could overextend the police they had a real chance of affecting the duration of the tour.

Through various newspaper articles, South Africans had learnt that the tour could be jeopardised if protests escalated to uncontrollable levels. They were also informed that in protest over the tour, New Zealand television had threatened not to broadcast matches internationally, specifically so that South Africans could not view them. However, the threat proved empty and matches were broadcast internationally. Ironically, the fact that the matches were aired proved pivotal in showing the outside world the mayhem that unfolded in New Zealand during the tour. International audiences could see the sort of chaos a touring Springbok side could attract, which proved decisive in deterring many rugby nations from inviting the Springboks to tour after 1981.

Although the Springboks had gone to New Zealand under the auspices of being a ‘pioneers tour’ during which they would show the world that they were still on the right track, the Springboks, and for that matter the All Blacks, would find that the fate of the tour no longer resided in their hands.¹¹² Regardless of how diplomatic the Springboks were on tour, their fate lay in the hands of the police and the demonstrations, or as *Die Burger* dubbed the protestors, “the enemies of South Africa”.¹¹³ In a sense then, the Springboks and their supporters would be helpless onlookers as their tour was either completed or called off short.

It seemed that, amidst the increasing difficulties surrounding the New Zealand protests and actually securing the tour, the rugby aspect of the tour had been somewhat overshadowed.

¹¹⁰ “Kommer oor duur van toer,” *Die Burger*, 11 July 1981, p. 1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Itinerary Irish Tour,” no date available.

¹¹³ “Dit gaan moeilik wees,” *Die Burger*, 13 July 1981, p. 8.

South African rugby enthusiasts would be hoping, though, that history did not repeat itself. Those who could recall the disastrous 1969/70 tour of Britain, the first of the ‘demo’ tours, would remember the Springboks losing all but their last match in the face of fierce protests, the sort of protests that it seemed would be rivalled in New Zealand. As one reader lamented in *Die Burger*, the fact that the Springboks would have to remain calm in the face of protests, as in 1969/70, meant “they will seldom deliver their best, because there is a lack of aggressiveness, which suffocates attacking rugby.”¹¹⁴ With the stories coming out of New Zealand regarding the anticipated levels of protest action, South Africans knew that the tour would be difficult, but it is unlikely that they would have anticipated what was to come.

The 1981 Springbok Tour on the International Radar

Perhaps more so than with any other tour, the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand became an international event as the eyes of the world turned to the tour. By allowing the tour to take place, Robert Muldoon had made New Zealand the centre of much international criticism. One New Zealand newspaper, fearing the worst, called on New Zealanders of all convictions to restrain their anger toward other groups as New Zealand’s international loss would be so great because of the tour that it could not afford any form of civil war as well.¹¹⁵ By allowing the tour, New Zealand had come to be regarded by many as a sympathiser of apartheid, and was consequently treated as such.

Those who advocated the sporting boycott also targeted New Zealand, as they believed that severing Springbok-All Black ties would deliver a telling blow towards isolating white South Africa’s most revered sport. David Black and John Nauright make this point and argue: “from the mid-1970s the effort to force the severing of New Zealand-South Africa rugby relations was the single-most important driving force behind the extension of sport sanctions internationally.”¹¹⁶ Thus, the decision to allow the tour to proceed provoked more international anger towards New Zealand than it did toward, for instance, Ireland or France, both of whom had recently toured to South Africa. The perceived pivotal importance of New Zealand in bringing about the isolation of South African rugby meant it attracted heavy criticism when it did not play ball with the boycott, such as in 1970 and 1976 when the All Blacks had continued to tour South Africa in spite of the boycott.

¹¹⁴ “Dit gaan moeilik wees,” *Die Burger*, 13 July 1981, p. 8.

¹¹⁵ SARB Archive, Collection Newspaper Clippings. “No place for politics,” *The New Zealand Herald*, 13 March 1981.

¹¹⁶ J. Nauright, D. Black: *Rugby and the South African Nation*, p. 87.

At the forefront of much of the international criticism were the Commonwealth countries. Much of their criticism over the tour was directed at Robert Muldoon, whom they regarded as having disobeyed the *Gleneagles Agreement* to which he had agreed in 1977. This was not the first time that New Zealand had found itself in hot water over maintaining rugby ties with South Africa. The 1973 All Black tour of South Africa had been cancelled partly due to threats from black Commonwealth countries to boycott the 1974 Commonwealth games in Christchurch. Furthermore, following an All Black tour of South Africa in 1976, shortly after the shooting of protestors during the Soweto uprising, twenty-one African countries, as well as Guyana, boycotted the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympic Games because of New Zealand's participation in the games. The *Gleneagles Agreement* had, to a certain extent, come about in order to prevent a similar boycott at the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games over the 1976 All Black tour of South Africa.¹¹⁷ In essence, though, the agreement was born out of the desire to put a stop to Springbok-All Black rugby contests and the repercussion's these contests were causing. With the 1981 tour set to take place and Robert Muldoon continuing to defend his decision, it seemed likely that New Zealand's presence at the 1982 Commonwealth Games in Australia would again result in the games being boycotted by the black Commonwealth affiliates.

Perhaps, though, New Zealand's most vociferous critic was Australia. Australia had adopted a strong approach of zero contact with South African sport teams and had severed its contact with South African rugby after the troublesome 1971 Springbok tour of Australia. The country had made its disappointment with New Zealand well known after the 1981 tour had been confirmed. Being the host nation for the following years Commonwealth Games, Australia felt the Springbok tour would likely bring on a mass boycott of the games if New Zealand athletes took part. Leslie Martyn, President of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association, warned New Zealand that an invitation to the Springboks could jeopardise the place of New Zealand athletes at the 1982 games.¹¹⁸ Martyn pointed out that, as many of the Commonwealth members were black African states, it was possible that they could pass a resolution that New Zealand should not be represented at the games.¹¹⁹ If New Zealand followed through with the tour invitation, thereby violating the sporting boycott and the *Gleneagles Agreement*, they could well be targeted by sports sanctions. The IOC and its

¹¹⁷ J. Nauright, D. Black: *Rugby and the South African Nation*, p. 85.

¹¹⁸ "Warning to New Zealand", *The Times* (England), 26 May 1981, p. 9.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Communist affiliates had in the past been sympathetic to anti-South African, anti-racist protests. If New Zealand continued with the invitation to the Springboks, it was likely that they would be treated in the same way that South African athletes were being treated.¹²⁰

Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, had also been vocal in his criticism of the New Zealand government's decision not to intervene in the tour. In addition to forbidding any Australian referee to officiate tour matches, Fraser had insisted that New Zealand be reprimanded by moving the scheduled Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting in Auckland later in 1981 to another country. This decision had been made by the Commonwealth and had given New Zealand up until 21 July, the day before the first scheduled match of the tour, to call off the tour, before steps would be taken against the country.¹²¹ It also became apparent that a Commonwealth Heads of State meeting scheduled for Sydney the following year would be boycotted if an invitation was extended to Robert Muldoon.¹²²

Amongst some of the others to come out against New Zealand were Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia, and Robert Mugabe, Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, both of whom issued statements in which they impressed upon New Zealand to give in to international pressure and to call off the proposed tour.¹²³ Muldoon's response to these requests was that he would not interfere in the country's sport, as it would deny New Zealanders their right to watch sport. Out of protest at the tour, a West Indian cricket tour to New Zealand in 1981 was also cancelled.¹²⁴

By allowing the tour to proceed, New Zealand had labelled itself as an apartheid sympathiser, and would be treated as such. New Zealand was seen as providing relief through rugby to a system which, by the 1980s, was abhorred by most of the world and who advocated that apartheid be fought through any means possible, including sport. Again, though, had Springbok-All Black ties not been of such significance to South African rugby, it is unlikely that the tour would have evoked as strong a response as it did toward New Zealand.

¹²⁰ "Warning to New Zealand", *The Times* (England), 26 May 1981, p. 9.

¹²¹ "Statebond stell ultimatum," *Die Burger*, 11 July 1981, p. 1.

¹²² "Gleneagles dood, se Muldoon," *Die Burger*, 22 July 1981, p. 1.

¹²³ "Keer bok-toer – Kaunda, Mugabe," *Die Burger*, 13 July 1981, p. 5.

¹²⁴ "Gleneagles dood, se Muldoon," *Die Burger*, 22 July 1981, p. 1.

Conclusion

White South Africans had hoped that 1981 would be the year that saw off the fear of rugby isolation. With the Irish returning to South African fields for the first time in 21 years and the Springboks returning to New Zealand fields for the first time in 16 years, it was not hard to see why 1981 looked like end of isolation. For Danie Craven the future was clear: the New Zealand tour would either open the doors to international acceptance or shut them entirely. For this reason, the 1981 tour was possibly the most important tour ever undertaken by a Springbok side, as they carried not only the responsibility of their own tour, but of restoring South Africa's rugby future. It seemed somewhat unreasonable that such a diplomatic responsibility rested on a group of young men, most of whom were politically ignorant or indifferent. After all, they were not politicians but sportsmen, staring down a matter that was ultimately a political conundrum.¹²⁵ The tour would need to be an advertisement for Springbok rugby and South Africa in general if the SARB wished to be readmitted to full international competition. Commenting on this facet of the tour, *Die Burger* reported that: "the Springboks, win or lose, be worthy opponents and play the sort of rugby that would command respect from New Zealand and the rest of the world."¹²⁶

As Craven reiterated at the teams official send off, they would be expected to be ambassadors for their country and sport in what was anticipated to be harsh conditions as the tour was being turned into a game of political football.¹²⁷ Any disreputable incidents on the playing field could close the doors on South Africa's international rugby hopes (the message seemed not to have been passed on to Springbok centre, Danie Gerber, who would go on to knocked-out All Black, Stu Wilson, with a punch in the first test of the tour).¹²⁸ For the Springboks it seemed that, as an earlier mentioned reader of *Die Burger* pointed out, they would be constrained from playing their natural style of aggressive rugby, yet in the same breath were expected to play a quality of rugby that would serve as an advertisement for Springbok rugby.

Furthermore, Johan Claassen, who had coached the Springboks on the 1969/70 UK 'demo' tour, was the only member of the touring party who had dealt with demonstrators. Therefore, Craven tasked Claassen with educating the players on the "provocative and nerve-wracking"

¹²⁵ Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015.

¹²⁶ "Toer hou sleutel vir SA, se Craven," *Die Burger*, 10 July 1981, p. 26.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

tactics employed by protestors.¹²⁹ Ultimately, though, nothing would prepare the Springboks for the events that took place in New Zealand and the USA. In the months leading up to the tour, South African newspapers had commented that, while demonstrations would put strain on the Springboks, there was no possibility of the demonstrations being as severe as they had been in the UK in 1969/70 and in Australia in 1971.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ “Bokke groentjies teen betogers,” *Die Burger*, 14 July 1981, p. 9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Chapter Four

“One, two, three, four, we don’t want your racist tour”: The Springboks in New Zealand

*“I will never forget what Doc said to us before we left. He said there will never be another Springbok team like this to leave our shores”.*¹³¹

All attempts to scuttle the Springbok tour before it got off the ground had failed. As a result, a Springbok side departed on 16 July for a sixteen-match tour of New Zealand and a three match stopover in the USA on the way back. The Springboks left South Africa under the auspices of being the first ‘merit-selected’ Springbok team to tour abroad. The team included South Africa’s first Springbok of colour, Errol Tobias, a builder from Caledon in the Western Cape, as well as Abe Williams, a SARFF official who was assistant manager for the tour. However, getting to New Zealand would be a feat on its own. As the Springboks were barred from touching down on Australian soil, what should have been a two-day trip was turned into four. The Springboks had to travel from Johannesburg to New York, to Los Angeles, to Honolulu in Hawaii, before traveling from there to New Zealand. The team had been warned that they would be met by a measure of protests in the US when their plane touched down in New York, foreshadowing what was to come when they would play the US on route back from New Zealand.¹³²

John Minto of HART had guaranteed that the demonstration that would meet the Springboks at Auckland airport upon their arrival would be one of the largest to date.¹³³ However, due to the convoluted travel arrangements, New Zealand protesters wanting to ‘welcome’ the Springboks were in some disarray about when the team was scheduled to touch down in Auckland. When the Springboks arrived on 19 July, it was a disappointing turn out for the protestors, who had planned this to be a showpiece moment to warn the Springboks of what they were set to encounter over the coming months. Upon arrival in Auckland, the Springboks must have felt somewhat better about the situation they were facing when they were met with only a handful of protesters who were easily cleared away by police.

¹³¹ Interview with DeVilliers Visser, 7 June 2015.

¹³² “Yank- betogers wag Bokke in,” *Die Burger*, 16 July 1981, p. 1.

¹³³ “Duiwelse plan teen Bokke,” *Die Burger*, 17 July 1981, p. 1.

Gisborne: Springboks vs. Poverty Bay

Following a brief stay in Auckland, the Springboks departed for Gisborne, where they were scheduled to play the first match of the tour on 22 July against Poverty Bay. Opinions in New Zealand were polarised over the tour to the extent that within families there was disagreement over the tour matter.¹³⁴ As one police officer recalled, while he would be preparing to go out and confront a demonstration his brother would be in the next room strapping pillows to himself so that he did not get injured while protesting against the tour.¹³⁵ The first match of the tour was a chance to test the waters regarding what could be expected for the rest of the tour. The anti-tour movement had vowed that the Springbok tour would not last for its full duration as they planned to force it into being either shortened, or called off completely. Newspapers informed South Africans that New Zealand protestors were distributing pamphlets with instructions on how to make petrol bombs and how to shatter glass effectively so it could be spread over playing fields where matches would be taking place.¹³⁶ In New Zealand, concern was rising over the potential for violence erupting between the protestors and rugby supporters wanting to see the Springboks play. In the run-up to the tour, there had been numerous scuffles during demonstrations between pro- and anti-tour supporters.

Gisborne did not have a reputation for having a significant anti-tour movement. It was some distances from major cities and universities, which were expected to yield the greatest number of demonstrators. However, Gisborne had a significant Maori community who, somewhat unexpectedly, gave the Springboks an official welcome at the local *Marae*¹³⁷. As with the rest of New Zealand, the tour was a fractious issue amongst Maori and was not unanimously rejected or accepted. During the welcoming ceremony Graham Latimer, President of the Maori Council, made it clear to the Springboks that he was against the tour

¹³⁴ *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ "Duiwelse plan teen Bokke," *Die Burger*, 17 July 1981, p. 1.

¹³⁷ A *Marae* (meeting ground) is a sacred carved building used for gatherings and social occasions and is a focal point for Maori communities as it is their place of 'belonging'.

and stated that: “we [the Maori Council] will not make another such welcome unless your government changes its apartheid policy.”¹³⁸

For Johan Claassen it also became apparent that the New Zealand media would be going out of their way to make the tour difficult. During the Springboks’ first press conference in New Zealand, Claassen fought a losing battle to try to keep the conference focused on rugby. Claassen was peppered with questions from the start on whether he was at all concerned that the ripples of the tour would stretch beyond rugby. Furthermore, Errol Tobias became the subject of much debate in the New Zealand press, most of whom dismissed him as ‘window dressing’, an inclusion meant to take some political heat off the mainly white Springbok team. During the first press conference, Abe Williams was also questioned on whether he thought it was more important that he and Tobias be involved in Springbok rugby or got voting rights in South Africa.¹³⁹ Consequently, Tobias became a representative of black South Africa through which journalists would question apartheid policies. Journalists would use Tobias as an example when there were questions about the Pass Laws¹⁴⁰, which of course Tobias did not have to adhere to because he was coloured not black, or the Group Areas Act¹⁴¹. Consequently, Tobias had a somewhat torrid time on the tour and was treated with disdain by the white Springbok management, as he came to embody much of hardship the management had to endure at the hands of the media and protestors.¹⁴² On several occasions, Tobias requested to go home, but Craven convinced him to stay.¹⁴³

The New Zealand media played a large part in the tour, as they sided with the anti-tour movement and subsequently gave substantial coverage to protests. This was much to the annoyance of Robert Muldoon and those trying to underplay the scale of events unfolding in New Zealand. The media coverage was seen to be spurring on the protestors as they could

¹³⁸ *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

¹³⁹ “NS pers wil niks van rugby weet,” *Die Burger*, 20 July 1981, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ The Pass Laws restricted the areas wherein black South Africans could freely move or imposed curfews between which times blacks were allowed to enter designated ‘white areas’, usually for labour purposes, but were forced to leave these areas when it came curfew time. The law was immortalized in the fact the blacks were forced to carry at all times a ‘pass book’, later renamed a citizenship document, which gave them access to certain designated areas.

¹⁴¹ The Group Areas Act was designed to keep South Africa’s races separate as it designated certain areas to which different races had to adhere. In some cases, black areas became reclassified as white areas at which point there were forced removals of those who occupied the land.

¹⁴² E. Tobias: *Pure Gold*, p. 86.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 93.

spread their anti-tour message to a wider audience through the media. One New Zealand reporter recalled how, while out covering an anti-tour riot, a civilian yelled at him that “this is all your fault”, implying that the excessive media coverage was sparking larger and more violent protests.¹⁴⁴ With the widespread media coverage of the tour bringing news into people’s homes through television and radio, it made it ever more difficult for New Zealanders not to choose a side.

The night before the first match, though, protest action in Gisborne escalated. Protestors broke into the stadium where the match was to be played and strew shattered glass on the field. That same night, a large group of protestors gathered outside the Springboks’ hotel with whistles and megaphones trying to cause the team a sleepless night in order to affect their performance the next day. In addition to this, police discovered a protestor carrying a deadly gas in his vehicle in front of the Springboks’ hotel, which was likely intended to be triggered when the team emerged to leave for their match.¹⁴⁵ A warning was also given to the Springboks that a sort of teargas would be sprayed over the field for crowd control purposes in the event that things got out of hand.¹⁴⁶

The morning of the first match an air of uneasiness lay over the quiet town as the eyes of the world turned to it. Poverty Bay was not renowned for being among the strongest provincial teams in New Zealand as they had ended fifth in the second division of the provincial tournament the year before. Thus, there was not as much interest in the outcome of the match as there was in the conditions under which the match would be played. Upon arrival at Gisborne airport, the Springboks encountered forty protestors, hardly something to make them shake in their boots. However, the news was that HART had organised protestors to travel to Gisborne to make an immediate impact on the tour.

HART had labelled the match the ‘National Day of Shame’ and protestors were set to try to disrupt the contest. For the Springboks, the match itself would not be an easy one. Despite Poverty Bay’s weakness in their domestic contest, Prof Claassen reminded his players that it was an honour for any New Zealand side to play the Springboks and that these teams usually

¹⁴⁴ *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

¹⁴⁵ “Stryd verskerp teen bokke,” *Die Burger*, 22 July, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

performed above their capabilities in these matches.¹⁴⁷ A substantial police presence of over 300 guarded the venue, giving rest to any lingering thoughts about protestors.

A crowd of some 20,000 spectators, more than the entire population of Gisborne, gathered to watch the first Springbok match on New Zealand soil in 16 years. They were unaware, though, that a group of over 400 protestors was making its way to the ground with the intent of storming the field. The protestors carried banners with massive swastikas in green and gold (the Springboks' traditional playing colours) and various other anti-tour and anti-apartheid banners.¹⁴⁸ All 400 of the protestors were engaged in chants of “*Amandla Awethu*”, a rallying cry that was used by the ANC during apartheid, meaning ‘power to the people’.¹⁴⁹

However, the protestors had inadvertently charged the most inaccessible part of the ground, as steep grass embankment, which after days of rain had made it a slippery slope to climb, lay between them and the ground. At the top of the embankment, a reinforced three-meter high fence prevented those determined protestors who had made it up the bank from entering the ground. A police line had formed to stop protestors from trying to rip down the fence and subsequently turned into the first of many battles waged between police and protestors over the coming months. As one reporter noted, the police line did not put off the protestors as they attempted to walk straight through it or, in some cases, straight over the police.¹⁵⁰ Hone Ngata, a Gisborne social worker and anti-tour campaigner who was part of the protest that day, recalled coming up against numerous members of his own family who were in the police trying to prevent him and other protestors from getting into the ground.¹⁵¹ Further trouble arose when some of the rugby spectators standing on the inside of the ground climbed the fence in an attempt to confront the demonstrators. Fistfights erupted up and down the embankment between spectators and protestors.

The match, however, was uninterrupted and the Springboks emerged victorious, 26-4. To a lesser extent, it was a victory for the police as well, as they had prevented the demonstration from making it onto the field. Although the police had kept the match from being disrupted, they had been stretched and were rudely awakened to the length that protestors were willing

¹⁴⁷ “Grondslag vir sukses more gele,” *Die Burger*, 21 July 1981, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

to go to.¹⁵² Even though Gisborne turned out to be one of the smaller demonstrations, it had illustrated that protestor numbers did not matter, but instead the intensity with which they went about performing their task. Protestors were willing to accept arrest for their actions, meaning they were willing to cross the borders of what was legal. Gisborne came as a sobering reality for many New Zealanders on the extent to which their existed malevolent capabilities amongst both the pro- and anti-tour campaigners.

In South Africa, rugby fans had been able to listen to a live radio broadcast of the match in the early hours of the morning on 22 July. For them it had seemed that rugby as normal had taken place which, in a certain respect, it had, as they only found out about the demonstrations in the following days newspaper. Certainly, the protestors did not put off the Springboks and whether they were even aware of what was going on outside the stadium is unlikely. Speaking on whether the protests ever distracted the Springboks during matches, Theuns Stofberg had the following to say: “When you ran out onto that field you were not thinking about protestors. You play the game and there is no time to think about a protestor. It [the game] was simply too fast.”¹⁵³

However, the Gisborne demonstrations had not been an isolated event, as across New Zealand around 14,000 people had taken to the streets in protest against the first match of the tour, with more than 100 arrests for unlawful actions. In Wellington, a large group of protestors stormed the head office of the National Party and proceeded to occupy it for some time before being forcefully ejected by police. The same was done at the National Party offices in Dunedin, where protestors chained themselves to equipment in the offices. Numerous other incidents were reported of protestors causing damage around the country, largely directed at damaging rugby grounds.

For New Zealanders these sorts of civil disobedience campaigns were unknown. The last major protests in New Zealand before the Springbok question came about were in the 1960s against the Vietnam War, which had certainly not had the effect of polarising the country. The tour would come to grip the attention of New Zealanders, as it became impossible not to choose a side or ignore what was going on around the country. For South Africans, however, the events surrounding the first match of the tour were not a cause for great concern. Four

¹⁵² *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

¹⁵³ Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015.

hundred protestors had failed to make it over a small hill and onto the ground. Those who could recall the 1969/70 UK tour would remember thousands of unruly protestors who tried to disrupt matches, or get close enough to spite in the faces of the Springboks. The initial demonstrations in New Zealand must have validated the predications of *Die Burger* that protestors would certainly not be as bad as they were in the UK in 1969/70. However, in the following weeks protest action would escalate drastically, especially after protests in Hamilton the later that week.

Hamilton: Springboks vs. Waikato

With the conclusion of the match against Poverty Bay in Gisborne, the Springboks travelled to Hamilton where they would play Waikato on 25 July. Hamilton had been a source of concern for rugby administrators and supporters alike even before the tour had been firmly secured. Hamilton was a larger town than Gisborne, less rural, and more accessible from Auckland where HART and other protest organisations were based. Hamilton was known for its fanatical rugby supporters (more so than usual in New Zealand) and had taken an openly pro-tour stand, causing concern that there could be violent clashes between supporters and overly zealous protestors who might try to disrupt the match.

Following the Gisborne match, there was an uneasy truce between police and protestors as both groups recovered and plotted their next move. Police now knew that protestors were willing to push the legal boundaries of protesting. However, for the protestors, their concerns were not so much about the police as it was about the thousands of rugby supporters who would attend the match. In the days leading up to the match, there was a tense atmosphere in Hamilton, particularly after the local protest leader, Geoff walker, made a public statement that the aim of protestors would be to end the tour in Hamilton.¹⁵⁴

A large demonstration was planned for Hamilton, particularly as this would be the first match to be broadcast directly to South African television, as well as to networks around the world. This would be the first time South Africans would see a live broadcast of an international rugby match, something the protestors knew. It was expected that a substantial number of viewers would tune in to the live broadcast of the match. For protestors, the fact that their actions would be broadcast into South African homes was like adding fuel to fire. It made them more determined than ever to disrupt the match and tour as it would certainly have a

¹⁵⁴ “More is D-Dag vir betoger,” *Die Burger*, 24 July 1981, p. 1.

resounding impact on South Africans to *see* the events taking place rather than having to read about them in the following day's newspaper. The fact that South Africans could see what was unfolding in New Zealand from their own homes came as a rude awakening of the extent to which there existed anti-apartheid sentiments outside South Africa, even with an old ally like New Zealand. Paul Dobson elaborates on this and points out that: "the vehemence of the opposition shocked many South Africans who believed that rugby men really wanted to play with them".¹⁵⁵

The match was highly anticipated one amongst those who supported the tour. In 1956, Waikato became one of only a handful of regional teams to beat the Springboks on a New Zealand tour. In 1981, Waikato held the Ranfurly-Shield, the supreme prize in New Zealand domestic rugby, and boasted ten All Blacks in their ranks.¹⁵⁶ Expectations in Hamilton were running high that the Waikato team could record the same historic victory as their predecessors had done 25 years ago. This sparked a great deal of excitement around the match.

The Hamilton protests were expected to be large, possibly some of the largest on the tour. Whereas South African newspapers promised their readers that protests would decline once New Zealanders were hit with rugby fever, the New Zealand protests groups had promised that it would take no longer than two weeks to scuttle the tour. On the morning of the match, thousands of protestors gathered in Hamilton town square chanting "*Amandla*" and brandishing anti-apartheid banners, ready to march to the rugby park and put a stop to the match between the Springboks and Waikato. In contrast, around 27,000 rugby fans were brimming with excitement at the prospect of watching Waikato beat the Springboks. The stage was set for a large clash, and not necessarily between the two rugby teams.

Hamilton Rugby Park resembled something of a fort that day, with barbed wire fences having been erected around the field. Local farmers and businesses who were in possession of large vehicles had parked them around the stadium to act as a makeshift barrier. Police had assembled in large numbers, some of whom were in tracksuits and rugby boots to tackle anyone who made it onto the field. Although they had brought their riot gear along with

¹⁵⁵ P. Dobson: *Doc: The Life of Danie Craven*, p. 169.

¹⁵⁶ "More is D-Dag vir betoger," *Die Burger*, 24 July 1981, p. 1.

them, police were still wrestling with the idea that, as one police officer commented, wearing riot gear “was a bit to confrontational for New Zealand society.”¹⁵⁷

Minutes before the match was scheduled start both teams were informed that they needed to remain in their dressing rooms, as a large demonstration was on its way. Theuns Stofberg, who was selected as captain that day, recalls how the team was able to look through a small window at the back of their changing room and saw what they thought to be thousands of protestors approaching the ground.¹⁵⁸ HART had labelled the protest at Hamilton as ‘Operation Everest’ and focused exclusively on occupying the field and forcing the cancelation of the match.¹⁵⁹ Around 200 HART members had also bought tickets to the match so that they help the protestors on the outside to get into the ground.

The approaching mob was not deterred by the barricade of trucks, many of which were toppled over. The protestors ripped down the barbed wire fences, after which they stormed onto the field. Police officers began rugby tackling the protestors, but were soon swamped as nearly 400 protestors charged onto the field, locking arms in the middle of the field. At this point, the police were faced with a dangerous situation. If they could not remove the protestors from the field, the 27,000 livid rugby supporters surrounding the field would surely take it upon themselves to remove the protestors. Police had been ordered not to use their batons to remove the protestors from the field as the event was being broadcast around the world.¹⁶⁰ For the moment, Hamilton Rugby Park had turned into a coliseum, with those sitting in the stands baying for the blood of those on the field. Police were left with few options. In an attempt to remove the illegal protestors, police began a mass arrest campaign as protestors were dragged one-by-one to the awaiting police vehicles, to which the crowd roared its approval.¹⁶¹ However, arresting 400 struggling protestors was a laborious process and soon there were lengthy queues of captives waiting alongside the police vans.¹⁶²

As the crowd became increasingly agitated a number of spectators leaped the barriers in an attempt to exact their own form of justice. As police feared that the more such instances

¹⁵⁷ *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015.

¹⁵⁹ N. Prinsloo: “Stories Told About Violence: Hamilton during the 1981 Springbok Tour,” *The New Zealand Journal of Public History*, (Vol 2), 2013, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ R. Meurant: *The Red Squad Story*, p. 40.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

would occur as the lengthy arrest process went on, the decision was made to escort the mob off of the field who, likely sensing that the situation was growing increasingly volatile, were more willing to be escorted off. As the protestors were escorted from the stadium, they were pelted from all directions with anything that could be found, from stones to bottles, causing grievous injuries to those who were on the receiving end of the flying objects.

As the protestors were leaving the field, an announcement was made over the public address system that requested that the spectators vacate the stadium as the match had been cancelled. The decision caused an outcry as it was thought that those who had occupied the field had forced the cancellation of the match. In fact, police had received information that a pilot in a small aircraft was threatening to crash into the main grandstand if the match was not cancelled.¹⁶³ By trying to avoid a panic, the police withheld this information from the spectators attending the match.

The cancellation of the match was, however, only the start of the problems, as 27,000 fuming rugby fans now took to the same streets where the ejected protestors still roamed. The hype of hoping to see the Waikato team defeat the Springboks now turned to rage. Many of the rugby supporters now lashed out at anyone who they thought had deprived them of a rugby match. Large fistfights broke out in the streets outside Hamilton Rugby Park as enraged supporters hunted down the protestors. The police simply did not have the numbers to contain the situation and consequently proved quite ineffective in curbing the violence.

Having anticipated the possibility of violence erupting, a number of nurses aligned with the anti-tour campaign had volunteered to wait outside the ground to treat wounded protestors. One nurse recalls a situation where a young woman who had sustained a serious head injury at the hands of rugby fans was left bleeding in the street.¹⁶⁴ While treating the woman, the nurse was kicked in the face several times by passing supporters. A van, which had been provided by one of the anti-tour members, was used to extract the two women from the midst of the violence. However, the van did not make it far before it became a target, as its windows were smashed and the woman with the head injury, now in a critical state, was dragged back out into the street as the van's back doors were ripped open.¹⁶⁵ There were also

¹⁶³ R. Meurant: *The Red Squad Story*, p. 40.

¹⁶⁴ *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

reports that around the country protest leaders, including John Minto, were attacked and assaulted in their homes.¹⁶⁶

In South Africa, those who had braved the early morning had witnessed the occupation of the field and subsequent cancellation of the game, but it was only in newspaper reports the following day that they learnt of what had unfolded outside the stadium. However, the reports provided by *Die Burger* were certainly with a sympathetic slant to the actions of the rugby supporters. The newspaper chose rather to report on the violence committed by the protestors, who had in fact been victims of far greater violence than they had themselves committed. *Die Burger* also reported extensively that a Communist presence was the driving force behind the protests at Hamilton. The newspaper's front page on 27 July sported a large picture of protestors holding a banner reading "Communist Party: Apartheid Racism – weapon of Capitalism to divide and rule".¹⁶⁷ Readers were told that the victory for the protestors in forcing the match cancellation was also a victory for Communism.¹⁶⁸

The role Communism and the CPNZ played in the events unfolding in New Zealand were grossly overstated in South Africa. However, it became a convenient outlet to justify why such events were occurring. In truth, though, it was not the longhaired Communist students from the surrounding universities that *Die Burger* reported were causing all the trouble. The protestors were ordinary New Zealanders who opposed apartheid, and were not anti-rugby as was so often reported. One would be hard pressed to see All Black Captain, Graham Mourie, who refused to play the Springboks during the tour out of moral conviction, as an anti-rugby Communist. John Howson, a New Zealand commentator at the Hamilton game, recalled that the protestors were not those he had been led to believe them to be:

"I could see priests, ministers, moms and dads. I could see elderly ladies, young people. It was not the longhaired rioting protestors that the rugby folk thought were disrupting their tour. It was not intellectuals who had come rushing down from the universities to protest, it was the average New Zealander, people you would meet and talk with everyday..."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ "Belhamel tuis aangerand," *Die Burger*, 27 July 1981, p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ "Daar is nog hoop vir boktoer," *Die Burger*, 27 July 1981, p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ "Reaksie in NS laai op teen betogers," *Die Burger*, 27 July 1981, p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ *1981: A Country at War*, Documentary, directed by Rachel Jean & Owen Hughes (2000, Auckland, Frame Up Films), VHS Video.

Information such as this, though, did not make it to South Africa where rugby enthusiasts were all too willing to accept that the tour was being disrupted by the unruly elements of New Zealand society. During the Cold War period, white South Africans, and for that matter much of the western world, had been indoctrinated with an apprehension over Communism, to the extent that it had become an irrational obstacle to reality. Thus, although Communists only made up a small part of those who were protesting against the tour, the demonstrations were dismissed in South Africa as a Communist inspired plot against the Springboks. To this day members of the Springbok squad still believe that those who protested against them in 1981 were Communists, who were being paid to do so.¹⁷⁰

The events in Hamilton, however, plunged the future of the tour into jeopardy. Supporters from both countries debated on whether the tour would continue or not. The events in Hamilton had confirmed the potential dangers that the tour posed to New Zealand society. It was no longer a certainty that the tour would continue as the police, the government, and rugby administrators toyed with the idea of calling the tour off before further violence ensued. In the absence of Robert Muldoon - who was attending the royal wedding of Prince Charles and Diana in the UK - stand-in Prime Minister, Duncan McIntyre, made inquiries from New Zealand's Attorney-General about the legality of withdrawing the Springboks' visas.¹⁷¹

The day after the Hamilton fiasco, the New Zealand Police Association convened to vote on whether it should be proposed that the tour be cancelled. Although the police did not have the final say over whether the tour was cancelled, they could propose to the government that the tour is called off as a matter of national safety. As it turned out, however, the police did not intend to vote to call the tour off. The police had been embarrassed by their inability to contain the situation in Hamilton and were desperate to regain respectability.¹⁷² In the eyes of the police, the events in Hamilton had transgressed lawful protesting (by both the pro- and anti-tour factions). Accordingly, the tour had become a matter of maintaining law and order in New Zealand. Ross Meurant, a member of the Red Squad, which became the Springboks' bodyguards, captured the attitude of the police toward the continuation of the tour:

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015 & Interview with DeVilliers Visser, 7 June 2015.

¹⁷¹ "Daar is nog hoop vir boktoer," *Die Burger*, 27 July 1981, p. 1.

¹⁷² R. Meurant: *The Red Squad Story*, p. 43.

“We no longer saw the tour as a moral issue but a matter of law and order and believed it was imperative that the tour proceed so the police could reassert the rule of law. We also stressed the importance of the police being given the opportunity to redeem themselves...”¹⁷³

In a sense, then, it became imperative that the tour proceeded as police needed to reclaim credibility in the eyes of the public by proving that they could bring the volatile situation caused by the tour under control. There would be repercussions in New Zealand long after the tour was gone if the public felt that the police force were ineffectual in implementing law and order. Thus, as Meurant points out, the moral question over the tour now took a back seat as it became imperative to ensure the maintenance of law and order and prevent any further incidents from taking place.

If the 1981 tour was a watershed moment in South African rugby, then the Hamilton match was a watershed moment within the tour. Suddenly, everything that was feared the tour might provoke came true in Hamilton as New Zealanders violently battled their fellow citizens. The incident became one of the most defining moments of the tour, and further polarised opinions on the tour. Any persons who had been uncertain over their stance on the tour before the Hamilton match likely found themselves choosing a side after the incident.

It was decided that the tour would continue, as the government also stressed the need for the police to show that they could regain law and order. Muldoon gave police the final say in cancelling one-off matches, as they had done in Hamilton, but ultimately could still not cancel the tour. Muldoon insisted that the final decision on the tour would still rest with the NZRFU. Even if police lodged an appeal to cancel the tour, the appeal could be vetoed by the NZRFU if they decided to continue with the tour.¹⁷⁴ To those who were watching the tour from around the world, it seemed that, following the decision to continue with the tour, it would take fatalities before cancelling the tour would be seriously considered.

Although the tour was not called off, the tour changed from here on for the Springboks. Hamilton had proved that protestors (and rugby fans, something that seems to have gone awry in recollections over the tour) were willing to transgress legal boundaries in their activities, causing safety concerns for the teams involved. The Red Squad were now in the Springboks' presence around the clock, as security around the team was tightened up. For

¹⁷³ R. Meurant: *The Red Squad Story*, p. 43.

¹⁷⁴ “Daar is nog hoop vir boktoer,” *Die Burger*, 27 July 1981, p. 1.

safety reasons, the team had most of its freedoms curtailed. They were prohibited from moving freely around the major centres in case they attracted unwanted attention. When larger than usual demonstrations were expected for a match, such as around the test matches or matches in volatile urban areas, the Springboks would not stay in hotels, but instead would sleep on mattresses in the stadiums where they were scheduled play.

The events at Hamilton had changed the landscape of the tour. Now, police were permitted to use their riot control gear. They also trained in new and more aggressive formations and tactics. Although Muldoon had refused to dispatch the military (as this would make it seem like the country was losing control over the tour situation) he did permit the military to lend logistical assistance to the police who travelled with the tour.¹⁷⁵ The decision to continue with the tour was heavily criticised by Bill Rowling and the Labour Party, who deplored the tour's continuation in the face of growing civil disobedience and warned that a 'bloodbath' was imminent.¹⁷⁶

The Battle of Molesworth Street

Although it seemed that the tour was very much in the balance, the events at Hamilton had provided the government with little choice, as the tour needed to continue. The government and police needed to prove that 'mob rule' could not prevail against law and order enforced by the police.¹⁷⁷ Muldoon could not be seen to be losing control of the situation in the country after he had refused to intervene in the tour. However, the continuation of the tour also proved to the anti-tour movement that they would need to intensify their campaign if they were to have the tour called off. While the events at Hamilton were a shock to the system, it appeared that it would take something even more radical to have the tour called off.

With the tour set to continue, the Springboks travelled to New Plymouth to play Taranaki. While the match was plagued by limited demonstrations, trouble was unfolding in Wellington. A large demonstration was arranged in Wellington for 29 July, with around 2,000 protestors marching to the steps of the New Zealand parliament, also the home of the South African consulate. Police numbers in Wellington were limited, as large numbers of police had travelled with the Springboks to New Plymouth to ward off any demonstrations. Those police that remained in Wellington had not been trained in riot control tactics and for

¹⁷⁵ "Daar is nog hoop vir boktoer," *Die Burger*, 27 July 1981, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ R. Meurant: *The Red Squad Story*, p. 50.

many, this would be the first time they encountered protestors. In order to swell police numbers, trainees from the nearby police college had been recruited to escort the demonstration. A barricade was set up by police in Molesworth Street, which led to the steps of parliament. Police were instructed to prevent protestors from reaching the upper gates of parliament and were permitted to use force if necessary. However, upon reaching the barricade the demonstration refused to stop as they tried to push through the police line.

Up until this point in the tour, there had not been violence between police and protestors. However, as the demonstration refused to desist and continued shoving an interlocked police line down the street, it became inevitable that police take some form of action. The police that night were armed with short handle wooden batons which could only be used for clubbing (as opposed to the longer batons given to the riot police which were meant to avoid physical harm as they were used to shove a person away). After being shoved some distance down Molesworth Street, the rookie police officers started beating those who were in the front of the demonstration. Newspapers headlines the following day displayed pictures of a multitude of police batons raining down on the heads of protestors, many of whom were schoolchildren still in their uniforms. The clubbing had continued until the demonstration dispersed, as protestors fled into the city.

Once again, a line had been crossed and the tour would not be the same hereafter. Protestors felt that their actions were peaceful and that violence had be used on them illegally, whereas police felt that they were losing control of a potentially dangerous situation and that protestors were not heeding their warnings. The event had the effect of intensifying the tour protests. Police and protestors now made themselves 'combat ready' when it came to matches or marches. While police donned their riot gear, protestors strapped pillows to themselves and wore protective headgear.

Importantly, the events at Hamilton and Molesworth Street diverted attention from the rugby tour, as the issues now at hand extended beyond a difference in opinion over the morality of the tour. Questions over the right to protest, the rule of law, and maintaining law and order became the centre of attention. The tour and apartheid were briefly eclipsed, as New Zealanders dealt with a quandary on the governance of their own society. The tour had acted as a catalyst for the protests and had brought New Zealanders to a tipping point where violence had occurred. However, from here on the tour took on a different significance as it became a matter through which protesters, police, and the government alike tackled questions

pertaining to the moralities and governance of New Zealand society. The weekly tour encounters now became a proxy through which police and protestors battled to secure what they believed to be right. Perhaps this explains why, after the Hamilton and Molesworth Street affairs, tour related incidents escalated to the lengths it did, as the issue suddenly became something closer to home than opposition to apartheid and a ‘racist rugby tour’.

In South Africa, the significance of the event was not grasped, as the Molesworth Street battle was only reported as having occurred among a whole host of other protests that had occurred that day.¹⁷⁸ However, for those who had predicted that the tour protestors would be vanquished after the first week or so, it was a rude awakening as protests around New Zealand now became more frequent than ever. Concerns also arose that the demonstrations were being infiltrated by subversive elements in New Zealand society, which were coaxing the demonstrations into an ever more violent direction.

In the meantime, Robert Muldoon had returned to New Zealand after being in the UK for the royal wedding of Charles and Diana. Muldoon immediately began investigating the possibility of a trade-off between the two tour factions, as the possibility was raised that the tour be shortened in return for peace. A meeting was set for Wellington where rugby administrators and protest leaders met face to face for the first time. The meeting was held at the New Zealand parliament buildings and was chaired by Muldoon. The talks, however, failed to reach any meaningful compromise, but the possibility was raised that the third test, the final match of the tour, would be cancelled if the rest of the tour were allowed to proceed in peace.¹⁷⁹ In place of the third test, a day of peaceful anti-apartheid rallies would be observed around New Zealand. The anti-tour movement also requested that the New Zealand government henceforth firmly adhered to the *Gleneagles Agreement* on all sporting contact with South Africa.¹⁸⁰ Although no decision could be reached on these possibilities, it seemed likely the follow-up talks would take place.

For the Springboks, much of the tour was shrouded in uncertainty, as it seemed to continually be on the brink of being either called off or shortened. Both Theuns Stofberg and Devilliers Visser, Springbok loose-forward, recalled that many of the players were largely oblivious to or unmindful of what was happening in South African politics, and therefore grappled to

¹⁷⁸ “Claassen nie bitter oor betogings nie,” *Die Burger*, 29 July 1981, p. 7.

¹⁷⁹ “Talks on future of Springbok tour,” *The Times* (England), 05 August 1981, p. 6.

¹⁸⁰ “Rugby tour peace effort as protest fears grow,” *The Times* (England), 12 August 1981, p. 5.

understand the purpose behind the demonstrations.¹⁸¹ As a group of young, they formed part of a historically elite group of South Africans to be able to come to New Zealand and challenge the All Blacks. As such, the politics behind the tour was not something which received much thought from the team, as they were busy with the experience of a lifetime, something very few South African rugby players would ever get the chance to be part of.

Despite the relatively strict security surrounding the tour, the Springboks were not always confined to their hotels and were allowed a considerable amount of freedom, particularly when the team was playing in rural areas. There was a notable split in opposition to the tour between urban and rural areas. While urban areas generally housed the majority of protestors, rural areas were widely considered pro-tour. In these towns, the team was able to walk openly in the streets and go about their own business, something that was virtually impossible in some of the larger centres. In many of the rural towns, the rugby club would form a central part in the community's social activities, making it unlikely that anyone would come out strongly against the tour, as they would be labelled as anti-rugby.

The team rarely felt that they were in physical danger and in general seemed to find the protestors amusing. Stofberg recalls numerous incidents where the team would drop balloons filled with water onto the protestors gathered outside their hotels, the cause of much amusement and laughter.¹⁸² The camaraderie of the team was not affected by the circumstances under which the tour was played and, if anything, brought the team closer together as a unit as they would often have to spend much time in close proximity with one-another when protests became a threat. As rugby players, they had come to New Zealand to prove their worth against the best in the world, something that kept their minds off what was unfolding around them.

Test Match Rugby: The battles of Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland

By the time of the first test, the Springboks were still undefeated, having secured victory in all six of their matches thus far. Despite their exhaustive strategies, it seemed that the protestors were having no effect on how the Springboks were playing. The setting for the first test between the Springboks and the All Blacks was Christchurch, a city known to police to have a substantial anti-tour following, with more protestors set to arrive for the match. While in Christchurch, the All Blacks also became targets of anti-tour movement, as there were

¹⁸¹ Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015 & Interview with DeVilliers Visser, 7 June 2015.

¹⁸² Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015.

numerous disruptions to their training sessions. A local rugby club stand was burned down by the protestors after the All Blacks had trained there and a stun-grenade was set off outside Lancaster Park, the test venue, giving rise to fears that the stadium could also be subjected to an arson attack.¹⁸³ Prior to the test, HART had made it public that this would be the last test. Fearing the worst, hospitals in Christchurch appealed to the public not to seek treatment on the day of the test unless it was urgent, as doctors would be on standby for protest-related casualties.¹⁸⁴ Around 3,000 police were reported to be travelling to Christchurch, the largest police gathering in New Zealand history.¹⁸⁵

The Springboks had been virtually smuggled into Christchurch and were forced to sleep in the Linwood Rugby Club as the hotels in Christchurch had refused to accommodate the team. There was even talk that, for safety reasons, the team could be housed in barracks on a military base outside of Christchurch.¹⁸⁶ Despite exhaustive security measures for the match, a group of protestors leapt the barricades and scattered broken glass on the field shortly before kick-off. The field had to be thoroughly checked for any hazardous objects before the match was allowed to continue. Those protestors who were outside the stadium, were heavily padded and wore motorcycle helmets in anticipation of an altercation with the riot police. The Red Squad, who were increasingly targeted by violent protestors, were informed that the radical Christchurch protestors were willing to use explosives against them.¹⁸⁷ The violent reputation of the Red Squad when dealing with protestors had served to intensify the battle against them. Ross Meurant's recollection of the first test is a testimony to this:

“...although none of the members were ever subject to a ‘successful’ firebomb attack, on many occasions members were hit with corrosive substances and acids...the coats were also found to absorb and diminish the effects of blows from rocks, bottles, iron bars and the like.”¹⁸⁸

As it happened, the Springboks lost the first test 14-9. The loss was put down to poor team selection, more so than the harsh circumstances surrounding the tour. Wynand Classen, tour Captain, had been left completely out of the side for the match due to difference with the

¹⁸³ “Blaze damages stand as test date nears,” *Cape Times*, 13 August 1981, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ “Springbokke oornag op sportbaan,” *Die Burger*, 15 August 1981, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ “Bokke dalk tuis in Militere basis,” *Die Burger*, 14 August 1981, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ R. Meurant: *The Red Squad Story*, p. 68.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 72.

coach, Nelie Smith. However, other factors were also blamed for the loss. The Springboks had arrived at Lancaster Park six hours early to avoid the protestors and had to sit in the cold changing rooms waiting for the match. They had also been unable to acclimatise themselves to the Christchurch conditions in the days leading up to the test as they had only arrived in the city the day before the match for security reasons.

The news of the test loss was taken with a pinch of salt in South Africa – the tour had been able to reach the first test match, something that many had thought would be unlikely after the events at Hamilton. The fact that the test had been played in the face of heavy resistance gave South Africans hope that the tour could run its course. Following the match, Ces Blazey pointed out that the police victory over the militant protestors was a more important victory than that which took place on the rugby pitch.¹⁸⁹ The first test loss had also been anticipated, as historically the Springboks had never been able to win the first test on a New Zealand tour.

Still, any loss to the All Blacks was a bitter pill to swallow. There had been hopes that a historical first test victory for the Springboks would be able to thumb its nose at those who wanted to isolate South African rugby, as well as to the protestors trying to scuttle the tour. The victory would have meant not only a great deal too South African rugby, but to the country in the face of international condemnation. The day before the test, *Die Burger*'s front page read "Bok-triumph will strike a blow for SA [Translated]".¹⁹⁰ The article emphasised how the knowledge that a victory would be a setback for South Africa's enemies would spur on the Springboks.¹⁹¹ A victory for the Springboks would be an answer to what an angry reader of *Die Burger* termed the "*haatsveldtog*" (hate-campaign) against South Africa.¹⁹²

The Springboks were scheduled to play South Canterbury in Timaru on 19 August, just four days after the test, but the match was called off in order to give police a break. Instead, the Springboks travelled to the rural town of Greymouth where they would stay until their next fixture. While in Greymouth, some of the Springboks did their bit to defuse tensions as they met with supporters and tour objectors. In the process they were able to get a better understanding on why New Zealand had been plunged into chaos over South African politics.

¹⁸⁹ "Polisie NS se werklike helde, se Blazey," *Die Burger*, 17 August 1981, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ "Bok-triomf sal vir SA slag slaan," *Die Burger*, 14 August 1981, p. 1.

¹⁹² "Haatsveldtog teen SA verklaar," *Die Burger*, 14 August 1981, p. 9.

With the conclusion of the first test, Muldoon requested another meeting between the two tour factions.¹⁹³ However, Muldoon insisted that such a meeting would only be conducted once the tour was completed, which seemed to defeat the objective of trying to reach a compromise while the tour was still going. However, what this gesture illustrated was Muldoon's awareness that the levels of civil disobedience had crossed a line that would not simply dissipate with the end of the series. The tour had become more than just an anti-apartheid movement, as social issues within New Zealand had been exposed by the events accompanying the tour. Barely a month into the tour there were already deep divisions that had been sown within New Zealand society over the matter and, with just shy of 1,000 arrests having already been made, the tour issue would remain in the public eye for some time to come.

The second test match was to be played in Wellington on 29 August. By April of 1981, the New Zealand capital had taken a formal decision that it would not welcome the Springboks to the city for the match and would not make any of its facilities available to the team. In an unequivocal statement by Wellington Councillor, Rosslyn Noonan, the city would deny the team the use of its facilities so that they would "experience what they mete out to black Africans every day of their lives".¹⁹⁴ In an attempt to stop the Wellington test, residents of Newton, the suburb surrounding the test venue, submitted a request to the Wellington city council to close all roads surrounding the stadium due to the impending violence and potential destruction of property. Effectively, this would mean that no one would be able to reach the stadium and cause the match to be cancelled.¹⁹⁵ After having had their appeal turned down by the city council, the Newton residents filled an interdict with the New Zealand High Court to have the match called off on the grounds of public safety, but this too failed.¹⁹⁶ A final attempt to have the match and tour called off was made when New Zealand Governor-General, David Beattie, contacted Robert Muldoon on behalf of "ten prominent citizens" to discuss the match cancellation. According to Beattie, New Zealand society was being seriously degraded by the actions resulting from the tour.¹⁹⁷ However, this too failed to have the match called off.

¹⁹³ "Boks do their bit to defuse tension," *Cape Times*, 19 August 1981, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ "Wellington will deny facilities to Springboks," *The Times* (England), 16 April 1981, p. 7.

¹⁹⁵ "Bokke speel wel toets in Wellington," *Die Burger*, 20 August 1981, p. 1.

¹⁹⁶ "Hoer hof beslis vandag," *Die Burger*, 28 August 1981, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ "Muldoon MPs reject poll on S Africa sport link," *The Times* (England), 28 August 1981, p. 4.

The Wellington protests, as well as future protests, would likely have been aggravated by concurrent developments in South Africa. In mid-August, the South African Defence Force had made an excursion into Angola during what was called 'Operation Protea'. The operation was aimed at destroying the South West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) headquarters and training base in the Cunene province. SWAPO were fighting a guerrilla war in an attempt to gain independence for South-West Africa (now Namibia) from South Africa. The organisation had been given refuge in newly independent and Soviet-backed Angola. The operation received much media attention in New Zealand and was expected to further motivate the anti-tour movement. The New Zealand Labour Party, which had been closely linked with the anti-tour movement, implored the government to call off the tour at once. They argued this on the basis that New Zealand had boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics due to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and that therefore South Africa should be boycotted, starting with the already troublesome Springbok tour.¹⁹⁸ Predictably, however, the government took no action against the tour and the Wellington test was free to proceed.

It was expected that around 10,000 protestors would descend on Wellington for the match, the largest demonstration yet, outnumbering the available police on the day by three to one. The week leading up to the match had once again been disruptive for the Springbok team. Their final preparations were done away from Wellington due to the threat of disruptions, as well as being refused any training facilities by the Wellington City Council. There was speculation that the Springboks may need to travel to the test venue by helicopter to avoid the massive demonstration.¹⁹⁹ When the Springboks arrived in Wellington, they were whisked away from the airport and taken straight to Athletic Park, the venue for the test, where they would stay for their short time in Wellington.

After the loss in the first test, the Springboks were written off for victory in the second test by their own country's media. It was feared that the Springboks had succumbed to the same fault made by the 1937 Springboks in New Zealand, when after a first test loss huge changes were rung to the team for the second test which resulted in an even greater loss in that match. However, against all expectations, the Springboks emerged victorious 24-12, stunning New Zealand and likely a large portion of South Africans. Even protest leader (and Communist, which *Die Burger* avidly pointed out) Allick Shaw could not hide his amazement that the

¹⁹⁸ "Optrede in Angola kan Bokke raak," *Die Burger*, 29 August 1981, p. 11.

¹⁹⁹ "Bokke dalk in helikopter na veld," *Die Burger*, 28 August 1981, p. 12.

Springboks had won, as he admitted in a radio interview that he had thought the tour conditions would ensure a Springbok failure.²⁰⁰

However, the failure of the protestors to put a stop to the match ensured beyond any doubt that the tour would now run its course. The Springbok victory meant that there would be a climatic final test match in Auckland in two weeks' time, as the third test would be the decider in the series. Prior to the second test there had been talk in the meeting between the NZRFU and anti-tour movement that the third test would be called off and in its place a nationwide anti-apartheid protest would take place. However, with the Springboks and All Blacks tied at a test apiece and only the Auckland test remaining, it would have taken a brave man to call the tour off at this point.

In essence, the third test now became the most important match of the tour, making it a certain target for the anti-tour movement. John Minto had publicly promised that the final test would see demonstrations like never before and that being the final match of the series protestors had nothing to lose. At the same time, though, police issued a warning to protestors that should they breach police lines their biggest problem would not be police violence, but the 50,000 rugby spectators wanting to see the climatic match.²⁰¹ Police reiterated that although they believed they could control as many as 10,000 protestors, should these protestors try to disrupt the match the rugby fans would undoubtedly take matters into their own hands, rendering the police useless. Following weeks of tour related violence, it was nothing short of a miracle that there had not been fatalities. However, with the largest demonstration of the tour to come, this could easily change. There were rumours that, in an attempt to radicalise the demonstration, the protest movement had incorporated violent Maori gangs into their ranks. Bob Walton, Police Commissioner, labelled this as a blatant attempt to subvert law and order.²⁰²

For the Springboks, the second test victory, as well as being undefeated in their regional encounters, gave the team the belief that they could in fact become only the second Springbok team to win a series in New Zealand. As was the case with the first test, a Springbok victory in the third test transcended rugby importance. The day before the test, *Die Burger* headlines read: "Springboks can build monument for SA rugby tomorrow

²⁰⁰ "Bok-oorwinning 'n betoger-nederlaag," *Die Burger*, 31 August 1981, p. 3.

²⁰¹ "Betogers 'in gevaar' as hulle verby polisie glip," *Die Burger*, 7 September 1981, p. 11.

²⁰² "Bendes teen bokke kwel polisie," *Die Burger*, 8 September 1981, p. 3.

[Translated]”.²⁰³ The article elaborated that: “In a time where SA is being attacked on all fronts, a Springbok victory will mean a great deal not only to rugby and South African sport, but for the entire country”.²⁰⁴

However, the article came with a sobering reality that, after what had unfolded in New Zealand over the past three months, the final test could well bring the curtain down on Springbok-All Black rugby. It would almost certainly be the final time that the Springboks played the All Blacks in “these times”, and perhaps the last time ever.²⁰⁵ It would also likely be the last international tour for the Springboks for some time to come. The tour had been closely monitored internationally and it was unlikely that, after witnessing the sort of chaos a touring Springbok team could attract, rugby nations would be extending an invitation to the Springboks anytime soon. The tour had caused so much damage in New Zealand that even those hardnosed supporters of the tour were forced to concede that there was irreparable damage that could shut the door to Springbok-All Black rugby.

However, a victory for the Springboks would perhaps make further isolation from world rugby less certain, as they would be able to stake a claim as still being one of the premier rugby teams around the world. In this past, this had helped the Springboks to ward off the worst of the isolation. For the Springbok team, though, a victory in the final test would mean not only a series win in New Zealand, but also a personal victory against the protestors and those who had forced the tour to take place under such harsh conditions. To an extent, though, the Springboks had already beaten the protestors as they had only lost one of their thirteen matches and were still strong contenders to win the series. Among the objectives of the protest movement had been to give the Springboks such a torrid time that their rugby performances would be affected. However, the Springboks of 1981 had fared as well, if not better, than previous Springbok teams, who had not had to deal with protestors. The anti-tour movement had promised first that the Springboks would not make New Zealand, and then that the tour would not run its full course. Had the All Blacks won the second test, and thereby the series, the third test may have been called off to prevent any further damages resulting from protests. However, by winning the second test the Springboks had ensured a climatic final, both on and off the field.

²⁰³ “Bokke kan more monument vir SA rugby bou,” *Die Burger*, 11 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

In both South Africa and New Zealand, the final test has been etched into public memory. Two-thirds of the New Zealand police force had been deployed in Auckland and around the now fortress-like Eden Park, the venue for the test. What unfolded in the streets of Auckland should be considered a riot, rather than a protest. Although only around 2,000 protestors were present that day, it seemed that they were comprised of the more radical elements of the protest movement. Reflecting on the final test, a New Zealand journalist wrote:

“Incidents around Auckland on Saturday, and particularly in the immediate vicinity of Eden Park, illustrated pretty plainly that the issues that supposedly sparked the anti-tour movement had been long forgotten...those front-line policemen who at times on Saturday were fighting for their lives against unbelievable aggression were defending more than a simple game of rugby. They were defending this country’s democracy.”²⁰⁶

By the end of the day, 200 protestors were arrested for rioting and an estimated 45 people suffered from injuries, including numerous police officers.²⁰⁷ Although the rioters outside the stadium were once again unable to make it into the stadium to disrupt the match, the teams on the field faced a situation scarcely believable. In what is to this day commonly referred to as the ‘flour-bomb test’, the two teams on the field had to deal with a light aircraft making regular low swoops over the field and dropping anti-apartheid pamphlets, burning flairs, and parcels filled with flour onto the playing field and into the stands during the match. This is certainly one of the most bizarre incidents ever to befall an international rugby test match. Wynand Claassen, who captained the Springboks, recalls how during the first half of the match they were playing straight into the flight path of the plane, making concentration for the Springbok backline players particularly difficult. Claassen writes:

“While the forwards were occupied with their heads down in the scrums...the backs had plenty of time to look around and they would have had to have been superhuman not to watch the plane make its runs over the field...I am sure this broke the concentration of our backs before half time and that the All Blacks suffered because of it in the long second half.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ P. Dobson: *Rugby’s Greatest Rivalry*, p. 162.

²⁰⁷ “VSA swig nie voor druk,” *Die Burger*, 14 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁰⁸ W. Claassen: *More Than Just Rugby*, p. 186.

There was a tense moment when All Black prop, Gary Knight, was struck by a falling flour-bomb. The event was enough for the Welsh referee, Clive Norling, to call together the two captains, Claassen and Andy Dalton, to suggest that the match be called off. In the end, however, it was not so much the plane as Norling who left a mark on the match. With the match being tied at 22-22 all and deep into extra time, Norling awarded a controversial penalty against the Springboks. Allan Hewson went on to break South African hearts as he proceeded to kick a penalty goal, thereby taking the score to 25-22 in favour of the All Blacks. Shortly afterwards the final whistle was blown with the All Blacks winning the final test and thereby the series.

It is perhaps odd that during a tour in which so much revolved around those events off the field that it was an on field controversy that most aggrieved the Springboks and their South African supporters. The controversial match brought the curtain down on what is certainly one of the most infamous and bizarre international rugby tours to be undertaken. The Springboks had performed exceptionally well under some of the most difficult conditions known to a rugby team. The players had been vastly inexperienced when it came to dealing with protestors, but had not lost their composure and seemed to take the tour in their stride. Reflecting on the tour conditions Theuns Stofberg noted: “you accepted that this was your lot, and then got on with why you had come [to New Zealand]”.²⁰⁹

Perhaps a further testament to the difficulties the tour had brought to New Zealand was when the Springbok team handed a mounted springbok head to the New Zealand police. Traditionally, the head was presented to the non-test side that had given the Springboks the best match. However, after the storm New Zealand police had weathered it seemed fitting that the head be presented to them. The fact that the tour had been able to run its course was put down to the work done by the police. Tributes to the New Zealand police began to pour in from all over South Africa. The South African travel agent, Hylton Ross, suggested that the police who had guarded the Springboks are invited to South Africa for an all-expenses-paid holiday. Furthermore, a number of cities and travel agencies around South Africa had offered to host the police officers and a Natal coastal town, Margate, even offered to make them honorary citizens for their troubles.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015.

²¹⁰ “SA maak sy hart oop vir Kiwi-polisie,” *Die Burger*, 14 September 1981, p. 9.

The New Zealand police had made more than 1,900 arrests over the course of the tour and had withstood the worst of the violence to prevent the tour from being disrupted. Upon the Springboks' departure from New Zealand on 13 September a collective sigh of relief went up around the country. However, the relief was premature as New Zealand was left in a state of disarray. As an article in *Die Burger* pointed out, "the Springbok tour caused New Zealand to lose its innocence [Translated]".²¹¹ It was unlikely that New Zealand society would be able to console the divisions left by the tour for some time to come.²¹² The overwhelming levels of protest in New Zealand were attributed to the fact that the tour had raked open and provided a voice for issues on racism and poverty in New Zealand society, issues which would not subside with the conclusion of the tour.

There was also the problem of mistrust of police for their hard-handed tactics and the fact that they were seen as a tool of the (pro-tour) government to suppress the anti-apartheid demonstrators. Following the conclusion of the tour, there were numerous enquiries into the police activities after protestors submitted no less than 350 complaints.²¹³ Six police officers were prosecuted, but unsuccessfully so and only two of the six were taken to court, where both cases were dismissed.²¹⁴ As late as 1984, the New Zealand police were still grappling with hostilities towards them following the 1981 tour. Speaking on a violent clash between police and crowds at a music festival the New Zealand Minister of Police, Ann Hercus, attributed the incident to the lingering mistrust of and antagonism toward police brought about by the 1981 tour events.²¹⁵

Furthermore, New Zealand was saddled with a hefty bill for the tour. It had been estimated that the tour would cost around NZ\$2.7 million, but by the time the Auckland test came round estimates had risen to NZ\$15 million.²¹⁶ By the time the tour was done *Die Burger* claimed that the tour had cost New Zealand around NZ\$35 million (R25 million at that stage).²¹⁷ The extra spending had largely been made up by the logistics of transporting and

²¹¹ "Springbok-toer laat Nieu-Seeland sy 'onskuld verloor'," *Die Burger*, 15 September 1981, p. 6.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ P. Dobson: *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry*, p. 163.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Unclassified newspaper article titled "Reeping 1981 Seeds".

²¹⁶ "Bok-toer kos R11m: blad," *Die Burger*, 7 September 1981, p. 2.

²¹⁷ "Springbok-toer laat Nieu-Seeland sy 'onskuld verloor'," *Die Burger*, 15 September 1981, p. 6.

housing police for the duration of the tour, damage caused by protests, and payments made to the Department of Defence for aiding the police.²¹⁸

New Zealand rugby also did not emerge unscathed from the tour. The Auckland Rugby Union reported that, along with most of New Zealand's other major centres, there had been a notable decline in the popularity of the sport of amongst schoolboys in the years following 1981.²¹⁹ Many teachers and parents had removed themselves from coaching roles in protest over the tour, meaning some schools no longer had rugby as a sport.²²⁰ One rugby administrator noted that, following the tour, rugby could no longer be regarded as the preeminent sport in certain centres.²²¹

However, perhaps the immediate problem facing Robert Muldoon and New Zealand was the international backlash, particularly from the Commonwealth countries, for not having done enough to 'discourage' sporting contact with South Africa. The Commonwealth, and in particular its secretary general, Shridath Ramphal, felt the New Zealand government's requests to the NZRFU to "reconsider", "think again", and to "weigh up the consequences" were less than vigorous attempts to discourage.²²² It had already been decided that a Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting, scheduled to be held in Auckland shortly after the Springboks left, would be moved elsewhere as those present did not want to be seen supporting a country which had had dealings with a racist regime. On top of the threat of potential economic sanctions toward New Zealand from African Commonwealth members, there was also a good chance that New Zealand athletes would be banned from the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games due to the fear that there could be mass boycotts if New Zealand were present. However, these threats were not carried out and New Zealand athletes were permitted to participate in both the 1982 Commonwealth Games and the 1984 Summer Olympic Games. The only boycott which took place was during the 1984 Games when the USSR announced it would not send its athletes to Los Angeles in retaliation to the USA boycotting the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games.

²¹⁸ "Bok-toer kos R11m: blad," *Die Burger*, 7 September 1981, p. 2.

²¹⁹ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. "Two Rugby Unions Say Drop Tour," *The New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1981, p. 1.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Unclassified newspaper article titled "ARU Stance on Tour".

²²² "How Muldoon let the side down," *The Times* (England), 5 August 1981, p. 10.

In South Africa, there was outrage over the controversial penalty.²²³ However, the consensus of the tour remained that it had been a Communist inspired plot to disrupt the tour and had cost the Springboks the series. An angry letter published in *Die Burger* lamented the fact that the Springboks, “who offered up so much to normalise South African sport [Translated]”, had encountered protests which were “[Russian inspired] terrorism but in a different form [Translated].”²²⁴ According to the letter, Russia sat behind much of the world’s terrorism and sought to exploit unrest and violence around the world for its own gains. Writing on the fear of white South Africans towards Communism, Hermann Giliomee has noted that:

“In 1969 a survey revealed that only two per cent of whites saw the rapid growth in numbers of the coloured people and black as a danger to the political system; the overwhelming majority regarded the greatest threat as stemming from ‘Communist influence, Communist-inspired guerrilla movements and Communism in Black South Africa’.”²²⁵

It would be highly unlikely that by 1981 white fear of Communism had decreased from 1969, particularly as there had been an increase in the Communist presence in southern Africa. Thus, the afore mentioned letter written to *Die Burger* can be regarded as a reflection of the general attitude amongst white South Africans towards Communism at the time, particularly as the letter appeared alongside numerous other Communist related articles, such as “Red campaign against solidarity” and “Marxist is great enemy of SA: Minister”.²²⁶ With the discovery in the 1970s of Russian and Cuban troops in neighbouring Southern African states, white fears over Communist expansion increased. By playing on these fears virtually any incident could be attributed to the spectre of Communism.

Conclusion

In so much as it can be called a rugby tour, the 1981 tour of New Zealand has gone down in the annals of international rugby contests as a spectacle of note. The Springboks of 1969/70 and 1971 had faced large scale demonstrations in the United Kingdom and Australia respectively, but what unfolded in New Zealand from July to September of 1981 would never

²²³ “Twis oor skop teen SA,” *Die Burger*, 14 September 1981, p. 1.

²²⁴ “Einde van ‘n toer,” *Die Burger*, 14 September 1981, p. 12.

²²⁵ H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, p. 548.

²²⁶ “Rooi veldtog teen solidariteit,” *Die Burger*, 14 September 1981, p. 9. & “Marxis is groot SA vyand,” *Die Burger*, 14 September 1981, p. 9.

be paralleled. Johan Claassen, who had been on the 1969/70 Springbok 'demo' tour of the UK, described the UK tour as a *lammetjie* (lamb) in comparison to the 1981 New Zealand tour.²²⁷ Despite the abnormal tour conditions, the Springboks fared exceptionally well, having been unbeaten in each of their regional encounters and only losing the test series due to some questionable refereeing decisions.

However, what the Springboks left in their wake was a country divided. New Zealanders were left with questions not only regarding future dealings with South Africa, but on their own political and social reality. The tour had become a vehicle through which many New Zealanders displayed their anger at the inequalities that existed in their own country. Questions on unequal land distribution, racial disparity, and poverty were amongst the issues which had helped fuel the protests. Questions over governance were also raised as the governing National Party had refused to condemn the rugby tour by a racist nation and, even after the tour was completed, persisted in defending their decision. If the Springboks had toured a country which did not have its own racial difficulties, the protests may well have been scaled down from what took place in New Zealand during the tour.

For white South Africans the events on the tour had come as a shock. Although much of the protestors during the tour were dismissed as Communist inspired troublemakers, John Nauright has argued that viewing events such as the Hamilton fiasco live on television must have been a rude awakening to white South Africans over the depth of the animosity felt towards their country.²²⁸ For much of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the South African government had vigorously opposed allowing television in South Africa as they feared it would ultimately promote racial contact, the very thing apartheid sought to prevent.²²⁹ With the historic first live broadcasts of a rugby tour South Africans witnessed their hallowed rugby team being smuggled around New Zealand and being forced to play behind barbed-wire fences in order to avoid being swamped by protestors who despised the Springboks and South Africa. The South African newspaper, *Sunday Times*, even reported that the Springboks had returned from New Zealand with enlightened views on race and started to question the need for many of the apartheid laws.²³⁰ The *Rand Daily Mail* went further and labelled the events in New Zealand as evidence of the steadily mounting pressure on the

²²⁷ "Tweeuisend wag bokke in," *Die Burger*, 30 September 1981, p. 1.

²²⁸ J. Nauright: *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, p. 150.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

South African government to implement major political and socio-economic change.²³¹ Where the *Rand Daily Mail* differed from other newspapers was in its interpretation of the tour events. While *Die Burger* conveyed to its readers that the tour events had been produced largely by outside interference (such as the ‘communist-inspired plot’ the paper frequently reported on), the *Rand Daily Mail* regarded the tour events as hostility toward what the apartheid regime was doing to black South Africans. Quoting John Smith, President of the England Rugby Football Union, the *Rand Daily Mail* report that: “...South Africans must realise that the only way they can bring themselves together in the amity of world sport is by altering a system which decides by the colour of a man’s skin whether he is a decent chap or not. It’s not acceptable”.²³² This was a point very few of South Africa’s dominant newspapers were willing to concede by the early 1980s.

Whereas the effects the tour had on New Zealand were immediately apparent, for South Africa the consequences were drawn out over the 1980s as South African rugby for the first time experienced true isolation. Ultimately, South Africans would realise that, despite the fact that the New Zealand protestors having failed in stopping the tour, they succeeded in something much greater: South Africa’s complete isolation from the rugby world. What many would realise in hindsight was that, in fact, the New Zealand protestors had won.

The 1980s became a lonely time for South African rugby, as they would face only one of their traditional IRB rivals over the next 11 years. The visuals of the New Zealand tour had sufficiently scared anyone who considered extending an invitation to the Springboks. Furthermore, with the strengthening of the *Gleneagles Agreement* in 1982 it became even more difficult to justify touring to South Africa.

The South African Rugby Board was also late in responding to the international trends. During the 1970s South African rugby had been led to believe that if rugby was made multiracial the sporting boycott would allow the Springboks back into international competition. However when the Springboks arrive in New Zealand in 1981 with a supposed ‘multiracial team’ they were greeted by anti-apartheid, anti-racist protests which were not concerned with multiracial sport, but instead with a multiracial society. This remained the objective of the boycott for the rest of 1980s, but the SARB were late to respond to this as

²³¹ “We can’t move at the rate of the oxwagon,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 October 1981, p. 13.

²³² “Opposition, but 1983 shaping to be bumper year for SA rugby,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 November 1982, p. 22.

they based all their attempts at readmission to the international arena on the fact that they had been able to legally remove apartheid from South African rugby. The SARB did not understand that only once apartheid was removed would they be capable of playing internationally without a repeat of 1981 taking place.

Chapter Five

Swapping Kiwi's for Eagles: The Springboks in the United States of America

*“In America we were scared. At least in New Zealand you could see the protestors, but in America they just used bombs”.*²³³

The United States leg of the Springboks' 1981 tour has largely slipped under the radar of the anti-apartheid sporting boycott literature. Whereas the Springboks' tour of New Zealand became an internationally contentious issue, discussions on the US leg of the tour have been minimal. The New Zealand leg of the tour has been etched into South African rugby memory for the bizarre events that took place in New Zealand. However, it seems to have been forgotten that the US leg also delivered severe anti-apartheid protests against the Springboks. It has taken 35 years since the conclusion of the US leg of the tour for the first piece of comprehensive work to be produced on the topic. In his book, *“No Rugby with Racists!” Anti-apartheid activism and the 1981 Springbok tour of the United States* (2016), Derek Catsam discusses how the Springboks' three-match tour of the US became a platform from which anti-apartheid activists could mobilize against South African sport and the apartheid regime. What Catsam's work illustrates best is that in the greater scheme of things the US protests were most valuable in nurturing anti-apartheid awareness in their own country.

However, the protest action against the Springboks while in the USA was of less significance to the average South African than those protests in New Zealand. The reason for this was, quite simply, that New Zealand and South Africa shared an infinitely closer rugby bond than South Africa shared with the USA. As Danie Craven noted some years later, “without the All Blacks it is just not rugby.”²³⁴ The rugby history shared between South Africa and New Zealand meant it was much more significant to white South Africans when New Zealanders started protesting against maintaining rugby ties with South Africa.

For this dissertation then, the US leg presents a potential problem: the protests quite simply did not carry the same weight as those in New Zealand and were of less concern to South Africans due to the fact that the USA was not one of their country's traditional rugby rivals.

²³³ Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015.

²³⁴ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Danie Craven's responds to questions from Haruhisa Kodaira, Chief Editor of Rugby Magazine Japan, no date available.

Despite the obstinate attitude of many South Africans toward why the New Zealand protests had unfolded, it plagued their consciences that the Springbok tour had plunged New Zealand into disarray and had likely ended a long history of civil rivalry between the two nations. However, losing the USA as a rugby ally over South Africa's apartheid policies was simply not comparable to the loss of New Zealand as a rugby ally. The US tour served the purpose of awakening anti-apartheid sentiment in America towards South African sport, but drew little interest amongst the same South Africans who had fanatically followed the New Zealand tour. Possibly the best testimony to South Africans' disinterest in the USA part of the tour is to compare the regularity with which *Die Burger* reported on the two legs. While the newspaper regularly produced as many as eleven articles per edition on the New Zealand tour, the USA tour was lucky if it received more than a single mention per edition. Even in *The Cape Times*, which did not report as enthusiastically on the tour as *Die Burger* did, there is a large discrepancy between the number of stories on the New Zealand leg and those on the US leg.

While this dissertation argues that the 1981 Springbok tour facilitated South African rugby's isolation in the 1980s, that isolation would have likely taken place regardless of whether the Springboks toured the USA. With regard to the effect that the overall tour had on South African rugby, the USA demonstrations were rather ancillary to the demonstrations that took place in New Zealand. In essence then, the Springbok tour of the USA had very little effect on contributing to South African rugby's isolation in the 1980s. Therefore, while this chapter will discuss the protests that developed around the Springboks in the USA, it is also necessary to discuss whether there was, perhaps, an ulterior political motive behind the USA tour.

A Brewing Storm

By 1980, the SARB and USA rugby officials had started conferring over a potential tour by a South African side to the USA. However, it was deemed that the prevailing circumstances in the USA would likely preclude the possibility of a tour. In 1980 the USA experienced some of the worst racial unrest since the civil rights movements of the 1960s, particularly in Miami, Chattanooga, and Orlando where fatal 'race riots' were taking place. With these riots taking place, US officials deemed it unlikely that a South African team would be granted visas due to fears of seeming insensitive to both the racial issues in the US and South

Africa.²³⁵ However, had there not been racial unrest it was still unlikely that a South African team would have been allowed into the USA as President Jimmy Carter, a Democrat, had been highly critical of apartheid. However, with the USA presidential elections around the corner and the likelihood of the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan, being elected, US rugby officials were optimistic that 1981 would be conducive to a Springbok tour.²³⁶ A tour was duly arranged for 1981 as the Springboks were scheduled fly home from New Zealand via the US. It was decided that the Springboks would undertake a short tour of no more than three matches, including one test against the USA Eagles. For many South Africans the tour was an anti-climax following the gripping rugby tour of New Zealand. The lack of coverage in South African newspapers seemed to confirm the indifference toward the tour in South Africa.

However, while all eyes were on the Springboks in New Zealand, there was a storm building in the United States. The sporting boycott had become one of the chief forms of opposition to apartheid - a way to deliver a blow to Afrikaner nationalism. With regard to demonstrating opposition to apartheid through sport sanctions, the United States was comparably late to the fray. This was for one very simple reason: South Africa and the United States did not have many overlapping major sporting codes. With exception to the Olympic sports, the USA did not have any sports that South Africa took part in on a large scale and similarly the major South African sports like rugby and cricket were virtually non-existent in America. Whereas numerous European, Australasian, and South American countries had significant sporting ties with South Africa – particularly rugby ties – and, therefore, could implement sporting sanctions against the Republic, the 1981 tour was one of the first opportunities for the US anti-apartheid organisations to launch meaningful opposition to apartheid.

For the SARB and US rugby, the door to test match rugby was opened by the election of Ronald Reagan as US president. The Republican Reagan had adopted a policy of closer working with Pretoria and, along with Margaret Thatcher, came to be known as one of the protectors of the South African government. For anti-apartheid groups in the US, the 1981 tour provided not only a chance to vocalise their opposition to apartheid but also opposition to the rekindling of friendliness between the USA and South Africa that came with the election of Reagan. However, it was not only anti-apartheid groups who opposed the tour, as

²³⁵ SARB Archive, Collection VIII: Toere, Box 1.37C: 1981. Letter from Edmund W. Lee of USA Rugby to Alex Kellerman on the 1981 Springbok tour of the USA, 3 August 1981.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

many of the Carter-era politicians felt that for moral reasons the Springboks should not be invited. Furthermore, with the announcement of the tour the American Olympic Committee began entertaining the possibility of boycotts at the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles. The IOC had expressed its concern that numerous Eastern Block, African, and Commonwealth nations were likely to boycott the 1984 Games should the Springboks tour the USA. This would be the third successive Olympic Games where there were boycotts over a matter relating to the Springboks. Despite the fact that rugby was not considered as one of America's major sports, the Springbok tour received extensive media coverage around the country, particularly with regard to how it could affect the 1984 Olympic Games. However, early in 1981 the US consulate in South Africa confirmed that visas would be given to the Springboks to tour the US, but only if their tour of New Zealand lasted its full duration.²³⁷ Reporting on the US's decision to grant visas to the Springboks, the *Rand Daily Mail* noted: "South African rugby will no longer be shut in a ghetto in the name of anti-apartheid philosophical principles."²³⁸

Despite the USA's relatively late arrival to the anti-apartheid sport campaign, several anti-apartheid organisations existed. The American Coordinating Committee for Equality and Society (ACCESS) was the USA's equivalent of HART and had played a major role in having the South African team expelled from the 1978 Davis Cup tennis tournament. For ACCESS and its cohorts, the 1981 Springbok tour was their best chance to exert some pressure on South African sport, as the cream of South African athletes would soon be within arm's reach. Richard Lapchick, ACCESS spokesperson, informed US rugby officials that large-scale protests would be conducted by his organisation in New York, Chicago, and Albany, the three cities where the Springboks would be playing. ACCESS would also make a formal request to each of the city councils - as had been done by HART in New Zealand - to withhold all facilities from the touring Springboks.²³⁹ Furthermore, ACCESS warned the White House of further alienating the USA's black population if the government was seen to be allowing representatives of a racist regime on the USA's sports fields. This was reinforced by the 'National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People' (NAACP), a

²³⁷ "VSA gee visums," *Die Burger*, 14 July 1981, p. 1.

²³⁸ "US rugby opens new links with SA," *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 February 1981, p. 20.

²³⁹ "Yanks wil betoog teen Bokke," *Die Burger*, 15 July 1981, p. 8.

prominent civil rights organisation. The organisation criticised the Reagan Administration's decision to grant visas to the Springboks as an insult to the 26 million black Americans.²⁴⁰

Reagan's refusal to intervene in the tour, even though the tour jeopardised the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, was regarded by anti-apartheid organisations as further evidence of the softer line the US government was taking towards the Botha government.²⁴¹ In addition to the threats made by ACCESS to disrupt the tour, more than thirty black, civil rights, religious, and political groups had appealed to Dick MoneyMaker, a US Rugby official, to withdraw the invitation to the Springboks or else they would take action.²⁴² The decision to permit the Springboks to tour the US also drew significant international criticism, predominantly by those same countries that were at New Zealand's throat over the tour. However, as the US was not a member of the Commonwealth it could not be held to abide by the *Gleneagles Agreement*. Reagan's decision that the government not intervene in the business of autonomous sporting bodies could not be condemned in the same light as the decision taken by Robert Muldoon, who, by permitting the Springboks to tour New Zealand, had contravened the *Gleneagles Agreement*.

Playing a Dangerous Game: The Springboks in the USA

On route to New Zealand, the Springboks got their first taste of USA tour protestors as a small group of protestors awaited them at New York's JFK International Airport. The group greeted the Springboks with chants of "*Boere, gaan huistoe* [Boers, go home]" before breaking into chants of "Sport yes, apartheid no; rugby with South Africa has to go".²⁴³ The Springboks would return to the USA two gruelling months later to play three matches against US sides before heading back to South Africa. The Springboks would first play the Midwest Rugby Union in Chicago, after which they faced the Eastern Rugby Union in Albany, and concluded the tour with a test match against the USA Eagles, also in Albany.

Whether the SARB would have agreed to the US tour knowing what would unfold in New Zealand is questionable. Following the New Zealand tour the US trip was already somewhat of an anti-climax for rugby fans. On top of this, reports were that the protest action would likely be as bad as those in New Zealand were. The US protest movements had been spurred

²⁴⁰ "Reagan oor Bok-besluit gekritiseer," *Die Burger*, 8 August 1981, p. 5.

²⁴¹ "Yanks wil betoog teen Bokke," *Die Burger*, 15 July 1981, p. 8.

²⁴² "Campaign to stop Bok rugby tour of US," *Cape Times*, 10 July 1981, p. 3.

²⁴³ "Noisy protest greets Boks in New York," *Cape Times*, 17 July 1981, p. 1.

on by the vigorous US media coverage of what was unfolding in New Zealand. The militant civil rights activist, Jesse Jackson, and his organisation, People United to Save Humanity (PUSH), vowed to cripple the tour with massive demonstrations.

In general, however, the Springboks had an easier time in the USA than they did in New Zealand. Being in a country where rugby was a little known sport had its benefits. The team was able to roam the streets freely without fear of being recognised or confronted, and were even able to attend a baseball match at the Chicago Cubs' stadium. Despite the mass coverage of the events in New Zealand by the US media, the Springboks still regularly came across people who had no idea who the Springboks were, what rugby was, or knew anything about South Africa.²⁴⁴

The first match of the tour was played on 19 September against the Midwest RU. The venue for the match was kept a secret to deter any plans made by demonstrators to disrupt the match. Even the Springboks were not told where the match was going to be played and only discovered the venue upon arrival, a public park in Racine, on the shores of Lake Michigan.²⁴⁵ The field had no pavilion and the few spectators in attendance simply stood around the edge of the field. Springbok captain, Wynand Claassen, having not been selected to play in the match recalls how he and several of the other non-playing Springboks had to climb a tree in order to have a good vantage point to watch the match.²⁴⁶ In order to prohibit any demonstrations, the Midwest RU had announced several different locations where the match might be played. Tyke Nollman, who had organised the match, had established a 'hot-line' which rugby fans could dial to establish where the match would be played. The only incident occurred when six protestors walked onto the field, one of whom was brandishing a baseball bat, but were quickly removed by the police stationed at the field.²⁴⁷

The Springboks extended their unbeaten run over regional sides as they defeated the Midwest RU 46-12. Around 500 spectators, many of whom had been drawn simply out of curiosity over the large gathering in a public place, attended the match. Despite the easy access to the field, only 15 protestors made it there, all of whom fell silent once they realised their backup

²⁴⁴ W. Claassen: *More Than Just Rugby*, p. 236.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 237.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁴⁷ "Springboks sour Moi visit," *The Times* (England), 21 September 1981, p. 4.

was not arriving and they were substantially outnumbered.²⁴⁸ Jackson and company had threatened that they knew where the field was and that they would amass around 1,000 protestors to stop the match, but this did not materialise.²⁴⁹ After the hordes of protestors that plagued most of the matches in New Zealand, the absence of protestors for the Midwest match came as a relief for both rugby sides. Johan Claassen even went as far to tell US media that their protestors were amateur in comparison to those militant protestors they had encountered in New Zealand.²⁵⁰

The Springboks next travelled to Albany in New York State to play the Eastern All Stars. Prior to the match against the Midwest, there had been numerous calls by anti-apartheid groups for Albany Mayor, Erastus Corning, to prohibit the Springboks from playing in Albany. Corning, however, refused to do so as he argued that it would impede on the constitutional rights of US sportsmen.²⁵¹ However, New York state governor, Hugh Carey, who banned the Springboks from playing in Albany, overturned Corning's ruling. Carey justified his reasoning by saying that the match posed the possibility for mass protests and potentially violent clashes by those "friend and foe" of the apartheid South Africa.²⁵² According to Carey, he had information that a band of Ku Klux Klan, a militant anti-black organisation known for its violent methods and naturally supporters of apartheid, were travelling from Connecticut to confront the anti-apartheid groups.²⁵³ Carey's apprehension is understandable when considering the presence of militant civil rights activists and a fanatical anti-black organisation, making the likelihood for violence on the streets of Albany a very real possibility, which could well lead to a renewal of the 1980 race riots.

Governor Carey's ban meant the Springboks would not be able to use the Bleecker Stadium in Albany where they were set to play the Eastern All Stars. However, the Eastern Rugby Union, who organised the tour, was quick to take the matter to the US High Court. Tom Selfridge, President of the Eastern Rugby Union, argued that if Carey was concerned over potential violence he needed to see to it that sufficient police were present to prohibit this

²⁴⁸ SARB Archive, Collection VIII: Groot Toere, Box 1.37C: 1981. Statistiese Verslag van die 1981 Springbok Toer van Nieu-Seeland en die V.S.A: Statistieke van Wedstryde Gespeel in die VSA, p. 2.

²⁴⁹ "Jesse Jackson se Bokke die stryd aan," *Die Burger*, 17 September 1981, p. 4.

²⁵⁰ "VSA betogers se blaf erger as hul byt," *Die Burger*, 21 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁵¹ "Bokke Albany verbied," *Die Burger*, 18 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

from happening.²⁵⁴ In addition to Carey's ban on the Springboks, the American Civil Liberties Union, one of those organisations campaigning against the Springbok tour, submitted a request to the High Court that Carey's decision be upheld, as well as be extended to the Springboks' remaining matches in the US.²⁵⁵

It took up until the day of the second match for the High Court to deliver its judgement. Judge Howard Munson ruled against the ban by Governor Carey in favour of the Eastern Rugby Union, thus allowing the use of Albany's Bleecker Stadium.²⁵⁶ Munson ruled that, although there was the possibility of violent disruptions if the match went ahead, it would be a constitutional violation if the match were to be called off. Munson concludes that it was Carey's responsibility to ensure that law and order be maintained without depriving the sportsmen of their right to play.²⁵⁷

Although the match was now legally allowed to proceed, it was not out of the woods yet. While Munson was delivering his judgment, hordes of screaming protestors outside the courthouse were busy passing around pamphlets highlighting the plans on how to disrupt the match that evening. Rumours had made into the Springbok camp that the anti-tour organisation, Stop the Apartheid Rugby Tour (START), had amassed 10,000 protestors, larger than any protest in New Zealand, and intended on travelling to Albany to disrupt the match.²⁵⁸ The seriousness of these threats was driven home later that day when a bomb was set off inside the offices of the Eastern Rugby Union, causing extensive damage. Although the explosion did not cause any injuries, it did have the effect of an increase in security around the Springboks. Quintus van Rooyen, a journalist for *Die Burger* who had travelled with the Springboks to New Zealand and the USA, reported that the Springboks had never before on the tour experienced the sort of protection they received in the USA, which is quite a statement to make when considering the strict security measures around the team in New Zealand.²⁵⁹

For many of the Springbok players, the US demonstrators were a much greater cause for concern than those in New Zealand for one simple reason: in New Zealand you could see the

²⁵⁴ "SA Toer: Veld bly geheim," *Die Burger*, 19 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁵⁵ "Bokke Albany verbied," *Die Burger*, 18 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁵⁶ "Bokke mag speel, se VSA hof," *Die Burger*, 22 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ W. Claassen: *More Than Just Rugby*, p. 238.

²⁵⁹ "Bokke nog nooit so opgepas," *Die Burger*, 23 September 1981, p. 2.

protestors, whereas in the US you could not.²⁶⁰ Wynand Claassen recalls the feeling amongst the Springboks at the time: “This was one thing that really scared the Springboks – bomb blasts. Demonstrators you can at least see, but a bomb or assassin (there was talk of one of us being shot) was a different story.”²⁶¹ The covert workings and renowned militancy of the US protestors became an additional source of psychological stress for many of the Springboks. There was an overall feeling that the US protestors were willing to harm the Springboks, and consequently sparked the tightening up of security around the team.

In the hours before the match at the Bleecker Stadium, the Springboks were explained the extent of their new security measures. For safety, the team would only be taken to the field at the last moment, and so the players were instructed to do all their preparations at the hotel where they were staying. Here they changed into their match clothes and were given a functions room in the hotel where they could do all their warm-up drills. Shortly before the kick-off, the team was instructed to put on street clothes over their rugby gear so as not to draw attention and were driven in three high-powered minibuses to the stadium. Once there, the team were driven to an alternate entrance opposite the main entrance and ran from the busses onto the field where their opposition was already waiting. Wynand Claassen recalls the extensive security measures at the Bleecker Stadium:

“The US police seemed less concerned than their New Zealand counterparts about avoiding a confrontation, and their numbers included marksmen armed with rifles and State Troopers carrying batons which looked like oversized baseball bats.”²⁶²

Fortunately for both teams, the only real problem they experienced was the torrential rain which bucketed down for much of the game. As had become the custom during the tour, even in New Zealand, the number of protestors that turned up at the match were only a fraction of what had been threatened would be amassed. Fewer than 2000 (of the 10,000 promised) made it to the match and barely got a glimpse of the Springboks as they marched in circles and chanted outside the stadium. Once the muddy match finished, which the Springboks won 41-0, the team was whisked off back to their hotel without even getting a chance to shake the hands of their opposition. The following day there were reports of scattered incidents of

²⁶⁰ Interview with Theuns Stofberg, 14 March 2015.

²⁶¹ W. Claassen: *More Than Just Rugby*, p. 240.

²⁶² *Ibid*, p. 238.

violence around Albany, but in general the match that was set to explode off the field never so much as even lit the fuse.

Numerous reasons were given for why there had not been the expected turnout of protest action. Torrential rain, lack of transport from New York, heavily armed police, and the court ruling in favour of the match seemed to take the sting out of the tail of those set on disrupting the match.²⁶³ The only source of concern was a second bomb that was set off in the Evansville All White RFC clubhouse in Indiana, more than a thousand kilometres from where the Springboks were. It was speculated that the bomb was set off there because the team had wanted to play the Springboks and had offered to host the Springboks for the Midwest match should things not work out in Chicago.

The increasing use of bombs by the anti-tour movement caused a radical change in security measures for the final match of the tour, the test between the Springboks and the USA Eagles. The match seemed to be building up to be a replay of the final test in Auckland, with US anti-apartheid groups vowing to throw everything at disrupting the final match. The possibility of violent demonstrations and the threat of explosives led New York City mayor, Ed Koch, to ban the Springboks from playing the test in New York. Once again, Tom Selfridge began a battle with politicians to allow the match, but this time it was to no avail. The inability to play in New York and the increasing dilemma of match security led rugby administrators to make a drastic decision.

The test between the Springboks and the USA Eagles was scheduled to be played on 25 September and, as perusal with the US tour, the venue was kept a secret from the public, media, and players. However, the secrecy surrounding the test was stepped up in light of the recent bomb attacks. On the morning of 24 September, Johan Claassen and Nelie Smith met with Selfridge and the Eagles management to discuss the match. As it had become difficult to guarantee the safety of either team, it was decided that in order to prevent any disruptions to the match and keep players out of harm's way, the match would be played later that afternoon, and not the following day as had been scheduled. It was decided that no media or spectators would be alerted to the change. Not even USA Rugby Football Union President, David Chambers, who was travelling to this historic first match between the US Eagles and the Springboks, would be alerted to the change.

²⁶³ "VSA-polisie laat betogers skrik," *Die Burger*, 23 September 1981, p. 2.

With the test team already having been selected, all those who were not selected were told that they would be going on an outing to a nearby baseball museum. When they returned to their hotel, they discovered that the test had already been played. Rob Louw, who had not been selected to play, recalls how upon arrival at the hotel he and the rest of the team not selected to play were greeted by a television news report (the media were only informed of the score after) that the test had been played.²⁶⁴ Edrich Krantz, also not selected to play in the test, was one of the few spectators fortunate enough to witness the secret test. Krantz had been sent out by the management to buy some gifts for the US management and, upon returning to the hotel, stumbled upon the test team busy doing their pre-match preparations. “Come with us, we are quickly going to play the test” were the words which greeted Krantz at the hotel, who was subsequently asked to write the match report for *Die Burger* as none of the South African media had been informed of the change.²⁶⁵ Dan Retief, a South African journalist who had accompanied the team to New Zealand and the USA, recalls how he was sitting in a pub near the Springboks’ hotel when an American journalist walked in and announced that the test had been played. There was a dash to contact anyone who may have attended the match.

In his book, *For the Love of Rugby*, Rob Louw writes that in 100 years’ time the third test between the All Blacks and the Springboks in 1981 will be remembered as the strangest test match ever played.²⁶⁶ If in 100 years’ time, the secret test between the Springboks and the US Eagles is still remembered, it can certainly be afforded a similar status. As it happened, those Springboks who were not selected to play in the test and had been taken to the baseball museum had acted as an unsuspecting decoy to draw anyone watching the hotel after them. The remaining test players were instructed to be dressed in their match gear and then put on civilian clothes over their jerseys. Sometime after the others had left to the museum, the team was piled four by four into minibuses and instructed to lie flat so that they could not be seen. They were driven for half an hour to the house of Tom Selfridge, where they waited and did their final preparations until shortly before the kick-off time. The team were then driven into a rural area until they reached the Owl Creek polo field in Glenville, New York. The team was greeted by 250 State Troopers, most of who were concealed in the bushes, and a spattering of locals who had happened to be at the field. After warming up in horse paddocks,

²⁶⁴ R. Louw: *For the Love of Rugby*, p. 142.

²⁶⁵ “Bok span ‘n wenperd op poloveld,” *Die Burger*, 28 September 1981, p. 24.

²⁶⁶ R. Louw: *For the Love of Rugby*, p. 136.

the team was introduced to their field – a polo field with a two-meter drop from end to end. As the teams arrived on the field, the goalposts were still being erected by the Eagles' substitutes. A record low crowd of 35, most of whom were substitutes, State Troopers, or friends of the field's owner, watched the match. It remains the smallest crowd ever to attend an official Springbok test match.²⁶⁷ With the Springboks playing uphill and against the wind in the first half, the score line was a narrow 6-4 to the Springboks at halftime. The second half proved a different matter as the Springboks cantered downhill to win the final match of the tour 38-7.

The manner in which the test had been played proved to be a sour point for many, particularly for those Springboks who had been unsuspectingly used as a decoy. They felt that the management and the test team had not regarded them as trust worthy enough to inform them that the test would be played earlier. Even Wynand Claassen, who had captained the team against the Eagles, lamented the fact that, after all the team had been through in New Zealand and the US, the team as a whole had not been able to be together for the final match of the tour.²⁶⁸ Rob Louw, a member of the decoy team, recalled the tensions that existed after the match. Eventually tensions boiled over and a scuffle broke out between a few of the Springboks at a cocktail evening held for the two teams.²⁶⁹

The news of the secret test was also not well received in South Africa. Many felt that it was an indignity that the cream of world rugby would be forced to play test match rugby under such circumstances. Former Springbok, Tommy Bedford, labelled the match as ridiculous and lamented the fact that such a match could be considered a test match.²⁷⁰ Similarly, Afrikaans radio commentator, Gerhard Viviers, who had been with the Springboks on the troublesome 1969/70 tour of the UK, labelled the match a farce and bemoaned the fact that the match had been given test match status.²⁷¹

Despite the discontent by many over the way the match had taken place, the tactic had worked as for the first time on the 1981 tour there was not a protestor in sight.²⁷² Although

²⁶⁷ SARB Archive, Collection VIII: Groot Toere, Box 1.37C: 1981. Statistiese Verslag van die 1981 Springbok Toer van Nieu-Seeland en die V.S.A: Statistieke van Wedstryde Gespeel in die VSA, p. 2.

²⁶⁸ W. Claassen: *More Than Just Rugby*, p. 242.

²⁶⁹ R. Louw: *For the Love of Rugby*, p. 143.

²⁷⁰ "Bokke vertrek stil na SA," *Die Burger*, 28 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² SARB Archive, Collection VIII: Groot Toere, Box 1.37C: 1981. Statistiese Verslag van die 1981 Springbok Toer van Nieu-Seeland en die V.S.A: Statistieke van Wedstryde Gespeel in die VSA, p. 2.

Tom Selfridge was in hot water over the manner in which the match had taken place, his actions had facilitated the first official test between South Africa and the USA, which may not have been possible had the test been played on the scheduled day and protestors had a chance to make it to the match. The minimal status of rugby in the USA also contributed to the fact that matches could be played in secrecy and, as was the case with the Springbok matches against the Eastern All Stars and the US Eagles, could be arranged or changed without much difficulty. In comparison to New Zealand, US rugby officials did not have to worry about thousands of match tickets that had been sold months in advance or television crews intending to broadcast the match live. The fact that matches did not draw that much attention in the US meant they could be chopped and changed on short notice, without causing too many disturbances.

For many South Africans, the bizarre spectacle they had witness over the past three months in New Zealand and the USA led to a moment of realisation: unless there was drastic change in South Africa, this would be the future of South African rugby. If the Springboks did manage to obtain tours, they would encounter severe demonstrations wherever they travelled. Even if the team claimed to be chosen on merit and despite the fact that rugby was arguably one of the frontrunners in breaking down South Africa's racial barriers, unless South Africa's racial practices were removed there was little hope of its rugby returning to normal. The Springboks had travelled to rugby-crazed New Zealand, a place where South African rugby was held in high regard, and had experienced severe demonstrations against their presence. Then they had travelled to a country where a rugby culture was virtually non-existent, but were still forced to hide from dangerous protestors.

The fact that rugby was leading the way in racial integration would never be enough for anti-apartheid bodies until the South African government dismantled its racial policies. It would never be enough that Errol Tobias could don the Springbok jersey if he could not share in the rights and freedoms of his white compatriots. What the sporting boycott now demanded, and which was probably best exemplified by the protests during the 1981 tour, was that the removal of apartheid would be the bare minimum before sport would be allowed back into the international fold.

Keeping Sport and Politics Separate? South African-United States Relations around the 1981 Tour

For the South African and world rugby communities, the Springbok tour of the US was of little importance. It had been an anti-climax following the gripping tour of New Zealand and left many of the players questioning why it had been necessary to come to the US. The SARB had been opposed to the Springboks touring the US straight after a strenuous New Zealand tour. As international tours go, the tour was arranged quietly hastily with the final invitation to the “Spring Bucks” only being received by the SARB in January of 1981 (international tours were normally arranged well over a year in advance).²⁷³ It was speculated that the tour had taken place to take some of the international pressure off New Zealand. However, it is more likely that South African rugby had attempted to broaden the scope of their available rugby rivals during the isolation-era. This certainly seems plausible, as while the Springboks were touring the US it became publicly known that a sum of \$50,000 had been paid by the SARB to the Eastern Rugby Union, who had hosted the Springboks. Furthermore, it emerged that Louis Luyt, President of the Transvaal Rugby Football Union and business magnate, had also given \$25,000 to the USARFU as a gift.

The news of the funds had anti-apartheid groups up in arms as they regarded the money as a bribe to allow the Springboks to tour. Once the Springboks found out about the payments, they were left feeling somewhat embarrassed, as it seemed that the tour had been bought.²⁷⁴ Although the money was not a bribe – the \$50,000 was meant to cover the Springboks’ living and travel arrangements in the US and the \$25,000 was to be used to develop US rugby – it did ensure a friendly line of communication between US and SA rugby bodies. Thus, the funds were perhaps a way of laying the groundwork for future tours between the two nations, or at least for as long as a Republican sat in the Oval Office. However, if these funds did in fact serve to facilitate friendliness between the two rugby boards, it did not serve either country particularly well, as South Africa and the US would only next play one another in an official test well after apartheid was removed in South Africa.

The question remains, however, on whether there existed an ulterior motive regarding the Springboks’ tour of the US. From a rugby perspective, the tour certainly made little sense,

²⁷³ SARB Archive, Collection VIII: Toere, Box 1.37A: 1981. Invitation from USARFU to the SARB to have the Springboks tour the USA in 1981, 5 January 1981.

²⁷⁴ W. Claassen: *More Than Just Rugby*, p. 240.

and thus it should be considered whether rugby was the sole purpose of the tour. The tour had taken place under the auspices that a tour by the Springboks would help to develop US rugby by providing it with exposure to top flight international rugby. However, it should be considered that perhaps the tour had been a means not only to further South Africa's rugby ties with the US, but also to rekindle its political ties with the US after the hostile Jimmy Carter era. South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s was facing what it regarded as a 'total onslaught' against the country, including a growing Communist presence in Southern Africa. With the NP embracing what Nelson Mandela labelled "the most hide-bound of Cold War ideology", it is not farfetched to conceive that following the election of the Republican Reagan, a chance presented itself to the South African government to rekindle its ties with the USA.²⁷⁵

South Africa's political landscape in 1981 was dominated by a single event: an increase of 14% on the defence budget spending, bringing the figure to around R2.6 billion, R847 million more than the year before.²⁷⁶ The *Cape Times* described the increase as a "siege budget", an increase that seemed to suggest that South Africa was on near wartime footing.²⁷⁷ The drastic increase was largely to do with the increasing Communist presence in the southern African independence struggles. From the mid-1970s, there had been a decline in what the South African government regarded as white-ruled 'buffer states' – South-West Africa (Namibia), Zimbabwe, and Portuguese Mozambique – which bordered South Africa.

Mozambique became the first of these states to lose its white rule after the fascist dictatorship in Lisbon was overthrown and ended Portuguese colonialism. Mozambique gained its independence in 1975 with the socialist Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) dominating the new political dispensation. The new developments in Mozambique also provided a passage through which the exiled Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) guerrillas, who were fighting a liberation war against Ian Smith's white minority regime in Rhodesia, could gain further access to the territory. When Smith's regime was successfully toppled, the South African government suddenly found itself with two liberated black, Russian supported regimes on its doorstep, as well as substantial Russian and Cuban influences in Angola. With this, attention shifted to the liberation battle SWAPO was fighting against South Africa in South-West Africa. For the South African government, what was

²⁷⁵ N. R. Mandela: *The Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 641.

²⁷⁶ "A Siege Budget," *Cape Times*, 13 August 1981, p. 1.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

busy unfolding in southern Africa was, to quote Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, “communist inspired, communist planned, and communist supported.”²⁷⁸ “Virtually the only activity that exists in those countries is the training of terrorists which are on their way to the Republic of South Africa” was Malan’s prognosis of what was happening in these southern Africa states.²⁷⁹

Speaking to the *Volksraad* (House of Assembly) in 1981, Malan elaborated that southern Africa’s changing political landscape was part of the domino theory that US President, Dwight Eisenhower, had first warned the world about in the 1950’s. The theory suggested that if one state fell to Communism, it would virtually ensure that the neighbouring states would follow suit unless there was an intervention.²⁸⁰ In their pursuit of “communist world domination”, Malan believed that the Soviet Union and its cohorts regarded southern Africa as a key point. Southern Africa had wealth in minerals and was a strategic position to gain control over the Cape sea-route, as well as an important territory for expansion into Africa.²⁸¹ Therefore, South Africa needed to prepare for the coming onslaught if it wanted to fend off future Communist advances on the country.

However, the ‘total onslaught’ against South Africa came not only from outside the country, but internally as well, as white South African rule faced an internal crisis as blacks’ demand for political rights gained momentum. The fatal Soweto uprising had rejuvenated support for the ANC and led it to become more militant.²⁸² The South African government regarded the ANC as a terrorist organisation set on violently overthrowing white rule in South Africa. With its socialist ideology and support from Soviet Russia, the ANC were a revolutionary force in the eyes of the South African government. Malan described the objectives of the ANC as follows: “This terrorist organisation is not set on peaceful evolutionary development, but on bringing about change through a revolutionary takeover of the state.”²⁸³ Malan tried to drive home the point that in the history of revolutionary takeovers, violent tactics were always used as a means to achieve an end.

²⁷⁸ Debate van die Volksraad, Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 24 September 1981, col. 4494.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, col. 4495.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, col. 4494.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*.

²⁸² D. O’Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, p. 181.

²⁸³ Debate van die Volksraad, Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 24 September 1981, col. 4492.

The events that unfolded during the Soweto uprising had led to renewed revolutionary enthusiasm amongst insurgents attempting to topple white rule in South Africa and had galvanized resurgent black resistance to the Republic. The event had shown the Afrikaner government to be vulnerable, as even schoolchildren were now challenging the white regime. This vulnerability was further amplified by the fact that South Africa had lost most of its western allies. Speaking in the House of Assembly in 1982, a Progressive Federal Party (PFP) member noted that South Africa would struggle against Soviet expansionism largely because it no longer had its western allies, which had deserted South Africa due to the NP's apartheid policy.²⁸⁴ In particular, the USA under Jimmy Carter had taken a much harder line toward South Africa than Richard Nixon or Robert Ford. The Carter Administration had informed the South African government that the US sought majority rule and a 'one man, one vote' system in South Africa, effectively saying apartheid had to go. Although Carter did not place any significant pressure on South Africa – such as by applying economic sanctions that may well have twisted the arm of Pretoria – the hostility of the US government towards apartheid effectively meant the regime was isolated from US aid during a time when communist influence was growing in southern Africa.

It is here where the 1981 Springbok tour of the US comes into play. The tour was played in 1981 for one specific reason: Jimmy Carter would no longer be president. Instead, the Republican, Ronald Reagan, would be president by the time the Springboks arrived in the US. This is not to say that a Republican president would support apartheid. It did, however, based on Carter's two predecessors, Nixon and Ford, both from the Republican Party and both having failed to act against apartheid, give hope to the South African government that a softer line would be taken toward their country by the US. Even the official opposition in South Africa, the PFP, believed that the election of Reagan as president would have positive consequences for South Africa and open new diplomatic and political lines between the two countries.²⁸⁵

As it turned out, this speculation was spot on, particularly with regard to Reagan's stance on South Africa's occupation of South-West Africa. Whereas Carter had declared that the Republic's occupation of South-West Africa as illegal, Reagan declared that South Africa did not need to leave Namibia until Cuban forces left Angola, for which he received a great deal

²⁸⁴ Debate van die Volksraad, Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 4 February 1982, col. 356.

²⁸⁵ Debate van die Volksraad, Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 26 January 1981, col. 22.

if international criticism.²⁸⁶ Despite Reagan being internationally derided as a protector of apartheid, he stuck to his guns over the matter. Some years later, Pik Botha, South African Foreign Affairs Minister, had the following to say on Reagan's position on the South-West Africa matter: "During the seven years in which Pres. Reagan has governed, this standpoint has formed a shield against sanctions and no sanctions were imposed against this country because of the South-West Africa issue."²⁸⁷ Reagan's policy of 'constructive engagement' with South Africa empathised not only with the suffering of South African blacks, but also with the political dilemma of whites.²⁸⁸

South Africa needed to rekindle an old friendship with the US in the face of growing hostility towards the Republic in Southern Africa. In a time where the South African government believed a Communist threat to be knocking on the Republic's front door, a rugby tour to the US is unlikely to have gone unnoticed as an opportunity to extend a hand of friendship to the US. Particularly as this tour was conducted under the auspices of using South Africa's rugby supremacy to benefit and improve the sport in the US. White South Africa believed itself to be facing a Communist-inspired onslaught against which it stood alone. However, an ally such as the US would certainly add some fortification to South Africa's vulnerable position.

Thus, perhaps the rugby tour of the US must be considered as a tactic to get the ball rolling between the US and South African governments. Although it is difficult to find definitive proof for such a claim, it must be considered that a nation with the sort of Communist-paranoia that South Africa was in during the 1970s and 1980s would use every and any opportunity to rekindle the lost bond that existed between the Republic and one of the world super-powers. Writing on white South Africa's overwhelming fear of communism, Herman Giliomee provides the following statistics:

“[In 1971] a survey of white elite found that only 9 per cent saw the rise of ‘black nationalism’ as a threat compared to 73 per cent who believed that international communism represented the ‘greatest threat to the security of South Africa and the successful realisation of the policy of separate development’.”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ P. Gleijeses: "The United States, South Africa, and the Cold War: A Gordian Knot," *Radical History Review*, (Vol 119), 2014, p. 238.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ S. Stevens: "From the Viewpoint of a Southern Governor": The Carter Administration and Apartheid, 1977–1981," *Diplomatic History*, (Vol 36), 2012, p. 879.

²⁸⁹ H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners*, p. 548.

Speaking at the House of Assembly in 1982, an NP member implored Prime Minister Botha that the only way South Africa would be able to cope with the impending battle against Communism and the USSR was to restore its friendship with the West, of which the US had traditionally been the most outspoken against Communism.²⁹⁰ Instead of South Africa asking the US for protection, a rugby tour, sending over the pride of South African sport, could be seen as an initial gesture of mutual benefits should the two countries resume a closer working with one-another. It must be granted, however, that South Africa helping develop US rugby seemed like a poor trade-off for protection from the Soviet Union. However, it was a start, a token gesture to signify the possibility of reciprocal benefits should the US ally itself with South Africa.

It must also be considered that, as a PFP member pointed out during a sitting of the House of Assembly in 1981, the US would only be able to justify its softer line toward South Africa if there was proof of meaningful change in the social and political structure of South African society.²⁹¹ By 1981, rugby in South Africa was regarded as the frontrunner in breaking down discriminatory racial barriers and was setting a tone for others to follow. Perhaps then, the 1981 tour to the US must be considered a moment where a ‘representative’ South African team could parade some of the changes that had been achieved in the country. By sending the first merit selected Springbok team with the first black Springbok in it to the US, South Africa could demonstrate that it was on the right path with regard to change, thereby hopefully encouraging a sense of confidence in the country. As illustrated earlier in this thesis, the 1981 tours (Ireland, New Zealand, and the USA) were meant to be a public campaign during which rugby could illustrate to the world the progress being made in South Africa in removing discriminatory practices. A confidential SARB document stated that: “...we have been given grace in that we can still prove to the world during the Irish and New Zealand [and US] tours that we are on the right road as far as public opinion and ourselves are concerned.”²⁹²

With this in mind, it is plausible to consider that the Springbok tour to the US also served as a campaign to assure the US that South Africa’s future was on the right track, and that here was evidence of it in the form of the first ‘racially mixed’ Springbok side. A ‘mixed’ rugby side

²⁹⁰ Debate van die Volksraad, Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 3 February 1982, col. 206.

²⁹¹ Debate van die Volksraad, Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 29 January 1981, col. 348.

²⁹² SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.1: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur 1980. “Itinerary Irish Tour,” no date available.

could be regarded as a major step in the right direction for South Africa as the sport had long held the reputation as the sacred game of the Afrikaner.

Other than Douglas Reid, an American businessman, who urged the SARB to take the lead in bringing the nations of America and South Africa together through a rugby tour, there is little evidence to suggest that the US tour held the sort of significance that is theorised above. Undoubtedly, South Africa and the US under Reagan had their respective interests in maintaining contact with one-another, but whether it was a rugby tour that contributed to facilitating such contact is open to interpretation. However, Reid's enthusiasm seems to suggest that he believed rugby could facilitate a closer connection between South African and the USA and was a way to ward off the Communist threat in southern Africa. Reid also wrote frantically to Richard Nixon, requesting that Nixon needed to have a word with his Republican successor, Ronald Reagan, to rekindle the US's relationship with South Africa before the Soviet Union were able to exert their influence over the territory.²⁹³ However, as Reid was neither a rugby nor government official, it is difficult to see his opinion on rugby between South Africa and the US as proof that the tour acted as a political foray to rekindle lost US and South African ties.

At this stage, however, it should be acknowledged that due to space, time, and narrative constraints this thesis could not delve deeper into this question. This thesis does not propose to have provided any form of answer to the question, but merely to state the plausibility of the 1981 USA tour being of political significance based on information obtained from various sources. To provide any meaningful discussion on whether the 1981 tour acted as a political foray to the USA, a separate self-standing study devoted to this question is required. A perusal of the South African Foreign Affairs Archive would certainly shed greater light on this matter. However, for the purpose of this thesis the potential political motive behind the 1981 USA tour is only worth mentioning as it falls outside the parameters of what this thesis has set out to argue.

Conclusion

Had South African rugby authorities known what would unfold in New Zealand in 1981, it is unlikely that they would have agreed to the US leg of the tour. The Springboks themselves could not understand the purpose of the tour as it was somewhat of an anti-climax following a

²⁹³ SARB Archive, Collection VIII: Toere, Box 1.37A: 1981. Letter from Douglas Reid to Richard Nixon, 22 July 1980.

riveting series in New Zealand. The tour was largely ignored in South Africa by the same media who had brought the country even the finest details of what was happening in New Zealand. The tour did, however, lead to a historic first test between the Springboks and the US Eagles, but under some of the strangest conditions ever to befall a rugby tour, even in comparison to what unfolded in New Zealand. Rugby's minimal status in the US, however, worked in favour of facilitating the tour as fixtures could be chopped and changed at a moment's notice without any major difficulties (such as thousands of spectators who had bought tickets months in advance such as in New Zealand).

The major damage to South Africa's international rugby future had been done in New Zealand, damage that would have come about regardless of whether the US tour had taken place. Thus, the US tour mainly served to reinforce the speculation that future tours would be plagued by violent demonstrations unless South Africa implemented drastic changes to its racial policies. However, despite the relative insignificance of the rugby aspect of the tour, it must be considered that the tour acted also as a political foray through which the South African government could begin to bridge the gap that had developed between the Republic and the USA over the previous decade. With the South African government believing it was facing a Communist crisis developing on country's borders, it became imperative that South Africa attempt to re-establish its western allies if the country were to thwart the perceived oncoming threat.

It should be considered that a rugby tour to the US was a way of illustrating the progress South Africa had made in terms of starting to break down racial barriers, with rugby taking the lead in sending over a racial mixed team selected on merit. Such progress could be used by the US (as it was in New Zealand) to justify closer working with South Africa in the face of international condemnation. However, as mentioned, this thesis will not delve deeper into this question other than to acknowledge - based on the political climate in both South Africa and the US at the time - the plausibility of a rugby tour being used as a diplomatic foray by South Africa to win back its alliance with the US.

Chapter Six

The Onset of Isolation: South African Rugby from 1981-1988

*“Did we do the right thing for sport and for rugby? We have decided it was the right thing to do!”*²⁹⁴

The Springboks returned to South Africa as national heroes. They had prevailed in exceptionally difficult circumstances, having lost only two matches across the two tours. The South Africans had proven that despite the relative isolation since the 1970s, South African rugby could still hold its own against the best in the world. Many a South African would have speculated that, had the New Zealand tour not taken place under the conditions it had, the Springboks may well have come back with a series win. The team arrived in Johannesburg to a hero's welcome as some 2000 peoples ushered them in. At the team's arrival, an overtly optimistic Craven assured the media that the tour had been a resounding success and that South Africans would see the American and New Zealand teams on their fields in the not too distant future.²⁹⁵

Craven was full of praise for those New Zealanders who had stood by the tour, claiming that more countries could learn from these strongmen. However, Craven had speculated that there was a very real chance that this could have been the Springboks' last tour to New Zealand. Yet in his traditionally combative way, Craven commented about those who had opposed the tour: “We showed the world who they are dealing with...we must fight [our enemies] wherever we find them.”²⁹⁶ Yet what Craven did not seem to grasp was that this insensitive ‘tour-at-all-costs’ mentality had likely not only prevented them from touring New Zealand in future, but would in fact confine the Springboks within South Africa's borders for the next decade.

The New Zealand and USA tours had been able to run their course, but the effects thereof would only manifest themselves in the years to come, effects that Craven could not immediately foresee. The anti-tour activists in New Zealand and the US had not been able to curb the tours as they had planned, but what they did succeed in doing was giving rugby nations around the world a healthy dose of the chaos a touring Springbok team could attract,

²⁹⁴ “Craven se toer was veg werd,” *Die Burger*, 30 September 1981, p. 3.

²⁹⁵ “Tweeuisend wag Bokke in,” *Die Burger*, 30 September 1981, p. 1.

²⁹⁶ “Craven se toer was veg werd,” *Die Burger*, 30 September 1981, p. 3.

whether this was in the smallest or largest of rugby playing nations. Although it was not immediately apparent, what these activists had succeeded in doing was forcing the Springboks into rugby isolation, something that the sporting boycott had struggled to achieve over the previous two decades.

This chapter will illustrate how the 1981 tour contributed to South Africa's rugby isolation in the 1980s, as well as the initiatives the SARB implemented to try to offset this isolation. These initiatives were usually short-lived, ineffective, and generally left the SARB in a worse-off position than before. The 1981 tour caused ripples in the rugby world, which over the course of several years would leave the SARB with few friends and staring complete isolation in the face. The ripples caused by the 1981 tour were even further aggravated by the political situation in South Africa. Not only was the SARB being forced to combat the effects of the 1981 tour, but also these effects were being aggravated by the South African government's reluctance to dismantle apartheid.

Thus, in order to grasp the situation faced by South African rugby in the 1980s, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the complex political upheavals South Africa went through during this period. Consequently, much of what took place on the political front in the 1980s dictated the severity of the isolation felt by South African rugby, generally leaving the SARB rudderless in finding a solution. The following section thus entails a brief discussion on the complex politics of 1980s South Africa.

Reform, Right-wingers, and Revolutionaries: South African Politics in the 1980s

South African entered the 1980s inauspiciously. The rugby tour of New Zealand and the USA had shocked many white South Africans as to the degree of animosity that existed towards their country, even from an old ally like New Zealand. Writing about that time, Paul Dobson noted that:

“The vehemence of the opposition shocked many South Africans who believed that rugby men really wanted to play with them; and that their ‘kith and kin’ overseas were really on the side of the Springboks and did not blame them for the nasty policies of the Nationalist government.”²⁹⁷

In this extract, Dobson captures the mentality of South African rugby: rugby should not be viewed on the same continuum as the politics of the National Party. Politics was regarded as

²⁹⁷ P. Dobson: *Doc: The life of Danie Craven*, p. 169.

having no business in rugby, yet occasionally the two would overlap. In the 1970s, opponents of apartheid South Africa had demanded a complete removal of racial segregation in sport before the country could return to international competition. Since the late 1970s, Craven had done much to facilitate the development of rugby in underdeveloped areas, as the SARB hosted clinics for players, coaches, and referees in order to upgrade the sport, for which Craven received much international praise. In June 1975, the fielding of a racially mixed South African side against the French at Newland in Cape Town also seemed to suggest that non-racial rugby in South Africa was becoming a reality. In 1978, the amalgamation of three of the four rugby bodies in South Africa (SARB, SARA, and SARFF amalgamated to form SARB – SARU refused to join until apartheid was removed entirely) seemed to suggest that apartheid had been removed from South African rugby.

The South African government had also, although somewhat grudgingly, removed certain legislation which was seen to constrain multiracial rugby. In essence then, all legal boundaries were removed from preventing players of different races playing together. Although racially mixed rugby was legally a reality from 1977, whether it took place in practice was a different matter entirely. This concession by the government largely manifested itself in the top echelons of South African rugby, with provincial and later national sides fielding racially mixed teams. Lower down the ladder this was not the case. Rugby clubs still held full discretion over whom they permitted as members, and racial mixing in schools was virtually non-existent. By permitting racially mixed sport, the government had made a shrewd assumption that apartheid was so engrained in South African society by the 1970s that racially mixed sport was unlikely to occur on any large scale. Removing legislation which had been engrained in every facet of South African society for almost 30 years (by the time multiracial sport was allowed) and was based on exploiting the separateness of the races would not mean that people were going to run into one-another's arms if the legislation preventing them from doing so was removed. It was also unlikely that traditionally white clubs or teams would suddenly be flooded with players of colour (and vice-versa). Because clubs could no longer legally turn away a prospective member due to the colour of their skin, other measures were devised in order to prevent players of colour joining the club. Cases were recorded of black players attempting to join white clubs who were turned away due to a supposed 6-year waiting list. While racially mixed sport was now legal, apartheid was too engrained in society for there to be any serious threat of racial mixing.

However, despite the reality over multiracial sport in South Africa, it seemed that rugby had fulfilled the criteria for the country's full return to international rugby. Apartheid had been removed in the sport, just as had been stipulated by the sporting boycott. With the start of the 1980s, it seemed as if South Africa would in fact return to international rugby. The British and Irish Lions (1980), France (1980, only for one match), South American Jaguars (1980), Ireland (1981), New Zealand (1981), and the USA (1981) were set to play South Africa. With this packed schedule, it certainly seemed that South African rugby had good reason to feel optimistic about its future.

The 1980s, however, came with a number of problems. The 1981 New Zealand tour had shaken the rugby establishment of not only South Africa, but also rugby bodies around the world. The good work done by the SARB in the 1970s to implement non-racial rugby had made little impact on the ferocity with which New Zealanders had protested the South Africans' presence. This can largely be put down to the fact that by the time the Springboks toured in 1981 the calls in New Zealand were no longer for the removal of apartheid in sport or for merit team selection (as it had been in the 1970s), but for the complete removal of apartheid in South African society.

Organisations such as SACOS in South Africa and SANROC in England had done an excellent job of publicising the fact that once sport was done, white South Africans and black South Africans returned to lives which were strictly governed by the colour of their skin. They highlighted the fact that non-racial sport could not be tantamount to equality until the society within which it existed was equal. This 'eighty-minute equality' could not be seen as a break from apartheid as players who had shared a field, and perhaps a drink after the match, would then return to their completely segregated lifestyles once the sport had concluded. SACOS' slogan in the 1980s of 'no normal sport in an abnormal society' captured the nature of what was being protested in New Zealand and the USA. Ultimately, there could not be equality in any sphere of life while the society itself was unequal. In essence, for there to be equal sport, there needed to be an equal society.

New Zealand in 1981 was perhaps the first major event that drew attention to this new line of fire toward South African rugby. Journalists on the tour bombarded the Springbok team management with questions over whether it was more important for Errol Tobias to don the green jersey than it was for him to have voting rights. From 1981 onwards, the call for the scrapping of apartheid slowly began to disseminate internationally until, just as non-racial

rugby had in the 1970s, it became the central criterion for South Africa's re-entry into international rugby. The concession by the South African government to allow multiracial rugby had shown the outside world – just like it had with the Maori question in 1967 – that pressure on sport, particularly on rugby, was an effective way of forcing the hand of the apartheid government. However, the government in the 1980s stunted this progress. Scrapping apartheid for the sake of resuming international sport was a bridge too far for P.W. Botha and his government.

By the early 1980s, both the SARB and the government argued that South African sport should be readmitted to international competition because sport was now multiracial. In 1982 the SARB was requested by French rugby boss, Albert Ferrasse (who had long been a friend of South African rugby but even now he was finding it difficult to justify sustained contact with South Africa following the 1981 tour induced international backlash), to provide a full report on the “Legislation Relating to Sport in South Africa.”²⁹⁸ The request was passed on to Gerrit Viljoen, Minister of National Education (whose profile included sport), who eagerly responded to Ferrasse: “it is the declared policy of the Government that sport in South Africa should be completely autonomous.”²⁹⁹

Therefore, all legislation in South Africa that had a restricting influence on multiracial sport had been duly amended. This included amendments to the Liquor Act³⁰⁰, Group Areas Act³⁰¹, and the Black Urban Areas Consolidation Act³⁰². Viljoen ended his report to Ferrasse with the guarantee that this legislation had been brought about to “grant equal opportunities to all population groups and to eliminate any discrimination that may have existed in sport.”³⁰³

²⁹⁸ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek In Sport/Apartheid. Letter from Alex Kellerman to Albert Ferrasse titled “Legislation Relating to Sport in South Africa”, 16 August 1982.

²⁹⁹ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek In Sport/Apartheid. Letter from Gerrit Viljoen to Albert Ferrasse titled “Legislation Relating to Sport in South Africa: Amendments,” 16 August 1982.

³⁰⁰ The Liquor Act amendment meant that players of all races, providing that they were members or guests of the club (which clubs still had full discretion over), were allowed to be served liquor on an equal basis. Discretion on whom to serve liquor too rested solely with the licensee, i.e. the state no longer barred serving liquor to all races within a club.

³⁰¹ The Group Areas Act, one of the cornerstones of apartheid, would no longer apply to persons in some or other capacity attending a bona fide sports meeting, thus sports activities were fully dissociated from the act.

³⁰² Members from each of the races could travel to any area for sports activity provided they had an admission ticket or a club membership card from either of the clubs involved in the match.

³⁰³ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek In Sport/Apartheid. Letter from Gerrit Viljoen to Albert Ferrasse titled “Legislation Relating to Sport in South Africa: Amendments,” 16 August 1982.

These measures implemented by the government did genuinely seem to represent the removal of apartheid within sport, something that international onlookers took as encouraging signs for the future of South Africa. However, the international community would have to wait until deep into the 1980s before it came to the realisation that the South African government had no intention of breakdown apartheid, but instead was intent on reforming it in a manner that could be construed as its removal.

“Adapt or Die”: Maintaining White Power in the 1980s

With the coming of P.W. Botha as Prime Minister of the Republic of South Africa in 1978 (in 1984 the position was changed to President) Afrikaner nationalism came to be split between two distinctive tracts: the reform-minded politics of the Cape based Botha; and the conservative politics of Andries Treurnicht, leader of the Transvaal NP. Botha stressed that Afrikaner Nationalism and apartheid could no longer continue along its current path and that there would need to be adaptation to the current system in order to see its survival (commonly known as the ‘Total Strategy’ to counter the Total Onslaught against the republic). On the other hand, the *verkrampte* (conservative) Treurnicht stressed that there should be no deviation from the sacred policies of Verwoerdian-era Afrikaner Nationalism and apartheid.

However, by the early 1980s, particularly following the 1981 general election, it appeared that Afrikaner nationalism would be torn into yet a third direction. The reform-minded Botha had scared many Afrikaners: between 1979 and 1981, an estimated decline of 23% in earnings had hit the public sector which, in addition to the planned cut in employment in the state bureaucracy, played on the fears of whites that further reforms could erode their niche of power and privilege.³⁰⁴ Fortunately, for the Afrikaner far right, who still advocated the firm apartheid measures Botha was willing to discard, it scared these whites straight into their arms. Following the 1981 general election, the *Herstige* National Party (a group of former NP members which had broken away in the late 1960s largely due to Vorster’s willingness to allow Maori players to play against white South Africans), under Albert Hertzog, as well as a number of other far-right organisations, received a substantial chunk of the traditionally NP vote. Reports showed that the far right had won 38% of the Afrikaner vote and that the NP’s share of the vote had fallen from 65% in 1977, to 53% in 1981, the largest downturn in NP

³⁰⁴ D. O’Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, p. 309.

popularity since it came to power in 1948.³⁰⁵ Equally concerning was the flourishing of smaller far right organisations, some of which were openly pro-Nazi, such as the extremist right-wing organisation, the *Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging* (Afrikaner Resistance Movement).³⁰⁶ For a country that was trying to show the world that it was on a commendable path, the substantial growth of such far right movements, all of which advocated either radicalising of apartheid or at least maintaining it, could have disastrous consequences.

Following a further split in the NP in 1982 when the *verkrampste* Treurnicht was essentially forced out (Treurnicht went on to form the Conservative Party, or CP, which drew a number of smaller far-right organisations into its ranks), the October of 1982 polls revealed that only 42% of Afrikaners now aligned themselves with the NP.³⁰⁷ By 1987, the CP had become the official opposition to the NP. An important social split had taken place with the tearing apart of the NP: those who had chosen to align themselves with the far right and conservative factions were mostly from the lower ranks of Afrikaner society – small farmer, state bureaucrats, Afrikaner workers still insisting on a colour bar, and rural areas.³⁰⁸ Whereas the NP now came to espouse middle-class values and was supported by some of the major conglomerates who were in need of Botha's reforms to facilitate business.³⁰⁹

Now, Botha's NP, partly under pressure from their new business allies and no longer having to contend with the obstinate Treurnicht, pushed ahead with the planned reforms. The NP now no longer espoused the Verwoerdian notion of 'separate development' but instead pushed ahead with what it called 'healthy power-sharing and joint decision making'.³¹⁰ The outcome of this was a new constitutional dispensation and the tri-cameral parliament, voted for in the 1983 whites-only referendum. The new parliament essentially entailed a power-sharing program between white, coloureds, and Indians, which would be implemented from 1984 onwards.

For the NP, things were now looking up: the success of the 1983 referendum had won them back a substantial portion of their lost votes, and things would only get better. In 1984 Botha

³⁰⁵ C. R. Charney: "Towards Rupture or Stasis? An Analysis of the 1981 South African General Election," *African Affairs*, (Vol 81), 1982, p. 534.

³⁰⁶ H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners*, p. 608.

³⁰⁷ D. O'Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, p. 308.

³⁰⁸ H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners*, p. 606.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 607.

³¹⁰ D. O'Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, p. 308.

left many an onlooker in disbelief as he signed the Nkomati Accord, a non-aggressive pact with Samora Machel, president of the Leninist-Marxist Mozambique, as well as made conciliatory moves toward Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and peace moves in South-West Africa (Namibia). These new developments seemingly unlocked the door to international acceptance for South Africa as for the first time it looked like real moves had been made towards a future without apartheid. Writing about these developments, Dan O'Meara concludes: "the casual observer could be forgiven the conclusion that South Africa was indeed on the cusp of a new historic settlement."³¹¹

However, barely a year later the exuberance of these developments had turned to ash. Underlining Botha's reforms was the central notion of maintaining the existing power bloc. One of the core objectives behind Botha's reforms had been to stem the mounting revolutionary demands for social transformation by black South Africans since the early 1980s. For three-quarters of the South African population, Botha's reforms had changed nothing. Six years after being elected to the Premiership in 1978, Botha's reforms still subjected blacks to regular pass raids, denied them any political rights, stripped them of their South African citizenship, and dumped them in the arid *Bantustans*. Black South Africans could be forgiven for asking what had changed under the much-trumpeted Botha reforms.

By June 1986, the country was placed under a suffocating state of emergency and near military rule existed. The realisation that these reforms were little more than blatant attempts at retaining power in white hands enraged blacks and led to renewed vigour for the revolutionary struggle against white domination. In 1985, the exiled ANC called for a campaign to make South Africa ungovernable during which the state's administrative control over black areas would be destroyed. During this period, around 35,000 troops were deployed in the townships. Thousands of protestors were detained and nearly 2,000 people were killed in political violence.³¹²

The NP and government now fell into the trap of conceding reform from a position of weakness, as they were seen to buckle under pressure. The revolutionary opponents of the state came to see that the government was floundering and was willing to implement a degree of change with every spell of unrest. The unrest also revealed that, in fact, the state did not have any long-term plan to stem the unfolding revolution and in general seemed rudderless.

³¹¹ D. O'Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, p. 321.

³¹² H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners*, p. 615.

Hastily formulated reform plans to put the revolution to bed gave the impression that “the architects no longer seemed to know what they intended to build.”³¹³ Each round of ill-fated reforms further compounded the notion that Botha was not prepared to surrender apartheid, further fuelling the rage of black South Africans and further discrediting and isolating the white regime.

Things certainly did not improve with Botha’s infamous ‘Rubicon’ speech. At the 1985 Natal NP congress in Durban, expectations had been that Botha would announce the release of Nelson Mandela. Instead, Botha delivered a speech that further reinforced the notion that white power would not abdicate.³¹⁴ In the wake of the Rubicon followed an enormous flight in foreign capital, as well as the onset of economic and other sanctions.

It seemed that on the political front the wheels had started to come off for the Botha government. In 1986, the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) visited South Africa as a final attempt to ward off a civil war. Among the members of the group was Margaret Thatcher, one of South Africa’s two remaining international protectors (the other being Ronald Reagan). However, the report released by the EPG far from shielded the Botha regime as it recommended that strong international sanctions were to be applied to South Africa. It concluded that “[South Africa’s] programme of reform does not end apartheid, but seeks to give it a less inhuman face...its quest is power-sharing, but without surrendering overall white control.”³¹⁵ The Reagan Administration now banned all new investment and loans to the South African government, while the Commonwealth agreed that, despite Margaret Thatcher’s refusal to take steps against the Nationalist government, all agricultural and manufacturing imports from South Africa would be banned.³¹⁶

With the armed struggle within South Africa intensifying and its international allies fast abandoning it, the NP government now looked to a different strategy. From 1986 onward, South Africa became a near military state, as the SADF sought to stem the revolutionary situation in the townships.³¹⁷ Botha now threw his weight in behind the SADF as a new crackdown on dissidents took place. Mass censorship of this unparalleled crackdown prevented damaging images from making it into the outside world. Botha argued that the only

³¹³ D. O’Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, p. 327

³¹⁴ H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners*, p. 614.

³¹⁵ D. O’Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, p. 341.

³¹⁶ H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners*, p. 614.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

way reform could continue was if there existed absolute law and order, with the first objective being to “command, coerce and eliminate the revolutionaries.”³¹⁸ This new security strategy also took on the form of militarily destabilising neighbouring states where the ANC had been exiled, in hopes that this would bring about the elimination of the ANC and its support networks.

By the time of P.W Botha’s stroke in 1989, national power-sharing structures had advanced no more than they had by the time of the declaration of the state of emergency, some thirty-one months earlier.³¹⁹ By 1987, large tracts of Afrikaner society had grown disillusioned with the Nation Party, giving considerable support to the CP and other far right parties.³²⁰ The somewhat floundering state had failed to make any headway with the basic political issue that had been confronting the country since the early 1980s.

Practicing Propaganda: Selling South African Rugby to the World

For much of the 1980s the South African government was faced with a state of crises. Threats came from the growing communist presence in Southern Africa, the Afrikaner far right, and the revolutionaries in the townships which sought to overthrow the existing order. The SADF contended that the revolutionary situation in the townships was as much of a threat, if not bigger, than the total onslaught faced by the country from outside its borders. The Nationalist government found itself in the midst of a battle for the heart of Afrikanerdom and the maintenance of white-privilege.

Given the magnitude of events that faced the South African government, it is unlikely that much attention would be given to the woes of South African rugby. For much of the 1980s South African rugby was left to fend for itself in the face of growing international pressure to have apartheid removed, something that rugby had no control over. The 1981 tour would leave South African rugby as sealed-off as a faulty nuclear reactor, something the Board could not have anticipated by the conclusion of the tour. However, there was speculation that the 1981 tour would have repercussions and that the Board would need to act if it wanted to stem the worst of these.

³¹⁸ D. O’Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, p. 345.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners*, p. 607.

Perhaps, above all else, the 1981 tour had turned the Springboks into security risk. Those who had witnessed the televised visuals of New Zealand police and demonstrators clashing in the streets around rugby stadiums would have been aware that such violence would not be limited to New Zealand. Anti-apartheid sentiments existed virtually around the world, meaning there were very few places, if any, where the Springboks could go and not attract demonstrations. The 1981 tour had been the Springboks' first major international tour since the first round of 'demo tours' in the UK in 1969/70 and Australia in 1971. The tour proved that anti-apartheid sentiment had not died down with the implementation of multiracial sport (only white players were eligible for Springboks selection during the first round of demo tours) and, if anything, the ferocity of anti-apartheid demonstrations had increased as pressure on sport had proven to be able to force the government to implement change. With the increased security threat, a touring Springbok side posed it was unlikely that anyone would be in a hurry to extend a tour invitation.

Furthermore, the *Brisbane Code of Conduct* (1982) had made touring to South Africa more difficult with the strengthening of the Gleneagles Agreement. In the 1970s, rugby playing nations had evaded the problem of touring Springboks sides attracting demonstrations by touring to South Africa where demonstrations did not take place. Thus, while the Springboks did not tour anywhere for most of the 1970s, they still played a healthy dose of test match rugby as their traditional rivals travelled to South Africa. While the *Gleneagles Agreement* in 1977 had initially seemed to prevent Commonwealth members from playing against South Africa, the 1981 tour of New Zealand, whereby Muldoon had found a loophole in the agreement which did not force him to intervene in the tour, promoted the need to tighten up the agreement. This came in the form of the *Brisbane Code of Conduct*, which now practically forced Commonwealth governments to intervene in sport contact between their sporting bodies and South Africa. The Code also now implemented a system of punishment for those nations who transgressed the agreement (usually in the form of some or other sanction or even expulsion from the Commonwealth), something which the *Gleneagles Agreement* had initially not done. Notably both England and New Zealand abstained from signing the Code, and by 1984 the England rugby team toured South Africa, and in 1985 the NZRFU attempted to arrange a tour to South Africa. The fact that the *Gleneagles Agreement* and *Brisbane Code of Conduct* were now strictly enforced deprived South African rugby of many of its rugby ties, as a substantial number of its traditional rivals were Commonwealth nations.

For those nations who did not fall under the jurisdiction of the *Gleneagles Agreement* there was the general sporting boycott against South African sport that they needed to abide by. By the start of the 1980s, the boycott had altered its objectives and demanded that apartheid be removed from South African society before South African athletes could compete on the international stage again. South African Rugby had found itself somewhat helpless in the face of these new demands. The SARB could only influence its own sphere by removing apartheid from the sport – which it had done to the best of its abilities – but was in no way capable of removing apartheid from the rest of the South African society. Even if Johan Claassen had agreed with New Zealand journalists in 1981 that it was more important for Errol Tobias to have voting rights than to wear the Springbok jersey, there was not much that he or Craven could do about the matter. With the lack of genuine change in 1980s South African society, the government drove an increasing wedge in between South African rugby and international competition, a wedge which the SARB had less and less control over.

The 1981 New Zealand tour came to be the epicentre around which questions on whether athletes could be held responsible for the policies of their government revolved. Those who supported the 1981 tour, both in New Zealand and abroad, intrinsically supported the notion that sport and politics should be not be allowed to overlap. However, the tour polarised opinions to such an extent that supporting the tour was regarded by the opponents of apartheid as tantamount to supporting one of the struts of white power in South Africa. In New Zealand, support for the tour certainly did not equate to support for apartheid, but merely that athletes and spectators alike should be free to partake in that which they enjoyed without being punished for a political problem that they could not influence.

With the conclusion of the tour, Craven and the SARB thought they had potentially found an answer to solve their worries over future political interference inhibiting the Springboks. The tour had led to the formation of three organisations, *Freedom in Sport*, *Stop Politics in Rugby*, and *Free Nation New Zealand*, all three of which were generated due to what they perceived as the injustice of political interference in the 1981 tour. They had been infuriated by the way the tour was turned into a political matter, thereby leading to demonstrations which were essentially in response to a political problem. With the completion of the tour, the three organisations took up the mantle of trying to limit political interferences in sporting matters. For the SARB, these organisations were appealing as South Africa's rugby problems were largely put down to the fact that they were being punished for apartheid, a problem the Board saw being created by politicians and which could only be solved by politicians.

These organisations regarded the 1981 New Zealand tour as evidence that politics had begun to play too large a role in rugby. Fundamentally, all three organisations regarded apartheid as a political problem, and therefore it was up to South Africa’s politicians to find a solution. They ultimately believed that sport should be free to continue as normal, particularly as sports such as rugby had been able to remove apartheid from the game. While these organisations proclaimed their function to be the removal of political intrusions into sport in general, all three worked closely with the SARB following the 1981 tour, as they regarded South African rugby to be suffering most from political involvement in sport.

Freedom in Sport

Speaking at a meeting with members of the SARB and other South African sporting codes, *Freedom in Sport* (FIS) founder, Tommie Campbell (a professional golfer turned politician), explained that what FIS did. Campbell noted that the organisation had come about due to his “deep frustration of reading media all over the world of what appears to be one sided only, and the feeling that something must be done.”³²¹ For Campbell, the purpose of his organisation was clear: the media, protestors and politicians had crossed a line and were now encroaching on the freedoms of individuals to pursue their own sporting interests and the freedom to choose who to compete against.³²² Speaking on the purpose of his organisation, Campbell went further and stated that:

“We believe sport should be removed from the political arena, it should not be selected [or] subjected to selective political and moral dictates. Freedom in Sport means the individuals choice to play or not to play in any country and against a team of sporting individuals.”³²³

According to Campbell and FIS, South African sport was being used as a political football by governments around the world who were hesitant to take any decisive steps toward apartheid. Numerous countries were willing to sacrifice amateur sport (professional athletes, such as golfers and tennis players, were to a large extent permitted to continue competing around the world) with South Africa but still maintained a degree of trade with the country or were

³²¹ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Speech delivered by Tommie Campbell in South Africa titled “Boodskap: Mnr Tommie Campbell, Stigterslid, Freedom in Sport,” 1 August 1982.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*

unwilling to implement economic sanctions which could have made real change in South Africa.

Campbell used examples of Irish butter that was still imported on a large scale in South Africa, while the Canadians and even many of South Africa's most strident African critics still served South Africa wines at their dinner tables and restaurants.³²⁴ Campbell lamented the selective hostility that many countries around the world seemed to be implementing against South Africa. Foreign governments were willing to sacrifice sporting ties with South Africa, as this would not cost the country in question nearly as much as it would to implement, for instance, a trade embargo with South Africa. These double standards by the politicians, which saw the demise of free and democratic sport, were for Campbell the driving force behind why an organisation like FIS was needed. Campbell and his colleagues had seen the events building up to and during the 1981, tour as evidence that South African rugby (and sport in general) was being held hostage to political demands the SARB could not hope to have the answers for.

While Campbell claimed that FIS represented the interests of athletes around the world, the organisation paid special attention to South African sport, and in particular South African rugby in the aftermath of the 1981 tour. South African rugby was seen by Campbell to be suffering the most at the hands of political interference in sport, as evidenced by the disastrous tour. This was a valid point made by Campbell and was echoed by Paul Dobson in 1987 when he noted that: "sportsmen have felt disappointment because of the actions of politicians, but nobody has been as affected as the South Africans."³²⁵ In order to counter the repercussions of the 1981 tour Campbell recommended that a "highly active and visible branch of FIS in South Africa" be established.³²⁶

Campbell devised elaborate and costly plans for this branch, as well as a complex sponsorship system through which 200 prominent South African businesses would be asked to donate a minimum of R5000.00 per annum for three years, as well as donate a percentage

³²⁴ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Speech delivered by Tommie Campbell in South Africa titled "Boodskap: Mnr Tommie Campbell, Stigterslid, Freedom in Sport," 1 August 1982.

³²⁵ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Unclassified document "Craven in Crisis? By Paul Dobson," no date available.

³²⁶ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Presentation for Freedom in Sport, 23 March 1982.

of the retail product that they manufactured.³²⁷ This did not materialise as it turned out few people outside of the amateur sporting establishment shared in Campbell's costly vigour. It was also not possible for South African sporting bodies to sponsor FIS, as this would discredit the organisation as one that had been bought by South African sport to work for readmission on its behalf. Throughout the duration of the organisations existence funding remained problematic and as a result severely limited the extent to which it could promote South African sport.

From its base in Dublin, the organisation turned into something of a public relations operation on behalf of South African rugby, trying as best it could to counter the negative publicity emanating from the UK, New Zealand, and Australia following the tour. The relationship between the SARB and FIS did not bode well for the claimed impartial stance of the organisation and soon began to draw the ire of anti-apartheid organisations. Nevertheless, these relations between FIS and the SARB continued and by 1984, the two had entered into an unofficial contract through which FIS and Campbell would act as an international public relations consultant to the SARB in an attempt to regain South Africa's entrance into world rugby.³²⁸

Campbell now essentially worked for the SARB to ensure that rugby tours came to South Africa. Locking down tours by Wales (1982), Australia (1983), France (1983), England (1984), New Zealand (1985), and the British and Irish Lions (1986) became the top priority for Campbell. However, of the six tours FIS worked towards only England came in 1984, which in truth had much more to do with the sympathetic Thatcher government and coincided with the first of P.W. Botha's reforms than it had to do with Campbell correcting the negative image of South African rugby. Wales, Australia, France and the Lions had cancelled their tours due to political pressure, while the All Blacks were prevented from touring South Africa after a court ruled that it was not in the best interests of New Zealand rugby.

The fact that these tours were cancelled highlighted a major problem that Campbell and the SARB faced. While tours could be arranged, sporting bodies ultimately required the consent of their country's government before a tour could take place. After witnessing the violent demonstrations in New Zealand in 1981, overseas governments were even less likely to give

³²⁷ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Presentation for Freedom in Sport, 23 March 1982.

³²⁸ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Report sent from Tommie Campbell to Alex Kellerman titled "Report for the Manager of the SA Rugby Board," 19 June 1984.

consent to their sporting bodies to engage with South African sport, predominantly over fears that they too would become victims of such demonstrations. By allowing the 1981 tour to proceed, thereby contravening the sporting boycott and the *Gleneagles Agreement*, New Zealand would face a measure of international sanctions (such as having their athletes barred from sporting events). This served to deter overseas governments from allowing their sporting bodies to play against South Africans, as they feared that they too would be internationally condemned if they were seen to be participating against South Africa.

For Commonwealth nations fears over sanctions from engaging with South African sport were further compounded by the 1982 *Brisbane Code of Conduct*, which strengthened the *Gleneagles Agreement* and imposed punishment for transgressions. The fact that South African rugby after the 1981 tour came to be regarded as a security risk meant that foreign governments were unlikely to be willing to engage with South African sport. Thus, the reality for Campbell and for Craven remained that, regardless of how favourable international rugby bodies were towards South African tours, unless the government of the day took a softer line towards South African sport, rugby tours would be highly unlikely.³²⁹

The 1983 International Rugby Media Congress

Perhaps, though, the biggest problem faced by Craven was seeing past his own preconceived notions of what apartheid entailed. Craven saw apartheid as a set of laws that led to social and economic discriminatory practices and that therefore if these laws were removed, apartheid would be removed. He did not see removing apartheid as entailing universal franchise, majority rule and a new political dispensation.³³⁰ Thus, Craven believed that once the social laws preventing mixed-race rugby were removed, it would equate to the removal of apartheid, and thus rugby should be allowed to return to normal. However, the reality remained that the removal of laws did not remedy the disparities that existed in South African rugby. By 1982, the Human Science Research Council still ranked the shortage of rugby facilities as the second highest shortcoming amongst South Africa's coloured and black sporting population.³³¹

³²⁹ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Report sent from Tommie Campbell to Alex Kellerman titled "Report for the Manager of the SA Rugby Board," 19 June 1984.

³³⁰ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 111.

³³¹ Human Sciences Research Council. *Sport in the RSA: Main Committee Report*, p. 87.

It was this imperfect grasp of what was needed in South Africa that affected Craven's ability to understand the linkage between rugby and politics and why it was that rugby was being boycotted. However, Craven remained certain that the hostilities which existed toward South African rugby abroad were bred out of the fact the foreign governments and media were ignorant to the changes which had been implemented in South African rugby. Thus, Craven reasoned, if the world could be sufficiently informed of the extent to which the SARB had removed apartheid from rugby, governments abroad would no longer be able to justify why South African rugby should not return to normal.

This reasoning led to the 1983 International Rugby Media Congress (IRMC). The Congress was arranged by Campbell, and was hosted by the SARB in Cape Town. Journalists and media personnel from around the world were invited to come to South Africa and see for themselves the progress that racially integrated rugby had made. The Congress was certainly a reflection of the anxieties of South African rugby with regard to their international future. Craven was known for not having a high regard for the press, and yet here he was attempting to win the world's media to his side (perhaps upon the instance of Campbell).³³² The negative publicity brought on by the 1981 tour had not subsided with the tour's conclusion and continued to plague the SARB, threatening to scuttle any prospect of touring sides in the future.

The SARB believed that the Congress could potentially save South African rugby from isolation as those who were propagating a misguided view of South African rugby would be able to come and see for themselves just how integrated the game had become.³³³ For Craven and Campbell the Congress provided the ideal chance to correct the uniformed opinions of the international media. Writing on the need for the Congress Craven stated that:

“...we were prepared to face the facts as they existed in 1983 – not 1973 or 1976 or 1979. It was obvious to us that rugby and many of the other sports played in our country had become the hostage of anti-South Africa policies. Added to this, the fact that large sections of the media were unaware of the changes that had and

³³² P. Dobson: *Doc: The Life of Danie Craven*, p. 231-233.

³³³ SARB Archive, Collection A3: Executive Files, Box A3.2: SARR Uitvoerende Bestuur. SARR: Internasionale Kongress vir Rugby-Media 22-31 Augustus 1983, no date available.

were taking place, we decided to afford them the opportunity of seeing for themselves the true position.”³³⁴

The Congress drew 55 media personnel from seventeen countries, all nations that had rugby links with South Africa. Campbell, who was acknowledged as “consultant and adviser to the SARB on the Congress”, did much of the organising. Lord Chalfont (Alun Gwynne Jones), British politician and international President of FIS since 1981, opened the event.³³⁵ Although both Campbell and Jones claimed to be participating in the Congress on their own accord, not as part of FIS, it is highly unlikely that their presence would not have been considered as an FIS initiative. Furthermore, in a newspaper article the following year, Lord Chalfont, in his capacity as FIS president, referred to the success of “our” conference (the IRMC).³³⁶

Delegates at the conference were criss-crossed around South Africa in order to show them how integrated South African rugby had become. However, the Congress did draw criticism that the journalists were only shown what the SARB wanted them to see.³³⁷ Rodney Bryant from Television New Zealand, who turned down an invitation to attend the Congress, lamented the fact that those journalists who attended the Congress centred their work on rugby and were not intent on looking at those social issues that influenced the whole picture in South Africa.³³⁸ “My interest in the South African situation goes beyond how many black men and how many white men now kick a football together around Ellis Park on a Saturday and it certainly does not include attending rugby coaching clinics, an ostrich farm, boat trips, barbecues, golf and visits to a winery” Bryant wrote to the Editor of the *Christchurch Press*.³³⁹

Officials of the non-white rugby fraternities that made up the SARB also addressed the delegates attending the Congress. This included Cuthbert Loriston (President of the SARFF), Dougie Dyers (SARFF selector and official), Curnick Mdyesha (President of SARA), and Abie Williams (Secretary of the SARFF and assistant manager on the 1981

³³⁴ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Media. The International Rugby Media Congress: A Pictorial Report, no date available, p. 1.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2.

³³⁶ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. “Send Them Off!,” *Daily Express*, 29 March 1984.

³³⁷ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Letter from Rodney Bryant to the Editor of the *Christchurch Press*, 25 July 1983.

³³⁸ *Ibid*.

³³⁹ *Ibid*.

Springbok Tour). Perhaps to be expected, they all painted an image of progress in South African rugby, took a strong stance against SACOS, and assured the attending journalists that South Africa could still “knock the hell out of [teams]” who toured South Africa.³⁴⁰

Amongst the journalists who attended the conference, the majority gave positive feedback upon return to their respective countries. John Taylor, a former Welsh rugby player who had played in South Africa in 1968, wrote that “although in some ways apartheid is as firmly entrenched as ever, the attitude is changing, and sport can take much of the credit.”³⁴¹ Jim Woodward from Australia wrote in the *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney): “change was the key word during the Congress, and there appears to be large and refreshing doses of that optimistic ingredient at the sporting level – credit where credit is due.”³⁴²

The Congress, however, received virtually as much negative press as it did positive, particularly resulting from the lack of rugby integration at school level which incensed numerous of the attending journalists. It seemed that while at senior level progress was being made, that lack of integration at school was simply breeding separationist attitudes among the players of tomorrow. Still, the organiser’s remained adamant that the Congress had been a success and that the SARB would reap the harvest from the seeds that the IRMC had planted.³⁴³

Following the conclusion of the Congress, reports were distributed around the world in order to publicise the positive reactions by those who had attended the event. The booklet teemed with democratic speak on the rights of sportsmen. Somewhat predictably this drew ire around the world as it was questioned how South African sports-administrators could demand democratic rights for their athletes when their government denied rights to the millions of black inhabitants of the country. Furthermore, Craven’s comment in the booklets foreword that “It is not a crime to be born a South African” elicited a strong reaction from many quarters that it was practically a crime to be born a black South African.³⁴⁴ While this may be

³⁴⁰ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Media. The International Rugby Media Congress: A Pictorial Report, no date available, p. 10.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 7.

³⁴² *Ibid*, p. 9.

³⁴³ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Report sent from Tommie Campbell to Alex Kellerman titled “Report for the Manager of the SA Rugby Board,” 19 June 1984.

³⁴⁴ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Report sent from Tommie Campbell to Alex Kellerman titled “Report for the Manager of the SA Rugby Board,” 19 June 1984. & SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Letter to Danie Craven from the Dundee College of Technology Student Association, 11 July 1984.

an overstatement of the case, it does capture the difficult nature of the IRMC campaign. By requesting that sport be treated on a democratic basis it seemed to the outside world that the interest of South African sportsmen were being placed above the interests of millions of degraded blacks who were stripped of any democratic rights.

The Congress was meant to show world media how integrated South African rugby had become. It was hoped by Craven and co that the media would leave the Congress and would correct the misguided hostilities that existed toward South African rugby in the outside world, thereby laying the foundations for readmission to international rugby. However, trying to show the world that apartheid was removed in rugby had become out-dated. The outside world was no longer willing to accept apartheid-free and merit selected teams while the rest of the society was still governed along racial lines. Ultimately, the IRMC did not yield the results that either Campbell or the SARB had wanted. As Paul Dobson noted about the Congress, “the rewards were well hidden if they existed at all.”³⁴⁵

Dobson’s comment should be extended to the SARB’s partnership with Freedom in Sport. The organisation yielded little benefit to the SARB and by the end of the three-year contract between the Board and Campbell, neither he nor his organisation had been able to change the fortunes of South African rugby. By 1985 Campbell was still scrambling to set up an ‘international media division’ in South Africa meant to rectify the lack of reward for the progress made in South African rugby – which had been the whole reason behind hosting the IRMC.³⁴⁶ Over the duration of its involvement with the SARB, FIS had attracted equal measures of negative and positive publicity. The initiatives set up by Campbell and FIS came to be seen as being ignorant to the struggle of black South Africans as the FIS campaigns attempted to circumvent a boycott that ultimately sought to remove apartheid. While these initiatives may have had more successful in the 1970s when multiracial sport was the objective of the sporting boycott, by the 1980s most of the world had accepted that apartheid needed to be fought through any means possible, including sport.

By 1986 the relationship between the Board and FIS had somewhat petered out. Ultimately, until South Africa made radical changes to its political landscape, there was little that Campbell and his organisation could hope to achieve by way of offsetting South African

³⁴⁵ P. Dobson: *Doc: The Life of Danie Craven*, p. 233.

³⁴⁶ SARB Archive Material: Collection A14: Bemarking van Rugby, Box A14.1: Manuskripte. Report of Goodwill Committee, 17 June 1985, p. 1.

rugby's isolation. The onset of isolation following the 1981 tour could only be solved if the greater political situation in South Africa was solved, something which Craven and the SARB were late to react to, and something which Campbell did not seem to grasp.

Freedom in Sport was formed out of Campbell's concern that the politically motivated protests that disrupted the Springboks' tour of New Zealand and the USA were a sign that politics were becoming too entrenched in sport. Campbell likely emulated what many sports administrators around the world felt at the time, that sport and politics should be kept separate. However, the reality was that in South Africa, sport and politics were intertwined – one only had to look at the disparities between the distribution of sporting facilities to white and black athletes to see how white privileges were extended to sport. Thus, there could not be normality in sport until there was normality in South African society as a whole.

However, Craven and Campbell were naïve in this respect, as they believed that the removal of apartheid laws would mean that there was equality in sport. Freedom in Sport and the International Rugby Media Congress were initiatives pursued by the SARB in order to offset any repercussions that could come about because of the 1981 tour. Clearly, Craven felt that the 1981 tour had been of enough significance that the SARB would need additional aid in trying to prevent isolation. However, trying to market South African rugby as non-racial could not have the desired effect of preventing rugby isolation purely because true non-racial rugby was no longer regarded as being able to exist in a society where everything else was stratified along racial lines.

Stop Politics in Rugby and Free Nation New Zealand

Campbell's Freedom in Sport was not the only organisation of the sort to develop because of the tour, as within New Zealand several such bodies emerged around 1981. Much like the way HART acted as an umbrella organisation for numerous anti-tour groups, *Stop Politics in Sport* (SPIR) acted to form a unified front in favour of the tour when it became apparent that the tour was under threat from anti-tour groups. The organisation consisted predominantly of New Zealand based rugby administrators, coaches, and former rugby players. SPIR was meant to be a resistance movement to the likes of HART, but had relatively little success in mobilising support the way HART had done during the tour. Ultimately, SPIR had little impact and the tour and mainly sought to publish pro-tour material in the few remaining New Zealand newspapers that were not against the tour.

In the months following the tour's conclusion, SPIR aligned itself with Tommie Campbell's newly formed Freedom in Sport movement. While SPIR continued to exist, it sprouted a new branch called *Free Nation New Zealand*, or FRENZ, which labelled itself as the New Zealand office of Freedom in Sport.³⁴⁷ Writing to Ces Blazey, NZRFU Chairman, in 1982 FRENZ Chairperson, Yvonne Wilcox, stated that organisations such as FRENZ and FIS had been products of the 1981 tour and the "stifling of freedoms of sports people."³⁴⁸ For FRENZ and SPIR, the events during the 1981 tour had eroded the rights of spectators and participants alike, which needed to be prevented from taking place during future sporting events.

FRENZ came to regard its purpose as "upholding the right of the individual to have freedom of choice about where a person wishes to pursue a sporting interest, and against whom and to promote non-political and non-racial sport worldwide."³⁴⁹ As was outline earlier, the 1981 tour came to be the crux around which questions on whether sport and politics could be seen a separate revolved. For those who opposed the tour, South African sport and apartheid were inextricably linked, making the Springboks a representative side of a racist regime and should therefore be boycotted to achieve the greater goal of eradicating apartheid. However, those who supported the tour believed that sport and politics did not, or should not, overlap and that therefore if rugby in South Africa had removed the apartheid laws from the game it should be allowed to continue as normal. As an affiliate of the Freedom in Sport ideology FRENZ firmly maintained that apartheid was a political problem that should not intervene in sport.³⁵⁰

As with FIS, FRENZ assumed a close working with the SARB and within a month of the conclusion of the tour had written to the Board outlining its campaign for 1982 and onwards. Their campaign sought to educate New Zealanders, particularly the youth, on the potential of maintaining contact with South Africa, both sporting wise and economic related.³⁵¹ Furthermore, it sought to "breakdown the defensive barriers which governments and people

³⁴⁷ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Pamphlet by Free Nation New Zealand titled "Prime Minister Going Backwards," 9 January 1985.

³⁴⁸ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Letter from Yvonne Willcox of Free Nation New Zealand to Ces Blazey, 15 February 1982.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Pamphlet by Free Nation New Zealand titled "Prime Minister Going Backwards," 9 January 1985.

³⁵¹ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Report from Free Nation New Zealand to Danie Craven outlining their objectives for 1982, 31 October 1981.

set up when one mentions South Africa” and was “determine to play its part in the strengthening of [New Zealand] ties with South Africa.”³⁵²

However, FRENZ fell into the same trap as FIS with regard to attempting grandiose and elaborate plans that proved difficult to implement with limited funding available. On top of this, creating a pro-South Africa rugby attitude in New Zealand so soon after the tour would be no easy task. FRENZ would have to vie against the New Zealand based anti-tour/apartheid organisations which were supported by the New Zealand media (not to mention liberal governments around the world, NGO’s, human rights groups, the UN and most of Africa) which gave substantial publicity to anti-apartheid campaigns set on bringing about the isolation of South Africa.³⁵³ Perhaps an irony of the matter was that FRENZ consisted largely of rugby administrators and former players who were pro-tour, yet one of the largest areas to suffer from the tour was New Zealand rugby. The Springbok tour had badly damaged the image of rugby in New Zealand, leading some to speculate that within a few years, rugby would no longer be the celebrated sport in New Zealand it once was.

In the years following the 1981 tour, in an attempt to foster a favourable attitude toward South Africa in New Zealand, both SPIR and FRENZ became patently pro-South African, insisting that those who refused to compete with it were discriminating against South African rugby. The organisations adopted a somewhat unusual line of argumentation as they sighted statistics by Freedom House (an American human rights organisation) that only 19% of the world’s population enjoyed full human rights, and thus argued that South Africa (and by extension South African sport) should not be singled out for what it was doing to the black population.³⁵⁴ In writing to the England Rugby Football Union in 1984, SPIR chairperson, Elizabeth Sutherland, contended that:

“What is abnormal about South African society? That her black people have overall, the highest standard of housing, education and welfare on the African

³⁵² SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Report from Free Nation New Zealand to Danie Craven outlining their objectives for 1982, 31 October 1981.

³⁵³ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Letter from Norman McKenzie to Steve Strydom, 28 February 1985.

³⁵⁴ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Letter from Elizabeth Sutherland of SPIR G. Craig of the New Zealand Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association, 13 September 1982.

continent; that her black people live in relative peace with at least some degree of legal protection and franchise.”³⁵⁵

Statements like these gave SPIR, and by extension FRENZ, a reputation for being somewhat politically conservative. The above extract seems to be suggesting that the disenfranchised South African blacks were relatively well off in comparison to the rest of Africa. Essentially, what FRENZ was propagating was that basic amenities outweighed human rights. This was similar to a plan the South African government came up with in the latter half of the 1980s, whereby they attempted to undercut the revolutionary tide developing in the townships by offering blacks better social conditions.³⁵⁶ As one SADF general put it, “if you want their support you can buy it.”³⁵⁷

In addition to this, FRENZ regularly publicly criticised one of apartheid’s most vocal opponents, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which it regarded as grossly hypocritical and one of the primary propagandists against South Africa. The regular public condemnation by FRENZ of the AOU earned criticism from then New Zealand Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, who himself had come under significant pressure from the OAU (many of the OAU members were also Commonwealth members) after the tour over New Zealand’s future sporting contact with South Africa.³⁵⁸

Between FRENZ and SPIR, numerous fact-finding missions to South Africa were orchestrated and in 1983, they attempted to recruit New Zealand journalists to attend the International Rugby Media Congress. In 1982, members of SPIR and FRENZ undertook a joint venture as they travelled to South Africa on a fact-finding mission. Upon their return, they insisted that there existed no case for denying South Africa its rightful place in world sport.³⁵⁹ Both organisations made claims that South African sport needed to see that there was some reward in continuing to foster non-racial sport or else initiatives to further integrate sport, and by extension society, would stultify. The organisations thus reasoned that the post-

³⁵⁵ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Letter from Elizabeth Sutherland to the England Rugby Football Union, 12 March 1984.

³⁵⁶ D. O’Meara: *Forty Lost Years*, pp. 346-347.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 346.

³⁵⁸ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Report by Free Nation New Zealand sent to the SARB, 10 January 1982.

³⁵⁹ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. Letter from Elizabeth Sutherland of SPIR G. Craig of the New Zealand Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association, 13 September 1982.

1981 isolation that South African sport faced would undermine the progress made in racially integrated sport. Writing to Robert Muldoon on the proposed 1985 All Black tour of South Africa, FRENZ urged him that not touring the Republic would set back racial integration by 20 years.³⁶⁰

Perhaps though, the biggest problem faced by SPIR and FRENZ was their lack of capital, something that hampered both organisations throughout the 1980s. The two organisations had sought to capitalise on the rifts left by the tour in New Zealand and had assumed that they could guarantee support from at least the half of New Zealand that had supported the tour. While there may have been significant support in New Zealand for the separation of sport and politics, SPIR and FRENZ soon found out what their Freedom in Sport compatriots had learnt early on: that moral support for a cause did not translate into funding. Norman McKenzie, FRENZ Chairman in 1984, regularly wrote to Craven and Steve Strydom (President of the Orange Free State Rugby Union and SARB executive) requesting funding from a South African benefactor, particularly as the proposed 1985 All Black tour of South Africa drew nearer. In the past, it had been difficult for the pro-tour administrators to devote significant time to their cause as they all worked full time jobs, making their SPIR/FRENZ activities part-time endeavours.

The fact that McKenzie could not find a financial sponsor in New Zealand for their cause also seems to demonstrate that perhaps, following the 1981 tour, supporting a pro-South Africa initiative in New Zealand was frowned upon. It seemed that McKenzie had overestimated the extent to which pro-tour sentiments had survived in New Zealand. Thus, McKenzie was left with few alternatives but to request funding from South Africa. As South Africa in the 1980s had perhaps a greater stake in maintaining rugby ties with New Zealand than vice-versa, there was a greater chance of finding a benefactor in South Africa. McKenzie requested that the SARB assist him in finding South African businesses to sponsor FRENZ to the tune of NZ\$100,000 or more in order to launch an extensive pro-tour campaign.³⁶¹ However, no such sponsorship materialised and consequently very limited work towards the 1985 tour could be done by SPIR and FRENZ. Without the necessary funding, it seemed unlikely that neither

³⁶⁰ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Pamphlet by Free Nation New Zealand titled "Prime Minister Going Backwards," 9 January 1985.

³⁶¹ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Letter from Norman McKenzie to Alex Kellerman, 6 January 1985.

SPIR or FRENZ could present a significant front against the mounting anti-tour campaign in New Zealand.

Ultimately, the relationship between SPIR/FRENZ and the SARB yielded little fruit. As with FIS, the two New Zealand organisations could not bring about much change in the fortunes of the SARB. All three organisations set out relatively elaborate plans to set up office from which they would orchestrate pro-South African campaigns. Instead, they mostly ended up waging ‘tabloid-style’ battles in the media against those they perceived to be undermining sporting freedom, or acted as public relations campaigns on behalf of the SARB. Realistically, neither of these organisations could have hoped to achieve much success. They represented a comparatively small interest group: mostly radical or naïve sportsmen and organisations who could not grasp the concept that sport and society in South Africa were interlinked. Sport could not take place in a vacuum and was therefore as much influenced by the prevailing social and political conditions as any other facet of society. Ultimately, FIS, SPIR, and FRENZ were swimming against the current that much of the world was beginning to advocate in the 1980s: that apartheid must be fought through any means possible, including on sporting grounds. Much as all three organisations attempted to assert themselves as credible, they were coming up against an anti-apartheid movement that was much stronger than they seemed to realise.

Furthermore, these organisations operated predominantly between 1982 and 1985, which, as was illustrated earlier, coincides with a period of (perceived) positive transformation in South Africa (the tri-cameral parliament; Nkomati Accord; Botha’s reforms). Thus, any measure of success achieved by these organisations could likely be put down to the slightly more optimistic image emanating from South Africa during this period. It also became apparent that any negative incident coming from South Africa could undo any forward momentum gained by these organisations. An example of this was when in 1987, a single black schoolboy was refused entry to a school athletics event, resulting in major international criticism.³⁶² Although 1987 was somewhat past the period during which the SARB was involved with these organisations, the incident does illustrate how a single event could lead to an international outcry against South Africa.

³⁶² SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Letter from Tommie Campbell to Danie Craven, no date available, with attached newspaper article titled “Athletes withdraw from Pretoria games after black schoolboy banned,” *The Times* (England), 14 February 1987.

These organisations were also not immune to the politics of their own countries. Possibly the biggest blow delivered to the work of SPIR and FRENZ was the change in New Zealand government when the Nationalist Muldoon lost the 1984 national election to David Lang of the Labour Party. Traditionally, the National Party had refused to intervene in sporting affairs (such as by allowing the All Blacks to tour South Africa in 1970, 1976, and the refusing to intervene in the 1981 tour) which was good for organisations like FRENZ and SPIR. The Labour Party was, however, more willing to intervene in sport if it felt that a political matter was at stake (as it did when it refused to send the All Blacks to South Africa in 1973 due to apartheid). The Labour Party had been vociferously anti-tour in 1981 and had seen the tour as driving the country to the verge of anarchy.³⁶³ In an attempt to combat the tour, the party had even made some of their facilities available to HART from which to organise their national anti-tour campaign. With the Labour Party at the helm, it seemed likely that the All Blacks and the Springboks would not be seeing much of one-another, regardless of any work done by SPIR and FRENZ.

The support by the SARB for all three these organisations illustrates the growing anxieties by the Board. It seemed Craven no longer felt comfortable relying purely on his friends in the IRB to help with touring, as had been the case in the 1960s and 1970s. His involvement with FRENZ, SPIR, and FIS and the hosting of the IRMC seems to illustrate that Craven felt that the post-1981 rugby world needed some additional enticing to retain ties with the SARB. Craven could not see it at the time, but the SARB's involvement with these organisations likely did the Board's reputation even further harm. SPIR, FRENZ, and FIS came to be seen as propagandists of South African rugby, working on behalf of the SARB. The Board's involvement with these organisations only reinforced the notion that Craven's Springboks would attempt to tour at all costs (Craven was also quoted on numerous occasions as saying that they would do it all again in reference to the 1981 tour). The Board's involvements with these organisations exposed the SARB to be desperate for tours. The SARB came to be regarded as willing to use underhand methods to ensure tours took place, a notion that was reinforced in later years by the 1986 Cavaliers tour and the 1987 South Sea Barbarians tours, which will be discussed at a later stage.

Freedom in Sport, Stop Politics in Rugby, and Free Nation New Zealand were all products of the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand. Those who formed the organisations had been

³⁶³ R. Nixon: "Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott," *Transition*, (Vol 58), 1992, p. 81.

supporters of the tour and abhorred the fact that apartheid, a political matter that had been removed from South African rugby, was the motive behind the disruptions during the tour. In essence, all three organisations came into existences due to their common desire of preventing a similar tour from taking place. While these organisations were not pro-apartheid, they certainly were pro-South African rugby and believed that the South African rugby players were being discriminated against by being isolated for what was fundamentally a political problem. This ideology made these organisations appealing to the SARB in the aftermath of the 1981 tour, as it seemed the Board had some inclination that the tour would have repercussions.

Essentially these organisations projected themselves as the watchdogs of sportsmen's rights; rights that they believed were being eroded by political interference in sporting matters. While these organisations centred their campaigns on the fact that the SARB had removed apartheid from rugby, they seemed unable to grasp the fact that in a racially stratified society like South Africa sport could not be equal until the social conditions from which participants came were equal. The fact that these organisations came to be seen as swimming against the current of boycotting apartheid made them seem somewhat conservative, and thus their relationship with the SARB was deemed further evidence that the SARB was not willing to reject apartheid.

“Without the All Blacks, it's just not rugby”: The 1985 All Black Tour

The future of South African rugby was uncertain following the 1981 tour. It had looked like the 1980s would bring some relief to the relative rugby isolation of the 1970s, but the 1981 tour proved that this would not be so easy to accomplish while South Africa remained a highly stratified society. With the conclusion of the 1981 tour Craven speculated that it could have been the Springboks' last tour of New Zealand, but did not rule out the possibility of future All Black teams touring South Africa.³⁶⁴ Craven still had friends in the IRB, which he hoped would serve to help in bringing teams to South Africa. However, Craven could not have known that not only would New Zealand desert South Africa in the 1980s, but so too the rest of world rugby. The international castigation of New Zealand following the tour was enough to put any country off from inviting the Springboks to tour. The international audience had been given a healthy dose of the sort of mayhem sporting contact with South Africa could attract. In the eyes of international governments, a touring Springbok side now

³⁶⁴ “Tweeuisend wag bokke in,” *Die Burger*, 30 September 1981, p. 1.

became an “economic and symbolic liability” and policing costs alone became prohibitive, resulted in the cancellation of some series altogether.³⁶⁵ As with the 1981 tour where “violence burst uncontrollably from the space-and-time frame of the game”, it seemed that the Springboks would no longer be able to tour abroad without attracting potentially violent anti-apartheid demonstrations.³⁶⁶ The sight of the rifts carved into New Zealand society by the 1981 tour gave rise to the notion that no further tours could be mounted safely, contributing significantly to South African rugby’s post-1981 isolation.³⁶⁷

Although the 1981 tour was not the first ‘demo’ tour, it was certainly the tour with the most lasting repercussions. In 1969/70, the Springboks had toured the UK on what was the first demonstration riddled tour, followed by a tour of Australia in 1971 during which much of the same happened. However, despite the events during these tours, the Springboks were still very much part of the international rugby scene. Although for the duration of the 1970s the Springboks only went on two outbound tours (Australia in 1971 and South America in 1980), between 1971 and 1981 the Springboks played no less than eleven touring sides (which was still less than during the pre-boycott era but certainly did not suggest that South African rugby was isolated). These tours included the likes of traditional rivals the British and Irish Lions (1974, 1980), New Zealand (1976), England (1972), France (1971, 1975, 1980), Italy (1973), and Ireland (1981). However, between the conclusion of the 1981 tour and 1991, the Springboks played four touring teams, three of which were ‘rebel tours’ (the South American Jaguars, New Zealand Cavaliers, and South Sea Barbarians). Rebel tours became a feature of South African sport in the mid-1980s whereby international teams, usually under a different name, continued to tour the Republic despite the sporting boycott and despite the disapproval of their governments. In the case of the rugby rebel tours, the teams travelled to South Africa without the consent from the IRB or their own unions.

By the end of the 1981 tour, it appeared unlikely that a South African rugby team would ever set foot on New Zealand soil again. Thus, if the two teams wished to continue playing each other it would have to be in South Africa in the safety of the white suburbs and cities. The 1981 tour had barely concluded when the first mention was made of the possibility of the All Blacks touring South Africa in 1985. With the 1981 tour still fresh in the memory, many New

³⁶⁵ R. Nixon: “Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott,” *Transition*, (Vol 58), 1992, p. 81.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ J. Nauright, D. Black: *Rugby and the South African Nation*, p. 90.

Zealanders (and likely a fair few South Africans too) could scarcely believe that after the divisiveness caused by the tour, a follow-up tour was already being contemplated. Such a tour seemed even more extraordinary when considering that in the same year it was first mentioned, 1982, the *Brisbane Code of Conduct* had been implemented to strengthen the *Gleneagles Agreement*, making it even more difficult for Commonwealth nations to justify sporting contact with South Africa. However, as 1985 drew nearer it seemed that the NZRFU would indeed attempt to arrange an All Black tour to South Africa.

However, the tour would be reliant on whether the England RFU followed through on their decision to tour South Africa in 1984. Recognising that if England toured in 1984 it would make justification for the All Blacks touring in 1985 much simpler, both pro- and anti-tour bodies leaped into action. FIS, SPIR, FRENZ, former All Blacks, the SARB and the NZRFU all wrote to the England RFU, conservative British politicians, and even Margret Thatcher in an effort to ensure that the tour went ahead. On the other end of the scale SANROC and numerous black African nations made it clear that they had the potential to muster enough votes to have England expelled from the Commonwealth and Olympic Games if the tour proceeded. Potentially problematic for England too was that following the strengthening of the *Gleneagles Agreement* in 1982 England could be expelled from the Commonwealth for not doing everything possible to prevent sporting contact with South Africa.³⁶⁸ Despite the criticism and numerous threats of repercussions, the England RFU stuck to their guns, arguing that their duty was to rugby players and not politicians. Consequently, in 1984 the England national rugby team returned to South Africa after a 12-year absence.

The England tour came and went in South Africa without causing much of a stir. The tour consisted of two tests and five regular matches, with the Springboks claiming victory in both tests. The tour temporarily quenched the thirst of South Africans for top-flight international rugby, but it was hoped that it had also laid the groundwork for a tour by the team South Africans truly wanted to see, the All Blacks. It seemed likely that the All Blacks would go to South Africa as the NZRFU started making the necessary arrangements. However, it was not long before the wounds of 1981 began to open up in New Zealand.

The 1981 tour had left rifts in New Zealand society which could prove an unsurpassable barrier to the tour proceeding. The 1981 anti-tour campaign had been the largest civil

³⁶⁸ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Letter from Tommie Campbell to Danie Craven, 16 May 1984, with attached newspaper article titled "England to be expelled," *Sunday Times*, 13 May 1984.

disobedience campaign in New Zealand history and police reports suggested that things would pick up where they left off should the 1985 tour go ahead, something that even SPIR and FRENZ conceded as a possibility.³⁶⁹ The 1981 tour had placed intolerable strain on New Zealand society and, according to *The New Zealand Herald*, had left the country with racial, social, and economic problems.³⁷⁰

These problems included the heightening of racial tensions (on top of tensions caused by Maori land claims in the 1970s and 1980s) as those who had supported the tour were considered supporters of the white supremacy regime in South Africa. Furthermore, those who opposed the tour labelled the Nationalist government (which had traditionally been a focus for racist sentiments in New Zealand) as an apartheid sympathiser for its unwillingness to intervene in the tour.³⁷¹ While in office, Muldoon's willingness to stir up anti-Maori feeling for electoral purposes placed even further strain on New Zealand's purported egalitarian society.³⁷² With the conclusion of the 1981 tour, New Zealand was left with a bitterly divided society: those who supported the tour were regarded as supporters of the white South African regime, while those who opposed the tour were labelled as anti-rugby, communist troublemakers who had disrupted the tour for their own nefarious ends.

Economically, New Zealand was saddled with a hefty bill for the tour that covered property damage during riots, overtime payments to police, as well as the logistical costs incurred by the military support provided to the police. Speaking to the *Dominion* in 1984 on the potential 1985 tour, Ann Hercus, New Zealand Minister of Police, lamented that "the cost is too high – and I am not talking about the millions of dollars such a tour would *again* cost the taxpayers."³⁷³ The social problems faced by New Zealanders following the 1981 tour were still very much part of their society by the time the 1985 tour question came about. The social divisions cast by the 1981 tour combined with what the *Auckland Star* regarded as "New

³⁶⁹ SARB Archive, Collection Newspaper Clippings. "Police Fear Result of South African tour," *Dominion*, 19 October 1984.

³⁷⁰ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. "Warning over tour 'strain'," *The New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1985.

³⁷¹ R. Mulgan: "A Race Relations Lesson from Across the Tasman," *The Australian Quarterly*, (Vol 68), 1996, p. 80.

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ SARB Archive, Collection Newspaper Clippings. "All Black tour cost too high – Hercus," *Dominion*, 17 October 1984.

Zealand's own simmer racial tensions" led to the concerns that anti-tour protests could once again become superheated.³⁷⁴

The 1981 tour had left a legacy of animosity in New Zealand, as there was mistrust towards the police and government, as well as within communities split over the tour matter. The New Zealand Minister of Police attributed violence and unrest towards police in the build-up to the 1985 tour to the antagonism that still existed toward police following the 1981 tour violence.³⁷⁵ With the conclusion of the 1981 tour numerous police officers had resigned and it seemed that the 1985 tour would see the same take place as numerous threats of resignation by police were reported even before the tour was set to happen.³⁷⁶ "Another tour would be too high in human and social terms," wrote Bob Moodie, Secretary of the Police Association, in the *Auckland Star* in December 1984.³⁷⁷ The tour had also defined clear lines within New Zealand politics regarding contact with the Springboks. The ruling National Party had proved to be less willing to take definitive steps to intervene in sporting matters than the Labour Party. With an election to be held the year before the tour, there was considerable uncertainty with regard to which side the government would come down on should the NZRFU accept the invitation to tour South Africa.

While pro-tour organisations like SPIR and FRENZ were still scrambling for funds and supporters to mount a pro-tour offensive, HART already had a significant following and infrastructure in place (dating back to the 1981 tour) from which to run their 'Stop the 85 Tour' campaign. The pro-tour faction was dealt an early blow when in 1984 the Auckland Rugby Union (ARU), New Zealand's largest rugby union and one that had been an adamant supporter of the 1981 tour, announced that it would not support the 1985 tour. The decision provoked debate within New Zealand rugby quarters regarding the tour, as it appeared that there would not be the unanimous support for the 1985 tour as there had been for the 1981 tour. Shortly after the ARU's decision, the unions of North Harbour, Poverty Bay, Otago, Taranaki, and Waikato announced their opposition to the tour, meaning a substantial portion of New Zealand rugby did not support the tour. Their reasons for opposing the tour were

³⁷⁴ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. "Peoples Story of '81," *Auckland Star*, 1 December 1984.

³⁷⁵ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Unclassified newspaper article titled "Reaping 1981 Seeds," no date available.

³⁷⁶ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. "Policeman threatens to resign over tour," *Auckland Star*, 1 December 1984.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

mostly the same. The 1981 tour had exacerbated an already marked decline in rugby popularity in New Zealand. If the 1985 tour took place with similar events as in 1981, the sport would likely not recover. John McDougall, a former advisor to the NZRFU believed that the controversy around South African tours endangered the game of rugby and that rugby administrators were so wound up in serving the game that they could not see the damage a trip to South Africa would cause.³⁷⁸ There had been substantial losses in young players and coaches following the 1981 tour and those unions who opposed the tour feared further losses would take place should the 1985 tour go ahead. These fears were also outlined in the ARU's formal statement regarding their opposition to the tour:

“We believe that if the tour proceeds we will see a trend which emerged during 1981 of a falloff in support from parents and teachers, and therefore a consequent falloff in boys playing rugby. Since 1981 active support has remained at earlier levels. For too long rugby administrators have taken the traditionally complacent view that rugby will always remain the pre-eminent sport. This can no longer be assumed.”³⁷⁹

Therefore, if the tour proceeded it would harm the objective of rugby unions to promote the game in New Zealand and therefore they could not support it, the ARU told *The New Zealand Herald*.³⁸⁰ Already there were threats from secondary schools around New Zealand that they would scrap the game, while numerous coaches showed their intent to boycott rugby should the 1985 tour proceed.³⁸¹ It would be hard to conceive that New Zealand would benefit from thirty All Blacks rugby around South African fields, particularly after the problems 1981 had brought for the country both internationally and domestically.

The prospect of the tour also drew criticism from other quarters, particularly from New Zealand's other sporting codes. Following the 1981 tour New Zealand athletes across all disciplines had found themselves to be virtually as reviled internationally as their South African counterparts. New Zealand athletes were punished as their government was regarded

³⁷⁸ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. “Policeman threatens to resign over tour,” *Auckland Star*, 1 December 1984.

³⁷⁹ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. “ARU Stance on Tour,” *Auckland Star*, 6 December 1981.

³⁸⁰ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. “Two Rugby Unions Say Drop Tour,” *The New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1984.

³⁸¹ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. “Anti-Apartheid Chief Makes Games Threat,” *The New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1985.

as a supporter of apartheid by allowing the Springboks to tour in 1981. Various attempts were made to have New Zealand athletes expelled from the 1982 Commonwealth Games and the 1984 Olympic Games. Although this did not take place, it was not farfetched to conceive that if the 1985 tour went ahead New Zealand sportsmen could well find themselves on the wrong end of a sporting boycott. There had already been murmurs from African nations that they would boycott the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland should the 1985 tour go ahead.³⁸²

Writing to Danie Craven in early 1985, Norman McKenzie informed him that polls revealed that 42% of New Zealanders were against the tour.³⁸³ However, according to McKenzie (the source of this information is unclear, but it is unlikely that such a source existed) at least half of these people did so out of fear (of a 1981 repeat), while only 20% of the total opposition did so for political reasons and where mostly anti-rugby more than anything.³⁸⁴ It seemed though that fear was probable cause enough to oppose the tour, as even FRENZ chairperson, Yvonne Wilcox, resigned from the organisation because she could not tolerate a repeat of the death threats and harassment she had faced in 1981 while working for SPIR.³⁸⁵ The statistics presented by McKenzie meant little and were likely something he had pulled out of a hat in order to convince Craven that there was not significant opposition in New Zealand to the tour. McKenzie was most likely trying to convince Craven that if FRENZ acted now, in essence received funding, the majority of New Zealanders could still be won over onto the side of the tour.³⁸⁶

However, there seemed to be a significant change in the attitude among New Zealanders toward the prospects of the tour. This must be put down to their experience of the 1981 tour. The opposition to the tour from rugby quarters was something unheard of and likely lead to speculation among New Zealanders that if rugby unions were opposing the tour it would most likely be wise not to tour. The election of the Labour Party to office in the 1984 could also be indicative of widespread opposition to the tour. While there is little evidence to suggest that 1985 tour was used as an election topic by the Labour Party, the New Zealand electorate

³⁸² SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. "Anti-Apartheid Chief Makes Games Threat," *The New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1985

³⁸³ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Letter from Norman McKenzie to Danie Craven, 26 February 1985.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

could not have failed to recognise that the Labour Party had traditionally opposed sporting contact with South Africa and had already once before (in 1973) forced the NZRFU to call off a tour to South Africa. In his capacity as Foreign Affairs Minister under the old guard, new Prime Minister, David Lange, had seen to it the New Zealand co-sponsored a United Nations resolution on international action against apartheid, which would “leave no-one in any doubt about New Zealand’s rejection of racism.”³⁸⁷ Speaking to a New Zealand newspaper, Lange contended that: “Our resolution condemns apartheid and the repression inside South Africa and attacks on neighbouring countries which aim to keep apartheid in place.”³⁸⁸ Shortly after coming to office, Lange announced that he was determined to sever all diplomatic ties with South Africa.³⁸⁹ Lange made it public that he believed that should the NZRFU reject the invitation to tour South Africa it would kick away one of the struts of apartheid.³⁹⁰

However, the new Labour government did not go to the frightening lengths expected by SPIR and FRENZ to intervene in the tour. While touring New Zealand on a campaign to encourage stopping the 1985 tour, General Joseph Garba, Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid, said that while there were encouraging signs, the New Zealand government could do a little more to prevent the tour than it was currently doing.³⁹¹ In a meeting between the Prime Minister Lange and Ces Blazey of the NZRFU, Lange requested that the NZRFU not send the All Blacks to South Africa in 1985, but that if they did except the SARB’s invitation the government could not stop the tour. This was virtually the same message the Nationalist Muldoon had given Blazey in 1981, leaving much to be desired from the vaunted ‘anti-tour’ Labour government in 1985.

For much of 1985 then, it looked like the tour would take place. Neither HART nor the Labour government had been able to persuade the NZRFU to decline the invitation from the SARB. Even following a warning by Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, that New Zealand rugby authorities would bear responsibility for the “adverse consequences” if the

³⁸⁷ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. Unclassified newspaper article titled “Racism Rejected,” no date available.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ “Pretoria may sever links with NZ first,” *The Times* (England), 1 August 1984, p. 6.

³⁹⁰ SARB Archive, Collection VII: SARR Sake, Box Politiek in Sport/Apartheid. A public statement by Free Nation New Zealand titled “Wake Up New Zealand: As a nation we are being conned,” no date available.

³⁹¹ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. “Anti-Apartheid Chief Makes Games Threat,” *The New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1985.

tour went ahead, seemingly hinting that the tour would be disrupted, the NZRFU continued with their plans to tour South Africa.³⁹² Despite the fact that the United Democratic Front, an anti-apartheid umbrella organisation in South Africa, had written to Ces Blazey informing him that they intended to disrupt the tour, the NZRFU decided to send the All Black to South Africa in mid-1985.³⁹³

The tour was conducted under the auspices that rugby should be free from political intervention, but at the same time, that contact with South African rugby would build bridges for further racial integration as receiving tours would be an incentive for South Africa to continue integrating. However, at the last minute the tour was prevented from taking place. Two rugby-playing Auckland lawyers had lodged an appeal in the High Court against the NZRFU's decision to send the All Blacks to South Africa. They argued that by touring, the NZRFU would be acting outside of their constitutive rules that require it to promote, foster and benefit the game of rugby in New Zealand.³⁹⁴ The court issued an injunction against the NZRFU to stop the tour only two days before the All Blacks were set to depart for South Africa. Speaking in court the presiding judge noted that:

“In its bearing on the image, standing, and future of rugby as a national sport the tour decision is probably at least as important, if not more important than any other in the history of the game in New Zealand.”³⁹⁵

While the court proceedings are not available in South Africa for inspection, it is probable to conceive that the lawyers sighted the earlier mention evidence of the 1981 induced decline in rugby popularity in New Zealand as evidence for why the 1985 tour should not take place. In the build up to the 1985 tour, there were already signs that rugby in New Zealand would suffer because of it.³⁹⁶ Thus, it is highly likely that parallels were drawn between the drop off in rugby popularity following the 1981 tour (which certainly had not promoted, fostered, or benefitted the game) and the likelihood that the same would occur if the 1985 tour proceeded.

³⁹² “ANC opens doors to all races and vows to step up armed conflict,” *The Times* (England), 26 June 1985, p. 6.

³⁹³ SARB Archive, Collection Newspaper Clippings. “Tourists could face active demonstrations,” *Taranaki Herald*, 5 September 1984.

³⁹⁴ D, Oliver. J, Fedtke (ed.): *Human Rights and the Private Sphere: A Comparative Study*, p. 312.

³⁹⁵ “All Black tour is challenged,” *The Times* (England), 22 June 1985, p. 32.

³⁹⁶ SARB Archive, Collection B, Box B3: Korrespondensie van Norman McKenzie. “Anti-Apartheid Chief Makes Games Threat,” *The New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1985.

The tour cancellation was likely one of the biggest blows dealt to South African rugby in the sporting boycott era. Bitter as the disappointment was of Wales, France, and the British and Irish Lions cancelling tours, it was incomparable to the disappointment of white South Africa when news broke that the All Blacks would not tour. Craven recalled that he had witnessed grown men openly cry when the news broke of the cancellation, such was the disappointment for white South Africa.³⁹⁷ The tour would have been a chance to prove not only to world rugby, but also to itself that South African rugby should still be taken seriously and that they could still contend with the best in the world.

White South Africans, and particularly Craven, felt that they had deserved the tour. The tour was seen in South Africa as reward for the hard work put in by the SARB to deracialize the game. Craven had hosted hundreds of clinics, which had breathed life into the game in underprivileged communities around South Africa, while the selection of two black Springboks, Errol Tobias and Avril Williams, to play against England had suggested to the world that rugby was continuing its racial integration. In his capacity as a rugby-man, there was not much more that Craven could do to facilitate tours for South African rugby. The ripples of the 1981 tour had caught up with the SARB and with South Africa entering an increasingly turbulent time politically, it seemed unlikely that much international rugby would be taking place for the foreseeable future.

It is safe to say that 1985 was a difficult year for white South Africans. The much-lauded Botha reforms, which had brought a measure of relief from international pressure, had been shown to be a sham, resulting in the clamming up of international sympathies. Even South Africa's two international protectors, Thatcher and Reagan, were having an increasingly difficult time justifying their softer line towards the Republic when the government was giving them little ammunition to use. Furthermore, the townships had been plunged into violent rebellion under the ANC's civil disobedience campaign, which was threatening to culminate in all-out civil war. With the cancellation of the All Black tour, one of the few things that provided white South Africans with a fleeting escape from the social and political upheavals their country was facing was removed. In his autobiography, former Transvaal RFU and SARFU Chairman, Louis Luyt, writes that the cancelling of tours "was one area where you could really hurt many privileged white South Africans who were still reasonably

³⁹⁷ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 105.

comfortable despite economic sanctions.”³⁹⁸ While David Lange’s comment that the tour’s cancelation would kick away one of the struts of apartheid was perhaps an exaggeration, the cancelation certainly did add to the increasing despair felt by many white South Africans toward the prevailing political dispensation. David Black and John Nauright have noted that the 1981 tour and its aftermath fuelled a deepening sense of cultural isolation, which, over time, eroded white South Africa’s resolve to resist political changes.³⁹⁹ The 1985 tour cancelation, on top of cancelations by Australia, France, and Wales, certainly could not have failed to fuel the speculation that rugby isolation would be the future while South Africa remained a racially stratified society.

With the 1985 tour being called off, the Springboks embarked on a consolation tour around South Africa, something many believed even further devalued the already low Springbok jersey. The Springboks played some of the stronger provincial sides, as well as the South African Barbarians, for which they received test caps. With international tours becoming scarce, increasing value was placed on South Africa’s domestic contests, particularly the Currie Cup. The Currie Cup entailed the SARB’s largest rugby unions playing one-another. Traditional rivalries such as Northern Transvaal versus Western Province essentially took on the importance of the absent test match rugby. Craven, perhaps trying to put on a brave face for the public, was adamant that the quality of the domestic competition would keep South African rugby competitive with the likes of the best around the world.⁴⁰⁰ However, this was a pipedream: the sport had already deteriorated because of the lack of regular and rigorous international competition and would continue to do so until it made a full return to the international arena. The semi-isolation of the 1970s had been replaced by the full onset of isolation in the 1980s. It would be fanciful at best to assume that under its current situation South African rugby would be able to match the quality of top-flight international rugby.

The cancelation of 1985 tour was perhaps the first time that the SARB truly felt the ramifications of the 1981 tour. The 1981 tour had played a large part on turning New Zealanders against the 1985 tour and had most likely been integral in the court case that had ultimately led to the cancelation of the tour. For white South Africans, the cancelation was

³⁹⁸ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louise Luyt Autobiography*, p. 162.

³⁹⁹ J. Nauright, D. Black: *Rugby and the South African Nation*, p. 89.

⁴⁰⁰ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Letter to Danie Craven from the South African Embassy in London, 12 December 1986, with attached newspaper article titled “Park cancel visit by Cape Town side,” *Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1986.

calamitous and, as David Black and John Nauright point out, likely weakened their resolve to resist future political changes as the cancellation only further played on the anxieties of being isolated. For rugby, the cancellation had repercussions as the continued lack of exposure to top-flight international rugby limited the extent to which South African rugby could develop and improve. Ultimately then, the 1985 tour cancellation heralded the onset of South Africa's rugby isolation. To a significant extent, this isolation could be put down to the ripples caused by the 1981 tour.

The Birth of the Rebel Tours: The 1986 Cavaliers Tour of South Africa

It was under these difficult circumstances that the 1986 Cavaliers tour of South Africa took place. To the outside world, the team touring South Africa was known as the Cavaliers, but to South Africans they were known simply as the All Blacks. The team that came to South Africa was, bar two players, the full All Black side that was meant to tour the Republic in 1985. The players had slipped out of New Zealand without informing the NZRFU, the IRB, or their own government of the tour and, once news broke of the tour, claimed to have come to South Africa as individuals and as a private, non-representative side. To South Africans though they were the All Blacks, and any doubts to this were removed when the team insisted in doing a *Haka* before the final test against the Springboks.

The brains behind the operation had been Transvaal rugby President, Louis Luyt. While numerous sources claim that the SARB was wholly unaware of the tour being planned, in his autobiography Luyt paints a somewhat different picture. Luyt writes about a confidential meeting held by the SARB executive on 18 July 1985 regarding the tour, a meeting Luyt himself did not attend. However, he does publish in his autobiography the minutes of the secret meeting, which had been given to him by Craven. The SARB could not be seen to be extending invitations to individual players and thus a private institution brought the team to South Africa. This private institution turned out to be a joint sponsorship of the tour by Yellow Pages (who were the official sponsor), a telephone directory company, and *Volksskas*, a South African bank. The SARB was to assume full authority over the tour once the team arrived. If the tour caused any problems, it would be taken over by the private institutions.⁴⁰¹ Luyt claims to have offered to invite the New Zealand players on behalf of the Transvaal Rugby Football Union, as the SARB could not be seen to be involved in the organising of the

⁴⁰¹ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 165.

tour.⁴⁰² Luyt and Robert Denton, managing director of Ellis Park rugby stadium, had flown to Hong Kong to hash out the final arrangements with Ian Kirkpatrick (tour manager), Colin Meads (Coach), and Andy Dalton, who would captain the side in South Africa.⁴⁰³

The Cavaliers arrived in April 1986, playing twelve matches, including four test matches, of which they lost three. The tour had a punishing schedule for the Cavaliers during which they would regularly play as many as three matches a week for four weeks. The Cavaliers were treated much the same way as the Springbok were in New Zealand in 1981, as they were under constant police surveillance and protection. There were concerns that the tour could be violently disrupted, as ‘terror attacks’ had increased since the initiation of the ANC’s civil disobedience campaign in 1985.⁴⁰⁴ However, there were few incidents of opposition to the tour. The only significant incident was in Cape Town, where township school pupils burnt a mound of Yellow Pages directories.⁴⁰⁵

However, the tour did bring the SARB into the firing line of the IRB. Once news of the tour broke the IRB requested that the Cavaliers be sent home immediately, but the SARB refused. Craven’s answer to the IRB’s request was definitive: “To stop this trip would be such a deep disgrace that no man in his right mind would ever do such an injustice to South Africa”.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, there had been speculation that the Cavaliers players had been paid up to US\$120,000 to tour, which was strictly against the IRB’s amateurism regulations. Although there has been little proof to suggest that such payment was made, Luyt writes that he could believe such rumours.⁴⁰⁷ Furthermore, Albert Grundlingh has outline that with the 1987 South Sea Barbarians rebel tour of South Africa there were clear signs of money exchanging hands for the players to tour.⁴⁰⁸ Thus, it would not be too farfetched to conceive that the Cavaliers were compensated for their services.

For much of white South Africa the tour had been worthwhile. The tour had fed the country’s rugby lust and had proven that Springbok rugby was still in the upper echelons of world rugby as they had beaten a full All Black side. Luyt described the tour as a chance for

⁴⁰² L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 166

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 105.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 106.

⁴⁰⁶ P. Dobson: *Rugby’s Greatest Rivalry*, p. 180.

⁴⁰⁷ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 167.

⁴⁰⁸ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 107.

South African rugby to break out of the straight jacket it found itself in.⁴⁰⁹ Craven went even further. Speaking to the *Argus* in late 1986 Craven stated: “I go so far to say that it saved South African rugby, providing as it did an opportunity for our Springboks to prove they are still up there with the world’s best.”⁴¹⁰ Paul Dobson also comments that the tour “did in fact save South African rugby from the slough of despond into which it had been dropped in 1985.”⁴¹¹

However, Craven conceded that the tour had gotten the SARB into hot water. It had soured the Board’s relationship with the IRB to the extent that Craven considered withdrawing the SARB from the IRB. The Cavaliers tour had also alienated their long-time allies, the NZRFU, who were also reprimanded by both their government and the IRB for the tour, despite their lack of involvement in it. The SARB was considered to have jeopardised the amateurism of the NZRFU’s players, which could likely lead to bans from the IRB only a year before the first Rugby World Cup. For their transgression, the New Zealand players faced the possibility of lifetime bans from the game. However, most players were only suspended for one match. If there were any lingering doubts about whether South Africa would be playing in the following years historic first Rugby World Cup, those doubts had been thoroughly dispelled by the Cavaliers tour.

The Cavaliers tour was perhaps the ultimate expression of just how isolated South African rugby had started to feel in the 1980s. Having to resort to underhanded tactics to bring out these rebel tours revealed the Board to be desperate, something the sporting boycott took as a sign of their success. These rebel tours were short lived and usually proved counterproductive to the SARB. In many ways, South African rugby was worse off after them. Craven’s friends in the IRB had aided the SARB in staving off the worst of the isolation in the 1970s, however these rebel tours only resulted in alienating the two boards from one-another as the IRB felt their role as international governing body was being undermined by such tours. The tour prompted the IRB to change some of their disciplinary laws to outlaw any further rebel tours.⁴¹² The SARB was forced to apologies to the IRB and give a solemn undertaking that no

⁴⁰⁹ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 166.

⁴¹⁰ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Letter to Danie Craven from the South African Embassy in London, 12 December 1986, with attached newspaper article titled “Park cancel visit by Cape Town side,” *Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1986.

⁴¹¹ P. Dobson: *Rugby in South Africa: A History 1861-1988*, p. 155.

⁴¹² SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Newspaper article sent to the SARB executive from Alex Kellerman, 9 January, 1987, titled “Tour Compensation Introduced,” no date available.

further rebel tours would take place, to which Craven agreed. Barely a year later, though, another rebel tour had landed in South Africa.

The team known as the South Sea Barbarians was made up of Pacific Islanders (mostly Western Samoans, but also some Fijians and Tongans). The tour provided the SARB with quite a predicament. Had they sent the ‘non-white’ tourists home it may well have been used against the Board as evidence that it remained a racist body. However, had the tour continued, it would lead to further condemnation by the IRB for again hosting a rebel tour. To try to escape any persecution, the SARB cancelled all the tests the Barbarians were set to play against the Springboks, thereby avoiding giving the tour full international status.⁴¹³ Despite this, the tour was regarded by the IRB as another rebel tour, and following the changes implemented by the IRB, they now had the power to expel the SARB for hosting the tour.⁴¹⁴ Ultimately, the SARB was not expelled, but the rebel tours left them in a position where there was little benefit to be found in remaining a member of the IRB. A newspaper reported that following the two rebel tours even some of the more conservative rugby unions around the world were having second thoughts about maintaining ties with the SARB.⁴¹⁵

These rebel tours provided significant problems to the future rugby contests involving South Africa. When in 1987 the England RFU wrote to Craven informing him that they were considering lifting the ban on contact with South Africa, they insisted that Craven first had to provide them with a statement on whether unauthorised fees had been paid to the Cavaliers by the TRFU. The SARB also needed to take legal steps to prevent such tours taking place again before England would consider lifting the ban.⁴¹⁶ Writing to the South Africa Embassy in London in December 1986, Craven requested that the embassy emphasize that the Cavaliers tour was a mistake when dealing with the press.⁴¹⁷ An invitation sent from the SARB to the Wallabies (Australia’s national rugby team) to tour in 1988 was also turned

⁴¹³ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. “Rugby nears its South African sticking point,” *The Independent*, 9 September 1987.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Newspaper articles sent from the SARB to the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, 17 April 1984.

⁴¹⁷ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Letter from Danie Craven to Philip Moolman of the South African Embassy in London, 12 December 1986.

down largely due to the controversy surrounding the two rebel tours, as well as the concern that Australian players would be paid to tour.⁴¹⁸

However, the problems caused by the Cavaliers tour extended beyond national tours. When in 1986 a Cape Town social team known as the Hedgehogs (which SANROC insisted was the University of Cape Town's rugby side) toured to England, they were treated like a touring Springbok side. Controversy raged about the touring side as English players refused to play them out of moral conviction, coaches threatened to resign should their club play the tourists, and threats were made that matches would be violently disrupted, ultimately resulting in the cancellation of several matches. The objections to the Hedgehogs' tour were put down to lingering hostilities in the rugby world towards South Africa over the Cavaliers tour.⁴¹⁹

The 1985 All Black tour cancellation and subsequent rebel tours marked the final stage in South African rugby's post-1981 isolation. The next time the Springboks and the All Blacks would meet was in 1992, at which point South Africa's political landscape had dramatically changed as apartheid was on the way out. In his desperation to stave off isolation, Craven's hand had been forced, culminating in initiatives such as the costly rebel tours. These rebel tours, particularly the one by the Cavaliers, had cost the SARB and South African rugby as much as the 1981 tour had with regard to their international rejection. By hosting the Cavaliers tour, Craven had managed to do something that the sporting boycott could not achieve in nearly 20 years: to drive a wedge between South Africa – New Zealand rugby.

The Cavaliers tour may have revived South African Rugby, but Craven could not have failed to understand that this revival would be short-lived unless there was a steady stream of international competition. The SARB also faced the new challenge of lucrative contracts being offered to their players by northern hemisphere clubs. Coinciding with the cancellation of the 1985 All Black tour was a flight in local talent to overseas clubs, possibly further illustrating the fact that the Springbok jersey no longer carried the same appeal it once had when the Springboks were the top team in world rugby.

⁴¹⁸ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Newspaper article sent to the SARB executive from Alex Kellerman, 9 January, 1987, titled "Australian RFU may be split over SA tour issue," *Argus*, 31 December 1986.

⁴¹⁹ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Letter to Danie Craven from the South African Embassy in London, 12 December 1986, with attached newspaper article titled "Demonstrators planning to disrupt Hedgehogs tour," *The Times* (England), 3 December 1986.

The 1981 tour certainly caused the growing isolation of South African rugby in the 1980s. The tour had been a prominent factor in the cancellation of the 1985 All Black tour. Fears had arisen in New Zealand that their society would be plunged into the same state of chaos as in 1981 and that rugby's popularity would suffer in the way it had following the 1981 tour. The 1985 tour cancellation in turn led to the birth of the Cavaliers tour, as Craven and the SARB were desperate for top flight international rugby to return to South Africa. Ultimately, though, the tour caused irreparable damage to the image of the SARB, despite bringing on some renewed, but brief vigour for the game in South Africa. With the Cavaliers tour, two of South African rugby's strongest proponents had been turned away, the IRB and the NZRFU. Both had contributed significantly to keeping South African rugby away from the grip of isolation from the start of the sporting boycott.

Opposition to apartheid had ultimately caused the 1981 tour events, and it seemed that only a solution to apartheid that would provide a solution for South African rugby. Had the 1981 tour proceeded peacefully it is probable that future tours would have been more likely to take place. However, the attention the tour received around the world coincided with and most likely aided the international spotlight turning onto South Africa. South African rugby found its hands bound for most of the 1980s, as it could do little to stop the isolation. Those strategies it did follow, like the rebel tours, were done out of a position of desperation and ultimately left the Board in a worse-off position in the long term. South African rugby would now be forced, yet again, to explore new avenues to make it acceptable to world rugby.

Exploring New Ventures: The SARB and its 'African Initiative'

While the South African government faced a 'total onslaught' against it in the 1980s, it seemed the country's rugby was facing a total onslaught of its own. By hosting the rebel tours South African rugby had turned away the last of its few remaining international allies. The once prized Springbok jersey was rapidly losing its appeal to South African players as the prospect of future tours seemed evermore unlikely. Those who did not wish to play Currie Cup for the remainder of their careers departed for the northern hemisphere where they joined professional club sides.⁴²⁰ Following the post-1981 isolation of rugby, South Africa's top players started deserting the country to broaden their own horizons, meaning the quality of domestic rugby on offer in South Africa was waning. The Currie Cup would not be able to

⁴²⁰ SARB Archive, Collection A14: Bemarking van Rugby, Box A14.1: Manuskripte. Die Agentskap vir Reklame en Bemarking, "Suid-Afrikaanse Rugby – Waarheen?," 13 March 1986.

maintain a high quality of play, as the tournament was rapidly losing its appeal to players and spectators alike. The SARB found itself in a situation where white South Africa's once prized sport was starting to wane in popularity. If rugby's current position in South Africa prevailed, the game could no longer be the preeminent sport it once was among white South Africans.

Even before the Cavaliers tour, the SARB had approached several marketing companies to draw up plans on how rugby popularity in South Africa could be maintained. The Board made a budget of R200,000 available to the marketing agency which could best address the problems South African rugby was facing. The fact that rugby in South Africa now needed to market the game to the population is in itself a comment on the situation the game had come to find itself in. One of the major problems faced by the SARB was drop-off in supporters attending live matches. Not even the 1985 Currie Cup final between Western Province and Northern Transvaal, traditionally one of the most anticipated contests on the domestic rugby calendar, was able to draw a capacity crowd at Newlands stadium.⁴²¹ The SARB and its unions were financially dependent on the gate fees collected at live matches. Thus, a decline in attendance meant a decline in revenue for the SARB, which in turn curbed the SARB's abilities to finance tours, upgrade rugby facilities, and host coaching clinics.

Rugby was no longer the *volksfees* (national festival) it once was to Afrikaners and unless immediate action was taken the game would struggle to survive. The decline in quality of domestic rugby had meant spectators were less inclined to make a costly and time-consuming family trip to stadiums when they could watch the match live on television. According to one marketing agency, an interest in the game had also not been fostered among the youth as they had been given precious little opportunities to witness the Springboks run out against top-notch international competition.⁴²² For many schoolchildren, rugby was no longer the obvious choice as their sport, particularly as games like cricket (traditionally played by English South Africans) were becoming ever more popular amongst Afrikaners.⁴²³ Unless the youth received the necessary stimulus, an agency advised, these future stars of South African rugby would focus their inherent rugby talents on other sports that promised better reward for

⁴²¹ SARB Archive, Collection A14: Bemarking van Rugby, Box A14.1: Manuskripte. D&O Bemarking en Promosies, "Suid Afrikaanse Rugby: 'n Voorstel aan die Suid Afrikaanse Rugby Raad," January 1986.

⁴²² SARB Archive, Collection A14: Bemarking van Rugby, Box A14.1: Manuskripte. Die Agentskap vir Reklame en Bemarking, "Suid-Afrikaanse Rugby – Waarheen?," 13 March 1986.

⁴²³ SARB Archive, Collection A14: Bemarking van Rugby, Box A14.1: Manuskripte. D&O Bemarking en Promosies, "Suid Afrikaanse Rugby: 'n Voorstel aan die Suid Afrikaanse Rugby Raad," January 1986.

their efforts.⁴²⁴ These marketing agencies also sought to play on the nostalgia of the older generations to return South African rugby to its former glory days by “putting back into rugby some of what you got out of it.”⁴²⁵ The quality of the game needed to return to the time where rugby came to represent the symbolic strength and unity of the Afrikaner nation, both domestically and internationally.

These agencies, however, sighted South Africa’s international rugby isolation as the primary factor resulting in the drop-off in player and spectator numbers.⁴²⁶ Until this could be rectified, the Board would face an uphill battle trying to keep the game prominent. According to *The Agency for Advertising and Marketing*, one of the companies approached by the SARB, the lack of international competition led directly to the lack of quality in the South African game, which in turn resulted in a lack of interest in the game and a gradual decline in the status of the green and gold jersey.⁴²⁷ Furthermore, the agency outlined that in a changing South Africa, rugby was still very much regarded as the Afrikaner’s sport with racial overtones making it less appealing both internationally and domestically.⁴²⁸ Another factor sighted by this agency, which is perhaps something for a further self-standing study, was the negative effect that television had on rugby popularity, as it gave a wider audience greater exposure to other sports.⁴²⁹

However, the SARB would be able to achieve little success in rejuvenating the game if tours were the chief manner of doing so. The global spotlight had trained itself on apartheid, making tours a scarce commodity, as teams faced an international backlash if they broke the sporting boycott and made contact with South Africa. Craven found himself in an immensely difficult position. Over the course of several years, the Board had not been able to improve its increasingly isolated position and those tactics it did employ only further cut it off from the outside world. By 1988, South African rugby players no longer believed Craven’s promises of tours and unashamedly left the country to play rugby for money in Europe.⁴³⁰ Although the

⁴²⁴ SARB Archive, Collection A14: Bemarking van Rugby, Box A14.1: Manuskripte. Die Agentskap vir Reklame en Bemarking, “Suid-Afrikaanse Rugby – Waarheen?,” 13 March 1986.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. “Craven kies ANC bo Noltes, Malan,” *Die Burger*, 12 September 1988.

Cavaliers tour had briefly breathed some life into South African rugby, the repercussions had made further touring (by teams who were not ‘rebel tours’) highly unlikely.

The success of the first Rugby World Cup in 1987 had also thrown into question the future significance of tours. As one journalist noted:

“In popular terms rugby has moved on from the time when its highest expression was the tour in which one International Board country crossed the equator to play another. In future it will be a World Cup in which dozens of countries are involved.”⁴³¹

It seemed that with the new age the rugby world was entering into, South Africa would be left behind. The battle for the best in the world would no longer be decided in climatic test series involving the All Blacks or the Springboks, but would instead be decided by the new format from which South Africa looked to be excluded. The marketing agencies had not been able to achieve much success primarily as that which they identified as rugby’s biggest problem (international isolation) was something that had for some time been outside of the SARB’s control, something which Craven had initially not realised. Two years after the marketing agencies were first approached, there was still a significant flight of rugby talent from South African shores and domestic matches were still poorly attended. Craven was forced to concede that the standard of play could not remain high while its ceiling was so low.⁴³²

Perhaps it was being forced into a corner yet again that made Craven adopt an entirely new strategy. Craven had always been adamant that sport and politics should be separate, but came to realise that while South African rugby was governed along racial lines this was unlikely to happen. In the 1970s, he had tackled the issue of depoliticising South African rugby by trying to remove apartheid from the game. This had culminated in the 1978 amalgamation of South Africa’s three racially based rugby bodies into the South African Rugby Board. From there on, he insisted that South African rugby should no longer be punished internationally for the politics of the NP government. However, the 1981 tour and the subsequent difficulties faced by the SARB came as a sobering reality that it no longer mattered if sport was deracialized while the rest of the society was not.

⁴³¹ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. “Rugby nears its South African sticking point,” *The Independent*, 9 September 1987.

⁴³² SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Danie Craven’s responds to questions from Haruhisa Kodaira, Chief Editor of Rugby Magazine Japan, no date available.

From 1987 onward, Craven adopted a new stance, one which was highly critical of the Nationalist government and apartheid. It is unlikely that Craven suddenly underwent a deep paradigm shift in this period (by 1990 Craven was still adamant that the government should not give everyone an equal vote), but instead came to realise that as long as apartheid was in place South African rugby would be a pariah to its international counterparts. Craven now made a point of coming out strongly against the government, calling for immediate reform before the country tumbled over the cliff it was heading for. He singled out the Group Areas Act and the hurt it caused as white South Africa's greatest sin, but qualified his statement by saying that the separation of the races was a natural evolutionary process and did not need legislation to enforce it.⁴³³ Still, the law needed to be repealed and white South Africa needed to apologise to its black brethren for the hurt they had caused.

Craven had a long history of doing battle with the government, starting in 1965 when Prime Minister Verwoerd banned Maoris from touring South Africa with the All Blacks. Craven had largely kept these fights to the rugby field, but his comments had gradually become more general in condemning the government for apartheid.⁴³⁴ Perhaps the point which most clearly marks the start of Craven's new endeavour was when he released a 'new year's message' on 4 January 1987, the first time he had done anything of the sort. In his message, Craven called for scrapping all apartheid laws and that the government should be pressured into making further changes more rapidly.⁴³⁵ The message provoked outrage, particularly amongst conservative circles, as Craven's address seemed to indicate that one of the traditional bastions of white power was now siding with those who opposed apartheid.

From here on Craven made no secret of his intentions. In both international and domestic media, Craven was quoted as saying that South African rugby (and sport in general) needed to fight the government to do away with any forms of discrimination.⁴³⁶ Craven urged South Africans to rise above party politics and forget group interests, as South Africa's survival was

⁴³³ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Newspaper article sent to the SARB executive from Alex Kellerman, 9 January, 1987, titled "Tour Compensation Introduced," no date available.

⁴³⁴ It remains a moot point whether Craven would have come out this strongly against the government had rugby not been in the difficult spot it was. Although rugby had been 'depoliticised' in the eyes of both Craven and the government, the general apartheid policies, i.e. those which did not have to do with sport, were still causing considerable problems for South Africa's sportsmen and their prospects of competing internationally.

⁴³⁵ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Unclassified document "Craven in Crisis? By Paul Dobson" no date available.

⁴³⁶ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Danie Craven's responds to questions from Haruhisa Kodaira, Chief Editor of Rugby Magazine Japan, no date available.

paramount. However, his statements were not only limited to the government, but also referred to those rugby bodies that had not made full attempts to deracialize the game. He was well aware that rural unions had been much slower to implement rugby integration and singled out the Boland Union for their reluctance to incorporate coloured players (something even Springbok Errol Tobias struggled with during his time at the Boland Union).⁴³⁷ Craven was quick to point out that any rugby body which was found not to be implementing mixed rugby to the fullest extent would suffer consequences.⁴³⁸ His statements drew a backlash in the media as his comments were labelled as ‘laughable’, particularly by Treurnicht’s Conservative Party, which by 1987 had become the official opposition to the ruling party in South Africa.⁴³⁹

Craven had barely delivered his new year’s message when two members of the SARB executive committee made it known that they would stand as candidates for the Conservative Party in the upcoming 1987 election. Boetie Malan and Dan Nolte would stand for election in Cradock and Delmas respectively. Craven had not been told by either Malan or Nolte of their intentions, but was swift in issuing a statement in which he quoted the constitution of the SARB:

“The SARB was empowered to expel any member who failed to comply with its constitution or whose actions were in the Board’s sole opinion detrimental to the best interests of the Board and the game.”

In essence, Craven was pointing out the fact that there were glaring philosophical differences between the constitutions of the SARB and the Conservative Party, who still advocated the most hidebound separate development policies. There were fundamentally irreconcilable differences between the two constitutions. Craven had interpreted the SARB statute to mean that if a member wished to represent a party in parliament whose policy conflicted with that of the SARB, they could no longer serve on the Board’s executive.⁴⁴⁰ Both Nolte and Malan, however, resigned from their positions on the Board, largely under pressure from Craven and despite CP leader Treurnicht ordering them to stay and fight the SARB over the matter.

⁴³⁷ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. “Politiek is almal se vyand,” *Rapport*, 4 January 1987.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Unclassified document “Craven in Crisis? By Paul Dobson” no date available.

However, for Craven and the SARB, the question over the matter went further, as membership to the SARB was thrown into review. The Board's disciplinary committee had found that no legal statute within the SARB's constitution existed which forbade members from being eligible to political office, but insisted that one be drafted immediately.⁴⁴¹ It would be safe to assume that Malan and Nolte were not the only conservatives serving on the Board, and were likely not the only ones to be incensed by Craven's new liberal warpath. The SARB requested that South Africa's main political parties to send a copy of their sports policies to the Board. This was done so that the Board's executive could gauge which of the parties had sports policies that could be reconciled with those of the SARB. Craven expected SARB members to resign from the positions in the Board if their political views and allegiances clashed with those of the SARB.⁴⁴² In doing so, Craven had essentially politicised the Board as it had adopted a position that opposed the Nationalist government. It was no longer a case of politics that was entering sport, but instead sport that had entered politics.

“Oom Danie” and the ANC

Craven's new political initiative was cemented in 1988. The state of the political logjam regarding reform would not be doing South African rugby any favours anytime soon. Condemning apartheid in the media meant little to international onlookers if there was not significant action behind these statements. In early 1988, an opportunity presented itself. Fresh from the so-called “Dakar Safari”⁴⁴³ Tommy Bedford, a former Springbok and renowned critic of the apartheid government informed Craven that during discussions with the ANC, it had been speculated that the liberalisation of sport could help break the political deadlock South Africa faced.⁴⁴⁴ Bedford believed rugby could well be the best avenue for such a venture, as Craven had done much to distance the sport from apartheid. Craven agreed, as he saw such an initiative as being a potential solution for South African rugby's international impasse.

⁴⁴¹ SARB Archive, Collection A9: Verhoudinge: SARR en Federasie, Box A9.2: SARA en Federasie, 1978. Minutes of a meeting of the SARB Disciplinary Committee, 23 March 1987.

⁴⁴² SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. “Craven stel KP's voor keuse,” *Die Burger*, 9 January 1987.

⁴⁴³ The Dakar Safari refers to a meeting held between the ANC and 52 mainly Afrikaans-speaking intellectuals between from 9-12 July, 1987, in Dakar, Senegal. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss future political, economic, and social change in South Africa and attempting to establish some common ground. The meeting was heavily criticised by the apartheid government.

⁴⁴⁴ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 169.

The ‘African Initiative’, as it came to be known in the SARB, was a set of three meetings between the Danie Craven, Louis Luyt and various members of the ANC executive, usually chaired by Thabo Mbeki and facilitated by Tommy Bedford and later, Chris Laidlaw. The first of these meetings was to be between several sports administrators and the ANC, scheduled to be held in London. The meeting was held without the government’s knowledge or consent. The first meeting, however, changed into a meeting between the SARB and the ANC, as the other sports representatives were unable to make the meeting for various reasons. Louis Luyt had been deputised to attend the meeting by Craven, who was recovering from bypass surgery. Luyt describes this first meeting as a ‘get-to-know-each-other’ gathering, as little discussion was undertaken on the South African situation.⁴⁴⁵ Both parties, however, showed interest in further discussions being held and barely two months later a second meeting was set up in Frankfurt, scheduled for 28 May 1988. This time though the meeting was purposefully only between the SARB representatives and the ANC.

Craven was again not able to attend due to still being frail following his surgery and thus Luyt and Bedford attended again. From the outset, the meeting had a hard time remaining on rugby, as Mbeki demanded that the government implement true reforms and the release of their political leaders.⁴⁴⁶ Of course, Luyt was not in a position to make any comments with regard to what the government could or would do, but promised to pass on the request. To his credit, Luyt did his best to pass the message on as upon return he arranged a meeting with Pik Botha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, during which he had given him a memorandum on the meeting. Botha had insisted that it was a matter of urgency that he passes the memorandum on to his namesake, P.W. Botha. However, nothing came of this and it is not clear whether the memorandum even made it to the President’s office.

The third and final meeting between the SARB and ANC took place on 15 October 1988. This was regarded as the true meeting between the ANC and the SARB, as this time Craven would be attending. Apart from Mbeki, the meeting was attended by Alfred Nzo, Steve Tshwete, Barbara Masekela, and numerous others from the ANC executive. Craven was warmly received by the executive, particularly by Mbeki who insisted on calling him “Oom [Uncle] Danie”. In attendance too was SARU President, Ebrahim Patel, as the meeting was partly aimed at merging the interests of black and white rugby bodies under a single banner.

⁴⁴⁵ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 170.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 171.

Under Patel, SARU had been one of the most strident critics of the South African rugby establishment. The Union was aligned with SACOS and had repeatedly called for intensifying the sporting boycott and isolating the SARB. The Union was as much a political organisation as it was a sporting body, with clear ties to the ANC.

An amalgamation between the two rugby bodies could potentially reopen the doors to international competition for South African rugby. Despite having relatively few numbers, SARU was internationally accepted as representing true non-racial rugby in South Africa. However, SARU had also suffered under the boycott. For all that the Union had a political agenda, it still had to function primarily as a sporting body and thus found that the boycott also diminished the quality of their play. The few international tours that came to South Africa did not play SARU teams (touring teams played SARA and SARFF teams, which caused extensive defections of SARU players who were looking to broaden their own horizons). As early as 1984 SACOS had, on behalf of its sporting unions, pleaded with the UN to adjust its blanket ban on international coaches working in South Africa, as their sports unions were in dire need of quality coaching.⁴⁴⁷

Perhaps from a sporting perspective then, an amalgamation between the SARB and SARU was as much needed by the Union as it was by the Board to ensure that rugby survived. By the end of the two-day meeting between the SARB, SARU, and ANC, the rugby bodies released a joint statement:

“The meeting came about because of the common desire on the part of all the participating organisations to ensure to ensure that rugby in South Africa is organised according to non-racial principles. The meeting confirmed this position and agreed that South African rugby should come under one non-racial controlling body. They agree to work together to achieve these goals...”⁴⁴⁸

The statement caused outrage in South Africa. The photos of Craven walking into the arms of the ‘terrorists’ and the joint statements by the SARB and an ANC affiliate incensed many whites. Within the Board, Craven’s actions were strongly condemned by Fritz Eloff (SARB

⁴⁴⁷ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Newspaper article sent from the SARB to the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, 17 April 1984, titled “SACOS plea to UN on coaching,” *Sunday Times*, 1 April 1984.

⁴⁴⁸ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Joint statement of the South African Rugby Board, the South African rugby Union and the African National Congress: Harare, Zimbabwe, 16 October 1988.

deputy president), Steve Strydom, and Ronnie Bauser who argued that the SARB should not be seen to be negotiating with terrorist organisations committed to violence.⁴⁴⁹

The meeting also drew strong criticism from the government, which felt somewhat humiliated by the fact that one of the major institutions of Afrikaner pride had bypassed them to speak with terrorists. Both Luyt and Craven were threatened with having their passports seized and that the government would be re-evaluating its relationship with and support for the SARB.⁴⁵⁰ The Afrikaans press had a field day in condemning the Craven and Luyt for their actions, while the English press was overwhelmingly in favour of the meeting and praised Craven for this new initiative. Coming on the back of the Noltes and Malan issue, Craven was criticized for choosing terrorists over his own people.⁴⁵¹

The ANC meeting was also strongly condemned by the South African Police rugby club, who felt that their members put their life at risk to protect South Africans from the ANC ‘terrorists’ only for the head of rugby to engage with the enemy, which the police believed legitimised the ANC and its actions.⁴⁵² Such meetings made the ANC believe that they held the key to South Africa’s readmission to international rugby, which was in fact true. When the Board celebrated its centenary in 1989 and was able to invite a World XV side to play an exhibition match, it was largely due to the somewhat more positive mood internationally toward the SARB following the talks with the ANC.⁴⁵³

Although the SARB/ANC meeting drew the most criticism, it was not the first meeting of its kind. Apart from the afore mentioned ‘Dakar Safari’ and the government’s attempts to establish underground networks of communication with the ANC, a business delegation of some of South Africa’s most influential business leaders had met with the ANC in 1986 after Botha’s initial reforms had been shown up. Perhaps, though, it was the historical significance of rugby to the Afrikaner nation which drew such a strong reaction when it came to rugby’s turn to meet with the ANC. Craven was labelled a traitor by P.W. Botha, something which hurt Craven to the end of his days, but seemed to spur him on to see the initiative through.

⁴⁴⁹ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 178.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 179.

⁴⁵¹ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. “Craven kies ANC bo Noltes, Malan,” *Die Burger*, 12 September 1988.

⁴⁵² SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. “SAP Klub takel Craven, Luyt oor ANC,” no date available.

⁴⁵³ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 108.

Craven presented an ultimatum to the Board that those who were not willing to abandon racism in rugby should leave. Under Craven's insistence, the SARB declared itself fully against racism, amending its constitution accordingly. Releasing a statement on the 'ANC incident' Craven reaffirmed that he was doing what he believed to be best for South African rugby.⁴⁵⁴ Following the meeting with the ANC, the SARB executive released a statement that unification of the existing rugby bodies in South Africa was to be vigorously pursued.⁴⁵⁵

Craven stipulated that the SARB needed to make a choice on whether it followed the old path, which had been unsuccessful over the past eight years, or chose a new road that led away from the abyss South Africa was heading towards.⁴⁵⁶ Craven pointed out that rugby autonomy meant nothing if the fortunes of the game were still dictated by government actions, and as long as apartheid survived, rugby would never be free to determine its own fate. The ANC meeting had been the first step to rugby regaining control over its own future.

In the joint statement released by the SARB, SARU, and ANC, they had called on "all people of goodwill inside and outside the South Africa to support this process."⁴⁵⁷ While the initiative did receive substantial support from around the world, it would not be enough to say that attempts were being made to unify in order to see rugby return to normal. There would need to be a unified rugby body leading the way to integration in South Africa before any prospect of return to rugby could be contemplated. Craven found that unification would not be easy, as there were certain fundamental disagreements on key points between the two rugby bodies. The process temporarily entered into a stalemate, as neither body was willing to bend on certain unsurpassable matters.

It was only in 1990, after new state President F.W. De Klerk (the same man who had reprimanded Craven and Luyt for their irresponsible meeting with the ANC) dramatically lifted the ban on the ANC and Pan African Congress that there was some renewed vigour for the Harare declaration by the SARB and SARU. Although by 1989 rugby officials were far ahead of the politicians in negotiating a new non-racial order, negotiations themselves were

⁴⁵⁴ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Danie Craven writing on his decision to meet with the ANC, no date available.

⁴⁵⁵ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Statement by the Executive Committee and recommendations to the Board on the African Initiative, no date available.

⁴⁵⁶ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. "SAP Klub takel Craven, Luyt oor ANC," no date available.

⁴⁵⁷ SARB Archive, Collection C2: Craven, D.H., Box Rugby/Politiek. Joint statement of the South African Rugby Board, the South African rugby Union and the African National Congress: Harare, Zimbabwe, 16 October 1988.

not enough to see South African return to the rugby world, as the Springboks were still excluded from the 1991 Rugby World Cup. There would need to be some concrete foundations laid before readmission would be acceptable. Discussions between the two bodies resumed in earnest, with Luyt being the chief negotiator from the SARB and Ebrahim Patel from SARU with Steve Tshwete chairing the discussions. Discussion progressed surprisingly rapidly, and after barely a day of negotiating enough had been achieved to let the outside world know that the SARB and the SARU would be merging on a 50/50 basis under a new name, the South African Rugby Football Union.⁴⁵⁸

The SARFU started functioning in 1991, with Danie Craven as its first President until he stepped down in 1993, being replaced by Ebrahim Patel. Perhaps to be expected, the new body had teething problems, both at executive and playing levels. John Nauright, commenting on post-integration South Africa sport, writes that black sports administrators became ceremonial figureheads alongside a core of old established officials who called on their supposed expertise to maintain key administrative positions.⁴⁵⁹ In addition, sending white clubs into townships and *vice-a-versa* for newly merged league matches proved to have their own problems, as racial tensions often threatened to boil over on the field or amongst spectators.

However, despite the early difficulties in the new body, there was an upside, as South African rugby was welcomed back into international rugby. The changes implemented in South African rugby as well as the clear steps taken by the government to dismantle apartheid proved acceptable enough to have rugby readmitted internationally without concerns that it would slow the integration process taking place. By 1992, the familiar black jersey of the old foe graced South Africa's fields, as the All Blacks were the first team to welcome the Springboks back. Shortly afterwards, this was followed by the Springboks' first test match against the Wallabies in 21 years.

The African Initiative had been born out of South African rugby's isolation, an isolation that had steadily grown since 1981 until it threatened to irreparably damage the country's rugby. Craven had worked hard to eradicate apartheid in the sport and had, to a significant extent, been able to do so, yet he had received little reward for his efforts. However, he did not have a genuine grasp of what scrapping apartheid entailed. He did not see it as entailing universal

⁴⁵⁸ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 183.

⁴⁵⁹ J. Nauright: *Sport, Culture and Identities in South Africa*, p. 155.

franchise, majority rule, and a new political dispensation, but instead as the removal of social and economic discriminatory practices (as he had done in rugby and which was why he could not understand why South Africa could not return to international competition in the 1980s).⁴⁶⁰ As late as 1990, Craven remained adamant that the government should never give everyone equal vote.⁴⁶¹

Craven's opposition to apartheid was rooted in the fact that, above all else, it was crippling South African rugby. Had rugby not been in the tough spot it was and had Craven not exhausted the rest of his options, a meeting between the SARB and ANC may well not have happened. However, the events during and following the 1981 tour had so isolated South African rugby that by 1987 Craven was forced to abandon what he later termed the 'ineffectual old road' (involving propagandist organisations, media congresses, rebel tours, and rugby marketers) and explored a new venture which led him and the SARB to the African Initiative. In his capacity as a rugby man, Craven was doing what he claimed to be best for rugby. Although his comments in the press were of a political nature and it was the politicians who attacked him, Craven and Luyt had not gone to Harare to negotiate a new settlement for the country, but to negotiate a way through which South African rugby stood a chance of returning to the international domain. Without international rugby, the sport in South Africa could not grow and was rapidly diminishing in quality as top players left the country.

The recommendation by the ANC that the SARB and SARU amalgamate was hoped to be a case of leading by example by which other South African institutions would follow suit and hopefully apply enough pressure to the Nationalist government to enter some form of negotiations for a new political dispensation in South Africa. However, it would be safe to assume that thinking that far ahead was not on Craven's agenda, as his primary objective was to see South African rugby return to its former glory.

Conclusion

For much of the 1980s, South African rugby found itself with few friends. The 1981 tour had been meant to herald the return of Springbok rugby to the world, but what happened in New Zealand and the USA only further shut the door on South Africa's international rugby hopes. While the SARB still attempted to preach its non-racial stance to the world, the sporting

⁴⁶⁰ A. Grundlingh: *Potent Pastimes*, p. 111.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

boycott had moved on with its objectives and now demanded that South Africa be a non-racial society before sport could return to normal. In the face of these new demands, sporting bodies were helpless. They could only exert influence over their own sphere and until the government came to their aid by dismantling apartheid, South African sport would remain isolated.

However, the SARB was late to realise this and utilised a number of initiatives which were hoped would return rugby to normal. Whereas these initiatives may have been effective in the 1970s, they were ineffectual in the 1980s. The SARB's involvement with Freedom in Sport, Stop Politics in Rugby, and Free Nation New Zealand yielded little fruit and, due to the conservative reputation of these bodies, likely only did further harm to the image of the SARB. With the hosting of the International Rugby Media Congress in 1983, the SARB had been able to show foreign journalist how integrated South African rugby had become. While many of the journalists left South Africa with a more favourable outlook on South African rugby, the world remained opposed to apartheid South Africa, particularly after it was revealed that the trumpeted Botha reforms were only a further way on maintaining white power.

With the cancellation of the 1985 All Black tour the Board became increasingly desperate and, perhaps in a moment of rashness, agreed to a rebel tour by the Cavaliers in 1986, something which did irreparable damage to the image of the SARB as it came to be seen as willing to 'buy' tours and use underhand techniques to facilitate touring. The 1987 South Sea Barbarians rebel tour only furthered the anger of the rugby world towards the SARB, particularly as Craven had given his word to the IRB that there be no further rebel tours after the Cavaliers tour in 1986.

It can only be seen as out of desperation that Craven entered talks with the ANC. Craven was doing what he believed to be right for rugby, something which had him labelled as a traitor by the South African government. However, by entering into talks with the ANC Craven had given South African rugby the semblance of a chance to return to international rugby in the not too distant future. With the amalgamation of the SARB and the SARU in 1991 South African rugby was readmitted to international competition, something that was aided by the Nationalist government finally starting the process of dismantling apartheid.

While this chapter primarily outlines how the ripples of the 1981 tour can be linked to all these events, it also discusses in depth how these events themselves contributed significantly

to the complete isolation of South African rugby in the 1980s. The 1981 tour was a catalyst for the creation of FIS, SPIR, and FRENZ, all of which saw the tour as evidence that political interference in sport was inhibiting the rights of sportsmen to compete against whom they wished. However, the conservative line of argumentation these bodies used to justify why South Africa should return to international rugby only served to further turn attitudes against the Board as it came to be seen as willing to engage with conservative organisations which were insensitive to the political struggle of black South Africans.

In the case of the 1985 All Black tour cancelation, the ripples of the 1981 tour are clear. New Zealand society had not yet fully recovered from the disastrous 1981 tour by the time the 1985 tour was proposed. New Zealanders feared that if the 1985 tour took place the violent demonstrations the country experienced in 1981 would pick up where they left off. There was also concern over the damage the 1981 tour had done to rugby in New Zealand as there was a substantial drop-off in support for the game, which was attributed to the 1981 tour. Ultimately this would be used as evidence against the 1985 tour as the New Zealand High Court ruled that the 1985 tour would not promote, foster, or benefit the game in New Zealand and that therefore it contravened the constitutional duties of the NZRFU.

The fact that the 1981 tour had in essence forced the cancelation of the 1985 tour meant that the SARB had to find an alternative way to attract tours to South Africa. This ultimately culminated in the birth of the rebel tours. The rebel tours illustrated just how isolated the SARB had become after 1981 as the Board was forced into using underhand tactics to secure tours. These rebel tours, however, only further isolated the Board as it drew the ire of the IRB and the unions whose players had been lured to South Africa, possibly for monetary gains. The rebel tours also reflected the dilemma the SARB was facing domestically as various marketing agencies had identified the lack of international competition as the primary reason for a lack of quality and spectator interest in rugby from the mid-1980s onward. The Springbok jersey no longer had the allure it once had when South Africa were regarded as the best in the world and regularly played against top flight international competition. South Africa's top rugby talents were leaving the country to broadening their horizons elsewhere as Craven could no longer ensure tours. It was from a desperate position that Craven approached the ANC for talks on how South Africa could return to international rugby. While the ripples of the 1981 tour can be traced through all these events, the amalgamation process between the SARB and the SARU were set in motion by something else. Thus, when tracing the effects of the 1981 tour it can be seen to have brought Craven to the point where he entered talks with

the ANC, but from there on it was these talks which dictated the direction the SARB followed up until 1992 when it and the SARU amalgamated to form the SARFU.

Concluding Remarks

The 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand and the United States of America has received very little academic attention. Those who have written on the tour have tended to lump it together with general discussions on the sporting boycott era. However, this thesis has demonstrated that the 1981 tour has its own set of complex causes and long-term effects and therefore needed a study of its own in order to comprehend the significance of the tour to South African rugby. While numerous authors have mentioned the tour in their work, none of them have gone further than outlining some of the bizarre events which took place during the tour as evidence for the peculiar conditions the sporting boycott forced South African sport into. However, this thesis has proven the 1981 tour to be a watershed moment in South African rugby history, particularly in the way it contributed to isolating South African rugby in the 1980s.

Instead of merely discussing the 1981 tour as part of the sporting boycott, this thesis has illustrated that the tour had its own unique dynamics, which led to the violent demonstrations taking place during the tour. Many New Zealanders had been growing increasingly impatient with their government's willingness to compete against a racist regime. This boiled over for the first time in 1967, when an All Black tour of South Africa was cancelled due to the South African governments continued request that the All Blacks leave their Maoris at home when touring South Africa. The subsequent concession granted by the South African government that Maoris could tour with the All Blacks in future was the first concession of its kind and revealed a potential chink in the armour of apartheid: that pressure on sport could bring a measure of change. Following the concession, New Zealand demonstration did not dissipate as South Africa and New Zealand continued to compete against one-another, despite the apartheid policies of the NP government.

By the time the Springboks arrived in New Zealand in 1981, attitudes toward South Africa had hardened considerably, particularly following the events during the Soweto uprising. Thus, the 1981 tour cannot be regarded as an isolated event, but instead as the final stage in a process starting in the 1960s whereby New Zealanders had grown increasingly uncomfortably with the NZRFU's continued support for the rugby team of a racist regime. In 1981, this frustration had boiled over and led to violent demonstrations in New Zealand.

Furthermore, this thesis has also demonstrated that the protests in New Zealand had gradually taken on a different dimension as the tour wore on. For many New Zealanders the 1981 tour

became a proxy through which they expressed their frustrations with their own country's racial disparities. This added extra potency to the demonstrations. With increasingly violent protests and hard-handed policing, the tour descended into a matter of demonstrators' freedom to protest versus the maintenance of law and order. The tour essentially became a vehicle through which New Zealanders battled their fellow New Zealanders for what they believed to be right. New Zealand society had found itself completely divided over the tour matter, divisions which would remain in the society long after the tour concluded.

With the Springboks traveling to the USA for a brief three-match tour following the New Zealand tour, much of the media attention they had received in New Zealand dissipated as the USA tour was simply not as appealing to rugby supporters. However, the Springboks encountered equally fierce demonstrations in the USA, which only reinforced the notion that following the 1981 tour South African athletes would not be able to travel abroad without encountering severe demonstrations. The USA tour, however, may have taken place for ulterior motives. Politically, South Africa was facing what it regarded as a 'total onslaught' against it, including a significant Communist presence in its southern African neighbours. The 1981 tour of the USA had been undertaken only months after the Republican, Ronald Reagan, had been elected President of the USA. Traditionally the Republican Presidents had taken a softer line toward South Africa and it is plausible that the tour was a way of extending a hand of friendship to the USA after the previous incumbent, Jimmy Carter, had left South Africa out in the cold. Due to time and spatial constraints, this thesis does not elaborate further on this question, other than the note the plausibility of such reasoning behind the tour. However, it would be necessary to undertake a self-standing study on this matter in order to either confirm or disconfirm this notion.

Following the disastrous 1981 tour, South African rugby found itself to be isolated from world rugby for the first time. The SARB was forced into new ventures to try to curb this isolation. Very few studies have illustrated the connection between the events which unfolded in New Zealand and the USA in 1981 and the growing isolation South African rugby entered into in the 1980s. The 1981 tour had further compounded the fact that South African teams were unwelcome on sporting fields around the world. However, apart from the political objections to touring Springbok sides, the 1981 tour had revealed that tours involving the Springboks posed substantial security threats due to the large protest action they would inevitably attract. The international castigation of New Zealand (and to a lesser extent the US) for inviting the Springboks to tour in 1981 and breaking the sporting boycott and

contravening the *Gleneagles Agreement* was enough to deter rugby unions around the world from extending an invitation to the South Africans. As it happened, 1981 was the last time that the Springboks would tour overseas while apartheid was in place.

The SARB would have to find a way of enticing teams to come to South Africa, as it seemed certain that international tours by the Springboks were off for the future. Over the course of the early 1980s, the SARB built up a relationship with three organisations that it had hoped would help the Board's cause to secure international tours. Freedom in Sport, Stop Politics in Rugby, and Free Nation New Zealand had all been products of the 1981 tour as they saw the events on tour as evidence that political interference was impeding the rights of sportsmen. They launched campaigns to remove political interference in sport, but proved generally ineffective. Amongst other things, the International Rugby Media Congress (1983) was arranged as an FIS initiative to show world media how integrated South African rugby had become, hoping that the attending media would then disseminate this picture of the 'real' South African rugby scene. However, the costly congress yielded little benefit to the plight of South African rugby.

These organisations came to see South Africa and the SARB as the greatest victim of political interference in sport and thus attempted to aid the Board by spreading its non-racial and apartheid-free agenda. However, their lack of funding and support seriously inhibited what these organisations could achieve. They also came to be regarded as somewhat conservative organisations swimming against the current of opposing apartheid through all means possible, which also reflected badly on the SARB. Eventually their unsuccessful relationship with the SARB petered out towards the mid-1980s, particularly following the 1985 All Black tour cancellation.

The prospects of an All Black tour had kept South African rugby hopes alive, as rugby fans were desperate to see the old foe back on South African fields. With a brief tour by England in 1984, it seemed that an All Black tour stood a good chance of taking place. However, in New Zealand tempers flared and the possibility of a 1981 repeat (even though the tour would be in South Africa) seemed on the cards, as New Zealand police reports identified the possibility of never before seen violence should the All Blacks tour. Despite the newly elected Labour government imploring the NZRFU not to tour, plans were put in place for the tour to go ahead.

However, in the days leading up to the tour departure two Auckland lawyers took the matter to the New Zealand High Court and contended that the NZRFU would be in contravention of its own constitution to promote the game should the All Blacks tour South Africa. They likely sighted evidence from the 1981 tour of a substantial drop-off in rugby popularity amongst New Zealanders, and particularly among the youth, and contended that should the 1985 tour go ahead New Zealand might find rugby was no longer its preeminent sport. Consequently, the New Zealand court ruled against the 1985 tour, effectively grounding it only two days before it was set to depart. White South Africans were devastated at the loss of the tour and for the first time it seemed that South African rugby might have become truly isolated as France, Australia, Wales, and the British and Irish Lions cancelled their tours of the Republic.

In a last gasp attempt to salvage South African rugby from the grips of isolation a New Zealand rebel tour was arranged by the SARB for 1986, without informing either the IRB or the NZRFU. The Cavaliers, as the rebel team was known, featured 28 of the 30 All Blacks who were set to tour in 1985 and were thus essentially a full All Black side. The tour briefly quenched the thirst of South African rugby fans, but ultimately proved counterproductive. The tour had violated IRB laws, as the Cavaliers did not have permission from their union to tour. On top of this, there was an investigation into transgressions of amateurism as it was speculated that players had been paid to tour South Africa. In the process, the SARB lost two of its closest friends, the IRB and NZRFU, who had both helped the Board to stave off South African rugby's isolation for much of the boycott era.

Despite promising the IRB that it would not engage in these rebel tours, another one was hosted the following year when the South Sea Barbarians toured South Africa in 1987, although they did not play any test matches. Again, the question of amateurism was thrown into dispute, as there was evidence of players being paid to come to South Africa. The SARB now found itself truly isolated as even some of the more conservative rugby unions around the world were questioning the 'tour at all costs' mentality of the SARB. After subsequently being excluded from the historic first Rugby World Cup, it seemed that the rugby world was leaving South Africa behind. The Rugby World Cup had changed the dynamic of future rugby as tours were now no longer the preeminent form of testing rugby strength. The rugby world was progressing while South Africa was being left behind.

Having been deprived of regular and rigorous international competition, South Africa's rugby quality was declining. Craven had relied for many years on the Currie Cup to keep South

Africa's rugby standard high but with the country's rugby ceiling becoming ever lower there was less chance for growth. Top players were leaving the country to apply their trade elsewhere as the Springbok jersey no longer represented the symbol of pride it once had. The drop in quality of rugby and the meagre prospects of playing the sport at an international level meant a drop in numbers playing the sport in South Africa, particularly among the youth who found that rugby was no longer their obvious choice at school level. South African rugby found itself in a position where it needed to be marketed – a comment in itself – if it wished to remain the foremost sport amongst white South Africans.

Craven had found himself in a corner as none of the Board's initiatives over the past several years had worked to facilitate the return of South African rugby to the international fold. As a result, he turned on the thing that had ultimately caused the 1981 tour events to transpire: apartheid. At the beginning of 1987, Craven released a new year's message in which he condemned apartheid and the government's non-commitment to major reform. Craven had not come to a sudden epiphany that apartheid was wrong, but had finally realised that while apartheid survived rugby could not.

When in 1988 an opportunity presented itself to enter into talks with the ANC Craven grabbed it, essentially acknowledging that South Africa's rugby future was very much at the mercy of the ANC. He and Louis Luyt entered into a series of discussions with the ANC executive regarding how rugby could ease the impact of the sporting boycott on the game. By talking with the ANC Craven believed that he was doing what was best for South African rugby, and in many respects, he was. The ANC recommended as a start the amalgamation of the two rugby bodies in South Africa, the SARB and SARU. Craven had already tried in 1977 to amalgamate the SARU into the SARB, but then SARU president Abdul Abass had refused. Now in 1988 the time for an amalgamation seemed right as it was hoped that it would lead the way in bringing South Africans to a point where the government would enter into negotiations with the ANC. Although the discussions between the SARB and ANC were not political in nature, they took on a political significance, as it seemed that one of the major bastions of white power had defected and placed its faith in the ANC, much to the humiliation of the Nationalist government.

The ANC incident marks the furthest reaches of the ripples caused by the 1981 tour. It was the moment that the SARB abandoned the old road it had followed since the tour and now implemented a new initiative that saw it amalgamate with the SARU to form the SARFU in

1991. The Board had tried numerous initiative which it believed could restore rugby pride in South Africa but each was as flawed as the next and ultimately left the game in a worse place than it had been before. It has to be acknowledged, though, that while the 1981 tour caused ripples in both South African and international rugby, these ripples were almost always aggravated by political events taking place in South Africa at the same time. Thus, while the 1981 tour isolated South African rugby because rugby nations were opposed to inviting the Springboks or to tour to South Africa, that isolation was usually further compounded by, for instance, the failure of Botha to implement meaningful reforms or his infamous ‘Rubicon’ speech or the occupation of the townships by the SADF in the mid-1980s. While the 1981 tour events forced the SARB into finding strategies to curb rugby isolation, the depth or severity of this isolation was usually dictated by what was happening in South Africa at the time, making it virtually impossible for the SARB to find a successful route past isolation.

This was something Danie Craven and his Board were late to come to. The African initiative was thus an attempt to get to the root of the problem (apartheid) instead of trying to subvert it through convoluted and counterproductive strategies. However, even once the SARB entered into negotiations with the ANC and SARU, international rugby did not rush back and it took a further four years before touring resumed. The negotiations certainly pricked up the ears of the international audience who had been lulled to sleep by the ‘no-apartheid-in-rugby’ jingle, but it was only when real negotiations started for a new political dispensation in South African and the formal amalgamation of the SARU and SARB took place that it was deemed acceptable to return to international rugby. The African Initiative - in relative terms, the most successful of all of the SARB’s initiatives - would most likely have failed if the Board had gone to the ANC directly after the 1981 tour, as the political climate in greater South Africa was not right yet. The SARB was, however, perhaps a little fortuitous that so soon after holding talks with the ANC the new Nationalist government under F.W de Klerk decided to pursue negotiations with the ANC.

Therefore, this thesis concludes that the 1981 tour of New Zealand and the USA is a much more complex entity that it is often made out to be. The events on tour were the ultimate expression of the frustrations New Zealanders had towards not only apartheid South Africa, but towards their own social environment. With the tour serving to isolate South African rugby, it certainly did add to the growing anxieties of white South Africans about the future of their country and likely weakened their resolve to resist major political changes in the 1990s. While the tour cannot be considered as having played a part in breaking down

apartheid, it certainly did contribute, along with the economic sanctions, civil disobedience in the townships, and the raging war on the country's borders, to the increasing psychological pressure being placed on white South Africans during the 1980s. This likely contributed to overall inclination that South Africa was in need of major change.

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