

# SPORTS ISOLATION AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICAN SPORT: THE SPORTS POLICY OF THE NATIONAL PARTY DURING THE 1980S

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## *Abstract*

*Under the National Party (NP) government sport had been governed by apartheid laws since 1948. Towards the end of the seventies the NP introduced the idea of sports autonomy as their policy going into the 1980s. This was based on the fact that government wanted to withdraw from the development and management of sport in the country. Growing resistance from the opposition, anti-apartheid movements, sports people in South Africa, as well as from the conservative elements within the NP against apartheid in sport, continued to work against government principles. The overwhelming anti-apartheid idea that apartheid in sport was no longer the ultimate goal, but the abolishment of apartheid legislation in general emphasised the pressure on the South African government during the decade under discussion. Various small amendments to the sports policy did not bring much relief, as the struggle against apartheid and apartheid in sport intensified. Government's frequent reassurance that sports autonomy removed government from the management sphere of sport in the country did not reach base, as various racially inclined laws and acts still ensured that governments had to intervene in sport and the practice thereof from time to time. This culminated in talks between the African National Congress (ANC) and, amongst others, a group of South African sports people, with a view to counteracting the NP's sports policy and paved the way for more talks towards dismantling apartheid in sport and the normalisation of sporting ties in South Africa and internationally.*

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**Keywords:** Sports history; politics and sport; apartheid; National Party.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Sportgeskiedenis; politiek en sport; apartheid; Nasionale Party.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history there has been a very delicate interaction between sport and politics. This notion is supported by simply looking at the political influences on the modern Olympics. Since Adolf Hitler refused to shake hands with the black American athlete, Jesse Owens, at the 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, an ominous precedent was set. This once again confirmed that sport was no longer

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separated from state and it was the start of a long process that would plunge global sport into political manipulation.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the 1970s sport and politics were already strongly intertwined in South Africa. Most of the South African sporting codes were already deprived of international participation because of the segregated sports policy of the National Party. Segregated sport was characterised by unequivocal opposition to multiracial contact and resulted in strong international boycott actions against South African sport. This in return led to growing pressure from within the South African sporting community on the government's apartheid policy, which had formed the ideological platform for the development of segregated sport in the country.

## **2. STRUCTURING A SPORTS POLICY FOR THE EIGHTIES**

The continuous change in the sports policy during the seventies could be attributed to the NP striving to adapt the sports policy to the changing circumstances and the needs of the South African sports people, who wanted to determine the direction in which sport should be moving. This could be seen against the background of growing frustration within the sporting fraternity towards the government's ideology of separate sporting development and international sports isolation.

Towards the end of the 1970s the National Party's sports policy was based on the following:

- No permit or other legal consent is required for any player to join a club or play at any sporting facility in South Africa;
- National or provincial sports organizations, through an arrangement with the Department of Sport, can arrange that their entire annual program of matches be attended by spectators of all races;
- Precautionary steps will be taken to change any restrictions to the Liquor Act of sports clubs to enable them to gain international status. This would enable the Liquor Act to apply for all athletes without the need for a special permit, thus bringing it on par with similar sporting events in other parts of the world;
- Precautionary action will be taken by the government to ensure that money spent on sport is divided fairly and proportionately on the basis of population and participation; and

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2 D Collins, *Olympic dreams: 100 years of excellence* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Los Angeles: Universe Publishing, 1998), p. 123.

- The Department of Sport will use its influence with local authorities to provide sporting facilities for all population groups, according to their needs and available facilities.<sup>3</sup>

After FW de Klerk's appointment as Minister of Sport and Recreation in 1978<sup>4</sup> he summarised the government's position on laws governing South African sport by saying:

"It is not in the interest of sport in South Africa to enforce the stated guidelines by law. The autonomy of sports bodies in respect of sport are recognised provided that the general laws of the country are upheld."<sup>5</sup>

In principle this meant that the various sporting bodies could manage and control sport without any government intervention, but it was still subject to the government's apartheid legislation. This perception was met with a lot of resistance and regarded as unacceptable abroad.

The laws in question which at that stage had an influence on the "free" practice of sport were mainly the *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act* (Act 49 of 1953), the *Liquor Act* (Act 87 of 1977), the *Urban Areas Consolidation Act* (Act 25 of 1945) and the *Group Areas Act* (Act 36 of 1966).<sup>6</sup> The sports bodies and sports clubs were subject to a permit system by which permission had to be obtained for the hosting of a multi-sport event. At the turn of the eighties these laws were identified as the main obstacles to the normalisation of sporting ties in South Africa and the government acted to adjust them accordingly.<sup>7</sup> Anti-apartheid activist, Sam Ramsamy, considered these changes to the sports policy and the government's view on the permit system as ridiculous.<sup>8</sup> According to him, the adjustments to the sports policy were made simply because there was increasing pressure on the government's permit system in sport. The *status quo* regarding decision making on the racial composition of teams was still reserved by government, although the competency of team selection were shifted onto autonomous sporting bodies.<sup>9</sup> Although the concepts of the "normalisation" of sport, "multiracial sport" and the "autonomy of sporting bodies" had developed strongly, several problems

3 WJ Breytenbach, "Changes in the South African society", *The South African International* 10(3), January 1980, p. 158.

4 D Booth, "South Africa's 'autonomous sport' strategy: Desegregation apartheid style", *Sporting Tradition. Journal of the Australian Society for Sport Historians* 6(2), May 1990, p. 156.

5 Parliamentary Debates, House of Assembly Debates, 21 May 1979, column 6815.

6 GB Saaiman, *Sport en politiek: Suid-Afrika se sportisolasië en die invloed op die binnelandse politiek* (MA, University of the Free State, 1981), p. 246.

7 DJ van Vuuren *et al.*, *Changes in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Butterworth, 1983), p. 250.

8 S Ramsamy, *Apartheid, the real hurdle: Sport in South Africa and the international boycott* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1982), p. 38.

9 *Ibid.*

surrounding apartheid legislation, sporting facilities and other social backlogs in the field of sport still had to receive serious consideration during the eighties.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. THE SPORTS POLICY OF THE NATIONAL PARTY DURING THE 1980S

The run-up to the 1980s was characterised by compelling changes in South African sport. By 1980, the process of “normalisation” in sport developed to an extent that sports competitions between different population groups and the selection of non-white players to club, provincial or international teams didn’t make the headlines in the local newspapers any longer. The changes that took place were however not enough to satisfy the anti-apartheid organisations. The mere removal of sporting apartheid was no longer the only issue on the table. The principle policy of apartheid strongly emerged as the core of the anti-apartheid organisations’ attacks. The sports boycotts were used only as a means to an end, and it came in very handy as South Africa was eminently a sport mad country.

The NP’s sports policy during the eighties was based on sports autonomy. Autonomous sport, which was announced in 1979, meant the conferring on sports organisations the right to administer their own affairs although the absolute freedom to do so was constrained by the Minister of Sport, FW de Klerk, who warned sports persons that autonomy was “conditional” on the preservation of “good order” and the “general laws of the land”.<sup>11</sup> The development of autonomy in South African sport was done because the government, on an increasing basis, preferred to leave sporting matters in the hands of the sports administrators. Evident to this is the fact that since 1980, the portfolio of Sport within the Cabinet was no longer a separate entity, but became part of the Education portfolio.<sup>12</sup> The South African Council on Sport (SACOS) on the other hand, reiterated that apartheid in sport was no longer the problem, but the laws of the country, which was still dictated by apartheid in general. The government’s initiatives regarding the normalisation of sport and SACOS’s principle of “no normal sport in an abnormal society” were perpendicular in conflict to each other and there was constant conflict between the two organisations regarding the government’s sports policy.

In 1982 the National Party reaffirmed their policy which stated that sport should be depoliticised. The fact that sport would now resort under the Department of National Education was done to ensure that the sports administrators could

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10 G Jarvie, *Class, race and sport in South Africa's political economy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 57.

11 Republic of South Africa: *Hansard* (Pretoria, 1979), column 6900.

12 Interview: C Rademeyer – J Segwaba, 18 August 1999, Bloemfontein.

obtain more power and control in South African sport.<sup>13</sup> The Minister of National Education would in future only assist in advisory capacity with sporting matters affecting the national interest in respect of sport and administrators.

Although sport and the practice thereof were still subject to the laws of the country, the NP was hoping to give sport a large degree of independence through the principle of sports autonomy. Autonomous sport was a strategic manoeuvre which must be understood in the context of shifts in the National Party policy in the late 1970s. These shifts were part of a co-ordinated program known as “total strategy” which aimed to buttress the National Party alliance against the resurgence of black militancy and intensifying international pressures.<sup>14</sup>

Sports autonomy was based on the fact that sporting bodies:

- “Comes into existence by the voluntary decision and agreement of its founders;
- must be able to decide for itself whom it wishes to admit or exclude as members;
- must itself determine its domestic rules for internal organisation and good order;
- must have the unfettered power to constitute its own organs and appoint its own officials;
- has the power to take disciplinary steps against disobedient members;
- will be free to arrange its external relations, which include *inter alia* the freedom to decide against whom it wants to compete and who may participate as spectators and guests at its sporting events.”<sup>15</sup>

These guidelines for the development of sports autonomy was the basis on which the government hoped that sports administrators would take the lead and ensure that the government needed to be involved only on a limited basis in sports development in the country. The initiatives by government in an attempt to neutralise and destroy further inequalities in South African sport were planned to ensure that it was in line with what the outside world expected of South African sport.

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13 *Daily Dispatch*, 4 June 1982, p. 4.

14 Booth, p. 156.

15 Van Vuuren *et al.*, p. 253.

#### 4. BRITISH AND FRENCH FACT FINDING MISSIONS TO SOUTH AFRICA

During the first half of 1980 two fact finding missions from Britain and France respectively visited South Africa. These visits were preceded by visits by the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the International Table Tennis Federation to South Africa during the late 1970s.<sup>16</sup> The aim of the British fact finding mission was to determine whether all the decisions taken at the time of signing the Gleneagles Treaty in 1977 by leaders of the Commonwealth countries, should still be strictly applied, or whether it can be relaxed to a certain extent.<sup>17</sup> The French delegation visited South Africa to assess the progress made in the normalisation of sport in the country. With the advent of the respective fact finding missions, the South African sports people hoped that the report emanating from these visits would be positive and that it would lead to the country's readmission to international sport. These reports however ultimately only lead to further frustrations for sports people.

The delegation of the British Sports Council<sup>18</sup> was headed by Dickie Jeeps, a former England and British Lions rugby player and in later life the President of the England Rugby Football Union. The delegation met with several sports people, regardless of colour or political belief, and after their talks compiled a voluminous report on the state of affairs in South African sport. The 184-page report highlighted various positive and negative aspects of South African sport. The negative aspects mainly focused on the differences between sports organisations in support of government and sports organisations affiliated to SACOS.

Several SACOS affiliate groupings testified before the British delegation that white sport earned much money from sponsorships, while SACOS depended on themselves to fund sporting events. Strong differences in views between SACOS and the government regarding apartheid in sport would remain a bone of contention throughout the eighties as the former grew to one of the strongest domestic structures advocating the sport boycott against South Africa.

The positive comments in the report concentrated on the willingness of most sporting organisations to work together successfully to facilitate the normalisation of sport in South Africa. Specific mention was made of the development of the government's sports policy from total segregation to the autonomy of sport at the

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16 *Sport in South Africa today*, South African Olympic and National Games Association (SAONGA) documentation, pp. 13-14.

17 P Hain, *Sing the beloved country* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), p. 152.

18 An interesting fact about the British delegation is that it included Basil D'Oliveira, who felt the brunt of sports apartheid during the 1960s. Institute for Contemporary History (INCH): PW Botha Private Collection, PV 203, PS12/9/1, Brochure.

end of the seventies.<sup>19</sup> There was cooperation across the colour line in order to achieve the normalisation of sport, but this collaboration was continuously rejected by SACOS.

Although the British Sports Council condemned apartheid in its entirety, they recommended that:

- the International Olympic Committee (IOC) must be approached to investigate South Africa's sport in conjunction with the Sports Council's report;
- International bodies should be encouraged by the national sports governing bodies to reconsider South African sport in light of the Sports Council's report; and
- the British government be asked to take note of the actions and recommendations of the Sports Council.<sup>20</sup>

Jeeps expressed his hope that the recognition for great progress in various sports would serve as an incentive for other sports, which are not yet integrated to the same degree of cooperation. Copies of the Sports Council's recommendations were sent to the IOC, as well as various sports governing bodies in Britain for consideration.

Several members of the Sports Council were however very sceptical regarding the Jeeps Report. Bernard Atha dismissed the report as "betraying an unconscious bias in favour of the South African establishment".<sup>21</sup> Peter Hain, a noted anti-apartheid campaigner, supported Atha's view and pointed out that the report only really indicated that racism is still alive in South African sport.<sup>22</sup> Paul Stephenson was also very critical of the report and was invited back to South Africa by SACOS to launch his own investigation into the sports situation. Stephenson's visa to revisit South Africa was however refused by the South African government.<sup>23</sup> This deepened the rift between SACOS and the NP government, with SACOS accusing government of interfering with the natural development of autonomy in South African sport.

The French fact finding mission, a parliamentary group headed by Bernard Marie, also made reference to both negative and positive aspects in their recommendations. The most prominent negative aspect was the fact that apartheid

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19 Reports: Commissions of Enquiry, *Findings of investigation commissions, South Africa and world sport*, p. 5.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 8, also see *Oosterlig*, 13 May 1980, p. 4.

21 L Gordon *et al.*, *Survey of race relations in South Africa 1980* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1981), p. 596.

22 *The Star*, 11 March 1980, p. 2.

23 Gordon *et al.*, p. 596.

was still functional in South Africa.<sup>24</sup> On the positive side, the report noted that sport such as football, athletics, boxing and fencing were fully integrated and therefore met all the requirements as established by international demand. Sport such as rugby, cricket and tennis were not yet fully integrated, and, according to the report, had to be led in the direction of integration before they could get international recognition. The Marie Commission made it clear that France had to postpone resuming ties with sport that have not been fully integrated. France could renew sporting ties with South African federations which had been fully integrated, but only after the total integration of the sport recognised by national and international organisations could be verified.<sup>25</sup> Anti-apartheid movements in France reacted strongly against the fact that the report strongly opposed sanctions and boycotts against South Africa. This can be seen as yet another example of how intertwined politics and sport had become in South Africa. South African sport can be neither depoliticised nor easily deracialised. This is true at both the conceptual and practical level.<sup>26</sup> Even though the Marie Commission visited South Africa to investigate sporting matters, the anti-apartheid movements in France were looking for political solutions to these problems.

From within the white South African sporting community there was disappointment that the two reports could not do anything for the international status of South African sport. On the other hand, anti-apartheid groups both locally and abroad were unhappy about the mere idea of international fact finding missions investigating the state of South African sport, while apartheid in sport was still very much alive.

The input and impact of the fact finding missions were soon neutralised by the actions of various international governing bodies of sports. In March 1980 the *Federations of International Football Associations* (FIFA), the governing body of international football, decided that the South African Soccer Federation will not be welcomed back onto the international arena while apartheid is still in place.<sup>27</sup> The unfortunate result of this decision was that more black soccer players in South Africa were affected by the decision than white players. Ironically the FIFA decision led to black sports people being punished for the actions of white politicians in South Africa. FIFA's decision summarized the sentiments of anti-apartheid organisations throughout the world. It was no longer about apartheid in sport, but apartheid as government policy, which had to be abolished as required for the removal of the sports boycott against South Africa. Sports people henceforth had to start putting

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24 Reports: Commissions of Enquiry, *Findings of investigation commissions, South Africa and world sport*, p. 8.

25 Gordon *et al.*, p. 596.

26 Booth, p. 156.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 597.



more pressure on the politicians to ensure that apartheid legislation was terminated before sporting ties with the outside world could be resumed.

## **5. THE HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL (HSRC)’S STUDY OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In October 1979 the Minister of National Education and Sport, Punt Janson, approached the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to do a thorough investigation of sport in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> The guidelines for the investigation, according to Janson, should be divided into the “physical needs” and “administrative problem areas” of sport in South Africa. The physical needs included, among others:

- The existing facilities for public use;
- The extent of utilisation of existing schools sporting facilities;
- Identifying the population groups who are encountering the greatest needs;
- The nature of these problems; and
- The financing of sporting facilities at local, regional and national level.

Administrative problems relating to sports promotion included, among others:

- South Africa’s isolation in world sport;
- The political problems created domestically by mixed sport sports participation;
- The role of the media, sporting bodies and individuals in disturbing race relations encountered through problems in sport;
- The role that sport played and could play in positively influencing race relations;
- The desirability of different population groups to each manage their own sport administration, given their unique cultural backgrounds and differences in interest; and
- An assessment of the role of sport in South Africa as factor in the socio-educational needs of the population.

The complexity and extensiveness of the Minister’s request led to the investigation report been submitted six months later than expected. The presentation of the main

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28 Reports: Commissions of Enquiry, *Report of the Main Committee: HSRC Investigation Sport in South Africa, 1982*, No. 1, p. i.

report was also significantly more extensive than requested by government. From the report it was evident that various areas within the sporting framework needed to be transformed and restructured in order to address the existing problems.

The main recommendations arising from the report was that discriminatory legislation was in principle unacceptable in the sporting framework and that the principle of sports autonomy had to be maintained and respected.<sup>29</sup> With respect to the legislation which could affect the normalisation of sports relations the Legal Scientific Committee recommended that:

- Section 1 (4) of the *Group Areas Act* be amended so that the presence of athletes, sports administrators and organisers, officials and spectators at *bona fide* sporting events, and also as a member of, or a guest in, a sports club are excluded from the operation of this proclamation;
- A *bona fide* sports club which is the holder of a club or sports license be involved under the exclusion article 211 of the *Liquor Act*. This should capture all related problems;
- Reservation of the *Separate Amenities Act* in its entirety should be reconsidered by way of a comprehensive research project; and
- Articles 9 and 10 of the *Blacks (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act* should be amended to guarantee the right of participation in sport in all its facets.<sup>30</sup>
- In response to the recommendations the *Liquor Act* (Act 87 of 1977) was amended in October 1981. The changes to the Act made it possible for the liquor license holders to serve people of all races, but it was not an unqualified opening of licensed premises. With regard to the other basic principles the committee recommended the following guidelines:
  - A consequent recognition of a right or claim to participation in sport;
  - The principle of sports autonomy, in other words the claim of a sporting body to in an exclusive and decisive manner organise its own unique domestic matters, should be accepted and respected;
  - A healthy relationship between sport and politics (or national policy) requires an optimal depoliticising of sport. The state may not interfere by legislation or otherwise with the internal affairs of sport and sports organisations, nor deliberately utilise sport for political gain or as political means; and

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29 Saaiman, p. 254.

30 Reports: Commissions of Enquiry, *Report of the Scientific Committee on Legislation Law normalising sporting relations in the Republic of South Africa*, p. 138.

- Any legislative restriction on the right of participation in sport and the autonomy of sporting bodies should be interpreted as destructive and should be adjusted accordingly.<sup>31</sup>

The amendments that were made to the legislations were welcomed in certain circles, but from within the opposition there was speculation that more would have to be done to convince the rest of the world that South Africa is serious about the normalisation of sport in the country.<sup>32</sup> The reaction to the report showed that the extent to which South African sport was already isolated from the outside world by 1980, was a clear indication that the apartheid laws in South Africa had been very successfully applied.

The government did not react to the content of the report immediately. By the end of 1982 a national conference was held to discuss the recommendations. Various sports administrators who were involved in the conference, later assisted in clearing the way for government to accept the recommendations. The report complimented the sports policy and the recommendations that stemmed from it helped to inform certain policy areas which previously still caused glitches in society. Sports people were involved in the conference specifically to ensure clarity regarding the recommendations of the report regarding sports autonomy.

SACOS dismissed the report as laughable.<sup>33</sup> The report stated that SACOS represented only a small portion of the South African sporting community, as its support base was especially from the Indian, and, to a lesser extent, the coloured ranks in South Africa. According to the report, these two groups represented less than 14% of the country's total population, and therefore SACOS represented only a small portion of the South African population.<sup>34</sup> Based on this the SACOS leadership rejected the HSRC report as just another attempt by the government to bluff the outside world regarding their apartheid legislation and the apparent changes made to it over the years.

## **6. CONFLICT IN THE NATIONAL PARTY AROUND THE CRAVEN WEEK CRISIS**

The implementation of sports autonomy at club level, led to mixed schools sport becoming a matter for the respective Education Departments to deal with. Mixed schools sport did not always enjoy the same support in different areas in South Africa. Even within cabinet there were mixed feelings about the matter. Minister Koornhof was in favour of it, saying mixed schools sport offered the opportunity

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31 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

32 *Rapport*, 4 October 1980, p. 1.

33 Gordon *et al.*, p. 593.

34 *The Cape Times*, 7 September 1982, p. 3.

for young players to get to know each other.<sup>35</sup> The Minister of Police, Louis le Grange, on the other hand, was not happy with mixed sport in schools, as mixed sport, according to him, was for adults and not for children. Thus the announcement in October 1979 that the Craven Rugby Week would in future be open to all population groups, obviously caused a ripple effect not only in the South African rugby circles but also throughout the political arena. The inclusion of a coloured rugby team in the Craven Week in 1980 threatened to split the NP<sup>36</sup> and led to some Afrikaner schools boycotting the tournament.

Throughout the eighties, the disputes around school sport and its multiracialism nature tested the NP's sports policy and government repeatedly had to change on how these problems could be solved in practice. As the problem of the Craven Week were resolved in rugby circles, the discord surrounding it expanded into the political arena. In March 1980 Andries Treurnicht, the Minister of Public Works, made a statement regarding the participation of coloured players in the Craven Week, which was inconsistent with the NP's view about the matter. This led to direct conflict with Prime Minister PW Botha and unleashed a debate that gave rise to high tension within the NP.

The Craven Week issue is widely regarded as one of the contributing factors to the split within the NP in 1982. This split occurred as a result of several factors, but mainly because of the so-called Colour Issue, and the split resulted in a second conservative pattern of thought.<sup>37</sup> With the establishment of the Conservative Party (CP) shortly after the split, the NP was however purged from his conservative elements. The Craven Week issue highlighted that even within the NP there were different streams of thought regarding the direction the sports policy should take during the 1980s.

## 7. RESISTANCE TO THE NATIONAL PARTY'S SPORTS POLICY

Various events during the early eighties clearly indicated that the NP, apart from the idea of sports autonomy, still had to work hard to shake off the burden of apartheid in sport. During the 1982-1983 financial year the NP government spent R9,9 million on the development of school sport in white neighbourhoods. During the same period less than R15 thousand was spent on school sport development in black areas.<sup>38</sup>

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35 M Horrell *et al.*, *A Survey of race relations in South Africa 1977* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1978), p. 560.

36 J Nauright, *Sport, cultures and identities in South Africa* (Claremont: David Philip, 1998), p. 95.

37 JG Chadinha, *Magsdeling en magsverdeling. 'n Vergelykende studie van beginselprogramme van blanke politieke partye in Suid-Afrika sedert 1948* (MA, University of the Free State, 1984), p. 206.

38 Parliamentary Debates, House of Assembly Debates, 2 May 1983, column 6128.

The conflict between the NP and the newly CP flared up again in 1982 on the issue of Sunday sport. In a question regarding Sunday sport PW Botha simply replied that the observance of Sunday is a personal issue for every South African.<sup>39</sup> With respect to the CP's question regarding the practice of Sunday sport by other cultural groups Botha replied as follows:

“A particular problem is the great range of established sport on Sundays among Black people and others for who organised sport provide a positive outlet. It is inconceivable that the Government cannot enforce Sunday observance on racial differentiated basis.”<sup>40</sup>

For the remainder of the eighties the NP's sports policy were closely watched and scrutinised by the CP, and any ambiguities, contrasting comments or decisions made by government were attacked and exploited by them. An example of this was the remark made from the CP ranks in 1983 on the viewpoint that the “once mighty” NP had now become the instrument of a gradual increase to integration in all spheres of society.<sup>41</sup> This comment was made in response to the debate on the *Amended Co-operation and Development Act* (Act 102 of 1983), which included a clause stating that a white person no longer needed a permit to take part in sport within a black residential area.<sup>42</sup>

From within sporting ranks this amendment was greeted with great joy, because it had a less restrictive effect on the autonomic management and participation in sport. The needs of sports people in the country had become a significant reality and the NP started realising that decisive action had to be taken to ensure no further alienation of sports people.

In 1983 the Westminster system of government was abolished and replaced by a Tricameral Parliament, a political system that gave both Indians and coloureds a certain degree of authority. This new dispensation provided for own decision on matters of special group interests and for the co-ownership on matters of general interest. This change was strongly criticised, both internationally, as well as by the official opposition, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), mainly as a result of the exclusion of blacks from this system.

As part of the new political order the NP decided that school sport should in future be managed and controlled as “own affairs”.<sup>43</sup> In principle the three colour groups represented in the new political order could make their own decisions regarding school sport within the respective “colour group”. All other forms of sport, including black sport, would be regarded as “general affairs”; in other words,

39 Parliamentary Debates, House of Assembly Debates, 15 April 1982, column 4508.

40 *Skietgoed* 10/82, 20 April 1982, p. 2.

41 C Cooper *et al.*, *Survey of race relations in South Africa 1983* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1984), p. 639.

42 Parliamentary Debates, House of Assembly Debates, 10 August 1983, column 1014.

43 Parliamentary Debates, House of Assembly Debates, 2 May 1983, column 6145.

black people had no say on policy matters and these decisions would thus be taken for them by government.

During a visit to Britain in March 1984 the Minister of National Education, Dr Gerrit Viljoen, rejected claims that the integration process of sport in South Africa were treated artificially. According to him South African sport should be seen as an opportunity for all racial groups to compete against each other on a multiracial base.<sup>44</sup> Journalists were amazed by Viljoen's clear support of segregation in sport. The main idea behind this decision of government was to limit the powers of SACOS since the organisation had, according to the NP, a clear political agenda in sport.<sup>45</sup> Government increased the pressure on SACOS by refusing visas to highly ranked SACOS members who wanted to go abroad to gain support for the struggle against apartheid in sport. Criticism against the government increased, mainly due to Dr Viljoen's statement abroad and the refusal of visas to the SACOS members. While SACOS, in collaboration with several international organisations, increasingly applied pressure on the government to abandon apartheid, the NP in return did everything in their power to neutralise organisations like SACOS. The refusal of visas was one of the most successful methods to ensure that direct contact with like-minded anti-apartheid movements abroad could not materialise. In response SACOS launched an action to disrupt the election of coloured and Indian representatives into the new political dispensation in South Africa.<sup>46</sup> Every sporting event was used as a demonstration in the struggle against apartheid in sport and ties were severed with any sporting structure that supported the new political dispensation. In the Ciskei a decision was taken that only "national" sport will be recognized, thus only sporting bodies that recognised the independence of the Republic of Ciskei, would be provided with sporting facilities.

In an effort to ensure the construction of sports facilities government involved the private sector through sponsorships. In the 1983/1984 financial year R11,9 million was spent on the provision of sports facilities in black communities.<sup>47</sup> A number of large companies and organisations became involved in sports sponsorship, and various non-racial school sport competitions benefited from this sponsorship. This led to government proclaiming that the sports policy and the execution thereof were emblematic of the NP's determination to eradicate discrimination. The NP added that amended laws that directly affect sport were of great value and underlined the commitment of the government to remove all

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44 *The Star*, 12 March 1984, p. 1.

45 *The Cape Times*, 9 June 1983, p. 4.

46 C Cooper *et al.*, *Survey of race relations in South Africa 1984* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1985), p. 922.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 924.

restrictive legislation in sport.<sup>48</sup> These statements were widely rejected and SACOS dismissed it as wishful thinking.

By the mid-eighties South African sport increasingly started to feel the pressure of international boycotts. The resistance to apartheid increased drastically during this period and in 1985 a state of emergency, comparable to a form of martial law, was introduced in certain parts of the country.<sup>49</sup> The areas directly affected by the state of emergency were the Eastern Cape, the Witwatersrand and later also the Western Cape. More than 8 000 people were arrested during the eight months that the state of emergency was in place. A second state of emergency that was applicable across the country, was introduced in mid-1986. The government's announcement of the state of emergency came just days before the tenth anniversary of the Soweto riots of 16 June 1976 and had South Africa back on the front pages of international newspapers.

The cancellation of the 1985 All Black rugby tour to South Africa led to the renewed realisation that South Africa's international sporting relations found the country in an impasse. In September 1985 the NP announced that government wanted to withdraw from sport completely. The NP furthermore recommended that a more representative sports federation, consisting of all population groups, should be established to manage and guide sport in South Africa more effectively.<sup>50</sup> The main reason for this was that the government wanted to leave the control and organisation of sport in South Africa in the hands of the administrators, but wanted to ensure that the administrators did not make South African sport into a political pawn.

A Steering Committee was appointed to investigate the proposals for a new sports federation and their findings were submitted to the government for approval at the end of March 1985. The committee agreed with the government's idea to withdraw itself from the control of sport in South Africa, but differed from the idea that the existing South African Sports Federation (SASF) should be dissolved and replaced with a new sports federation that would be more representative of all population groups in the country.<sup>51</sup> The main reason why the committee decided against the establishment of a new sports federation was the fact that the levels of sports management and development in all population groups differed. Therefore the sudden convergence of the various structures in a sports federation at that point might have been more disruptive than anything else.

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48 *The Rand Daily Mail*, 8 November 1984, p. 2.

49 R Shrire, *Adapt or die: The end of white politics in South Africa* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1991), p. 161.

50 C Cooper *et al.*, *Race Relations Survey 1986* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1987), p. 295.

51 *Pretoria News*, 3 May 1987, p. 2.

The South African government's plan to completely withdraw from sport was warranted as follows:

“South Africa is an example to many other governments in the world, illustrating that politics and sport should not be mixed and that sport should not become a political punitive instrument.”<sup>52</sup>

In 1986 the school sports policy changed dramatically. The NP began to encourage interracial sport in schools, although the government did not want to be involved with the organisation thereof.<sup>53</sup> As a result representatives of the various population groups came together and the South African Schools Sports Council (SASSC) was established. The main purpose of the SASSC was to promote school sport among all population groups, to fight discrimination in school sport, and promote contact in school sport in order to promote a climate of mutual cooperation..<sup>54</sup> The Transvaal Education Association, the South African Bureau for Racial Relations (SABRR) and SACOS rejected SASSC for various diverse reasons. According to Professor Carel Boshoff, the chairperson of the SABRR, the organisation of multiracial school sport would endanger the future of the Afrikaner people,<sup>55</sup> while SACOS rejected the structure because the government promoted separate schools, but wanted a joint school sports council.

Several schools refused to take part in multiracial sports events. An example of this was when a black athlete from Durban was not allowed to participate in an event at Menlo Park High School in Pretoria, simply because he was black. Several athletes and their parents boycotted the event in protest at the refusal to let the specific athlete participate in the event. The situation degenerated into a political debate and the government had to intervene to resolve the situation. The President's view that the government would not interfere with sport in South Africa did not help much to solve the problem. It was, according to Botha, a task for the sports administrators and parents.<sup>56</sup> However, as the problem deepened, the government announced that it was to review its policy regarding school sport. The amended policy stated that schools who were not willing to participate in multiracial sports events, should withdraw from the events in question.

## 8. THE SPORTS POLICY AS FACTOR IN THE 1987 ELECTIONS

Before the 1987 general election, several sports people strongly expressed themselves against the NP's sports policy and pledged their support to the

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52 *The Daily News*, 25 April 1986, p. 1.

53 *Evening Post*, 23 January 1986, p. 3.

54 *The New Nation*, 9 October 1986, p. 1.

55 *The Star*, 12 September 1986, p. 1.

56 Parliamentary Debates: House of Assembly Debates, 16 to 20 February 1987, column 1120.



opposition alliance.<sup>57</sup> This pledge, signed by several prominent white sports people and administrators, amongst others Dr Danie Craven, stated:

“We, Stellenbosch sportsmen and women, will support and encourage others to support those in party-political contests, including independent candidates, who are united in a common search for sincere and urgent initiatives to ensure a normal and peaceful life for all South Africans.”<sup>58</sup>

Craven even asked executive members of the SARU to publicly show their support for multiracial sport. Two members of the executive management, Daan Nolte and Sonny Malan, resigned from SARU as a result of the statement, indicating that they wanted to run as Conservative Party candidates in the election.

The NP’s changing policy on sport and especially on school sport led to great discontent, especially among the conservative white grouping in the country. Several incidences related to the colour issue and school sport occurred during this period. For the first time during the 1980s the government’s approach to multiracial sport was criticised from both the official opposition on the left as well as the CP on the right of the white political spectrum. Both sides criticised government’s changing approach to multiracial sport, but for completely different reasons.

The 1987 election resulted in a drastic change in the opposition. Although the NP secured 123 seats in the House of Assembly, the CP became the official opposition in Parliament by winning 22 seats against the 10 seats of the PFP.<sup>59</sup> As a result the CP’s performance in the election can be seen as a repositioning of the conservative elements against the NP’s policy of racial sport in South Africa.

In contrast with the period before 1987, when the government was confronted by the PFP opposition on issues of apartheid in sport, the CP opposition after the 1987 elections aimed at criticising the government’s policy of racial integration in sport. Although the criticism from the CP was very fierce, and placed a lot of pressure on the government, the NP was to a certain extent relieved that the new official opposition and the anti-apartheid movements no longer used one voice in criticising the government on their policy on apartheid in sport.

The CP introduced a new dimension of opposition and attacked the sports policy from a very different angle. Under the control of the CP, separate municipal facilities were established in some of the local authorities<sup>60</sup>, which in return led to separate sporting facilities and segregated sport for the different racial groups

57 The PFP, the New Republic Party (NRP) and the Independent candidates formed an alliance before the 1987 election to oppose the National Party in the election. C Cooper *et al.*, *Race Relations Survey 1987/88* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1988), p. 276.

58 *Sunday Times*, 3 May 1987, p. 1.

59 A Ries and E Dommissie, *Broedertwis* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1982), p. 67.

60 C Cooper *et al.*, *Race Relations Survey 1989/90* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1990), p. 26.

in these areas. This resulted in several race-related incidents in many of the CP controlled areas. The successes, although limited, achieved by the CP in the 1987 elections resulted in negative consequences for the NP's sports policy during the latter part of the decade. Several NP initiatives relating to sport which were developed during the earlier parts of the decade, were destroyed by the advances of the CP as official opposition in 1987 and contributed strongly to acidify the already turbid relations with black sports people even further.

The consequences of the Menlo Park incident resulted in the launch of the "never again" campaign. The campaign was launched by collecting signatures of support for equality in sport and the development of multiracial sport throughout South Africa. It was not seen as a political struggle, but rather as a moral duty to the youth of the country.<sup>61</sup> By January 1988, more than 29 000 signatures had been collected and the campaign gained great momentum, compelling the Minister of National Education, FW de Klerk, to address the matter. He pointed out that the sports administrators should confine themselves to matters that directly affected them, and not get involved in the broader sports-political debates. He warned that if sports people would become directly involved in the broader political game in South Africa, sport would just be the victim again.<sup>62</sup> Through their actions the sporting fraternity however showed a clear sense of rejection towards the political situation in the country.

## 9. INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON THE SPORTS POLICY

The fears among sports people that politics in the country still dictated sport was reconfirmed in June 1988 when the International Olympic Committee met in Lausanne, Switzerland. At this meeting, the IOC reaffirmed its opposition against apartheid and its continued suspension of sporting ties with South Africa.<sup>63</sup> After the meeting, which was attended by 12 international sports organisations, the IOC issued the following statement:

- "The practice of apartheid violated the fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter;
- All member bodies of the Olympic movement should exclude or suspend South African national sports federations from membership (where it has not already taken place) and discourage sporting contacts with South Africa until apartheid had been abolished;

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61 C Cooper *et al.*, *Race Relations Survey 1987/88*, p. 277.

62 *Business Day*, 3 March 1988, p. 5.

63 C Cooper *et al.*, *Race Relations Survey 1988/89* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1989), p. 36.

- Actions designed to disrupt the unity of the Olympic movement, especially efforts to organise sporting contacts with South Africa, would be denounced;
- A commission should be established to examine apartheid in sport; and
- No non-African entity could impose a solution to resolve this specifically African problems (i.e. South Africa's racial policies), and the only solution would be one based on proposals made by Africans."<sup>64</sup>

The United Nations supported the IOC's view on apartheid in sport by introducing a so-called "blacklist" of all sports people who retained sporting ties with South Africa. The effect of foreign resistance towards the sports policy was followed by renewed attacks by anti-apartheid movements. In July 1988 a powerful car bomb exploded in a side street next to the Ellis Park stadium (Johannesburg), shortly after the completion of a Currie Cup rugby match. Two spectators, who had just left the stadium, were killed while 35 spectators were injured in the explosion.<sup>65</sup> The government condemned the action and promised tougher action against anti-apartheid groupings. The then exiled African National Congress (ANC) later accepted responsibility for the explosion and said it was part of their strategy to "take the fight to the white areas" at the end of the eighties.<sup>66</sup> Initially the ANC denied any involvement in the bombing, and later said the goal was never to kill innocent civilians, but to make whites aware of the injustices of apartheid in South Africa.<sup>67</sup>

Since 1988 the political climate started changing in Southern Africa, which constituted a new phase in the history of the ANC.<sup>68</sup> Discussions between the ANC and prominent South African businessmen, editors and later also amongst sports people, was initiated and was held to discuss alternatives to the apartheid policy, including apartheid in sport. The sporting fraternity's talks with the ANC were aimed at cementing ties with various pressure groups against apartheid in sport. The political situation in the country was at a very delicate stage and the sports people's involvement in political debates further intensified the matter.

## 10. IN CONCLUSION

Since the late 1970s the National Party government took several steps in trying to dismantle the presence of apartheid in South African sport. Several discriminatory

64 *The New Nation*, 30 June 1988, p. 1.

65 S Johns and R Hunt Davis, *Mandela, Tambo and the African National Congress: The struggle against apartheid, 1948 – 1990. A documentary survey* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 25.

66 *Beeld*, 4 July 1999, p. 2.

67 Interview: C Rademeyer – Mthobi Tyanmzashé, 14 June 2002, Johannesburg.

68 W Esterhuysen and P Nel, *Die ANC* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1990), p. 23.

laws were amended or completely discarded in order to bring about these changes. This assisted in bringing about the policy of autonomy in the management of sport in the country and helped to develop a new model for sport in South Africa. The NP's implementation of autonomy in their sports policy was done to try and ensure that politics had only limited involvement in sport in the country. The general apartheid legislation remained an obstacle and was constantly highlighted by the outside world as the main reason why South Africa remained isolated in world sport.

The constant appeal from the international anti-apartheid movements and the international sporting community made the sports administrators in South Africa more determined to break the shackles of sports isolation once and for all. Throughout the 1980s South African sporting people from across the racial divide attempted to get their house in order with a view towards readmission into international sports participation. Unfortunately politics constantly became involved in sport and especially at school level, leading to major problems and various conflicts.

To the outside world, the development of multiracial sport in South Africa during the eighties did not achieve much. Apartheid legislation became the ransom, and very few international organisations were satisfied with the mere thought that apartheid in sport was to disappear; to them only the dismantling of apartheid at all levels of society would be satisfactory.

Not even the government's initiative to be "uninvolved" towards the management of sport in South Africa had any impact. This initiative was always overshadowed by the bigger picture of apartheid, which, according to the international anti-apartheid activists, was very comprehensive. Throughout the eighties it was clear that autonomy in sport alone would not ensure South Africa's readmission into the international sports world. Sports administrators also started realising this and it led to great frustration. Several sporting codes in South Africa worked hard during the eighties to get their house in order, but it seemed irrelevant, because the eyes of the outside world was only focused on apartheid, and only changes in the political system of South Africa would determine the international future of sport in the country.

The government could not always keep up with the pace at which the sports people in the country attempted to sustain normalised international relations. From within the sporting fraternity, however, it was important to accelerate the pace of change in order to ensure that the demands of the international requests regarding apartheid in sport were met.

The policy on school sport was a constant bone of contention during the 1980s. The government continued to emphasise that the decisions regarding participation in multiracial sports and cultural activities should be made by each

school. School principals, governing bodies and the parent committees of schools had to decide on this matter, but government still implemented guidelines to ensure that the hosting of events and activities did not cause any political crisis. This contradictory measure just illustrated that sport and politics were still intertwined, even at school sports level.