

Regaining Lost Ground and Countering the Anti-Apartheid Sports Movement: the Committee for Fairness in Sport (CFFS), Bureau of State Security (BOSS), and the International Sports Boycott, 1973-1978

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Abstract: Because of the determined effort of the anti-apartheid movement to secure South Africa's expulsion from the international sports arena, the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) established the Committee for Fairness in Sport (CFFS) in 1973. This front organization was tasked with the promotion of South Africa's sports bona fides internationally. Beyond the regular publication of progress reports about integrated sports in targeted newspapers, CFFS supplied information to interested parties globally. Aided by the South African diplomatic corps, CFFS also used advocacy and lobbying through paid agents to promote the country. It also used pro-apartheid personalities such as golfer Gary Player to promote a narrative that the sports boycott and international isolation were detrimental to the aspirations of black sportspersons. Collectively these activities created a situation in which some countries, groups and individuals felt comfortable enough to either search for a formal relationship with South African sport or to maintain existing relations.

Keywords: sport, South Africa, boycott, apartheid, state security

Because of the determined effort of the anti-apartheid movement to secure South Africa's expulsion from the international sports arena, the Bureau of State Security (BOSS)—the principal security agency of the apartheid state—established the Committee for Fairness in Sport (CFFS) in 1973. The former organization, established on 16 May 1969 and headed by General Hendrik van der Bergh, was attached to the office of Prime Minister John Vorster. Its formation signalled the regime's deliberate action to form a comprehensive security architecture aimed at "supporting and driving the counter-revolutionary strategies, structures and operations of the apartheid state."¹

Since its inception, BOSS was put in complete command over all security and intelligence chiefs, including those of the Army and Air Force. It was further empowered to investigate all security-related matters. Indeed, its creation resulted in significantly reduced budget allocations to the South African Defence Force and South African Police for the 1969-1970 financial year. Unlike other state agencies, BOSS was not accountable to the South African Parliament but only

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to the Prime Minister. For accounting purposes, its funding was channelled via the South African Defence Force's secret accounts, a situation described by a member of the white parliamentary opposition as both "sinister" and one that undermined civilian, political, and judicial oversight.² Later research, however, indicated that a significant number of white people supported the creation of BOSS.³

From the outset, BOSS executed its functions through a number of specialist units aimed at policing an increasingly politically restless and militant black population.⁴ This included those in international exile, such as the members of the Campaign Against Race Discrimination in Sport (CARDIS, est. 1959) and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Movement (SANROC, est. 1962) who were campaigning for South Africa's international isolation within the cultural and sport fields. Against this background, Macklin suggests that the secret visit of Van der Bergh and Brigadier P.J. Venter (Head of the Security Police) to London in April 1969 was far from innocent. Given the city's status as the headquarters of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), Macklin sees it as both a reconnaissance mission and a visit aimed at signalling to the exiles that the regime continued to monitor them.⁵ The successful disruption of the Springbok rugby tour of the UK and Ireland during late 1969 and early 1970 by the AAM, followed by South Africa's mass expulsion from a number of international sports federation the next year—all acts of "psychological sabotage by Communists" according to Hendrik Van den Bergh—effectively undermined the morale of the white community and necessitated immediate action.⁶ Thus as the 1970s got underway, BOSS established a dedicated section to monitor and actively counter the movements, activities, and strategies of the anti-apartheid sports movement.

Key to the execution of the new initiative were the Departments of Information (DOI), Foreign Affairs (DFA), Sport and Recreation (DSR) and the Bureau for State Security (BOSS), supported by the so-called National Security Management System. The latter coordinated intelligence gathering and containment of domestic opposition.⁷ As the lead department, DOI determined methods, resources, and actions, and coordinated its transnational activities with DFA.⁸ The key player, however, was the Bureau of State Security (BOSS).

To execute their political and security mandate, including a range of sectoral tasks, the network of state departments channelled key parts of their propaganda and information campaign through several secret front organizations. These included the Foreign Affairs Association (FAA), the South Africa Foundation (SAF) and the Southern African Freedom Association (SAFA) which were answerable to the highest echelons of authority and ultimately, the prime minister. Aided by the South African diplomatic corps internationally, they used advocacy and lobbying through paid agents including advertising and public relations firms, lobbyists, government-funded publications, businesspeople, organizations, and documentary filmmakers to promote the country's interest.⁹ This strategy was an extension of an existing effort to use far-right proxies both to monitor and physically disrupt the activities of the global anti-apartheid movement.¹⁰ For actions within the sports domain, a dedicated sports front organization named the Committee for Freedom in Sport (CFFS) was established.

This article explores the counter-revolutionary strategies and activities/initiatives of the apartheid regime employed to specifically counter the anti-apartheid sports movement, both domestically and abroad, in order to avert an international boycott against the country. These initiatives represents a form of information warfare in which forms of "mediated symbolic

communication” and the media were extensively used by both of the opposing parties.¹¹ In this process, the apartheid agencies used a wide range of disinformation strategies, inclusive of offering political conclusions unsupported by any reliable evidence, mixing of facts with unverifiable common sense, elevating speculation into proof, repeated assertions in the hope of creating self-perpetuating or self-evident truths, and the use of selected experts to legitimize its arguments.¹² However, not all of these had the same measure of success. Despite using well-known personalities (both black and white) in the attempt to divide the anti-apartheid sports movement, and in pursuit of establishing a new pro-government narrative, the results were largely inconsequential. The regime’s failure to offer a meaningful political solution for Black aspirations, coupled with the internal contradictions of apartheid and its ideological offshoots such as separate development and multinationalism, however, defeated all these efforts. With the eventual exposure of the “Information Scandal,” the CFFS effectively became a historical footnote.

The current study, in addition to its undoubtedly sporting character, is also a foray into the field of intelligence history and is based on a number of official archives. This includes documentation of the Department of Sport and Recreation (National Archives, Pretoria), South African Rugby Union Archives (University of Stellenbosch), the Wits Historical Papers Research Archives (especially archives of the South African Council of Sport), and the African Activist Archives (Michigan State University). In addition, secondary sources about the “Information Scandal” as well as other relevant sources were consulted.¹³ Extensive use was also made of the archives of the *Rand Daily Mail* which consistently reported the activities and pronouncements of the CFFS. Its relationship and the interconnectedness of its strategies with that of BOSS and the wider security establishment is, however, continuously indicated.

Towards a Sports Front Organization

One year before the Sharpeville shootings, Father Trevor Huddleston, an Anglican priest and apartheid critic, called for the total isolation of the apartheid state. This was followed by a call for the isolation of apartheid on the cultural terrain.¹⁴ Against this background, he became a founder member of the Campaign Against Race Discrimination in Sport (CARDIS), a movement established to end all whites-only sports tours. Midway into the new decade, CARDIS—due to extensive overseas lobbying—was supported by a range of foreign organizations.¹⁵

From the 1970s onwards, the international anti-apartheid movement used mediated symbolic communication and the media in a virtual “total onslaught” through what the regime called “critical and carping newspapers” in its attempts to isolate the apartheid regime.¹⁶ It focussed strongly on the plight of political prisoners, and through the act of ‘voicing’ win a greater understanding and secure ongoing and focused attention from an otherwise distracted media.¹⁷ This assisted in generating sympathy from both existing supporters and potential new sympathizers which, over time, became the lifeblood of the struggle for liberation and the instruments to connect “geographically dispersed places, organisations and networks.”¹⁸ Given this collective pressure, South Africa was not only expelled by the International Olympic Committee but also from several other world sports bodies between 1964 and the early 1970s.

Facing an uncertain future, some South African sports federations demanded action from the Department of Sport and Recreation who, with due consideration to its central constituency,

chose to reiterate the government's opposition to any form of racial mixing. It further rejected all external pressure for change and insisted that South Africa alone would decide who to invite and play against.¹⁹ This inflexibility, however, generated increasingly violent opposition to all-white South African teams at international events, forcing them to consider some changes. In addition, most sports federations did not have the financial resources or political acumen to reverse the rapidly growing anti-apartheid movement and its transnational reach. In addition, the exiled SANROC—due its proximity to key international players and their access to the international solidarity network—were able to oppose South African tours almost from anywhere on the globe. Thus, at the beginning of the 1970s, a new sports policy, officially called “multi-nationalism,” was announced.

Under the new policy, South Africa's four ethnic groups were treated as separate “nations” and were allowed to field race-specific national teams against international opposition. This decision, according to Booth, had nothing to do with “an enlightened attitude” but everything with “the co-optation of middle-class urban blacks—the sports-playing class.”²⁰ The first to benefit from this policy change were the so-called “national teams” of the South African Rugby Football Federation (all-coloured) and the South African African Rugby Football Board (all-black African) who were granted an opportunity to play against the visiting England touring team in 1972. Unbeknownst to the general public, both matches were at the insistence of the English Rugby Football Union and aimed at appeasing its harshest critics.²¹ This notwithstanding, the number of incoming and outgoing tours over the ensuing seasons continued to decrease. This necessitated a combination of better international communication and meaningful political adjustment, actions that, according to Dr. Louis Luyt—business tycoon and rugby personality—would enable them to “regain lost ground.”²²

Because of the determined efforts of the anti-apartheid movement to secure South Africa's expulsion from the international arena, BOSS established CFFS in April 1973 in Johannesburg as a countermeasure. To ensure that the front had the appropriate apolitical, racial, and cultural representations, it recruited a number of agents that were high-profile, publicly known, racially and culturally representative, and skillful opinion-formers. In addition, this recruitment was kept secret. Against this background, a trio consisting of Luyt, Gert “Wollie” Wolmarans, and Lesley “Bing” Sehume was tasked with the promotion of South Africa's international sports bona fides.²³

Luyt was a successful industrialist and businessman, and a former provincial rugby player well-known in local and foreign circles. A serving executive member of the Transvaal Rugby Football Union, he was also designated chairman and figurehead of CFFS. The day-to-day management of the organization's activities, however, was the responsibility of Chief Executive Officer Wolmarans. Wolmarans, likewise, was a successful businessman, with experience in public relations, journalism and sports management. An ex-chairman of the Rand Sportswriters Society (1959) and former sports editor of the Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Vaderland*, Wolmarans was also a serving member of the South African Institute of Public Relations.²⁴ His clients included the South African Cycling Federation and Luyt's company, Triomf Fertilisers.²⁵ In these capacities, Wolmarans was a frequent attendee of high-profile events, where the likes of Gary Player regularly featured.²⁶

Sehume, in turn, was an experienced journalist and sports editor at *The World* newspaper with substantial media experience. His newspaper, though white-owned, served a predominantly black urban market. This potentially provided the front with a significant media platform to influence public black opinion. In addition, he was a well-known events promoter associated with companies involved in boxing, jazz festivals, and other forms of entertainment in the preceding period, and also became closely connected with public fundraising for charitable causes.²⁷ Sehume achieved public prominence in 1966 when he, together with six other black journalists, met with USA Senator Robert Kennedy during the latter's South African tour.²⁸ During this interaction, the group, among other things, reiterated the black majority's rejection of apartheid, and their desire for peaceful co-existence with white people. They further stressed their eagerness for interracial mixing and appealed to Kennedy "to ask white South Africans to rid themselves of their fear of the black man."²⁹ Three years earlier, by then identified as a "moulder of community opinion" by the *Rand Daily Mail*, Sehume formed part of a group of four black South Africans who were selected to visit the United Kingdom (UK) as guests of the British government.³⁰ Against this background, Sehume was recruited for CFFS following the South African Games in 1973.³¹

In addition to the above mentioned, individuals such as golfer Gary Player, and cricketer Wilfred Henry James "Wilf" Isaacs were recruited as trustees and directors of CFFS.³² Isaacs, a former Air Force fighter pilot and well-known promoter of local and overseas exhibition events and invitational tours, held interests in a prominent property and finance company with shareholding in a consortium of ten leading estate companies and three finance houses. Isaacs was a known critic of the anti-apartheid boycott and opposed political campaigners and protestors whom he called "banner holders" and the "vitriolic few."³³

Andrew T. "Andy" Hatcher, an African American businessman, was a key foreign functionary. Formerly one of the associate press secretaries of both President John F. Kennedy and President Lyndon Johnson, Hatcher was the vice president of the American public relations firm Sydney S. Baron and Company. He was related to Richard Hatcher, Mayor of Gary, Indiana, who spearheaded the city's disinvestment campaign against South Africa and who, among other things, terminated dealings with companies such as IBM, Motorola, and the Control Data Corporation for their continued links with the apartheid state.³⁴ Being an individual with civil rights credentials, also made Hatcher more than a useful contact.³⁵ Presented as the "top black spokesman" for the South African Department of Information, Hatcher, upon public enquiry, defined his role as encouraging USA investment in South Africa, promoting overseas tourism, and providing "a sophisticated news service designed to provide the US with 'a little objectivity'."³⁶ As part of the strategy to project himself as a political realist, Hatcher denounced apartheid while concomitantly declaring his intention of becoming "a catalyst for change."³⁷ By October 1976, he also became the Transkei's press liaison officer and self-identified as "an agent of the Republic of South Africa" under the US Foreign Agents Registration Act.³⁸

Funding

In addition to state funding, CFFS also received cash donations from Luyt and Player.³⁹ This was supplemented by several South African banks through their support for certain strategic

events including corporate golf days hosted by Player for influential foreign businessmen.⁴⁰ Further financial support came from South African Breweries (SAB) led by Chief Executive Dick Goss who became a leading sponsor of “open multi-national” sports events. These ventures were complemented by financial support from the South Africa Foundation (SAF), a body of professional and business leaders involved in promoting international understanding of South Africa. A business-funded initiative and policy think-tank on urban and social policy, the SAF further agitated for the end of influx control and the pass laws in order to improve black urbanization, provide proper housing, and secure a reliable labor supply. In addition, departing from the premise that the country’s main sporting contacts and partners were by far also her most important trading partners, the SAF used its sponsorship to advance their own long-term financial interests. Some critics, however, denounced what was seen as collaboration with apartheid and described the SAF as a non-philanthropic organization that favored a “strictly controlled, technocratically defined [form of] development” and promoters of an agenda aimed at maximizing profit instead of fundamental political change.⁴¹

CFFS Strategic Objectives

Having established its critical infrastructure and systems, CFFS was ready to start its work. High on the agenda was the disruption and counter of the anti-apartheid sports movement as the most immediate threat to establishment sport. As part of what was to become an information war, CFFS planners formulated several key strategic objectives. These included disrupting the exiled anti-apartheid sports movement, especially SANROC led by Dennis Brutus (coloured), Chris de Broglio (white), Reg Hlongwane (black) and Sam Ramsammy (Indian).⁴² The principal aim of the new offensive was to sow division and strip this non-racial front of its legitimacy through the foregrounding of a new narrative, one that would assert that the sports boycott was detrimental to black aspirations. In this regard, Sehume was pivotal as a longstanding critic of minority leadership, mainly by Indians and coloureds, of national sports organizations.⁴³ The second inter-related objective was to counter the anti-tour campaign and to ensure ongoing international participation for South Africa’s national teams. A third was to complement information dispensed through the print and broadcast media, with *in situ* visits by influential foreign opinion formers and significant others, and through facilitating direct interaction with black administrators sympathetic to official or state initiatives. Beyond its foreign target audiences, with its fifth strategic objective CFFS aimed to position itself as the key articulator of black aspirations and a mediator for sporting opportunity.

Strategy in Action: Foregrounding an Alternative Narrative

With a focus on the exiled sports movement’s non-racial leadership and the overall objective to delegitimize it, CFFS through Sehume as its principal voice, actively attacked SANROC’s demographic makeup. SANROC was not only denounced for its minority-led character but also accused of promoting a narrow and racist agenda. Sehume suggested that Indians were racist exploiters whose leadership, together with that of coloureds, of the black majority was “inappropriate.” This explicitly racial narrative became the key message during deliberately planned overseas “goodwill missions” such as CFFS-sponsored tours. To this end, the

organization also deliberately targeted credible news services such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as well as media networks in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. On these occasions, it was asserted that white anti-apartheid activists such as Peter Hain and De Broglio had no right to speak and act on behalf of non-racial sport. This right, according to the CFFS argument, belonged to the black majority which constituted 70% of the population. Others should therefore desist from speaking on the majority's behalf.⁴⁴ The exiled sports movement was further accused of being out of touch with developments in the country and of being engaged in "causing trouble for South Africa overseas."⁴⁵

In addition to television and radio performances and interviews, Sehume published articles and commentaries in influential newspapers, journals, and magazines pre-written by others within the overarching security and propaganda network. One such article, "We Black and White," which was published in the British magazine *Sports World* in December 1973. It severely criticized countries who rendered solidarity support to the anti-apartheid movement. According to this article, black athletes were disillusioned and disenchanted with the anti-tour campaign which, according to the new narrative, has resulted in their further marginalization, and the undermining of inter-racial dialogue, understanding, and cooperation. Black organizations, it stated, desired to affiliate with white sporting organizations since such affiliation would foster good relations, create an atmosphere of cooperation, stimulate progress, and grant access to "vital financial assistance necessary for existence."⁴⁶ The black majority, according to this exposition, ultimately wanted gradual, peaceful, and evolutionary change and cooperation as they work towards self-improvement. Against this background, Sehume criticized those in opposition to the scheduled rugby tour of South Africa by the British Lions scheduled for the next year.

Tours: "A Necessary Evil for Black Athletic Progress"

Early in 1974, Sehume visited the UK for the express purpose to "open the eyes of the British public to the state of sport here," and to promote the notion that boycotts were "hurting the very same people they claim to be helping."⁴⁷ This was in direct reference to the possible cancellation of the British Lions rugby tour which, among other things, was scheduled to include two matches against black opposition as part of the tour itinerary. According to the CFFS spin, cancellation of the tour would not only retard further progress made by black rugby but also had the potential to undo all of the positive advances recorded up to that point. Concomitantly, CFFS suggested that blacks in general opposed boycotts of tours, since these ventures, "at least [provided them with] opportunities to compete with whites."⁴⁸ These claims were continuously repeated on both British and New Zealand television during which Sehume was at pains to declare not only his opposition to apartheid but also his support for multinational as opposed to multiracial sport. In defending his choice, Sehume described multi-racialism "as a development towards the inevitable takeover in South Africa by blacks – with blacks not Indians, coloured or whites or any other racial group in control."⁴⁹ At that point, the second plank in the fight against the anti-apartheid sports lobby, namely the notion that ongoing tours were a necessary evil for black athletic progress, was introduced. These claims were generally made without any reliance or reference to any authoritative survey or credible source of information to buttress CFFS's claims.

Given the seriousness of the claims made, some critics started to question Sehume's mandate to act as a spokesman for black athletes in general and rugby players in particular. This was countered by CFFS claiming that it was indeed mandated by the South African Rugby Football Federation.⁵⁰ The veracity of the claim given the aforementioned organization's growing working relationship with establishment sport was, however, never investigated by anyone.

In addition to the British Lions tour, CFFS also participated in the campaign to safeguard the New Zealand All-Black rugby tour of South Africa scheduled for 1976. Two years before the tour, Sehume was invited to New Zealand by the Friends of South Africa Association to spearhead a counterattack against a government ban on sports contact with South Africa. To this end, they also assisted in the establishment and support of a New Zealand Committee for Fairness in Sport which refused to discuss any government re-appraisal of continued sports contact with South Africa.⁵¹ Instead, they appealed to the New Zealand rugby clubs and implored them not to become a party facilitating "Springbok rugby genocide."⁵² During a second visit during April and May 1975, Sehume and his false narrative were confronted by anti-apartheid activist Trevor Richards of the anti-apartheid group "Halt All Racist Tours" and accused of being an apologist for apartheid. This accusation was merely brushed aside since in subsequent public statements, Sehume continued to promote the notion that "the presence of overseas teams in action in South Africa will help to gradually educate public opinion towards accepting integration."⁵³

Similarly, CFFS also campaigned against any attempts to isolate white South African athletes such as Player. In this regard, it sponsored a visit by two black golfers, Hamilton Mbata and Martin du Preez, who were respectively president and secretary of the South African Golf Association, an all-black organisation with the chief objective to "smooth the way for Player."⁵⁴ Concomitantly, CFFS secretly also attempted to convince top Australian cricket players to tour South Africa in contravention of an earlier ban on their scheduled tour in 1976. To this end, monetary promises up to the value of 128,000 Australian Dollars plus bonuses were made.⁵⁵ These initiatives took place against the background of growing opposition by groups such as the anti-apartheid Citizens Association for Racial Equality (CARE).

CARE, to counter South Africa's "hidden persuaders" and their program of misinformation, invited Norman Middleton, Hassan Howa and Morgan Pather, three non-racial sports administrators associated with the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) to visit New Zealand in an attempt to introduce an alternative voice to that of CFFS.⁵⁶ This effort was, however, derailed by the refusal of passports to the three by the apartheid authorities. In May 1976, on his third visit to New Zealand, Sehume, as in the past, continued to amplify the new narrative while simultaneously countering accusations of him being a government stooge and apartheid apologist.⁵⁷ To this effect, he claimed to have obtained endorsements and mandates from George Thabe, president of the South African National Football Association, and Roger Sishi, General Manager of the National Professional Soccer League, the main coordinating bodies of black soccer in South Africa.⁵⁸ Throughout, Sehume, in an effort to deflect the criticism levelled against him, maintained that he was merely motivated by his desire to facilitate recognition for black athletes, and to encourage overseas contact with South Africa as a "catalytic means of change."⁵⁹

Mediator for Sporting Opportunity: “Creating Better Race Relations”

Parallel to its foreign initiatives, CFFS also paid attention to the domestic sports fraternity. The key was to position the organization as a credible mouthpiece for black rights as a bulwark against the growing support for non-racial sport and sympathies for the exiled movement. Simultaneously, it was crucial to maintain white support for government initiatives, including multinational events and support to compliant black sports bodies. Thus, when black boxing promoters had problems with the rules of the South African Boxing Control Board against white and black promoters and boxers at the ringside of the same event, CFFS intervened and influenced the Native Administration Boards to smooth the way.⁶⁰

In 1975, for strategic political reasons, CFFS appealed for the admission of Indian and coloured players into George Thabe’s South African National Football Association and for spectators of this ethnic designation to gain access to such matches. This deviation from the original counter-narrative was publicly justified by a statement that integrated sports meetings and games “created better race relations between the three black groups.”⁶¹ It further had everything to do with attempts to stop the growing influence of SACOS (established in 1973) within the black sporting fraternity. On the macro-political level, it coincided with events such as the second elections for the Coloured People’s Representative Council amidst growing anti-apartheid opposition, the founding of the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement amongst Natal-based Zulu people, and government plans to consolidate 113 “homeland areas” into 36 “homelands” for black South Africans.

On the local and community level, no matter was too trivial for CFFS. Thus, by early 1976, it became involved in a number of diverse but ultimately, interdependent matters. Among other things, it resolved a dispute between the Transvaal Non-European Golf Union, West Rand African Golf Union, and the West Rand Administration Board about access to the Kliptown and Mofolo Golf Clubs. Realizing the potential danger of the ongoing lack of proper facilities within black communities, CFFS used its secret links with the authorities to remove bureaucratic obstacles and to win some concessions for clubs in question.⁶² During the same period, the organization invited Ernest Furlur, an African American gymnast and coach, to South Africa to conduct coaching courses and sessions. Various sessions were held in Soweto and Benoni aided by the various administration boards, who also used the opportunity to announce plans to assist clubs in Johannesburg with equipment.⁶³ However, in their most significant declaration during this time, both Sehume and Wolmarans called for the award of national Springbok colors to all athletes irrespective of race. This was a very emotional matter with the general sentiment firmly against the award of such colors to anyone other than whites. Some, like Dr. Danie Craven as president of the South African Rugby Football Board, in no uncertain terms expressed their opposition to this and rather supported the design and award of a different emblem for multi-national sport.⁶⁴ The CFFS declaration, however, was in sync with official government thinking as it started to deal with the ever-growing boycott campaign.

The CFFS programme, however, was taken in a different direction following the Soweto Uprising of June 1976. Although the white sports fraternity continued to host multinational sports events, they also realized that more needed to be done. As the year sped to its end, CFFS became a formal spokesperson for racially integrated sport on the club level as the “only

solution” for the survival of white South African sport.⁶⁵ In this regard, Sehume, embedded as secretary of the black South African Amateur Bodybuilders, at the beginning of the new year started to “campaign” for access to gymnasiums in white areas. He further attempted to use his influence with the whites-only South African Amateur Bodybuilding Union to promote integration of the two bodies. Concomitantly, Sehume used Molefe Frans Khunou, president of the black South African Amateur Bodybuilders, to continue to attack the anti-apartheid sports movement in strong language—which included describing their opponents as “filth”—to warn them against obstructing black sporting progress.⁶⁶

By late 1977 with multi-racial sports official government policy, Sehume also directed his attacks against white conservatives such as Prime Minister John Vorster’s brother Koot Vorster. In response to a suggestion by Koot Vorster that mixed sport was a threat to Afrikaner identity, Sehume accused him of a lack of vision, of being ignorant about the existing situation in South African sport, and of displaying “a lack of love for the South African nation—not just a segment of it.”⁶⁷

Foreign Visits

The CFFS strategy on various occasions also invited pro-South Africa groups and individuals to visit and to appraise themselves about the prevailing political situation. Visitors were generally sheltered from events in society and royally treated. Such visits routinely included a few short excursions and meetings with select groups or individuals. Otherwise, visitors had little freedom to explore, resulting in the majority not being able to form an independent opinion about local conditions. Consistent with its established sports links, visitors mainly came from the UK, USA, New Zealand and Europe. Amongst these were delegates from organizations such as the New Zealand-based War Against Recreational Disruption (WARD), the New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association and the Eastern Rugby Union of America. Ordinary individuals included people such as Allan Murrell, the owner of the bus company who voluntarily transported the Springbok softball team during their protest-afflicted tour to New Zealand in 1976. The first-mentioned visits, however, were the most important in this period.

WARD, a right-wing group under the leadership of Robert Fenton, was a strategic ally against the anti-apartheid movement in New Zealand. Fenton visited South Africa in January 1974 at the invitation of CFFS. According to various news reports, Fenton came, firstly, to familiarize himself with the South African situation, and, secondly, to apologize to South Africans for the cancellation of the 1973 New Zealand rugby tour. WARD’s key objective according to Fenton, was to persuade the New Zealand government “that no friends can be made by appeasement of power cliques at home and abroad at the expense of the freedom of New Zealand sportsmen.”⁶⁸ Against this background, he met black sports administrators such as George Thabe (soccer) and Edward Setshedi (athletics), which was not surprising. Setshedi, in particular, was on record for his views that sports isolation represented both a “form of racism” and a “positive conspiracy” aimed at depriving South African and Rhodesian black people of their right to compete internationally.⁶⁹ Both, unsurprisingly, called for its termination and in line with the CFFS narrative, reiterated that it was detrimental to black sporting interests.⁷⁰

Fenton's visit was followed by that of Ian Wells of the New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association in May 1974. His three-week visit was likewise sponsored by CFFS and followed South Africa's exclusion from the Federation Cup. Wells insisted that these actions were both "out of step" and unfair. As had become standard practice, he was allowed to interact with a select group of black administrators such as Reggie Ngcobo—chairman of the all-black African South African National Lawn Tennis Union which was affiliated with the (white) South African Lawn Tennis Union—and Morgan Pather of the (non-racial) Southern African Lawn Tennis Union as well as others such as Dr. Piet Koornhof, Minister of Sport and Recreation.⁷¹ Fenton's visit also coincided with the hosting of the so-called "Coup des Nations" Multi-National Women's Tennis Tournament at Ellis Park in Johannesburg which involved four South African teams (two white and two black) and teams from Britain, Spain, Holland, and West Germany. This tournament was supposed to serve as mixed trials for the Springbok team to the Federation Cup in Italy. True to form and in accordance with the host agenda, Wells criticized the relevant world bodies for their actions against South Africa and labelled their conduct as both unbecoming and not what is expected from Western democracies.⁷² His post-tour remarks about the low quality of black tennis players, however, resulted in a protest by Morgan Pather to the New Zealand Prime Minister. Collectively, these actions contributed to the South African netball team being refused entry for the 1975 Netball World Championships in New Zealand.⁷³

In addition to the aforementioned activities, Gary Player also played a role in influencing international opinion in favor of South Africa. On record as declaring that "I am of the South Africa of Verwoerd and apartheid," Player similarly promoted the narrative that the sports boycott and international isolation were detrimental to black aspirations.⁷⁴ This was done through the hosting of several exclusive and highly publicized personalized golf events with foreign businessmen and industrialists. During these events, the visitors interacted with both their South African counterparts and government leaders who used the opportunity to explain their approach and plans in this critical time of increasing sanctions.

Opposition to Sehume and the End of CFFS

Notwithstanding his undoubted stature within the black community, as the principal mouthpiece of CFFS Sehume started to attract criticism from both inside and outside South Africa. SACOS in particular, became one of his fiercest critics. A proponent of the principle of non-racialism, it opposed both multi-nationalism and multi-racialism as propounded by CFFS. Hassan Howa, president of the non-racial South African Cricket Board of Control, a SACOS affiliate, denounced Sehume for a lack of a popular mandate and also rejected his claim to credibility by labelling him as no more than "a little man who writes for a newspaper."⁷⁵ SACOS further opposed visits by foreigners such as Fenton and WARD, and denounced these as aimed at circumventing the sports boycott and ensuring continued sport exchanges between the two countries. It further described WARD and its representative as little more than "proponents of racialism."⁷⁶ These sentiments were echoed by its affiliates such as the South African Soccer Federation, who also accused CFFS of having a nefarious agenda that included the soccer body's destruction and having embedded spies within the sport's branch and regional structures.⁷⁷

Opposition also came *inter alia* from the National Youth Organisation (NYO), the Black People's Convention (BPC), and the Union of Black Journalists (UBJ). In June 1974, the NYO adopted a resolution against multi-national sport, calling it racist and dehumanizing, and aimed at dividing the black community.⁷⁸ This was followed by criticism of Sehume who also started to get opposition from the UBJ which was particularly harsh in its criticism, calling Sehume's statements merely representative of "the views of his white friends with whom he is collaborating to entrench racialism in sport." He was further accused of being "anti-black" and therefore unfit to remain a member of the organization.⁷⁹ In the wake of this, Sehume was sacked by *The World*. With Sehume, for the sake of public consumption, playing the role of an aggrieved employee, CFFS stepped in and publicly "undertook" to assist him in finding alternative employment. Soon after, CFFS made it known to the media that Sehume had received "several offers of employment."⁸⁰ Thus, when he assumed the full-time position of permanent secretary-general of CFFS on 1 July 1975, no probing questions were asked.

In his "new" role, Sehume continued to implement the original strategies and projects of CFFS. True to form, he also maintained a public profile while brushing continued criticism about his sports credentials aside.⁸¹ By 1977, in the aftermath of the Soweto Uprising, Sehume and his handlers adjudged it the appropriate time to steer him into local politics. During August 1977, he indicated his availability to serve on a West Rand Administration Board's initiative to form a moderate so-called "Committee of Thirteen" opposed to the more radical Soweto Committee of Ten whose objective was to negotiate with the apartheid government on political matters following the collapse of the Urban Bantu Council. When most of the nominees rejected both the structure and participation, calling it an embarrassment, "credibility-destroying," and "cosmetic" at a time that black communities demanded meaningful and fundamental change, Sehume appropriately distanced himself from the initiative, declaring that it was "irreconcilable" with his work for CFFS.⁸² This and the determination of the anti-apartheid movement abroad to secure South Africa's isolation, also made it increasingly difficult to find receptive audiences. What was needed was a fundamental political response to the unfolding events.

By late 1977, the so-called "Information Scandal" broke which led to the public exposure of among others, CFFS. Outed as part of a comprehensive propaganda campaign for which significant amounts of taxpayer money could not be accounted, CFFS effectively became dormant. By December of the next year, it was indeed dysfunctional for a lack of funding. This allowed Sehume, a minor player in the bigger scheme of things, to accept employment as a public relations officer in Wolmarans' private business and to disappear from immediate view. Having played his predetermined role in the battle to undermine the anti-apartheid movement and to counter the boycott campaign, the still disenfranchised and politically excluded Sehume ironically had to return to the separate Black world of sport promotions and events marketing in the hope of restoring his tarnished reputation at a time of high political volatility and deep levels of mistrust within oppressed communities. Two years after the scandal, Sehume was cited as the manager of professional boxer 'Baby Jake' Ntseke and soon after he was appointed as the Johannesburg bureau chief of the magazine *Bona*, which was aimed at an essentially black urban readership.⁸³ During the mid-1980s, Sehume's name also cropped up as chairman of the

Bophuthatswana professional soccer league—an indication that he was indeed still not welcome in anti-apartheid circles. This stood in stark contrast to the situation of his fellow campaigners.

Luyt and Wolmarans—given their privileged positions as a fully enfranchised and well-to-do white businessmen with an extensive government network—just left the CFFS behind and returned to their respective businesses. Wolmarans also continue to work for Louis Luyt’s fertilizer company as an official media spokesperson in addition to his normal activities in the public relations sphere. Luyt in turn, similarly, had no problems with managing the fallout that followed the Information Scandal. While the likes of Eschell Rhoodie had to legally account for their role, Luyt—thanks to his continued links with key political decision makers in the governing National Party and state administration—was literally and figuratively able to rebound and carry on with his life. These contacts were key over the next 20 years in enabling the Louis Luyt Group of companies to achieve major financial successes with turnovers as high as R7billion.⁸⁴ Almost arrogantly, Luyt further continued to dabble in politics which he balanced with an involvement in rugby administration on both provincial and national levels.

During its short existence, the activities of CFFS (and others) significantly contributed to securing at least four major rugby tours to South Africa: the British Lions (1974), France (1975), New Zealand (1976), and the World Team (1977). In addition, weightlifters were able to compete against Taiwan and Thailand during 1975 and 1976. Similarly, local tennis players were able to continue to play against international opposition through the annual South African Cup competition in defiance of the world body.

The joint disinformation/misinformation initiatives of BOSS/CFFS, in the majority of cases, failed to divide the non-racial sports movement. It indeed strengthened international resolve to effect South Africa’s expulsion. Admittedly, the propaganda campaign was able to attract some foreign visitors who wanted to assess the situation and who issued positive reports. This was, however, countered by the organized activities of the international AAM on all continents who strengthened their campaigns in line with the adoption of various international anti-apartheid punitive measures by a variety of multi-national bodies.

Although the CFFS through its domestic initiatives secured a semblance of black participation in the small number of so-called ‘open’ multinational events, it, however, failed to attract significant numbers of both participants and sympathizers to their cause. While only a small number of black organizations affiliated with the white establishment federations, the majority continue to pledge allegiance to organizations such as SACOS. The regime, despite its access to funds and its ability to mobilize both the print and broadcast media to convey its message, concomitantly, also fail to convince their target community to accept the alternative narratives of the need for African leadership and dominance. Indeed, there are very few, if any, reported cases of an African backlash against either Coloured or Indian leadership in the majority of the non-racial sports bodies. Indeed, mass organizations such as SACOS, SARU, and the SA Cricket Board of Control, continued to be led by its most able administrators, irrespective of race until the achievement of unity in 1992. These events effectively and conclusively disprove the notion that by repeating a lie, it would eventually become the truth.

Against this background and following the demise of the CFFS, its strategic program was taken over by other arms of the security service and continuously implemented until the late 1980s. Despite its very brief existence, the CFFS provided an important new impetus to the anti-

apartheid sports movement and its global support network. It further forced the opposition to improve both their campaign strategies, and ideological foundations, in addition to ensuring their organizational survival and the globalization of their struggle.

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Notes

¹ O'Brien 2010, p. 6.

² Hepple 1969, p. 436.

³ Lever 1974, p. 408.

⁴ O'Brien 2001, p. 29.

⁵ Macklin 2010, p. 825.

⁶ Macklin, 2010, p. 839.

⁷ Seegers 1991, p. 263.

⁸ Rhodie 1984.

⁹ Haasbroek 2016, p. 40.

¹⁰ Macklin 2010, p. 824.

¹¹ Thörn 2009, p. 423. Sport and information warfare in South Africa is an underdeveloped and neglected field in South African sport and military historiography. Some aspects thereof were studied by the likes of Floris van der Merwe, Dean Allen and Stephen Symons who have, among other things, studied the recreational activities of South African soldiers within different war contexts. The recent publication by André Odendaal and Peter Hain, *Pitch Battles: Sport, Racism, and Resistance*, also touches on the subject but no general comprehensive study has thus far been undertaken.

¹² Tomaselli and Louw 1991, pp. 133–136.

¹³ Most of the BOSS Police files were reported destroyed concomitantly with the replacement of Van der Berg and could therefore not be consulted.

¹⁴ Huddleston 1956, p. 150.

¹⁵ These included the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA, established 1965), the London-based Anti-Apartheid

Movement (AAM, formerly known as the Boycott Movement, est. 1959), the Australian Campaign against Racial Exploitation (ACARE, est. 1973), New Zealand-based Citizens Association for Racial Equality (CARE, est. 1964) and Halt All Racial Tours (HART, est. 1969), as well as the United States-based American Committee on Africa (ACOA).

¹⁶ Hachten and Giffard 1984, p. 3.

¹⁷ Gurney 2000, p. 131.

¹⁸ Thörn 2009, p. 436.

¹⁹ SAB 1970.

²⁰ Booth 2003, p. 484.

²¹ SARBA 1972.

²² Luyt 2003, p. 91.

²³ Luyt, a renowned and successful industrialist and former provincial rugby player, subsequently served as president of both the Transvaal Rugby Football Union and nonracial unified South African Rugby Football Union.

²⁴ Nettle 1973, p. 8; *Rand Daily Mail* 1959.

²⁵ Crews 1973, p. 8.

²⁶ Roux 1972, p. 29.

²⁷ Molete 1965, p. 5.

²⁸ The group consisted of Harry Mashabela (*The Star*), Theo Mthembu and Godwin Mohlomi (*Post*), Leslie Sehume, Manase Moerane and Simon Mogapi (*The World*) and Lawrence Mayekiso (*Rand Daily Mail*).

²⁹ Mayekiso 1966, p. 2.

³⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 September 1963, p. 2.

³¹ *Rand Daily Mail* 1975b.

³² Rhoodie 1984, p. 138.

³³ Carruthers 1969, p. 13.

³⁴ Walker 1975, p. 2.

³⁵ Moon 2019.

³⁶ Walker 1976b, p. 4.

³⁷ Walker 1976a, p. 3.

³⁸ Laurence and Kenny 1976, p. 9.

³⁹ Rhoodie 1984, p. 138; HPRA 1975.

⁴⁰ Rhoodie 1984, pp. 136 -138.

⁴¹ See Brickhill 1976, p.52; Huchzermeyer 2001, pp. 308-09; Smith 2003, p. 1.

⁴² These were apartheid race classifications which were rejected by the individuals in question, and which also motivated their involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle.

⁴³ Duleep 1959, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Serache 1974, p. 7.

⁴⁵ *Rand Daily Mail* 1974g.

⁴⁶ *Rand Daily Mail* 1973.

- ⁴⁷ *Rand Daily Mail* 1974c.
⁴⁸ *Rand Daily Mail* 1974e.
⁴⁹ *Rand Daily Mail* 1974d.
⁵⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, 1974b.
⁵¹ *Canberra Times* 1976.
⁵² *Rand Daily Mail* 1974i.
⁵³ *Rand Daily Mail* 1975a.
⁵⁴ *Canberra Times* 1975b.
⁵⁵ *Canberra Times* 1975a.
⁵⁶ Laurence 1976, p. 5.
⁵⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, 1975b; Ditseko 1975b, p. 1.
⁵⁸ Akhalwaya 1975b, p. 1.
⁵⁹ *Rand Daily Mail*, 1975b.
⁶⁰ Pongolo 1975, p. 1.
⁶¹ Akhalwaya 1975a, p. 1.
⁶² Siwani 1976, p. 1.
⁶³ *Rand Daily Mail* 1976a.
⁶⁴ *Rand Daily Mail* 1976b.
⁶⁵ Tsuai 1976, p. 2.
⁶⁶ Bikitsha 1977, p. 2.
⁶⁷ *Rand Daily Mail* 1976d.
⁶⁸ *Rand Daily Mail* 1974a.
⁶⁹ Bisseker 1974b.
⁷⁰ Bisseker 1974a.
⁷¹ Brown 1974a, p. 36.
⁷² Brown 1974b, p. 18.
⁷³ *Rand Daily Mail* 1974f.
⁷⁴ Brickhill. 1976, p. 52.
⁷⁵ Ditseko 1975b, p. 1.
⁷⁶ HPRA 1975.
⁷⁷ Singh 1976, p. 3.
⁷⁸ *Rand Daily Mail* 1974h.
⁷⁹ Diseko 1975a, p. 1.
⁸⁰ *Rand Daily Mail* 1975c.
⁸¹ *Rand Daily Mail*, 1976c.
⁸² Ndlazi 1977, p. 1.
⁸³ Laden, 2003, p. 201
⁸⁴ Du Preez, 2001, p. 28.