

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

From Montreal to Moscow:  
The Legacy of the Anti-Apartheid Olympics on the Boycott of the Cold War Games (1976-1980)

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History

by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|      |                                     |
|------|-------------------------------------|
| IOC  | International Olympic Committee     |
| NOC  | National Olympic Committee          |
| SCSA | Supreme Council for Sport in Africa |
| NSC  | National Sports Council             |
| ISF  | International Sports Federation(s)  |



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When UCSD accepted me, Bob was as welcoming and encouraging as could be. He called immediately to find out what football team I supported since it was absent from my application materials. It has been a great relationship from that moment onwards. He's always supported my ideas (or at least kept an open mind), he's been an excellent sounding board for everything, and he's provided the direct, helpful feedback and reality checks I've needed along the way. Bob made the research and writing process much easier, even during the most stressful periods, and this project would not have happened without his persistent support. His friendship means a lot and I've been very lucky to have him in my corner. It's been great watching Fulham games both at Craven Cottage and in San Diego, going out for tacos or dinner at his house, and hanging out with Vicky and the dogs.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From Montreal to Moscow:  
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University of California San Diego, 2024

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The International Olympic Committee confronted a contentious period between 1976-1980 that featured repeated threats to unified global sport. In 1976, African states withdrew from the Montreal Olympics protesting New Zealand's rugby contacts with apartheid South Africa. Four years later in 1980, the United States and over a third of the world's Olympic Committees withheld their athletes from the Moscow Games opposing the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan.

Both events threatened to split world sport apart, one over the issue of apartheid and the other along Cold War lines. Even though these were successive boycotts, historians have largely treated these events in isolation. This dissertation establishes the overlap between these two boycotts and how the African walkout in Montreal directly Soviet affected the preparations for the Moscow Olympics and influenced the US boycott of the 1980 Games. It argues that the context of the anti-apartheid campaign is necessary to understand the lead-up to the 1980 Olympics and frames 1976-1979 as a period of struggle between the Global South against the institutions and countries of the Global North, thus challenging dominant Cold War narratives surrounding the Moscow Olympic Games. Additionally, by focusing on Africa, a continent caught in the middle of the Global Cold War, it demonstrates how regional concerns about apartheid competed with Cold War understandings about the Olympics. Though the Cold War would overwhelm the decolonization struggle in sport in 1980 by forcing countries into a US vs. USSR binary, this dissertation examines how countries sought to navigate through this situation and proposed contending understandings of the boycott and non-alignment. The dissertation reframes the 1980 Olympic conversation by demonstrating how the anti-apartheid struggle influenced proceedings and argues for interpreting the Moscow Olympics as an important moment in the longer anti-apartheid struggle rather than isolating it within the Cold War crisis of 1980-1984.

## INTRODUCTION

As the Olympic torchbearer wound his way through Moscow's streets, eager crowds lined up behind barriers to see the flame on the final leg of its journey from Olympia, the site of the Ancient Games, to its temporary home for the next two weeks, the cauldron atop Lenin Stadium. 103,000 spectators awaited the torch and the signal to begin the festivities at the first Olympics held in a socialist state.

At 4pm, the guests of honor, Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Lord Killanin, Organizing Committee of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Olympiad (OrgCommittee) President Ignati Novikov, and IOC Chief of Protocol Juan Antonio Samaranch, entered the central box accompanied by a trumpet fanfare. With their blessing the Opening Ceremony began. Men and women garbed in tunics and dresses reminiscent of Ancient Greece marched around the running track, some holding flowers and libation bowls, others carrying giant models of the five Olympic Rings. Four-horse chariots rolled around the stadium to reinforce the link in everyone's minds between Moscow and Olympia. Up in the crowd, in the section below the cauldron, an artistic display of colored cards threw up images of the Moscow Olympic emblem and the ancient Parthenon on the Acropolis.

As the chariots wheeled off the track, the Greek team entered the stadium first, as was tradition. The Parade of Nations quickly bore signs of the Moscow Olympic boycott. After Greece came the Australians marching in their yellow and green uniforms. But rather than carrying their country's blue flag emblazoned with the Southern Cross constellation, the team followed the Olympic flag. Then the Andorrans came, also behind the Olympic flag. The Belgian team sent no representatives to the stadium. Britain's sole participant was Chef de Mission Dick Palmer; the rest of the team remained at the Olympic Village. As Palmer walked into Lenin



Stadium, Soviet television commented on his appearance: “there is the clumsy plot that you all can see, against the traditions of the Olympic movement.”<sup>1</sup> After Britain, Soviet cameras refused to show any more of the protesting nations. Their event would not be ruined by political maneuvering.

Protests defined the Moscow Olympic build-up. After the USSR’s invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, US President Jimmy Carter threatened a boycott of the Olympics. Carter demanded that the USSR withdraw from Afghanistan; the Soviets refused. As a result, some of the leading sports nations, including the US, Federal Republic of Germany, and Japan withheld their teams, along with sixty-three other countries, in the largest boycott of the Olympics. The USA hoped that the absence of nations from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe would render Moscow’s Games illegitimate. Others, such as Britain, Belgium, and Australia, decided to compete but wanted to protest the USSR’s presence in Afghanistan. As competing nations assembled on the grass in the middle of Lenin Stadium, large green patches remained visible. The athletes still numbered in the thousands, but the negative space showed spectators in the stadium and via images sent around the world the anger of much of the world directed at the Soviet Union.

The Moscow Olympics would go on. During the Opening Ceremony, Soviet and IOC officials said little about the missing nations. They focused instead on the eighty teams that had arrived to compete. Though the number of nations was the lowest since Melbourne in 1956, Lord Killanin thanked “all the athletes and officials here today, especially those who have shown their complete independence to travel and compete, despite many pressures placed on them.”<sup>2</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Klose, “Mixture of Pageantry, Acrimony,” *Washington Post*, 20 July 1980, A1.

<sup>2</sup> *Games of the XXII Olympiad Moscow 1980: Official Report of the Organizing Committee of the Games of the XXII Olympiad* (Fizkultura i Sport, 1981), 288.

was the closest allusion to the Olympic boycott during the ceremony by any of the officials present. The USSR and IOC were ready to focus on the competitions, not the politics that had dominated the build-up to the events.

The IOC was increasingly accustomed to political interference; boycotts had become the norm. The Moscow boycott was the most recent in a long line of threatened and actual boycotts. In 1956, a handful of nations withdrew over the Soviet Union's repression of Hungary; others sought punishment for Britain and France over the Suez Crisis. Before the Mexico City Olympics in 1968, a group of Global South, socialist, and Scandinavian nations forced the IOC to reconsider South Africa's participation by threatening to walkout. But the real change had taken place in 1976 at the Montreal Olympics. Twenty-six African teams, Iraq, and Guyana withdrew protesting New Zealand's rugby tour of apartheid South Africa just two weeks after the Soweto Uprising, which left well over one hundred protesters dead. African states did what no one had expected them to do and withdrew *en masse* from the Olympics to ensure that their protest largely against apartheid sports contacts was clearly visible on the grandest sporting stage while the world watched on.

Montreal would be the first in a series of political boycotts of the Olympics with evolving meanings. In 1976, African states expressed their frustration that the Western countries would not stop playing with apartheid. They targeted New Zealand to send a message that South Africa's isolation needed to be complete. This was the peak of the anti-apartheid struggle in the Olympics, setting off panic that Africa was willing to tear the Olympics apart to enforce the anti-apartheid boycott. The next boycott in Moscow was a Cold War-inspired affair: a protest largely organized by the United States against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The IOC worried in 1980 that the USA would split the Olympics into two camps divided by Cold War loyalties.

These were the two largest boycotts of the Olympic Games, but they threatened the IOC on different issues and pulled together different coalitions. However, despite their differences, it is clear by examining the 1976 Montreal Olympic boycott and the years leading up to the Moscow Games that the two events are more linked closely together than existing literature would have us believe.

In this dissertation, I argue that the longer anti-apartheid struggle in sport and the 1976 African boycott of the Montreal Olympics are integral to understanding both the Soviet preparations for and the American boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games. Histories of the Moscow Olympics tend to focus on Cold War issues. Because of this Moscow is tied to the USSR's retaliatory boycott of Los Angeles in 1984. However, the link back to 1976 is rarely established. Historians have overlooked how the anti-apartheid campaign, which dominated world sport from the 1960s to the 1980s and led to the Montreal boycott, influenced the 1980 Olympics. By ignoring the link between 1976 and 1980, this weakens our understanding of what happened in 1980 and how it fits into the larger issues in global sport during this period.

Developing this connection between 1976 and 1980 shows how the decolonization struggle in international sport interacted with the Cold War in 1980. Through the 1960s until the 1976 Montreal Olympic boycott, the main issue threatening unified, world sport was apartheid. To preserve unity, the IOC had backed down repeatedly over the issues of South Africa and Rhodesia. But in 1976 it refused to move. The effect was a continental boycott of the Olympic Games was marked. The IOC reeled from the walkout. The USSR, as the host of the upcoming Olympics, panicked. Western states complied for almost a whole Olympic cycle with the South African boycott. But in 1979, with détente ending, the issue of apartheid sports contacts arose again. In December 1979, the USSR invaded Afghanistan and sparked the American-led Cold

War boycott of Moscow, distracting the world from the returning issue of apartheid sports contacts. Suddenly, Cold War concerns overwhelmed Africa's struggle in sport, reducing it to a secondary struggle, and letting South Africa off the hook for a few years. International sport was a successful arena for decolonized states to fight against white-settler regimes and the vestiges of colonialism, but this was only possible when the Cold War did not dominate the international scene.

Decolonization and anti-apartheid also influenced African states' decisions in 1980, often challenging Cold War reasoning behind the boycott. Looking at the Olympics through a Cold War prism would lead one to suppose that countries that boycotted were supportive of the US position and those that participated supported the USSR. But while the US and USSR presented the Olympics as a Cold War binary, nations tried to negotiate or reason out their positions to retain their own independence. In the case of Africa, states and citizens sought to avoid the being drawn into the binary while rationalizing the boycott through the decolonization struggle. However, the problem was that the boycott remained a binary through participation: stay or go? Despite this, the debates inspired by the boycott showed complex reasoning about whether to attend and anger at being forced into this position by the superpowers. The "Third World" resented the Global North bringing its conflict into the Global South and this is visible in the local debates about the 1980 boycott.

In showing all of this, I argue that the Olympic boycott, or crisis era, that has been commonly ascribed to 1980-1984 should focus on the period of 1976-1980.<sup>3</sup> The most obvious reason to do this is that Montreal and Moscow were the two largest Olympic boycotts. But this

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<sup>3</sup> For instance: John Hoberman, *Olympic Crisis: Sport, Politics and the Moral Order* (Aristide D. Caratzas, 1986).

dissertation also demonstrates that this four-year period was politically fraught and threatened the existence of the Olympic Games through multiple avenues. Instead of looking at events just through the Cold War lens, it is instead better to see how the 1980 Olympics fits within the larger anti-apartheid struggle and follows on from 1976. Reframing the boycott period also shows how the greatest victims of the boycott era were African athletes, many of whom missed out on the chance to compete at the Olympics through their entire careers. Ghana and Kenya, for instance, would not participate in an Olympic Games for 12 years - from 1972-1984.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the Soviet Union and the USA each missed one Olympics.

Lastly, by studying Montreal and Moscow in detail, side-by-side, it is possible to understand how boycotts develop and what makes them effective. The direct comparison is instructive here. The 1980 boycott is generally regarded with infamy. Historians consider it a failure despite its large size. In contrast, Montreal is less well-known but is an example of a successful boycott that effected political change in the following years. It is important to ask what makes a boycott successful by contrasting these two events.<sup>5</sup> The only way to do this is to better understand how Montreal took place and the various consequences of that boycott.

### **Literature about 1976 and 1980**

The Moscow Olympic boycott ended up as a Cold War event. It was a conflict between the USSR, hosting the first Olympics in a socialist country, and the USA, which wanted to

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<sup>4</sup> Upper Volta/Burkina Faso boycotted in 1984 as well, meaning it missed 16 years of Olympic competitions. Ethiopia also boycotted in 1976, 1984, and 1988.

<sup>5</sup> The idea of success for a boycott is taken from Carole Gomez, “Le boycott à l’heure du soft power et de la diplomatie d’influence,” *Revue Internationale et Stratégique* 1, no. 97 (2015): 122: “Although the symbol [of the boycott] occupies an important place in contemporary societies, it alone cannot constitute the success of a policy. Its success will be measured by the number of States that take part and, ultimately, by the change in attitude of the targeted entity.”

punish the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. The approach taken by many historians of this event, therefore, has followed this Cold War framework and presented the issue from the perspective of the two superpowers.

Historians have written numerous works on the American efforts to rally countries to boycott the 1980 Olympics.<sup>6</sup> These works usually frame the issue as rooted in the larger Cold War, the human rights show trials of 1978, and finally the invasion of Afghanistan. Historians then explain American inability to force the IOC to move the Olympics and its failure to mobilize a majority of countries to boycott. Often this is reduced to looking at a few notable examples of American foreign policy failure, such as Muhammad Ali's ill-fated trip to Africa in February, that demonstrates the tone-deaf approach taken by the State Department to local contexts.<sup>7</sup> The Americentric approach to the Moscow boycott often amplifies the Cold War nature of the Games. But viewing matters through a Cold War prism limits our understanding of the events leading up to Moscow. This approach does not address how other issues of US foreign policy during the postwar period prevented countries from siding with it over Afghanistan. Decolonization struggles impacted the Olympic movement during the 1960s and 1970s, which made the IOC much more hesitant to any political inference, let alone from the US government. It also privileges the American understanding of the boycott over other competing versions. By

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic Boycott, and the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Derick L. Hulme Jr., *The Political Olympics: Moscow, Afghanistan, and the 1980 U.S. Boycott* (Praeger, 1990); Laurence Barton, "The American Olympic Boycott of 1980: The Amalgam of Diplomacy and Propaganda in Influencing Public Opinion," PhD diss. (Boston University, 1983)

<sup>7</sup> For criticism of Ali's tour: Jeffrey T. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: the Role of Boxing in American Society* (University of Illinois Press, 1988). For more positive converge: Stephen Wenn and Jeffrey Wenn, "Muhammad Ali and the Convergence of Olympic Sport and U.S. Diplomacy in 1980: A Reassessment from Behind the Scenes at the U.S. State Department," *Olympika: the Journal of Olympic Studies* 11 (1993): 45-66; Lannon Walker, "Travels with the Champ in Africa," *The Foreign Service Journal*, October 2016.

not addressing these larger questions, much of the American literature puts the failure of the boycott on Carter's policy in 1980. Looking long-term and globally shows why the US was only partially successful at rallying support across the world, but not as successful as it had hoped it would be.

On the other side, historians of the USSR focus on Moscow's lengthy preparation process, both domestically and internationally. By taking an extended view, scholars can better understand how the Soviet Union successfully hosted the Olympics despite US pressure. Studies of Soviet domestic preparations have delved into the massive modernization project in Moscow that the government hoped would finally break the USSR out of economic "stagnation" that had blighted the Brezhnev era.<sup>8</sup> Other historians have focused on the soft power of the Olympic Games and Soviet diplomatic efforts, analyzing the benefits that the USSR would accrue as host of a successful sporting and cultural exhibition.<sup>9</sup> The Soviet Union's interest in the Olympics was largely due to soft power concerns: it wanted to demonstrate itself as a model, leading nation to both the West and to the Global South. The 1976 Montreal Olympic boycott and Africa fit into some of these histories, but most studies look at soft power policy primarily in the West and in parts of the developing world. This dissertation aims to add to this work by linking the Soviet project to the global anti-apartheid struggle and focusing on the role of Africa in the Olympic preparations.

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<sup>8</sup> For more on "Stagnation": Dina Fainberg and Artemy M. Kalinovsky, eds., *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange* (Lexington Books, 2016); Igor Orlov and Aleksey Popov, *Olimpiskii Perepolokh: Zabitaya Sovetskaya Modernizatsiya / Olympic Commotion: Forgotten Soviet Modernization*, (Vishaya Shkola Ekonomiki / Publishing House of the Higher School of Economics, 2020) [referred hereafter as *Olympic Commotion*]; Simon Young, "Playing to Win: A Political History of the Moscow Olympic Games, 1975-1980," PhD diss., (University of Winchester, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Jenifer Parks, *The Olympic Games, the Soviet Sports Bureaucracy, and the Cold War: Red Sport, Red Tape*, (Lexington Books, 2017).

National studies of the 1980 Olympic boycott have proven useful in explaining how specific countries reacted to the Cold War struggle over their participation. Many historians have examined Western countries and especially countries that had conflicts between national governments and sports organizations. Britain has been studied extensively on this issue. Margaret Thatcher's pro-boycott position conflicted with the British Olympic Association's desire to compete.<sup>10</sup> Historians have explained similar situations in several countries, including West Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and others.<sup>11</sup> Each case shows how domestic politicians reacted to the international crisis surrounding Afghanistan and the Olympic boycott campaign. Outside of the Western world, there has been less attention on how these Cold War events influenced local decisions and vice versa.<sup>12</sup> These national histories broaden our understanding of the 1980 boycott by providing additional perspectives from around the world outside of the USA and USSR and explain how the global and local interplayed with one another in these cases.

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<sup>10</sup> Kevin Jefferys, "Britain and the Boycott of the 1980 Olympics," *Sport in History*, 32, no. 2 (2012): 279-301; Paul Corthorn, "The Cold War and British Debates over the Boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics," *Cold War History* 13, no. 1 (2013): 43-66; Daniel James Lahey, "The Thatcher Government's Response to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, 1979-1980," *Cold War History* 13, no. 1 (2013): 21-42.

<sup>11</sup> Evelyn Mertin, *Sowjetisch-deutsche Sportbeziehungen im "Kalten Krieg"* (Academia Verlag, 2009); Willi Ph. Knecht, *Der Boykott: Moskaus mißbrauchte Olympiade* (Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1980); Lisa Forrest, *Boycott: Australia's Controversial Road to the 1980 Moscow Olympics* (ABC Books, 2008); Sheila Hurtig Robertson, *Shattered Hopes: Canada's Boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games* (Iguana Books, 2012); Brian Bridges, "Sustaining Identities: Hong Kong and the Politics of an Olympic Boycott," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 3 (2014): 276-289; Brian Newth, *Moscow Story: The New Zealand Story of the Moscow Olympics* (WPRR Publishing, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Flavio de Almeida Lico and Katia Rubio, "The Brazilian Position Considering the Boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games," in *Olympia als Bildungsidee*, ed. Annette R. Hoffman and Michael Krüger (Springer VS, 2013): 113-131.



This dissertation examines countries caught in the middle of this superpower conflict in 1980 and explains why these countries made the choices they did. Joseph Eaton, in his study of American boycott efforts in several countries, has argued that countries in Asia and Africa “reinterpreted [the boycott] to suit local perspectives.”<sup>13</sup> The Cold War arguments of the US were either changed or rejected due to local circumstances. Eaton demonstrates how countries responded to Cold War pressures and sought to maintain independence of action or exploit the Cold War situation to their advantage, particularly in relation to the US. This approach allows more agency to those countries caught between superpowers and shows how they responded to the Cold War environment instead of seeing how they were “directed” to act by a superpower or the situation.

Other historians have focused on issues such as human rights and the Moscow Olympics, which are similarly viewed through a Cold War lens. Human rights were a large part of the Western campaign against the USSR’s right to host the Games. These critiques focused on the Soviet Union’s repression of dissident political and religious groups, which escalated during the 1970s and in particular during the final build-up to Moscow. Umberto Tulli has examined how human rights issues and the boycott campaign’s adoption of these problems was a central talking point in the Western world which encouraged opposition to the Moscow Olympics.<sup>14</sup> But Tulli sees the human rights argument within a Global North context - an argument between the

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Eaton, "Decentering US Sports Diplomacy: The 1980 Moscow Boycott Through Contemporary Asian-African Perspectives," in *Sport and Diplomacy: Games within Games*, ed. Simon J. Rolfe (Manchester University Press, 2018), 203.

<sup>14</sup> Umberto Tulli, “Bringing Human Rights In: The Campaign against the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games and the Origins of the Nexus Between Human Rights and the Olympics Games,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 16 (2016): 2026-2045; Dmitry Dubrovskiy, “The Moscow 1980 and Sochi 2014 Olympic Games: Dissent and Repression,” in *The Ideals of Global Sport: From Peace to Human Rights*, ed. Barbara Keys (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019): 136-155.

Western and the Eastern blocs over human rights in a post-Helsinki Act world (1975). These same human rights questions appeared in other contexts, such as debates in African newspapers, but did not persuade in the same way as they did in Europe and North America. Western politicians and citizens might have been concerned about the rights of religious minorities and political opponents in the USSR, but African readers in Kenya, Tanzania, and Nigeria were more concerned about the human rights of the black population in South Africa. Human rights showed a difference in the outlook between the West and Africa in 1980.

Many of these works focus on the Cold War narrative of the 1980 Games at the expense of other views and contexts. The 1980 Olympic boycott was an important Cold War event, but it did not occur in isolation from other, larger campaigns and struggles in world sport. Many of these histories have often ignored the concerns, interpretations, and reactions of the postcolonial Global South when examining the boycott campaign. By focusing on the Cold War binary and takes away from the complex history of those countries in the middle that sought to maintain their independent action through non-alignment or sought to navigate a difficult international position. These issues become clearer as one examines how the Global South, or in this case Africa, experienced the build-up to the Moscow Olympic Games. Few historians have looked at the importance of Africa in this affair and how the continent's anti-apartheid struggle in sport informed the preparations in Africa and the Soviet Union for the Moscow Olympic Games.<sup>15</sup> David Kanin's contemporary history of the 1980 boycott explained how many Global South countries resented the Cold War imposition on the Olympics, particularly when it overpowered

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<sup>15</sup> Recent MA thesis by Louis Brosseau focuses on Africa and does a good job of explaining the links between 1976 and 1980. Louis Brosseau, ““Moscou 1980: la séduction olympique de l'Afrique. Diplomatie sportive et relations soviéto-africaines (1917- 1980),” MA thesis (Université Laval, 2024).

their campaigns on apartheid.<sup>16</sup> Sylvain Dufraisie's recent work on Cold War sport has taken a much more global approach and seen how these traditionally bipolar moments between USA and USSR are best studied from a multi-polar perspective, particularly looking at how countries caught in the middle reacted.<sup>17</sup> This dissertation fits into these global and multipolar approaches to the 1980 Olympics and helps us to better understand how the 1980 boycott developed in both global and local contexts.

In contrast with the 1980 Olympics, historians have understudied the 1976 Montreal Games. There is no detailed work on how the 1976 Olympics links to events in 1980, and there are few in depth accounts of what took place in Montreal focused on understanding the African walkout. Much of the literature on Montreal has focused on the construction issues, spiraling costs, and on the diplomatic issue over Taiwan. The African boycott has been examined in only a few articles and chapters despite its importance.<sup>18</sup> The Montreal boycott generated political change at the highest levels: the British Commonwealth and the United. But despite this notable impact on global sport and politics, Montreal has remained understudied, leading to questions as to why this is the case. Malcolm Maclean, the former head of the British Society of Sports Historians, asked whether this absence was due to a lack of interest or to a deliberate shunning of an African narrative in favor of focusing on the Cold War superpowers in 1980.<sup>19</sup> This lack of study of 1976 by itself is unfortunate, but by not examining 1976 it is then harder to link

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<sup>16</sup> David B. Kanin, *A Political History of the Olympic Games* (Westview Press, Inc., 1982), 139.

<sup>17</sup> Sylvain Dufraisie, *Une Histoire Sportive de la Guerre Froide* (Nouveau Monde éditions, 2023).

<sup>18</sup> Éric Monnin and Catherine Monnin, "Le boycott politique des Jeux olympiques de Montréal," *Relations internationales* 2, no. 134 (2008): 93-113; Donald Macintosh and Michael Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> Malcolm MacLean, "Reclaiming the 1976 Montreal Boycott from Olympic marginalisation," *Idrottsforum*, 15 February 2022, <https://idrottsforum.org/forumbloggen/reclaiming-the-1976-montreal-boycott-from-olympic-marginalisation/>.

Montreal to Moscow and to show how the 1980 preparation was affected by the anti-apartheid struggle in 1976.

### **Cold War, Decolonization, and the Olympics**

The 1980 Moscow Olympic boycott has been framed as a Cold War crisis in sport. The 1976 Montreal Olympic boycott was a crisis of Decolonization. These two boycotts reflect the two largest political processes of the post-war world. Together, 1976 and 1980 show how these processes overlapped with one another and merged in what James Hershberg has referred to as a “murky nexus.”<sup>20</sup> This approach to the postwar period, explaining how Decolonization and the Cold War interacted and competed with one another, has become a larger part of the field in recent decades.<sup>21</sup> The question often remains as to which of these processes takes precedence in different scenarios. Some historians have argued that the Cold War had less influence over local events than previously believed.<sup>22</sup> Yet, this dissertation argues that despite the prevalence of the decolonization struggle in sport in the 1970s, the Cold War ended up dominating in the crisis moment of 1980. The Cold War was difficult to escape. It created an international environment in which everyone had to participate, whether they wanted to or not. In 1976, when the Cold War still lulled despite a waning détente, the anti-apartheid struggle remained at the fore in sport. This would continue for the next few years, until December 1979, when the invasion of Afghanistan pushed anti-apartheid issues to one side and the Cold War dominated the Olympics.

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<sup>20</sup> James Hershberg, “Series Preface,” in *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956-1964*, ed. Sergey Mazov (Stanford University Press, 2010), ix.

<sup>21</sup> The big shift started with: Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Edward H. Judge and John W. Langdon, *The Struggle Against Imperialism: Anticolonialism and the Cold War* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 1.

How should we approach the overlap of decolonization with the Cold War? Jeremi Suri argued that the Cold War framework in the postwar period is often a poor tool for analyzing the histories of many decolonizing nations since it “privileges state actors in the United States and Europe and neglects local forces of change, many of which had little apparent connection to the basic issues and personalities of the Cold War.”<sup>23</sup> This project shows Suri’s argument within the context of Africa and the 1980 Olympics. But the Cold War could often override the concerns of decolonized states, prioritizing the desires or visions of Moscow and Washington. It then became up to decolonizing states to navigate a Cold War environment with their wishes pushed to the side. But my argument also shows what Suri is suggesting when it examines the African response to Cold War pressures. By taking the perspective of African states, it is possible to see these local forces within the larger global struggle. Despite the best efforts of the USA and USSR to make African countries understand matters from their perspectives, countries caught in the middle challenged these interpretations and offered their own in return.

While Cold War concerns dominated 1980, the period from 1976-1979 was about decolonization. Much of this dissertation, therefore, focuses on the decolonization struggle in sport and its evolution in the post-war period. The anti-apartheid campaign formed a part of this decolonization struggle between the Global South and North.<sup>24</sup> By looking at this period from the perspective of the Global South, it is possible to see the preparations for Moscow in a different light. African states had different priorities from the West and East when it came to the Olympics. By “taking the Cold War lens off” our analysis of Moscow and the period of 1976-

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<sup>23</sup> Jeremi Suri, “The Cold War, Decolonization, and Global Social Awakenings: Historical Intersections,” *Cold War History* 6, no. 3 (2006): 354.

<sup>24</sup> See the works of Vijay Prashad: Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (The New Press, 2007); Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (Verso Books, 2014).

1980, it is possible to refocus on how during this same period African states took the offensive on isolating South Africa and used their participation as a weapon against Global North countries and institutions. A different picture emerges through this reframing compared with traditional Cold War histories of the Moscow Olympics.<sup>25</sup> Moscow becomes another part of the larger decolonization struggle in sport and not only a Cold War boycott, at least from the African perspective.

This project also fits into historical analysis of the larger Cold War cultural struggle that raged in almost every field. “Virtually everything,” Tony Shaw has argued, “from sport to ballet to comic books and space travel, assumed political significance and hence potentially could be deployed as a weapon both to shape opinion at home and to subvert societies abroad.”<sup>26</sup> The Olympics became part of this cultural struggle within the Cold War in two ways. The first was as an athletic competition where men and women representing different nations struggled physically against one another, embodying their political and economic systems in a fight where only one could achieve supremacy.<sup>27</sup> Sport in the Cold War, as Robert Edelman and Christopher Young have argued, was “the hardest form of soft power and the softest form of hard power” -

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Connelly, “Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence,” *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (2000): 739. Also see: Matthew Connelly, “Rethinking the Cold War and Decolonization: The Grand Strategy of the Algerian War for Independence,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 2 (2001): 221-245.

<sup>26</sup> Tony Shaw, “The Politics of Cold War Culture,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3, no. 3 (2001): 59.

<sup>27</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 143: Hobsbawm described how “The imagined community of missions seems more real as a team of eleven named people” playing football - the same can be applied to Olympic teams and in other sports.

bodies were trained, tested, and sacrificed in athletic contests for the glory of different political systems.<sup>28</sup>

Another competition was through hosting sporting events such as the Olympic Games and demonstrating the success of a political and economic system through a well-organized, entertaining event. Megaevents, such as the Olympics, enabled countries to control what tourists saw and craft international impressions of the host city or nation.<sup>29</sup> These events provided opportunities for diplomatic relationships to develop through the host's ability to bring together leaders of participating nations.<sup>30</sup> The Moscow Olympic Games were the first to take place in a socialist country and an opportunity to bring thousands of tourists to witness socialism up close. The Soviets wanted to use the Olympics to shape opinion both at home, in the socialist bloc, and in the West and Global South. Soviet officials, as expected, took this opportunity extremely seriously and sought to ensure the Games were a success by being well-organized. Moscow was more than a sports competition. The 1980 Olympics provided a monumental opportunity for the Soviet Union to define itself in the eyes of the world as a modern state filled with friendly people, successful athletes, and world-leading facilities. Or as Robert Edelman has put it, the Soviet Union could present itself as a "normal and civilized" country with "a well-developed traditional and elite culture and a comfortable standard of living - in other words, a place that

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Edelman and Christopher Young, "Introduction: Explaining Cold War Sport," in *The Whole World Was Watching: Sport in the Cold War*, ed. Robert Edelman and Christopher Young (Stanford University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>29</sup> Jonathon Grix and Donna Lee, "Soft Power, Sports Mega-Events and Emerging States: the Lure of the Politics of Attraction," *Global Society* 27, no. 4 (2013): 527-8.

<sup>30</sup> Judit Trunkos and Bob Heere, "Sport Diplomacy: A Review of How Sports Can Be Used to Improve International Relations," in *Case Studies in Sport Diplomacy*, ed. Craig Esherick, Robert E. Baker, Steven Jackson, and Michael Sam (FiT Publishing, 2017), 10.

was really not so different from the rest of the world.”<sup>31</sup> While other histories have focused on how the USSR sought to present itself, this dissertation will help answer the question of what reached back to Africa and whether the soft-power campaign was successful.

While Cold War sport was very important to the development of the Olympics in postwar era, the Olympics were also an important site of Global North versus Global South struggle as well. Looking at the period of 1976-1980 helps us to understand this struggle. The Olympics was an excellent location for this fight for similar reasons to why it was a fruitful Cold War battlefield: participation and legitimacy. In the postwar period, decolonizing states sought to use their growing numbers in global sport to pursue their own political goals. The isolation of apartheid South Africa was one of these desires. The Olympics provided an excellent opportunity to isolate South Africa from a major world event in which nearly every state could take part thus damaging the legitimacy of the state. The struggle to isolate South Africa was a contest between the Global North, in the form of the IOC and Western sporting ideology, against the Global South, represented by the rising number of decolonized nations joining the Olympic movement that often saw sport as an extension of foreign policy. The IOC suffered challenges from the Global South during the postwar period, most dangerously with Indonesia’s development in 1963 of the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO) that threatened to split the Olympic movement.<sup>32</sup> The struggle against apartheid and the threatened boycotts in 1968 and 1972 were another manifestation of this. The Montreal boycott and the interactions between the IOC,

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Edelman, “Moscow 1980: Stalinism or Good, Clean Fun?” in *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*, ed. Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (State University of New York Press, 2006), 150.

<sup>32</sup> Chris A. Connolly, “The Politics of the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO),” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 9 (2012): 1311-1324.



USSR, UN, and African states in the years that followed forms a part of this longer history of Global South resistance to the continued domination of world sport by the Global North.

A vital part of this decolonization struggle inside and outside of sport was the fight against apartheid. It is also important to think about how this project fits into this fight. Anti-apartheid has been a popular topic for sports historians for a long time. Montreal appears in many works about the anti-apartheid movement since it was the cause for the Commonwealth's Gleneagles Declaration in 1977 that promised to isolate South Africa in sport.<sup>33</sup> But usually the story then shifts to 1981 and South Africa's contentious tour of New Zealand.<sup>34</sup> The Moscow Olympics have largely fallen out of this picture despite the African threats to boycott the Games over French rugby contacts with South Africa in 1979 and the provocative British tour of South Africa in 1980.<sup>35</sup> The struggle within the UN over a Convention Against Apartheid in Sport has similarly not been discussed. These events help us understand how the anti-apartheid campaign continued through this period from the mid-1970's into to the 1980's.

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<sup>33</sup> For instance: Trevor Richards, *Dancing on Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*, (Bridget Williams Books, 1999); Malcolm Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts: New Zealand Attitudes to Race Relations in South Africa 1921-94* (Auckland University Press, 1998); Mihir Bose, *Sporting Colours: Sport and Politics in South Africa*, (Robson Books, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Hamish McDougall, "'The Whole World's Watching': New Zealand, International Opinion, and the 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour," *Journal of Sport History* 45, no. 2 (2018): 202-223; Malcolm Maclean, "Football as Social Critique: Protest movements, rugby and history in Aotearoa, New Zealand," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 17, no. 2-3 (2000): 255-277.

<sup>35</sup> James Alexander Ivey, "Double Standards: South Africa, British Rugby and the Moscow Olympics," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, no. 1 (2019): 104-121.

## **Chapter Outlines**

Chapter 1 explains the roots of the 1976 Montreal boycott by tracking the anti-apartheid movement in sport from its start in the 1940s through to the 1970s. The chapter will provide important background to understand why 1976 happened and how it was the logical outcome of the evolving anti-apartheid struggle in sport and the Olympics specifically. Chapter 2 focuses on what took place in Montreal from the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) call for a boycott to the way that it played out both in Canada and back in Africa. This chapter demonstrates the chaos of events in Montreal and then explains the interpretations of this surprising, drastic action.

Chapters 3 through 6 focus on the period from 1976-1979 and the legacy of Montreal. These chapters overlap with one another but focus on the story from different angles and the perspectives of various organizations, thus showing how complex the international situation was following Montreal. Chapter three examines the USSR's interpretations of Montreal and how the Soviet Union went about trying to prevent a second African boycott, this one of Moscow. The 1980 Organizing Committee (OrgCommittee) and Soviet state sought to persuade African countries to come to Moscow through various means including aid, propaganda, and close personal relationships with politicians and sports leaders. The chapter finishes with the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa's (SCSA) meeting in December 1979 in which African countries voted to go to Moscow. Chapter four looks at the SCSA and its struggle to maintain its unity in the post-Montreal era. The SCSA had been the mobilizing force behind the boycott threats of the 1968 Mexico City and 1972 Munich Olympics. These threats had bolstered the SCSA's reputation. But in Montreal the SCSA learned that threatening and conducting boycotts were very different things. While the USSR and IOC considered the SCSA at the height of its power

in 1976, looking closely at the organization shows how it expended most of its political capital in Montreal and suffered internal discord in the years following.

The struggle over the United Nations' Convention Against Apartheid in Sport is covered in chapter five. In the aftermath of Montreal, African countries sought to develop international legislation that would finally isolate South Africa in sport. The proposed United Nations convention threatened to normalize boycotts like Montreal by calling on signatories and all UN membership to boycott events involving countries that played with apartheid. The Soviet Union and IOC fought the UN as they believed the convention would split global sport and spell the end of the Olympics. This was prescient as in 1979 both Britain and France restarted rugby contacts with South Africa, which is covered in chapter six. South Africa challenged its isolation with the Olympics just a year away and found willing collaborators in Western Europe. The SCSA and Soviets sought to maintain South African isolation and prevent these tours. The SCSA threatened to boycott Moscow if France or Britain played with South Africa and then were invited to the Games. The USSR bowed to pressure and claimed it would disinvite countries that played with South Africa to ensure massive, global participation at its Olympics. In December 1979, there was a real possibility of a second African boycott. However, due to the Soviet work over the previous three years, SCSA members voted to ignore South African provocations this time around.

A week after the SCSA voted to go to Moscow, the USSR invaded Afghanistan. This set off the US-led Cold War boycott of the Moscow Olympic Games. Chapter seven briefly covers the efforts by both the USSR and USA to win support in 1980 in Africa, but it focuses largely on how civil society in several African states, through newspaper editorials and letters, interpreted the Moscow boycott and their governments' decisions to stay or go. The key issues in the

African press were not human rights in the USSR or the invasion of Afghanistan as the US government hoped. Rather journalists and readers complained about American support for apartheid, its imperialist foreign policy, and its lack of support for the African boycott in 1976. Chapter eight contains a brief analysis of the Soviet media output and propaganda campaign during the Olympics and African newspaper coverage of the Moscow Games in July and August 1980 to analyze how effective the 1980 Olympics was as a soft power event. The conclusion rounds up the main questions presented in this research.

## **Sources**

This project uses materials primarily from the IOC, British, French, and Russian archives, as well as a large collection of African newspapers at the British Library. The IOC archival material was collected from files at the Olympic Studies Centre in Lausanne and covers both the IOC's meeting minutes as well as materials collected from individual IOC members and National Olympic Committees around the world. The most important files are those on the major events, such as the 1976 Olympic boycott files, and the meeting minutes of the IOC Tripartite Commission that negotiated with the United Nations on the Convention Against Apartheid in Sport in chapter five. The core sources for chapter six are files from the National Archives in Kew, London and the Diplomatic Archives in Paris and Nantes. These archives hold material from the foreign ministries of both countries, covering both Britain and France's relationships with South Africa and other African countries. These archives demonstrate the ways in which sports contacts with South Africa were an issue for states rather than just for sports organizations.

Soviet documents provide important details about the USSR's interpretation of events in 1976 and 1980, as well as efforts to win African support for the Moscow Olympic Games. A major source for this material is the document collection *Five Rings under the Kremlin's Stars*. The staff at the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI) compiled these files concerning the Olympic Games. The documents cover both domestic and foreign preparations and provide an incredibly useful set of materials for anyone interested in the Soviet Union's approach to hosting the Olympic Games. *Five Rings* is complemented by other documents collected from RGANI and from the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF). The files in both archives helped construct a picture of Soviet propaganda efforts and sports aid to African countries during 1976-1979, which form the basis of chapter three, as well as providing correspondence from the Ukrainian delegation at the United Nations in chapter five.

## Chapter 1 THE ANTI-APARTHEID BOYCOTT UP TO MONTREAL

The mass withdrawal of 26 African countries from the Montreal Olympic Games in July 1976 started the boycott era of the Olympics, which would last until 1988. The Montreal boycott, the largest to hit the Olympic Games before 1980, saw almost every African National Olympic Committee (NOC) sit out the global sports competition. While African states had threatened to withdraw from the Games *en masse* in 1968 and 1972, the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) intervention prevented actual boycotts from coming to fruition. However, the Montreal protest sent a message to the IOC that the anti-apartheid struggle had entered a new phase, one where the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) and individual African states would no longer tolerate any sports contacts with South Africa. This was a powerful, public statement showing that apartheid could divide world sport into separate camps and one that established the anti-apartheid struggle as the dominant global sports issue between the Montreal boycott in 1976 and the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

This chapter tracks the growth of the international anti-apartheid movement in sport from its inception during the 1950s to the two events in 1976 that directly led to the Montreal boycott: the Soweto Uprising and the New Zealand All-Blacks rugby tour of South Africa. The first section will examine the start of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa from the 1940s and 1950s. The second section will show how the decolonization of Africa led to the Mexico City boycott threat in 1968, the expulsion of South Africa from the IOC in 1970, and the expulsion of Rhodesia from the IOC in 1975. The third section will explain the bitter conflict over Britain, France and New Zealand's choice to play rugby against South Africa in the early 1970s.

Ultimately, these rugby contacts increased the tension between the anti-apartheid movement and western sports bodies, resulting in the decision to boycott the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games.

### **Early Struggles against Apartheid in Sport: origins to 1960s**

The Montreal boycott was the result of the long, evolving campaign against apartheid South Africa in sport from the end of the Second World War. Policies of racial segregation in sports teams and competitions had become the norm in South Africa in the late-nineteenth century, predating the formal implementation of apartheid laws by the South African National Party in 1948. During the late-nineteenth century, as many Western countries formed national sports bodies and international organizations to manage global competition, South Africa gained admittance to these bodies with groups allowing whites-only membership. During this period, no South African laws banned non-white participation in sports. As anti-apartheid campaigner Sam Ramsamy explained about early South Africa, “racial discrimination in sport was only a social practice” – but effectively maintained.<sup>36</sup>

Reports of pervasive race-based discrimination in South Africa led to the earliest efforts to exclude the country from international sporting events in the 1930s. The organizers of the 1934 British Empire Games, the precursor to the Commonwealth Games, stripped Johannesburg of its hosting duties following complaints about South Africa’s discriminatory racial policies, such as dictating the racial composition of visiting teams.<sup>37</sup> Many non-white athletes represented countries in the Empire, and many of these athletes held legitimate medal hopes. Canada’s Sam

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<sup>36</sup> Sam Ramsamy, *Apartheid the Real Hurdle: Sport in South Africa & The International Boycott* (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1982), 9.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce Kidd, “Campaign Against Sport in South Africa,” *International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 43, no. 4 (1988): 648.

Richardson, for instance, was a gold-medal candidate in both the long-jump and the triple jump in 1934. The British Empire Games Federation moved the event to London to allow multi-racial teams to compete, but it refused to interfere with the domestic politics of the South African state or force mixed competition in sport. In the eyes of the Federation, it was not the duty of a sports organization to dictate to other countries what their domestic politics should look like.

Racial segregation of sport in South Africa continued unabated despite this snub. Many non-white South African athletes formed their own sports organizations due to the prevalence of whites-only clubs and with little hope of representing South Africa internationally. These non-white or non-racial organizations sought affiliation with international sports bodies to compete abroad. They also appealed to international bodies and national organizations in different countries to pressure South African sport's racial attitudes. Black, South African weightlifters requested the British Amateur Weightlifters' Association's assistance in gaining representation abroad in 1946.<sup>38</sup> However, the British association declined to assist, feeling this would be deemed interference in South African domestic affairs. Faced with little prospect of representing South Africa, some non-white athletes emigrated to pursue their careers. Ron Elland, a South African weightlifter forbidden from representing his country, competed for the British Olympic team at the 1948 Olympic Games. Jake N'tuli won the British Empire Flyweight title in 1953 but was not allowed to compete in South Africa, due to his race, despite his international success in boxing.

There were, however, some non-white sports bodies that succeeded in appealing to international organizations for recognition, thus challenging apartheid separation in sport. The first case came in table tennis. South Africa had two different table tennis organizations, each

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<sup>38</sup> Ramsamy, *Apartheid*, 10-11.



hoping in 1950 to become affiliated to the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF). The South Africa Table Tennis Union (SATTU) was a whites-only organization; its rival, the South Africa Table Tennis Board (SATTB), was a non-racial organization. Because the international federation had a non-discrimination policy, it selected the non-racial SATTB as a member in 1956.<sup>39</sup> In 1957, a SATTB table tennis team became the first non-white athletes to represent South Africa abroad in the World Table Tennis Championships in Stockholm. Though the team lost every game, the tournament was symbolically important in the struggle against apartheid sport.

As in table tennis, white and non-white organizations vied to represent South Africa in FIFA, the international football body. FIFA rebuffed an attempt by the non-white South African Soccer Federation (SASF) to become a member in 1954 because the white South African Football Association (SAFA) was already affiliated. FIFA only allowed one representative body per country and asked the two organizations to find a compromise, which proved impossible. As F.W. Fell, the president of the white-body, explained to FIFA: "even if my association desired to do so (and it certainly does not desire to do so) the laws of South Africa and the established practice would preclude my association" from coming to any compromise or playing with SASF.<sup>40</sup> FIFA sent a fact-finding mission to South Africa in 1956 to investigate discriminatory policies while still hoping to broker a resolution between the two bodies.<sup>41</sup> Yet, compromise

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<sup>39</sup> Peter Donnelly, "Sport and Human Rights," *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 11, no.14 (2008): 386.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in: Marc Keech, "Africa and the struggle against Apartheid sport," in *Sport in the African World*, ed. John Nauright and Mahfoud Amara (Routledge, 2018), 75.

<sup>41</sup> Keech, "Africa and the struggle against Apartheid sport," 76.

proved impossible and FIFA decided to suspend the white-body SAFA from international competition in 1961, later expelling them completely in 1976.<sup>42</sup>

Anti-apartheid activists supported non-racial organizations' attempts to gain membership in international bodies as a way of increasing pressure on the South African government to end segregated sport. The Committee for International Recognition, formed in Durban in 1955, sought to resist apartheid through sport since "South Africa's sporting policy was by now inextricably bound up with the Nationalist government's political and social policy."<sup>43</sup> The Committee aimed to get "a number of prominent non-white sporting federations (such as cricket, weightlifting and rugby) to again apply for affiliation to the respective international body."<sup>44</sup> Activists hoped that by promoting non-white and, later, non-racial sports organizations that it would force international bodies to admit these more representative bodies over white South African organizations, as in the case of the South African Table Tennis Board, or threaten the position of the existing whites-only bodies, such as SAFA.

The National Party, meanwhile, moved to formalize apartheid in sport. The National Party passed the apartheid laws originally in 1948 but did not directly implement these laws in sport until 1956, instead relying on the broad effect of apartheid on society to cover sport. South African sport initially followed its "traditional policy" where "the national sports organizations were the ones who enforced a color bar and, thus, gave no need for government policy."<sup>45</sup> This meant that, initially, the government rarely interfered directly in sport, normally allowing the national sports bodies to enforce the country's segregationist policies. There were two high-

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<sup>42</sup> Kidd, "Campaign Against Sport," 652.

<sup>43</sup> Ramsamy, *Apartheid*, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Keech, "Africa and the struggle against Apartheid sport," 76.

<sup>45</sup> Richard E. Lapchick, "South Africa: Sport and Apartheid Politics," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 445, no. 1 (1979): 158.

profile exceptions. In 1951, the government intervened to prevent black boxers from fighting new British Empire flyweight champion Jake N'tuli in South Africa, forcing N'tuli to fight outside the country.<sup>46</sup> In 1955, the Bloemfontein City Council banned black spectators from its newly built stadium for a rugby game between South Africa and the British Lions, fearing that blacks would cheer for the visitors and thus humiliating South Africa internationally.<sup>47</sup>

The triumph of the non-white table tennis association prompted formal and extensive government intervention in sport. In 1956, Dr. Ebenhaezer Donges, South Africa's Minister for the Interior, announced a new sports policy that formalized separately organized white and non-white sport and established that "there could be no mixed sport within South Africa's borders."<sup>48</sup> This policy extended to international visitors coming to South Africa, who "should respect [South Africa's] customs, as South Africa would respect theirs when playing abroad."<sup>49</sup> The new laws also hampered the work of non-white activists and athletes by withholding passports from them so that they could not travel abroad to compete or attend meetings.<sup>50</sup> The same policy would extend to mixed-race teams. Only white teams would receive government permission and assistance to travel abroad.

The formalization of apartheid in sports, far from stymying the work of multi-racial activists, created the conditions for those same activists to challenge South Africa in an international forum. The South African Sports Association (SASA), formed in 1958 by colored activist and poet Dennis Brutus and white writer Alan Paton, took over the fight in the

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<sup>46</sup> Paul Martin, "South African Sport: Apartheid's Achilles Heel?" *The World Today* 40, no. 6 (1984): 235.

<sup>47</sup> Joan Brickhill, *Race Against Race: South Africa's 'Multi-National' Sports Fraud* (International Defence & Aid Fund, 1976), 7.

<sup>48</sup> Lapchick, "South Africa: Sport and Apartheid Politics," 158.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

international arena.<sup>51</sup> SASA aimed to challenge segregated sport through a two-fold approach. The first was to bring together 20 non-racial sports organizations representing over 70,000 athletes under one umbrella, thus building the legitimacy of SASA as representing a large athletic bloc within South Africa.<sup>52</sup> The second was to campaign internationally for the acceptance of these non-racial bodies into international sports organizations in place of the existing whites-only bodies.<sup>53</sup> SASA had early success when, thanks to its advocacy work, the USSR called for IOC members to discuss South Africa's participation in the Olympic movement at the IOC's Rome meeting in 1959.<sup>54</sup> The IOC ruled out taking action against South Africa before the 1960 Rome Olympic Games, but SASA had forced the issue of apartheid onto the global stage.<sup>55</sup> SASA began to organize allies, including newly decolonized nations and the Communist bloc, into an international campaign to isolate South Africa and fight apartheid in sport.

The IOC's failure to deal with the South African issue before the 1960 Olympics was complicated by the March 21, 1960, Sharpeville Massacre, when South African police officers fired on black protestors, killing sixty-seven and injuring 187.<sup>56</sup> International condemnation followed Sharpeville and mobilized the burgeoning international anti-apartheid campaigns, but this growing global outrage was not enough to prevent South Africa competing at Rome. The

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<sup>51</sup> Scarlett Cornelissen, "'Resolving 'the South African problem'': Transnational activism, ideology and race in the Olympic movement, 1960-91," in *Sport Past and Present in South Africa: (Trans)forming the Nation*, ed. Scarlett Cornelissen and Albert Grundlingh (Routledge, 2012), 157.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew P. Llewellyn and Toby C. Rider, "Dennis Brutus and the South African Non Racial Olympic Committee in Exile, 1966-1970," *South African Historical Journal* 72, no. 2 (2020): 251.

<sup>53</sup> Keech, "Africa and the struggle against Apartheid sport," 76.

<sup>54</sup> Ramsamy, *Apartheid*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Lapchick, "South Africa: Sport and Apartheid Politics," 156.

<sup>56</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*, 40.

South African government's domestic response was to clamp down on the two major anti-apartheid political parties - the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. However, the government largely left SASA alone in the aftermath of Sharpeville, which would lead to sport becoming an important site in the global struggle against apartheid.<sup>57</sup>

### **Escalation of the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in the Olympics: 1960 - 1972**

The shock of the Sharpeville massacre galvanized a group of new decolonized states whose emergence on the global stage initially threatened and ultimately transformed the Olympic movement. The IOC had remained aloof from the apartheid discussion until the 1960s. But the landscape of international sports changed dramatically over the following decade as "African, Caribbean and Asian nations with the support of socialist states entered the international sporting fold behind the rhetoric of anti-imperialism to challenge white, western, capitalistic sporting interests."<sup>58</sup> In 1956, just before the start of the major wave of African decolonization in 1960, there were 67 participating nations at the Melbourne Olympics. By 1960 that had increased to 83 countries; and by 1964, there were 93 countries participating. Within eight years the IOC had admitted 26 new nations, most of them from Africa and the Caribbean, who opposed the policies of South Africa. Decolonization changed the composition of the Olympic movement and thus forced the IOC to change its attitude towards South Africa.

South Africa competed in the Rome Olympics in 1960. It would not compete again until Barcelona in 1992 as negotiations to end apartheid allowed for its reentry. SASA, with the help

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<sup>57</sup> Marc Keech and Barrie Houlihan. "Sport and the End of Apartheid," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 88, no. 349 (1999): 113.

<sup>58</sup> Llewellyn and Rider, "Dennis Brutus," 263.

of the USSR, started the process of South Africa's isolation from the Olympics when IOC members discussed apartheid's discriminating effect on sport in the country in 1959. However, the IOC decided at that time to do nothing. In 1960, South Africa's position in the Olympics was already under clear threat. In 1961, South Africa would draw more pressure onto itself when Minister for the Interior Jan de Klerk restated the ruling National Party government's opposition to mixed teams.<sup>59</sup> Following this announcement, SASA, which re-formed itself as the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) in 1962, complained to the IOC that South Africa was violating article 4 of the Olympic Charter through discrimination on the basis of race. The IOC met in Moscow in June 1962 with South Africa as a central issue. IOC members voted in favor of giving South Africa an ultimatum: select an Olympic team without prejudice or face suspension. Reginald Honey, South Africa's IOC member, was conspicuously absent from the meeting, perhaps hoping to avoid a confrontation on the matter. The white South African National Olympic Committee (SANOC) would have until the IOC meeting in October 1963 to make the required changes to allow it to compete in Tokyo in 1964.

South Africa was not the only front of the IOC's increasingly tense skirmishes with newly decolonized states that undermined the integrity of the Olympic movement. After Indonesia refused to provide visas to Israeli and Taiwanese athletes for the IOC-sponsored 1962 Asian Games, the IOC suspended the country for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. In response, President Sukarno created a rival competition, the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO), held in Jakarta in November 1963. GANEFO promised would-be members to shift decision-making power in international sport from an oligarchy of conservative, Western elites to a more democratic coalition of decolonized countries. To emphasize this point, Sukarno

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<sup>59</sup> Keech, "Africa and the struggle against Apartheid sport," 77.

described the IOC as “a tool of the imperialists and colonialists,” criticizing its defense of South Africa and its “no politics in sport” ideology.<sup>60</sup> The IOC could see the allure of this message to African nations. The rise of GANEFO represented “the deepening division between developed and developing states within the Olympic movement” - and the unwillingness to act on South Africa was one of its greatest fissures.<sup>61</sup>

In the early 1960s, the South Africa issue hampered the IOC’s rapport with the developing world. The IOC planned to follow its first meeting in a socialist country in Moscow in 1962 with its first in sub-Saharan Africa in Nairobi in 1963. But when the Kenyan government refused visas to the South African and Portuguese delegations, the IOC moved the meeting to West Germany.<sup>62</sup> The incident stoked tension between the IOC and the Kenyan government. The IOC resented Kenya’s intervention in its affairs, citing politics and sports were not to be mixed; the Kenyan government refused to change its position and allow representatives from settler colonial states into its territory. These tensions would continue between the IOC and African governments more broadly in the build-up to the Tokyo Games in 1964.

Events in late 1963 and early 1964 would force the IOC, at last, to give the anti-apartheid movement its first major Olympic victory. In 1963, South African police arrested, shot, and imprisoned Dennis Brutus, the co-founder of SANROC, as he sought to leave the country to reach the IOC meeting in Baden-Baden. In the same year, the white South African National Olympic Committee refused to change its selection policy before Tokyo in 1964; South Africa

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<sup>60</sup> David Webster, “Sport as Third World Nationalism: The Games of the New Emerging Forces and Indonesia’s Systemic Challenge under Sukarno,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 23, no. 4 (2016): 402.

<sup>61</sup> Keech and Houlihan, “Sport and the End of Apartheid,” 113.

<sup>62</sup> Michelle Sikes, “The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend? A Clash of Anti-Apartheid Tactics and Targets in the Olympic Movement of the Early 1960s,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 37, no. 7 (2020): 520-541.

would send another segregated team to the Olympics. The die was cast. South Africa's open discrimination, even after IOC warnings, combined with wider moral arguments and public relations pressure on the IOC from "non-white South Africans and supported by Scandinavian, Soviet, and Brazilian sportspeople."<sup>63</sup> This pressure forced the IOC to withdraw its invitation to South Africa in January 1964. South Africa was, temporarily at least, out of the Olympics because of global anger at its apartheid policies.

South Africa's Olympic ban proved that international pressure could affect change in world sport. During the rest of the 1960s, SANROC pursued the anti-apartheid boycott vigorously at international sports meetings, through letter campaigns, and by developing relationships with officials from socialist and developing states.<sup>64</sup> Dennis Brutus' work, along with that of other activists such as Sam Ramsamy, built pressure on South Africa and forced its government onto the defensive. Historians Matthew Llewellyn and Toby Rider argued that "the years 1966 to 1970 marked the apex of SANROC's fight against apartheid sport" with the South Africa losing active membership in several sporting organizations, including FIFA in 1964, the Amateur International Boxing Association in 1968, and the International Weightlifting Association in 1969.<sup>65</sup> SANROC campaigned for South African isolation until the country embraced non-racial sport, but it was not alone in this struggle.

Sociologist Håkan Thörn claimed that the anti-apartheid movement was not monolithic but instead a "movement of movements" encompassing a range of groups and individuals with

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<sup>63</sup> Kidd, "Campaign Against Sport in South Africa," 652; Llewellyn and Rider, "Dennis Brutus," 257.

<sup>64</sup> Llewellyn and Rider, "Dennis Brutus," 263.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



different aims and ideas about how to pursue their struggle.<sup>66</sup> SANROC led the charge against South Africa, both as SASA and as SANROC, through the 1950s and into the 1960s. However, it was soon joined in the 1963 by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and then the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) in 1966. The OAU coordinated African countries' foreign policies, especially on the issue of South Africa. At its first meeting, OAU members agreed to the "blanket isolation" of South Africa in all fields.<sup>67</sup> The OAU would later task the SCSA with enacting this policy in sport.<sup>68</sup> The SCSA's job would be twofold: to coordinate the development of sport across African states and to seek South Africa's isolation in global sport from its headquarters in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

SANROC and the SCSA both worked towards South African isolation, but they had different aims and different resources at their disposal. SANROC wanted South Africa to shift to non-racial sport. It would protest and call for the suspension of all-white organizations. But it promoted non-racial organizations and encouraged international bodies to accept and play with those teams. SANROC wanted the South African government to understand that embracing non-racial sport would end the sports blockade. However, the OAU and SCSA pursued "blanket isolation," which meant no international sport for South Africa at-all, regardless of whether the team was non-racial or white. Because the SCSA coordinated African states political power, whereas SANROC was a civic organization, the leadership of isolating South Africa began to shift by the mid-1960s towards the SCSA.

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<sup>66</sup> Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (Macmillan Press, 2006), 20.

<sup>67</sup> Sikes, "The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend?" 529.

<sup>68</sup> Pascal Camara, "A Divided House: The Foundation and Evolution of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, 1965-2013," *Sport in History* 43, no.4 (2023): 494.

African states and the SCSA began to test the viability of the sports boycott as a tool to isolate South Africa, and white-ruled Rhodesia, at the football World Cup and Commonwealth Games. In 1966, African countries protested their single place at the World Cup, which came through a play-off match against an Oceanian team.<sup>69</sup> European and Latin American teams held 14 out of 16 places at the competition. African countries refused to play in the 1966 World Cup or qualifiers until at least one spot was guaranteed for their teams. FIFA, facing a revolt from its new members and the prospect of losing a whole continent from its global football competition, relented to pressure from the boycott in 1970. African participation provided legitimacy to the global reputation of the World Cup.

The protest against FIFA coincided with a threatened boycott of the 1966 Commonwealth Games in Jamaica.<sup>70</sup> South African participation in the Games had ended after its withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 1961. But Rhodesia quickly replaced South Africa as the main issue after its Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. The white-minority government's refusal to transition to black-majority rule led to its international isolation supported by the UN but not by many sports organizations. African countries threatened to boycott the Commonwealth Games if Rhodesia competed. They argued that participation in Jamaica would provide Ian Smith's illegal government with international recognition through sport. Again, the boycott threat was a success. The Commonwealth Games Federation disinvited

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<sup>69</sup> See: Simon J. Rofo and Alan Tomlinson, "The Untold Story of FIFA's Diplomacy and the 1966 World Cup: North Korea, Africa and Sir Stanley Rous," *The International History Review* 42, no. 3 (2020): 505-525; Paul Darby, "Politics, Resistance and Patronage: The African Boycott of the 1966 World Cup and its Ramifications," *Soccer and Society* 20, no. 7-8 (2019): 936-947.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Little, "The Paralympic Protest Paradox: The Politics of Rhodesian Participation in the Paralympic Games, 1960-1980," *Proceedings: International Symposium for Olympic Research* (2008): 124.

Rhodesia and refused to allow the country to compete until after it transitioned to Zimbabwe in 1980.

Mounting international pressure on South Africa forced the government to make some changes in 1967. New Prime Minister Balthazar Johannes Vorster announced that “that blacks could be a part of the South African team” for the Olympics but only on the condition “that separate trials for whites and blacks would be held to select its members.”<sup>71</sup> The team would be selected separately before meeting up outside of South Africa and travelling to the 1968 Mexico City Olympics together. This policy sought to bypass the IOC’s objections by fielding a mixed team while still forbidding inter-racial competition within South Africa. The government tinkered with its own policies a little while keeping apartheid in sport with the hope that these changes would give IOC enough cover to let South Africa back into the Games.

South Africa’s changes intrigued the IOC. It sent a three-person fact-finding mission to South Africa in September 1967. The mission, composed of Lord Killanin (Michael Morris, Ireland, and future IOC-President), Sir Ade Ademola (Nigeria), and Reginald Alexander (Kenya), examined discrimination in South African sport. The mission findings argued that SANOC was making changes, but was limited in moving towards full, integrated sport since it “could not operate in open defiance of its government.”<sup>72</sup> Lord Killanin presented the IOC with, what he considered to be, a “very fair and balanced” 113-page report at its February meeting, 1968, in Grenoble.<sup>73</sup> IOC members discussed the matter and invited SANOC head Frank Braun to explain what changes his organization had made to address racial discrimination. Since not all

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<sup>71</sup> Ramsamy, *Apartheid*, 20.

<sup>72</sup> Lord Killanin, *My Olympic Years* (William Morrow and Company Inc., 1982), 41.

<sup>73</sup> Lord Killanin, *My Olympic Years*, 37; Amy Bass, *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: the 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 158.

members were present in France, the IOC decided to hold a postal vote on whether to invite South Africa to the Mexico City Olympics. IOC members voted in favor of inviting a mixed South African team to the Games, even if whites and non-whites were not allowed to compete in selection trials together.

The IOC's vote led to an immediate backlash. On February 16, Ethiopia threatened to boycott Mexico City over South Africa's invitation, calling on African, Asian and Latin American countries to join it.<sup>74</sup> Within a few days, Algeria, Tanzania, and Ghana added their support. The OAU recommended on February 24 that its thirty-eight member states boycott Mexico City. Two days later, the SCSA and its thirty-two members "unanimously approved the boycott," formalizing the African position.<sup>75</sup> The African bloc was joined by more countries. India had announced its support February 19. The Soviet Union, along with the rest of the socialist bloc, criticized the IOC's decision on March 5. The USSR then threatened to withdraw from the Games. The Soviet withdrawal would be a devastating blow to the prestige of the Olympics. Without the USA versus USSR competition the Olympics had come to rely on to generate excitement, the Games would be reduced in stature. When the IOC met again in mid-April to address the situation, forty-six nations had issued boycott threats over South Africa's participation. The IOC's Executive Committee bowed to pressure and allowed for a new vote, which came back in favor of disinviting South Africa from the 1968 Olympic Games to preserve global, sporting unity.

The 1968 boycott campaign demonstrated the growing power of decolonized states within the Olympic movement. The core group of boycotters came from Africa: the SCSA

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<sup>74</sup> Bass, *Not the Triumph*, 161.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 168.

coordinated its thirty-two members (with three more joining during this fight: Libya, Somalia, and Rwanda) to oppose the IOC's initially pro-South Africa stance. Out of forty-six states that declared their intent to boycott, Africa formed two-thirds. India, Brazil, Cuba, and Scandinavian countries contributed to the African boycott to turn the protest global and to show neutral, non-aligned, and Global South support. This mass of countries willing to boycott the Games amounted to over a third of the 112 countries the IOC expected to compete in the Mexico City Olympics. Because of this, the IOC accepted banning one nation to save the Games. The IOC complied with the demands of the boycotting countries, demonstrating to African states that they now had considerable power through their participation. The lesson from Mexico City was that an organized bloc could force the IOC to change its policies through threatening a boycott.

However, the 1968 boycott raised an alternative explanation. African states mobilized as a bloc to oppose South Africa's involvement, but it was not until the USSR threatened to withdraw that the IOC reacted. By the 1960s, the Olympics were a proxy battle between the USSR and USA. The Cold War infused the competition with greater relevance and popularity. Without one of the two main protagonists, the Olympics would lose both athletically and commercially. It is unclear where the IOC's tipping point was. Was African pressure, tied in with support from the Global South, enough to force the IOC to change its position? Or did the 1968 boycott threat only succeed because of the Cold War tensions that the IOC benefitted from? This question would remain through the 1970s.

### **The SCSA Takes Over**

The success of the 1968 boycott threat continued with the formal expulsion of South Africa from the IOC in 1970. The SCSA kept up the pressure on the IOC after its victory in April

1968. It followed the threatened boycott with a demand to have South Africa removed from the Olympic movement completely. The SCSA was unwilling to allow South Africa to compete in the Olympics while apartheid affected sport, and the South African government refused to shift its policies. This led to a confrontation in 1970. A letter from 19 African NOCs in March forced the IOC to discuss the matter at its meeting in Amsterdam in May.<sup>76</sup> SCSA President Abraham Ordia and General Secretary Jean-Claude Ganga made the case for the prosecution, before debating against members of SANOC. After listening to both sides, IOC members voted 35-28 to expel South Africa.<sup>77</sup> The SCSA's victory at the IOC meeting brought the group more legitimacy and increased the momentum of the anti-apartheid campaign globally.

The SCSA followed up the expulsion of South Africa by targeting Rhodesia. Rhodesia had threatened to become an issue in 1968, but British government officials had persuaded the Mexico City organizers not to invite the country.<sup>78</sup> In the build-up to the Munich Olympics, in 1971, IOC President Avery Brundage believed that he, Ordia, and Ganga had come to an agreement that would allow Rhodesia to compete as a colony under the Union Jack using British passports, just as the country had done before the UDI in 1964.<sup>79</sup> But whispers of a boycott started a month prior to the Munich Olympics' start in late August.<sup>80</sup> The OAU and SCSA, despite their apparent agreement with the IOC, had changed their minds: Rhodesia could not be given international legitimacy by competing at the Olympics. On August 4, both organizations

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<sup>76</sup> "Minutes 69th Session of the International Olympic Committee, Amsterdam, May 12-16, 1970," Sessions CIO, International Olympic Committee Olympic Studies Center, Lausanne, Switzerland (hereafter OSC), 118.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>78</sup> Andrew Novak, "Averting an African Boycott: British Prime Minister Edward Heath and Rhodesian Participation in the Munich Olympics," *Britain and the World* 6, no. 1 (2013): 36.

<sup>79</sup> "Minutes 71st Session of the I.O.C. - Luxembourg, 1971," Sessions CIO, OSC, 17-18.

<sup>80</sup> Novak, "Averting an African Boycott," 42.

called for countries to boycott the Munich Olympics if Rhodesia participated. By August 10, Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Kenya, and Ethiopia had publicly declared their support for this position. There were even rumblings that African American athletes may boycott.

The IOC met a week before the start of the Munich Olympics. Brundage, a traditionalist who believed sport and politics should be separate, wanted to stand firm on the matter. The IOC should allow Rhodesia to participate because African actions constituted “a threat to the Olympic Games and the whole Olympic movement” by bringing politics into sport.<sup>81</sup> The IOC Executive Board consulted with Ordia and Ganga at its meeting in Munich before speaking with the Rhodesian delegation’s leadership. Brundage then called for a members’ vote on Rhodesia’s participation at the Games. 31 members voted to keep Rhodesia in Munich, 36 against, and three abstained.<sup>82</sup> The IOC withdrew Rhodesia’s invitation. This series of events, from the SCSA’s supposed reneged promise to IOC members voting against Rhodesia, frustrated Brundage so much that he claimed that “it was obviously time for him to leave the presidency;” sport had become too political for him in the post-colonial era.<sup>83</sup>

Lord Killanin, an Irish sports journalist and long-time IOC member who had led the original investigatory committee sent to South Africa, replaced Brundage as President. Killanin understood that the key issue facing the IOC was apartheid. If the IOC wanted its Games to remain a global competition, then it needed to deal with both South Africa and Rhodesia. Lord Killanin started his presidency by consulting with Ordia in Lagos in January 1973. The SCSA President informed his IOC counterpart that, historically, Olympic officials had not appreciated “the views and recommendations of the leaders of African sport,” even when the matters

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<sup>81</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting of the I.O.C. Executive Board, Munich”, Sessions CIO, OSC, 3-4.

<sup>82</sup> Novak, “Averting an African Boycott,” 45.

<sup>83</sup> “Minutes 73rd Session of the I.O.C. - Munich, 1972,” Sessions CIO, OSC, 18.

concerned Africa.<sup>84</sup> Ordia believed that the IOC had turned a deaf ear to Africa and thus forced the continent to threaten to boycott the Olympics. All Ordia wanted was that “African countries should be heard...[and] their opinions and recommendations to be accepted with better understanding by the IOC;” if that were the case then the SCSA would ensure African countries “reaffirm their loyalty to the IOC” and stop threatening to boycott events.<sup>85</sup>

The SCSA believed the IOC was beginning to heed the opinions of its African members more as it forced Rhodesia out of the organization in 1975. Before the IOC’s meeting in Lausanne in May 1975, a group of 19 African NOCs sent a letter to the IOC to ask for the expulsion of Rhodesia, the same as had in 1970 when demanding South Africa’s expulsion.<sup>86</sup> The IOC presented its investigatory report on the state of Rhodesian sport in Lausanne and then the floor opened for discussion of Rhodesia’s fate. Ordia and Ganga travelled to Switzerland to present the case for expulsion. The Rhodesian NOC also travelled to the shores of Lake Geneva to present its defense. Just as in the case of South Africa, IOC members voted to expel Rhodesia (41-26).<sup>87</sup> Rhodesia would not be readmitted until after it ended white minority rule and re-emerged as Zimbabwe in 1980.<sup>88</sup> The SCSA had once again forced a country out of the Olympics for discriminatory racial policies.

Between 1968 to 1975, the SCSA forced the Olympic movement to bend to its will repeatedly. To avoid a series of Olympic boycotts and maintain sporting unity, the IOC changed

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<sup>84</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting held between I.O.C. President, Lord Killanin, and Representatives of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (S.C.S.A.) at Lagos, on 12 January 1973,” E-REO2-CSSA/015, SD4, OSC, 3.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> “Minutes of the 76th Session of the International Olympic Committee, Lausanne, 21-23 May 1975,” Sessions CIO, OSC, 23-26.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 55-57.

<sup>88</sup> See: James Alexander Ivey, “Rhodesian Readmission and the Decolonization of the National Olympic Committee of Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Olympic Studies* 5, no.1 (2024): 95-116.



its policies towards South Africa and Rhodesia so that countries from Africa and the Global South felt accommodated. The IOC, which had maintained a separation of sport and politics for decades, adjusted its ideology in the post-colonial world and bent so as to avoid breaking the Olympics into separate competitions for different regions. A major question after 1968 and 1972 was whether the Olympic ideology was fit for the modern era and could continue to weather these political storms every four years?

At the same time, the SCSA learned that the boycott was a powerful weapon to change policy. Historian Amy Bass has described the legacy of 1968 as “not so much a blow against South Africa as it was a triumph for independent Africa and its supporters.”<sup>89</sup> But in 1968 there were questions as to whether Africa had won on principle or because of assistance from the Soviet Union and other countries. In 1972, however, Andrew Novak has argued that “Africa, as a continent, had won” without outside assistance.<sup>90</sup> Munich taught African states about their power as a united bloc. And this created future problems for the Olympic movement. Novak has explained how the “most immediate consequence of the threatened boycott of the 1972 Munich Olympics over Rhodesia was that it held the African bloc of NOCs together for another Olympic cycle.”<sup>91</sup> While “historians have not been kind to [the 1972] boycott,” its success inspired the SCSA to vigorously prosecute the anti-apartheid boycott over the next four years, leading to the 1976 Montreal boycott.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Bass, *Not the Triumph*, 182.

<sup>90</sup> Novak, “Averting an African Boycott,” 45.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*.

## **Boycotting the Springbok South African Rugby Team (1969-1973)**

While the SCSA succeeded in excluding South Africa from the Olympics, it struggled to isolate the country in the sport that inspired the most national pride: rugby. Anti-South African rugby protests emerged in the late 1960s to complement SANROC and the SCSA's campaign to isolate South Africa in international sport. Rugby was important because it was an integral part of Afrikaner national identity and ideology. Albert Grundlingh has described how "the nature of the game [rugby] itself also appealed to the evolving self-image of nationalist Afrikaners. Implicit in rugby is a certain duality. On the one hand, it can be seen as a collective sport of combat which emphasized stamina, strength, speed and courage, and symbolically the rugged aspects of the game could be easily equated with a resurgent and rampant Afrikaner nationalism."<sup>93</sup> The national rugby team, the Springboks, were guardians of the white, Afrikaner nation, and efforts to integrate the team by Prime Minister Vorster in 1969 were rebuked, leading to a split in the National Party between the more moderate members and the hardliners, the Broederbond. Dr. Danie Craven, the head of the South African Rugby Board, responded at the time that "there will be a black Springbok over my dead body."<sup>94</sup> While Dr. Craven would later work towards integration, his sentiments in 1969 were reflective of popular attitudes in South Africa and demonstrated that rugby was an integral part of Afrikanerdom.

The importance of rugby to South Africans was not lost on anti-apartheid activists around the world. Many activists, such as Brutus, Ramsamy, and Peter Hain in Britain, were South

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<sup>93</sup> Albert Grundlingh, "Playing for power? rugby, Afrikaner nationalism and masculinity in South Africa, c.1900–70," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 11, no.3 (1994): 413.

<sup>94</sup> André Odendaal and Peter Hain, *Pitch Battles: Sport, Racism and Resistance* (Roman & Littlefield, 2021), 17.

Africans living in exile and understood the place of rugby in the South African psyche. By targeting rugby with protests to enforce isolation, these activists believed they could strike a strong blow against the National Party and apartheid sport. Rugby's cultural power was such that both the South African government and its opponents understood "international rugby links as a cultural area where apartheid could be shored up or broken down in a psychological sense."<sup>95</sup> Anti-apartheid activists believed that if they could take away international rugby from South Africa then white South Africans would feel the pain of the sports boycott and perhaps force their government change domestic policies to get access to the sport they valued most.

The number of civil rights groups opposing South African rugby tours mushroomed during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In Britain, in 1969, Young Liberal Peter Hain formed the direct-action protest group "Stop the Seventy Tour" (STST) to prevent the 1970 South African cricket tour of Britain. However, the group became famous for its protest of the Springbok rugby tour of Britain in the winter of 1969. STST disrupted the tour by invading pitches, spreading tacks on the playing field, and even at one stage hijacking the South African team's bus.<sup>96</sup> These protests were unpopular with the rugby-supporting crowds. Those in favor of the tour often assaulted those protesting it. Though STST did not stop the tour completely, they did force teams to abandon matches and raised awareness of the anti-apartheid campaign within Britain, which was still in early development. Due to the financial costs of protecting these matches and negative publicity incurred by the protests, no South African Springbok rugby team would tour Britain again until the 1990s.

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<sup>95</sup> David R. Black and John Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation: Sport, Cultures, Politics and Power in the Old and New South Africa* (Manchester University Press, 1998), 77.

<sup>96</sup> *Fair Play*, directed by Connie Field (2010; Clarity Films) Kanopy.

The SCSA complemented the work of STST by threatening an African boycott of the 1970 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games.<sup>97</sup> The STST protests originally focused on stopping a South African cricket tour of Britain set for 1970, which the SCSA also wanted to prevent. Its threats to the Commonwealth Games forced the British government to request that the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) disinvite South Africa. It would take numerous requests, but the combination of direct-action protest from STST and the threat of an African boycott of the Commonwealth Games eventually forced the MCC to relent. No South African national cricket side would tour Britain again until 1994. For the SCSA, this was yet more proof that a boycott threat to an international sports competition could change policy towards South Africa.

In Australia, groups such as the Sydney Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Anti-Apartheid Co-ordinating Committee in Adelaide emulated the direct-action protests in Britain when the Springboks toured in 1971. The anti-apartheid protest movement had globalized in a couple of years and many of Australian protest organizations learned their tactics from leaders abroad, such as STST's Hain.<sup>98</sup> The Australian tour was a bitter affair. Protests of the Springboks were met by counter-protests. Rugby fans attacked those marching against the tour. During the build-up to one tour match in Queensland, the provincial government instituted a State of Emergency so that the game could go ahead. Again, as in Britain, the financial and moral cost of the tour ended Australian sports contacts with South Africa for decades.

The anti-apartheid campaign's greatest success was forcing the New Zealand government to cancel the 1973 Springbok tour. The New Zealand rivalry was the most important to South

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<sup>97</sup> Fiona Skillen and Matthew L. McDowell, "The 1970 British Commonwealth Games: Scottish Reactions to Apartheid and Sporting Boycotts," *Journal of Sport History* 44, no. 3 (2017): 375.

<sup>98</sup> Nick Scott, "Black-Bans and Black Eyes: Implications of the 1971 Springbok Rugby Tour," *Labour History*, no.108 (2015): 150.

Africans since many Afrikaner nationalists viewed it as a barometer of South Africa's virility and strength as a nation. New Zealanders similarly valued the rivalry and had previously adhered to apartheid controls prohibiting the inclusion of indigenous Māori in New Zealand teams to South Africa. South Africa's tour of New Zealand took on additional importance after the disrupted tours of Britain and Australia. South Africa hoped to preserve its most important sporting connection against the encircling anti-apartheid boycott.

In New Zealand, anti-apartheid activists mobilized to prevent the tour from taking place. The group Halt All Racist Tours (HART), founded by Trevor Richards in 1969, led much of the work against the tour. New Zealand's conservative National Party government and rugby officials refused HART's appeals to cancel the upcoming tour through 1971 and 1972. Prime Minister Keith Holyoake declined to intervene. After Holyoake stepped down in February 1972, protestors hoped his successor, Jack Marshall, would be less conservative and stop the tour. But on March 7, 1972, Marshall recommitted to non-interference in sport, saying he preferred "to build bridges between nations - not walls."<sup>99</sup> Non-interference became synonymous with condoning rugby connections.

The victory of a new Labour government under the leadership of Norman Kirk in December 1972, however, raised hopes for a change in official policy towards South Africa and the rugby tour. During the campaign, Kirk had refused to take a stance on the rugby tour and continued to adhere to the policy of non-interference in sport. However, when in power, Kirk commissioned two studies on how the Springbok tour would impact public safety and foreign

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<sup>99</sup> Quoted in: John Nauright, "‘Like fleas on a dog’: New Zealand and emerging national and international conflict over New Zealand Rugby ties with South Africa, 1965-1974," *Sporting Traditions* 10, no.1 (1993): 69.

policy.<sup>100</sup> The report on foreign policy argued hosting the Springbok team would damage New Zealand's relations with the Global South, particularly African and Caribbean countries, and could lead to a boycott of the 1974 Christchurch Commonwealth Games. The public safety report provided a bleak picture: for the tour to go ahead safely due to the threat of protests and counter protests, it would require police intervention "on a massive scale with a possible requirement for support from the armed forces."<sup>101</sup> It might even require enacting martial law to prevent protests and counter-protests from getting out of hand. For Kirk, this was too much. In his explanation for cancelling the tour, Kirk argued that "the Government must balance, on one hand, the impact on the desire to organize games and of people to watch them against, on the other hand, the impact of non-intervention on the civil rights of all New Zealanders. Confronted with such a choice, there is no doubt what the decision must be."<sup>102</sup> Kirk called off the tour on April 10, 1973.

The cancellation of the 1973 Springbok tour of New Zealand showed the growing success of the anti-apartheid movement in preventing South Africa from playing abroad against its traditional sporting allies: Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. It also demonstrated the multi-faceted nature of the anti-apartheid movement. The local direct-action protests had significant success in isolating South Africa by forcing countries to consider the costs of inviting the Springboks to tour. This was complemented by the SCSA's work threatening action against the Commonwealth Games in 1970 and 1974 to stop South African contacts. This period was

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<sup>100</sup> Nauright, "Like fleas on a dog," 68-70.

<sup>101</sup> "Mr. Kirk explains his order to cancel S African rugby tour," *Times of London*, 11 April 1973, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

remarkably successful. Over just a few years, from 1969-1973, it appeared that even rugby would succumb to the anti-apartheid campaign.

### **Rugby Tours Breaking the Boycott (1974-1975)**

Between 1969 and 1973, the anti-apartheid movement succeeded in isolating South African rugby teams from their traditional rivals in Britain, Australia and New Zealand. These victories gave the movement confidence that it was possible to remove South Africa from international sport completely. However, between 1974 and 1976 the movement suffered a series of setbacks. British, French, and New Zealand rugby teams resumed their contacts with South Africa. These rugby tours set up a confrontation between the SCSA and African states on one side and these Western governments on the other. The SCSA tried to use its boycott threat to pressure governments to condemn or prevent these rugby tours from taking place, but surprisingly this had minimal effect. The British and French tours set back the SCSA's approach to rugby contacts in the 1970s. The New Zealand tour in 1976, after British and French breaches, would spark the Montreal boycott out of growing frustration.

Through May to July 1974, the British Lions rugby team toured South Africa.<sup>103</sup> The Lions went undefeated, winning 21 out of 22 matches, but it proved politically troublesome. In April, before the tour started, SCSA General Secretary Jean-Claude Ganga had called on the British government to stop the tour. Ganga saw the tour as a "war on Africa" and warned that the SCSA would be happy to fight if necessary.<sup>104</sup> The British government under Harold Wilson

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<sup>103</sup> The British Lions rugby team is an amalgamated team including players from the English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish Rugby Unions.

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in: Michelle Sikes, "If Britain Wants War on Africa, She Will Have It": African Reprisals to the 1974 British Lions Rugby Tour of South Africa," *Sport History Review* 52, no.2 (2021), 172.

could not step in since it had no authority to do so through traditional means, and the newly appointed Labour Prime Minister was unwilling to take the drastic step of withdrawing passports from players.

The Lions tour went ahead. In response, the SCSA voted for a continent-wide sports boycott of Britain. Ordia announced the SCSA's decision, explaining "you can't be our friends if you're friends of our brothers' oppressors."<sup>105</sup> Kenya initially showed strong support for the boycott. The government stopped the upcoming Norwich City Football Club and Hendon Rugby Club tours.<sup>106</sup> Kenyan athletes were barred from participating in British athletics meets, such as the Crystal Palace Invitational. Zambian officials also cancelled visits by two British soccer teams. Uganda and Tanzania cut sports ties with Britain. But the boycott lacked enthusiasm. A majority of SCSA nations voted for it, but it was inconsistently applied across the continent. The Kenyan National Sports Council (NSC) estimated that only 22 out of the SCSA's 41 nations participated in the boycott.<sup>107</sup> Even among those, few participated with zeal and most limited themselves to lip service. Some countries ignored the boycott completely, like Mauritius. Even Kenya's boycott proved porous. The Kenyan Amateur Athletic Association only banned competition against British competitors in Kenya and Britain but allowed members to face British athletes in any other country.<sup>108</sup>

This bilateral, anti-British boycott marked a change of tactics in the SCSA's struggle against South Africa. Michelle Sikes has argued that the SCSA's boycott of Britain set the new precedent of targeting "third-party offenders."<sup>109</sup> South African teams struggled to play outside

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<sup>105</sup> Quoted in: Sikes, "If Britain Wants War," 181.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 183.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.



their own borders, so now the SCSA focused on punishing countries who travelled to South Africa and broke the boycott. But the SCSA's action against Britain proved relatively unsuccessful and difficult to enforce. Firstly, the Lions tour went ahead despite warnings from the SCSA. Secondly, SCSA members applied the boycott to various degrees, with some banning all contacts and others ignoring it. This was frustrating for those, mostly Anglophone, countries that boycotted Britain. The lack of unity hampered the effectiveness of Britain's punishment over its South African contacts. The reaction to the Lions tour demonstrated the SCSA's new approach, but it demonstrated its weaknesses, too.

Following the British Lions tour of South Africa in 1974, the Springboks travelled to France to play in October and November. Just before the first game between South Africa and France, Ganga threatened that "if the tour is maintained, it is more than likely that Africa will then be led to re-examine its attitude towards French sport."<sup>110</sup> But the French government refused to intervene and the French Rugby Federation (FRF) stuck to its guns.<sup>111</sup> The touring Springbok side encountered protestors from the French organization "Mouvement contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et pour la paix" (MRAP) in Nice and Paris.<sup>112</sup> MRAP's protests were limited to picketing and leaflets; they did not engage in direct action protests as in the cases of Britain and Australia. South Africa's tour of France was largely uneventful and the SCSA did not issue the same sorts of threats it had to Britain or New Zealand. At the end of the tour, FRF

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<sup>110</sup> "D'un sport à l'autre," *Le Monde*, 25 October 1974, 32; All French documents are translated by the author.

<sup>111</sup> The Springboks were supposed to play a few warm-up games in Italy before they toured France, but these were cancelled due to Italy choosing to adhere to the apartheid boycott.

<sup>112</sup> "Le M.R.A.P. entend s'opposer à la venue en France des joueurs d'Afrique du Sud," *Le Monde*, 10 October 1974, 28; "Manifestation à l'Arrivée Des Springboks à Nice," *Le Monde*, 29 October 1974, 12; "Manifestation Aux Abords Du Parc...", *Le Monde*, 3 December 1974, 15.

President Albert Ferrasse announced that France would tour South Africa in 1975 if the government permitted it.

African leaders within the SCSA and beyond were infuriated that France would tour South Africa. Ganga complained to French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac in March 1975 that the tour provided “a dangerous example of racism because the support of France, the cradle of Modern Olympics and the grand champion of equality and fraternity of all people, is a significant endorsement for the racist regime of Pretoria.”<sup>113</sup> Ganga told the French ambassador in Yaoundé, Cameroon, that Anglophone countries, especially Kenya and Zambia, were keen to see France punished as Britain had been in 1974.<sup>114</sup> The head of Kenya’s NSC, Isaac Lugonzo, warned the French ambassador in Nairobi “of the consequences which are likely to follow should the proposed tour be allowed to proceed as planned.”<sup>115</sup> However, as the tour approached, the SCSA was split between Anglophone countries pushing for a boycott and Francophone countries ignoring their calls to action.

Ganga was among those seeking de-escalation, in part because of his close relationship with the French government. In a conversation between Ganga and Hubert Dubois, the French ambassador to Cameroon, the SCSA General Secretary asked whether the French government could provide assurances of its opposition to South African sports contacts even if it refused to intervene directly. Ganga understood that the SCSA’s threats were unlikely to stop the rugby tour, but hoped that Dubois could get him a “response from the Prime Minister which will allow

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<sup>113</sup> Letter from Jean Claude Ganga to Prime Minister of France, 11 March 1975, found in France, Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères (hereafter AMAE), dossier 515.

<sup>114</sup> Telegram from Ambassador Hubert Dubois, Yaoundé, to Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 28 March 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>115</sup> Letter from Isaac Lugonzo to Olivier Deleau, French Ambassador to Kenya, 18 April 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

him to give the 40 African countries...sufficient guarantees to prevent the matter from becoming too important.”<sup>116</sup> The response did not require the French government to commit to ending apartheid sports contacts, but hopefully the message could “make it understood that in the future, we [the French government] will examine the question closer and above all, that we insist on the fact that [while] rugby is not an Olympic discipline, the tour of French athletes cannot in any circumstance constitute a breach of the rules of Olympism.”<sup>117</sup> Ganga sought to give the French government a way out of the boycott threat, even coaching the French on language acceptable to SCSA members.

Chirac did not appear take this advice. Ganga announced in May 1975 that the SCSA intended to “break relations with France after its rugby team’s tour to South Africa.”<sup>118</sup> At the beginning of June, with the French team travelling to South Africa for its warm-up games, the SCSA formally announced that the tour was a “challenge to Africa” and asked “its members to break all bilateral sporting relations with any country which encourages racism by taking part in sporting competitions with a racist country.”<sup>119</sup> Interestingly, the declaration called for a boycott of any country playing with South Africa and Rhodesia, not naming France directly. The SCSA sought to boycott France and Britain for their contacts with South Africa, but these targeted boycotts appeared to be weak and uncoordinated. There was no rallying moment against either country and there was a lack of enthusiasm for this new sort of “third-party boycott.” It was not until the All-Blacks tour in the aftermath of the Soweto Massacre in June 1976 that African

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<sup>116</sup> Telegram from Ambassador Hubert Dubois, Yaoundé, to Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 28 March 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Telegram from Yaoundé to Foreign Ministry, 22 May 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Hubert Dubois, French Ambassador to Cameroon, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 6 June 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

states took the “third-party boycott” seriously and withdrew from Montreal to protest New Zealand.

### **New Zealand as a Catalyst (1975-1976)**

A year before the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, New Zealand resumed its sports contacts with South Africa, aggravating tensions with the SCSA. The New Zealand Labour Party, which had stopped the Springbok tour back in 1973, lost the 1975 election to the conservative National Party led by Robert Muldoon. During the election campaign, a slumping economy was the issue that concerned most New Zealanders, closely followed by sports connections with South Africa.<sup>120</sup> Muldoon promised non-interference in sports matters and that it would be up to the sports bodies to decide whether they wanted contact with South Africa or not. With the prospect of a New Zealand rugby tour to South Africa on the horizon in 1976, this appealed to many voters.

After Muldoon’s election victory in November, the National Party stayed true to its campaign promise. The men’s Softball World Championship in January and February 1976 provided the first test. The UN Special Committee on Apartheid issued a boycott threat to the games if South Africa participated.<sup>121</sup> In January, Ordia, as SCSA President, asked all nations to boycott the tournament.<sup>122</sup> After New Zealand IOC member Lance Cross laughed off Ordia’s threat, Ordia expanded his warning to include a boycott of any competition involving New

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<sup>120</sup> Embassy Wellington to Department of State, Telegram 02677, July 20, 1974, 1976WELLIN02677, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-1979/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives (hereafter Electronic Telegrams USNA).

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Oliver Newnham, *A Cry of Treason* (Dunmore Press, 1978), 16-18.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 21.

Zealand, including the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, if the National Party government allowed contacts with South Africa. Muldoon remained unmoved. Mexico and the Philippines withdrew in protest, but the competition went ahead with South Africa present.

Softball was only the opening pitch in the mounting struggle between New Zealand and the SCSA. The SCSA escalated its campaign in the coming months since its focus was not on softball but rather the upcoming New Zealand All-Blacks rugby tour of South Africa set to start at the end of June. Ordia wrote several times to the *New Zealand Herald* to explain the SCSA's position on these rugby contacts and threatened readers that the SCSA would organize a global boycott of New Zealand if the South Africa tour went ahead. The *Herald* printed Ordia's warning on its front page on March 9: if the tour went ahead, New Zealand "will be boycotted not only by Africa, but also by the friends of Africa. We will not take part in any competitions, including the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, if New Zealand is also taking part."<sup>123</sup> While the IOC had in years past threatened African National Olympic Committees with suspension if they brought politics into sport, Ordia said "we Africans would not mind being suspended or even expelled on this issue of New Zealand's support for apartheid. No prize would be too great to pay in defense of human dignity."<sup>124</sup> The situation was so serious that the *Herald's* editorial responded to Ordia's threat and explained to its readers that "New Zealanders will need to decide which comes first with them. Do they wish to continue refusing to blame South African sportsmen for the racial policies of the South African Government? Or now the penalties for such naivety have been clearly spelled out by Mr. Ordia, should they change their mind?"<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> "Ordia Tells NZ Olympic Boycott By African Nations Unless..." *New Zealand Herald*, 9 March 1976, 1.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> "Who, now, for Montreal?" *New Zealand Herald*, 9 March 1976, 6.

However, the New Zealand government and sports officials had no intention of changing their position despite Ordia's complaints.

The SCSA broadcast its boycott threat globally, raising the stakes. When Ordia visited Canada in March, in preparation for the Montreal Games that summer, journalists asked if he was serious about boycotting the Olympics if New Zealand sent its rugby team to South Africa. Ordia repeated that Africa could boycott in that case.<sup>126</sup> In mid-April, Ordia wrote again to the *Herald* and its sports journalist Terry McClean explaining that "One should sympathize rather than be angry with New Zealand and her policy of support for apartheid sport. She is so detached from the rest of the world and consequently appears to be out of touch with reality."<sup>127</sup> Ordia explained that he represented 80 million people in Nigeria but that he had the backing of the entire African continent on this matter. These people expected New Zealand to "demonstrate, not only by words but also by actions, its condemnation of apartheid in sport;" if it failed to do so, then the SCSA was willing to "struggle....to the bitter end."<sup>128</sup> Newspapers in New Zealand and in Africa interpreted these exchanges in March and April to mean Ordia was ready to call on African nations to "boycott the Olympics Games unless New Zealand entry was refused."<sup>129</sup>

Ordia's letter to the *Herald* appeared just before the SCSA Executive Board met in Nairobi between April 27-29. While Ordia had threatened a boycott on behalf of the SCSA and Africa since January, it did not appear that other SCSA members and African countries had been consulted on this matter. The boycott largely appeared to be a policy decided upon by Ordia alone. Nairobi provided this opportunity to discuss a New Zealand boycott. At the meeting,

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<sup>126</sup> Newnham, *A Cry of Treason*, 53.

<sup>127</sup> "Ordia hits at SA tour: NZ is the last ditch supporter of racists," *Daily News*, 23 April 1976, 12.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

Ordia explained to journalists that the SCSA would be faced with “a very difficult situation soon” given New Zealand’s growing contacts with South Africa.<sup>130</sup> However, he pulled back on some of his rhetoric. Ordia claimed that his letters to the *Herald* had been misinterpreted: “I did not say we would pull out of the Olympics in my threat, but told them we would have nothing to do with whichever sport they’re taking part in.”<sup>131</sup> Ordia walked back his stronger threats while the SCSA formulated its official position on the Olympics and New Zealand.

The Nairobi meeting raised the stakes for New Zealand. Before the meeting, the boycott appeared to be Abraham Ordia’s private campaign against Prime Minister Muldoon and his old foe, New Zealand IOC member Lance Cross. However, after Nairobi, the SCSA formally adopted Ordia’s boycott position. General Secretary Jean-Claude Ganga announced on the conference’s last day that “if New Zealand went ahead with its planned rugby tour, member countries of the SCSA would be called on to boycott all competition with New Zealand.”<sup>132</sup> Ganga mellowed his statement a few days later, explaining that the SCSA wanted “to isolate the racists and their backers...to mete out this punishment,” but that “it would be unadvisable for Africa to boycott” the Olympics completely.<sup>133</sup> The SCSA was more likely to issue an “appeal for our sportsmen and women’s conscience to pull out of the competitions against racism supporters;” this would mean not competing alongside New Zealand athletes at the Olympics, but African teams would be allowed to compete in all other events. For Ganga, if the SCSA called for a full boycott, then there were questions over who would be most hurt by this position: New Zealand or the African continent? Ganga believed African counties could end up “isolating

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<sup>130</sup> “SA ‘bedfellows’ warned by CSSA,” *Daily News*, 27 April 1976, 12.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> “Africans all set for Montreal Olympic boycott,” *Daily News*, 3 May 1976, 11.

<sup>133</sup> “Handle with care,” *Daily News*, 5 May 1976, 8.

ourselves” in the process of trying to isolate New Zealand, which was counter-productive in both the short and long-term.<sup>134</sup> At the Nairobi meeting, the SCSA issued a dramatic boycott threat and mellowed it at the same time, leaving confusion about its position.

In May, the SCSA sought to rally support for its boycott of New Zealand at the International Seminar on the Eradication of Apartheid, an UN-organized meeting held in Havana. How to isolate apartheid sport was a key question for delegates after Michael Manley, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, had proposed creating a UN declaration (or even a convention) against apartheid sports contacts in a letter sent to the organizers.<sup>135</sup> At the Havana meeting, Ordia and other anti-apartheid activists canvassed delegations about their support for action at the Olympic Games. Dennis Brutus, SANROC’s founder, spoke to delegates about the struggle in sport. Ordia also gave an address at the conference. But their appeals largely were ignored. The delegates sympathized with Ordia and Brutus but refused to commit to any concrete action. The assembled members voted to take “appropriate international action” against those that collaborated with South Africa in sport but declined to define what that action would be. With over a month to go before the Montreal Olympics, there was still confusion over what could happen if New Zealand played in South Africa.<sup>136</sup>

Ordia left the conference disappointed. He did not believe that the Seminar’s vague declarations of support would scare off New Zealand.<sup>137</sup> Brutus spoke to the *New York Times* and likened the anti-apartheid campaign’s work to “fly[ing] the political kite” and learning in which

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Dennis Brutus, “International Declaration Against Apartheid in Sport: Draft Convention Against Apartheid in Sport: United Nations Action,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 2, no.2 (1978), 1.

<sup>136</sup> UN Centre Against Apartheid, *Notes and Documents*, SEM/1 June 1976, 10.

<sup>137</sup> Newnham, *A Cry of Treason*, 60.



direction the wind was blowing.<sup>138</sup> Brutus said that he and other officials had come to Havana to “size up the base of their support;” then they would take a decision on whether to “take a harder line [against New Zealand] if it is appropriate to do so.” But the political kite had struggled to gain much lift in the Havana winds. It appeared that there was little global support for an Olympic boycott of New Zealand, even among those at a UN anti-apartheid seminar beginning to discuss what would become the Convention against Apartheid in Sports.

However, the lackluster result in Havana did not dissuade Ordia from pursuing a New Zealand boycott. At the end of May, Ordia decided to appeal to New Zealanders directly and travelled to the country to meet anti-apartheid activists and appear on the popular television debate program *Friday Conference* to explain the SCSA’s position on the tour. Upon arriving in New Zealand, Ordia was snubbed by Muldoon, who refused to meet the SCSA President, arguing Ordia was just a sports official and not a government representative. During Ordia’s interview on *Friday Conference*, the audience booed him after he asked the New Zealand government to reconsider its position on contact with South Africa. The tour ended up being counterproductive. Ordia grew more frustrated in New Zealand, and it reinforced his belief that the only way to change the government and sports bodies’ policies was to boycott and show New Zealanders the impact of their decision to play with apartheid. Ordia’s views hardened. He came to believe that New Zealand’s government, sports bodies, and much of its public purposely ignored his arguments and would not engage in any discussion whatsoever. What is more, he came to consider the timing of the All-Blacks tour, just a few weeks ahead of the Montreal Olympic Games, as “a slap in the face” of Africa and those struggling against apartheid.<sup>139</sup> This

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<sup>138</sup> Tony Kornheiser, “Africa. Threat Causes a Cloud on Olympics,” *New York Times*, 23 May 1976, S1.

<sup>139</sup> “SA tour slap on the face,” *Daily News*, 4 June 1976, 8.

timing led Ordia to believe that New Zealand was deliberately causing trouble around the Olympics with its government's support. New Zealand was being as provocative as possible.

The SCSA President was intent on punishing New Zealand for its sports contacts, but those contacts alone did not appear to be enough to mobilize popular support behind the boycott. Then the Soweto Uprising took center stage. On June 16, in response to a South African government policy forcing schools to provide instruction in Afrikaans, between 10,000 and 20,000 students in the Soweto township attempted to march from their various schools to Orlando Stadium in protest of the policy. However, the police were ready to stop the march, barricading roads and forming blockades to stop demonstrators. The police opened fire on the students. The Soweto protests quickly turned into an uprising against police violence. Demonstrators attacked beer halls and other symbols of the South African state. The police brought in more officers to violently pacify the township. Contemporaneous estimates of fatalities ranged from a South African government estimate of 140 to more than 1,000.<sup>140</sup> The Soweto Uprising infuriated popular opinion around the world, just as Sharpeville had in 1960, and fueled anti-apartheid campaigners with righteous anger.

Suddenly, with Soweto in the news, the African boycott of New Zealand gathered momentum. Newspapers across Africa started publishing commentaries about the meaning of the upcoming rugby tour considering recent events. Tommy Sithole, future Zimbabwe Olympic Committee President and journalist for Tanzania's *Daily News*, encapsulated the anger after Soweto in his column. In an impassioned article entitled "The Kiwis, Boers and the Soweto Blood," Sithole described how "the smell of gun powder will still be hanging in the air when they [the All-Blacks] finally touch down at Jan Smut. And the smiling faces there to welcome

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<sup>140</sup> "Soweto Massacre: Over 1,000 Black Africans killed," *Daily News*, 25 June 1976, 1.

them will include the trigger-happy men who will still be chortling at the way they killed blacks.”<sup>141</sup> Even more shockingly, he vividly described how “the fly that will buzz over the New Zealander’s plate down-town Johannesburg may probably have lifted off the neglected body of the Black man murdered by the Boers last week.”<sup>142</sup> Sithole argued that Soweto necessitated that African countries take a strong stand against South Africa and any country engaging in sports contacts with it. Boycotting countries would risk their position in the IOC, but could countries really turn “a blind eye at what is happening down south just so Killanin will not suspend us en-mass from the Olympics?”<sup>143</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of Soweto, the New Zealand government tried to clear the air surrounding the tour, which would still go ahead despite the massacre. Brian Talboys, New Zealand’s foreign minister, wrote to all Commonwealth governments on June 22 to reaffirm his country’s position that “the apartheid system is wrong and want to see it ended.”<sup>144</sup> But in the same message, he condemned the African boycott, stating that there was nothing the New Zealand government could do to prevent the tour and thus targeting its athletes was unfair. When the OAU met in Port Louis, Mauritius, to discuss how to approach the Montreal Olympics given the All-Blacks tour, Talboys wrote to the delegates again condemning apartheid but asking the OAU to “support Olympic principles and drop the boycott threat.”<sup>145</sup> Talboys asked the delegates to consider the impact of a boycott on global sport: “By boycotting the Games, African countries would only further undermine the Olympics principle of free competition regardless of race,

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<sup>141</sup> Tommy Sithole, “The Kiwis, Boys and the Soweto Blood,” *Sunday News*, 27 June 1976, 11.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> “‘Apartheid wrong’ - N. Zealand,” *Nation* 23 June 1976, 30

<sup>145</sup> “NZ now ‘pleads’ to OAU,” *Daily News*, 1 July 1976, 16.

creed or colour, and by introducing politics in this way they might well jeopardise the future of the Games themselves.”<sup>146</sup>

Talboys appealed to the OAU members’ sensibilities. Lance Cross, the New Zealand IOC member, took a different tack. He complained that African countries were unfairly targeting New Zealand. Cross claimed that New Zealand was one of 25 countries to send teams to South Africa in 1975-1976; 22 countries had hosted South African teams during the same period. Given this, Cross wanted to know why the SCSA had chosen to “pick on New Zealand alone” if its mission was to stop all apartheid sports contacts?<sup>147</sup> Cross’s complains were similar to those of other western commentators that disagreed with the African position. All western powers had violated the South African boycott in recent memory; it was normal.<sup>148</sup> So why should New Zealand be targeted now and at all?

One explanation for why New Zealand’s contacts were an issue over others was the high value that South Africans placed on these contacts in particular. The SCSA sought to stop any connections with New Zealand taking place to hurt South Africa as much as possible. Another was that New Zealand was unfortunate to be the third country to violate the apartheid boycott through rugby in two years; tensions were building and the SCSA wanted to make a point. Most likely was that New Zealand started their tour very close to the Olympic Games, which the SCSA thought gave more leverage to any boycott threat it made. However, the real issue was Soweto, which transformed the All-Blacks rugby tour into a referendum on New Zealand’s attitudes toward apartheid. That the tour would go ahead after the world condemned what had

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> John Lucas, *The Modern Olympic Games* (A.S. Barnes and Company, 1980), 214.

taken place near Johannesburg indicated to many that New Zealand condoned the South African government's actions during the Uprising.

Curiously, the SCSA, which had pushed for a boycott for several months, remained quiet immediately after Soweto. The violent reaction by the South African police provided additional evidence for why apartheid needed to be isolated and punished. Soweto provided a rallying call for the New Zealand boycott and energized anti-apartheid activists and African politicians. Yet the SCSA said nothing. Instead, the SCSA awaited a ruling by the OAU at its Port Louis meeting set for the end of June. In the meantime, the All-Blacks rugby team flew to South Africa on June 25, playing their first warm-up game on June 30 as the OAU delegations sat down to decide Africa's position on the Olympic Games. The assembled delegates felt that "the time for mere resolutions against racist South Africa had passed and that the time had come for action."<sup>149</sup> Peter Onu, OAU spokesman, explained to the press that the OAU intended to "call for an African boycott of the Montreal Games if New Zealand was to take part...[and] call for an African sports boycott of any country which allowed South African sportsmen to play there."<sup>150</sup> SCSA officials did not attend the meeting, but Ordia sent a telegram stating his support for boycott action.<sup>151</sup> With the Olympics just over two weeks away, the Port Louis meeting provided the best opportunity for African countries to threaten a continental boycott of the third Olympics in a row unless the IOC bowed to their demands and disinvited New Zealand.

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<sup>149</sup> "Africa may boycott Olympics," *Daily News*, 28 June 1976, 8.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> "Africa to boycott Olympic Games," *Times of Zambia*, 2 July 1976, 12.

## **Conclusion**

The Montreal Olympic boycott is often described as the product of the All-Blacks tour taking place in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising. However, by taking a longer-term view of the anti-apartheid campaign's development, the growing power of decolonized nations within the global sports movement was the key reason behind the Olympic boycott in 1976. The greatest power that developing nations had within world sport was their participation. States learned, through experimentation in the 1960s, that by threatening to withhold their participation in important events, they could make international bodies adjust their policies and force countries out. Within the Olympics, the successes in 1968 against South Africa and in 1972 against Rhodesia demonstrated that the boycott, if coordinated by a united bloc of African countries, was a powerful tool in isolating white-settler regimes in Africa. The 1976 boycott, then, should be understood as part of this longer tradition. It would become the first mass walkout from the Games, but it was the third Olympics in a row that African countries had threatened to boycott.

The 1976 boycott can also be understood as part of the escalating anti-apartheid, "third-party boycotts" that emerged post-1972. The Olympic boycott of New Zealand was the most ambitious third-party boycott to date, but it was an extension of the SCSA's policies in 1974 and 1975 against Britain and France. As the anti-apartheid boycott succeeded in isolating South Africa from international sports organizations, methods to isolate the country increased in difficulty. Against Britain and then France, the SCSA began punishing countries that violated the anti-apartheid boycott, refusing to compete with athletes and teams from those two countries. The SCSA originally conceived of the New Zealand boycott in the same way: African states would boycott events involving New Zealand. But as tensions grew during 1976, with New

Zealand refusing to discuss sports contacts with South Africa and the SCSA's position hardening in response, the boycott threat transformed into African athletes refusing to take part in any organized competition, such as the Olympics as a whole, involving New Zealand athletes. The SCSA used the Olympics as part of their third-party boycott against New Zealand, which provided a stronger threat than in previous efforts against France and Britain. 1976 then was a marked evolution in the SCSA's third-party boycott strategy with more devastating consequences for world sport than bilateral sports boycotts.

Lastly, by taking a longer look back at the development of the anti-apartheid campaign, it is clear that the issue of apartheid would remain central to global sport until free elections and a new black majority government took power in 1994. As the campaign against apartheid succeeded in isolating South Africa, the goalposts shifted repeatedly. First it was about disinviting South Africa from the Olympics in 1964, then expulsion in 1970, before the SCSA moved its attention to preventing contacts with South Africa outside of the Olympics during the early 1970s. Apartheid would remain one of the key issues troubling global sports throughout the post-colonial era. The issue came to a head in 1976 with the Montreal boycott because of New Zealand's rugby tour of South Africa. But it would continue to rage throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s. Apartheid remained the main threat to global sporting unity until South Africa's negotiations to transition to black-majority rule in 1990s.

## Chapter 2 THE 1976 MONTREAL OLYMPIC BOYCOTT

The Montreal Olympic boycott, involving twenty-six African states, Guyana and Iraq, rocked the Olympic movement in 1976. The walkout was a response to the New Zealand All-Blacks rugby tour of South Africa between June and September in 1976. But the issue had developed over decades before finally coming to a head in July of that year. The Montreal boycott was a powerful statement for the anti-apartheid sports movement reflecting the anger of African countries at the continued sports contacts with South Africa. The boycott demonstrated that the issue of apartheid was worth sacrificing Olympic participation and threatening to split the international Olympic movement over. It would spark reactions by the United Nations and the Commonwealth, with both organizations attempting to draw up declarations and conventions that would prevent sports contacts with South Africa and thus future boycotts. Montreal also sparked panic within the Soviet Union, which wanted to ensure maximal participation at its Olympics in 1980. The IOC desperately sought to hold global sport together during this contentious period. The United States would later feel the lingering effects of the Montreal boycott when it attempted to organize its own mass withdrawal from the Moscow Games in 1980.

This chapter explains the complexities and the disunity of the 1976 Montreal Olympic boycott. At the time, the Montreal boycott demonstrated a united African anger at apartheid sports contacts and threatened to split an entire continent from the Olympics on this issue. However, despite the appearance of unity, behind the scenes the boycott suffered from serious issues that hampered its effectiveness. This chapter will explain these difficulties in the last-minute mobilizing of the boycott and then the chaotic way in which the boycott played out over a



week in Montreal. This chapter will then explain the reasons countries gave the IOC for their participation in the boycott and how the decision to boycott was explained to both athletes and the public back home. Finally, it will look at the debates within a selection of African countries - Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Senegal, Nigeria, and Ghana - about what the boycott meant and whether it had been a success. The 1976 boycott set up a period of four years of questions about the future of the Olympics as a global sports organization and whether the Moscow Olympic Games would suffer from a similar boycott due to the persistent issue of sports contacts between Western nations and South Africa.

In comparison to the histories of other Olympic boycotts or flashpoints in the anti-apartheid struggle, the 1976 Montreal Olympic boycott has received less attention. Coverage of the Montreal Olympics has largely been on the construction and financial issues that led to the city of Montreal declaring bankruptcy. If attention is paid to the political issues surrounding the Games, then it is on the IOC's struggle with the Canadian government over the latter's One China policy and refusal to allow Taiwanese athletes into the country for the Olympics. The African boycott has come in third to these events despite its size and the ripple effects of Africa's walkout over the following decade.

In larger histories of the Olympics, Montreal is often bypassed or given short shrift. Allen Guttman's history *The Olympics* spends all of three paragraphs on 1976.<sup>152</sup> Both Moscow and Los Angeles receive their own chapters due to their being Cold War boycotts. Other major works like Christopher Hill's *Olympic Politics* does not explore the issues of Montreal.<sup>153</sup> Jules

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<sup>152</sup> Allen Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (University of Illinois Press, 1992), 144-5.

<sup>153</sup> Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics: Athens to Atlanta 1896-1996* (Manchester University Press, 1996); Hill has chapters on every Olympics from Moscow onwards and a section that discusses the anti-apartheid boycott but misses out Montreal.

Boykoff's *Power Games: A Political History of the Olympics* gives less than a page to the events in Montreal, but also gives only a few pages to the other boycotts as well.<sup>154</sup> John Hoberman's *Olympic Crisis* argues that the Olympic crisis era lasted from 1980 to 1984, and he ignores the precedent set in 1976 by African countries.<sup>155</sup> Even David Goldblatt's recent global history of the Olympics, *The Games*, largely bypasses Montreal and its global ramifications.<sup>156</sup> Richard Espy gives the 1976 Olympics some consideration in *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, but uses it primarily as a set up for a longer discussion of the growing relationship between sport and politics that would define the Moscow Olympics, chiefly because he was writing in 1979.<sup>157</sup>

Historians have generally ignored the Montreal Olympics in favor of other political events such as Mexico City 1968 or the 1980 and 1984 Cold War boycotts. Malcolm MacLean, the former Chair of the British Society for Sports Historians, argued that historians have downplayed the Montreal boycott in comparison because "it was mainly African nations that acted."<sup>158</sup> Olympic history is generally Western focused as it "prioritises and grants agency to Western European and North American interests and perspectives." But in Montreal "the active forces were majority world nations, mainly African, acting against the interests of that North Atlantic nexus and its allies. This suggests at best a colonial blindness, if not an inherent white supremacy, in the historical narrative." The 1976 boycott, MacLean argues, "redefined the locus of struggle" for the anti-apartheid boycott in "perhaps the most geopolitically important moment of the era" that had "resonance across and beyond global sport." That it has been ignored in larger histories of the Olympics is something that needs to be corrected.

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<sup>154</sup> Jules Boykoff, *Power Games: A Political History of the Olympics* (Verso, 2016), 127.

<sup>155</sup> Hoberman, *The Olympic Crisis*.

<sup>156</sup> David Goldblatt, *The Games: A Global History of the Olympics* (Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>157</sup> Richard Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games* (University of California Press, 1979), 158.

<sup>158</sup> MacLean, "Reclaiming the 1976 Montreal Boycott."

The 1976 boycott is often generalized in mainstream accounts as an “African” boycott of the Games. By not explaining the boycott in detail, readers are often misled by accounts that appear to demonstrate continental unity on the issue and suggest it was an organized affair rather than one fraught with difficulties, in-fighting, and struggles over whether to boycott and what a boycott would mean. Studying the Montreal boycott in greater detail allows us to understand how boycotts take place, their issues, and how they can be interpreted both at the time and then in hindsight. And since this was the first major, international boycott of the Olympic Games, it is important to go through in the same detail and to show the same issues that have been discussed and analyzed in the case of the following boycott over Moscow.

Scholarship that focuses on the African boycott of Montreal often does so from the perspective of the Canadian hosts.<sup>159</sup> Danielle Griffin’s study of the boycott focused on the Trudeau government’s reaction to countries leaving and its help developing the Commonwealth’s Gleneagles Agreement in the aftermath. This view of Montreal leading to the Gleneagles Agreement is also seen in Donald Macintosh and Michael Hawe’s *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy* that links the 1976 Montreal boycott to the Canadian government’s efforts to prevent a boycott of the Edmonton 1978 Commonwealth Games.<sup>160</sup> However, when it comes to how the 1976 Montreal Boycott took place, including the build-up and the order of events, these discussions are more limited and need expanding.

Aside from these articles, few have focused on explaining events in Montreal in July and August. Éric and Catherine Monnin’s article “Le Boycott Politique des Jeux Olympique De

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<sup>159</sup> Danielle Griffin, “The Politics and Diplomatic Legacy of the Montréal Olympics,” in *Routledge Handbook of Sport and Legacy: Meeting the Challenge of Major Sports Events*, ed. Richard Holt and Dina Ruta (Routledge, 2015), 301-312.

<sup>160</sup> Macintosh and Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy*.

Montréal” explores the Taiwanese and African issues in 1976. Monnin and Monnin go into detail, utilizing Olympic documents, on why the boycotts took place and how the IOC attempted to resolve them.<sup>161</sup> The article situates the Montreal boycott within the larger anti-apartheid struggle against both South Africa and Rhodesia to provide readers with context, but it is forced to skim through much of the story. The focus on Olympic politics, since the sources are largely from the IOC meeting minutes in Montreal, means that different African perspectives, such as those of SCSA and delegation leaders, athletes, and those at home are often missed. This chapter will attempt to bring in more of these African perspectives on the boycott while providing a narrative that starts from the OAU’s resolution in Port Louis at the beginning of July and ends with the fallout after the Olympics in August.

### **From the OAU’s Port Louis Decision to the Montreal Boycott**

Between 24 June to 3 July, the Organisation of African Unity discussed the issues facing the continent. What to do about the impending New Zealand rugby tour of South Africa was a central question. With the Montreal Games just two weeks away, the OAU heads of state passed a resolution “On Sports Relations with South Africa” that sought to pressure the IOC by creating a clear and unified African position on New Zealand. The resolution stated, “that while South Africa indulges in savage massacres of our brothers and sisters at Soweto, Johannesburg, Pretoria and elsewhere in South Africa, New Zealand stands surety for such atrocities by maintaining sports relations with South African fascists.”<sup>162</sup> OAU member states “vigorously”

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<sup>161</sup> Monnin and Monnin, “Le boycott politique,” 93-113.

<sup>162</sup> OAU, “Resolutions of the 27th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers,” 24 June - 3 July 1976, CM/Res.473-524, African Union Common Repository, hereafter AU Repository, (<https://archives.au.int/discover>), 26.

condemned any country or organization “which co-operates and participates in any sports activity whatsoever with the racist regime in South Africa.” The OAU appealed to the IOC “to ban New Zealand from all participation in the 1976 Olympic Games;” but the OAU also stated that if the IOC hesitated to act on the issue, then it would ask member states to “reconsider their participation” in Montreal. OAU spokesman Peter Onu declared this resolution would force the IOC to “choose between New Zealand and us,” setting up a showdown between the African continent and the International Olympic Committee.<sup>163</sup>

The OAU’s resolution was a clear warning shot across the IOC’s bow. Abraham Ordia had been urging action against New Zealand since the National Party’s election victory in November 1975 and had been threatening an Olympic boycott since the beginning of 1976. These threats had not produced any changes from the IOC or the New Zealand government in the preceding months. The OAU resolution should have forced the issue to the top of the IOC’s agenda. The political organization representing the African continent threatened action over New Zealand’s sports contacts with South Africa at the same time as the All-Blacks tour started on June 30. New Zealanders was in the process of breaking the international boycott of South Africa; a reaction was surely to be expected. But if the IOC heard the warning shot, it is not clear. The IOC and New Zealand government appeared oblivious to the growing threat to the Olympic Games.

Despite the OAU’s best intentions in crafting the resolution, there were significant problems that would hamper its effectiveness. The OAU confirmed it had passed a resolution asking members to reconsider their participation in Montreal on the final day of the Port Louis conference on July 3. This would have left less than two weeks for the IOC, the SCSA, the New

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<sup>163</sup> “O.A.U. posers for the Kiwis and I.O.C.” *Standard*, 2 July 1976, 10.

Zealand government, and individual OAU member states to find a solution before the opening of the Olympics. While there had been a boycott threat against Rhodesia just weeks before the start of the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, which ended in the SCSA's favor with Rhodesia's withdrawal, the situation in 1976 was more complicated and required more time. However, issues with transmitting copies of the document meant that the OAU's resolution only reached the Olympic capital on July 13, when it was brought up to the Canadian city by an OAU delegate from the UN in New York. This left little time for the SCSA to coordinate action from Montreal and for individual teams to coordinate with their governments about what to do. While Ordia had threatened a boycott for months, there was no plan nor specific demands that would be made to the IOC beyond New Zealand's withdrawal. The SCSA had no idea about what an acceptable, negotiated outcome would look like. Timing was an issue, but so was lack of preparation over the previous weeks and months.

The language of the OAU's resolution was also up for debate. The Port Louis resolution called on member states to "reconsider their participation" if the IOC rejected demands to disinvite New Zealand. This was ambiguous and caused problems both before and after the Olympics. David Wickham, the Halt All Racist Tour's representative in Montreal, telexed back to New Zealand that the London branch of SANROC and Ganga had "done [their] best to sabotage boycott, thus reason for weak OAU resolution" calling for states to "reconsider" rather than directly calling for a boycott.<sup>164</sup> Dennis Brutus, SANROC's founder, argued that the issue lay with "the translation from French to English" rather than in the actual intent of the resolution. However, the OAU's resolution remained ambiguous, leaving the question as to whether it required African nations to boycott the Olympics if the IOC did not prevent New Zealand's

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<sup>164</sup> Richards, *Dancing on our Bones*, 160.

participation. This question remained as national teams were flying to Montreal and starting their final preparations in the Olympic Village.

The OAU's call to boycott the Olympic Games was also unusual in that neither Abraham Ordia nor Jean-Claude Ganga, the key leadership of the SCSA, were present during the OAU's meeting. Ganga explained that this was due to two reasons: the first was when the OAU had sent out the initial agenda for the conference it "did not include any point relating to the boycott of the Montreal Olympics;" the second was the first Central African Games were scheduled at the same time in Gabon.<sup>165</sup> This combination of reasons meant that Ganga did not attend the meeting, but neither did Abraham Ordia, who had made his only contribution to the meeting via telex. The OAU's decision was taken without the direct input of the SCSA and other African sports leaders, but it was left to these officials to interpret and enact the OAU's will.

That the OAU was deciding the fate of athletes rankled some sports officials. In Kenya, the chairman of Kenya's National Sports Council (NSC), Isaac Lugonzo, gave several interviews stating his issues with the boycott. Lugonzo was quoted in Kenya's *Standard* arguing that "African countries should have a second look at their case for a planned boycott...the New Zealand issue is very complex...it is not like the case of Rhodesia and South Africa." Tanzania's *Daily News* quoted Lugonzo as explaining that it was "not right to hold that since the New Zealand Rugby Union maintains links with racist South Africa, so does its Olympic committee."<sup>166</sup> After the Kenyan team left for Montreal on July 8, Lugonzo was quoted saying "We don't want to sacrifice our policy on apartheid for Olympic medals but we have much at stake if we fail to participate in the games."<sup>167</sup> Critics, such as Lugonzo, did not believe the OAU

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<sup>165</sup> "Report on the Activities of the Secretary General," E-RE02-CSSA/011, SD1, OSC, 58.

<sup>166</sup> "Olympic Dispute," *Daily News*, 7 July 1976, 16

<sup>167</sup> "More Troubles Hits Olympics," *Daily News*, 9 July 1976, 8.

had fully considered what it was asking African athletes to do on its behalf and that it needed to reconsider whether a boycott was the right tool for this job and whether New Zealand was the right target.

However, despite Lugonzo's complaints over interference and the sacrifices asked of African athletes, countries started to boycott immediately after the OAU published its resolution. Two of the earliest boycotters were Madagascar and Mauritius. On July 6, the Malagasy government announced it would not be sending a team to Montreal but refused to give a reason in its public announcement.<sup>168</sup> The Mauritian government announced on July 11 that it was not sending a team to Montreal in accordance with the OAU's decision. However, neither Madagascar nor Mauritius were especially strong Olympic nations. Their delegations would have been small and non-competitive.<sup>169</sup> But their boycott had symbolic importance in reducing the number of countries that would participate in Montreal and raising the pressure on other African nations to follow.

The first major sporting nation to boycott was Tanzania. The government announced on July 9 that its team would not travel to the Olympics as per the OAU's request. The statement argued that while "the whole world was mourning and condemning the barbaric massacres of loyal sons and daughters of Africa in Soweto, Johannesburg, Pretoria and other parts of South Africa," that the All-Blacks rugby team was playing in South Africa "was an open approval by New Zealand of these murderous acts."<sup>170</sup> A *Daily News* editorial praised the government's decision as "a bitter condemnation of the forces of oppression;" participating in the Olympics

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<sup>168</sup> "Olympic Dispute," *Daily News*, 7 July 1976, 16

<sup>169</sup> The Mauritian NOC did not compete in an Olympics from its founding in 1971 until its first Games in 1984; Madagascar sent 11 athletes to Munich but did not win any medals.

<sup>170</sup> "Tanzania Boycotts Olympics," *Daily News*, 10 July 1976, 1.



alongside New Zealand would have meant “conniving with the forces of injustice. Doing that is to condone racism in games whose message is chivalry, brotherhood and fair play.”<sup>171</sup> The deputy chairman of Tanzania’s NSC, Mustafa Nyang’anyi, said that his country’s decision was based on the Olympic principles that “the idea of the Olympics is peace and the IOC can not overlook the barbaric massacre of the sons and daughters of African by the racist South Africa regime.”<sup>172</sup> Tanzania did not want to be seen competing alongside New Zealand and declared its position early to raise the stakes of the boycott for the IOC.

Tanzania’s announcement on July 9 was unsurprising. The government had already been leading the charge against New Zealand for much of 1976. The Tanzanian government had instituted their own boycott in January, before the SCSA had decided on its policy, by forbidding star athlete Filbert Bayi from competing in New Zealand.<sup>173</sup> While the SCSA was vacillating over what sort of punishment it should pursue for New Zealand in June, the state-owned *Daily News* published a series of critical articles of the IOC, New Zealand, and SCSA inaction, even before the Soweto massacre. After the bloody events in South Africa, the SCSA’s continued deliberation frustrated columnist Tommy Sithole who wanted action: “It is horrifying that we should have people of this kind leading us...It is unsettling to just think what they would do next particularly now that there is blood involved.”<sup>174</sup> Therefore, when the Tanzanian government announced its decision to boycott and censured New Zealand, it was a long time coming.

Tanzania’s withdrawal struck a significant blow to the Montreal Olympic Games’ prestige. The focus during the Olympic build-up had been on the impending “Race of the

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<sup>171</sup> “Sunday News Opinion: Olympic Games,” *Daily News*, 11 July 1976, 6.

<sup>172</sup> Stephen Rweikiza, “Boycott is the real thing,” *Daily News*, 11 July 1976, 12.

<sup>173</sup> “Report on the Activities of the Secretary General,” E-RE02-CSSA/011, SD1, OSC, 56.

<sup>174</sup> Sithole, “The Kiwis, Boers and the Soweto Blood,” 11.

Century” in the 1,500m between Tanzania’s Filbert Bayi and New Zealand’s John Walker. Interest had risen throughout 1976 due to the Tanzanian government’s ban on contacts with New Zealand, which had prevented Bayi from racing Walker for months. The prevailing wisdom in the Western press, though, was that the Tanzanians would not sacrifice their participation in the Olympics and so sports fans eagerly awaited the Bayi-Walker race in Montreal. But Tanzania’s withdrawal meant no “Race of the Century.” Bayi was frustrated but understood his government’s decision: “Four years of training have gone for nothing...The government had to do what it did.”<sup>175</sup> The Tanzanian government also acknowledged that it was preventing Bayi’s participation in the “Race of the Century” as a political statement, conceding that Bayi’s absence would “be a matter of regret for many a sports lover. For we know we are, in effect, denying the international community the opportunity to see an outstanding sportsman they have anxiously waited for all this time.”<sup>176</sup> For Tanzania, the withdrawal of the full team was symbolic as a protest against New Zealand and the IOC, but the largest blow was their refusal to let Bayi compete in a marquee matchup that was sure to garner global media attention, thus demonstrating the growing importance of African states to the Olympics.

Tanzania’s withdrawal was detrimental to the Olympics, but when teams started arriving in Montreal on July 11 only three countries had declared their intent to boycott. Everyone else was waiting for the SCSA to take the lead in Montreal. Questions remained about whether the IOC would listen to African concerns and disinvite New Zealand or whether Ordia and Ganga could negotiate another face-saving solution. From the sidelines, Tanzania’s ruling party called for African countries to “follow Tanzania’s example” and boycott the Olympics, with the party’s

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<sup>175</sup> “Disappointed admits Bayi,” *Daily Nation*, 12 July 1976, 14.

<sup>176</sup> “Tanzania’s Pullout,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 July 1976, D2.

newspaper *Uhuru* declaring “Africa must choose what is best for her. Olympic medals or freedom and respect.”<sup>177</sup> Comments in favor of a boycott trickled out of Montreal from different African delegations and even a few IOC members. The deputy leader of Nigeria’s Olympic delegation said, “Nigeria would also withdraw if New Zealand were represented.”<sup>178</sup> Francis Nyangweso, Uganda’s team leader, explained that “We will certainly move out if the OAU orders it...I hope there is room for a compromise but if New Zealand disregards our stand against apartheid then we shall go. We are not aiming at destroying the Olympics, but we have to show where we stand.”<sup>179</sup> Surprisingly, Mohamed Benjelloun, a Moroccan IOC member, “announced that Morocco would join any united African action against New Zealand,” which was an unusual statement for an Olympic official to make.<sup>180</sup>

Yet, it remained unclear how the boycott would take shape. As African delegations arrived, leaders could now discuss the OAU resolution and its meanings. The SCSA had no fixed policy coming into Montreal and had to create one from scratch. There was also confusion among members about when and where this policy would be discussed. After arriving on July 11, John Kasyoka, the President of the Kenyan Olympic Association, “said he had no idea of any discussion that had been going on in Montreal” but expected conversations to take place soon.<sup>181</sup> The following day, Adele Adeboye, the Nigerian delegation’s liaison officer, told reporters that there had already been a number of meetings among African team leaders, but that

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<sup>177</sup> ““Follow Tanzania’s example,”” *Standard*, 13 July 1976, 7.

<sup>178</sup> “Mauritius joins games boycott,” *Daily News*, 13 July 1976, 8.

<sup>179</sup> “African teams discuss ban,” *Daily News*, 13 July 1976, 8.

<sup>180</sup> “Mauritius joins games boycott,” *Daily News*, 13 July 1976, 8.

<sup>181</sup> “Kasyoka not aware of Boycott talks,” *Standard*, 12 July 1976, 8.

he was not sure “whether these had started before Tanzania announced it was boycotting” or after.<sup>182</sup>

As the start of the Olympics approached, there was a clear issue on how to proceed and the initial meetings produced no consensus. Ghana’s Chef de Mission, Dr. R.O. Addae, commented on July 13 that his delegation would follow any “unanimous decision” by the SCSA, but that “African nations in Montreal have so far not been able to decide on a total boycott.”<sup>183</sup> Jean-Claude Ganga’s report on events from 1976 states that while discussions had taken place as soon as delegations arrived, it was only after the OAU’s resolution arrived via telex and as a physical copy on July 14 that the SCSA and the African delegation heads could begin to formulate a plan with all the information available.<sup>184</sup> But with the Opening Ceremony set for July 17, there were less than three days to discuss the issue, come up with a plan, and act on it. Time was against any boycott action.

Even after African officials received the OAU resolution, confusion still reigned around what the SCSA should do about it. David Wickham, HART’s representative in Montreal, summarized discussions between SCSA, anti-apartheid, and delegation leaders and sent these reports back to New Zealand. Wickham’s first-hand account revealed the struggle to produce a unified policy. Two days before the Opening Ceremony of the Olympics, Wickham described a rancorous situation between the different anti-apartheid and sports bodies, as well as intra-organization fighting. SANROC was split on the issue of the boycott with Dennis Brutus pushing for strong action and other SANROC members, particularly the London branch under Sam

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<sup>182</sup> “African teams discuss ban,” *Daily News*, 13 July 1976, 8.

<sup>183</sup> Sammy Aduagyei, “Olympiad - Ghana Contingent Awaits Word From Home,” *Ghanaian Times*, 14 July 1976, 1.

<sup>184</sup> “Report on the Activities of the Secretary General,” E-RE02-CSSA/011, SD1, OSC, 58-59.

Ramsamy, attempting, according to Wickham, to “sabotage [the] boycott.”<sup>185</sup> When allocating credit for the boycott, Wickham praised Brutus, who “rushed around organising an extraordinary, absolutely secret meeting of the SCSA to discuss the issue...despite the hostility of Ganga” and built a coalition on the boycott issue.<sup>186</sup>

While SANROC was a house divided, the SCSA leaders were similarly split. Ordia and Ganga mirrored the division between Anglophone and Francophone Africa on how to punish South African connections. Wickham described Ordia as the driving force behind the boycott threat and the SCSA’s resolutions in Nairobi earlier in the year. During his time in Montreal, Ordia’s job was seemingly “to push any wavering Africans into line” and to get the continent to boycott.<sup>187</sup> Ganga was hesitant and had been since the Nairobi meeting, where he had been lukewarm about joining the call for a boycott with other SCSA members. Ganga and the London branch of SANROC believed the boycott was too dangerous. For the SANROC critics, the New Zealand issue was risky to boycott the Olympics over and not worth risking Africa’s sporting capital. It was not clear what Africa would be getting out of this boycott.

What also scared some SCSA and SANROC officials was that it appeared Africa would have to go it alone in Montreal and could not “rely on support of socialist countries on this issue.”<sup>188</sup> The upcoming Moscow Olympic Games, the prize of the socialist sports movement, meant that the usually reliable socialist bloc would withhold their support on this occasion. Ganga simply “did not believe that a boycott was possible” without this support.<sup>189</sup> The socialist bloc had backed the SCSA’s positions with varying enthusiasm in 1968 and 1972, but in 1976

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<sup>185</sup> Richards, *Dancing on our Bones*, 160.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*, 129.

<sup>188</sup> Richards, *Dancing on our Bones*, 161.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

there was silence on the matter during the build-up to the Games. However, Ganga's fear that the boycott would prove impossible would hold until the very last minute when suddenly African nations started to walk away from the Games without waiting for wider support. Wickham said that with the departure of the first teams from Montreal things changed: "Once Ganga had achieved some sort of unity he was shit-hot" and worked hard to publicize the boycott and explain that Africa had withdrawn because of New Zealand's participation and the All-Blacks tour.<sup>190</sup> But despite Ganga's efforts on behalf of the boycott, divisions would remain within both SANROC and the SCSA over whether it had been correct. Ganga would remain hesitant about the boycott in the coming years.

In the meantime, a few African states started to withdraw from the Olympics regardless of the work done behind the scenes by the SCSA and other actors. On July 14, Somalia announced its intent to boycott the Olympic Games.<sup>191</sup> The following day, the Republic of Congo declared that it would not participate in Montreal.<sup>192</sup> Both Somalia and the Republic of Congo explained their withdrawals as adhering to the OAU's resolution. Their withdrawals were again symbolic blows to the Montreal Olympics, like Mauritius and Madagascar, but not as harmful to the Olympics as Tanzania's. But with Somalia and Congo leaving, remaining African officials began fearing the worst. The domino effect appeared to be growing in strength, increasing pressure on those that remained. Nigerian team manager Isaac Akioye complained that "These are my first Games, but I think they are ruined...They have taken the wrong direction when on the eve of competition officials start to wrangle. Officials are wrangling in every nook and cranny. This is a farce. They have now become an Olympic Games for officials

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> "Somalia too backs out," *Standard*, 15 July 1976, 8.

<sup>192</sup> "Now Congo pulls out," *Standard*, 16 July 1976, 10.

and this makes me sick."<sup>193</sup> Akioye did not blame New Zealand's athletes, instead blaming Muldoon's government: "Africa is pointing out a principle...unfortunately it has to happen in the eleventh hour of the Olympic Games."<sup>194</sup>

After the SCSA's meeting with African team leaders on July 14, a two-pronged policy developed. The first was to approach the IOC and complain about New Zealand's presence at the Olympic Games given the All-Blacks tour to South Africa. The SCSA would ask for New Zealand's withdrawal or Africa would withdraw its teams. The second prong was to approach New Zealand officials and ask them to persuade their government to either recall the rugby team from South Africa or to condemn the tour in some fashion, which would save face for the SCSA and other African states. Either way would prevent a boycott from taking place and allow the Montreal Olympic Games to continue without further disruption, even possibly allowing countries that had already boycotted, such as Tanzania, to send their athletes in time for competitions. Neither of these paths would prove fruitful. In the first case, the IOC proved both sidetracked by the Taiwan issue facing the Montreal Olympics and disinterested in African complaints. In the second case, New Zealand officials had no interest in being held ransom by African states and refused to budge one inch.<sup>195</sup>

The IOC was aware of the SCSA's issues with New Zealand for months in the lead-up to the Games. Ordia and other African officials broadcast their displeasure with New Zealand's sports contacts with South Africa widely. The UN Seminar in Havana had discussed the matter and issued a declaration calling on New Zealand's contacts to be punished in some form. The OAU's meeting in Port Louis was well-covered and its resolutions publicized. The withdrawal of

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<sup>193</sup> "Boycott decision coming," *Standard*, 15 July 1976, 8.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> "Africa set for new boycotts," *Standard*, 20 July 1976, 1.

Tanzania, Madagascar, and Mauritius had all taken place before IOC members arrived in Montreal. Somalia and Congo's withdrawals on July 14 amplified the problem and had taken place when the IOC was in session for the Olympics. The possibility of an African boycott appeared headed for a showdown as the Montreal Olympics started. But IOC officials appeared surprised that a boycott was on the horizon just days before the Opening Ceremony. In Lord Killanin's autobiography, *My Olympic Years*, he wrote that the African boycott "eventually materialised" in Montreal and was caused by "a string of events, mostly unforeseen."<sup>196</sup> But this was clearly not the case unless the IOC was not paying attention to matters or understanding the seriousness of the situation as African delegations plotted their endgame in Montreal.

The first that many IOC members heard about the boycott was when African delegations sent a letter to Lord Killanin on July 15 calling for New Zealand's withdrawal from the Olympic Games. The letter, which claimed to be from sixteen "representatives of the National Olympic Committees of Africa present here in Montreal," complained about the "collaboration of the sporting authorities of New Zealand with racist South Africa."<sup>197</sup> The letter described the rugby tour as "bare-faced support...for acts of inhumanity against Africans in South Africa" and demanded that the IOC take action to show the world that support for South Africa in any form was egregious.<sup>198</sup> The signatories called on "the I.O.C. to bar New Zealand from participating in the 1976 Olympic Games being held in Montreal" and that "should the I.O.C. fail to heed this humanitarian call, the respective National Olympic Committees of Africa reserve the right to reconsider their participation in the Games."<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Lord Killanin, *My Olympic Years*, 138.

<sup>197</sup> "Minutes of the 78th IOC Session in Montreal," Sessions CIO, OSC, Annex 8, 70.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.



The letter was supposed to shock the IOC into supporting the African cause. Instead, it had the opposite effect. The IOC's African members, who were a small minority within the sports organization, led the group's discussion on the letter. Ahmed Touny, the Egyptian IOC member, said he was against any sanctions on New Zealand athletes.<sup>200</sup> Other African members, Louis Guirandou-N'Diaye, who was also President of the Ivory Coast Olympic Committee, and Sir Ade Ademola, from Nigeria, supported Touny, with Ademola adding that despite the protests "there was no case against New Zealand."<sup>201</sup> Syed Wajid Ali (Pakistan), Hadj Mohammed Benjelloun (Morocco) and Mohamed Zerguini (Algeria) all spoke against action since "this question was not within the competence of the IOC."<sup>202</sup> Despite this, Mohammed Benjelloun did wonder if there was anything that Lance Cross, the New Zealand IOC member, might be able to do "in order to save the situation."<sup>203</sup> But this was rejected by Willi Daume, the powerful West German IOC member and long-time official, who cited that since "New Zealand was not guilty of breaking Olympic rules" there was nothing the IOC needed to do.<sup>204</sup> The rest of the IOC members agreed.

The letter raised serious questions about who was controlling these African sports organizations. Sixteen countries signed the letter, with Senegal and Ivory Coast among the signatories despite both states later refusing to join the boycott. Ivory Coast's name on the list was a problem for another reason: Guirandou-N'Diaye, the head of the NOC, claimed that "he had not seen this letter," nor signed it, before it appeared before the IOC.<sup>205</sup> Yet Ivory Coast was

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 22.

still among the sixteen signatures. Guirandou-N'Diaye reiterated his opposition to the African demands “as there was no reason to suspend relations with a country which had relations with South Africa. This was nothing to do with the Olympic Games.”<sup>206</sup> But who was in control of the Ivorian NOC specifically and the African Olympic Committees broadly was unclear. This left the IOC more confused as to how to both respond to the letter and deal with the boycott threat.

On July 16, Lord Killanin responded to the letter to Jean-Claude Ganga briefly explaining the IOC’s position and why it refused to disinvite New Zealand. Lord Killanin explained that since “rugby is a sport over which the International Olympic Committee has no control whatsoever,” the IOC members “unanimously agree this is not a matter within its competence;” moreover, “the New Zealand National Olympic Committee and Team have in no way breached the Olympic Principles and Rules,” meaning there was no reason to punish that sports organization.<sup>207</sup> The IOC dismissed the demands of the assembled African teams with little discussion, claiming that it could do nothing in this case.

The IOC’s quick dismissal of the New Zealand issue, though, contrasted starkly with its attention on the Taiwan situation. Since the IOC awarded Montreal the Olympics in 1970, the Canadian government had changed to a One China policy and recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Therefore, Canadian border officials no longer allowed Taiwanese athletes to enter the country, even for the Olympic Games. The IOC wanted an exception since Montreal was not a Canadian city for the duration of the Games but rather the capital of the Olympic movement. The IOC, Montreal Organizing Committee, and Canadian government engaged in telephone and shuttle diplomacy searching for a solution. Other countries involved themselves,

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<sup>206</sup> “Minutes of the 78th IOC Session in Montreal,” Sessions CIO, OSC, 22.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 71.

with the American team threatening to pull out if Taiwan did not compete.<sup>208</sup> The Taiwanese issue dominated the IOC's attention in the lead-up to the Olympics, with the matter discussed on July 10, 11, 12 and 15. In contrast, the African boycott and New Zealand was not discussed until July 16. The IOC invited the Taiwanese delegation to its meetings to negotiate and consult. The best the SCSA got was a short meeting at Lord Killanin's hotel suite. Lord Killanin spoke to Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau over Taiwan, but did not make a similar call to Robert Muldoon in New Zealand. The IOC perceived the Taiwan situation as a diplomatic incident that required solving before the Olympics started. It did not view the African issue with the same seriousness.

There are a few reasons why the IOC might have focused on Taiwan over New Zealand. In Taiwan's favor, the United States advocated for its inclusion and threatened to pull its own team if no solution could be found to allow Taiwan to compete. Losing the US Olympic team was out of the question for the IOC and so it sought to solve that situation. Another reason was that Canada's Taiwan decision challenged the IOC by allowing states to dictate participation, which could set a dangerous precedent for future Games. But a major reason was likely that this was the third time in a row the SCSA had threatened an Olympic boycott in a row, but there had not yet been a boycott. In 1968 and 1972 the SCSA scared the IOC into disinviting both South Africa and Rhodesia. But there had never been any proof that Africa would boycott. Dennis Brutus was suspicious of the IOC's refusal to engage with African states after spending so much time on Taiwan, claiming that the IOC had dragged out the One China issue to "divert attention from African threats" and to wait the Africans out.<sup>209</sup> But it could also be that the IOC had

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<sup>208</sup> Doug Gilbert, "IOC wants Taiwan out of the Games," *Gazette*, 12 July 1976, 1.

<sup>209</sup> Richard E. Lapchick, "A Political History of the Modern Olympic Games," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 2, no. 1 (1978): 10.

enough of being pushed around by those newly decolonized states that believed sport and politics were tied together, and it sought to draw a line in the sand. For whatever reason, whether the IOC was more focused on the Taiwan issue or refused to engage over New Zealand, the IOC rejected African demands and sparked the largest boycott of the Olympics at the time, threatening to tear apart the Olympic movement.

## **Boycott**

The IOC's refusal to disinvite New Zealand on July 16 left African countries with a decision to make with a day to go until the Opening Ceremony. But many decisions started to fall out of the SCSA's hands. The Nigerian delegation suddenly packed up on the evening of July 17 after receiving instructions from its government. A few days before the Nigerian government had warned it would withdraw its team unless New Zealand was banned. After the IOC's reply reached Lagos, the government carried out its threat, stating that Nigeria "would never compromise Africa as the centre-piece of its foreign policy, on any international sporting participation."<sup>210</sup> Lord Killanin later claimed the Nigerians always intended to boycott and kept a plane ready to dramatically whisk the team away to make their point.<sup>211</sup>

Reporters questioned Nigerian delegation members as they departed. The delegation's head described his nation's actions as "an eloquent protest over New Zealand."<sup>212</sup> Major General Olufemi Olutoye, the team leader, stated "Of course, we are aware that some of our athletes will suffer, but if this is the price we have to pay, then we will do it." Archie Moore, the American former light heavyweight boxing champion, who had been training Nigerian athletes for the

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<sup>210</sup> "Nigerian squad due home today," *Nigeria Standard*, 18 July 1976, 19.

<sup>211</sup> Lord Killanin, *My Olympic Years*, 138.

<sup>212</sup> "Homeward-Bound," *Standard*, 19 July 1976, 8.

Olympics, commented on the decision to boycott with the simple rejoinder, “If a man has no principles he has nothing.” An unnamed Nigerian athlete responded to questions, “No we can’t stay. We’re doing this for the whole continent. But we don’t want to go. Man, how could you ask? We don’t really want to go.”

Nigeria’s withdrawal carried tremendous symbolic weight due to its economic and political power on the African continent. This weight led to other countries quickly following the Nigerians out of Montreal. Zambia also left on the July 17. This was particularly tragic since 1976 was set to be the first time that the Olympics would be shown on Zambian television.<sup>213</sup> Kenya also announced that it would leave the same day. The Kenyans, who had always been hesitant about boycotting, decided to join once other states started to leave. James Osogo, the acting Foreign Minister, stated that his government had not taken the decision “hastily or lightly” but rather had decided to withdraw “on principle and in accordance with the majority of views and agreement of African nations.”<sup>214</sup> Lugonzo, who had called on the SCSA and OAU to reconsider their boycott proposition a few weeks before, issued his own statement from the Olympic Village stating, “we will not align ourselves with a country that has sports ties with South Africa.”<sup>215</sup> Withdrawing was sure to hurt Kenyan athletics but “the Government and the people of Kenya also hold the view that principles are more precious than medals.”

Kenya’s withdrawal was important because, like Tanzania, its athletes had been expected to challenge for medals in Montreal, thus tarnishing the competition through the absence of Kenyan middle and long-distance runners and boxers. The delegation was also Africa’s largest at

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<sup>213</sup> Ridgeway Liwena, “I write as I please,” *Times of Zambia*, 16 July 1976, 10; “Zambia to pull out of games?” *Times of Zambia*, 17 July 1976, 8.

<sup>214</sup> “Kenya boycotts Olympics,” *Daily News*, 18 July 1976, 1.

<sup>215</sup> Steve Cady, “22 African countries boycott opening ceremony of Olympic Games,” *New York Times*, 18 July 1976, 130.

132, meaning that its withdrawal would hurt a number of competitions across the Olympics.<sup>216</sup>

The news, though, was not taken well and Kenya's 400-metre runner Stephen Chepkwony vented his frustrations at what had just taken place, "I don't mind telling you I'm very angry at the OAU...I've spent years training for this. It has been my life's ambition, and then, this stupid resolution."<sup>217</sup> Kenya's withdrawal was met by mixed feelings within the team and at home, but its symbolic value was enormous to the SCSA and African boycott.

On July 17, alongside Kenya, Zambia, and Nigeria, the Peoples Republic of Congo, Gambia and Ethiopia withdrew. The Opening Ceremony signified the start of the boycott proper with a substantial number of African countries absent. Some teams hung around Montreal waiting for a resolution, but Nigeria's decision to leave the Olympic Village and return home increased the pressure on other states to follow suit. With Nigeria gone, vacillating countries now had to make their choices. Kenya had withdrawn wanting to be part of the consensus among African states. Others followed for similar reasons. David Wickham's telegrams back to New Zealand explained that many delegations were afraid to make the first move, "Nigeria and Ethiopia [were] waiting on Kenyans to make first move," but in the end the Kenyan's had responded to Nigeria taking the lead.<sup>218</sup> The withdrawal lacked coordination. The fear of being the last African country out, the weakest on the anti-apartheid and New Zealand issues, caused a massive walkout.

In later reports to Soviet officials, Ordia would describe the boycott camp as led by Nigeria, Libya, Guinea, and Tanzania, while many countries, such as Liberia, showed "fluctuations" in their willingness, and Kenya only withdrew because it "feared completely

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> "Sad African exodus from Games amid uneasy noises," *Pretoria News*, 23 July 1976, 3.

<sup>218</sup> Richards, *Dancing on our Bones*, 160.

losing its prestige in Africa.”<sup>219</sup> The OAU’s deputy General Secretary Nurridin Jeudy would describe the boycott position in Montreal as “ambiguous from the start” with different levels of commitment: Nigeria “unconditionally accepted the boycott” along with a few other counties; most were like Algeria, “following the decision of the majority, although they did not approve.”<sup>220</sup> IOC vice-President Mohamed Mzali would explain after the boycott that Tunisia had withdrawn “as it were compulsory [to boycott] from the moment that the majority of Africa and Arab-Muslim countries withdrew. It was difficult to choose splendid isolation.”<sup>221</sup> The boycott was not a united front across Africa, instead it was fractured and relied primarily on group pressure to ensure compliance across the continent. No country (or at least only a few) wanted to be on the outside of the boycott.

The African boycott took place in slow motion with countries departing the Olympics sporadically, leaving observers guessing about how many countries would stay. Many delegations were left waiting for news from home and thus produced mixed messages when asked about their intentions to compete. In the case of Egypt, where the government vacillated, the team participated in the Opening Ceremony and the first three days of competition, including basketball, boxing, and weightlifting. Only after this did the government summon the team home. Even then, the Egyptian team leader Abdell-Aziz Shafei had to be told by a Reuters journalist that his government had ordered the team to withdraw. Shafei, though, had not heard

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<sup>219</sup> “Document 38,” in *Pyat Kolets pod Kremlevskimi Zvezdami: Dokumentalnaya khronika Olimpiady-80 v Moskve*, ed. N.G. Tomilina, T. Iu. Konopa and M. Iu. Prozumenshchikov (Mezhdunarodnii Fond “Demokratiya”, 2011) hereafter referred to as *Five Rings*, 141-2: All Russian documents translated by the author.

<sup>220</sup> Russian State Archive for Contemporary History, hereafter RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 75-81.

<sup>221</sup> Mohamed Mzali, “I am sorry about the boycott of the Montreal Olympic Games,” *Olympic Review* 107-108 (September-October 1976): 464.

anything directly and initially believed that his team would continue participating in the Olympic Games.<sup>222</sup> Cameroon similarly participated in the Opening Ceremony and sent its cyclists to compete in a time trial event before being summoned back to Yaoundé. Tunisia initially participated in boxing, swimming and handball. Mohamed Mzali, who was both Minister for Sport and the IOC vice-President, explained after the Opening Ceremony that “Tunisia has no reason to boycott the Olympic Games. There is no question of Tunisia withdrawing.”<sup>223</sup> But immediately after giving that statement, the Tunisian government summoned its team home. The trigger for Tunisia was the withdrawal of Egypt and Morocco after the first days of competition; Tunisia did not want to be the only North African country at the Olympics. It had to join the boycott to save face on the continent.

Since delegations were left waiting for news from governments back home as to what they should do and the governments were reacting to each other’s movements, there was no singular coordinated exit from Montreal, thus leaving it appearing disorganized and lacking a singular, defining moment for maximal effect. The boycott took place over nearly a week from the earliest withdrawals from Montreal on July 14 through to Tunisia and a few latecomers leaving on June 20 and 21. Updates were published in newspapers as to exactly how many and which countries had boycotted. Often these updates could be wrong as the situation was confusing and lacked central coordination. It was printed in Tanzania’s *Daily News* at one stage that Senegal had boycotted the Olympics, before that was found out not to be true.<sup>224</sup> There were rumors flying around Montreal during the build-up and early days that Jamaica would boycott

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<sup>222</sup> “‘All-White Olympics’ Still in Big Mess,” *Nigeria Standard*, 20 July 1976, 11.

<sup>223</sup> Niamagne, “Le Sénégal reste,” *Le Soleil*, 21 July 1976, 1.

<sup>224</sup> “New Crisis,” *Daily News*, 17 July 1976, 8.



the Games in pan-African solidarity.<sup>225</sup> It was not until Montreal was over, and the IOC's later investigation into events in 1976, that it became clear who had joined the boycott and why.

Twenty-six African countries pulled their teams from Montreal, but two countries kept their athletes at the Olympic Games. President Léopold Senghor of Senegal decided not to boycott, a decision which Ivory Coast's President Félix Houphouët-Boigny supported. When journalists asked Senghor why Senegal would not boycott, he stated that "We think politics should be talked about in the United Nations. At the Olympic Games, one should talk about sport."<sup>226</sup> When the French ambassador to the Ivory Coast spoke to President Houphouët-Boigny on the subject of Montreal, the Ivorian criticized the boycott, stating "the Africans have in no way reacted when more powerful nations exchanged athletes with South Africa" so to make an example of New Zealand and sacrifice participation in the Olympics seemed "very wrong."<sup>227</sup> Senegalese news reports from Montreal were critical of the SCSA and other African countries describing the situation as confused.<sup>228</sup> Senegal and Ivory Coast's refusal fractured African unity on the boycott and was a point of contention within the SCSA after the Olympics, almost leading to a schism in the movement. The issue would also remain on the minds of African sports officials during the 1979 SCSA elections, which would set a Senegalese candidate up against Ganga for General Secretary.

A few non-African states joined the boycott, which was a welcome relief to the SCSA and African leaders. Guyana joined after the first wave of competitors left Montreal around the

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<sup>225</sup> Steve Cody, "Olympic Games Started; Guyana joins boycott," *New York Times*, 19 July 1976, 45.

<sup>226</sup> "Canada wins silver in swimming...security scare fizzles," *The Star-Phoenix*, 23 July 1976, 1.

<sup>227</sup> Telegram from M. Raphael-Leygues, Embassy of France in Cote D'Ivoire, to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 24 July 1976, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>228</sup> Serigne Aly Cissé, "La confusion de Montréal," *Le Soleil*, 6 August 1976, 1.

Opening Ceremony. Though African officials had hoped for a wider Caribbean boycott including Jamaica, Trinidad, Antigua and the Bahamas, in the end Guyana was only the Caribbean and South American nation to walkout.<sup>229</sup> Cuba was also mentioned as a possible participant, but the socialist bloc decided it could not pass up Montreal for sporting success or hamper Moscow hosting in 1980.<sup>230</sup> Africa-Caribbean unity on the anti-apartheid boycott developed substantially during the 1970s, but failed to result in solidarity in 1976.<sup>231</sup>

Iraq joined the boycott, citing its sympathy with the African position. Sri Lanka was also listed as a boycotting nation since it had not sent athletes to Moscow; however, Sri Lanka's position was later clarified as a non-participant, not a boycotter. Other groups offered their support for the boycott, such as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia who believed that the "New Zealand government must take full blame for the withdrawal of African Olympic teams by permitting the rugby tour of South Africa."<sup>232</sup> And a *Sacramento Bee* article suggested, with apparently no evidence, that African nations were appealing to African American athletes to join a trans-continental boycott.<sup>233</sup> But this did not mobilize into anything, unlike the solidarity shown by black Americans for the anti-apartheid struggle in 1968.

The SCSA had hoped for wider support for the boycott globally, as had been the case in Mexico City, to send a message to the IOC. But Montreal remained a continental rather than a

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<sup>229</sup> "Guyana, Togo pull out of Olympics," *Daily News*, 19 July 1976, 8.

<sup>230</sup> "Kenya boycotts Olympics," *Daily News*, 18 July 1976, 1.

<sup>231</sup> Aviston D. Downes, "Forging Africa-Caribbean Solidarity within the Commonwealth? Sport and Diplomacy during the Anti-Apartheid Campaign," in *Diplomatic Games: Sports, Statecraft and International Relations Since 1945*, ed. Heather L. Dichter and Andrew L. Johns (University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 127.

<sup>232</sup> "Americans May Pull Out," *Daily News*, 16 July 1976, 8.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

global boycott. Guyana and Iraq's participation helped to demonstrate this was a wider issue than just Africa, but Africa appeared to be quite isolated in this struggle. It was the socialist bloc's hesitance to back the boycott that left a feeling of "bitterness" among both African athletes and politicians.<sup>234</sup> Press statements from Soviet officials, such as Sergey Pavlov, called on African countries to stay in Montreal, saying that "withdrawal from the Olympic Games is not an effective way to react" to the New Zealand tour.<sup>235</sup> On this occasion, the USSR and SCSA were not on the same page and it hampered the effectiveness of the African boycott.

The UN also offered limited support to the African boycott. Leslie Harriman, the Nigerian head of the UN's Special Committee Against Apartheid, said that if his group had been given more time then "Black athletes the world over would have been asked to boycott the Olympic Games."<sup>236</sup> But with so little time between the OAU's announcement on July 3 and the SCSA's failed negotiations with the IOC on July 16, Harriman felt "it would have been too much" for more countries to join the African boycott. Unlike previous boycott threats, Montreal remained focused on the African continent and did not spread into a global boycott threat due to its late start and disorganized approach.

### **Presentations and Interpretations of the Boycott**

As African countries withdrew, there was a brief issue of who would organize the boycott and explain it to the world's media. Ordia left the Games with the Nigerian delegation due to his secondary position as secretary general of the Nigerian Olympic Committee. This meant that the President of the SCSA, who had pushed for a boycott for months and was largely responsible for

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<sup>234</sup> Guttman, *The Olympics*, 145.

<sup>235</sup> "Don't pull out, say Russians," *South China Morning Post*, 17 July 1976, 12.

<sup>236</sup> "Africa set for new boycotts," *Standard*, 20 July 1976, 1.

events in Montreal, was absent when matters came to a head. This placed the responsibility for the boycott in the hands of Jean-Claude Ganga, a man who had not believed in the efficacy of an Olympic boycott even as plans were formulated in Montreal.

Ganga, however, excelled in his new role as the face of the boycott. He spoke often with journalists and clarified Africa's position on the Olympics, New Zealand, and apartheid sports contacts. Ganga also explained that the boycott was not going to stop with Montreal, it would "be applied to other world sports until people realise they cannot support South Africa."<sup>237</sup> Putting it eloquently, Ganga explained to those listening: "what is the good of an Olympic medal if there is no dignity for your race? The boycott is not only for the Olympic Games. It will go on for other international sport, particularly the Commonwealth Games (due in Edmonton, Canada, in 1978) until the world realises that it cannot have sport and still support South Africa."<sup>238</sup> Montreal had escalated the struggle against apartheid South Africa. No longer was it just about boycotting South Africa, now it was about apartheid's complete isolation in international sport. Otherwise, Africa would continue to boycott sports events until the human rights crisis in South Africa was over.

Ganga provided a clear explanation to the media about why teams had boycotted Montreal. This public explanation was complemented by letters from various NOCs to the Montreal Organizing Committee and the IOC explaining their reasons for withdrawing. Some letters argued that teams had withdrawn for "private reasons," as in the case of Egypt, or provided no explanation, like Guyana.<sup>239</sup> The Zambian delegation informed the Mayor of the

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> "Letter from Mohyeldine Moh Abdelmeguid, Deputy Secretary General of the Egyptian Olympic Committee, to Ivan Dubois, Mayor of the Olympic Village, 20 July 1976," and "Letter

Olympic Village that it was withdrawing “due to circumstances beyond our control the Zambian team of athletics and officials have been ordered to return home. As sportsmen, we have no alternative but to comply with the instructions of our government.”<sup>240</sup> The issue of New Zealand or apartheid was not mentioned in these letters that largely cited withdrawal as a political issue between the NOC and their government.

Most letters were more forthcoming about the reasons for the boycott and followed Ganga’s line that New Zealand’s tour of South Africa and the IOC’s handling of the situation were the problem. The IOC came in for severe criticism. Upper Volta cited the IOC’s refusal to do anything about New Zealand as the reason for its boycott.<sup>241</sup> The Kenyan delegation provided a two-page statement explaining that after the All-Blacks tour had started, Africa “had no other peaceful remedy against the bare-faced support of New Zealand for acts of inhumanity against Africans in South Africa other than to call on the IOC to ban New Zealand from participating;” the IOC had then failed to deal with the problem sensitively, thus leading to the boycott.<sup>242</sup>

While the inaction of the IOC had frustrated many delegations, New Zealand’s tour and presence at the Olympics was often cited as the main reasons for withdrawing. The Sudanese informed the Organizing Committee why it had withdrawn, “the obvious...reason being the participation of New Zealand at the Games.”<sup>243</sup> Iraq cited New Zealand’s contacts with South

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from Lionel Luckhoo, Chef de Mission Guyana, to Lord Killanin, 18 July 1976,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>240</sup> “Letter from the National Olympic Committee of Zambia to The Mayor of the Olympic Village, 17 July 1976,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>241</sup> “Letter from Pierre Adama Traore, President of the Voltan National Olympic Committee, to Roger Rousseau, President of the Montreal Organising Committee, no date,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>242</sup> “Statement issued by Chef De Mission Mr. John Kasyoka, 18 July 1976,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>243</sup> “Letter from Fuad Elton Hassan, Chef De Mission, Sudan, to Montreal Organising Committee, 21 July 1976” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

Africa as an “encouragement of racial discrimination, which is against the principles of the Olympic Games.”<sup>244</sup> Letters from Benin and Ethiopia explained the issue in graphic terms, perhaps trying to hammer home the validity of the boycott. Benin’s withdrawal was “a protest against...New Zealand who approve the massacre of black youth following the recent events in Soweto by sending a sporting team to South Africa.”<sup>245</sup> The Ethiopian delegation’s four-page letter argued that New Zealand’s rugby tour demonstrated its “unconditional support to Apartheid and to the genocide of the Black people” especially after the “South African Government has murdered more than 200 Black students in Soweto because they simply demonstrated in a peaceful way for the preservation of their rights.”<sup>246</sup> The All-Blacks tour, after such an event, was “a deliberate, premeditated move to reinforce the philosophy of Apartheid and to support the extermination of the Black race.”

These letters shocked the IOC. Members gathered again on July 22 to discuss the boycott and how the IOC should respond. Some members, like Lord Killanin, believed that if teams arrived at the Olympics, then they should have to compete. But he acknowledged that there was “no rule to say that NOCs had to take part” in the Olympics.<sup>247</sup> Mohamed Mzali advocated for a pause since he believed that “if any action was taken in Montreal, it would spark off further reactions,” possibly breaking the Olympic movement.<sup>248</sup> Some twenty IOC members wanted to punish the boycotting countries immediately. On July 31, Reginald Alexander, the Kenyan IOC

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<sup>244</sup> “Letter from Dr. Amir Ismail Hakki, Iraqi Head of Delegation, to the Mayor’s office of the Olympic Village, 18 July 1976,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>245</sup> “Letter from Léon-Blaise Ahouandogbo, Ambassador to Canada, to Lord Killanin, 20 July 1976,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>246</sup> “Letter from Tsegaw Ayele, Head of Ethiopian Delegation, to Lord Killanin, 17 July 1976,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>247</sup> “Minutes of the Meetings of the I.O.C. Executive Board, Montreal, 10-31 July 1976,” Sessions CIO, OSC, 36.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

member, told Lord Killanin that these members wanted a meeting “to discuss what action should be taken regarding the African countries which had withdrawn from the Games.”<sup>249</sup> Lord Killanin refused to call a meeting. The Executive Board wanted to first discover the boycott’s root causes rather than quickly enact punishments. Lord Killanin recognized that the IOC’s actions post-Montreal could decide the future of a united Olympic movement.

As part of its investigation over the next six months, the IOC requested more information from the NOCs it believed had participated in the boycott. Some NOCs provided the same explanation for their withdrawal and provided no further details. Others explained their position in more detail now that they had time. Zambia expanded on its previous message and described its participation in the boycott as fulfilling the OAU resolution and its unwillingness to “adopt an ostrich-like attitude” to events in Soweto and New Zealand’s rugby tour.<sup>250</sup> Ordia wrote on behalf of the Nigerian Olympic Committee and took umbrage with both New Zealand’s sporting relationship with South Africa and Lance Cross’s threats of “suspension or expulsion” for African states if they criticized these apartheid sports contacts.<sup>251</sup> Lionel Luckhoo, the President of Guyana’s Olympic Committee, wrote that his country’s decision “was not motivated by any political pressure or interference, but was in accord with our national stand in sport” that opposed apartheid in all fields.<sup>252</sup> The Algerians criticized the IOC for showing “solidarity with New

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> “Letter from W.P. Nyirenda, Chairman of the Zambia Olympic, Commonwealth and All Africa Games Association to H.R. Banks, Technical Director of the IOC, 10 January 1977,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>251</sup> “Letter from Abraham A. Ordia, Secretary-General Nigeria Olympic Committee, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director IOC, 10 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>252</sup> “Letter from Lionel A. Luckhoo, President of the Guyana Olympic, International and British Commonwealth Games Association, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director IOC, 23 August 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

Zealand” and “listening more to their heart than their head.”<sup>253</sup> A key theme throughout many of these letters was the belief that Olympic officials ignored African perspectives and desires. Until that changed, the same problems over apartheid sports contacts would continue.

The IOC’s investigation also clarified the positions of a few nations. Mutombo Kabamba, the general-secretary of the Zairean Olympic Committee, wrote to the IOC to clarify that “our country never made a definite undertaking to take part in the Games of the XXIst Olympiad...our Committee never returned either the entry forms by number or those by name.”<sup>254</sup> Zairean budgetary issues meant that an Olympic-standard team could not be trained or assembled: “Consequently our country’s defection from the Games of the 21st Olympiad is in no way due to considerations of a political nature but rather to national priority realities and needs.” The NOC enclosed a photocopy of a telegram sent to the Zairean embassy in Ottawa, dated June 30, stating that the country would not be participating in the Olympics. A similar letter was sent from Sri Lanka, where the NOC had planned to send a marathoner, but that on June 30 their proposed competitor “disclosed that he had no recent achievements in the Marathon to merit his participation.”<sup>255</sup> Therefore, Sri Lanka withdrew its only participant for sporting reasons, not because of the ongoing boycott issue. The boycott appeared to lose members after the fact with countries previously listed as protesting at the Olympics now explaining their actions in greater detail.

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<sup>253</sup> “Letter from M. Zerguinim President of the Algerian Olympic Committee, to IOC President, 15 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>254</sup> “Letter from Mutombo Kabamba, General Secretary of the Zairean Olympic Committee, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director IOC, 9 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>255</sup> “Letter from P. Julian Grero, President of the Sri Lanka Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director IOC, 9 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.



NOC reactions and discussions with the IOC took place largely in private. But across African states a public debate raged over what the boycott meant, whether it was the right move, and how effective it had been. With so many different parties involved, some frustrated and others rejoicing, each country hoped to sell its decision to its population. Government ministers and state-newspapers attempted to control the narrative about the Games. Some journalists claimed victory over Western, conservative elites through a visible and stunning protest. But others contested these views, questioning why the OAU and SCSA had protested New Zealand and the IOC at this time, what the cost of the protest had been, and what a boycott meant for Africa's future in the Olympic movement. These different framings of the 1976 Montreal boycott showed how the actual act of the boycott, and the unity it had strived to perform on the world stage, began to shatter in response to the event itself.

The first question was whether the boycott had been the right move against the IOC, New Zealand, and South Africa's supporters. Statements from national governments praised the boycott as part of a human rights struggle that demonstrated athletes' moral courage to sacrifice medals on behalf of the non-white population of South Africa. Nigeria's head of state, Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo, announced on Lagos Radio that his country would never "compromise over the principles of equality for all human beings."<sup>256</sup> Dr. Z. Onyonka, Kenya's minister for Housing and Social Services, assured returning Kenyan athletes that "the Government and the people of Kenya are proud of you. Your return is more victorious in the eyes of those who seek justice and peace in this world than when you return having won medals."<sup>257</sup> The Tanzanian government, which never had to recall athletes since it boycotted

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<sup>256</sup> "Nigeria can't compromise principles," *Times of Zambia*, 23 July 1976, 10.

<sup>257</sup> George Obiero, "They've won medals for dignity," *Standard*, 24 July 1976, 1.

early, published a lengthy explanation, “Why we boycotted the Olympics: The Case Against New Zealand,” in which it argued that African states had placed “the sanctity of human dignity, freedom and justice above individual glory and national prestige.”<sup>258</sup> The OAU’s secretary-general William Eteki Mboumoua praised athletes that had returned home unwilling to “exchange for the vaingloriousness of a few medals or the ephemeral prestige of a few performances...the dignity, freedom and justice” of Africa.<sup>259</sup>

Journalists and editors justified the boycott as a noble act supporting those suffering under apartheid. *Times of Zambia* columnist Ridgeway Liwena explained that Zambia’s decision to leave Montreal was “reasonable” and described the boycott as “just another form of action in the continent's struggle for universal justice for all mankind.”<sup>260</sup> The *Nigerian Chronicle* praised the government as having acted “audaciously, damning whatever consequences it might have on our relationships with Canada,...to salvage the little dignity left of the continent.”<sup>261</sup> George Obiero, writing for the Kenyan *Standard*, referred to the Kenyan team as having “won medals for human dignity.”<sup>262</sup> His colleague, Saude George, asked the question on every reader’s mind: “Was the boycott justified? The answer must be an unequivocal, YES. After all, what's more sacred - the lives and dignity of the African peoples or Olympic medals and some money lost over the Olympic adventure.”<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> “Why we boycotted the Olympics: The Case Against New Zealand,” *Daily News*, 5 August 1976, 4.

<sup>259</sup> “Eteki hails games boycott,” *Times of Zambia*, 22 July 1976, 8.

<sup>260</sup> Ridgeway Liwena, “I Write as I Please,” *Times of Zambia*, 30 July 1976, 12.

<sup>261</sup> “Sportswriters Laud Govt Action,” *Nigerian Chronicle*, 23 July 1976, 14.

<sup>262</sup> George Obiero, “They’ve won medals for dignity,” *Standard*, 24 July 1976, 1.

<sup>263</sup> Saude George, “Why African lives are more important than Olympic medals,” *Standard*, 3 August 1976, 8.

Letters filled newspapers full of praise for the boycott, indicating its broad popularity. Many framed the boycott through the lens of human rights. In a letter to the *Daily Nation* in Kenya, Nasirembe from Webuye claimed that the Montreal boycott was “the most noble decision ever taken by members states of the OAU.”<sup>264</sup> The IOC and other “developed nations should not bulldoze our feelings. We are aware that most of them do not care where the life of a Black man is concerned; but when this attitude is demonstrated straight in our faces, we should protest.” That African states were willing to “sacrifice money, time and the medals for making the world know how we Africans feel about the brutal and inhuman activities of South Africa...should be praised by every peace loving human being.” The boycott and the sacrifices that had been made in Montreal were clear proof that Africans “value human dignity much more than the medals.” Anyu Abu Yusuf, writing into Tanzania’s *Daily News*, argued that the “boycott was...based on humanism, liberty and it was a sign of unity. It is yet another weapon to combat oppression, apartheid and colonialism.”<sup>265</sup> The boycott demonstrated which countries “value a gold medal (if not a tin or zinc medal) more than human life!”

The boycott was a strike for human rights in southern Africa and a rallying cry for the continent; it was proof that through collective action there could be success against powerful, international organizations and their supporters. The rallying aspect was particularly important to those who believed that African cooperation on the anti-apartheid issue in sport had floundered in recent years. *Daily News* columnist Tommy Sithole situated his praise for the Montreal boycott in those recent failures: “I am not sighing with relief simply because other African countries have joined the boycott. I am sighing with relief because the number of hypocrites in

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<sup>264</sup> Nasirembe, “We value human dignity (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 27 July 1976, 7.

<sup>265</sup> Abyi Abu Yusuf, “Politics and Sports Mix (letter),” *Daily News*, 28 August 1976, 7.

Africa is dwindling.”<sup>266</sup> Sithole cited the limited boycott against Britain in 1974, when “only four countries in Africa did so. The rest just kept quiet,” and the failure against France, where “the same people again would never dare talk against France, their second motherland.” Sithole wasn’t the only commentator to celebrate this political shift. Mamadou Kaba’s editorial in Mali’s state-owned newspaper, *L’Essor*, reveled in the fact that western, conservative elites were “unpleasantly surprised...that for once the African front held firm” and “dared to move from verbal threats to action, thus breaking with the spectacle of sterile condemnations and ineffective resolutions.”<sup>267</sup> The resolution taken by the OAU at Port Louis demonstrated to all “that the time for compromise is over” and that “after Montreal, nothing will be the same as before.”<sup>268</sup>

The importance of African unity was emphasized following the boycott. John Kasyoka, the head of Kenya’s Olympic Association, argued “the allegiance displayed by member-states to the Supreme Council” was “more important” than the boycott itself.<sup>269</sup> Despite questions about whether North and West African countries had hesitated in their support, Kasyoka argued “what is important is that all, except two, African nations withdrew in unison.” The *Nigerian Chronicle* agreed with this assertion, arguing that the boycott had “demonstrated their [African states] collective respect for the OAU” and sought to “breathe new vigour into the OAU by backing up its resolutions with action.”<sup>270</sup> Wandie Joseph from Nairobi hailed Africa’s newfound cohesion: “the IOC should not misunderstand us in Africa. For in unity, we condemn the racial and apartheid government of South Africa, and those who support this government of hungry, selfish

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<sup>266</sup> Tommy Sithole, “Politics or no Politics we abide by our stand,” *Daily News*, 18 July 1976, 11.

<sup>267</sup> Mamadou Kaba, “The 21st Olympiad, The Hand of Jesse Owens,” *L’Essor*, 21 July 1976, n.p.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Hector Wandera, “Boycott of Montreal Games brought solidarity - Kasyoka,” *Standard*, 3 August 1976, 8.

<sup>270</sup> “Comment: The Flickering Flame,” *Nigerian Chronicle*, 19 July 1976, 3.

white wolves.”<sup>271</sup> After so many recent failures to punish South African sports contacts, the OAU, SCSA, and individual African states had managed to form a relatively united front on this issue and protested at the world’s largest sporting event, striking a clear, public blow against the IOC and Western conservatives.

Wandie Joseph and other commentators raised another point of pride for African supporters of the boycott. The boycott had demonstrated that power of Africa as its own bloc. It had stood up to the West and the IOC; it had also acted without the aid of the Soviet Union and socialist bloc. Montreal demonstrated that African states could enact their own protests independent from, what Zambian columnist Ridgeway Liwena termed, “Big Power influences.”<sup>272</sup> In this case, Africa stood up for its own values in the face of opposition from both superpowers. Maingi Kuniyiha, writing to the *Daily Nation*, enjoyed the boycott because it demonstrated the possibility of African independence: “Will Africa dance to the tunes of Moscow, London, Washington and Peking forever?”<sup>273</sup> Concerns about Africa’s position in a world dominated by a few powers was clear in the Olympic coverage but the boycott demonstrated for some that perhaps these fears were overstated. Montreal demonstrated that independent action was possible.

Criticism flowed through African commentaries of the Montreal boycott: criticism of New Zealand, of the IOC, and of the roles played by third powers. New Zealand was an obvious target of anger because it was the boycott’s catalyst. The *Ghanaian Times* described the boycott as “an eloquent protest against New Zealand's utter contempt and blantant[sic] disregard for

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<sup>271</sup> Wandie Joseph S.K., “The Right Weapon (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 26 July 1976, 7.

<sup>272</sup> Ridgeway Liwena, “I Write as I Please,” *Times of Zambia*, 6 August 1976, 12.

<sup>273</sup> Maingi Kuniyiha, “The price we had to pay (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 26 July 1976, 7.

human conscience and morality."<sup>274</sup> Tanzania's explanation for its boycott listed "at least four ways" that New Zealand had thumbed its nose at Africa since Muldoon's election in 1975, including "evidence of the Government's insensitivity to and utter disregard for African opinion."<sup>275</sup> M.S. Majuto wrote to the *Daily News* to criticize New Zealand's attitude in the build-up to the Games: "to disregard a fellow human being because of the colour of the skin is a sin against nature. This really proves the moral bankruptcy of the New Zealand leadership."<sup>276</sup> Majuto mentioned a comment made by New Zealand IOC member Lance Cross that his country "will not bow to political pressure from the black African nations." Did this mean that "New Zealand...could only bow to political pressure from white countries only?" Majuto's letter, among other critical articles and letters, raised the issue of racism within New Zealand when it came to taking African political stances seriously.

The IOC came under attack across Africa for its refusal to shift its position on New Zealand. Many critics pointed out the IOC's dismissive attitude for African concerns, especially when compared to the attention paid to Taiwan. Tanzania's National Sports Council deputy chairman Mustafa Nyang'anyi could not understand how the IOC had spent several days discussing Taiwan's application to participate, but "it took the same body a mere two hours to decide on a more serious issue concerning the lives of people and the dignity of a continent."<sup>277</sup> The Tanzanian government argued that it was "shocking to know that the Olympic Committee was prepared to bend its rules to accommodate a non-existing country simply to avert a US walkover while dismissing out of hand African demand for the exclusion of a country that

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<sup>274</sup> Editorial, "Games Pull-Out," *Ghanaian Times*, 19 July 1976, 4.

<sup>275</sup> "Why we boycotted the Olympics," *Daily News*, 5 August 1976, 4.

<sup>276</sup> M.S. Majuto, "New Zealand (letter)," *Daily News*, 31 July 1976, 7.

<sup>277</sup> Tommy Sithole, "Tanzania warns on IOC break-up," *Daily News*, 19 July 1976, 8.

openly encourages the violation of its own principles.”<sup>278</sup> It was clear to many critics that the IOC did not represent all of its members but rather a subsection of them. An editorial in the *Times of Zambia* criticized the Olympic Charter as a bastion of “untidy European thinking” and “a kind of plaything for the convenience of the Western conscience alone.”<sup>279</sup> This “untidy European thinking” was evident in the handling of events in Montreal, as Zambia’s team leader complained that the “IOC and Western countries...did not understand the tempo of African thinking on New Zealand.”<sup>280</sup>

A few articles emphasized the IOC’s role in reinforcing a racial hierarchy within international sport. The *Nigerian Chronicle* reported a speech at the Lagos branch of the Sportswriter’s Association, where the speaker described New Zealand’s lack of punishment as “another indication that a white man cannot be found guilty, no matter the gravity of the offence, in a court presided over by a white judge.”<sup>281</sup> Nigeria’s foreign minister Joe Garba described the “Olympic[s] as another edifice of white man determination to lord it over the black man.”<sup>282</sup> Nigerian newspapers, in particular, celebrated the boycott as a racial struggle between black and white. The *Nigeria Standard* repeatedly described Montreal as the “All-White Olympics” in its coverage and letter writers described the Games as an “all-white club” or an “all-white affair.”<sup>283</sup> After the *Nigeria Standard*’s editorial celebrated Montreal as a “monumental failure,” it continued that it was regrettable the IOC had allowed “racial sentiments...to deal a death blow to

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<sup>278</sup> “Tanzania warns on sports ties with racists,” *Daily News*, 4 August 1976, 8.

<sup>279</sup> “Opinion,” *Times of Zambia*, 16 July 1976, 1.

<sup>280</sup> “IOC snubbed Africa - Nyirenda,” *Times of Zambia*, 25 July 1976, 8.

<sup>281</sup> “Sportswriters Laud Govt Action,” *Nigerian Chronicle*, 23 July 1976, 14.

<sup>282</sup> “Africa May Boycott 1978 C’wealth Games,” *Nigerian Chronicle*, 24 July 1976, 14.

<sup>283</sup> “‘All-White Olympics’ Still in Big Mess,” *Nigeria Standard*, 20 July 1976, 11; “Boycott of Olympics,” *Nigeria Standard*, 2 August 1976, 11.

the global sports rendezvous” by protecting New Zealand.<sup>284</sup> These papers stressed how the boycott had harmed the Montreal Olympic Games by reducing its prestige and its racial diversity, which brought into question Montreal’s global character. They raised questions about the place of Africa within an Olympic movement that did not appear to take the continent seriously.

Senegal and Ivory Coast, both of which had refused to leave the Olympic Games, were targets of popular anger. Ridgeway Liwena described how “for Ivory Coast and Senegal to sell out Africa's efforts in this direction is highly condemnable and very un-African.”<sup>285</sup> The immediate response across the continent was to call for OAU and SCSA action on this issue. A letter to the *Nigeria Standard* referred to both countries as “black legs” and wondered whether both countries had remained because of their “neo-colonialist relationships” with France, a damning accusation.<sup>286</sup> In the *Ghanaian Times*, Oheneba Charles described both as “strike breakers” and “sworn allies of South Africa.”<sup>287</sup> A second *Ghanaian Times* article argued it was unsurprising that both Senegal and Ivory Coast refused to withdraw since Ivory Coast had a history of “dialogue” with South Africa, while Senegal wanted tighter relations with the Europe Community and France.<sup>288</sup> This anger extended across almost all countries examined. One letter from Godwin Conrad Blasio Riccard in Tanzania described African countries that refused to boycott as having “betrayed the toiling sons and daughters of this contingent who fight unreservedly against racism, dispossession of land and wealth, against torment and terror.”<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Editorial, “A Crisis-Torn Olympics,” *Nigeria Standard*, 19 July 1976, 3.

<sup>285</sup> Ridgeway Liwena, “I Write as I Please,” *Times of Zambia*, 30 July 1976, 12.

<sup>286</sup> “Boycott of Olympics (letter),” *Nigeria Standard*, 2 August 1976, 11.

<sup>287</sup> Oheneba Charles, “Ghana-Ivory Coast Games Need Review,” *Ghanaian Times*, 1 August 1976, 10.

<sup>288</sup> Nana Essilfie-Conduah, “Post Olympics,” *Ghanaian Times*, 7 August 1976, 4.

<sup>289</sup> Godwin Conrad Blasio Riccard, “Olympics Boycott (letter),” *Daily News*, 31 July 1976, 7.



The widespread anger aimed at New Zealand, the IOC, and Senegal and Ivory Coast was joined by articles that took aim at other supposed enemies of the African boycott. David Attah attacked the Senegalese position in the *Nigeria Standard* but expanded his criticism to the wider Black Atlantic. Attah's main target was Haiti, which he described as having only gone to Montreal "to provide the white audience with fun," before repeating a "popular joke" heard around Montreal that "the Closing Ceremony which took place last Sunday might well be delayed until mid-September! Reason, because a Haitian was taking part in the Marathon."<sup>290</sup> The joke was an apparent reference to a Haitian 10,000-meter runner who was "lapped eight times...and was still running long after the next heat should have begun." Attah continued the cruel jibes towards Haiti, describing the nation as "a tiny country where love for cock fighting is the nearest thing to a sporting heritage, in an island where only the power of its presidents, its secret police and its "Voodoo" make world headlines." Attah's anger lay with Haiti's, and other Caribbean states', refusal to boycott in solidarity with Africa, arguing that "the most honourable thing for this miserable island to have done was to have joined the other Black and Arab countries in the boycott of the "White Olympics.""

In another confusing attack, the *Times of Zambia* published an article by Siyanga Malumo that blamed a Jewish conspiracy for the boycott's lack of support. Malumo argued that the IOC's rebuttal of African entreaties was partly due to a "clear-cut manifestation of the anti-black prejudices that are rampant in most of the countries in the western hemisphere."<sup>291</sup> A second reason was "the power held by the Jewish communities in these countries to influence the political, social and economic trends of events in this part of the world." Citing the power of

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<sup>290</sup> David Attah, "The 'Black Sheep' of Africa," *Nigeria Standard*, 8 August 1976, 3.

<sup>291</sup> Siyanga Malumo, "Olympic walkout gets the point home," *Times of Zambia*, 6 August 1976, 5.

“economically powerful Jews” to punish those countries unsympathetic to Israel, Malumo argued that “Jewish influence might have helped to undermine the African [boycott] by putting pressure on the IOC” through its “financial backing.” Malumo saw the conflict in the IOC as between racial groups, black versus white, and argued that a victory for Africa would have meant “defeat for the “white race,”” a view which was common in other articles. However, Malumo’s article was exceptional for raising a Jewish conspiracy as behind the IOC’s refusal to budge and other countries’ hesitance to join the boycott.

### **Criticisms of the Boycott**

While national newspapers were flooded with articles supporting the boycott, there were many who believed the boycott had been negative. Senegalese newspapers, unsurprisingly given their government’s position, published many of these, as did Kenyan newspapers. These articles and letters demonstrated a diversity of opinions on the necessity and effectiveness of the boycott. For instance, in contrast to the *Times of Zambia*’s interviews with team officials lauding how “each member of the contingent was fantastic...Everyone smiled when we were informed of the boycott...the decision to boycott was most welcome,” the *Daily Nation* published an interview with its own sports editor and athlete Philip Ndoo, where Ndoo described how returning from Montreal left him “disgusted” and that his “sacrifice and sweat” over so many years had gone unnoticed.<sup>292</sup>

Ndoo had always been open about his unhappiness with his government’s position and that of the SCSA. He had featured in a *New York Times* article stating “there is no logic in the

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<sup>292</sup> “IOC snubbed Africa - Nyirenda,” *Times of Zambia*, 25 July 1976, 8; “No logic in politics says Philip Ndoo,” *Daily Nation*, 19 July 1976, 15.

decision [to boycott]. There is never any logic in politics. I'm disgusted, but I go along with our Government's decision."<sup>293</sup> Ndoo also interviewed Kenyan athletes after the boycott decision, with medal hopeful Mike Boit commenting "Why did they leave the decision until this late? It is terrible" and shooter John Hart complaining "The time I can afford to lose because I love the sport, but what about all the money I spent on ammunition?"<sup>294</sup> These feelings were experienced across much of the team. Kenya's flag-bearer joined a chorus of unhappy athletes when the team returned to Nairobi, describing the situation simply: "It is very bad."<sup>295</sup> Though most newspapers published comments from athletes generally accepting of the boycott, there were some voices, especially in Kenya, that were willing to challenge the official position and express frustration about the boycott.

Kenyan newspapers and letter writers engaged in a vigorous debate about the Montreal boycott's validity. While the government had decided, albeit reluctantly, in favor of a boycott, there were many in Kenya who disagreed with the protest. An editorial published in the *Daily Nation* argued that the boycott had been "irrational in the extreme" and that OAU should not have had "to resort to one extreme measure without having tried all others."<sup>296</sup> The editorial argued that if the Montreal boycott's reasoning was extended to other events, then Kenyan athletes "will never take part in sports with participants from nations with whom they have even the slightest political difference. Clearly, this is a ridiculous stance." It also went so far as to defend New Zealand's sportsmen and government, arguing that "the New Zealanders may be

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<sup>293</sup> Neil Amdur, "Athletes of Protesting Nations Disappointed," *New York Times*, 18 July 1976, 130.

<sup>294</sup> Philip Ndoo, "Kenyans pack backs and get ready to jet home," *Daily Nation*, 20 July 1976, 15.

<sup>295</sup> George Obiero, "They've won medals for dignity," *Standard*, 24 July 1976, 1.

<sup>296</sup> Editorial, "Politics and the Olympics," *Daily Nation*, 21 July 1976, 6.

stubborn, but they are not racialists. We really must not get into the habit of seeing pink rats even in our offices.” This was a surprising position given recent events, but that did not stop some critical letters in response to the boycott. One letter described the boycott as a “desire to make the 1976 Olympic arena a political tribunal by intimidation” rather than attempting to find a workable solution.<sup>297</sup> A second reader labelled the withdrawal a “blunder” and demanded, “let us not act on emotions. I am sure Kenyans will live to regret this.”<sup>298</sup>

However, while some letters appreciated the *Daily Nation*’s opposition to the boycott, many readers disagreed. Jim Michoma criticized the *Daily Nation*’s editorials as “notorious for their deliberate distortion of news and confusion of issues,” stating that the paper was “more concerned about the medals that could be won than the advance of the cause of justice and equality in Southern Africa.”<sup>299</sup> Michoma was not alone. Maingi Kunyitha wrote to the paper to praise the SCSA’s position: “When 16 African countries threatened (and I am glad Kenya has pulled out) to pull out over the New Zealand issue, the IOC thought Africa was mixing dirty politics with sports. How can a level-headed person afford to ignore events like the “Soweto massacre”?”<sup>300</sup> Wandie Joseph also wanted to express his support for the boycott, which was “the only way African nations can show the whole world their bitterness against New Zealand for having sporting links with South Africa.”<sup>301</sup> For Joseph and others, the blame lay with the IOC that “should understand the grievances of the African nations” and the boycott “was the right weapon to use against apartheid” and its enablers. Attacks on the *Daily Nation* from its

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<sup>297</sup> Parvez Mughal, “Withdrawal was unjustified (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 24 July 1976, 7.

<sup>298</sup> C.G.N. Dunga Pekecha, “Games Pull-Out was a Blunder (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 24 July 1976, 7.

<sup>299</sup> Jim Michoma, “You seem to be more concerned about medals (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 26 July 1976, 7.

<sup>300</sup> Maingi Kunyitha, “The price we had to pay (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 26 July 1976, 7.

<sup>301</sup> Wandie Joseph, “The Right Weapon,” *Daily Nation*, 26 July 1976, 7.

readers were not uncommon and would become an important feature in 1980 when it wrote in favor of the Moscow Olympic boycott.

The reasons for the boycott came under intense scrutiny in both Kenya and Senegal. Philip Ndoo placed the blame at the feet of “the temperamental Abraham Ordia, the president of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa and his equally emotional secretary, Jean-Claude Ganga.”<sup>302</sup> Ordia had “turned an international affair into a personal quarrel” with New Zealand and forced the whole of Africa into the argument. Senegalese journalists blamed Ordia and Ganga for their ineffectual leadership in Montreal, arguing that in the week before the Games “the SCSA was...conspicuous by its absence if not its deficiency.”<sup>303</sup> Questions were raised about why Ordia had forgotten “for a moment his responsibilities...[and] had thought it more appropriate to return to his country with the official delegation from Lagos...when nothing had yet been decided.”<sup>304</sup> The SCSA position was also criticized for its inconsistency across press conferences. Serigne Aly Cissé of *Le Soleil* recounted that Ganga was “congratulating Senegal on the one hand for its lucidity and wisdom, and pushing it with the other (because, in response to a question [about the boycott] he did not hesitate to say: “The true Africans have left...”)<sup>305</sup> Aly Kheury Ndaw, also writing in *Le Soleil*, criticized Ganga and described him as “a friendly man above all, quick to make sensational declarations, always ready to drop the big piece in front of the mirror or in the ear of a journalist.”<sup>306</sup> Ndoo, Ndaw and Cissé all argued that Ordia and Ganga had pursued political objectives at the expense of the SCSA’s real mission: to develop

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<sup>302</sup> Philip Ndoo, “The Missing Ring,” *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1976, 11.

<sup>303</sup> Serigne Aly Cissé, “La confusion de Montréal,” *Le Soleil*, 6 August 1976, 1.

<sup>304</sup> Aly Kheury Ndaw, “La Grande Confusion,” *Le Soleil*, 22 July 1976, 7.

<sup>305</sup> Serigne Aly Cissé, “La confusion de Montréal,” *Le Soleil*, 6 August 1976, 1.

<sup>306</sup> Aly Kheury Ndaw, “La Grande Confusion,” *Le Soleil*, 22 July 1976, 7.

sport in Africa. Ndaw finished his criticism of the SCSA leaders by stating that they should "leave politics to politicians."

While some writers spoke of the boycott as a great example of African unity in the face of conservative opposition, some critics argued that the decision to boycott showed cowardice on the part of governments. One letter to the *Nation* described how African countries had not "act[ed] out of any real conviction of their own but because they are following the majority;" peer-pressure won out over good judgement.<sup>307</sup> Philip Ndoo agreed with this statement, writing that Kenya's international reputation suffered by "jumping into the bandwagon" on the boycott issue.<sup>308</sup> Serigne Aly Cissé, reporting from Montreal on the day the boycott started in earnest, described how "it is the face of immaturity that triumphed in Montreal" with countries looking to each other for support to boycott.<sup>309</sup> Cissé wondered how sincere some of the boycotters were; many countries "wanted to put themselves in [Africa's] debt by proclaiming that they were withdrawing even though they were not even represented."<sup>310</sup> It was easy to boycott when you had nothing at stake. Cissé praised the resoluteness of Senegal and Ivory Coast for staying in the Games instead of "blindly follow[ing] a disorderly movement dictated by overbidding and demagoguery."

Another issue was the purpose of the boycott. Who was it supposed to hurt? The boycott was ostensibly about New Zealand's sports contacts with South Africa, especially its rugby contacts in the aftermath of Soweto, but the victims were the IOC, Canada, and African countries. Many argued that New Zealand was a scapegoat for anti-apartheid protests and not the

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<sup>307</sup> Chemwajar, "Boycott was not a progressive idea (letter)," *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1976, 7.

<sup>308</sup> Philip Ndoo, "The Missing Ring," *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1976, 11.

<sup>309</sup> Serigne Aly Cissé, "Montréal ou la grande défaite de l'Afrique," *Le Soleil*, 19 July 1976, 10.

<sup>310</sup> Serigne Aly Cissé, "La confusion de Montréal," *Le Soleil*, 6 August 1976, 1.

worst offender. R. Pamba from Mombasa wrote to the *Daily Nation* that New Zealand was one of several countries that played with South Africa and Rhodesia, including the USA, Britain, and France. Targeting just New Zealand was pointless and if the SCSA and OAU were serious then they should widen their boycott to “any country which allows its sportsmen to compete against South Africans or Rhodesians.”<sup>311</sup> Another letter commented that “Why they picked on New Zealand is a puzzle. We know that other Western countries have greater ties with South Africa than New Zealand.”<sup>312</sup>

M. Oyugi from the University of Nairobi questioned boycotting New Zealand over sports relations when “France recently signed a contract to sell two nuclear reactors to S. Africa and nobody seems to be worried about this. Apparently the African states had nothing to lose by picking on New Zealand.”<sup>313</sup> Multiple letters argued the OAU was cowardly for choosing a sports boycott when France, US, West Germany, and Britain supported South Africa economically. Some commented on how New Zealand had few contacts with South Africa outside of sport, unlike these other offenders. Philip Ndoo, in his round-up of the boycott, noted that it was ironic that Kenyan athletes had returned to Nairobi from London on a British Airways flight that went on to Johannesburg: “half the passengers in that plane were South Africans or tourists of that hated country.”<sup>314</sup> The symbolism of the sports boycott was pointless in comparison to the economic support being given to South Africa from other countries that the OAU refused to target.

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<sup>311</sup> R. Pamba, “What future do the Olympic Games have? (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 27 July 1976, 7.

<sup>312</sup> Wilfred Waitutu, “Let’s try new tactics in fighting South Africa (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 29 July 1976, 7.

<sup>313</sup> M. Oyugi, “New Zealand the Scapegoat (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1976, 7.

<sup>314</sup> Philip Ndoo, “The Missing Ring,” *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1976, 11.

## The Future of the Olympic Games

Both proponents and opponents of the boycott postulated what Montreal's impact would be on future Olympic Games. In the boycott's aftermath, the IOC suggested banning protesting countries from future events. Journalists started asking questions about whether African nations would even want to compete in Moscow in 1980. Tanzanian NSC Deputy Chairman Nyang'anyi warned that "the Olympic Movement can only continue if the IOC changes its attitude. We provide the teams for the Olympic Games and we must be respected."<sup>315</sup> In a *Daily News* editorial, the author wanted to see changes to IOC rules: "are they assuming that Africans and all these others who boycotted the Montreal Games would go to Moscow in 1980 knowing full well that New Zealand with her present policies would also be there?"<sup>316</sup> The Tanzanian government argued that if the IOC enforced tougher rules on apartheid sports contacts then it "will inevitably compel Africa to reconsider its participation in the games...[and] the continuation of a situation that encourages such callous disregard to [African] feelings."<sup>317</sup> It finished with a clear threat: "whether the present African boycott of the Olympic Games is a temporary step or it will become a permanent break will depend on the attitude of the IOC."

The same threats to the future Olympics were common in Kenyan newspapers from both sides of the boycott divide. Kenya generally held conservative views on the boycott and the politicization of sport, but the IOC's dismissive attitude toward Africa raised a serious issue. Saude George, writing for the *Standard* in Kenya, asked: "can the I.O.C. for instance ignore

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<sup>315</sup> Tommy Sithole, "Tanzania warns on IOC break-up," *Daily News*, 19 July 1976, 8.

<sup>316</sup> "Comment," *Daily News*, 20 July 1976, 1.

<sup>317</sup> "Why we boycotted the Olympics: The Case Against New Zealand," *Daily News*, 5 August 1976, 4.



African opinion on major issues such as sports apartheid?"<sup>318</sup> Saude explained that "if the I.O.C. decide to fight for the present rules, they may live to see the Games crumble to a less exalted position in the world's sporting calendar. If, on the other hand, the I.O.C. act strongly and come out clearly against those who condone sporting apartheid, then the Games will continue to prosper as the greatest sporting event." Geoffrey Miller wrote in the *Daily Nation* that it was imperative that the IOC "make a gesture...to show that African feelings are understood even though their actions may be disapproved," otherwise Africa might walk away from the Olympics completely.<sup>319</sup> Polly Fernandes, also writing for the *Daily Nation*, concluded that unless the IOC changed its rules then there were only two options left for African countries: "Accept the position and fight for their political ideologies elsewhere or withdraw from the Commonwealth and Olympic Games."<sup>320</sup> While the boycott itself was unpopular across the Kenyan press, the die had been cast and now it was up to the IOC to decide how the rest of the game would be played. Would the IOC continue with or without Africa?

Perhaps most frighteningly for the IOC and the Soviet hosts of the future Moscow Olympics Games, these statements by journalists were echoed by previously anti-boycott Kenyan officials. Isaac Lugonzo explained that "there must be a change in the rules of the I.O.C. The present ones are outmoded and do not suit other members (referring to African countries) of the Olympic family. Unless they are altered, there is no chance that the political turmoil that gripped the Games this year will subside. And if they continue to overlook our case we shall think of aligning with Asian countries to start our own Afro-Asian Games to rival the Olympics,"

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<sup>318</sup> Saude George, "Wind of Change in the Olympics," *Standard*, 20 July 1976, 8.

<sup>319</sup> Geoffrey Miller, "Africans Worry Olympic Officials," *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1976, 12.

<sup>320</sup> Polly Fernandes, "Boycott: Where does Africa go from Here?" *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1976, 12.

perhaps a threat to revive Indonesia's failed sports organization to rival the IOC, the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO), back in 1963.<sup>321</sup> John Kasyoka stated that IOC needed to understand that African states were serious about the need for rule changes, "Our position is clear to these international sport organisations. If they decide to lend us no ear, that is the "shauri"."<sup>322</sup> Kasyoka ended with a clear threat: "the weapon [boycott] is deadlier than ever before. It is unlikely to grow blunt. There are many ways of killing a cat, but you don't disclose them all to your enemy."<sup>323</sup> That Kenya, a more conservative, pro-Olympic country, was openly considering the question of whether it should participate in the Olympics showed the depth of feeling that the 1976 boycott raised.

Outside of Kenya and Tanzania, the question over Africa's position in the Olympics was also debated. In the *Ghanaian Times*, reporter Kwesi Blay Amihere explained to readers that "Africa should not care if the Games come to an end over this fundamental issue. Rather African states should seriously consider the promotion of African sports and international meetings like the All-Africa Games."<sup>324</sup> A letter to the *Nigeria Standard* proposed leaving the Olympics completely and starting afresh with Africa's "own version of Olympics with the rest of the Third World and [to] organise its own competitions on a better and more equal basis than presently exists in the crisis-ridden International Olympics."<sup>325</sup> Nigeria's foreign minister, Joe Garba, argued that "African countries...should propose a complete revision of the Olympics or quit the

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<sup>321</sup> George Obiero, "They've won medals for dignity," *Standard*, 24 July 1976, 1; For more on GANEFO, see: Ewa T. Parker, "GANEFO I: Sports and Politics in Djakarta," *Asian Survey* 5, no. 4 (1965): 171-185.

<sup>322</sup> Hector Wandera, "Boycott of Montreal Games brought solidarity - Kasyoka," *Standard*, 3 August 1976, 8; "Shauri" is an East African term for an argument or problematic issue.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Kwesi Blay Amihere, "Sports and Politics are Bed-Fellows," *Ghanaian Times*, 30 July 1976, 11.

<sup>325</sup> "Boycott of Olympics (letter)," *Nigeria Standard*, 2 August 1976, 11.

games entirely;” if the IOC did not accept these revisions, then he “suggested the continental African games should be developed to include “all like minded countries.””<sup>326</sup> A *Nigeria Standard* editorial called for “an indefinite boycott...until the present IOC set-up sees with African nations from the same perspective.”<sup>327</sup> The *Standard* similarly called on widening the “All-Africa Games...to embrace all countries sympathetic to the African cause.” Nigeria appeared ready to go to war with the IOC over the apartheid issue.

Regardless of whether a country supported the boycott or not, Montreal raised questions about the continued viability of the Olympic movement, especially now that the African bloc had challenged its legitimacy. The question for the IOC and the Moscow Olympic Organizing Committee was whether these threats were real, and if the issue of apartheid sports contacts would fracture global sport before 1980.

## Conclusion

The 1976 Montreal Boycott was unprecedented. There had been smaller boycotts involving just a few countries in 1956 and threats of mass walkouts in 1968 and 1972, but there had never been a continental boycott before, metaphorically removing one ring from the Olympic logo. Though there had been plenty of warnings that a boycott of the Olympics was coming, it surprised everyone. The IOC, which dismissed the SCSA’s call to disinvite New Zealand, was shocked when delegations proceeded to leave the Olympic Village and board flights back home. African countries themselves were also stunned it had come to this. African sports leaders, politicians, and journalists had expected some sort of resolution to be found in the

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<sup>326</sup> “Africa may boycott 1978 C’Wealth Games,” *Nigerian Chronicle*, 24 July 1976, 14.

<sup>327</sup> Editorial, “A Crisis-Torn Olympics,” *Nigeria Standard*, 19 July 1976, 3.

build-up to Montreal, but when nothing came about the decision to boycott seemed a dramatic, final step.

Those watching proceedings from Nairobi, Lagos, Dar Es Salam and Lusaka were all surprised that it had come to this. Some celebrated the fact that African states had banded together on this issue and stood up to the IOC and its Western backers. No longer would African states be pushed around by those that argued sports and politics do not mix. They called for a new era of global sport, one where the IOC listened to African concerns and changed their rules accordingly. Otherwise, leaving the Olympics all-together and starting a rival competition with other disgruntled countries seemed possible. The future of the Olympic movement appeared to hang in the balance as in the months after July 1976.

Most importantly, the 1976 boycott set up a global conflict that needed to be resolved before the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. As delegations withdrew from Montreal, questions arose about what the African boycott meant for Moscow. Would African teams compete in the Soviet Union in four years' time? Would there still be a global Olympic movement by then? The objectives of the boycott were to punish countries with South African sports contacts, which changed the dynamic of the anti-apartheid boycott from just isolating South Africa and Rhodesia from international events. This was a larger boycott and therefore less easy to enforce. This new phase of the anti-apartheid boycott struggle would cause problems for the IOC and the USSR as they were forced to react to the SCSA issuing a challenge on this issue through the Montreal boycott.

### Chapter 3 SOVIET EFFORTS TO AVERT A SECOND AFRICAN BOYCOTT

The Montreal Olympic boycott in 1976 sparked immediate concern among members of the Organizing Committee of the Moscow Olympic Games (OrgCommittee) stationed around the Canadian city, watching and learning in preparation for their own Olympic festival four years later. The withdrawal of so many African countries, with athletes packing their bags to fly home without competing, over the issue of New Zealand's rugby tour of South Africa, shook the Soviet delegation. No group of countries had ever organised a boycott of this sort, nor had a boycott had such a symbolic impact on the Olympic Games. The withdrawal in Montreal left many, especially Soviet and Olympic observers, wondering whether the Moscow Olympics would also be boycotted and if the Olympic Games would survive in the long-term.

This chapter will examine first how the Soviet Union understood the Montreal Olympic boycott and formed a plan to prevent a future African boycott. It will then examine the ways that the OrgCommittee and the Soviet state developed relationships with African states through bilateral sports agreements and propaganda work to build interest in the USSR's Olympic preparations. The chapter will conclude with the events leading up to and including the December 1979 meeting of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, where African delegates debated whether to boycott the Moscow Olympics in the face of new provocations by Western countries. The success of the OrgCommittee and Soviet state can be measured by the SCSA's refusal to declare another boycott in circumstances nearly identical to 1976.

Montreal forced the USSR onto the back foot. The SCSA's third-party boycott targeting New Zealand's sports contacts with South Africa and the IOC punished Canada and the Montreal

organizers the most. Frustratingly for Canadian officials, the boycott had nothing to do with Canada's own policies towards South Africa; the country had few connections with South Africa and was supportive of the overall anti-apartheid campaign. If the USSR wanted its Moscow Olympics to be successful, its own policies towards South Africa would not be enough to prevent a boycott. Instead, a fully attended 1980 Games would require both the USSR persuading African states of the benefits of competing combined with increasing South Africa's isolation in international sport. These would be difficult tasks to accomplish over the next four years. The USSR proactively cultivated African support for its Olympic project to prevent another boycott while hoping that it could persuade African states to ignore any South African threats.

Despite the clear connection of the Montreal boycott to Soviet preparations for 1980, the literature on the Moscow Olympics had not explored this connection in detail. Jenifer Parks' *Red Sport, Red Tape* takes the reader from the Soviet Union entering the Olympic movement in 1951 to its hosting the Olympics in 1980, but the issue of Montreal and efforts to gain Africa's participation in Moscow is limited in comparison to its discussion of the physical preparations and the Cold War boycott.<sup>328</sup> Aleksey Popov and Igor Orlov's Russian-language monograph on Moscow, *Olympic Commotion: Forgotten Soviet Modernization*, describes the Cold War propaganda battle between East and West from 1976-1980, and provides only a little context of how this struggle played out in Africa.<sup>329</sup> David Kanin's account, written in 1981, described Africa's role in the Moscow build-up as "the scene of the most superpower attention in the third world" since "African states had a heritage of Olympic politics."<sup>330</sup> However, there is little explanation of Soviet policies aimed at earning African trust after Montreal.

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<sup>328</sup> Parks, *The Olympic Games*, 157-59.

<sup>329</sup> Popov and Orlov, *Olympic Commotion*.

<sup>330</sup> Kanin, *A Political History of the Olympic Games*, 142.

There have been some works that have made African connections a central part of their argument. Baruch Hazan's work, *Olympic Sports and Propaganda Games* (1982) and "Sport as an Instrument of Political Expansion" (1987), explored the connection between the Soviet Olympic project and its propaganda efforts in Africa.<sup>331</sup> Hazan demonstrated through Soviet newspapers and published cooperation agreements that the USSR made a concerted effort to earn African states' support for the Moscow Olympics in direct response to Montreal. Many of Hazan's observations can now be reinforced through archival documents. Louis Brosseau's thesis on "Moscow 1980: the Olympic seduction of Africa" outlines how the OrgCommittee went about developing relations with the SCSA and African states using many documents from the RGANI collection *Five Rings*.<sup>332</sup> Brosseau's work complements Simon Young's dissertation "Playing to Win: A Political History of the Moscow Olympic Games, 1975-1980."<sup>333</sup> Both Young and Brosseau investigate the links between the USSR and Africa in this period and have shown the value of examining the development of these connections. Lydia Lesnykh's work on USSR-Francophone African sports connections also addresses the importance of these links in the pre- and post-Montreal periods.<sup>334</sup>

The Soviet Union's diplomatic efforts preparing for the Moscow Olympics focused largely on Africa. The main reason was because the USSR was concerned after Montreal about a second African boycott of the Olympics over apartheid sports contacts. However, Africa was

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<sup>331</sup> Baruch Hazan, *Olympic Sports and Propaganda Games: Moscow 1980* (Transaction Inc., 1982); Baruch A. Hazan, "Sport as an Instrument of Political Expansion: The Soviet Union in Africa," in *Sport in Africa: Essays in Social History*, ed. William J. Baker and James A. Mangan (Africana Publishing Company, 1987), 250-271.

<sup>332</sup> Brosseau, "Moscou 1980."

<sup>333</sup> Young, "Playing to Win."

<sup>334</sup> Lidia Lesnykh, "L'aide soviétique aux pays de l'Afrique noire francophone dans le domaine du sport (1952-1980)," MA thesis, (Université Paris X Ouest Nanterre, 2016).

also vital to the success of Moscow because of the growing Cold War struggle on the continent during the 1970s. The Moscow Olympic Games provided a once in a lifetime opportunity to demonstrate to the developing world the success of socialist system to the developing world and persuade decolonizing states to follow the example of Soviet modernization. The Soviet Olympic project formed part of Odd Arne Westad's *Global Cold War* where the fight in Global South was in many ways a "conflict over the very concept of European modernity - to which both [USA and USSR] regarded themselves as successors."<sup>335</sup> The Olympics were a vision of modernity that flaunted technology and hospitality. It allowed the USSR to craft a persuasive case for Soviet modernity to be transmitted to the rest of the world for emulation.

Westad also argued that the Cold War was a "continuation of colonialism through slightly different means;" both superpowers sought to supplant the former colonial powers in the Global South and influence these decolonizing countries economically, politically, and culturally.<sup>336</sup> This was where the Cold War was fought from the 1960s onwards. But it was a fight in which the US struggled. By the Montreal Olympics, the USSR appeared to hold a significant advantage in the Global South. US intervention in Vietnam both humbled American politicians, who turned inwards, and turned developing nations against the United States due to its heavy-handed conduct of the war. American failure in Vietnam, followed by the Watergate scandal, inflicted "psychic wounds" on the US.<sup>337</sup> In contrast, during the 1970s, the USSR entered what Jessica Chapman has referred to as a period of "Third World optimism."<sup>338</sup> The

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<sup>335</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 4.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Harvard University Press, 2014), 269-272.

<sup>338</sup> Jessica M. Chapman, *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War* (University Press of Kentucky, 2023), 35.



Soviet Union made great advances into Africa, in particular. Its support of Ethiopia in the Ogaden War marked the first massive Soviet military intervention in Africa. With the assistance of Cuba, the USSR provided military instructors and material to liberation groups across Southern Africa, such as in Angola, Mozambique, and Namibia. It also developed closer relationships with many “non-aligned” countries during this period. The USSR appeared on the ascent in the Global Cold War during the late 1970s.

The USSR believed that it was in a strong position in Africa by the end of the 1970s. Anatoly Gromyko, the son of Minister for Foreign Affairs Andrei, wrote his summary of the USSR-Africa relations in 1981, *Africa: Progress, Problems, Prospects*. In it, he argued that the USSR and African states had common political purposes: “The Soviet Union is in complete solidarity with the African countries in their struggle against colonial opposition...[and] is the chief ally of the forces fighting against the racist regime in Pretoria.”<sup>339</sup> These goals were complemented by connections in other spheres. Soviet trade with Africa increased “fortyfold” from the 1950s to the 1980, and the Soviet Union maintained trade agreements with thirty-nine African nations.<sup>340</sup> The USSR had helped to construct 130 secondary schools, universities and other higher education institutes across the continent while also providing 3,000 scholarships to African students each year.<sup>341</sup> In 1980, Gromyko estimated there were 12,000 African students studying in the USSR. The USSR was investing in Africa, seeking to build connections across the continent, and winning the soft and hard power Cold War struggle against the US in this region when Gromyko published his book.

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<sup>339</sup> Anatoly Gromyko, *Africa: Progress, Problems, Prospects*, trans. Dudley Hagen (Progress Publishers, 1983), 133.

<sup>340</sup> Gromyko, *Africa*, 144.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

However, the USSR was not only focused on its superpower competition with the US in Africa, but it was also conscious of the growing influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Global South. Jeremy Friedman has termed this conflict between the USSR and PRC the Shadow Cold War.<sup>342</sup> The USSR and PRC presented the developing world with competing versions of Communism after the Sino-Soviet Split in the early 1960s. The PRC held the advantage as a formerly colonized state that supported anti-imperial, revolutionary movements. It understood the difficulties facing countries emerging from European rule. Mao promoted his Three Worlds theory from the 1940s onwards arguing that China was between the two superpowers, in what he termed the "Intermediate Zone," along with the formerly colonized nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.<sup>343</sup> Mao also divided the world into Global North vs. Global South, developed vs. developing. China aligned itself with these developing states, supporting their anti-colonial ambitions and development projects, and challenging the Global North's primacy in Africa, opposing both the US and USSR. So, while the USSR held an advantage over the USA, it worried about the challenge from the PRC on the African continent during the 1970s.<sup>344</sup> The Soviet pre-occupation with China would be visible in the ways that OrgCommittee officials understood the Montreal boycott.

The Soviets saw Africa as central to its overall Cold War strategy. The Moscow Olympics provided an added incentive to intensify its relationships with African states. Sport had

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<sup>342</sup> Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015)

<sup>343</sup> Chen Jian, "China and the Cold War after Mao," in *Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume 3, Endings*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 184-5.

<sup>344</sup> Stephen Sestanovich, "The Third World in Soviet Foreign Policy, 1955-1985" in *The Soviet Union and the Third World: The Last Three Decades*, ed. Andrzej Korbonski and Francis Fukuyama (Cornell University Press, 1987), 12

been a successful tool for the Soviets on the African continent since the 1950s. The Soviet Union had used sport as an easy, seemingly non-political way to build relationships.<sup>345</sup> It had supported the efforts of African states to join the IOC and to democratize the organization.<sup>346</sup> The USSR had also aligned itself with the anti-apartheid campaign in sport, supporting moves to kick South Africa out of sports bodies and condemning countries that played with apartheid.<sup>347</sup> These efforts, though, took on greater importance in 1976 after the USSR offered no assistance to the anti-apartheid boycott in Montreal and needed to win African support for its Moscow Olympic Games. The next three years, from 1976-1979, would make or break the 1980 Games.

### **Soviet lessons from Montreal:**

During the Montreal Olympics, an eight-person delegation of the Moscow OrgCommittee, led by OrgCommittee President Ignati Novikov, stayed in the Canadian city to learn how to prepare for and manage an Olympic Games.<sup>348</sup> The Moscow OrgCommittee needed first-hand knowledge about what athletes required, how competitions functioned, the security arrangements, and all the minutiae of how to run a successful global sporting event while the whole world watched and judged the host nation's performance.

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<sup>345</sup> Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 4.

<sup>346</sup> Jenifer Parks, "'Nothing but Trouble': The Soviet Union's Push to 'Democratise' International Sports During the Cold War, 1959-1962," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30 (2013): 1554-1567.

<sup>347</sup> Douglas Booth, "The South African Council on Sport and the Political Antimonies of the Sports Boycott," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 53.

<sup>348</sup> Parks, *The Olympic Games*, 114-115: The OrgCommittee had formed after the IOC awarded the Games to Moscow in 1974 to coordinate the Soviet efforts to put on the Olympics. It was responsible for all planning of the Games, from the facilities to the competitions, and coordinated the various levers of government in this massive project. The OrgCommittee also grew rapidly in its size, especially as the Olympics approached, rising from 282 members in 1977 to 945 in 1980.

The OrgCommittee also had front row seats to the unfolding drama in Montreal. With matters appearing to spin out of control for the Canadian hosts, the OrgCommittee started gathering evidence for its own analysis and preparations. It interviewed officials, journalists, and anyone who might know anything about the African boycott, trying to understand what had happened. The OrgCommittee wanted to find the root causes of the political issues so that they could prevent the Moscow Olympics from following the same path. By the time the Montreal Olympics ended on August 1, the OrgCommittee had gathered a wealth of information. Before the end of August, the OrgCommittee had written up its findings in two reports for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC-CPSU). The reports focused on what the OrgCommittee termed the “aggravated political situation” surrounding the Games.<sup>349</sup> There had been several issues all contributing to tensions: conflict over whether Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty could cover events, Taiwan’s exclusion by the Canadian government, and issues with anti-Soviet protests. But the central issue was the African boycott.

The African boycott was the largest issue because it had, in the OrgCommittee’s estimation, caused “significant damage to the prestige of the Olympic Games.”<sup>350</sup> Montreal was the first Games of the post-war era to shrink. There were 29 fewer delegations and around 1,000 athletes less in Montreal than at the Munich Olympics in 1972. In terms of the number of participating countries, Montreal was attended by the fewest since Rome in 1960. The African boycott left a significant mark on the 1976 Olympics. The OrgCommittee saw a possible African boycott as a major obstacle to Moscow’s prestige. An African boycott, the OrgCommittee wrote, would “lead to reduced numbers of participant countries...which would be extremely

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<sup>349</sup> “Document 31,” *Five Rings*, 110.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

undesirable, because the number of participating states serves as an indication of a successful Games.”<sup>351</sup> Moscow would also need to avoid an African boycott if it wanted to surpass Munich to be the biggest and most successful Olympics yet.

To avert a future African boycott, the OrgCommittee explained in its report what it had learned in Montreal and its interpretation of that information. The OrgCommittee’s thinking reflected the larger Cold War concerns of the USSR rather than the longer-term anti-apartheid struggle in sport. Instead of seeing Montreal as an escalation of the SCSA’s boycott threats since 1968 or because of the recent “third-party boycott” tactic against Britain and France, the OrgCommittee concluded that African countries had been manipulated into causing an Olympic fiasco by the People’s Republic of China. “The PRC has recently intensified subversive activities to split the Olympic movement,” wrote Novikov.<sup>352</sup> “Some officials explain the departure of many countries in Africa and the Middle East from the Montreal Games as the result of serious work done by the representatives of the People’s Republic of China.” Novikov’s accusation that the PRC was engaged in “intensified subversive activities” was underlined.

Novikov based his accusation of PRC interference on rumors and conversations between Soviet and Montreal Games officials. A key source was a conversation between OrgCommittee member B.T. Shumilin with the chairman of the Council for Safety at the Montreal Olympics, a Mr. Lecuyer.<sup>353</sup> The Canadian “confidentially” informed Shumilin that “representatives of the PRC were actively working to withdraw countries of Africa and Asia from the 1976 Olympic

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<sup>351</sup> “Document 32,” *Five Rings*, 119.

<sup>352</sup> “Document 31,” *Five Rings*, 110.

<sup>353</sup> No first name is given in the text, just referred to by the position and last name. Could be one of Carole, Normand or Richard Lecuyer, who are all listed as permanent staff in the Montreal Olympic Report.

Games.”<sup>354</sup> Lecuyer warned Shumilin that “there is evidence that the PRC has launched active work in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America to boycott Olympiad-80 in Moscow and [has proposed] holding parallel games of similar sports competitions for the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.”<sup>355</sup> In the first report, Novikov presented Lecuyer’s warning about the PRC as gossip. But in the second report, Novikov was more blunt in his assessment: “According to information received from a few actors in the Olympic movement, journalists, and from other sources, a notable role in the withdrawal of sportsmen by African governments from the Games was played by representatives of Peking and pro-Chinese elements in a number of African states.”<sup>356</sup> These PRC representatives “were interested in disrupting the Olympic movement and the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.”

Novikov’s presentation of the African walkout in Montreal as a Chinese plot to disrupt the Olympics is a clear example of the paternalist and condescending attitudes that some Soviet officials held for countries of the Global South. Soviet, and also American, thinking about the Global South carried, according to Jessica Chapman, “the unmistakable imprints of imperial thinking about colonised people’s political immaturity and need for foreign tutelage, which resulted in chauvinistic attitudes.”<sup>357</sup> Soviet policy makers prioritized their viewpoints over those they were analyzing, often fitting issues within a Cold War narrative rather than understanding the “local and regional considerations that were often much more important to their Third World

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<sup>354</sup> “Document 31,” *Five Rings*, 110.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid; The accusation that the PRC might seek to create a rival set of competitions to the Olympic Games was rooted in the issues between GANEFO and the Olympics in the 1960s, which the PRC took special interest in promoting and participating in as a challenger to the IOC. That the Chinese Communist government might propose a new sports competition to frustrate the Soviet Union on that back of its support for the GANEFO project was not unthinkable.

<sup>356</sup> “Document 32,” *Five Rings*, 118.

<sup>357</sup> Chapman, *Remaking the World*, 6.

counterparts than were Cold War imperatives.”<sup>358</sup> That Novikov explained the Montreal Olympic boycott as a Chinese machination suggested that African countries could not organize such an event themselves and that they were manipulable by outside forces. This reflected Soviet thinking about Chinese interference in sub-Saharan Africa more than it reflected the anti-apartheid reasoning for the SCSA boycott of Montreal.

However, Soviet fears that the PRC held influence over the SCSA were not unfounded. PRC sports aid to African states increased in the years leading up to Montreal. Jean-Claude Ganga attended the Third Chinese Games in October 1975. Chinese sports officials then travelled to Yaoundé in January 1976. At these meetings the SCSA and PRC agreed to cooperate leading up to the Moscow Olympics. Cooperation included SCSA support to isolate Taiwan in sport in return for Chinese training for African coaches and \$150,000 of sports equipment to be distributed among “the poorest Sahel countries and the newly independent States of our continent.”<sup>359</sup> This agreement pleased Ganga, who said it showed that the PRC was a reliable ally and hoped for further cooperation in the future. Chinese officials were “aware of our difficulties and...bring us their help without any particular condition.”<sup>360</sup> An added bonus to Chinese support was that it allowed the SCSA “to avoid falling under the blow of the superpowers whose spirit of domination transpires in all the aid they give.”

Novikov was not the only person in Montreal to hear rumors of Chinese involvement in the African boycott. The rumor appeared in articles by several Western journalists, who saw the issue through the same Cold War lenses as Soviet officials. Richard Cleroux, writing for Toronto’s *Globe and Mail*, reported on PRC’s clandestine influence campaign to build support

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> “Report on activities of the Secretary General,” E-REO2-CSSA/011, SD2, OSC, 28.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

for “its own rival Games for 1980 to get back at the Russians.”<sup>361</sup> Cleroux claimed that the PRC wanted to get back at the IOC over Taiwan’s Olympic membership and at the Soviets over the Sino-Soviet split. The PRC was drawing Africa away from the Olympics to harm both parties. However, despite all his postulating, Cleroux could not find a “Chinese official...to either confirm or deny the reports circulating in Montreal.”<sup>362</sup>

This rumor was so pervasive that Jean-Claude Ganga, the SCSA General Secretary, publicly denied that the PRC had any influence on Africa’s decision. When explaining the African withdrawal, Ganga made it clear that the PRC had no influence over the boycott and “that African nations had not heard from Peking regarding a possible “Third World Olympics” to compete with the 1980 Games.”<sup>363</sup> Accusations of Chinese direction angered Ganga: “Some persons think Africans cannot think for themselves,” he replied. “This boycott was decided only by Africans, not the Chinese.” But even after Ganga’s denials, Novikov still presented the Central Committee with unsubstantiated rumours of Chinese involvement in the Montreal boycott because it fit the USSR’s shadow Cold War fears.

The OrgCommittee believed the PRC instigated the Montreal boycott through skillfully exploiting Africa’s anti-apartheid sentiments. Novikov thought the PRC could do this again in the build-up to Moscow. He also raised the possibility that another power could manipulate African countries into boycotting through the apartheid issue. “If some state decided to establish relations with South Africa for provocative purposes on the eve of the Olympic Games,” Novikov reasoned, then the USSR could face an African boycott outside of its control.<sup>364</sup> Events

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<sup>361</sup> Richard Cleroux, “UN-backed anti-apartheid group was key force behind Games’ exodus by blacks,” *The Globe and Mail*, 20 July 1976, S6

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Steve Cady, “Egypt, Morocco Join Olympic Walkout,” *New York Times*, 21 July 1976, 25.

<sup>364</sup> “Document 32,” *Five Rings*, 119.



in Montreal had demonstrated to Moscow's enemies that African countries could be provoked into boycotting the Olympic Games. If the PRC did not pressure African states to boycott in 1980, then Novikov believed there was a chance that another reactionary power, possibly the US or another Western country, could send a team to South Africa deliberately to ruin the Moscow Olympics. The only solution to this was to develop "immediate countermeasures to expose the subversive activities of the PRC, as well as to strengthen our advocacy work in Asia, Africa and Latin America."<sup>365</sup>

For Moscow to be a success, the Olympics would need to avoid a boycott. But the OrgCommittee's reports argued there was a good chance Africa would boycott the Olympics again in 1980. This meant that the USSR needed to "start work early to strengthen the international Olympic movement and its unity."<sup>366</sup> The OrgCommittee proposed a broad program for the Soviet Union to both "expose and neutralize the actions of reactionary forces, directed in ultimate aim of disrupting the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow" and to "strengthen relations with sporting organizations in the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America with aim of ensuring their participation in Olympic Games." These two aspects, if done well and together, would help ensure that Africa attended Moscow in 1980.

To achieve the goal of a boycott-free Olympics, the OrgCommittee asked for the full assistance of the Soviet state. The OrgCommittee proposed that the government use all the levers available to it to build excitement for the 1980 Olympic Games and to start countering efforts by the PRC, and to a lesser extent Western countries, to ruin Moscow. The plan contained roles for the state news services of TASS and APN, State Broadcasting of the USSR, State Cinema, the

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<sup>365</sup> "Document 31," *Five Rings*, 110.

<sup>366</sup> "Document 32," *Five Rings*, 119.

All-Union Council of Trade Unions, the Komsomol, Committee for Soviet Women, and others. The OrgCommittee also requested direct assistance from the Foreign Ministry (MID) to help the OrgCommittee build relationships with foreign leaders and the Department of Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop) to spread positive coverage about the Moscow Olympics. By mid-September, the OrgCommittee and Central Committee agreed on a plan of action to win the developing world's support for the Moscow Olympics and counter any anti-Soviet machinations.

Much of the OrgCommittee's focus would be on Africa for the next four years. Though the OrgCommittee called for work across the whole developing world, it recognized that the SCSA boycott meant that Africa was the most likely group of countries to boycott again. OrgCommittee members travelled to Africa for regional meetings, spoke to sports officials across the continent, and invited influential national and international leaders to Moscow as feted guests. It oversaw Olympic exhibitions going to Africa and inserted pro-Soviet news articles into local newspapers. Soviet athletes travelled to Africa to play friendly matches and coaches went to train their African counterparts in new techniques. Bilateral cooperation agreements between the USSR and African states formed a network of exchanges and connections that would tie these developing nations to the Moscow Olympic project. Novikov hoped that these policies would generate enough goodwill within Africa to prevent efforts by "China, USA, Britain, as well as other countries," to instigate an African boycott of the Moscow Olympics.<sup>367</sup>

## **Personal Diplomacy**

The OrgCommittee believed that personal diplomacy was integral to Moscow winning Africa's support. Personal diplomacy meant inviting African leaders to the USSR and

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid, 120.

dispatching Soviet delegations to as many countries and meetings in Africa as possible to address continental concerns. The OrgCommittee would coordinate with the MID to build relations with foreign leaders and sports officials, sending out invitations to foreign leaders and coordinating visits abroad. The OrgCommittee built relationships with such influential figures as Ordia and Ganga, as well as leaders of the OAU and leading African nations, during 1976-1979 to mollify Africa's attitude towards the Moscow Olympics specifically and the Olympic movement broadly.

The Soviet sports bureaucracy had been effective at building personal networks among the global sports bodies since the 1950s. The USSR's efforts to win Moscow the right to host the Olympics, for instance, had required Soviet officials to do a certain amount of "schmoozing with important and influential sports figures" in the IOC and other international sports bodies, according to Jenifer Parks.<sup>368</sup> In the aftermath of the 1976 boycott, the Soviets went back to work cultivating relationships at the highest levels in the IOC, the SCSA, and everywhere else they deemed important, since they believed these officials would protect the Moscow Olympics from any outside, political threats.

One of the key relationships that the OrgCommittee cultivated during this period was with the leadership of the SCSA. Shortly after the Montreal Olympics, the OrgCommittee invited Ordia and Ganga to Moscow to "discuss the issues of unity in the Olympic movement, participation of African countries in the games of 1980 and other urgent problems of the international sporting life."<sup>369</sup> Ordia visited Moscow in December 1976 ostensibly to check on the city's Olympic preparations. However, Sergey Pavlov, the OrgCommittee vice-president and

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<sup>368</sup> Parks, *The Olympic Games*, 100.

<sup>369</sup> "Document 35," *Five Rings*, 130.

Soviet minister for sport, described Ordia's visit as "caused by the necessity of carrying out negotiations with him about African countries' participation in the Olympic Games in Moscow."<sup>370</sup> Ordia, having just led the African boycott in Montreal, was in a strong negotiating position.

The Soviets needed Ordia on its side for the Moscow Olympic project given that in 1976 it was unclear what Africa's intentions were towards the future of the Olympics. Soviet thinking at the time, given the OrgCommittee's report from Montreal, was that the Chinese could split Africa off to form its own Global South sports competition. It is likely that Soviet embassies across Africa also reported back to Moscow the threats published in African newspapers following the boycott. Tanzania's *Daily News* questioned why the IOC or the Soviets would assume that "Africans and all these others who boycotted the Montreal Games would go to Moscow in 1980 knowing full well that New Zealand with her present policies would also be there?"<sup>371</sup> The *Times of Zambia* argued after Montreal "a split between Third World nations and China, on the one hand, and the developed countries on the other" was increasingly likely, possibly before Moscow.<sup>372</sup> Even the Kenyan *Standard* had questioned "whether the next scheduled Games in Moscow in 1980 will take place" and claimed that China was "lobbying in favour of organising a special "Third World" Olympics" to challenge the IOC and USSR.<sup>373</sup>

Winning Ordia's support early was vital to the Soviet plans for the next four years. During the meeting in Moscow, Pavlov initially offered Soviet assistance in sports material and training to the SCSA and African states. Ordia gratefully accepted, stating that "in Africa, where

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<sup>370</sup> "Document 38," *Five Rings*, 141.

<sup>371</sup> "Comment," *Daily News*, 20 July 1976, 1.

<sup>372</sup> "Africa quits the Olympics," *Times of Zambia*, 18 July 1976, 1.

<sup>373</sup> "Politics in sport have come to stay," *Standard*, 26 July 1976, 8.

there is enough wealth of talent, we really lack the methodology in scientific training of athletes. We are counting on the help of Soviet specialists in this matter.”<sup>374</sup> But Ordia wanted more from the USSR to assure African participation in Moscow. Ordia recognized the USSR was a long-term ally in the “struggle for national liberation” across Africa and assisted in isolating South Africa in sport. However, Ordia wanted Soviet support for its push in the UN to create a Convention Against Apartheid in Sport, since it would seek to forbid the “admission to the Olympic Games sportsmen who took part in competitions with teams from SA and Rhodesia.”<sup>375</sup> Ordia wanted a tough Convention to enforce South African isolation by punishing athletes and countries that continued to cooperate with apartheid. But this threatened the Moscow Olympics and Pavlov was hesitant to offer any commitments. The Convention would be a sticking point between the USSR and SCSA over the next three years.

The Soviets also had a chance to learn more about the situation around Montreal from Ordia; but it also provided an opportunity for the Soviets to lecture Ordia on his mistakes. Pavlov attempted to explain to Ordia how the PRC and reactionary forces had manipulated Africa into boycotting, and how those powers would attempt “to inflict harm on the position of the Soviet Union” by striking at the 1980 Olympics in the coming years.<sup>376</sup> The Soviet version of events had the SCSA as a pawn in the shadow Cold War between the USSR and PRC. Ordia found this confusing. He laid out his own version of events. No country had manipulated Africa. The sports boycott was part of the SCSA’s long-term effort to isolate South Africa. The boycott had “paid off, as it inflicted a sensitive blow to the prestige of New Zealand on the world stage.”<sup>377</sup> But

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<sup>374</sup> I. Marinov, “Abraham Ordia: African has true friends in Moscow,” *Sovetskii Sport*, no. 288, 10 December 1976, 4.

<sup>375</sup> “Document 38,” *Five Rings*, 142.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*

even after Ordia's explanation, Pavlov still maintained that Africa was a candidate for manipulation in the future. In the report of the Ordia's visit, Pavlov wrote that during "discussions with Ordia...[I] helped expose him our opponents' attempts to oppose the interests of socialist and African countries in relation to the Olympic Games in Moscow."<sup>378</sup> Ordia had explained Africa's position on the boycott, but Pavlov stuck to his original thinking. The Soviets were more interested in a Cold War understanding of Montreal rather than seeing the African boycott as part of the anti-apartheid struggle.

However, despite disagreeing on the reasons for Montreal, Ordia was content with how discussions with Soviet officials proceeded. He promised to use his influence as SCSA president to ensure "a maximum number of African countries will take part."<sup>379</sup> In an interview with *Sovetskii Sport* before he left Moscow, Ordia stated his positive impression of Moscow's preparations and thanked the Soviet Union for its support in the anti-apartheid struggle. Taking a positive tone, Ordia told reporters "I want to emphasize that the Olympics in Moscow are our Games, that Moscow is close to us Africans."<sup>380</sup> Ordia concluded by explaining that "in Africa we are good at distinguishing who is a friend in words and who is a friend in action. In the USSR we have real friends."<sup>381</sup> If the Soviet Union would continue to fight against apartheid, Ordia would rally African support for the Moscow Olympics.

In 1977, following on from Ordia, Ganga made his own trip to Moscow for negotiations with the OrgCommittee and Soviet sports leaders. In his report to SCSA members, Ganga described the meetings as "extremely fruitful" and both parties "expressed...[their] satisfaction

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>380</sup> I. Marinov, "Abraham Ordia: African has true friends in Moscow," *Sovetskii Sport*, no. 288, 10 December 1976, 4.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

on the level reached so far by our mutual cooperation and decided to do everything to consolidate and extend it further.”<sup>382</sup> Cooperation included Soviet training for coaches and athletes from SCSA countries in 1978 and 1979, sports equipment delivered to the SCSA for redistribution across the continent, and travel and accommodation for the 1980 Olympics at “extremely advantageous conditions.”<sup>383</sup> The USSR used the SCSA leadership as an important conduit for developing deeper cooperation across Africa and ensuring the continent supported the Moscow Olympic project.

In addition to working with the SCSA, the OrgCommittee would send delegations across the continent to establish relationships with national sports leaders. These delegations helped secure bilateral agreements between the USSR and a range of African countries, but they also provided opportunities for Soviet officials to listen to local concerns and build rapport with sports leaders. Nikolai Podgorny, the Chairman of the CPSU Presidium, had told Lord Killanin that travelling Soviet delegations were part of the “necessary steps to ensure that African countries take part in the Moscow Olympic Games” by demonstrating the value the USSR placed on African participation.<sup>384</sup> The first OrgCommittee delegation travelled to Cameroon, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Tanzania in December 1976. The OrgCommittee targeted these counties as the Soviets believed they had been influential in leading the Montreal boycott. This first tour formed the basis for those that followed. In Cameroon, the OrgCommittee met at the SCSA headquarters and issued a joint statement on “developing cooperation between sports organizations of the USSR and the SCSA” and “the determination of both sides to fight any manifestations of racial

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<sup>382</sup> “Report on activities of the Secretary General,” E-REO2-CSSA/011, SD2, Olympic Studies Center, 38-9.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>384</sup> “Document 37,” *Five Rings*, 132.

discrimination and apartheid in the international sports movement.”<sup>385</sup> In Ethiopia, the local NOC made a similar announcement with the OrgCommittee.<sup>386</sup>

Aside from statements of assistance in sports aid and the anti-apartheid struggle, personal diplomacy allowed the OrgCommittee to develop important relationships and information networks. The OrgCommittee committed to sending delegations to nearly every regional and global sports conference to build these connections. When the IOC met in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in March 1977, an OrgCommittee delegation attended. Lord Killanin had recommended the USSR send sports officials to the meeting as it “would provide an opportunity to establish closer contacts with the NOCs of many countries, in particular the developing countries of Africa.”<sup>387</sup> Closer to the event, Novikov wrote that his delegation would use the meeting to establish “contacts with leaders of regional and national sporting organizations of the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America” as well as encourage the “participation of national teams of the states of said continents in the 1980 Olympic Games.”<sup>388</sup>

At the Abidjan meeting, the Soviet delegation presented an update on the Moscow preparations to the assemble delegates. But the primary objective was to build relationships with national politicians and sports leaders. Novikov spoke with Ordia again, with the SCSA President assuring Novikov that he would “give special importance to the relationships between the OrgCommittee and the SCSA.”<sup>389</sup> The OrgCommittee met with Louis Guirandou-N’Diaye, the Ivory Coast’s IOC member, who discussed the possibility of “developing sporting relations between the Soviet Union and the Ivory Coast” and the “hope that sportsmen from the Ivory

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<sup>385</sup> TASS, “Africa is getting closer,” *Sovetskii Sport*, no. 294, 17 December 1976, 4.

<sup>386</sup> “Friendship ties strengthened,” *Sovetskii Sport*, No. 298, 21 December 1976, 4.

<sup>387</sup> “Document 37,” *Five Rings*, 133.

<sup>388</sup> “Document 39,” *Five Rings*, 143.

<sup>389</sup> “Document 40,” *Five Rings*, 149.



Coast will take part in the Games in Moscow and, possibly, will be able to go there earlier.”<sup>390</sup>

This was notable since the USSR and Ivory Coast had no diplomatic relations in 1977. President Félix Houphouët-Boigny had broken ties in 1969 (they would not be renewed until 1986).<sup>391</sup> The IOC meeting in Abidjan allowed for discussions between Guirandou-N’Diaye and the OrgCommittee over reconstructing Ivorian Soviet relations, at least in sport.

As the Moscow Olympics approached, the delegations became more important as fact-finding missions to understand how African countries were reacting to provocative moves and how the SCSA’s internal politics were changing. In July 1979, OrgCommittee and IOC member Konstantin Andrianov travelled to the People’s Republic of Congo for a regional handball competition. Andrianov learned through discussions with local officials about the Congolese position on the UN Convention Against Apartheid in Sport, reactions to renewed South African-French rugby relations, and fears that France was taking over the SCSA.<sup>392</sup> Andrianov reported that “the situation is really strained and could be used by governments of a number of countries in provocative ways to organize a boycott.” He suggested sending more OrgCommittee members to African countries to shore up support because of growing Western provocation.<sup>393</sup>

In his account of the Moscow Olympics, Novikov reported that the OrgCommittee followed Andrianov’s advice for 1979 and 1980, sending members to multiple African states. The OrgCommittee members were to explain the “the ins and outs of the provocative actions of

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>391</sup> “Soviet Ties with Ivory Coast,” *New York Times*, 21 February 1986, A6.

<sup>392</sup> “Document 84,” *Five Rings*, 236-240.

<sup>393</sup> Hazan, “Sport as an Instrument,” 262; Hazan noted that as the South Africa issue developed, “the number of Soviet delegations visiting Africa sharply increased” to prevent a second African boycott.

certain Western forces” to ruin the Moscow Olympics.<sup>394</sup> Baruch Hazan estimates that in 1979, as the crisis unfolded, the Soviets sent 140 delegations to developing nations, with Africa the main focus.<sup>395</sup> These delegations provided important information to the OrgCommittee and allowed Moscow to respond to threats with known faces and personal visits that appeared successful in winning African states over to the Soviet way of thinking.

The OrgCommittee was ostensibly an independent sports body, but it was an important diplomatic extension of the Soviet state. Members were treated as esteemed guests. At the All-Africa Games in Algiers in 1978, Novikov spoke with Algerian President Houari Boumédiène about Algeria’s commitment to attend the Moscow Olympics and its relationship with the USSR.<sup>396</sup> Before the SCSA General Assembly meeting in Yaoundé, in December 1979, Novikov spoke with Cameroonian President Ahmadou Ahidjo about Cameroon’s participation in Moscow before the conversation shifted to the Soviet-Cameroonian relationship more broadly.<sup>397</sup> The clearest example of the OrgCommittee being seen as an emissary of the USSR rather than as an independent body came when Novikov stopped in the Central African Republic on his way to Yaoundé. The CAR foreign minister spoke of his desire to increase Soviet assistance in “physical culture and sport,” which was well within the remit of the OrgCommittee and its associated sports bodies.<sup>398</sup> But the minister then quickly moved on to Soviet assistance for agriculture, diamond mining, and surveying for uranium. Then, just as quickly, the conversation switched back to the Olympics and how excited the CAR was to compete in 1980. Tying sports

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<sup>394</sup> Ignati T. Novikov, *Olimpiiskii Meridian Moskvi/Olympic Meridian of Moscow* (Fizkultura i Sport / Physical Culture and Sport, 1983), 32.

<sup>395</sup> Hazan, *Olympic Sport*, 64.

<sup>396</sup> Novikov, *Olympic Meridian*, 35.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>398</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 104-105

discussions to Soviet assistance in other fields was not uncommon in OrgCommittee delegation trips to African states.

Personal diplomacy and delegations were integral to the Soviet charm offensive. This was particularly true during the difficult periods after the 1976 Montreal Olympics and when the South African issue returned to the fore in 1979. The OrgCommittee built relationships with key leaders in African sport, such as Abraham Ordia, and with national leaders to build goodwill towards the Moscow Olympics. Across 1976-1979, the OrgCommittee appeared to have great success building close working relationships that would help complement the sports aid and bilateral cooperation agreements that the USSR would sign with many countries. The proof for the OrgCommittee's successful public diplomacy would come in 1979 with the South African issue and the SCSA General Assembly in December. The vote would end up favoring the Soviets in large part because of the OrgCommittee's work explaining its interpretation of events to sports officials across Africa.

### **Soviet Sports Collaboration**

The OrgCommittee and Soviet sports organizations believed that encouraging African sport through aid, training, and bilateral agreements would increase African support for participating in the Moscow Olympics.<sup>399</sup> The OrgCommittee facilitated the transfer of large amounts of sports materiel, including balls, sneakers, uniforms, and other equipment, to African states during 1976-1980. Soviet sports bodies sent sports scientists, coaches, and physical education experts to work in many African countries. And these bodies would also organize the training of African athletes and coaches in the USSR in preparation for Moscow. The

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<sup>399</sup> "Document 32," *Five Rings*, 120.

OrgCommittee also encouraged participation through subsidized or free transportation to and accommodation at the Olympics for many African delegations. By providing all of this, the OrgCommittee hoped that it would build excitement for the Moscow Olympics and goodwill towards the USSR among African states.

The OrgCommittee focused a lot of its efforts on facilitating assistance agreements between Soviet sports organizations and African states. These declarations, which would be published in newspapers in both the USSR and the local countries, provided “written proof of [the USSR’s] support of the African cause.”<sup>400</sup> In 1979 alone, the USSR signed 25 sports cooperation agreements with developing nations, sixteen of them in Africa.<sup>401</sup> These agreements were only for one to two years to ensure that they needed to be renewed regularly so the Soviet Union could demonstrate once again its magnanimity. Baruch Hazan has argued that these Soviet sports relations with developing nations were “totally devoid of any sports value.” They were never about sport, instead they were designed “to develop political relations between the Soviet Union and these countries, or to develop interests in the Soviet Union and a positive attitude toward Soviet life and achievements.”<sup>402</sup> They were also about demonstrating publicly Soviet assistance for political capital and, perhaps, creating a sense of indebtedness to the USSR and the Moscow Olympics.

For their part, African states were eager to sign agreements with the USSR because these would aid their preparations for the Olympics and defray many of the costs. These agreements were mutually beneficial. During Ordia’s visit to Moscow in November 1976 and at the IOC’s Abidjan meeting in March 1977 the SCSA President reminded Soviet officials that African

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<sup>400</sup> Hazan, “Sport as an Instrument,” 255.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid, 263.

<sup>402</sup> Hazan, *Olympic Sports*, 62.

countries would need both “material/technical assistance” before the Olympics and “preferential terms of transportation to the Games.”<sup>403</sup> Ordia cited the precedent of the Mexico City Olympics, where organizers had “provided great help in organizing transport of African sportsmen to the Games and providing payment of 2/3 of total expenses for transportation.”<sup>404</sup> If the USSR wanted a large African presence at its Olympic Games, then it would need to provide African states with aid in preparing for and participating in the Games. Many African states proved willing recipients of Soviet aid: the offer of free or subsidized coaching, donations of equipment, and participation in international seminars was too good to turn down.

The USSR started signing more of these cooperation agreements in the aftermath of the 1976 Montreal Olympics, as countries started to form their plans for the upcoming Moscow Games. The first Soviet delegation to Africa in December 1976 announced cooperation agreements with Cameroon and Ethiopia, with the Ethiopian Olympic Committee announcing it would visit Moscow in 1977.<sup>405</sup> Algeria organised its own cooperation agreement with the USSR in 1977 because it wanted sports assistance before it hosted the 1978 All-Africa Games in Algiers.<sup>406</sup> The Algerian agreement contained numerous areas of cooperation, including Soviet cultural tours, a film festival, and an exhibit on the Moscow Olympics. But it focused on “revitalizing the sporting movements...organizing sports teams at enterprises, educational institutions, holding mass competitions, etc.”<sup>407</sup> The Sports Committee sent twenty-four specialists to Algeria for 1978 to train seven Algerian national teams. The Algerians finished the III All-Africa Games at the top of the medal table and “achieved significant results.” The Soviet

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<sup>403</sup> “Document 40,” *Five Rings*, 150.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>405</sup> “Friendship ties strengthened,” *Sovetskii Sport*, no. 298, 21 December 1976, 4.

<sup>406</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1259, 22.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

report from Algeria indicated that those athletes trained by Soviet specialists won sixty percent of the total Algerian gold medals at the African Games.

The USSR's agreement with Algeria was a success for both sides. The Algerians were said to have "highly appreciated" the Soviet trainers' work. It was so appreciated that the Algerians wanted Soviet trainers to remain to prepare athletes for 1980. The Soviet Sports Committee needed to find twenty-one trainers for this purpose. These trainers would also train and assist staff at the "newly created Institute for Physical Cultural and Sport," which had been built according to the Soviet model. The Algerians wanted to learn and utilize Soviet training methods in sport to become the dominant African sports power. To the Soviets, this showed how the initial cooperation agreement had been a success. Algeria provided a positive case for the USSR in developing closer relations with a non-aligned, though Soviet leaning, country through sports cooperation agreements in the build-up to Moscow.

In July 1979, an OrgCommittee delegation signed a "Bilateral Sports Cooperation" agreement with Zambia.<sup>408</sup> Like Algeria, Zambia was a non-aligned country and a target of intense Soviet interest in the years leading up to Moscow. The sports agreement immediately provided scholarships for 56 Zambian students in the USSR to study physical education. It also organised meetings between Soviet and Zambian boxers and football teams.<sup>409</sup> The Soviets wanted to use the cooperation agreement to build better relations with Nalumino Mundia, Zambia's minister in charge of sport, which was auspicious because Mundia would end up as Zambia's Prime Minister in 1981. The Soviets placed extra importance on its sports cooperation agreement with Zambia for another reason: a Chinese delegation visited Zambia in the same year

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<sup>408</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76., D.1011, 51.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid, 55.

as the OrgCommittee, demonstrating the growing influence of China in the country.<sup>410</sup> Sport could help reinforce Zambia-Soviet relations despite the PRC threat.

During the same trip, the OrgCommittee brokered a similar arrangement with Botswana.<sup>411</sup> The Botswana deal focused on sports cooperation to prepare the country for the Moscow Olympics. However, Botswana was not yet a member of the IOC and needed Soviet assistance to gain admission in time for Moscow. Botswana wanted to compete in boxing, athletics and cycling, and hoped that the Soviets might be able to help “in the development of these sports.”<sup>412</sup> The Soviet delegation concluded that it was advantageous to sign a deal on sports cooperation as “an important means of strengthening inter-state relations with that country.” The position of Botswana as a frontline state against South Africa was a key point in the delegation’s argument to provide immediate support. The Soviets would help Botswana gain admission to the IOC and prepare a delegation for the Moscow Olympics.

While in the cases of Algeria, Zambia and Botswana, the Soviets were happy to aid in exchange for political support and enthusiasm about the Moscow Olympics, there were cases where Soviet officials felt they were taken advantage of. The Soviet embassy in Antananarivo, Madagascar, complained that while sports contacts had helped strengthen the bond between the USSR and Madagascar, the Malagasy government had violated the terms of its agreement with the Soviets. The Soviet Union had sent trainers to work with the basketball, volleyball, and gymnastics teams in preparation for both the Moscow Spartakiade competitions in 1979 and Olympics in 1980. However, despite the trainers’ “great work in preparing training cadres and the country’s national teams,” the embassy said that the government had failed to pay for the

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<sup>410</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1011, 51 and 55.

<sup>411</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op.35, D.865, 14.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid, 15.

trainers because it had not signed any of the contracts.<sup>413</sup> The embassy was paying for the coaches, which was usually the responsibility of the host country. But despite these complaints the Soviet sent 1,000 pairs of sneakers, 20 footballs, 20 volleyballs, 15 basketballs, 5 volleyball sets, and 10 basketball net sets, with the total coming to 1,500 rubles.<sup>414</sup> Unsigned contracts were a frustration, but the goodwill generated by the trainers and the sports supplies outweighed the financial costs.

The USSR signed as many cooperation agreements as possible during 1976-1980 with the hope that this would increase African participation at the Olympics. But not all these agreements were successful in ensuring African participation. The Sports Committee signed an agreement with Ghana in 1978 that sent 3,000 rubles worth of boxing and football equipment.<sup>415</sup> The Sports Committee also paid the Ghanaian delegation's airfare and accommodation for the 1979 Spartakiade. The Soviets then sent athletics, boxing, and swimming coaches to Ghana and the USSR paid for a post-Spartakiade training camp for Ghanaian athletes. But despite that, Ghana would not participate in 1980, citing lack of preparation. Similarly, the Soviets signed an agreement with Gambia for the period of 1979-80 to prepare its delegation for Moscow.<sup>416</sup> The USSR hosted four coaches and the athletics team for three months for training. It paid for a Gambian delegation to take part in the Spartakiade. The USSR sent a soccer and a volleyball coach to Gambia to train its national teams. But, just as in the case of Ghana, Gambia boycotted the Moscow Olympics.

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<sup>413</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1021, 55.

<sup>414</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1169, 197; 1,500 rubles in 1979 amounts to around \$10,000 in January 2024.

<sup>415</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op.35, D.865, 9-10; 3,000 rubles amounts to just over \$20,000.

<sup>416</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op.35, D.706, 6-8.



Some countries were simply uninterested in sports aid or cooperation with the USSR, no matter how hard the Soviets tried. The Soviets and Senegalese signed a sports cooperation agreement in 1972, but this amounted to very little with only two delegations exchanged between 1971-78.<sup>417</sup> When the agreement came up for renewal, Senegal told Soviet officials in 1978 that they would not need any sports assistance from the USSR since they had little hope of winning any medals and their participation would be “more of a symbolic nature.”<sup>418</sup> Senegal’s hesitance about any cooperation was more likely due to President Senghor’s pro-Western politics than anything to do with Senegal’s poor medal hopes.

Somalia, which had been a Soviet ally until the Ogaden war with Ethiopia in 1977, started rapprochement with the USSR in 1979. In March, the Somali ambassador to Moscow informed the Soviets that Siad Barre was interested in restoring relations with Moscow.<sup>419</sup> The Soviet embassy in Mogadishu initiated discussions with Barre’s government, hoping to build cooperation before the Moscow Olympics, but despite Somalia’s initial overtures, the Soviet embassy reported that “there were difficulties in contacts with sports organizations regarding participation in Moscow Olympiad-80” and no cooperation agreement would be forthcoming.<sup>420</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting example for building cooperation and the provision of sports aid was the Soviet pursuit of Nigeria. The Nigerians were important to the Moscow Olympic project for several reasons. Abraham Ordia was Nigerian and suspected of following his government’s line rather than pursuing policies in Africa’s best interest. Nigeria had been the key domino to fall in Montreal, whose withdrawal pushed all the other countries to leave.

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<sup>417</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op.35, D.865, 56.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1033, 1-3.

<sup>420</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1034, 32.

Nigeria also withdrew from the 1978 Commonwealth Games in Edmonton in protest at New Zealand's continued sports contacts with South Africa, even after the rest of the Commonwealth had agreed to the Gleneagles Declaration in 1977. Nigeria was a wildcard: it pursued a strong non-aligned foreign policy and was determined to become the leading power in Africa through a rigorous anti-apartheid stance.

Soviet embassy reports from Nigeria told a complicated story. The Nigerians were determined "to play a leadership role among African countries, striving to use all means, including sports relations, for that purpose."<sup>421</sup> The Nigerians maintained sports ties with everyone except South Africa. Its military government (Nigeria transitioned to civilian rule in late 1979) had pro-western elements, but it sought to use sports contacts with socialist countries as "a counterbalance to the political and economic influence of the imperialist powers."<sup>422</sup> This did not mean the Nigerians were keen to expand their sports contacts with the USSR. Sport became a contentious issue for Soviet Nigerian relations. When the Nigerian volleyball team visited the USSR in 1977, the National Sports Council in Nigeria "strongly objected to the trip...for financial and "climactic" reasons."<sup>423</sup> FC Ararat, which was to tour Nigeria in a trip organised by both governments, could not get visas for its players at the Nigerian embassy in Moscow; when they arrived as scheduled in Lagos, the players and coaches had their passports taken away. When four Soviet tennis players played in a competition in Benin City, the Nigerian press attacked the quality of the Soviet players. The Dynamo table tennis team, which "performed generally successfully" at the Nigerian Open Championships, left "before the solemn

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<sup>421</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op.35, D.865, 51-2.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid, 54.

ceremony of awarding prizes...[which] made an unfavorable impression on the Nigerian public.” Sport did not generate goodwill between Nigeria and the USSR.

However, Soviet officials pressed on in 1978 to formalize cooperation between the USSR and Nigeria. When the Soviet embassy tried to negotiate an expansion of sports contacts, the Nigerians were hesitant. Anatoly Kolesov, the deputy chairman of the Soviet sports committee, tried to conduct negotiations but failed. The embassy reported that “without objecting to our initiatives, the Nigerians, under various pretexts, avoided specific answers and sought to delay their decision.”<sup>424</sup> The Nigerians likely sought to preserve their status as a non-aligned power by hesitating on its contacts with the USSR. But the USSR wanted formal contacts to help ensure the participation of Nigeria at the Moscow Olympics. Nigeria would warm-up slightly to Soviet initiatives after the transition to the civilian government of President Shehu Shagari and as the Moscow Olympics grew closer. In the final months before the Games, the Soviets sent a boxing coach to Nigeria to help train its national team.<sup>425</sup> However, relations remained quite cool overall.

Soviet sports aid to the developing world grew during the build-up to Moscow. The Soviet Union mobilized its sports resources to send material to over 40 countries and sent coaches to 52 different countries. At the same time, the Soviets hosted over 100 delegations from developing countries for training in the USSR in 1979.<sup>426</sup> The hope was that these agreements would generate goodwill towards the Soviet Union by off-setting costs for equipment and training. But OrgCommittee officials also hoped that they would create a feeling of investment in

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>425</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op.35, D.1061, 76-7.

<sup>426</sup> Hazan, *Olympic Sport*, 60-1.

the Moscow Olympic Games. Countries that felt both invested in and perhaps a sense of duty towards Moscow would be less likely to boycott.

## Propaganda

The last area where the OrgCommittee proposed expending substantial resources was in the media. One of the lessons of Montreal was that the Canadians had failed to control the narrative surrounding the Games. The Deputy Head of the CC-CPSU's Propaganda department, Marat V. Gramov, believed that the Montreal Organizing Committee had done a terrible job spinning the "shortcomings made in the preparations for the Games" and had failed to win over journalists covering the event, which "predetermined a general negative tone" within the press.<sup>427</sup> Montreal was doomed before it began. The Moscow OrgCommittee wanted to control the media narrative around the 1980 Olympics and to use the press to build excitement for the Games from 1976-1980. At the same time, by controlling the media narrative around Moscow, it would allow the OrgCommittee to counter any criticisms from Western or anti-Soviet sources.

The OrgCommittee attempted to control the media narrative around Moscow in a few different ways. Its main avenues were through the magazines *Olympiad-80* and *Olympic Panorama*, which it printed and distributed from 1976-1980. There were 42 issues of *Olympiad-80* and 15 of *Olympic Panorama*, with a total print-run of around 10,000 per issue.<sup>428</sup> These were largely distributed to embassies and cultural centers abroad for foreign consumption, with glossy pages of photos of Moscow, the Olympic construction projects, and Olympic and Soviet sports articles. These magazines were complemented by over 500 books in both Russian and foreign

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<sup>427</sup> "Document 31," *Five Rings*, 114

<sup>428</sup> Novikov, *Olympic Meridian*, 76.

languages on the Olympic movement, the history of Soviet sport, and on technical subjects. But these magazines and books were for those with a particular interest in the Olympics or Soviet sport, they were not for the everyday reader.

Newspapers were the most important aspect of the media campaign. Novikov explained later that the OrgCommittee's "systematic work with the press was of great importance" because it "ensured the periodic appearance in the mass media of foreign countries of objective materials about the Games in Moscow."<sup>429</sup> TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) and APN (Novosti Press Agency) produced these "objective materials." These were distributed to embassies, who then attempted to get them published in friendly newspapers. In 1979, the OrgCommittee estimated that TASS and APN had produced "around 900 materials on the Olympic theme" with over two thousand pieces sent to the foreign press and 1,200 informational pamphlets published.<sup>430</sup> Soviet and international printers also "issued 13 brochures" that addressed questions about the Moscow Olympic Games and life in the Soviet Union, with another thirty-two prepped on "sporting themes" in time for 1980.

Embassies worked hard getting a steady stream of positive articles into newspapers across Africa. In 1978, the Soviet embassy in Ghana reported it had conducted "propaganda work in connection with the upcoming 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. This theme had 49 materials published in Ghanaian newspapers dedicated to it."<sup>431</sup> APN was pleased by this success but wanted the embassy to increase the number of articles given to Ghanaian newspapers on the Moscow Olympics for 1979. The news agency wanted to use "the Olympic movement to strengthen foreign political propaganda" and so agreed to "provide the embassy with literature

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> "Document 81," *Five Rings*, 232.

<sup>431</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1258, 20.

on the theme “Olympiad-80” to achieve this aim.<sup>432</sup> News articles attempted to form a positive image of Moscow in newspapers and provide a steady stream of updates about what the OrgCommittee was doing. The OrgCommittee hoped this would keep the excitement up as the Games approached and see off criticisms from Western and anti-Soviet elements.

Radio, television, and film also played important roles in the Soviet propaganda campaign. The Ghanaian embassy reported in 1977 that it had managed to get 103 Soviet produced radio articles and commentaries broadcast and ten documentary films shown in the second half of the year on a variety of topics.<sup>433</sup> But as 1980 approached, APN wanted more Olympic themed materials sent to Accra. The State Radio of the USSR agreed to “include in the tapes sent to Ghanaian radio more material about the preparations for Olympiad 80.”<sup>434</sup> Soviet television agreed to send more films “on the Olympic theme” to Ghanaian television broadcasters. Film exporters would send out more sports themed products to Ghana and even planned to hold a “Soviet film premiere in Ghana in 1979” to generate excitement. Though these newer forms of technology played an important role in the distribution of Soviet propaganda, newspaper articles were seen as the core of the Soviet plan.

The OrgCommittee saw itself in an information war against powers that did not want it to succeed. Africa was a center of competition in the Global Cold War and was bombarded by media from all sides: from America, Europe, China, the Non-Aligned news pool, and the socialist bloc. Articles from all manner of perspectives were republished in African newspapers. The Soviet embassy in Lusaka reported in 1979 that the *Times of Zambia* had been publishing “material from the feed of Western media agencies in relation to “human rights violations” in the

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>433</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1258, 22.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid, 26.

USSR, about the persecution of “illegal religious activities,” [and] reprinted western messages about “Soviet dissidents.””<sup>435</sup> In Algeria, the embassy issued a similar warning in 1978: Algerian newspapers had started to publish articles from abroad criticizing the Soviet Union’s human rights record. This was all seen as part of an effort to tarnish the Olympic Games and turn Africa against the Soviet Union.

In response, the OrgCommittee, TASS, and APN redoubled their efforts. Positive articles about the Olympics were joined by attacks “exposing the Western propaganda regarding “human rights.””<sup>436</sup> The Soviet embassy in Algiers reported that in response to western attacks, it had managed to get “more than 40 Soviet counter propaganda materials, including, for example, on the question of “human rights”” published in Algerian newspapers. The Soviets flooded Algerian media: local newspapers published an estimated 1130 APN articles and 500 from TASS in 1978. This rivalled anything sent out by the West and China. In Zambia, the embassy worried about the Western articles appearing in local newspapers but was also happy to see local journalists often countered anti-Soviet material without prompting. Embassy officials reported that Zambian journalists “exposed the cynicism of American propaganda in relation to i.e. “protection of human rights,”” arguing that while the US complains about Soviet deficiencies, “the same USA is exposed as the main culprit in the continuation of policies of fascism and apartheid in South Africa and in its onward country.”<sup>437</sup>

Not everywhere was a success. In Ghana, the embassy had a hard time getting more APN and TASS articles printed in response to growing Western accusations. The embassy worried in 1978 that the military government was “shifting to the right,” making newspapers less interested

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>436</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1259, 11.

<sup>437</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1258, 81

in “publishing materials of APN, criticizing imperialistic policies of the West, [and] exposing the activities of multinational monopolies.”<sup>438</sup> Ghanaian newspapers were also more likely to repeat accusations from anti-Soviet sources. The embassy started to produce and publish its own counter propaganda through “confidential connections” in a few Ghanaian newspapers. But, the report concluded, the most effective form of propaganda would come through continuing to promote the Moscow Olympics in a positive way. Newspapers remained interesting in publishing news about the Olympics even with growing hostility towards the USSR in other spheres. These articles generated excitement about the Games and a modicum of goodwill towards the Soviet Union, despite the increasing amount of anti-Soviet articles published in the press.

The OrgCommittee supported bringing journalists to Moscow for special visits and training sessions since it could not rely on reports from just APN and TASS, it needed local voices to tell readers how successful the Games were going to be in order to appear authentic.<sup>439</sup> Delegations of African journalists travelled to Moscow for training courses and to examine the preparations during the years leading up to the Games. Embassies were encouraged to induce more journalists to attend if possible, so as to ensure even broader coverage of Moscow.<sup>440</sup> In 1979, Novikov spoke to Stefan Malonga, the deputy president of the Association of African Sports Journalists, about increasing the number of African journalists at the USSR’s training seminars.<sup>441</sup> Novikov wanted more African journalists at the Moscow Olympics because it would help disseminate the Soviet successes across the continent. Those brought to Moscow were

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>439</sup> Novikov, *Olympic Meridian*, 76.

<sup>440</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1258, 26.

<sup>441</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200,103.



introduced to many Soviet journalists who were to be local guides and advisors, and who would also spend their time informing the guests about the successes of the Soviet Union in every field.<sup>442</sup> But the most important aspect of the plan was getting journalists from Africa who could lend their credibility to the Moscow Olympic project. It was fine when APN and TASS told Nigerians how great the Olympics were, but to have a journalist from the *Chronicle* or *New Nigerian* do it was far more effective.

The main methods to control the narrative around Moscow would be through newspaper and magazine articles, but the OrgCommittee would also include travelling exhibitions on the Moscow Olympics, film festivals, and other cultural events to build excitement for the 1980 Olympics and present Moscow and the Soviet Union as worthy Olympic hosts. The OrgCommittee had started promoting the Moscow Olympics with its “Sport and Culture in the Service of Humanity” exhibition at the Montreal Exposition, which ran concurrently with the Olympics in 1976. Over the next four years the OrgCommittee sent “collective visits of exhibitions” to Soviet embassies across “leading countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.”<sup>443</sup> These included the “Olympic Lens” photographic collections and poster exhibits.<sup>444</sup> The popular “Olympic Moscow” and “Moscow - Capital of the Olympics” exhibitions were set up on 450 occasions in 70 countries with around 6 million visitors. Soviet film festivals presented both sports documentaries and popular movies in many countries around the world. These were consistent and targeted efforts to build support for the Moscow Olympics.

The OrgCommittee valued the exhibits above many other forms of propaganda because they “provided an opportunity to talk about the peace loving foreign politics of the CPSU and the

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<sup>442</sup> Hazan, *Olympic Sport*, 187.

<sup>443</sup> “Document 32,” *Five Rings*, 121.

<sup>444</sup> Novikov, *Olympic Meridian*, 76.

Soviet state, about the benefits of socialist-political content..., about Soviet democracy and Soviet lifestyle.”<sup>445</sup> The exhibits presented information about Olympic construction and sports. Soviet athletes or members of the OrgCommittee often accompanied these exhibits to provide additional information and build local connections. But aside from presenting a controlled image of the Soviet Union to visitors, officials examined the audience’s reviews, newspaper reports, and attendance figures to “judge...the effectiveness of the informational propaganda impact.” The OrgCommittee used these responses to understand what audiences enjoyed and were less impressed by; then it could adjust the exhibits to target its propaganda more effectively. Reviews from exhibits in 1977, which were largely hosted in Western countries, convinced OrgCommittee members that the current versions should be “continued on a wider scale and at a higher organizational and artistic level.”

From 1978 onwards, the exhibits proved useful in popularizing the Moscow Olympics across Africa. Algeria was a center of Olympic exhibitions through 1978-1979 because of the III All-Africa Games in Algiers and the cooperation agreement signed by the two countries. The OrgCommittee also considered Algerian support for the Olympic project as vital for Moscow’s success within Africa. The Soviet embassy in Algiers reported that “considering the important role of Algeria in the sporting movement of non-aligned countries...it would be desirable to expand the direction of the Embassy exhibitions and illustrated materials about the sporting movement in the USSR and the preparations for the Olympic Games in Moscow.”<sup>446</sup> The exhibit “Moscow - Capital of the Olympics” went on display in Algiers before the All-Africa Games and

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<sup>445</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.75, D.318, 1.

<sup>446</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1259, 17.

for its duration. The exhibit was popular among Algerians and visitors to the Games; it followed this success by touring the cities of Oran, Constantine, Batna, Tlemsen, and Said.<sup>447</sup>

As exhibits toured sub-Saharan Africa, embassy officials continued to be pleased at how local populations received the various exhibits. In Nairobi, the Soviet embassy noted that visitors responded positively to the Olympic exhibit despite the country's generally pro-British, anti-Soviet sentiments.<sup>448</sup> The embassy in Accra wrote to the OrgCommittee that the photo exhibition "I am a citizen of the Soviet Union" was a great success.<sup>449</sup> Visitors praised the event, with one guest claiming to have been "overwhelmed by the achievements of your peoples" and another calling it as "Good exhibition, it gave a full view of the Soviet Union." Many exhibits were on broad topics but generally included pro-Olympic themes to foster excitement for the upcoming event. The exhibits also provided an opportunity for Soviet officials to impress and schmooze local politicians, thus tying in with efforts to build personal relationships through diplomacy. In Nigeria, the Soviet embassy managed to get the Olympic exhibition into the newly built National Theatre in Lagos and persuaded Iro Abubakar Danmusa, minister in charge of sport, to open the event.<sup>450</sup>

The Soviet Union launched a massive propaganda campaign in the build-up to the Moscow Olympic Games. The OrgCommittee sought to correct the mistakes of Montreal and try to control the press coverage of the Moscow Olympic Games, even during its build-up. Articles and exhibits created an image of a well-organised Moscow, a city of sport, and one where guests would be welcomed with a festival atmosphere. By presenting the Games this way, the

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<sup>447</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>448</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op.35, D.865, 14.

<sup>449</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.1258, 20.

<sup>450</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op.35, D.1066, 42-3.

OrgCommittee hoped to maintain excitement for the Olympics and increase the investment that ordinary sports fans had in their success. In 1978, the OrgCommittee recalibrated their effort slightly to include counter propaganda to Western accusations about the USSR's poor human rights record. But this Western campaign was ineffective. And the Soviet Union's own research suggested that staying positive was a better counter to these accusations than going negative. Because of this, as the years counted down to Moscow, anticipation grew for the great sporting event that the Soviet Union promised in its articles, exhibits, and films.

### **Soviet Success? SCSA Yaoundé Meeting, December 1979**

Soviet efforts to prevent a second African boycott reached a critical moment in December 1979. The issue of South Africa reared its head again. Both Britain and France had invited South African rugby teams to tour their countries in 1979. The French government responded to international pressure and stopped the tour. But Britain first allowed a multi-racial team to tour in October 1979, and then rugby authorities proposed sending the British Lions rugby side to South Africa in 1980, a month before the start of the Moscow Olympics. Britain's renewed contacts with South Africa mirrored New Zealand's actions during 1976, which resulted in the Montreal boycott. During the second-half of 1979, politicians and sports officials questioned whether there would be a second African boycott of the Olympics. The SCSA would meet at its headquarters in Yaoundé in December to decide on how to respond to Britain's provocative move.

The OrgCommittee had worried about this scenario since Montreal. It had warned in its reports to the Central Committee back in August 1976 that the biggest threat to the Moscow Olympics would be some act of provocation aimed at instigating an African boycott. The OrgCommittee had spent the following three years building personal relationships with African

leaders, providing coaching and sports equipment to various countries, and demonstrating that it valued African participation in the Olympic Games. It wanted as many large, African delegations as possible in Moscow, but all that effort was threatened by the proposed British Lions tour of South Africa.

The SCSA spent the months leading up to the Olympics mulling its options. It suggested that the IOC or the OrgCommittee should disinvite Britain from Moscow if it sent a team to South Africa right before the Olympics. The situation was almost the same as with New Zealand in 1976 and the SCSA wondered if the IOC and Soviets had learned the lesson from Montreal. But the Soviets worked on scaling down the tension. In August, Novikov spoke with Ordia about the tour and asked the SCSA President to tone down his rhetoric against Britain. Novikov explained again that the USSR was an ally to the African cause, but this was deliberate provocation by the West to ruin Moscow. Ordia promised that he would “leave the commentaries, sit with a closed mouth, to not give any reason to distort my words and create problems around Olympiad-80...I understand that it is better for me now to remain silent. We will continue the battle after the Moscow Olympics.”<sup>451</sup> Ordia had been the driving force behind the Montreal boycott, so his assent on this issue was important to the OrgCommittee and demonstrated their success cultivating his trust since 1976.

The SCSA meeting in December was quite orderly. Delegates’ attentions were split between the two important issues: the SCSA election and the decision on Britain’s sporting contacts. The OrgCommittee sent a delegation to Yaoundé to once again demonstrate how seriously it valued African participation. While there, the OrgCommittee signed cooperation

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<sup>451</sup> RGANI F.5, Op.76, D.200, 58-61.

agreements with several countries to assist in their participation for Moscow.<sup>452</sup> Novikov gave a presentation to the General Assembly with updates on Moscow's preparations. When he announced that the OrgCommittee would increase the amount of subsidized and free travel and accommodation for the Olympics and then once again declared the USSR's opposition to apartheid in all spheres, the SCSA delegates cheered. African officials praised the Soviets for their continued support "in the struggle against racism and apartheid in sport" and thanked the OrgCommittee for its participation in the meeting, which showed "the sincere desire of the Soviet side to provide the most favorable conditions for the participation of African sportsmen in the 1980 Olympics."<sup>453</sup>

The presentation was the easiest part of the OrgCommittee's work in Yaoundé. Behind the scenes, the Soviet delegates worked to undermine any effort to boycott the Olympics. Novikov and other Soviet officials spoke to national leaders, such as Cameroon's Prime Minister Ahidjo, the OAU's representatives at the meeting, Ordia and Ganga, and individual delegations. Despite the Soviet fear about a boycott over Britain's South Africa contacts, Novikov and his fellow Soviet officials found little support for another African withdrawal. Even when speaking to the Nigerian and Zambian delegations, both of whom had "persistently threatened to boycott the Moscow Games in the case of continued sporting contacts between western countries and South Africa," they told the OrgCommittee of their sincere "desire to participate in Olympiad-80."<sup>454</sup> For Novikov, this was frustrating. In private Zambia and Nigeria wanted to go to Moscow, but in public they continually raised the prospect of a Moscow boycott. However,

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>453</sup> "Document 92," *Five Rings*, 255.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid, 256.

before the General Assembly debate on the issue, the OrgCommittee delegation felt that its Olympics were secure.

When the SCSA delegates gathered to discuss Britain, the Nigerian delegation suddenly proposed the “possibility of a boycott of the Olympic Games, in the case of extreme measures in the struggle against racism and apartheid,” such as a major international rugby tour of South Africa.<sup>455</sup> The OrgCommittee initially worried that Nigeria would rally support for its position or cause a domino effect of states determined to demonstrate their anti-apartheid credentials. But instead of a situation like 1976 in Montreal where Nigeria led the walkout, Yaoundé was analogous to the Commonwealth Games in 1978, where its rallying cry fell flat. The majority of SCSA delegates rejected Nigeria’s call. Instead, members voted for a limited resolution that attacked states “supporting sports connections with the South African regime.”<sup>456</sup> The SCSA labelled Britain’s sports connections as “provocative” and “having the purpose of sabotaging [Africa’s] whole participation in the Olympic Games.” The SCSA, therefore, called on member states to “stop...bilateral relations with any countries having sporting contact with South Africa;” a limited boycott of Britain, not a total boycott of the Olympics. This was a resolution harking back to 1974 rather than 1976. African countries were angry at Britain for its relations with South Africa, but they were hesitant to boycott another Olympics over the same issue.

With Britain put aside for the time being, the SCSA then passed a resolution in favor of the Moscow Olympics. The General Assembly declared itself “ready to promote the success of the Games of the 22nd Olympiad. Recommend all state members of the SCSA to not boycott the Olympic games in Moscow.”<sup>457</sup> The Soviet delegates were excited by this resolution. Novikov

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> RGANI F.5, Op.76, D.200, 85.

hailed the decision “as having in principle an important meaning...this resolution testifies that at this stage [we] basically succeeded in exposing the provocative essence of South Africa’s expanding sports contacts with individual western countries.”<sup>458</sup> The SCSA had largely agreed with the Soviet interpretation of Britain’s actions: South African contacts were designed to be a provocation to sabotage the Moscow Olympics. With the SCSA member states rejecting the boycott and committing themselves to Moscow, the OrgCommittee had helped ensure massive participation in their Olympic Games, and thus ensured that the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games would be a prestigious event with all continents present.

## **Conclusion**

The SCSA’s decision in Yaoundé alleviated Soviet fears of an African boycott of the Moscow Olympics. The OrgCommittee had worked towards this aim for the previous three years, trying to get African states to invest themselves in the Moscow Olympic project through a constant stream of propaganda, sports agreements, and meetings with officials. The Yaoundé decision to ignore the provocative British Lions tour to South Africa validated the work of the OrgCommittee during this period. Soviet efforts to win African support for the Moscow Olympic Games helped to hold the Olympic movement together after it appeared on the verge of fracturing following Montreal. And by December 1979 it appeared that the Olympic movement was whole again, with African participation assured by an SCSA vote.

That the Olympic movement held together during the period of 1976-1979 can be partially ascribed to the work done by the Soviets. They made the SCSA and African countries feel a part of the Olympic movement and that their participation was valued. This had been a

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<sup>458</sup> “Document 92,” *Five Rings*, 256.



complaint of African leaders and commentators before and after the Moscow boycott; Africa did not feel valued or heard. The Soviets changed that after Montreal. The OrgCommittee engaged with African states, provided assistance, and listened to leaders. This brought African states back into the Olympic fold before the next Games. However, the OrgCommittee's moves can hardly be considered altruistic or for the benefit of the IOC. The OrgCommittee saw the Olympics as part of the global Cold War and a massive propaganda opportunity for the USSR. African participation was central to this project and would decide if Moscow was a soft power success or not.

The OrgCommittee's work in Africa helped to prevent a second boycott by growing the influence of the USSR, which in turn helped within the context of the global Cold War. That Africa was the main center of contention between the two superpowers and China, that it had been the center of ideological and anti-colonial struggles from the Horn to the Cape during the 1970s, meant that winning African support for the Moscow Olympic Games was the same to the USSR as winning African support within the Cold War setting. The OrgCommittee's work in promoting the USSR's version of modernity, through exhibits such as "Moscow - Capital of the Olympics" or "Olympic Lens," produced an image of Moscow as both Olympic city and as a model for other developing nations to follow. Olympic coverage in newspapers allowed for a steady stream of positive articles about the USSR and its sports ventures to appear across Africa. Sending coaches and sports teams to Africa allowed for both training to get athletes ready for Moscow and political work by trainers in developing relationships and teaching Soviet techniques abroad. As Baruch Hazan argued, "these relations served as a bridge toward developing cooperation in other areas, publicize and demonstrate various achievements of the Soviet political system (along with the Soviet successes in sport) as an example for the African

states to follow."<sup>459</sup> The OrgCommittee's project fell within the remit of winning hearts and minds, and promoting the Soviet model abroad through the guise of Olympic preparation.

However, success was fleeting. The SCSA's Yaoundé decision came on December 17. On December 24, Novikov added a supplementary note to his report on the SCSA meeting to Brezhnev. In the note, Novikov praised the OrgCommittee's work as having had a "direct impact on the adoption of a favorable resolution by the Assembly participants."<sup>460</sup> The OrgCommittee had secured thirty-nine IOC member countries for the Moscow Olympics, with an additional four members that it would try to get into the IOC in 1980. But on December 24, Brezhnev had other concerns. The first Soviet soldiers travelled to Kabul, ostensibly to protect Afghan General Secretary Hafizullah Amin. These soldiers participated in a palace coup on December 27, which preceded a full scale-invasion by the USSR. This invasion would initiate other boycotts of Moscow, one led by the USA and another by Islamic countries. At the same time Novikov celebrated his OrgCommittee's success in seeing off one boycott, the Soviet government created a pretext for another boycott, which would be more dangerous than Africa. However, the USSR had one advantage in 1980: it had been fighting a possible boycott for years, putting in the groundwork across the developing world, and was ready to fight against this new, Cold War inspired boycott because of this.

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<sup>459</sup> Hazan, "Sport as an Instrument", 266.

<sup>460</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 74

## Chapter 4 STRUGGLES IN THE SUPREME COUNCIL FOR SPORT IN AFRICA

By overseeing the withdrawal of 26 African countries plus Guyana and Iraq, the SCSA demonstrated that it had the power to disrupt the grandest of global sporting spectacles. The Montreal boycott raised questions about the legitimacy of the Olympics as the world's competition. In its aftermath, sporting and political organizations desperately investigated what had happened and wondered what the future of Africa in the IOC would be. The IOC investigated the causes of the boycott and discussed whether punishments or inducements were better to restore Olympic unity. In Moscow, the OrgCommittee put together a plan to ensure African participation in 1980 and prevent a future boycott. The Commonwealth and United Nations developed statements, declarations, and a draft convention on sports contacts with South Africa. In summary, the effects of the SCSA's walkout rippled across global sport.

The Montreal Olympic boycott, however, proved to be the height of the SCSA's power. During the period of 1976-1980, the organization suffered from internal fighting that steadily reduced its militancy on the South Africa issue. During the debates that followed Montreal, some countries and officials questioned both the legitimacy and effectiveness of the boycott. They complained about the suitability of Abraham Ordia and Jean-Claude Ganga as the SCSA's executive leadership. They vacillated over whether to punish New Zealand and the two SCSA members that refused to boycott, Ivory Coast and Senegal. These problems were partially resolved with the Commonwealth's 1977 Gleneagles Declaration on apartheid in sport, but this agreement papered over the fundamental issues within the SCSA. Divisions within the organization required both a change in leadership and a change in approach in 1979. The SCSA moderated its bullish positions against apartheid South Africa to win back the support of many

African nations. While the SCSA frightened world sport in 1976 with its bold actions in Montreal, by the end of the decade it was weakened and divided, a fact that the IOC and USSR may not have fully appreciated in their struggles to prepare for Moscow.

This chapter follows the SCSA's Icarus moment from 1976-1979. It starts with responses to the Montreal boycott and ends with Jean-Claude Ganga's election defeat to Senegal's Lamine Ba in December 1979. The first section will briefly cover the rapid growth of the SCSA as a political force in world sport from its inception in 1966 to the height of its power just a decade later. The second section will examine efforts to defend the Montreal boycott against IOC investigations and develop a narrative around the event. The third section will discuss the SCSA's conflicted response to Senegal and Ivory Coast's refusal to join the boycott. The chapter then will examine how the boycott against New Zealand continued into 1977 and, in the case of Nigeria, 1978. Finally, it will conclude with the 1979 SCSA election, the efforts of Ganga and Ordia to retain their positions, and the subsequent political changes within the organization. The conclusion will explain how these changes resulted in the SCSA begin to ease back on the politicking in 1980; a change in policy that would lead to the UN taking over much of the anti-apartheid work in the early 1980s.

The Supreme Council for Sport in Africa frequently appears in histories of the anti-apartheid boycott, the threats to the Olympic movement in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Montreal Olympic boycott. Scholars agree on its central role in mobilizing African states to demand change from international sports organizations as part of the anti-apartheid struggle in sport during the 1960s and 1970s. Scholars have also mentioned it in passing in the build-up to

the 1980 Moscow Olympics.<sup>461</sup> However, these histories focus on the effect of the SCSA as an agent of protest rather than studying the SCSA's own structures and internal struggles. What has been missing from scholarship is a detailed study of the SCSA in specific moments, such as how the organization responded to mounting pressures both within Africa and abroad, especially as it became a more powerful organization in the 1970s.

The few works that study the functioning of the SCSA are biographical or survey works that do not discuss critical moments in depth. Jean-Claude Ganga's account of the SCSA's development and its first decade provides little information on the 1976 and 1980 Moscow Olympics.<sup>462</sup> Pascal Camara's article "A Divided House: The Foundation and Evolution of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa" follows the organization from its inception in 1965 to its dissolution by the African Union in 2013 using materials from the SCSA's own archives in Cameroon.<sup>463</sup> Camara explains the organization's power structures and evolving aims over its multiple decades. But in condensing a forty-year history into twenty pages, Camara's article necessarily must skim over pivotal periods in the organization's past.

This chapter fills that gap by studying the SCSA at the peak of its power in the late 1970s. By focusing on a four-year period towards the end of the effective years of the SCSA in the anti-apartheid struggle, this chapter will show how the internal workings of the SCSA affected the larger arena of international sports. The period from 1976 to 1980 shows how the organization sought to foster pan-African unity over the issue of apartheid sports contacts. But growing fractures along cultural, linguistic, and political lines challenged this mission as SCSA

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<sup>461</sup> Parks, *The Olympic Games*; Kanin, *A Political History of the Olympic Games*; Ivey, "Double Standards," 104-121.

<sup>462</sup> Jean-Claude Ganga, *Once upon a time were the African Games* (Partridge Africa, 2016).

<sup>463</sup> Camara, "A Divided House," 490-510.

members debated the appropriate way to punish contacts with South Africa and prepare for the Moscow Olympics. A deepening schism ultimately contributed to the decline of the SCSA in this important period.

## **Growth of the SCSA**

The SCSA did not start out as a political organization. It emerged from the Permanent Committee assigned to organize the first All-Africa Games in Congo-Brazzaville. The committee was created by 21 countries in February 1964 with Andrés Hombessa elected as chair, Abraham Ordia as deputy chairman, and Jean-Claude Ganga as secretary general.<sup>464</sup> Both Hombessa and Ganga were from Congo-Brazzaville and representatives of Francophone Africa, while Ordia balanced the committee as a Nigerian representative from Anglophone Africa. After the first All-Africa Games in 1965, the committee remained intact to organize future Olympic-style competitions for African nations. The Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, officially formed in December 1966, drew representatives from 29 countries. Hombessa would now be president, Ordia and Badare Sowe from Mali would be his deputies, and Ganga would retain his position as general secretary.<sup>465</sup>

The SCSA, from its inception, was an organization divided. One split opened immediately between the Anglophone and Francophone countries, as Anglophone countries wanted to avoid scheduling conflicts between the All-Africa Games and the Commonwealth Games.<sup>466</sup> Other schisms formed regarding the mission of the SCSA. The organization

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<sup>464</sup> Camara, "A Divided House," 494.

<sup>465</sup> When the organization shifted from the Permanent Committee to the SCSA, the title of secretary general turned into general secretary. Ordia would become President in 1969.

<sup>466</sup> Camara, "A Divided House," 498.

envisioned itself as “the instrument through which Africa can forcefully make her voice heard, to express her needs and desires to the appropriate international authorities” - leaving unclear whether the body intended only to advocate for the sporting needs of African countries (funds, material, training, etc.) or to become a political actor in world sport.<sup>467</sup> The latter seems to have been more likely since the organization was seen as an OAU tool in its anti-apartheid policies, at least until the SCSA achieved nominal independence in 1977. At the first SCSA meeting, SANROC’s President Dennis Brutus and Secretary General Chris de Broglio participated, which linked the SCSA immediately to the anti-apartheid struggle. The SCSA was also from the beginning part of the UN and IOC’s struggle for the future of global sport. The Permanent Committee invited the sports attaché at UNESCO, William Renato Jones, to become a member at its inception in 1964 “to further strengthen their legitimacy” as a new organization; but when the Permanent Committee transformed itself into the SCSA it made sure to invite African IOC members as observers, placing itself firmly between these two contesting versions of sport and physical education in the postcolonial world, seeking to gain development aid from both sides through its positioning.<sup>468</sup>

The SCSA quickly made itself troublesome to the IOC through its vigorous participation in the anti-apartheid movement. The struggle against South Africa quickly became the only common denominator among the members of the newly formed SCSA. Soon after its formation, the SCSA mobilized members to protest South Africa’s invitation to compete at the 1968 Olympic Games, warning of a possible boycott if South Africa were permitted to attend. The threat drew enough support from the socialist bloc and the Global South to force the IOC

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<sup>467</sup> Camara, “A Divided House,” 500.

<sup>468</sup> Camara, “A Divided House,” 494; 496.

members to vote again and disinvite South Africa. The pressure continued into 1970, when the SCSA campaigned to have South Africa completely expelled from the Olympic movement.

Success against South Africa encouraged the SCSA to define its mission as primarily about fighting apartheid. In 1972, it forced Rhodesia out of the Munich Olympics; the SCSA followed it up by press the IOC to expel Rhodesia in 1975. The success against South Africa and Rhodesia from 1968-1975 was accompanied by efforts to punish countries that continued to play with apartheid. The SCSA implemented, albeit weakly, a continental boycott of Britain in 1974 after the British Lions rugby tour of South Africa that year. In 1975, it proposed a boycott of France because of its own South African connections. On the eve of the Montreal Olympic Games in 1976, the SCSA's leaders had become increasingly focused on the struggle against South Africa over the development of sport on the African continent.

The peak of the SCSA's influence was in 1976 with the rapidly enacted Montreal boycott. The election of New Zealand's National Party in November 1975, which promised not to block sporting competitions against South Africa, challenged the SCSA's progress. The SCSA threatened to boycott events involving New Zealand in April 1976, presaging the OAU's call to sit out the Olympic Games. The resulting withdrawal of 26 African countries from the Olympic competition was the height of the SCSA's influence. It jeopardized the Olympic movement and demonstrated the extreme consequences if western countries continued to allow apartheid South Africa to compete in international sport.

### **IOC Reactions to Montreal**

The SCSA touted the Montreal boycott as a line in the sand against sports contacts with South Africa - a line the organization would continue to enforce after the 1976 Olympic Games



had ended. “What is the good of an Olympic medal if there is not dignity for your race?” Jean-Claude Ganga told reporters following the mass walkout.<sup>469</sup> “The boycott is not only for the Olympic Games. It will go on for other international sport, particularly the Commonwealth Games until the world realises that it cannot have sport and still support South Africa.” To deliver on this promise, Ganga and his SCSA colleagues would have to rally its members to hold firm in the face of outside pressure from the IOC.

Olympics officials, shocked by the boycott, debated how to respond. Angry IOC members including Kenya’s Reginald Alexander and Canada’s Richard Pound floated suspending or expelling countries that had boycotted. Lord Killanin rejected these calls; the IOC President wanted to understand why the boycott had taken place in the interest of holding the Olympic movement together. To achieve this, on August 16 the IOC Technical Director H.R. Banks sent a circular to all the National Olympic Committees that had not participated in Montreal or had withdrawn asking “that all information relating to the causes of their withdrawal...be provided to [the IOC].”<sup>470</sup> The circular warned that political withdrawals from the Games were banned under Olympic Charter rules 3, 24, and 25, and that violating such rules could lead to the expulsion of those committees that had boycotted.

The SCSA saw the IOC’s circular as an attempt to sow dissension in its ranks through intimidation. The strength of the boycott came from its unity. In a directive sent to all SCSA member states, the organization “instructed African countries which boycotted the Montreal Olympics not to respond to a circular from the International Olympic Committee.”<sup>471</sup> The SCSA, and Tanzania’s *Daily News* journalist Tommy Sithole, believed that the IOC’s demands

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<sup>469</sup> “Africa set for new boycotts,” *Standard*, 20 July 1976, 1.

<sup>470</sup> “Letter from H.R. Banks to NOCs,” 16 August 1976, C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>471</sup> Tommy Sithole, “Africa told to ignore IOC,” *Daily News*, 8 September 1976, 8.

included “thinly veiled threats of suspension of the boycotters” and that the IOC wanted the International Sports Federations to initiate suspensions because “an IOC ‘punishment’ alone would not be felt until the 1980 Moscow Olympics.” Individual SCSA members were less resolute. If the circular had intended to shake SCSA’s members confidence in the boycott, it was working. Jim Wabua, head of SCSA’s technical department, feared the IOC’s threats would fracture the boycotting group, creating splits both in the SCSA and in the anti-apartheid struggle. Wabua asked that if members chose to respond to the circular, they “make sure that the African response to the IOC circular is standardised and that no particular member is singled out for punishment.”<sup>472</sup>

Many sports officials across Africa followed Wabua’s advice, choosing to respond to the IOC’s circular under threat of suspension but holding to the official line of the boycott outlined by the SCSA. Most letters sent back to the IOC explained the withdrawal as an expression of solidarity with black South Africans. Abraham Ordia, responding to the IOC in his position as the Nigerian Olympic Committee general secretary rather than as the SCSA President, explained in a detailed two page letter that his country objected to New Zealand’s sports contacts with South Africa and would not be compelled to compete alongside that country.<sup>473</sup> The Algerian Olympic Committee responded that it was showing solidarity with the rest of Africa while the “majority of the leaders of the Olympic movement showed their solidarity with New Zealand.”<sup>474</sup> Uganda phrased their withdrawal as part of a broader movement, saying that Lord Killanin’s response African demands in Montreal “was so unsatisfactory that the African nations found

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> “Letter from Abraham A. Ordia, Secretary-General Nigeria Olympic Committee, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director IOC, 10 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>474</sup> “Letter from M. Zerguinim President of the Algerian Olympic Committee, to IOC President, 15 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

themselves left with no alternative but to withdraw from the Games.”<sup>475</sup> The letter barely mentioned Uganda at all, choosing instead to explain its withdrawal as Africa’s struggle against New Zealand, South Africa, and those that supported apartheid sport. The Tanzanian Olympic Committee wrote a short letter back explaining that they had “pulled out...in complying with the Organization for African Unity Summit Resolution” but did not mention their support for the move, perhaps hoping to protect themselves.<sup>476</sup> The majority of African states held the line, explaining to the IOC that they had taken a stand on the issue of sports contacts with South Africa and that this was not a political issue but one centered on human rights.

However, some states wavered in their display of unity, providing other explanations for why they did not participate. The Zairean Olympic Committee clarified that their “defection” over the Montreal Olympics was “in no way due to considerations of a political nature but rather to national priority realities and needs.”<sup>477</sup> The Zairians attached a photocopy of a telegram sent to Ottawa on June 30 stating it would not participate in the upcoming games. The letter explained the funding issues in Zairean sport and made no mention of the boycott aside from the quote above, thus detaching the country from the rest of the African boycott. John Kasyoka, as head of the Kenyan National Olympic Committee, portrayed the decision to boycott as a free-for-all after Ordia left as part of the Nigerian delegation: “he asked each country to take its own decision and the meeting was resolved.”<sup>478</sup> Kasyoka said Kenya’s decision to boycott was a face

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<sup>475</sup> “Letter from Major General Fracis Nyangweso, President of the Ugandan Olympic Committee, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director IOC, 30 August 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>476</sup> “Letter from Erasto B. Zambi, Secretary of the Tanzanian Olympic Committee, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director of IOC, 13 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>477</sup> “Letter from Mutombo Kabamba, General Secretary of the Zairean Olympic Committee, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director IOC, 9 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>478</sup> “Letter from J.M. Kasyoka, Chairman of the Kenyan Olympic Committee, to H.R. Banks, Technical Director IOC, 8 September 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

saving exercise “in light of a very delicate situation facing our country at that moment following an Israeli Commando raid at Entebbe,” referencing the counter-terrorist operation to release hostages from a hijacked plane that had landed in Uganda. Kasyoka’s letter broke ranks with the SCSA line by moving away from a united position on the boycott and instead describing the boycott as a chaotic process caused by the absence of strong leadership.

Other voices within Kenya challenged the IOC’s authority to identify and punish politically motivated boycotters. Isaac Lugonzo, the Kenyan National Sports Council chairman, announced that if the IOC moved to punish any African state, then it “would be a death blow for the Olympic movement. Let them try it and they will suffer the consequences.”<sup>479</sup> The IOC’s rules were described as out of touch and that the organization was still “living, I would say, in the Victorian days.” Lugonzo demanded that the IOC recognize its rules needed updating to consider the broader “thinking of all members of their community.” While the Kenyan Olympic Committee’s response to the IOC was a lot more conciliatory than those of other countries, Kasyoka’s public message was still one of unity and opposition to the IOC’s pro-New Zealand policies.

Many leaders, though, had not been on board with the decision to boycott and were critical of events as the year progressed. IOC vice-President and Tunisian minister for sport, Mohamed Mzali, published an article in the *Olympic Review*’s September edition entitled “I am sorry about the boycott of the Montreal Olympic Games.”<sup>480</sup> Mzali reiterated his support for the struggle against apartheid but described the action taken in Montreal as “impoverished in its inspiration, rushed in its execution, and relatively ineffective.” Mzali laid the blame with the

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<sup>479</sup> Hector Wandera, “Olympic boycott? Just try it...,” *Standard*, 14 October 1976, 1

<sup>480</sup> Mohamed Mzali, “I am sorry about the boycott of the Montreal Olympic Games,” *Olympic Review*, 107-108 (September-October 1976), pp. 463-465.

OAU but “in particular the leaders of the SCSA” whose failure to decide to boycott in advance caused “so many trials for the athletes and...confusion.” The unity of the boycott, which had been so difficult to bring together in July 1976, was now being attacked from multiple different directions.

The IOC’s pressure on African states began to fracture the SCSA’s unity in sport. Ethiopia was among the countries buckling to avoid the repercussions for their future Olympic prospects. Ethiopia’s Commissar of Sports and Physical Culture sent a letter to Jean-Claude Ganga on September 29 that provided an “exhaustive examination of the situation created by the withdrawal of the African countries from the Montreal Olympic Games.”<sup>481</sup> The Ethiopian minister listed several complaints about the SCSA’s handling of the matter including the timing, organization of the boycott, and the SCSA’s lack of leadership during the boycott and immediately after. Ganga, responding in a February 1977 letter, questioned why the Ethiopian government was now complaining about policy taken in Montreal. Ethiopian officials, he wrote, “did not deem it necessary to attend the two meetings of heads of African delegations...that we convened [in Montreal].”<sup>482</sup> Ganga explained that representatives in Montreal had little time to decide what to do given “the late receipt of the resolution and...[due] to the difficulties of communication with the African countries.”

Ganga showed his frustration with Ethiopia’s sudden criticism of the SCSA’s action in Montreal. Ganga stated that if Ethiopia was the leading African nation it claimed to be, then it needed to be “ready, both on national and international levels, to sacrifice certain privileges, including the Olympic medals, in favor of the dignity of the black man, of the dignity of out

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<sup>481</sup> “Letter from Jean-Claude Ganga to Commissar of Sports and Physical Culture of Ethiopia, 10 January 1977,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD2, OSC, 1.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid, 6.

continent.”<sup>483</sup> What frustrated Ganga most was the timing of Ethiopia’s original letter to the SCSA ten days before the IOC met in Barcelona to decide about sanctions on African countries for boycotting the Montreal Olympics. “The curious coincidence left us with a bitter aftertaste, as if the Sports Commissioner of Ethiopia intended to exonerate his country from the sanctions to which Africa was exposed,” Ganga wrote. The exchange showed the cracks between SCSA leadership and member states widening.

In the end, however, the IOC resolved the question of whether to punish boycotting countries favorably at an October meeting in Barcelona. Ganga met with Lord Killanin on the sidelines of the meeting to reiterate the African position on sports contacts with South Africa and attempt to devise an amicable solution.<sup>484</sup> But while Ganga and SCSA members feared sanctions, most IOC members were afraid of splitting world sport and losing Africa. They did not want to punish the boycotters and increasingly argued that African NOCs were victims of their national governments rather than independent actors. The IOC decided that there would be no punishment for the boycotters so that the organization could move on. But it agreed that there should be future punishments for countries that boycotted for political reasons. The IOC felt that it did not need to further punish African states in part because leading African sports figures softened the tone of their remarks regarding the boycott. But the threat of IOC sanctions prior to Barcelona had exacerbated the growing disunity within the SCSA, which would continue to fester with the issue of Senegal and Ivory Coast.

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>484</sup> “Ganga calls on Killanin,” *Times of Zambia*, 16 October 1976, 8.

## Senegal and Ivory Coast

The Montreal boycott's strength came from pulling virtually the entire continent of Africa from the Olympic Games, thus removing one of the five Olympic rings and bringing into question the claim of the Olympics as a global competition. The sacrifice that the OAU, SCSA, and national politicians asked of the boycotting athletes and teams was enormous, but as the Nigerian team leader put it "if this is a price we have to pay, then we will do it."<sup>485</sup> Previous boycott threats against the 1968 and 1972 Olympic Games had also succeeded because of the unity of the whole African continent protesting the inclusion of South Africa and Rhodesia. But in 1976, this unity was broken. Both Senegal and Ivory Coast chose to compete in Montreal, even after all the other African countries had withdrawn.

Senegalese President Léopold Senghor explained his to compete in Montreal to a group of students in Dakar on July 22, stating that "we should treat the problems objectively. There is an international organization that specializes in politics. It is the United Nations...we think that at the Olympic Games, we should talk about sport."<sup>486</sup> Senegal said it was unfair to attack New Zealand when the SCSA and other countries did not boycott the United States of America and France for the same sports contacts; the only reason the SCSA felt comfortable demanding the removal of New Zealand was due to the small size of the country. "It is not just, it is not chivalrous that we do not attack the powerful, and especially, the overly powerful," Senghor explained. Lastly, he attacked the rest of the continent's political and sporting leadership when he concluded that "we are not like some people who are without culture, who confuse everything

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<sup>485</sup> "Homeward-Bound," *Standard*, 19 July 1976, 8.

<sup>486</sup> "Senghor: "Voici pourquoi nous avons décidé de rester," *Le Soleil*, 23 July 1976, 10.

and who use culture as an instrument of politics.” When the French ambassador in Abidjan spoke with Ivory Coast President Houphouët-Boigny after his country remained in Montreal, the Ivorian President said that it was hypocritical to attack New Zealand when “Africans have in no way reacted when more powerful nations exchanged athletes with South Africa.”<sup>487</sup> Both leaders spoke of their displeasure over targeting New Zealand and refused to participate in the boycott, thus spoiling the effect of a unified, pan-African protest against the IOC and apartheid sports contacts.

The refusal of Senegal and Ivory Coast to withdraw their teams from Montreal, thus breaking with their OAU and SCSA allies, frustrated sports leaders in countries that had sacrificed their participation. The feeling of betrayal was raw in the days after the boycott took shape. Mubarak Said, the Kenyan Football Federation’s vice-chairman, was quoted in newspapers across Africa complaining that both countries were “a big shame before the world. They have clearly betrayed our struggle against apartheid in sport. Their cases should be debated by the OAU and disciplinary measures instituted against them.”<sup>488</sup> The *Times of Zambia*’s columnist Ridgeway Liwena described the decision by Ivory Coast and Senegal to turn a blind eye as “highly condemnable and very un-African.”<sup>489</sup> Critics questioned their very status as African countries given their reluctance to stand with the rest of the continent in an anti-apartheid protest.

The strongest criticism of Senegal and Ivory Coast came from the Olympic Committee of Guinea, which publicly demanded that the SCSA suspend both countries from its membership

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<sup>487</sup> Telegram from M. Raphael-Leygues, Embassy of France in Cote D’Ivoire, to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 24 July 1976, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>488</sup> “Kenyan hits at boycott bursters,” *Daily News*, 27 July 1976, 8.

<sup>489</sup> Ridgeway Liwena, “I Write as I Please,” *Times of Zambia*, 30 July 1976, 12.



and prevent them from taking part in all “inter-African sports competitions.”<sup>490</sup> On July 31, a Guinean statement cited Mubarak Said’s comments about these countries bringing “disgrace to African sport” before accusing Presidents Senghor and Houphouët-Boigny of bowing to “their imperialist masters.”<sup>491</sup> Following that message, Guinean officials sent another on August 14 requesting that the SCSA convene a meeting before the end of the month to discuss Senegal and Ivory Coast’s “high treason.”<sup>492</sup> When the SCSA did not respond, the demand was reissued on August 26, asking for a “special meeting...concerning the insulting, shameful, and traitorous attitude of Ivory Coast and Senegal during the last Olympics.”<sup>493</sup> This time the OAU responded by asking that the SCSA “highly consider” a meeting to resolve this issue. In an interview in September, Ordia deflected questions, saying that while “he had received several requests to ban these two countries” he would not do so unless given a direct order by the OAU.<sup>494</sup> The situation was “very delicate” and Ordia argued that “he was convinced that Africans were above these petty squabbles which could harm African unity.” He then hypothesized that this rift had been created by “imperialist manoeuvres. They are watching us and waiting for Africans to quarrel.”

Guinea was not alone in calling for a meeting on the issue. Senegalese ministers and sports officials wanted to take the offensive against the SCSA and other African states, demanding that the whole affair be discussed at a quickly convened meeting. Senegal’s Minister for Sport, Joseph Mathiam, wished not to present Senegal “as defendants” at such a meeting, but rather to prosecute a case against the boycott. “Africa’s withdrawal has generally been seen as a

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<sup>490</sup> Toumany Sangaré, “Declaration du Comité Olympique Guinéen: A propos des Jeux Olympiques de Montréal, 31 July 1976,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

<sup>492</sup> “Letter from Toumany Sangaré to Abraham Ordia, 14 August 1976,” C-JO1-1976/033, SD1, OSC.

<sup>493</sup> “Senegal, Ivory Coast to face action,” *Standard*, 4 September 1976, n.p.

<sup>494</sup> “Ordia denies ban on Senegal, Ivory Coast,” *Standard*, 21 September 1976, 8.

sign of childishness of which we are so often accused,” Mathiam said, “It was in any case proof of disunity among Africans.”<sup>495</sup> In *Le Soleil*, journalist Serigne Aly Cissé’s criticized the African boycott, saying Senegal and Ivory Coast had “refused to blindly follow a disorderly movement dictated by overbidding and demagoguery.”<sup>496</sup> These sorts of accusations harked back to Senghor’s early criticism of the boycott, where he described African states acting like “the sheep of Panurge” and launching themselves off the boat, into the sea to drown, one after the other.<sup>497</sup>

Senegalese leaders, determined not to be made scapegoats, pressed forward with searing criticisms of Ordia and Ganga’s leadership ahead of the Montreal games. In a memorandum by Mathiam published in the Congolese sports journal *Sports Mazano*, the sports minister demanded accountability from the SCSA leadership and answers to questions, such as “Is it true that they preferred to find themselves on vacation, one in New Zealand and the other at sporting games that did not concern an African party?”<sup>498</sup> Mathiam also accused the SCSA leadership of “deceiving the good faith of our Heads of State...to use the whole of Africa for purposes that have nothing to do with the interests of Africans.” The SCSA was more interested in its own political drama than looking out for the needs of African sportsmen, Senegalese leaders argued. With these accusations, Senegal hoped to turn other African states against the SCSA. The Senegalese hoped that this argument would find fertile ground in willing listeners also angry with the direction the SCSA had taken in recent years.

The growing conflict over the issue of Senegal and Ivory Coast threatened the unity of the SCSA throughout 1976. Guinea’s call for suspension of both countries from inter-African

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<sup>495</sup> “Senegal asks for meeting,” *Standard*, 12 August 1976, 8.

<sup>496</sup> Serigne Aly Cissé, “La confusion de Montréal,” *Le Soleil*, 6 August 1976, 1.

<sup>497</sup> “Senghor: “Voici pourquoi nous avons décidé de rester,”” *Le Soleil*, 23 July 1976, 10.

<sup>498</sup> “Telex from Tshimpumpu wa Tshimpumpu to Monique Berlioux, 3 November 1976,” C-JO1-1976/032, SD2, OSC, 1.

competition raised the stakes for all SCSA member countries. Some, such as Kenya, simply buried their heads in the sand. When the Kenyan NSC met in September, participants refused to discuss Senegal and Ivory Coast.<sup>499</sup> However, some states were forced to take positions on the matter. Ghana, for instance, had held a bilateral sports competition with neighboring Ivory Coast since 1972 to bring the two nations closer together and to provide important competition for both countries' athletes.

The Ghana-Ivory Coast Games were a topic of debate in Accra with readers of the *Ghanaian Times* offering a variety of opinions on whether the Games should go ahead considering Ivory Coast's actions in Montreal and Guinea's warnings. One reader, Oheneba Charles, explained that while "Ghana as a nation has nothing against Ivory Coast" the country needed to think of its reputation "as one of the leading members of the OAU and torchbearers in the struggle against apartheid."<sup>500</sup> He warned that "the consequences may be disastrous for our clean image if we go to play sport with Ivory Coast immediately after the Montreal episode" and suggested Ghana cancel the bilateral Games rather than face a country that had shown itself to be "sworn allies of South Africa." Other *Ghanaian Times* readers, such as Kwasei Ntlameah, called for the Games to continue and said cancelling them risks "straining the existing cordial and friendly relations between our two countries with repercussions that may prove disastrous to the cause of African unity and solidarity that we all cherish so much."<sup>501</sup> Ntlameah argued that those calling for Senegal and Ivory Coast's isolation from the rest of Africa were falling for a trick by the "enemies of Africa...ever ready to capitalise on any rift that may arise between us. We

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<sup>499</sup> "Senegal, Ivory Coast to face action," *Standard*, 4 September 1976, n.p.

<sup>500</sup> Oheneba Charles, "Ghana-Ivory Coast Games Need Review (letter)," *Ghanaian Times*, 1 August 1976, 10.

<sup>501</sup> Kwasi Ntlameah, "Don't Scrap Ghana-Ivory Coast Games (letter)," *Ghanaian Times*, 14 August 1976, 15.

should not suffer then by giving them the opportunity to drive a wedge between our ranks and to destroy the united and solidarity that we have striven to establish.” In the end, the Ghanaian government decided to send its team to Abidjan and to maintain sporting contacts with Ivory Coast.

Countries such as Ghana were left to make their own decisions on continuing contacts with Ivory Coast because the SCSA appeared hesitant to deal with the problems it was facing after Montreal. Despite repeated calls from Guinea and Senegal for an extraordinary meeting of the SCSA in July, August, and September 1976, the organization would finally break its silence on Senegal and Ivory Coast in January 1977. The SCSA delayed meeting after the Montreal boycott in part because it was waiting to see whether the IOC would suspend African countries. But this did not explain why the SCSA waited an additional three months from the October Barcelona meeting to meet. Ganga’s report on his activities from October to December 1976 offers no explanation for the delay, so we can only assume the SCSA wanted a cool-off period before discussing how the boycott had fractured its membership.<sup>502</sup>

At the SCSA meeting in January 1977, moderation prevailed. The French ambassador in Yaoundé, Hubert Dubois, noted that “Algeria, Mozambique, Tanzania and Angola had called for sanctions” to be placed on both Senegal and Ivory Coast but did not wish to suspend the two countries from inter-African competition, as Guinea had suggested the previous year.<sup>503</sup> The majority of SCSA members wanted to move on and to display a united front to the rest of the world. Part of this was due to cultural splits within Africa. Dubois observed that the “moderate

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<sup>502</sup> “Report on Activities of the Secretary General, 7th General Assembly of the SCSA in Rabat (Morocco), 21-23 November 1977,” E-REO2-CSSA/011, SD1, OSC.

<sup>503</sup> Letter from Hubert Dubois, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Foreign Minister, 3 February 1977, AMAE, dossier 679.

camp” had a large number of Francophone countries that “had spoken out against all possible action.”<sup>504</sup> The moderate position was partially informed by the action of the IOC at Barcelona, with members “pointing out that it would be paradoxical for Africa to sanction two of its own while the International Olympic Committee had refrained from pronouncing against the countries who had boycotted the Montreal Games.”<sup>505</sup> Senegal and Ivory Coast were also Francophone countries, so this likely played a part, too. The SCSA leadership sought to patch relations up: they asked members to consider that there had been a “lack of consultation [on the boycott] due to extremely short deadlines” before Montreal and this had caused hesitation. This was a peace offering to Senegal and Ivory Coast. But the peaceful resolution of the SCSA’s internal squabbles may have come down to one happy coincidence, Guinea was not present. Despite Guinea’s harassment of Senegal and Ivory Coast, its delegation did not attend the meeting, leaving the SCSA with an opportunity to close the affair.

The SCSA’s determination to move on from the inter-African issues, especially when it still had the problem of the New Zealand boycott to resolve, was even supported by Guinea in the coming months. The French embassy in Conakry reported in July 1977 that there appeared to be a rebuilding of relations between Guinea’s leader, Sékou Touré, and Senegal. During a meeting of sports ministers from Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Mali and Mauritania in Conakry, President Touré spent three hours discussing policy with the group of visiting ministers. He then had “a long aside with [the minister from] Senegal” in what was, to the knowledge of the French ambassador, “the first time in more than four years that a member of

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

the Dakar government [was] officially welcomed here.”<sup>506</sup> While the visit did not signal the start of official rapprochement between the states, French ambassador André Lewin saw the meeting as a sign of improving relations. Despite the anger directed at both Ivory Coast and Senegal post-Montreal, by mid-1977 it appeared that the SCSA had overcome internal frictions in favor of constructive dialogue and unity - at least for the moment.

The aftermath of the Montreal boycott tested the unity of the SCSA. The organization’s leaders temporarily resolved tensions between member states that withdrew from the 1976 Olympics and the countries that decided to sit out the boycott, Senegal and Ivory Coast. They did so by reaffirming Senegal and Ivory Coast’s membership, rather than punishing them for splitting from the rest of the continent on the boycott. However, in the years between Montreal and the Moscow Olympic Games, Senegalese leaders would become some of the most vocal critics of Ordia and Ganga, a reflection of a deepening rift within the SCSA over the objective of the organization.

Tensions remained, particularly over Senegal’s criticisms of the SCSA’s use sport as a weapon against apartheid. Senegalese sports officials of national and international bodies used their positions to criticize Ordia, in particular. In a confrontation between Ordia and Lamine Diack, the President of the African Athletics Confederation, at the IOC’s meeting in Abidjan at the end of March 1977, Diack criticized the boycott of New Zealand by stating that countries were now understanding “the paradox that while they are trying to isolate South Africa from world sport, they are also isolating themselves.”<sup>507</sup> Diack also described Ordia not as a sports

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<sup>506</sup> Letter from André Lewin, Ambassador of France to Guinea, to Louis de Guiringaud, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 7 July 1977, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>507</sup> "Crack in Africa's boycott strategy," *Standard*, 1 April 1977, 12

official but rather “a politician... The Nigerian Government takes a line and he follows it like an arrow.”<sup>508</sup> The struggle between Diack and Ordia appeared to also represent the growing rift over the New Zealand boycott between Francophone and Anglophone Africa, with Senegalese officials often leading the charge on the matter.

In 1979, during the SCSA election the legacy of the split over Montreal between Senegal and the SCSA leadership would be on display again. Senegal proposed its own candidate, Lamine Ba, in the election for the position of general secretary against Jean-Claude Ganga, who had held the position since 1964. The struggle between Ba and Ganga would reflect the growing sentiments of many Francophone states that the SCSA needed to focus more on sports management rather than the anti-apartheid struggle. The apoliticism espoused by Senegal that had led to criticism of the country in July 1976 was now coming more into vogue for SCSA members in December 1979 due to their fatigue with the existing leadership and their focus on the anti-apartheid struggle over all else.

## **New Zealand**

A key question in the aftermath of the Montreal boycott was what it had achieved? Participating African states had hoped withdrawing from the Olympics would force the IOC to give New Zealand an ultimatum: recall its rugby team from South Africa or face ejection from the Olympics. This had not happened. The IOC instead supported New Zealand's right to compete in Montreal and New Zealand, in turn, refused to apologize for its rugby team's tour of South Africa. The failure left the backers of the boycott questioning how - and whether - they should enforce a boycott of New Zealand going forward.

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<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

The OAU's resolution in Port Louis had attacked New Zealand's sports contacts with South Africa and asked OAU member states to "vigorously" condemn any country "which co-operates and participates in any sports activity whatsoever with the racist regime in South Africa."<sup>509</sup> Specifically, the OAU wanted African states to "ban New Zealand from all participation in the 1976 Olympic Games" and to "reconsider their [own] participation" if New Zealand showed up to Montreal. But there did not appear to be a long-term plan for what should take place after Montreal. In this case, the only guidelines appeared to be those from the SCSA's meeting in Nairobi back in April: boycott competitions involving New Zealand until the country changes its policy. The SCSA leadership would argue that it needed to adhere to this policy if the sacrifice of Montreal was to be worth it.

In the aftermath of Montreal, several African governments came out in support of continuing the boycott. The two most important participants in this struggle were Tanzania and Kenya, which were strong advocates of the policy and prevented their athletes from taking part in meetings involving New Zealand. In early August, Isaac Lugonzo, chairman of Kenya's NSC explained that "Kenya has ordered all her athletes, irrespective of status or where they are based, not to compete against New Zealanders."<sup>510</sup> This ban would include "students in the United States who are on athletic scholarships...even in collegiate championships," even if it meant losing those scholarships. It remained unclear what the status would be for professionals. Kenya sought to come up with a clearer policy in the coming months, but the official position from August 10 was to continue boycotting all competitions involving New Zealand. The Tanzanian Amateur Athletics Association supported the Kenyan position and sent a letter to the

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<sup>509</sup> OAU, "Resolutions of the 27th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers," 24 June - 3 July 1976, CM/Res.473-524, AU Repository, 26.

<sup>510</sup> Joshua Okunthe, "Kenya's Stand Spelled Out," *Daily Nation*, 11 August 1976, 23.



International Amateur Athletics Federation “to ask the world body to inform organisers of the effective ban on sporting ties between Tanzania and New Zealand.”<sup>511</sup>

Tanzania and Kenya would forbid their athletes from taking part in any competition that had a single New Zealand athlete in any of the events. This severely limited the number of competitions that Kenyans and Tanzanians could participate in, but also sought to force organizers to choose between African or New Zealand participation. Athletes would only be allowed to compete after receiving assurances from the organizers that there would be no New Zealanders present, such as when Tanzania allowed runners to take part in the Emsley Carr Mile race at the British Games in August.<sup>512</sup> The organizers of the Aarhus International Athletics meet in Denmark and the Citta di Rieti in Italy both informed the Tanzanian NSC that they had not invited any New Zealand athletes to their events and so requested the presence of Filbert Bayi, the famed 1,500-meter runner.<sup>513</sup> The Tanzanian NSC was happy to let Bayi compete in this competition but he would be too injured to participate.

The boycott did not stop organizers trying to induce or trick African athletes to compete alongside New Zealanders. The Tanzanian government rejected invites from organizers in Australia and Jamaica hoping to put on the eagerly sought after Bayi-Walker match-up.<sup>514</sup> There was also a certain amount of deception involved by organizers trying to break the boycott. Teleport International, the producers of the Jamaica event, had told the Tanzanian government that since New Zealand planned to cut its sporting ties with South Africa as of September 1, 1976, there was no need to keep up the boycott. Harry Sembuche, speaking on behalf of the

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<sup>511</sup> “‘Do not bother’,” *Daily News*, 12 August 1976, 8.

<sup>512</sup> “Bayi to run in London,” *Daily News*, 20 August 1976, 10.

<sup>513</sup> “No Kiwis,” *Sunday News*, 8 August 1976, 16.

<sup>514</sup> Amos Mwakasege, “Tanzania rejects invitation,” *Daily News*, 10 September 1976, 8; “No, thank you,” *Daily News*, 18 September 1976, 8.

Tanzanian government, argued that Tanzania was still waiting for “New Zealand’s policy on sport to be made clear” and did not appreciate Telesport’s attempt “to fool us” into breaking the boycott.<sup>515</sup>

A similar example happened with French television company Stade Français that Filbert Bayi accused of trying to organize a “meet between Tanzania’s John Stephen and New Zealand runners in the marathon event with the objective of portraying Tanzania as having changed her boycott policy on New Zealand.”<sup>516</sup> The Paris event was supposed to be safe since the New Zealand team was set to compete in London at the same time, but with the Paris marathon due to take place on September 18, the New Zealand runners started to arrive from London on September 17. Stephen pulled out of the competition, though, before he could be tricked into participating alongside New Zealand runners. Bayi did, however, participate in the 800-meter race but only because all the other New Zealand athletes were still in London at the time.

Bayi was not just being paranoid: Western sports promoters had formed a united front to continue inviting New Zealanders to international events. In a *Daily Nation* interview with West German sports journalist Robert Hartmann, he explained how “the top European meet promoters have “ganged” together against the Africans” and “have agreed to keep on inviting both the Africans and New Zealanders to all big international meetings...they will not budge to the African threats.”<sup>517</sup> The knock on effect of this was that it severely limited the number of competitions that African athletes could participate in, thus reducing their profile and providing fewer opportunities to develop their skills, which “could be the end of world class performances”

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<sup>515</sup> Amos Mwakasege, “Tanzania rejects invitation,” *Daily News*, 10 September 1976, 8.

<sup>516</sup> Amos Mwakasege, “Bayi tells of France’s sinister intentions,” *Daily News*, 24 September 1976, 8.

<sup>517</sup> Philip Ndoo, “Africans take another hard punch,” *Daily Nation*, 25 August 1976, 27.

for African athletes. If organizers continued to favor New Zealand athletes, then the boycott policy would be more harmful to the development of African athletes and at the same time make little progress in stopping sports contacts with South Africa.

The problem for African countries was that neither the OAU nor the SCSA had provided clear guidance on what a continued boycott of New Zealand would entail. Kenya and Tanzania boycotted any competition involving New Zealand athletes but wanted clarity on the future of the boycott. In the immediate aftermath of Montreal, the SCSA seemed to be absent from the decision-making process. The SCSA ignored attempts by Guinea and Senegal to force the SCSA to meet; it also reneged on promises to Kenyan official John Kasyoka to meet in September and make “a decision on what action to take in the case New Zealand continues its relationship with South Africa.”<sup>518</sup> The issue remained unresolved, exasperating the boycott’s harshest critics and genuine supporters alike.

Athletes were growing frustrated by the SCSA’s lack of policy and their government’s strict positions. Kenyan middle-distance runner Mike Boit participated in a competition in Zurich in August, winning his race against the Olympic silver medalist Ivo van Damme in the 800-metres.<sup>519</sup> While this should have been a proud moment for Boit and Kenya, the situation was overshadowed by accusations that Boit had broken the boycott by taking part in a competition involving New Zealanders. Though there were no New Zealand athletes in the 800-metres, they were involved in other competitions, such as John Walker in the 1,500m. Lugonzo announced that the National Sports Council would discuss whether to punish Boit. The Kenyan NSC’s acting secretary, James Tirop, explained “the council views Boit’s participation in the Zurich

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<sup>518</sup> “Ordia promises action meeting to discuss stand on N. Zealand,” *Standard*, 9 September 1976, 8.

<sup>519</sup> “Bayi to run in London,” *Daily News*, 20 August 1976, 10.

event very seriously, as we had advised him to refrain from taking part in any competitions with New Zealanders until further notice.”<sup>520</sup> But Boit had not run against New Zealanders, just in a set of competitions involving New Zealand athletes. The line remained strict.

Anglophone countries grew increasingly frustrated as 1976 ended because they wanted clarity to plan for the 1978 Commonwealth Games. Some officials hinted about their displeasure over the boycott. Lugonzo called on the SCSA to discuss the issue well in advance since “one can assume certain nations were not happy the way the boycott of the Olympic Games was handled.”<sup>521</sup> However, there were many within the SCSA who wanted to boycott the Commonwealth Games since New Zealand’s policies appeared not to have changed. Nigeria, seeking to solidify its status as the primary anti-apartheid power on the continent, led this push. Minister for External Affairs Joseph Garba announced on a visit to Ottawa in November 1976 that his country would boycott the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton “if any Commonwealth country participates in sporting events with Apartheid South Africa.”<sup>522</sup> Garba stated that “every government should be sensitive to the feelings of Africa concerning sporting links with racist South Africa” and that he expected support from all African and Asian Commonwealth members in this struggle.<sup>523</sup>

In a communiqué issued before Ordia travelled to London for a meeting of the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) in November 1976, the SCSA restated that its position on a boycott would “only change when the Wellington Government prohibited any sporting ties with racist South Africa.”<sup>524</sup> At the meeting, Ordia again demanded that the New Zealand

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<sup>520</sup> “Boit faces action,” *Daily News*, 20 August 1976, 10.

<sup>521</sup> “KNSC stays tight-lipped on proposals over N.Z.,” *Daily Nation*, 2 September 1976, 23.

<sup>522</sup> “Nigeria to lead offensive against SA friends,” *Daily News*, 11 November 1976, 8.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid.

<sup>524</sup> “NZ warned: Africa will not change unless,” *Daily News*, 15 November 1976, 8.

government announce a policy change before the end of the year; if not, then Ordia promised that “no African athletes will compete” in Edmonton.<sup>525</sup> After discussions with the leadership of the CGF, Ordia described the chances of African participation as “very bleak.” “I have done my best,” he reported, “but the leaders of the Federation don’t seem interested” in getting New Zealand to change its policies. Matters were further inflamed when CGF vice-President Bill Young commented that “Africans were not missed in Montreal and would not be missed in Edmonton,” since, after all, “eleven White nations founded the Games 45 years ago, and they will compete in Edmonton.” Given the choice between risking an African boycott of the Commonwealth Games and disinviting New Zealand, the CGF made clear it would choose the former.

Ordia travelled to London threatening a boycott of the Commonwealth Games, but his support base for this was shrinking. Kenya stepped out against the prospect of boycotting the Commonwealth Games. Lugonzo had already dropped a hint in September that Kenyan officials were not happy with how things in Montreal had gone. Later, in December, the Kenyan NSC announced it was “against taking part in any African boycott of the 1978 Commonwealth Games” and was “unanimous in agreeing that there was no purpose in boycotting the Commonwealth Games.”<sup>526</sup> The Kenyan NSC said that it would “go it alone” and would not necessarily follow the SCSA’s decision when deciding whether to boycott Edmonton. Kenya would continue to adhere to the present New Zealand boycott, but it refused to commit to any joint African action in the future. This weakened the SCSA’s position. Kenyan comments

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<sup>525</sup> “Whites won’t miss Blacks in Edmonton,” *Daily Nation*, 19 November 1976, 26.

<sup>526</sup> “Kenya Won’t Support Boycott,” *Times of Zambia*, 6 December 1976, 8.

showed growing tiredness with the boycott tactic and that the SCSA was having a hard time holding Africa together.

During November, the New Zealand government attempted to resolve the situation diplomatically. Brian Talboys, New Zealand's Foreign Minister, travelled to Kenya and Tanzania to discuss the boycott. While in Nairobi, Talboys told reporters that "he had been assured by the manager of the rugby team that it would be the last time the team competed with South Africans" and that "following the Soweto riots and the boycott by African countries of the Olympic Games...there has been a great change in public opinion in New Zealand."<sup>527</sup> In Dar es Salaam, Talboys gave a speech at a dinner hosted by his Tanzanian counterpart, Ibrahim Kaduma, in which he described racial discrimination and apartheid as "not only wrong" but also an "abhorrent system [that] must go."<sup>528</sup> But Talboys did not promise that New Zealanders would no longer compete against South Africans. Instead, he restated that New Zealand athletes had "the right to compete with opponents of their choice" and nonetheless hoped African leaders "can see our point of view and we can avert further boycotts."<sup>529</sup>

Talboy's charm offensive persuaded no one, not even Kenyans who were boycott fatigued. The *Daily Nation* editorial following Talboys' departure summed up the feeling of his trip succinctly: "Mere expressions by Mr. Talboys or any other Minister in the New Zealand government of the abhorrence they feel for South Africa's racial system of rule is not going to resolve matters. Nor can these things be left to the discretion of [New Zealand] sports administrators alone; in any event, some of them leave much to be desired in their policies."<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> "New Zealand Team 'Won't Return to South Africa,'" *Daily Nation*, 8 November 1976, n.p.

<sup>528</sup> "NZ warned: Africa will not change unless," *Daily News*, 15 November 1976, 8.

<sup>529</sup> "Kiwi Minister insists: Govt can't interfere," *Daily News*, 8 November 1976, 8.

<sup>530</sup> Editorial, "Think again, Mr. Talboys," *Daily Nation*, 20 November 1976, 6.

Upon Talboys' return to New Zealand, he asked sports bodies to consider the international ramifications of sports contacts with South Africa but did not tell those organizations to halt contacts. From this, Ordia inferred that Talboys "spoke with two voices," one for Africa and one at home.<sup>531</sup> As New Zealand historian Malcolm Templeton has put it, Ordia was "unfair to Talboys...[but] it was becoming increasingly clear that New Zealand was speaking with two voices" between Talboys' promises to African states and Muldoon's continued support for sports contacts.

While Ordia accused New Zealand of speaking with two voices, the SCSA had the same problem. Ordia and Ganga presented divergent policies at the SCSA's meeting in January 1977. The meeting was to decide on "the place of African sport in the fight against apartheid" and to "calm the turmoil within the Council."<sup>532</sup> The French ambassador to Cameroon reported back to Paris on the events at the meeting. The opening speeches encouraged internal reconciliation and "minimized the differences in order to highlight the positive aspects of the Council's decision." The Cameroonian Minister of Youth and Sport, Tonye Mbog, spoke on how "despite the difference that had emerged, Africa, by preserving the dignity of the black man, emerged from the ordeal stronger." He concluded with a call for unity to preserve these gains. The OAU's representative at the meeting, Mr. Nzomwita, sought to explain the reasoning behind the OAU's decision in Mauritius before "attacking apartheid, this attack taking a racist tone against the white man." Dubois noted "it is significant, in this regard, that the local press did not report these excessive remarks." Ordia finished off the speeches calling for unity among the member states.

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<sup>531</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*, 138.

<sup>532</sup> Letter from Hubert Dubois, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Foreign Minister, 3 February 1977, AMAE, dossier 679.

These calls for unity, though, floundered over the New Zealand issue. Ordia remained determined to pressure the New Zealand government to block sports contacts with South Africa. It was fine for Talboys to make statements saying that New Zealand's position had changed, but without proof it would be reckless to call off the boycott. Ganga took the opposite position. He presented a case for ending the boycott based on the combination of Talboys' statements in November and a letter from Muldoon in December, both of which had promised to end sports contacts with South Africa.

The SCSA appeared to be moving towards Ganga's position: a desire to end the boycott was joined by a willingness to believe the New Zealand government had changed its position. But during the SCSA meeting, Ordia sent a telegram to Muldoon asking for clarification on the Prime Minister's original letter; Ordia wanted assurances Muldoon would ban racially selected teams from entering New Zealand or at least the government's promise to "actively discourage" their entry.<sup>533</sup> Muldoon only promised to reiterate his government's anti-apartheid position to sports bodies. Just as the SCSA was considering reducing the boycott to focus on rugby contacts with New Zealand, Muldoon publicly reiterated his position of non-interference in sport. He would later claim that the SCSA had misunderstood "a paragraph in the letter" and that his position had been consistent throughout.<sup>534</sup>

The clarification of Muldoon's position swung the vote back towards Ordia's position in favor of maintaining the boycott. Kenyan SCSA member John Kasyoka explained that "if he [Muldoon] had not done this, he would have succeeded in convincing us to reduce our boycott to only rugby players from his country," as had been the case with Britain in 1974.<sup>535</sup> Though

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<sup>533</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*, 142.

<sup>534</sup> Hector Wandera, "Summit hopes of avoiding Games boycott," *Standard*, 19 April 1977, 15.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.



members remained split on the issue, the SCSA recommended the OAU maintain the boycott until New Zealand committed to end sports contacts with South Africa. Dubois noted at the meeting that “unanimity was far from being reached in favor of maintaining the decision [to boycott New Zealand] taken a year earlier.”<sup>536</sup> The OAU would accept the SCSA’s recommendation to continue the boycott at its own meeting in Togo in February.<sup>537</sup> The OAU resolution reiterated the boycott stance and asked all members “to refrain from participating in all sporting events taking place in 1977 and 1978 in which New Zealand or any other country maintaining sporting links with South Africa would participate,” thus threatening the Edmonton Games and expanding the boycott beyond New Zealand.

The SCSA’s recommendation to the OAU was a victory for Ordia and a failure for Ganga. Ganga complained to the French ambassador about “Nigeria’s maneuvers” to take control of the apartheid issue and accused the Nigerians of letting themselves be “manipulated by the opposition in New Zealand” for their own political gain.<sup>538</sup> Dubois subsequently reported to the French foreign minister that while the SCSA’s decision to continue to boycott might seem to signal “the general satisfaction of a rediscovered unity” on this issue, there was reason to question whether “this unity does not constitute a facade.”<sup>539</sup> Fundamental issues remained unresolved, as did the lingering discontent over Montreal and the prospect of an Edmonton boycott.

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<sup>536</sup> Letter from Hubert Dubois, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Foreign Minister, 15 March 1977, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>537</sup> OAU, “Resolutions of the Twenty-Eighth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers, Lome, Togo, 21-28 February 1977,” CM/Res. 526 (XXVII), AU Repository.

<sup>538</sup> Letter from Hubert Dubois, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Foreign Minister, 15 March 1977, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>539</sup> Letter from Hubert Dubois, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Foreign Minister, 3 February 1977, AMAE, dossier 679.

The New Zealand boycott, though still in place after the January meeting, became a source of growing resentment within African sporting circles. During the IOC's meeting in Abidjan in April, Abraham Ordia and Lamine Diack, the president of the African Athletics Confederation, clashed over African participation in the first Track and Field World Cup in Dusseldorf set for September. Ordia argued that no SCSA member state should attend, but Diack insisted that the continent "will have a team there" even if Ethiopia and Nigeria, which had the strongest track and field athletes, decided to sit out the event.<sup>540</sup> Diack argued athletes and countries were tired of the boycott. Several African delegations agreed with Diack but would only speak to journalists "privately" for fear of being seen as anti-boycott and therefore anti-African or pro-apartheid. These delegations "pointed out the paradox that while they are trying to isolate South Africa from world sport, they are also isolating themselves." Ganga also wanted a compromise to get African athletes into the World Cup. Ordia, however, maintained that "the boycott against New Zealand is stronger than before and it will apply at both the World Cup in Dusseldorf and at the Commonwealth Games." The New Zealand boycott was becoming an SCSA power struggle. Ganga had challenged Ordia's position in January. Diack followed up with his own challenge in April. Ordia understood that this was a challenge to both his policy and his role as president, stating that "Mr. Diack says there will be an African team at the World Cup. I say there will not. We will see when the time comes who makes the decisions."

While SCSA leaders struggled in public, African NOC delegations were "careful to show complete unity" in policies affecting New Zealand and sports contacts with South Africa.<sup>541</sup> The Nigerian Olympic Committee acted as the pro-boycott bloc's standard bearer. It proposed

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<sup>540</sup> "Crack in Africa's boycott strategy!" *Standard*, 1 April 1977, 12.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*

changing Rules 3 and 25 of the Olympic Charter to force the IOC to expand its anti-apartheid campaign. The Nigerian delegation sought to insert the word “colour” into Rule 3, which forbade discrimination “against any country or person on grounds of race, religion or politics.”<sup>542</sup> The Nigerians proposed that while “some delegates would argue that race and colour are the same thing,” it was necessary to close a potential loophole allowing racial discrimination under the guide of “a colour bar or colour discrimination.”

Nigerian delegates also hoped to revise Rule 25 to favor the anti-apartheid cause. Rule 25 stated that NOCs not following Olympic anti-discrimination rules should be expelled; Nigeria suggested language barring National Olympic Committees from “maintain[ing] sporting links” with countries already expelled from the IOC.<sup>543</sup> While South Africa and Rhodesia already were unable to take part in Olympic or Olympic-related competitions, Nigeria’s proposed new rule would seemingly force NOCs to cut all contacts with the two expelled countries in Olympic-style sports. The General Assembly of NOCs accepted the proposal with 35 in favor, 19 against. Forty-nine countries abstained, citing a lack of clarity about how the rule would be implemented. Lastly, the African countries proposed a “motion to ask the International Olympic Committee to ban all countries which keep sports links with New Zealand.”<sup>544</sup> In all cases, the African bloc presented a unified front, despite the internal struggles over the direction of the anti-apartheid boycott.

Some countries remained committed to boycotting competitions involving New Zealand even at great cost. Zambia ordered its team withdraw from the World Badminton Championship

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<sup>542</sup> “Minutes of the Meetings of the I.O.C. Executive Board with the National Olympic Committees,” Abidjan, 31 March to 1 April 1977, CIO - Commission Executive, OSC, 50.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>544</sup> “Crack in Africa’s boycott strategy!” *Standard*, 1 April 1977, 12.

in early May 1977, after discovering that a single New Zealand badminton player planned to participate.<sup>545</sup> Zambia's Director of Sport blamed the incident on the Zambia Badminton Association, which he said "never informed the Government about the countries taking part in the tournament."<sup>546</sup> The *Times of Zambia* believed that keeping up the pressure on New Zealand was vital even if it meant "plunging all the resources, time and energy put into preparing the seven-man team to waste into the Baltic sea."<sup>547</sup> Zambia needed to send a signal to the international community that Africa still wanted to punish New Zealand, the "naughty rat with a stinky smell."

Tensions began to grow between those countries that continued to make sacrifices, such as Zambia, and those that were beginning to flout the boycott. In April 1977, both Kenya and Nigeria adhered to the standing boycott resolutions by pulling their athletes from the World Table Tennis Games in Birmingham because New Zealand would also be participating. The Kenyan team felt particularly frustrated since it had been "training for several months...[and] some of the players had already gone ahead with plans for air tickets."<sup>548</sup> However, Egyptian officials representing the African Table Tennis Federation (ATTF) travelled to Britain for the competition. Sunder Bhandari, the Kenyan Table Tennis Association's secretary, responded angrily to news of the Egyptian officials' participation. "Are there two sets of regulations?" he complained, "One for the Arab members of the A.T.T.F. and another for the Black African member?"<sup>549</sup> For Bhandari, the decision by the ATTF to send members suggested a lack of solidarity among different blocs within Africa. The boycott "does not seem to interest the Arab

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<sup>545</sup> "Zambia ordered to pull out," *Times of Zambia*, 4 May 1977, 8.

<sup>546</sup> "Now Zambia Backs Out," *Standard*, 6 May 1977, 34.

<sup>547</sup> Sam Sikazwe, "Sportstalk," *Times of Zambia*, 6 May 1977, 8.

<sup>548</sup> "Kenya pulls out of world table tennis tourney," *Standard*, 10 March 1977, 8.

<sup>549</sup> "Bhandari hits out at Egypt," *Standard*, 6 April 1977, 39

block or for that matter Franco-phone African countries,” he said. Rather, “it is the Anglo-phone countries that have been doing most of the boycotting.” Bhandari’s concerns echoed frustrations dating back to at least 1974, when Anglophone African countries had participated in a ban on contacts with British teams and Francophone countries had hesitated. The New Zealand boycott raised frustrations and appeared to exacerbate the existing cultural divides within the African bloc. But this also showed how the New Zealand boycott was an Anglophone African issue and not a continental one, which increasingly would lead to a Commonwealth solution to the problem and not an OAU or SCSA one.

### **Gleneagles Declaration**

In the aftermath of the SCSA and OAU’s meetings in early 1977 and the decision to continue the boycott of New Zealand, the Commonwealth sought to arrange a solution during its meeting in Britain in June. The negotiations at the Gleneagles estate in Scotland sought to find language that would be acceptable to most African countries and New Zealand. The Gleneagles Declaration, which called on member governments to “combat the evil of apartheid by withholding any form of support for, and by taking every practical step to discourage contact or competition by their nationals with sporting organizations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa,” appeared to do enough to win support from many countries in Africa.<sup>550</sup> Kenyan vice-President Daniel Arap Moi told his foreign minister that the “statement fully represented Kenya’s position” with regards to South Africa.<sup>551</sup> Lugonzo was happy that the Kenyan NSC now had clarity and Isaiah Kiplagat of the Kenyan Amateur Athletic Association celebrated the

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<sup>550</sup> “The Gleneagles Declaration,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 2, no. 2 (1978): 55-56.

<sup>551</sup> Arnold Raphael, “Waiyaki welcomes ‘ban’ on sporting links,” *Standard*, 15 June 1977, 1.

decision because it allowed the organization to “go ahead with preparations for not only the Commonwealth games next year, but also for the first athletes World Cup in Dusseldorf.”<sup>552</sup>

However, even in the case of Kenya, not everyone was certain that the crisis was over. Kenyan Foreign Minister Dr. Munyua Waiyaki expressed his own concerns, describing the Gleneagles Declaration as “a step in the right direction” and that “it is all right as far as it goes. But there is over a year to go before the Edmonton Games. We have to make sure that between now and then there are no sporting contacts with South Africa.”<sup>553</sup> The Tanzanian National Sports Council echoed these thoughts and said it would take a “wait and see” attitude since “the New Zealand leader has never been reliable on the issue as he has persistently reversed statements.”<sup>554</sup> Ordia remained unconvinced. For him, the promises of Muldoon in Scotland now needed to be backed up with action. Muldoon had already promised change to the SCSA in December 1976 and then quickly recanted by January 1977. Ordia announced after returning from London to attend the OAU meeting in Gabon, that “what we now need is action, not words” before Africa could end the boycott.<sup>555</sup> At the meeting in Libreville, the OAU amended its resolution on sports contacts passed at its February meeting in Togo dropping the specific call to boycott New Zealand. Instead, the OAU now invited its member states “to refrain from participating in any sporting events in which a National Sport Association, which maintains sporting relations with South Africa, is also taking part.”<sup>556</sup> Even after Gleneagles, the boycott was still on, at least according to the OAU and Ordia.

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<sup>552</sup> Hezekiah Wepukhulu, “Decision on ‘Club’ Games welcomed: Kenya to go ahead with preparations,” *Standard*, 17 June 1977, 16.

<sup>553</sup> Arnold Raphael, “Waiyaki welcomes ‘ban’ on sporting links,” *Standard*, 15 June 1977, 1.

<sup>554</sup> “Pretoria sports link cut,” *Times of Zambia*, 15 June 1978, 1.

<sup>555</sup> “N.Z. action awaited, says Ordia,” *Standard*, 24 June 1977, 18.

<sup>556</sup> OAU, “Resolutions of the Twenty-Ninth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers, Libreville, Gabon, 23 June - 3 July 1977,” CM/Res. 585 (XXIX), AU Repository.

## Edmonton Commonwealth Games

The Gleneagles Declaration did not make the Edmonton Commonwealth Games safe from the prospect of a boycott. The SCSA still needed to decide whether it could accept the promises of Muldoon to prevent further sports contacts with South Africa. In November 1977, the SCSA gave the go ahead for member countries to attend the Commonwealth Games but with a caveat again asking that members keep an eye on attempts by countries to play with South Africa. In July 1978, the SCSA used the opportunity of its meeting at the III All-Africa Games in Algiers to restate its position that “collaboration with South Africa contributes an encouragement of the racist regime of Pretoria” and that “total isolation is the only way to bring home this message.”<sup>557</sup> But New Zealand, and other countries, continued to play sports against South Africa. The issue remained the same. The SCSA, however, appeared tired of the boycott and despite low-level, continuing apartheid sports contacts reiterated “its recommendation that the African Commonwealth countries will take part in the Commonwealth Games.”<sup>558</sup> The only country to announce before Algiers that it would not be participating in the Commonwealth Games was Idi Amin’s Uganda, and that was due to Uganda’s poor relations with Canada rather than anything to do with New Zealand.

But during the Games in Algiers, Nigeria took a dramatic step and attempted to hijack the sports meetings for its own political purposes. On July 26, the Nigerian government announced that it would boycott Edmonton, “accusing New Zealand of failure to comply with the

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<sup>557</sup> “As SCSA’s 8th Assembly Opens: Ordia Warns Collaborators with Racists,” *Nigerian Chronicle*, 15 July 1978, 14.

<sup>558</sup> “Edmonton Games,” *Nigeria Standard*, 22 July 1978, 15.

Commonwealth leaders' agreement signed in Britain last year."<sup>559</sup> The Nigerian government alleged that many New Zealanders had travelled to South Africa as individuals and then reformed themselves as teams to tour the country to get around the restrictions of the Gleneagles Declaration. The official statement concluded, "It would be illogical in the extreme, therefore, if Nigeria were now to participate in the Edmonton Games...when the reasons for its boycott of the Montreal Olympics remain unchanged." The Nigerians attempted to rally support, claiming to be leaders in the struggle against apartheid, continuing the legacy of Montreal, and promoting their sacrifice as the largest sporting power in Africa.<sup>560</sup>

Nigeria's move quickly fell flat. "We are definitely not going to do the same as Nigeria," a Ghanaian official interviewed about Nigeria's boycott said.<sup>561</sup> Sam Onger, the Kenyan Amateur Athletic Association Chairman, gave a more detailed answer, describing the Nigerian move as "unwarranted" and "too late to deserve any support."<sup>562</sup> "Nigeria can go it alone," he said. "Such action at the eleventh hour is depressing and we are not going to go with them." Further Kenyan criticism after the event focused on how the Nigerians had announced a boycott without consulting other African states or the SCSA, then expected all other states to follow at the last minute.<sup>563</sup> Adding to Onger's frustration was the report that Nigerian athletes had already been informed that their government intended to boycott the Commonwealth Games over New Zealand's sports contacts.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> "Nigeria maintains her stand," *Nigerian Standard*, 28 July 1978, b.p.

<sup>560</sup> "440 Nigerians for All Africa Games," *Daily Nation*, 11 July 1978, 15; Nigeria had sent the largest delegation to Algiers and amounted to almost 10% of the total athletes at the Games.

<sup>561</sup> "Nigeria maintains her stand," *Nigerian Standard*, 28 July 1978, b.p.

<sup>562</sup> "Ghana, Kenya won't go along with Nigeria," *Times of Zambia*, 28 July 1978, 10.

<sup>563</sup> Telegram from Yves Plattard, French Ambassador to Nigeria, to Foreign Minister, 7 August 1978, AMAE, dossier 559.

<sup>564</sup> "Ghana, Kenya won't go along with Nigeria," *Times of Zambia*, 28 July 1978, 10.



Fears among athletes rose about a future boycott. Tanzanian officials worried that “it will be the same with us...I will not be surprised. It is a matter to be decided upon by the government.”<sup>565</sup> But Nigeria’s move did not gain traction among other Commonwealth African states. Only Uganda and Nigeria would boycott Edmonton. However, Nigeria did gain support from the African National Congress of South Africa: “In our view the stand adopted by the Nigerian government is a principled one. We salute the government and people of Nigeria for act of solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa.”<sup>566</sup> The ANC would go on to state their dismay at Kenya and Ghana’s reactions to Nigeria’s boycott.

The Nigerian boycott in 1978 was rejected in part because many Anglophone African countries were tired of boycotting events. But a larger reason was that many countries felt that the boycott issue had become a vehicle for Nigeria’s regional political ambitions. French ambassador to Nigeria, Yves Plattard, described the Nigerian move as an attempt to “strengthen [Nigeria’s] reputation as leader of the anti-apartheid movement” through making a “spectacular gesture” that would “cost them nothing.”<sup>567</sup> The issue for Nigeria was that other African leaders saw it as just that: a gesture. Plattard wrote back to Paris a few weeks later to describe the Nigerian boycott as “a more serious failure than was apparently expected. The anti-apartheid crusade from Lagos’ initiative - it was thought here - would give it great mobilizing power.”<sup>568</sup> Instead the Nigerian government was left with “an aftertaste of bitterness,” the failed boycott

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<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> “ANC calls for more boycott of Games,” *Nigeria Standard*, 30 July 1978, 15.

<sup>567</sup> Telegram from Yves Plattard, French Ambassador to Nigeria, to Foreign Ministry, 27 July 1978, AMAE, dossier 559.

<sup>568</sup> Telegram from Yves Plattard, French Ambassador to Nigeria, to Foreign Minister, 7 August 1978, AMAE, dossier 559.

was “painful for the pride of the Nigerians.” Most importantly, other African states showed “a weariness with regard to the too often advertising nature of Lagos’ initiatives.”

The New Zealand boycott had ended in practice by 1978. Nigeria’s move was a last attempt to rally African states together using apartheid sports contacts as a reason. Since 1976, the boycott had been difficult to keep together; by 1978, there was little interest left among all African states in punishing New Zealand and, inadvertently, themselves. Sports officials were split on the moral value of the boycott against the sporting damage it caused to African athletics. Athletes, themselves, did not want to sacrifice their participation again and resented the opportunities taken from them, often at the last minute. At the same time, sports contacts between South Africa and Western nations continued but were limited rather than grand affairs in 1978. But Western countries would soon take advantage of Africa’s waning appetite for boycotts. Sports contacts with South Africa again increased in 1979 and 1980.

### **1979 SCSA Election**

The election campaign in 1979 would demonstrate that there was a strong desire for a change in direction for the organization, both in terms of leadership and in policy, that would lead to the removal of Jean-Claude Ganga and his replacement by the Senegalese sports official Lamine Ba. The elections in 1979 were of particular importance for the SCSA, the IOS, and the USSR due to another series of crises developing around South African sports contacts just a year before the Moscow Olympic Games. In the spring, rumors swirled about a possible South African rugby tour of France taking place in the fall. By the summer this tour had been a topic of contention between the French government and its rugby federation, with the SCSA and IOC involved in trying to prevent the tour from happening. The French government eventually

stepped in to remove visa-free travel for South Africans, thus enabling the government to prevent the arrival of the rugby players, but this issue was replaced by a second as a multi-racial South African Barbarians rugby team toured Britain in October. At the same time, the possibility of a British Lions tour of South Africa in 1980 was floated and a French tour was also mooted for the same year. The situation was eerily similar to that of 1974-1976 with a sudden increase in the number of rugby contacts with South Africa after a quiet period since Montreal. The SCSA election would decide what sort of policy African countries wanted the SCSA to take in the coming year.

In December 1979, the SCSA would vote on all the major executive positions, including the presidency held by Ordia since 1969 and the position of general secretary, which had been Ganga's since the group's inception in 1964. Neither had been challenged seriously for their positions in previous elections. But their growing unpopularity and general tiredness with the anti-apartheid boycotts made both leaders vulnerable to new challengers. Each leader sought to find new support networks and make promises to different blocs to preserve their positions.

In the years from Montreal to the SCSA election in December 1979, Abraham Ordia had come under significant pressure from critics challenging his behavior, his tactics in the anti-apartheid struggle, and his ability to lead and hold the SCSA together. His reputation had been damaged after Montreal with voices inside and outside of Africa criticizing his character. Philip Ndoo, the *Nation's* sports editor, had taken issue with Ordia leading Africa out of the Olympic Games due to his "personal quarrel" with Robert Muldoon, adding that the SCSA President was known for being quite "tempermental[sic]."<sup>569</sup> Juan Antonio Samaranch, the future President of the IOC, described Ordia to Soviet officials in October 1979 as "the greatest extremist in

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<sup>569</sup> Philip Ndoo, "The Missing Ring," *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1976, 11.

Africa.”<sup>570</sup> The Kenyan Olympic Committee’s vice-chairman called the SCSA’s leadership in Montreal “short of what one would expect from an organization representing the continent of Africa.”<sup>571</sup> Accusations also swirled that Ordia was a Nigerian puppet, an accusation levelled by Lamine Diack, and that he showed preference to his role as a Nigerian official rather than to the rest of Africa in his roles as SCSA President.<sup>572</sup>

However, despite these criticisms, Ordia felt pretty assured he would remain in the position of President. “I am the boss in Africa,” he purportedly told Ignati Novikov, the president of the Moscow OrgCommittee who attended the December 1979 SCSA meeting.<sup>573</sup> “Ministers come and go,” Novikov reported Ordia saying, “but Ordia remains.” Even critics agreed that Ordia would be difficult to unseat. Ethiopian officials who spoke to Novikov described Ordia as both unpopular and egoistic, but said he was unlikely to lose any election.<sup>574</sup> Congolese officials interviewed by Soviet visitors in the summer of 1979 complained about Ordia playing both sides of the UN Convention Against Apartheid in Sport, supporting a convention with and without sanctions depending on his audience, and suffering no significant ill-will for this.<sup>575</sup> Ordia entered the 1979 election from a position of strength because of a canny willingness to shift his position when politically expedient.

Ordia was an expert at playing both sides. In the months before the election, Ordia asked for the support of the USSR in his election campaign. He promised Soviet officials to “leave the commentaries, sit with a closed mouth, in order to not give any reason to distort my words and

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<sup>570</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 69-71.

<sup>571</sup> “Supreme Council Under Fire,” *Times of Zambia*, 19 December 1976, 8.

<sup>572</sup> Aly Kheury Ndaw, “La Grande Confusion,” *Le Soleil*, 22 July 1976, 7.

<sup>573</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 92-3.

<sup>574</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 96.

<sup>575</sup> “Document 84,” *Five Rings*, 238.

create problems around Olympiad-80,” adding that the anti-apartheid battle could resume after the Moscow Olympics.<sup>576</sup> When he spoke to Novikov in Yaoundé before the election, Ordia stressed again how he “highly appreciate[d] this new manifestation of solidarity from the Soviet side with the struggle of the African peoples against racism and apartheid,” referred to the Moscow Olympics as “our games” and then stated that he would never give in to “western provocation” over the issue of South Africa, thus whipping Soviet support for his position.<sup>577</sup>

After getting the USSR’s backing, Ordia shocked Soviet observers and several socialist African countries when, during his General Assembly speech, he started “obviously flirting with representatives of pro-western orientation” offering thanks to “Australia, France, Canada and also the USA for support and help to African countries” while remaining “silent on the decisive roles of the USSR and other socialist countries in the struggle against racism and apartheid in sport.”<sup>578</sup> Ordia was willing to flatter any group to win the election. OAU deputy general secretary Nuriddin Jeudy described Ordia as among the most “demagogically minded individuals” in African politics, a master of maintaining his own grasp on power.<sup>579</sup>

At the SCSA meeting, Ordia ended up defending his position quite easily. Before the meeting, it had been rumored that Tunisia’s Mohamed Mzali, the very popular IOC vice-President, would run against Ordia providing a strong Francophone challenge. Lesotho’s Minister for Information Mahmout Chehata would challenge from the Anglophone wing of the SCSA. But as Ordia whipped votes, the Tunisian campaign fell apart. According to French ambassador Robert Mazeyrac, there were issues with registering Mzali and mobilizing

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<sup>576</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 58-61.

<sup>577</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 92-3.

<sup>578</sup> “Document 92,” *Five Rings*, 255-256.

<sup>579</sup> RGANI F.5, Op.76, D.200, 75-81.

support.<sup>580</sup> Tunisia withdrew its challenge just before the election “after realizing that it had no chance of winning.” In Ordia’s favor, Nigeria and Senegal had already arranged to support one another’s candidates for the executive positions and bring loyal countries with them, to counter the possible Tunisian bid.<sup>581</sup> In the end Ordia ran against just Chehata, which the incumbent won 41 to 3.<sup>582</sup> Despite mounting frustration with his leadership, Ordia was the consummate politician and brought together Anglophone, Francophone, and socialist countries. For all the criticism of Ordia, the SCSA president was a politician capable of saying what was necessary, changing his policies, and mobilizing coalitions. However, Ordia’s campaign promises reduced his personal power. He had now committed not to boycott Moscow, despite South African provocations, and to slow down the anti-apartheid struggle for the time being in exchange for Soviet support, as well as knowing he might be joined by Senegal’s Lamine Ba, a much more apolitical administrator than Ganga.

While Ordia built a loose coalition and made deals to protect his presidency, Jean-Claude Ganga faced much stronger, more coordinated opposition organised by France and Senegal that would ultimately lead to his downfall. Ganga had been appointed secretary general in 1964 at the first meeting of the Permanent Committee, then ran unopposed as general secretary in 1971 and 1975. However, discontent with Ganga’s administration of sport and anger at the boycotts led to a push to replace him with a candidate focused more on African sports issues rather than international political grandstanding. Critics of the Montreal boycott targeted Ganga not only

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<sup>580</sup> Letter from Robert Mazeyrac, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Minister for Foreign Affairs, Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 22 December 1979, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>581</sup> APS, “La victoire du réalisme sur les considérations d'ordre politique,” *Le Soleil*, 22/23 December 1979, 12.

<sup>582</sup> Serigne Aly Cisse, “Lamine Bâ nouveau secrétaire général du CSSA,” *Le Soleil*, 18 December 1979, n.p.

because of his new vulnerability, but because the general secretary had the power to direct the operations of the SCSA while the president was largely a figurehead.

Since the Montreal boycott, Ganga had believed that his position as General Secretary was under threat from forces inside and outside of Africa. One source of his frustration was Radio France Internationale (RFI), which he had complained about undermining both his position and spreading reports of “internal difficulties” in the SCSA in 1977.<sup>583</sup> In the beginning of 1979, this pressure would increase with RFI broadcasting reports that Ganga was set to leave the SCSA and take up a position at UNESCO.<sup>584</sup> Ganga believed the reports were part of a Senegalese plot to sabotage his candidacy. In a letter to Hubert Dubois, the French ambassador in Cameroon, he reported that the SCSA had already received applications for the position of general secretary from Senegal and other French-speaking countries.<sup>585</sup> He claimed that the reports were part of a personal vendetta by an RFI employee of French Senegalese heritage and were going to harm his chances of re-election, which in turn, Ganga believed, would harm French influence on the continent..

Dubois, meanwhile, suspected his own government of planting the stories to interfere in the upcoming SCSA elections. Blindsided by Ganga’s accusations, he reported his correspondence with Ganga to Paris and asked for clarification on the French government’s position. Dubois questioned why Paris would have organised a move against Ganga through RFI and suggested the French government should consider supporting Ganga over any other candidate. Dubois first pointed out that, by shifting French support to a Senegalese candidate,

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<sup>583</sup> Telegram from Yaoundé to Paris, 5 February 1977, AMAE, dossier 493

<sup>584</sup> Letter from Dubois, French Embassy in Cameroon to Paris, Directorate of Information and the Press, 20 June 1979, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

there was no guarantee that this candidate would win. Even worse, a Senegalese candidate could end up splitting the Francophone African voting bloc, thus allowing an English-speaking candidate to take the role.<sup>586</sup> Secondly, Dubois couldn't understand what Ganga had done to warrant this change of policy. In a personal aside, Dubois noted "despite certain faults (and who doesn't have them?) Mr. Ganga seems to me the best candidate. He maintains, in fact, good relations with the French authorities...he always knew how to show moderation to us even when he had to deal with delicate issues which arouse passions in Africa (sporting relations with South Africa.)"

However, by the time Dubois was raising these issues in June, the French government had already switched its support. In April 1979, Jean-Pierre Soisson, France's minister for sport, visited Dakar to reaffirm his country's relationship with Senegal. He promised more work in the anti-apartheid field and technical assistance through the French-African sports organization, COFEJES (Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sport), including trainer and athlete exchanges in preparation for the Moscow Olympics.<sup>587</sup> After that meeting, it appeared that France had decided to support a bid by the General Secretary of COFEJES, Lamine Ba, to become the new General Secretary of SCSA over Ganga. This move would give France more leverage over the SCSA by linking its Francophone, post-colonial sports body to Africa's sports organization. Soisson had attempted to get Ganga to come to Dakar in April during his meeting with Ba to inform him of France's change in support, but Ganga had refused the invitation not understanding what was going on behind the scenes.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Djib Diedhiou, "Fin de la visite de M. Soisson: Condamnation de la discrimination raciale dans le sport," *Le Soleil*, 6 April 1979, 8.

<sup>588</sup> "Document 84," *Five Rings*, 238-240.



Ganga's struggle with the French government was an open secret across the sports world by the middle of the year. During Konstantin Andrianov's visit to the People's Republic of Congo in late July 1979, the Congolese hosts informed Andrianov of Ganga's loss of support from the French government, which seemed in part related to the SCSA's hostile reaction to South Africa's proposed rugby tour of France that year.<sup>589</sup> The problem for Ganga was that France was believed to coordinate fourteen of the twenty Francophone African votes in the SCSA. Without France, Ganga's largest supporting bloc would be gone. However, Congolese officials had a proposal for Andrianov, which was that the Soviet Union back Ganga in his election against the "reactionary...imperialist" Lamine Ba. The Soviets were alarmed to find out about France's heavy involvement in the SCSA election and saw it as France trying "to take [the SCSA] in hand;" Andrianov recommended that the Soviet embassies across Africa learn more about local attitudes to Ordia and Ganga, and then figure out how best to support their re-elections to solidify the SCSA against imperialist influence. The Soviets were very interested in supporting Ganga more than Ordia as they believed that he was the real power in the SCSA and that the General Secretary was more amenable to their causes than the President.

With the loss of French support and in search of a new bloc, Ganga shifted his position to become the "progressive" candidate, attempting to mobilize a combination of socialist and anti-Western countries. He doubled down on the struggle against South Africa and his challenges to the Global North.<sup>590</sup> Despite holding the job for a decade and a half, Ganga framed himself as the candidate of change against Lamine Ba. With a few days left before the election, Ganga formally sought Soviet help in his campaign, hoping to win over socialist African countries to his cause,

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Tony Stephen, "Lamine Bâ 30 ans au service du sport," *Le Soleil*, 10 December 1979, n.p.

and presented himself as the natural ally of those revolutionary countries against the growing conservative influence of France.<sup>591</sup> Ganga was particularly anxious for the support of Benin and Ethiopia, both of whom he would need to retain his position.

But most African countries could not conceive of Ganga as the change candidate and saw him as a French stooge. Ganga had a long relationship with the French government, had been assisted by French administrators in running the SCSA, and was rumored to be the recipient of the *Legion D'Honneur*, the highest honor the French government could present him with.<sup>592</sup> Ethiopian delegates speaking to their Soviet colleagues at the December meeting said that they didn't want to vote for either candidate: Ganga was "basically a conductor of French policies" and Ba was the "henchman of France."<sup>593</sup> Despite Ganga's supposed change of political direction and courting of the "progressive" vote, he could not escape his long history of cooperation with the French government. But in the face of French and Senegalese control of the SCSA, it appeared that many "progressive" countries would have to vote for him.

However, while French influence played on voters' minds about the future direction of the SCSA, a growing number of members were increasingly concerned about Ganga's track record of managing the group's finances, the SCSA's failed development of sport in Africa, and the legacy of the Montreal boycott. A lot of these criticisms appeared in *Le Soleil*, the national paper of Senegal, which presented Ganga as the root issue of these problems. Some writers accused Ganga of being too comfortable in his job and not interested in the actual work, and that he was only standing for re-election so that he could maintain his current, international

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<sup>591</sup> RGANI, F.5. Op.76. D.200, 102.

<sup>592</sup> T.S. [Tony Stephen], "Le. C.S.S.A. a besoin d'une nouvelle dynamique," *Le Soleil*, 3 December 1979, 9.

<sup>593</sup> RGANI F.5, Op.76, D.200, 96.

lifestyle.<sup>594</sup> During his tenure, there had been little to no progress in continental sport with “various development programs proposed by African countries...stalling.”<sup>595</sup> Senegal’s Minister for Sport Francois Bob described Ganga as “overwhelmed by the sporting situation on our continent.”<sup>596</sup> Bob presented the election as a time for change to get African sport back on track after a decade of lost opportunities.

The continent’s sporting programs had stalled in part because of the budget crisis that had developed under Ganga’s tenure. Since 1968, the SCSA had run up debts, partly due to its “disastrous management” but also due to its funding structure that relied on national governments contributing as they were able. The SCSA desperately needed reform and Ganga had done nothing about this during his tenure.<sup>597</sup> Because of these debts and the constant budget deficit, which reached up to eighty million Francs in 1979, the SCSA’s reputation was damaged and even national airlines such as Air Afrique, Cameroon Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines and Air Zaire were hesitant about taking SCSA bookings for fear of not receiving payment.<sup>598</sup> These debts and financial mismanagement were a popular reason for people to vote against Ganga and played into the hands of Lamine Ba. The Senegalese candidate was presented by his supporters as an “efficient and honest civil servant, with perfect control of his files.”<sup>599</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> T.S. [Tony Stephen], “Le. C.S.S.A. a besoin d'une nouvelle dynamique,” *Le Soleil*, 3 December 1979, 9.

<sup>595</sup> Momar Seyni Ndiaye, “Yaoundé: Les choses sérieuses commencent ce matin,” *Le Soleil*, 14 December 1979, 10.

<sup>596</sup> AFP, “Le secrétariat général est dépassé par la situation sportive de notre continent,” *Le Soleil*, 11 December 1979, n.p.

<sup>597</sup> T.S. [Tony Stephen], “Le. C.S.S.A. a besoin d'une nouvelle dynamique,” *Le Soleil*, 3 December 1979, 9.

<sup>598</sup> Serigne Aly Cisse, “Le CSSA à l'heure du choix,” *Le Soleil*, 17 December 1979, 10; T.S. [Tony Stephen], “Le. C.S.S.A. a besoin d'une nouvelle dynamique,” *Le Soleil*, 3 December 1979, 9.

<sup>599</sup> M.S. Ndiaye, “Lamine Bâ: “homme d'action et de réflexion,”” *Le Soleil*, 19 December 1979, 10.

Criticisms of mismanagement combined with anger related to the anti-apartheid boycott and the Montreal Olympic walkout. Tony Stephen for *Le Soleil* emphasized that over the last thirteen years Ganga “focused all his action on the fight against apartheid which, however noble it may be, does not constitute a goal for African sport.”<sup>600</sup> In doing so, African sport had lacked investment, not developed the required continent-wide coaching programs, and suffered the loss of international competition, especially in Montreal and in the year immediately afterwards. *Le Soleil*’s Tony Stephen also used the example of Munich to criticize Ganga’s leadership under pressure, describing the official as “more subject to the events” than in control of them. That the SCSA left the decision up to each individual government in 1976 was seen as an example of how Ganga, and Ordia, had “disappeared in Montreal” when clear leadership was direly needed to coordinate the continent.<sup>601</sup> Montreal reflected how “the cohesion which has always been the strength of African sport...[was] greatly lacking.”<sup>602</sup> Stephen did not mention that unity was more harmed by Senegal’s refusal to join the vast majority of African states in boycotting the Games. The focus on South Africa both distracted Ganga from his key purpose as General Secretary and increased divisions between members of the SCSA. Fatigue was also an issue, as countries tired of isolation from global sports events.

As the elections neared, it was not clear which candidate would win, which issues would matter to countries most, and whether the vote would split along linguistic, cultural, or political lines. Robert Mazeyrac, who had replaced Dubois as ambassador to Cameroon during 1979, predicted that the vote would hinge more upon “divisions between moderates and progressives,

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<sup>600</sup> T.S. [Tony Stephen], “Le. C.S.S.A. a besoin d'une nouvelle dynamique,” *Le Soleil*, 3 December 1979, 9.

<sup>601</sup> Tony Stephen, “Lamine Bâ 30 ans au service du sport,” *Le Soleil*, 10 December 1979, n.p.

<sup>602</sup> T.S. [Tony Stephen], “Le. C.S.S.A. a besoin d'une nouvelle dynamique,” *Le Soleil*, 3 December 1979, 9.

anglophones and francophones, Maghreb and black Africans than the technical aspects of the case.”<sup>603</sup> The vote, though, did end up focusing on the technical aspects. Ba’s presentation on how he would run the SCSA “as a technician concerned with leadership and coordination than as a dirigiste and authoritarian politician” received positive comments from members.<sup>604</sup> But most influential was the financial report presented by Togo’s Folly Ekue, who “carefully highlighted the irregularities...and revealed a deficit and unjustified expenses of nearly one hundred million CFA francs” that Ganga had attempted to hide supposedly with Kenyan help.<sup>605</sup> Lamine Diack, who had been Ganga’s ally for several years, switched sides to support his countryman Ba by ensuring that the full financial report was leaked. Ganga struggled to refute these criticisms, with the French ambassador describing “his muddled attitude, his outburst” and how “he was particularly clumsy and defended himself poorly when he was questioned for his poor financial management.” Ganga’s inability to explain these financial issues alongside Ba’s presentation as a competent administrator swung votes towards the challenger.

However, despite the financial revelations and the anger at Ganga’s job performance, the election result was very close. Ba won with 24 votes to 20.<sup>606</sup> The result of the vote appeared to be a surprise to many. When it came to which countries supported which candidate, “linguistic divisions...or ethnic divisions...did not have the importance in this affair that some expected,” according to Mazeyrac.<sup>607</sup> Instead, the race was a referendum on Ganga’s record as an

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<sup>603</sup> Telegram from Mazeyrac, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 December 1979, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>604</sup> Letter from Robert Mazeyrac, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Minister for Foreign Affairs, Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 22 December 1979, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> Serigne Aly Cisse, “Lamine Bâ nouveau secrétaire général du CSSA,” *Le Soleil*, 18 December 1979, n.p.

<sup>607</sup> Letter from Robert Mazeyrac, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Minister for Foreign Affairs, Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 22 December 1979, AMAE, dossier 679.

administrator and politician over the last thirteen years. In Mazeyrac's opinion, the victory of Ba over Ganga seemed to indicate that a slim majority of members wanted the SCSA to change direction. He postulated that Ba's ascent could return the SCSA to "its true mission and cease to be a political forum."<sup>608</sup> Similar messages came from victorious Senegalese commentators stressing that Ba's victory "a victory of realism over political considerations;" with the election over, "political differences, whether from the left, the center or the right, should not come into play" in the management of African sport.<sup>609</sup> December 1979 marked the end of Ganga's tenure in the SCSA leadership and the chance for a re-evaluation of the SCSA's policies in almost every field.<sup>610</sup>

It was not yet clear how radically the SCSA would change. Ordia was still president. Ba, who had run as a change candidate, also promised to increase pressure on South Africa and Rhodesia, auguring continuity with the past. Mazeyrac saw Ba's victory as a protest vote against Ganga, the product of an unstable alliance between moderates and progressives that had not "profoundly modified" the balance of power.<sup>611</sup> Ba could try to be "more dynamic" in his rule, Mazeyrac wrote, but on serious issues, such as the South African boycott and the UN's Convention Against Apartheid in Sport, "he will be slowed down by the divisions that will remain."

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<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> APS, "La victoire du réalisme sur les considérations d'ordre politique," *Le Soleil*, 22/23 December 1979, 12.

<sup>610</sup> Jean-Claude Ganga would fulfill several roles after he left the SCSA, including ambassador to the People's Republic of China and serving as a member of the IOC from 1986-1999. However, his prominent role in the Salt Lake City bid scandal, which involved bribes, property investments, and health treatments, led to the IOC expelling him.

<sup>611</sup> Letter from Robert Mazeyrac, Ambassador of France to Cameroon, to Minister for Foreign Affairs, Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 22 December 1979, AMAE, dossier 679.

## Conclusion

The SCSA's December 1979 election indicated a change in direction for the organization. The SCSA had been the center of political struggles over sport since the late-1960s. It had led boycott threats against the Mexico City Olympics in 1968, and the Munich Olympics in 1972 and it had orchestrated an actual boycott of the Montreal Games in 1976. Ordia and Ganga had presented the cases in the IOC for expelling South Africa in 1970 and Rhodesia in 1975. The SCSA was important in the development of the Gleneagles Declaration in 1977 and in the construction of the UN's Declaration Against Apartheid Sports Contacts that same year. The organization's impact on the sports world during this period was second to none. But its success came at a cost to the organization.

The change began with the 1976 boycott. Though the SCSA had threatened boycotts before, they had never taken place. The disappointment, anger, and confusion within the African bloc following Montreal turned the boycott weapon into a double-edged sword. On the one hand, Montreal made the SCSA an even stronger organization capable of scaring countries and sports bodies into changing policies; on the other, the SCSA was overextended, had lost much of its internal unity, and had sacrificed much of the goodwill for its struggle against apartheid outside of Africa. The organization held a united line against the IOC's threats of suspension, reintegrated Senegal and Ivory Coast back into the SCSA, and pressured New Zealand long enough to yield the Gleneagles Declaration. But every challenge weakened the SCSA.

Marc Keech has argued similarly that after Montreal, the "influence of African nations in the anti-apartheid campaign in sport declined."<sup>612</sup> Montreal instigated, according to SANROC

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<sup>612</sup> Keech, "Africa and the Struggle Against Apartheid Sport," 84.

leader Sam Ramsamy, a period of “petty bickering and personality conflicts” that affected the ability of the organization to do business. Ordia wanted a strong SCSA boycotting any country who played with South Africa; Ganga was more prone to forgiveness and wanted Africa participating in global sport. Nigeria pushed to continue the New Zealand boycott; countries like Kenya looked for ways to end it. The election campaign in December 1979 forced a much-needed change of direction. Ordia, recognizing the way the political wind was blowing, relented on his vigorous anti-apartheid boycott and sought support from both Western and Eastern powers promising to return the SCSA to a management organization over a political one. Ganga, vulnerable due to his financial mismanagement and loss of French support, lost his position to Ba. Monique Berlioux, the IOC’s Director, described Ba as “exactly the opposite of Mr. Ganga; he is a technocrat not a politician;” someone that the IOC could work with in the coming years.<sup>613</sup> The rise of Ba, combined with a chastened Ordia, signified a real shift in the SCSA’s approach to prosecuting the anti-apartheid issues in the early 1980s.

The SCSA navigated challenges ahead of the Moscow Olympics in a more hands-off manner than it had done in 1976. After the South African Barbarians team travelled to Britain in October 1979, the British Rugby Unions considered and proposed a Lions tour of South Africa for the middle of 1980. Instead of allowing this to become a second Montreal, the SCSA voted to only punish Britain and to dedicate Africa to the success of the Moscow Olympics. Participating in the Moscow Games was more important than making a point about apartheid sports contacts.

A second issue quickly arose in January 1980 with the United States’ boycott announcement of the Moscow Olympics over the invasion of Afghanistan. During an interview

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<sup>613</sup> Monique Berlioux, “Visit of Mr. Amadou Lamine Ba,” 18 April 1980, E-REO2-CSSA/002, SD2, OSC.



on Nigerian television, Ordia explained that the SCSA would not change its position on the Moscow Games. “We are preparing to go and we must go,” he said.<sup>614</sup> “We are not supporting any faction, we are not in any ideological conflict with any group.” Ordia also took aim at the proponents of the boycott, stating that Africa did not plan to join a boycott “just because America and Britain are unhappy with the Soviet Union.” But in this case, the SCSA would be unable to hold its members together on one policy. Cold War influences would begin to overpower the SCSA’s directive. Before the OAU could meet in mid-February 1980 to discuss the issue, Kenya announced on February 4 that it would boycott the Moscow Olympics, followed quickly by Liberia. In 1980, 20 African countries boycotted and 21 participated, meaning the continent was split down the middle.

The strongest indication that the SCSA had changed was in an interview Ordia gave to Kenya’s *Daily Nation*. Ordia downplayed his role in current events and the role of the SCSA in general. When asked whether he disagreed with Carter’s call for a boycott, Ordia said “I have nothing to do with Mr. Carter. Mr. Carter is the President of the United States of America. I am a simple sportsman. Who am I to agree or to disagree with Mr. Carter?”<sup>615</sup> When asked about the SCSA’s position on the boycott, Ordia responded “you are asking me a semi-political question. I have told you I am not a politician. I am a sportsman.” When asked about his view on SCSA members declaring in favor of the boycott, he claimed that “the role of the SCSA is to coordinate the sporting activities on the continent...we cannot as the SCSA say to each individual nation, you must go or you must not go (to the Olympics). That is left to the national Olympic committees of each country.” The interview was perhaps a little tongue in cheek, but Ordia had

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<sup>614</sup> “Africa has no plans to boycott Olympics,” *Standard*, 22 January 1980, 27.

<sup>615</sup> Hector Wandera, “Africa and the Moscow Games Boycott: Last Decision Up to Africa?” *Daily Nation*, 16 February 1980, 17.

never downplayed his power before this. Perhaps the situation required this, but the SCSA appeared in a weaker position in 1980 than it ever had been since its foundation over a decade earlier.

The SCSA would go from directing policy on the African continent in 1976 to seeing its previous unity ruptured by outside pressures in 1980. The African bloc, which had held together throughout the struggles of 1968, 1972, and (largely) 1976 fractured as countries forged separate paths out of Cold War necessity. Cold War concerns appeared to trump the concerns about apartheid sports contacts. African countries like Kenya, Liberia, and Ghana - which boycotted Montreal over New Zealand's apartheid sports contacts now lined up with America, which still supported South Africa. The Cold War subsumed the anti-apartheid struggle surprising many African observers.

## Chapter 5 THE UN CONVENTION AGAINST APARTHEID IN SPORT

In the aftermath of the Montreal boycott there was a renewed push to formalize the international sporting isolation of South Africa. African countries wanted to develop stronger, global legislation against South Africa to enforce its isolation and punish violators rather than relying on organizations and countries to police themselves, which had been only partially successful. The best location for these countries to develop and pass this international legislation was in the United Nations. The UN had proved a successful global forum in the past for the pursuit of anti-apartheid resolutions and the large number of developing countries in the organization made it more amenable to politics in sports than most European-designed sports bodies, such as the IOC. UN legislation also had the benefit of bypassing sports groups and dealing directly with governments, telling them what they needed to do to prevent apartheid sports contacts. From 1976 until a Convention Against Apartheid in Sport was finally passed in 1985, the UN would form an important battleground in the effort to finally seal off South Africa from world sport.

The struggle to draft the Convention over so many years came down to the fact that many African countries were unwilling to accept anything other than a strong Convention against sports contacts with South Africa. The drafts produced in the UN would call for governments to withhold funding to organizations and teams playing with South Africa, forbid visas to South African athletes, and campaign for the removal of South Africa from all international sports bodies. Most importantly, the anti-apartheid hardliners wanted a ban on contacts with athletes and teams that played with South Africa, even calling for boycotts of events that included these athletes. This sort of sanction would demand countries to boycott events over “third-party”

contacts, which would lead to more Montreal boycotts with the legal backing of the UN and likely involving more countries outside of just Africa. The push for such strong legislation, with the threat of destroying the Olympics and global sport, brought the anti-apartheid countries into conflict with the IOC and their traditional allies in the Soviet bloc. For African states, this was about protecting global sport through ensuring South Africa's complete exile. But for the Soviets and IOC, it was about avoiding a conflict that was bound to happen and keeping Moscow 1980 safe.

The chapter will first explain the UN's role in the struggle against apartheid sport before the Montreal Olympic Games. Then the chapter will examine how the UN started the process of drafting a Declaration in 1977 and the start of the Convention process in 1978. The UN's growing involvement in sport worried both the IOC and USSR. The third section will demonstrate how the IOC and USSR confronted the draft Convention and sought to both delay and weaken it to protect the Moscow Olympics from disruption. This chapter draws upon sources from the UN, the IOC and the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow. The outcome of the work done by the IOC and, primarily, the USSR meant that the UN's draft Convention did not interfere with the Moscow Olympic Games or fracture global sport over the South Africa issue.

### **Anti-Apartheid Struggle and the UN**

UN activism in the apartheid struggle developed as a response to the "international shock" of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960.<sup>616</sup> This shock, combined with growing African

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<sup>616</sup> Newell M. Stultz, "Evolution of the United Nations Anti-Apartheid Regime," *Human Rights Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1991): 4.

membership in the UN after a wave of decolonization in the late 1950s and 1960, forced the UN to become more active within the apartheid struggle. The UN appointed a Special Committee on Apartheid in 1962, which “became progressively a driving force of the global mobilisation against apartheid.”<sup>617</sup> This Special Committee would later produce its own Ad Hoc Committee Against Apartheid in Sport in 1976 that would draft the UN’s convention studied in this chapter. The Special Committee was composed primarily of countries from the developing world and the Communist bloc since western countries “refused to recognize the committee until the end of the 1970s,” and in many cases appeared to oppose its actions.<sup>618</sup> The Committee’s composition meant that its politics had a “clearly anti-colonial and anti-racial dimension” that led to both criticism of its work in the West but also allowed it to promote more radical policies aimed at combating apartheid. Anna Konieczna has argued that the establishment of the Committee in 1962 was “a founding moment in the global anti-apartheid movement” that put significant political weight behind anti-apartheid states and campaigners.<sup>619</sup>

The United Nations moved into the struggle against apartheid in sport during the late 1960s. Its first foray came with the General Assembly’s resolution on December 2, 1968, which demanded in Article 12 “all States and organisations...suspend cultural, education, sporting and other exchanges with the racist regime and with organisations or institutions in South Africa which practise apartheid.”<sup>620</sup> The General Assembly made this move in response to South

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<sup>617</sup> Anna Konieczna, “‘We the People of the United Nations’: The UN and the Global Campaigns Against Apartheid,” in *A Global History of Anti-Apartheid*, ed. Anna Konieczna and Robert Skinner (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 69.

<sup>618</sup> Konieczna, “‘We the People of the United Nations,’” 72.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Resolution 2396 (XXII), 2 December 1968. Unless stated otherwise, all UN resolutions cited in this text come from the UN’s website: General Assembly Resolutions Table website, <https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick>

Africa's invitation to the Mexico City Olympics, which instigated a threatened boycott by Global South, Scandinavian, and socialist countries. The resolution called for a general boycott of South Africa rather than a specific sports boycott, but the UN's intervention in 1968 inspired further action against South Africa in sport. Direct action protests against touring South African teams in Britain, Australia, and Scandinavia during 1969-1971 partially resulted from the new global struggle against apartheid inspired by the actions in Mexico City and the General Assembly. With the UN's backing, from 1968 the apartheid boycott would become the largest issue in global sport.

The General Assembly followed up its 1968 declaration with a new call for South Africa to be isolated in sport in 1971, a year after the IOC had expelled South Africa from its membership. The new resolution couched the sports boycott in the UN Charter and called for "individual sportsmen to refuse to participate in any sports activity in a country in which there is an official policy of racial discrimination or apartheid in the field of sports."<sup>621</sup> This was the first direct move by the UN against South Africa's participation in international sport. It appeared at the same time as South Africa's isolation was growing: the problematic tours of Britain and Australia in 1969 and 1971 bolstered the anti-apartheid struggle. The following year the New Zealand government would also stop South Africa from touring in 1973. The UN would not immediately follow up this legislation with more instructions since the battle appeared to be turning it in the anti-apartheid movement's favor. The existing legislation and boycott appeared to be working.

But with the election of the conservative Muldoon government in New Zealand in late 1975, the UN returned to passing resolutions on South African sports contacts. During the

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<sup>621</sup> UNGA, Resolution 2775 (XXVI), 29 November 1971.

election campaign, Muldoon had promised not to get involved in sport. This quickly became a gateway to South Africa-New Zealand contacts that frustrated the anti-apartheid bloc within the UN. Immediately following Muldoon's election in November 1975, the General Assembly once again called upon governments and sports groups to stop their contacts with South Africa.<sup>622</sup> This resolution had little effect on New Zealand's policies. Muldoon simply ignored the UN's requests and warnings. First New Zealand hosted the South African team at the World Softball Championships, which the UN would call on members to boycott.<sup>623</sup> Then the All-Blacks rugby team toured South Africa in June 1976. Because of New Zealand's refusal to adhere to earlier resolutions or bow to UN pressure, this inspired further action within the UN to formalize the South African sports boycott through a Declaration, then a Convention, which would force compliance from even the most hesitant of nations.

The UN had started its move towards stronger legislation before the 1976 Montreal Olympics inspired by the upcoming All-Blacks tour. Before the Havana seminar hosted by the UN's Special Committee Against Apartheid at the end of May, Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley sent a letter to the organizers suggesting the UN craft a set of rules to force South Africa out of sport for the last time. Manley's letter listed five items that he believed would help isolate South Africa including "refusal of financial assistance," preventing access to sports facilities, removing honors given to athletes and teams who later play with South Africa or Rhodesia, and "non-recognition by signatory states of international sporting bodies which do not adopt the Convention as part of their constitution."<sup>624</sup> The UN Seminar considered Manley's letter but did

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<sup>622</sup> UNGA, Resolution 3411 (XXX), 28 November 1975.

<sup>623</sup> Only Mexico and Philippines boycotted.

<sup>624</sup> Robert D. Baker, "An International Convention Against Apartheid in Sports: Its Legal Significance," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 2, no. 2 (1978): 12-13.

not have time to fully discuss it. With the New Zealand issue in the background, the Seminar endorsed Manley's proposal and recommended discussing it again when the UN met in the fall of 1976.

In the meantime, the South African issue appeared to get worse. In Montreal, African states boycotted the Olympic Games over New Zealand's rugby tour. But Montreal was also the center of anti-apartheid protests after the South African government was found to be "privately setting up an information and hospitality center in Montreal with 50 representatives of their sporting bodies" so as to "propagandize South Africa's cause."<sup>625</sup> The South African delegation ensconced itself in the basement of the Laurentian Hotel, setting up a private exhibition space for the "Association of African Travel Bureaus."<sup>626</sup> In response, UN-backed groups protested this disguised South African propaganda campaign headquarters. SANROC supporters demonstrated outside the Laurentian. The Quebec Peace Council created a "Quebec Centre against Apartheid and Racism in Sport" with the UN Special Committee's support.<sup>627</sup> The Centre hosted a "round-table discussion on apartheid and racism in sports" bringing together "officials and representatives of more than 100 countries," including Abraham Ordia, Dennis Brutus, and a UN delegation.<sup>628</sup> Montreal, for a period of two weeks, became the center of the apartheid struggle and heightened the need for a solution to the continuing South African problem in global sport.

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<sup>625</sup> George M. Houser and Raphael Gould, "A Report on the United Nations International Seminar on the Eradication of Apartheid and in Support of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa, Havana, Cuba - May, 24-28," *American Committee on Africa (ACOA)*, African Activist Archive at Michigan State University, 2, <https://africanactivist.msu.edu/record/210-849-20481/>

<sup>626</sup> Richard Cleroux, "South Africa sets up lobby against Blacks' Games stand," *The Globe and Mail*, 22 July 1976, 46.

<sup>627</sup> "UN Press Release," 2 June 1976, C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.

<sup>628</sup> Edouard Martin Sloan, "Invitation from "Conseil Québécois de la paix", C-JO1-1976/032, SD1, OSC.



The UN involved itself in Africa's boycott of Montreal, too. In the weeks leading up to Moscow, UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim had tried to cool tempers and asked Muldoon to pull New Zealand's rugby team back from South Africa.<sup>629</sup> After Muldoon refused and African states boycotted, Waldheim called on the boycotters to return: "I recognise the deep and genuine concerns felt by Africa states...At the same time, I wish to point out that the Olympic Games have become an occasion of special significance in mankind's search for brotherhood and understanding."<sup>630</sup> While Waldheim promoted reconciliation, Leslie Harriman, Chairman of the Special Committee, described the decision to boycott not as "politics" or "improper interference in sport" but rather "an inescapable duty of all those loyal to the principles of the United Nations and the Olympic movement."<sup>631</sup> Harriman also stated that had he been informed about the boycott earlier, his Committee "would have called on all Black people to withdraw from the Games," bringing the weight of the UN onto Africa's side.<sup>632</sup> The UN involved itself in the Montreal Olympics more than it had at previous events due to its growing opposition to apartheid sport.

The African boycott and anti-apartheid protests in Montreal sparked the UN into action when the 1976 session began in November. The General Assembly passed resolution 31/6F targeting Apartheid in Sport by a vote of 128 to 0 with 12 abstentions from the USA and most western countries.<sup>633</sup> The UN resolution cited the earlier efforts from 1971 and 1975 that sought, unsuccessfully, to isolate South Africa in sport. The failure of these earlier resolutions

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<sup>629</sup> "Africa set for new boycotts," *Standard*, 20 July 1976, 1.

<sup>630</sup> "Waldheim Urges Africans to Return," *New York Times*, 19 July 1976, 36.

<sup>631</sup> "Olympic Boycott Commended; No Compromise on Racism in Sports," *UN Chronicle*, August 1976, 28.

<sup>632</sup> "Africa set for new boycotts," *Standard*, 20 July 1976, 1.

<sup>633</sup> UNGA, Resolution 31/6F (XXXI), 9 November 1976.

demonstrated to UN delegations the need to develop a full convention against apartheid in sports to enforce South Africa's isolation. The new resolution urged member states to refuse funding for potential sports contacts with South Africa, refuse visas to South African teams and athletes, and to push international sports bodies to remove South Africa from their membership, just as Manley's letter had suggested back in May.<sup>634</sup>

The most important aspect of the UN's 1976 Resolution was its establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee to draft the Convention Against Apartheid in Sport, with the hope that a full Convention would be presented to the General Assembly by 1978 to take effect before the 1980 Olympic Games. The Ad Hoc Committee would contain a mixture of Socialist (including East Germany, Hungary, and Ukraine) and Global South countries. The only Western country involved was Canada since Canadian officials hoped that its participation would "result in speedy action by the committee and more firmly establish their credentials as opponents of apartheid in advance of the 1978 [Commonwealth] Games."<sup>635</sup> The UN gave this new Committee a year to develop a draft declaration targeting sports contacts to be presented at the next UN General Assembly session in 1977. This declaration would then form the core of a future Convention Against Apartheid in Sport.

1977 would see two major documents produced in the struggle to end apartheid sports contacts. In June, the Commonwealth heads of state gathered in Scotland to discuss the terms of what became the Gleneagles Declaration to save the 1978 Commonwealth Games in Edmonton. The Gleneagles Declaration was a united statement on the necessity of all Commonwealth members "to combat the evil of apartheid by withholding any form of support for, and by taking

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<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

<sup>635</sup> "Ottawa hopeful, by Games boycott still a possibility," *Globe and Mail*, 2 February 1977, S2.

every practical step to discourage contact or competition by their nationals with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa or from any other country where sports are organised on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin.”<sup>636</sup> The Gleneagles Declaration had powerful symbolism but little legal strength. Mihir Bose pointed out that “strictly speaking Gleneagles was neither an agreement nor a declaration, and nobody signed anything. It was a press statement endorsed by the Commonwealth leaders.”<sup>637</sup> Derek Catsam has similarly argued that Gleneagles was just a piece of paper - “a largely toothless agreement that relied on moral suasion” and would not stop anyone playing with South Africa.<sup>638</sup> However, there was a reason for why the Gleneagles Declaration was so limited - it was a stop-gap agreement until the UN produced a legally binding document.

Commonwealth leaders wrote into the Declaration that they awaited “the efforts of the United Nations to reach universally accepted approaches to the question of sporting contacts within the framework of that campaign.”<sup>639</sup> Many Commonwealth nations were already represented on the UN’s Ad Hoc Committee drafting a declaration as their heads of state met in Britain. In May 1977, the first version of the Ad Hoc Committee was set up: Leslie Harriman of Nigeria was appointed chairman until a suitable candidate could be found. Donald Blackman of Barbados was one of two vice-chairmen. The group’s rapporteur was Lucille Mair of Jamaica. This left the Ad Hoc Committee’s leadership with a preponderance of Commonwealth members. Even when the Committee reformed in 1978 between the Declaration and Convention negotiations, the Commonwealth remained in charge: Harriman was replaced by Sebastian Chale

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<sup>636</sup> “Gleneagles Declaration,” 55.

<sup>637</sup> Bose, *Sporting Colours*, 117.

<sup>638</sup> Derek Charles Catsam, *Flashpoint: How a Little-Known Sporting Event Fueled America’s Anti-Apartheid Movement* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), xxv.

<sup>639</sup> “Gleneagles Declaration,” 55.

of Tanzania, the two vice-chairman positions were given to Nepal and India, and Stafford Neil from Jamaica replaced his compatriot Mair. Commonwealth countries guided the UN's anti-apartheid effort in sport in its early stage, possibly due to the consistent anti-apartheid activism by these countries over the last two decades and their regular dealings with some of the most blatant boycott breakers, New Zealand and Britain.

The Ad Hoc Committee presented its Draft Declaration to the General Assembly in December 1977. The General Assembly voted to adopt it with 125 countries voting for, 0 against, and 14 abstaining. The Declaration asked for all member countries' "active support for the total boycott" of South Africa through refusing financial aid to teams playing South Africa, refusing visas to South African athletes, and asking member governments to establish national rules banning competition with South Africa.<sup>640</sup> Its Article 11 called on states to "use their best endeavours to terminate the practice of apartheid in sports...States agree to work towards the prompt preparation and adoption of an international convention against apartheid in sports...which would include sanctions for violation of its terms." The sanctions were unspecified in the Declaration. This ambiguity worried several states. Both the Portuguese and Danes abstained because they felt that some of the Articles were illegal under their own laws, and they were hesitant to support a convention that could contravene their own principles.<sup>641</sup> While the problems were already visible, the IOC and USSR would not worry about this until 1978 when negotiations began in earnest over the Convention.

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<sup>640</sup> UNGA, Resolution 32/105M (XXXII), 14 December 1977, 39-40.

<sup>641</sup> "Mandatory Economic Sanctions Against South Africa Requested," *UN Chronicle*, January 1978, 24-5.

## Writing the Convention and Early Reactions

Anti-apartheid activists celebrated the UN adopting the Declaration. The UN had taken a major step in the fight against apartheid and towards the complete isolation of South Africa in sport. Now the Ad Hoc Committee had to transform the Declaration into a Convention that would force countries to cut South Africa off until the end of apartheid. The Ad Hoc Committee consulted experts in early 1978 about what a Convention should look like. One important site for discussion was the Conference on International Sport, Politics, Racism and Apartheid held in early March at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>642</sup> Representatives from ICARIS (International Campaign Against Racism in Sport) including Dennis Brutus and Richard Lapchick, as well as Tom Newnham and Trevor Richards from New Zealand, attended to analyze the Declaration. The Ad Hoc Committee's rapporteur Stafford Neil attended the conference to discuss the UN's initial plans for the Convention.

Dennis Brutus spoke at the meeting about the difficulty of building unity around a Declaration. Creating a set of rules that everyone would adhere to but that would still provide tough sanctions on South Africa would prove difficult. Brutus recounted his experiences at a UN-sponsored conference on eradicating apartheid in Lagos in 1977. At the meetings he was struck by how many delegates refused "to approve/endorse/call for action which would involve the withholding of visas/passports," while others were hesitant "in adopting stringent measures

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<sup>642</sup> The meeting was hosted in Nashville so that the assembled members could participate in the protest against an upcoming South Africa vs. USA Davis Cup match at Vanderbilt University on March 18, 1978.

which may create problems at future international events.”<sup>643</sup> But Brutus wanted the UN to move past these issues and draft as strong a Convention as possible since it would “be a potent weapon in our struggle against apartheid; we must do everything in our power to assist in bringing it into existence.”<sup>644</sup>

Brutus was not the only one calling for this in consultations with the UN. The Ad Hoc Committee invited Abraham Ordia to New York in April. Ordia wanted as tough a Convention as possible to ensure the “total isolation of the racist sports teams of South Africa and their collaborators and accomplices” otherwise countries would continue to play with apartheid with no fear.<sup>645</sup> When the UN had allowed for countries and organizations to police themselves, many chose to ignore its resolutions. But with clear punishments for countries that played with South Africa enforced by the international community, national governments would have to think hard about the implications of letting their athletes and teams play South Africa.

The Ad Hoc Committee appointed a Working Group in May to draw up a first draft of the Convention. The group immediately ran into trouble. Within the Working Group there were substantial disagreements over core terms such as “apartheid” and what was meant by “direct or indirect” sports contacts.<sup>646</sup> The largest issues focused on the Convention’s Article 11 where “no agreement or compromise was reached on the substance of the article” by either the Working Group or the larger Ad Hoc Committee. Article 11 was the strongest measure against sports

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<sup>643</sup> Dennis Brutus, “International Declaration Against Apartheid in Sport: Draft Convention Against Apartheid in Sport: United Nations Action,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 2, no. 2 (1978): 2.

<sup>644</sup> Brutus, “International Declaration,” 2.

<sup>645</sup> “Working Group to Draft Convention against Apartheid in Sports,” *UN Chronicle*, June 1978, 15.

<sup>646</sup> “Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention Against Apartheid in Sport,” *General Assembly Official Records: Thirty-Third Session Supplement No. 36 (A/33/36)* (United Nations, 1978), 3.

contacts with apartheid and instructed countries to “use their best endeavours to ensure compliance with the Olympic principle of non-discrimination and the provisions of this Convention.”<sup>647</sup> In doing so, these states “shall take all necessary action to ensure that their nationals refrain from participating in all sporting events which include individuals or teams that engage in sporting activities with teams and individuals from a country practising apartheid.” This Article called for countries to avoid contact not only with South Africa but to boycott all sports competitions that involved countries or athletes that played with South Africa. The UN Convention would make the African boycott of Montreal a normal practice.

Within the Ad Hoc Committee there was dissension about Article 11 and how the convention should enforce the international boycott. Some delegations, those that were militantly anti-apartheid, believed it was not enough to strike against South Africa; to be successful, the UN needed to take measures against “sports bodies, sports teams and sportsmen who participate in sports with countries practising apartheid.”<sup>648</sup> Though the UN documents do not list which countries espoused this line, it was likely from the Nigerian and Jamaican delegates. This hardliner group argued that countries playing with South Africa “were undermining...and were in fact abetting those countries that practice apartheid.” In contrast, some members of the Working Group argued that Article 11 would “disorganise and undermine the unity of the international sports movement, as well as the solidarity and effectiveness of the international campaign against apartheid in sports” through splitting the sports movement in two.<sup>649</sup> It was not possible to isolate South Africa from global sport if there was no global sports movement. Article 11 was a major obstacle in the development of the Convention Against Apartheid in

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<sup>647</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid, 4.

Sport and the most dangerous threat to the 1980 Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement as a whole.

### **IOC and USSR Responses to the Convention**

The IOC and USSR remained largely unconcerned about the UN's push for a Convention Against Apartheid in Sport until the first draft was produced in the middle of 1978. For the IOC, this was not because it did not consider the UN a threat to its dominant position in global sport. In fact, it was the opposite. The IOC did not appear to notice the Convention because it was pre-occupied in the mid-1970s by UNESCO's attempts to "infringe on the autonomy of the IOC, the IFs and the NOCs."<sup>650</sup> The IOC perceived UNESCO's growing interest in physical education as "a barely concealed power grab to take over the Olympic Games," which Barbara Keys has said provoked "considerable resentment and hostility in IOC circles."<sup>651</sup> Because of the IOC's focus on UNESCO rather than the work of the UN Special Committee on Apartheid, its Executive Board did not discuss the Declaration or Convention until 1978.

The USSR also appeared initially disinterested by the UN's involvement in the struggle against apartheid in sport. When Lord Killanin travelled to Moscow in November 1976 for discussions with Soviet leaders, the IOC President raised the prospect of growing UNESCO and UN control of sport to challenge the IOC. Lord Killanin tried to parse it as a threat to the Soviet Union as well, stating that if the UN gained control of sport then the USSR would find "itself being dictated to by many small countries" rather than in control of its own sports policies.<sup>652</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> "Minutes of the 78th I.O.C. Session - Montreal," Sessions CIO, OSC, 52.

<sup>651</sup> Barbara Keys, "Political Protection: The International Olympic Committee's UN Diplomacy in the 1980s," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 11 (2017): 1164.

<sup>652</sup> "Minutes of the IOC Executive Board Meeting - Abidjan," 29-30 March 1977, CIO - Commission Executive, OSC, 40.



However, Sergey Pavlov, the Chairman of the Committee for Physical Culture, told Lord Killanin that the Soviet Union had little concern about the UN at this time. The Soviets were still digesting what had happened in Montreal. They were focused on the Non-aligned Movement's recent "Colombo resolution to hold separate Olympic Games" and concerned about a second African boycott.<sup>653</sup> Pavlov even dismissed Lord Killanin's fears, stating that the UNESCO and UN moves were "not directed against the IOC" or the Moscow Olympics; the Soviets believed there was nothing fear on this issue.

After Lord Killanin's visit to Moscow, the OrgCommittee invited Abraham Ordia to visit in December as part of their efforts to win the SCSA's support for the 1980 Olympic project. Ordia demanded the USSR show that the Soviets wanted Africa at the Olympics. The SCSA President asked that the Soviets mobilize the socialist bloc to support the draft declaration that would come up in the UN that would bar the "admission to the Olympic Games of sportsmen who have taken part in competitions with teams from SA and Rhodesia."<sup>654</sup> Though neither the Declaration nor the Convention had yet been written in December 1976, Ordia revealed what it was that the SCSA wanted the Convention to do: ban all athletes who had competed with South Africa. Though Ordia did not mention a boycott as a result of allowing such athletes to participate in the Moscow Olympics, the meeting was about what it would take to get the SCSA to support the 1980 Games. The boycott threat was implied. The Soviets were hesitant and non-committal on the UN issue. From Ordia, they now had a greater understanding of how the UN could harm the Moscow Olympics.

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<sup>653</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>654</sup> "Document 38," *Five Rings*, 143.

The USSR kept itself well informed on the proceedings in the Ad Hoc Committee due to the danger it posed. The USSR had the advantage of several socialist states within the group, including Ukraine, East Germany and Hungary. The Moscow OrgCommittee tracked the goings on in New York with regular visits by V.I. Prokopov, the OrgCommittee's head of international development, who consulted the Ad Hoc Committee on several occasions from 1978 onwards. Prokopov relayed information to the OrgCommittee and other Soviet sports officials, including IOC vice-president Vitaly Smirnov. It was through these channels that the USSR learned about the threat of the draft Convention's Article 11 encouraging "third party" boycotts and relayed these fears to the IOC leadership in the middle of 1978.

The USSR found out about the strict measures of the draft Convention in mid-1978 and shared their concerns with the IOC in July during the III All-Africa Games. Novikov discussed the sanctions with Lord Killanin, with both concerned about the impact Article 11 could have on the upcoming Moscow Olympics. Lord Killanin had also heard about the Convention from Ordia, who was excited about its strong measures to punish South African sports contacts. But Novikov and Lord Killanin wanted to eliminate Article 11's "third party" boycotts completely from the Convention. They agreed that the first step was to contact Kurt Waldheim, the UN Secretary General, and clarify what sort of sanctions the Ad Hoc Committee had proposed.<sup>655</sup> In Lord Killanin's letter to Waldheim, the IOC President wrote that from what he had heard about the Convention, "I can see a danger of unnecessary conflict between governmental sources and the sporting bodies in this respect."<sup>656</sup> This should be resolved through communication between

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<sup>655</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting of the I.O.C. Executive Board - Lausanne," 30-31 August 1978, CIO - Commission Executive, OSC, A-17.

<sup>656</sup> "Letter from Lord Killanin to Kurt Waldheim," 9 August 1978, D-RMO1-AFRIS/032, SD2, OSC.

the IOC and the Ad Hoc Committee, and Lord Killanin expressed his surprise that the UN had not consulted the IOC on this point.

With the IOC and USSR aware of the Convention and in agreement about its danger to the Moscow Olympic Games, both parties mobilized to challenge Article 11. At the IOC's meeting in Lausanne in August 1978, Smirnov updated the IOC Executive Board about the Convention, describing Article 11 as "extremely dangerous to the Olympic movement" in that it would "allow the same situation which arose in Montreal regarding the South Africa boycott, to appear again at future Olympics."<sup>657</sup> Article 11 would legalize the Olympics being "boycotted for purely political reasons." The Moscow OrgCommittee had already started discussing the Convention with relevant delegations, explaining to "African countries...that while [the USSR] sympathised, it was essential not to split up the Olympic movement." But Smirnov described Nigeria and Tanzania as "extremely militant and very anxious to get the resolution passed immediately." When the OrgCommittee explained Article 11's consequences, both countries "refused to understand" why this would be an issue. After Smirnov's report, Lord Killanin agreed that the current version of the Convention would have "very dangerous consequences" for the future of the Olympic movement.

After the Lausanne meeting, the IOC mobilized its resources to learn more about the Convention and to stall it if possible. Lord Killanin instructed the IOC Director Monique Berlioux to send an anonymized draft of the convention to "all NOCs and all members of the IOC...pointing out the dangers to individual athletes" and to the Olympics.<sup>658</sup> Then these sports officials could campaign on the IOC's behalf against the Convention in their home nations. An

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<sup>657</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting of the I.O.C. Executive Board - Lausanne," 30.

<sup>658</sup> "Letter from Lord Killanin to Monique Berlioux," 18 September 1978, D-RMO1-AFRIS/032, SD2, OSC.

example of this came from Leila Robinson, the Jamaican NOC's Secretary General. Robinson reported that the Jamaican government was supportive of the Convention since the inspiration was Michael Manley's letter and Stafford Neil worked as the Ad Hoc Committee's Rapporteur. But the Jamaican NOC had held "discussions with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Sport" expressing its concerns with the Convention.<sup>659</sup> Jamaica's sports minister had travelled to the USSR in November 1978, where Soviet officials had also expressed their opposition to the Convention "if it contains the "third party principle." This seemed to take the wind out of the Jamaican government's sails.

Lord Killanin also tasked the recently created IOC Tripartite Commission to study the Convention and find ways to meliorate it. The Tripartite Commission was a small group representing the IOC, the Association of National Olympic Committees, and the International Federations, created in 1975, to allow NOCs and the International Federations more say in issues confronting the IOC. The Commission's smaller size allowed it to discuss issues more quickly than the Executive Board. It would also continue to meet and study issues outside of IOC meetings. Lord Killanin empowered the Tripartite Commission to conduct negotiations on behalf of the IOC before presenting its recommendations to the IOC President. The Tripartite Commission would represent the IOC in its struggle against the UN's Ad Hoc Committee and would do "everything...to prevent the draft of an international convention coming to fruition."<sup>660</sup>

The Tripartite Commission was beholden to Lord Killanin, but the IOC's meeting minutes in December 1978 show that Vitaly Smirnov was in charge. The Soviet official had a

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<sup>659</sup> "Letter from Leslie Robinson, Secretary General of the Jamaican Olympic Association, to Monique Berlioux," 28 November 1978, D-RMO1-AFRIS/032, SD2, OSC.

<sup>660</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting of the Tripartite Commission - Lausanne (1978)" 12-13 December 1978, Commissions CIO, Tripartite Commission, OSC, 16.

personal stake in preventing the Convention from harming the Moscow Olympics. He updated the Tripartite Commission on Soviet efforts to unsuccessfully alter the Convention through 1978. Smirnov argued that the Working Group members “knew nothing about sport” and so had crafted a dangerous document out of ignorance.<sup>661</sup> Smirnov asked the Tripartite Commission to focus on African countries first and to go through the SCSA leadership, inviting either Ordia or Ganga to attend IOC meetings to consult.<sup>662</sup> The declaration reflected African wishes and it was necessary for the IOC to once again demonstrate its abhorrence of apartheid while not committing to stricter legislation that would affect future competitions.

Smirnov informed the Tripartite Committee that the Ukrainian delegation was attempting to temper the Convention from the inside. Soviet officials had also spoken with sports ministers of countries involved in the drafting process, such as “India, Hungary...Africa and Jamaica who were all against certain articles included in this report.”<sup>663</sup> There were growing fractures within the Ad Hoc Committee over the Convention and the USSR wanted to exploit these. The USSR would use its influence to try to break off some countries from the militant position, but they needed the IOC’s help to pressure countries from another direction. Smirnov asked that IOC members and NOCs pressure these same “countries which had representatives on the United Nations Commission to explain to their NOCs the danger of the situation.”<sup>664</sup> Through pressure from both the IOC and the USSR, the Ad Hoc Committee might be convinced to revise the Convention.

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<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid, 17.

At the end of the discussion, Lord Killanin wanted to stress that the IOC did not oppose the general spirit of “the actual resolution,” but rather “the danger lay in the possibility of its becoming a convention” that would tear global sport apart.<sup>665</sup> He wrote to Waldheim again on December 13, 1978, expressing his belief that “if such a Convention was adopted, it would have the most dreadful consequences especially in view of the Games scheduled in 1980.”<sup>666</sup> He again offered to consult with the Ad Hoc Committee on the matter at the group’s earliest convenience in 1979 to resolve these issues. The Ad Hoc Committee would finally agree to meet with the IOC and scheduled a meeting in April.

While the IOC waited for a chance to present its grievances to the UN, the Tripartite Commission continued to study the draft Convention. It requested a legal opinion on the Convention in time for its February 1979 meeting. The report cited issues with the Convention’s broad definitions of apartheid and participation, as well as other matters previously raised in the UN’s own assessment on the draft Convention. But the biggest issue was Article 11, which the legal experts described as a “direct threat to the Olympic Games if athletes who had been in contact with an Apartheid team were to take part.”<sup>667</sup> The issue with Article 11 was that if the Convention came into force then “what happened at Montreal would become legal, compulsory and in accordance with a legal act of the United Nations.”<sup>668</sup> This could contribute to the “splitting of the Olympic movement” into two camps - those with apartheid sports contacts and those without.

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<sup>665</sup> Ibid.

<sup>666</sup> “Letter from Lord Killanin to Kurt Waldheim,” 13 December 1978, D-RMO1-AFRIS/032, SD2, OSC.

<sup>667</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting of the Tripartite Commission - Baden-Baden,” 1 February 1979, Commissions CIO, Tripartite Commission, OSC, 17.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

The legal opinion confirmed the worst fears of the IOC and necessitated a “friendly meeting” between the Tripartite Commission and Ad Hoc Committee “to help solve the problems” that could lead to another third-party boycott since it did not appear the contacts with South Africa were going to stop anytime soon.<sup>669</sup> The Tripartite Commission’s meeting in February 1979 came at the same time the French Rugby Federation invited South Africa to play in the autumn and Israel’s sports contacts with South Africa were back in the news.<sup>670</sup> The IOC had no power over these issues and did not want the Olympic Games targeted by a UN-supported boycott over sports it had no influence over.

### **UN and IOC Discussions**

The UN Ad Hoc Committee and IOC’s Tripartite Commission met in Brussels on April 23 to discuss the draft Convention. At the start of the discussion, Lord Killanin stressed that the IOC’s “aims were in conformity with those of the UN” but that the Convention “was, in some ways, unrealistic and that the desired result, i.e. the abolition of all types of discrimination in sport, might not be achieved” in the Convention’s current format.<sup>671</sup> The IOC felt the Convention was draconian and sought to punish any country that had even one athlete participating in competition with a South African or Rhodesian. Lord Killanin believed that the “convention would be unworkable and that only the innocent and not the guilty parties would suffer.”<sup>672</sup>

The IOC president then handed over the meeting to Smirnov, who presented his viewpoint as both IOC vice-president and vice-president of the Moscow OrgCommittee.

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<sup>669</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>671</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting of the Tripartite Commission - Brussels,” 23 April 1979, Commissions CIO, Tripartite Commission, OSC, 1.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid.

Smirnov established the Soviet Union's long support in the "struggle of African nations against apartheid and racialism" in all fields, including sport.<sup>673</sup> The USSR also supported drafting the Convention, which it considered to be "an important contribution" to this fight.<sup>674</sup> But, Smirnov told the Ad Hoc Committee, "certain provisions in the Draft Convention cannot find support with the Soviet side, particularly the provisions on the sanctions against countries which maintain sports contacts with South Africa."<sup>675</sup> Soviet support in the apartheid struggle had its limits. It would not support a Convention that endorsed "third party" boycotts that could potentially harm the Moscow Olympics. Instead, if the Ad Hoc Committee continued to support Article 11, then Smirnov warned that the USSR would use its global influence to expose the "potential damaging consequences and uselessness of the methods to fight apartheid" proposed by the Committee, thus discrediting its efforts.<sup>676</sup>

Smirnov then accused the Ad Hoc Committee of not understanding the double-edged nature of its Convention. In Smirnov's interpretation of Article 11, it could allow pro-South African countries (and anti-USSR) to force a boycott of the Moscow Olympics through their sports connections, something Soviet officials had been warning their African counterparts about since 1976. Once the Convention had enough signatures from UN members it would "have the statute of an international law document" and could be used "for provoking undesirable reaction on the part of African countries."<sup>677</sup> Smirnov argued that South Africa was breaking out of international isolation through its rugby connections, which "is an example of provocative actions which may harm the unity of the International Olympic movement" if Article 11

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid, 11.



remained in the Convention.<sup>678</sup> The Convention would then force African countries to boycott another Olympics, which would be “far from...helpful in the struggle of African nations against racialism” since “such actions lead to their self-isolation in sports and play into the hands of the opponents of Olympic unity.”<sup>679</sup>

After the IOC laid out its case, the Ad Hoc Committee had a chance to respond. Chairman Sebastian Chale from Tanzania clarified that his committee was open to “possible reformulations” of its Convention with help from the IOC.<sup>680</sup> Chale also stressed that the Convention was not designed to override the IOC’s control on this issue, but rather to provide “all governments with certain guidelines as to the approach of the problem. We think it will assist us in our joint effort to eliminate apartheid...and that it will hasten the process.”<sup>681</sup> Stafford Neil, the group’s rapporteur, argued that the Convention “could strengthen the overall campaign” by providing a united front between sports bodies and states.<sup>682</sup> The Committee did not want to “disrupt the international sports movements as such,” but Neil argued that the greatest disrupters of international sport were South Africa and the countries that participated in sport with it.<sup>683</sup> If the Convention included strong measures, then South Africa’s regular disruption of international sport would finally end.

The discussion in Brussels proceeded through the Articles one at a time as the IOC raised issues with the language, asked for clarifications, and proposed alternatives. The main point of debate was Article 11 and “third-party” boycotts. The Tripartite Commission believed that

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

Article 11 was unsalvageable and “should be entirely deleted.”<sup>684</sup> The IOC was most worried about “the potential danger of the third party element” and that this was what had caused the boycott in Montreal - Canada had suffered for New Zealand’s tour of South Africa.<sup>685</sup> Neil responded that from his understanding of the clause a second Montreal “could not be repeated with this text, since it only dealt with those directly involved in competition and not the whole country.”

But Article 11’s language was up for debate. One example was whether the UN would call for a total boycott of the 1979 Pan American Games because it included tennis, a sport in which American players still competed against South Africa. Thomas Keller, the Swiss head of world rowing, wanted to know if the ban on “sporting events” would extend only to tennis or to the whole Pan American Games since the definition was flexible. Neil believed that it would only be the tennis competition since only the “offending team or individuals” would be targeted by the Convention.<sup>686</sup> But Ukrainian Ad Hoc Committee member Boris Korneyenko noted that this “was a question of interpretation, since games were an event, but individual sports championships were too.”<sup>687</sup> Neil held that “in spite of [his] interpretation the Montreal situation would still not occur.”<sup>688</sup> This did not reassure the IOC members and they continued to call for Article 11’s removal from the Convention.

Towards the end of the meeting the IOC and the UN delegations agreed to discuss the Convention again in a few months. The Ad Hoc Committee needed to reflect on which changes could be made. It still intended to present the General Assembly with its final version of the

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<sup>684</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

Convention before the end of 1979 for a vote. Things ended amicably but Charles Palmer, the head of the International Judo Federation, questioned the sincerity of the UN's desire to make changes in his parting remarks. Palmer noted that Chale had said that the Ad Hoc Committee had been required to "consult sports experts, but...that this [meeting] was being done on the Commission's initiative and only at the stage when a draft had been prepared."<sup>689</sup> Why had the IOC not been consulted before on this matter? Perhaps the Ad Hoc Committee would not have encountered so many issues if they had brought the IOC into discussions earlier.

After the UN delegation left the room, Lord Killanin expressed his frustration that "the Ad Hoc Committee had never approached the IOC to consult on the drafting of its convention" and that the meeting had only been possible after he had contacted UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim and SCSA President Abraham Ordia.<sup>690</sup> Lord Killanin believed that the UN remained disinterested, despite its assurances, in the opinions of the IOC and was intent on ignoring its advice regardless of the IOC's long experience in managing international sport through difficult issues like apartheid. However, even if the Ad Hoc Committee was not interested in the comments of the Tripartite Commission, the IOC and Soviet Union planned to ensure that the Convention did not ruin the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980.

## **USSR vs. UN**

The Tripartite Commission's struggle against the UN Convention was complemented by the Soviet Union's struggle within the UN itself. The Soviets kept a close eye on proceedings through the Ukrainian delegation and its allies, including the GDR and Hungary, so that it could

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<sup>689</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>690</sup> Ibid.

influence discussions in its favor. The Convention put the USSR in a difficult position. Firstly, it wanted to establish its support for a Convention Against Apartheid Sport, since that demonstrated Moscow's anti-colonial, anti-racist position. This in turn would help to bring more African countries to the Moscow Olympic Games. But, as a Soviet summary on the development of the Convention from April 1979 stated, "at the same time we oppose the use of methods that may not only fail to bring a positive result, but may also have negative consequences, leading, in particular, to a split in the Olympic movement."<sup>691</sup> The main concern in the Ukrainian report to Moscow, as in many other Soviet documents leading up to the 1980 Olympics, was that African powers, through the UN, were playing into the hands of "reactionary forces" seeking "to constantly provoke African countries to boycott the Moscow Games."

To prevent a new boycott, the OrgCommittee, Foreign Ministry, and Soviet Solidarity Committee of the countries of Asia and Africa sought to persuade Working Group delegations and their national governments of the futility of the Convention's sanctions clause. In November 1978, Soviet officials tried to discuss the Convention with Ordia during a visit to Moscow, but "Ordia avoided setting out the basics of his position" and refused to be drawn into a discussion.<sup>692</sup> Soviet officials asked the leaders of ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union) and ANC (African National Congress) to write letters calling on African support for the 1980 Moscow Olympics rather than supporting the Convention or another anti-apartheid boycott. The Soviets asked the Canadian delegation to intensify their participation in the Ad Hoc Committee, which the USSR felt had been lacking in enthusiasm after the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games took place successfully, since they were the lone western voice that would oppose

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<sup>691</sup> GARF, F.7576, Op. 35, D.814, 17-20.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

sporting sanctions. Soviet officials also requested that Cuba put pressure on Jamaican leaders about the Convention; at the same time, the Soviets invited Jamaican officials to Moscow to explain the USSR's perspective. Outside the UN, the Soviet Union piled pressure on relevant countries to stall or moderate the Convention, particularly on Article 11 and the "third-party" boycott.

Within the UN, the Ukrainian delegation actively canvassed the various delegations about Article 11 throughout 1979. On March 1, Volodymyr Nykyforovych Marteyenko, the Permanent Representative of Ukraine at the UN, met with Sebastian Chale to discuss the "sanctions against third countries" in the draft Convention.<sup>693</sup> Marteyenko argued with Chale that the purpose of the Convention was to create something universally acceptable so that the Convention would be effective rather than an extreme document that imperialist countries would simply ignore. Chale accepted some of these arguments, stating that he understood the position of Ukraine and the Soviet Union on this matter. Chale even conceded that in his opinion the sanctions proposed went "too far." Chale hinted that Ukraine was not alone in its objections and that several delegations in the Ad Hoc Committee felt similarly, but only expressed these opinions in private. He suggested that Marteyenko should consult further among the delegations to negotiate an acceptable version of the Convention.

Marteyenko's conversation with Chale indicated that the Chairman, and perhaps the Tanzanian state he represented, was wavering in its support for a stronger version of the Convention. A few days later, on March 6, Boris Ivanovich Korneyenko, the Ukrainian delegation's first secretary, spoke with Olayinka Fisher, Nigeria's representative in the Ad Hoc Committee, about the drafting of the Convention. During the conversation, Korneyenko repeated

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<sup>693</sup> Ibid, 26-27.

Ukraine's objections to the sanctions on third parties and once again presented it as the main issue preventing the Convention from coming into force. Fisher disagreed with Korneyenko, stating that the sanctions in Article 11 needed to be the "basis of the convention" to ensure that it was taken seriously and that Nigeria's "position had remained unchanged for the time being."<sup>694</sup> But Fisher conceded that Nigeria needed to consult with other African countries to ensure that a united front existed on this issue.

Korneyenko's conversation with Fisher in New York contrasted with a conversation that V.V. Makarishchev, one of the Soviet diplomats based in Ghana, had with the Executive Secretary of the Ghanaian NOC, S. Okyere, on March 13 at an event held for Ghanaian sports organizations. Makarishchev and Okyere spoke about Ghana's desire to get to the Moscow Olympics and the latter's problems with the UN Convention. Okyere stated that both in Ghana and across most of Africa the strong positions taken by Nigeria and Somalia in favor of boycotting events due to contacts with South Africa were unpopular and would not find widespread support if countries were asked to act upon them.<sup>695</sup> His evidence for this was Nigeria's last minute boycott of the Edmonton Games in 1978 over New Zealand's continued contacts with South Africa, which resulted in just Nigeria's withdrawal. Okyere even went so far as to state that regardless of whether other African countries were in favor of boycotting the Games, Ghana would be there. Ironically, though, Ghana would not show up to Moscow the following year. But from the conversations that Ukrainian and Soviet ambassadors had with African officials about the Convention, unity on the sanctions position was weakening and could be exploited.

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<sup>694</sup> Ibid, 30-31.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid, 33.

Right before the UN Delegation travelled to Brussels to meet with the Tripartite Commission at the end of April, Korneyenko spoke with the Ad Hoc Committee's Secretary, Ibrahim Noor of Somalia. The Somali delegation had been outspoken in its support of strong sanctions against those that played sport with South Africa. Noor reiterated his government's position, stating that the upcoming Brussels meeting's success would depend on the attitude that Lord Killanin entered negotiations with. If the IOC objected to the Convention based on principle, then there would be problems.<sup>696</sup> The IOC needed to at least appreciate why African states wanted stronger, legal enforcement of South Africa's sporting isolation. If the IOC was resistant to the UN Convention without making positive, anti-apartheid gestures of their own, this could force many African countries to solidify their stance in favor of the sanctions in Article 11 and thus threaten the Moscow Olympics. However, Noor provided a ray of hope to Korneyenko when he reported that many African representatives on the Committee had been in contact with their home governments to explain the impasse in the negotiations over the Convention related to sanctions. This could lead some to relax their stance on certain aspects of the Convention if the Brussels meeting were a success.

In the aftermath of the UN's consultations with the Tripartite Commission in April, Korneyenko spoke again with Sebastian Chale to see if the Chairman had changed his position on Article 11. Chale said that he had been impressed by the productivity of the meeting, and he was both surprised and appreciative that the Tripartite Commission had emphasized that both they and the UN wanted the same thing: the end of apartheid sports contacts.<sup>697</sup> During the conversation, Chale revealed to Korneyenko that the Tanzanian Foreign Ministry had instructed

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<sup>696</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid, 40-41.

him to talk with other African representatives about dropping the third party sanctions as part of the Convention. It was more important to have an international Convention than to keep debating the issue for several more years. But there was a complication. The Tanzanian government asked Chale to pursue this quietly. If more zealous delegations found out that Tanzania was wavering in its support, then this could provoke hostility towards Chale and Tanzania. Chale told Korneyenko that this would be especially difficult since some delegations, such as Nigeria, remained irreconcilably in favor of the third-party sanctions. Chale would meet with all the other African delegations before June 11, when the Working Group was set to meet again, and would try to persuade as many countries as possible, privately, to drop the requirements for sanctions in new versions of the Convention. Whether he would be successful, however, was difficult to predict.

Reports from Ukraine's permanent mission in the first half of 1979 indicated that the Soviets and their allies had started to sow dissent within the Ad Hoc Committee quite successfully. Under pressure from the socialist bloc and many of the Asian delegations plus Barbados, the Ad Hoc Committee pushed back discussions about the Convention until June to allow more time for reflection and reconsideration. When the Ad Hoc Committee met again between June 11-15, it appeared to make a breakthrough. On the main issue of Article 11, "the position of the socialist countries advocating the exclusion of these provisions was supported by the delegations of Barbados and the Philippines."<sup>698</sup> Chale appeared to support deleting language calling for third party boycotts. Nigerian opposition failed to emerge but only because Fisher was taken ill. The rest of the Nigerian delegation had no instructions from their government on how to proceed. The Working Group also decided to remove Article 8, which had called for

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<sup>698</sup> Ibid, 43-49.



“individuals, international, regional and national sports bodies...[to] ease all sports contacts whether direct or indirect with a country practising apartheid.”<sup>699</sup> The Soviets had opposed this Article, too. The Somali representative was hesitant about both deletions, but did not formally oppose them. The Jamaican member agreed in principle with the changes but was not convinced. In return for removing parts of Article 11 and the whole of Article 8, the socialist representatives removed their oppositions to Article 12-14 that dealt with the composition of the body appointed to monitor the Convention, a minor point compared to third-party boycotts.

The issue surrounding Article 11 appeared to be resolved on the first day of discussions in June. But the Working Group understood it was likely that this early decision would be challenged soon. “According to available information,” reported the Ukrainian delegation, the Nigerians did not want to lose the “sanctions against third countries” from the Convention and planned to make an issue of it at the OAU meeting in July in Liberia, where it would “mobilize African countries to defend the provisions of such sanctions and to exert pressure on other developing countries.”<sup>700</sup> But Nigerian opposition manifested a lot sooner than that. On the second day of discussions, June 12, Ordia arrived in New York to attend the meeting. When informed about the removal of Article 11, “Ordia demanded the restoration of the provisions on sanctions in the draft and said that their exclusion was a “stab in the back of African athletes”, etc.”<sup>701</sup> Ordia then attempted “to exert crude pressure on the chairman of the Committee, calling on his “feelings as an African” and saying that he should protect the interests of Africa, and “not follow the party of compromise solutions.”” Despite Ordia’s pressure, Chale managed to prevent Article 11 from coming back up for full debate. But this angered the reinvigorated Nigerian and

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<sup>699</sup> United Nations, “Report of the Ad Hoc Committee (1978),” 7.

<sup>700</sup> GARF, F.7576. Op. 35. D.814, 43-49.

<sup>701</sup> Ibid.

Somali delegations who “launched a violent attack on the decision of the working group and demanded the restoration of the former article 11,” which Somalia had agreed to the removal of just the day before.

A split emerged within the Ad Hoc Committee because of Nigeria and Somalia’s protest. Chale, the Barbadian representative, and the socialist countries objected to Article 11’s restoration since it had been voted on already. But some countries that had supported the removal on June 11 now backtracked “in the spirit of compromise.”<sup>702</sup> They called for concessions and the reinsertion of parts of Article 11 in brackets so that further discussions could take place. Because of this, two versions of Article 11 were inserted into the Convention, both in square brackets to indicate that the Working Group could not agree on the specific wording. One called for a boycott of any country playing with apartheid, while the other called only for a boycott of South Africa and Rhodesia. The group agreed to wait until after the OAU’s meeting in July and the return of Chale from a long trip abroad to discuss this issue again in August at the earliest.

Korneyenko, presenting his own understanding of what happened during the meeting, argued that this was a minority African rebellion against much of the Committee. The Ukrainians believed that most countries were behind the Soviet position on the Convention: “the positions of the Philippines and the leading Asian countries have been significantly consolidated;” Jamaica, “which had previously been actively seeking the inclusion of such sanctions in the convention, had changed its position dramatically;” and Yugoslavia had coordinated with Hungary and other socialist countries to oppose sanctions.<sup>703</sup> Korneyenko also praised Chale’s work preventing a full capitulation to Nigeria and Somalia, citing the Tanzanian chairman’s support for removing

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<sup>702</sup> Ibid.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid.

Article 11 and his view that “sanctions against third countries” would be “unrealistic.” Ukraine’s next move was to “consolidate this success and to prevent the revision of the draft Convention” by Nigeria and Somalia. The hope was that with a successful conversation with the IOC in July, then the Committee would commit to the revised version of the Convention and thus prevent the division of world sport.

### **Tripartite Commission vs. UN**

While the Ad Hoc Committee debated whether and how best to revise the Convention, the IOC prepared itself for further meetings with the UN and discussed how to reinforce its opposition to Article 11. The Tripartite Commission met in Paris on June 6 to discuss the upcoming Ad Hoc Committee meeting set for June 11-15. Chale had invited Lord Killanin to send “representatives of the Tripartite Commission [to] attend towards the end” after the group had discussed many of the issues raised at the Brussels meeting and come to a resolution.<sup>704</sup> But the IOC did not appear to trust Chale’s invitation with Smirnov suggesting that “a representative be sent for one or two days” towards the beginning of the meeting to observe discussions rather than just at the end. Smirnov also noted that if this was not possible then the OrgCommittee member in contact with the Ukrainian delegation, Prokopov, “would be on the spot and could immediately contact the [IOC] President or Director” with anything they needed to know about.<sup>705</sup> The Soviet Union would take the lead in this meeting.

From the information delivered by the Ukrainian delegation to Smirnov, the Soviet IOC member informed the Tripartite Commission about the fractures emerging within the Ad Hoc

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<sup>704</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting of the Tripartite Commission - Paris,” 6 June 1979, Commissions CIO, Tripartite Commission, OSC, 5.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

Committee and its supporters. One major rift appeared to be within the SCSA. Ordia continued to press for sanctions against countries playing with apartheid, but it appeared that Jean-Claude Ganga, the SCSA General Secretary, was keen to go to New York to explain the “real position of the SCSA,” which was against further sanctions.<sup>706</sup> Ganga even accused Ordia of misleading the Ad Hoc Committee during his trips to New York, claiming that Ordia “was not authorised to speak on behalf of the SCSA, but only as a Nigerian.”<sup>707</sup> But despite this fracture within the SCSA there was one problem: Ordia was the one making the trips to the UN and consulting with the Ad Hoc Committee. Ganga never presented his view to the UN committee, and he only ever spoke to Soviet officials on this matter. But it indicated dissension within the pro-sanctions camp. The SCSA had been the inspiration for the Convention and third-party boycotts because of its attempts to isolate New Zealand and its boycott of Montreal. Now, three years on, the leadership was split over whether this was a good idea, possibly reflecting the split between Anglophone and Francophone Africa on this matter. Perhaps the IOC and USSR together could exploit these rifts within the pro-sanctions camp.

The Ad Hoc Committee and the Tripartite Commission agreed after their April meeting that they should hold further consultations again soon. The Ad Hoc Committee wanted to wait until after it had met again in June before further consulting with the IOC. But then it pushed back its meeting from July to August to allow the Convention to be discussed at the OAU’s meeting in Liberia, where Nigeria hoped to rally continental support for sanctions. For the IOC, postponing the meeting had its positives and negatives: it left less time for Ad Hoc Committee to reflect on the positions the IOC brought up at the meeting, but it also made it less likely that the

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<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

draft Convention would be presented in 1979, which could protect the Moscow Olympic Games from an UN-inspired boycott.

The two groups met in New York in early August to discuss the most recent draft of the Convention after the Ad Hoc Committee's contentious discussions back in June. The draft under discussion still included two versions of Article 11, one with and a second without third party boycotts. The meeting opened with Sebastian Chale thanking the Tripartite Commission for the frank and "very useful" criticisms of the Convention during the April meeting.<sup>708</sup> Mohamed Mzali, IOC vice-president and Tunisian minister for sport, responded on behalf of the Tripartite Commission that the IOC remained committed to the anti-apartheid struggle and praised the drafting of the Convention as "a good step in that direction," but explained that there were still specific issues in the text that "should perhaps be reviewed" before the Ad Hoc Committee presented the new draft to the General Assembly.

The main issue, as it had been since 1978, was Article 11 and the call for boycotts of competitions involving countries that played with South Africa. This was even more important given events that had developed during 1979. In the spring, the French Rugby Federation had invited South Africa to tour in September, which anti-apartheid groups protested vigorously and threatened to organize a mass boycott of the 1980 Olympics if the tour took place and France were invited to Moscow.<sup>709</sup> Mzali wanted to know whether the Ad Hoc Committee had thought about "the problem posed by the intended tour of the Springboks in France," which could lead to

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<sup>708</sup> "Ad Hoc Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention Against Apartheid in Sports: Summary Record of the First Part (Public) of the 8th Meeting," 15 August 1979, D-RMO1-AFRIS/033, SD2, OSC, 2.

<sup>709</sup> AFP, "Stop Tour, of Face Olympic Boycott," *South China Morning Post*, 23 March 1979, 21.

signatories of the Convention boycotting any event, including the Moscow Olympics, if France were permitted to compete.<sup>710</sup> It appeared to be the perfect test case for the UN's legislation.

The IOC's assertion that the upcoming South African tour of France would have a disastrous impact on the Moscow Olympics if the UN's legislation passed started a vigorous debate between the two sides. The debate allowed the Tripartite Commission members to try and identify which countries were in favor of sanctions and which were more hesitant. Mzali noted during the discussion that the "strongest opponents to the deletion of Article 11 would be Haiti and the Philippines."<sup>711</sup> Mr. Charles of Haiti criticized the IOC's attempts to remove Article 11, stating that the "draft convention was intended to eliminate apartheid not only in the Olympic Games but also in sport as a whole and that it should, therefore, contain clauses which would place the signatories under a definite obligation" to prevent contacts.<sup>712</sup> For Charles, the French government's strong statements against the South African rugby tour and its ending of visa-free travel for South Africans proved the power of the draft Convention and Article 11: "without the prospect of a boycott of the French team at the Olympic Games, France would perhaps not have taken action to forbid the entry of a rugby team into its territory." This reaction was the exact reason to have these sanctions; it forced countries that wanted to play with South Africa to understand that doing so would lead to "sacrifices, even at the risk of catastrophic consequences for certain international sports events."

Nicasio Valderrama, the Filipino delegate, criticized the unwillingness of Western governments to control sport in their countries as other countries around the world did.

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<sup>710</sup> "Ad Hoc Committee...8th Meeting," 4.

<sup>711</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting of the Tripartite Commission - Lausanne (1979)," Lausanne, 19 November 1979, Commissions CIO, Tripartite Commission, OSC, 25.

<sup>712</sup> "Ad Hoc Committee...8th Meeting," 5.

Valderrama told the IOC officials that “he did not share the view that a Government could not control the actions of its nationals in the field of sport,” which was a central tenet of the IOC’s Charter.<sup>713</sup> Governments had significant control over their citizens in different spheres and “there were examples every day of the fact that Governments could, if they so wished, exercise a right of inspection in all matters.” Why should sport be different? Surely there was nothing wrong with requiring governments to stop their citizens from playing with apartheid representatives in accordance with international law as laid out by a UN Convention? The idea that sport was somehow above the law was “unrealistic.” Both the IOC and Western governments needed to understand that “a spirit of cooperation was required if apartheid was to be eliminated” and the West was purposely being stubborn in this field.

This broad criticism of the IOC and the West was continued by the observer from the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania, Mr. Makhanda. Makhanda, representing a South African liberation movement that had been struggling to end apartheid since 1959, wanted Article 11 to “be strengthened and made more explicit” rather than weakened through negotiation.<sup>714</sup> The sanctions listed in Article 11 were integral to the entire Convention and were “designed to give some force to the measures and penalties to be adopted.” Without these sanctions, then the Convention would “become totally ineffective” since there would be no consequences for countries playing with South Africa. If the purpose of the Convention was to isolate apartheid sport, then Article 11 had to remain.

As the meeting appeared to be heading down a more confrontational path, Enugu Reddy, the long-time UN anti-apartheid activist and Director of the Centre Against Apartheid, stepped in

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<sup>713</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid, 8.

to cool tensions. Reddy repeated his belief that African athletes had made a “tremendous sacrifice” in Montreal as part of “the struggle for the cause of liberation.”<sup>715</sup> The Montreal boycott had demonstrated to the world how powerful sports boycotts could be and their ability to manufacture political change, such as the Gleneagles Declaration and this UN Convention. But Reddy did not want to see the Olympics permanently divided over this issue, stating that “he was sure that everyone present had great respect for the Olympic movement and for the USSR” and did not want to hurt the Moscow Olympic Games. Reddy stressed to the Tripartite Commission that the Special Committee would avoid interfering with the success of the Moscow 1980 Olympic Games and that the Soviet representatives and the IOC should not worry about the Convention disrupting the USSR’s megaevent.

After the meeting ended, informal discussions began between different delegation members on aspects of the Convention. The Tripartite Commission members came to understand how much of the formal meeting and the hostility had been political theatre as countries sought to demonstrate their commitment to the anti-apartheid cause. During the official meeting, Mzali had noted, “not a single member of the Committee spoke in favour of the deletion of Article 11” despite the pleas of the IOC members to consider the possible unintended consequences of its ratification.<sup>716</sup> But in private, many of the most vociferous Ad Hoc Committee members were much closer in their positions to the IOC. Mzali’s opinion on who was for and against sanctions was “somewhat modified after the meeting in the course of private discussions.”<sup>717</sup>

From his conversations with different members, Mzali concluded that the strongest opponent to dropping Article 11 was Jamaica’s Stafford Neil, who had vigorously defended the

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<sup>715</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>716</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting of the Tripartite Commission - Lausanne (1979),” 25.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid.



article in the April meeting with the IOC. During the August debate it had appeared that both Haiti and Philippines held strong positions in favor of retaining sanctions in the Convention, but in private they seemed to agree with the IOC's position and were willing "to accept a new Article 11" that toned down the punishments.<sup>718</sup> The Haitian delegate told the IOC members that while he felt some sanctions were necessary, he would be happy to rewrite Article 11 and then send it to the IOC for their opinion. The Ad Hoc Committee's secretary Ibrahim Noor also "expressed the opinion that Article 11 has a good chance of being deleted, or at least completely rewritten" despite the opposition of some members like Neil.<sup>719</sup> Noor represented Somalia, which had taken the strongest position on sanctions alongside Nigeria and now appeared to be reconsidering the matter, at least in private.

The Ukrainian delegate at the meeting expressed "his satisfaction on the outcome of this meeting."<sup>720</sup> He was now "quite confident that Article 11 will never be accepted as it stands," thus protecting the Moscow Olympics from a boycott.<sup>721</sup> Mzali concluded that while the meeting may not have "brought concrete results," the Tripartite Commission had made all the delegates aware of the "difficulties that the Convention could create" if left in its current state. In private, many members now understood this issue and were willing to make changes to the document to prevent future splits in world sport. The UN delegates also understood the need for "closer collaboration and co-operation between themselves and the sports movement" to produce a Convention that would be effective while not destroying the Olympic movement.<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>718</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid.

The IOC left the August meeting feeling quietly confident. The differences in opinions expressed by delegates in the formal meeting and then in private demonstrated that there were real splits within the Ad Hoc Committee over how to approach future boycotts. And with so many delegates indicating in private that they were willing to tone down their positions, matters appeared to be shifting in the IOC's favor. Better news came during the Tripartite Commission's meeting in November when Thomas Keller informed colleagues that private sources from the UN had told him that the discussions over Article 11 had stalled again and the draft Convention would not be presented at the upcoming General Assembly meeting. Instead, these private sources told Keller, it would likely take "at least two years to arrive at a decision" on sanctions.<sup>723</sup> This meant that Moscow was safe from this Convention and need not fear an UN-backed boycott over apartheid sports contacts. Given how South African rugby contacts had become a key issue through 1979, this was a relief to the IOC members and Soviet officials.

The Report of the Ad Hoc Committee for 1979, adopted on October 31, indicated that the group had asked for an extension into at least 1980 while it tried to iron out the details with Article 11. The draft still contained "two alternative formulations" representing the two different views with neither side willing to back down.<sup>724</sup> The moderate version asked that nations "refrain from participating in all sports events which include individuals or teams from a country practicing apartheid." The radical version demanded by Nigeria still called for nations to boycott "all sports events which include individuals or teams that engage in sports activities with teams and individuals from a country practicing apartheid." The debate over this central issue, what

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<sup>723</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>724</sup> "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention against Apartheid in Sports," 5 November 1979, D-RMO1-AFRIS/033, SD2, OSC, 4.

sort of sanctions should be in place against those playing with South Africa, continued until 1985 when a final draft was finally proposed to the General Assembly.

## **Conclusion**

The 1976 Montreal Olympic boycott started a new era in the struggle against apartheid sport. The drastic action taken by African states inspired multiple actors to take on the responsibility to protect global sport. One of these actors was the United Nations. The UN had been a relatively minor participant in the struggle against apartheid sport during the 1960s and early 1970s. The General Assembly had passed a few declarations during this period calling for an end to South African sports contacts and asking governments to intervene to stop tours. But in 1976, inspired by the problems caused by New Zealand's rugby tour of South Africa and the Montreal boycott, the UN became a key figure in this fight.

The UN's move to draft a declaration and convention against apartheid sports contacts was popular among Global South states. African nations supported this project as they felt that the UN was a favorable organization that would listen and react to their concerns, unlike the IOC. The UN had long been a battleground between the Global South and the West, and the struggle for a Convention Against Apartheid in Sport would continue in a similar fashion with the conservative, Western IOC opposing intervention by the UN's Ad Hoc Committee dominated by Global South states. However, the Convention proved different from older attempts to craft anti-apartheid legislation. Instead of the usual split within the UN between the Global South and the West, a split between the Global South and North hampered the Convention in this case, as the Soviet bloc lined up with Western states to prevent a strong Convention that threatened the 1980 Olympic Games.

The UN's Convention Against Apartheid in Sport proved contentious for all involved. In theory, no state wanted to be seen against isolating South Africa. In the General Assembly votes to draft the declaration and then accept it, there were no votes against in either case and only a small group of states abstained. Openly, no state could be against such a project. But in private there were frustrations and efforts to hinder the Convention. The IOC repeatedly stated its support of the anti-apartheid struggle and reaffirmed its isolation of South Africa but fought against the Convention. The Soviet Union supported the establishment of the declaration and a convention, but quietly withdrew its support for strong measures and even threatened to use its political muscle to shame the Ad Hoc Committee if it did not tone down some of the language unacceptable to the USSR. By 1979, with states eager to get a Convention signed, many African and Asian countries privately shifted their positions, while still ostensibly committed to hard punishments for countries playing with South Africa.

The UN was usually a hotbed of USSR-Global South cooperation, but with the Convention this relationship turned somewhat antagonistic. While many in the Global North argued that decolonized states dominated the UN, in this case the USSR was the deciding factor and forced the Ad Hoc Committee to rethink its positions on sanctions before 1980. The debate over the Convention showed the limits of Soviet African cooperation within the UN and on the anti-apartheid issue. Previously, supporting the anti-apartheid struggle in the UN and sport allowed the USSR to demonstrate its value to and win support from African countries. But when it came to the success of the Moscow Olympics and the soft power success that sport provided the USSR, the Soviets were unwilling to support any move that would impact them negatively. The Convention's threat to the 1980 Olympics broke this successful alliance and showed that the

success of the anti-apartheid movement in the United Nations depended on Soviet support for the Global South.

Opposition from both the Soviet Union and IOC forced the UN into taking longer on its Convention than expected and delayed the eventually passing of the Convention Against Apartheid in Sport until 1985. Its ratification would wait until 1988 when the required number of states signed up. By that point, the sports boycott against South Africa was heading towards its conclusion. As the apartheid state entered its end phase and negotiations started in 1990 to transition the country to become a multi-racial democracy, the sports boycott was sacrificed by the ANC and anti-apartheid activists as a gesture of goodwill towards the white South Africa population.<sup>725</sup> India, which had always vociferously supported the boycott, invited South Africa's cricket team to play in 1991 with a return tour of South Africa in 1992. South Africa returned to the Olympics in Barcelona that same year. And in 1993 South Africa received the right to host the 1995 Rugby World Cup, which they would win. The UN's determination to enforce the anti-apartheid boycott, then, came at the end of the apartheid boycott era. The Convention was an important step in developing a legal opposition to apartheid sport, but it showed how difficult it was to create a global boycott of South Africa until the struggle had largely concluded.

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<sup>725</sup> Booth, "The South African Council on Sport," 64.

## Chapter 6 FRANCE, BRITAIN, AND SOUTH AFRICA – ANOTHER BOYCOTT

The Montreal Boycott in 1976 succeeded in dissuading many countries from having sports contacts with South Africa for three years. After New Zealand's ill-fated rugby tour of South Africa prompted 26 African states to boycott the Olympics, major rugby tours to or from South Africa ended for brief period. In 1979, however, chilled relationships between rugby officials in South Africa and their counterparts in France and Britain began to thaw. That year marked a flurry of activity, starting with the French Rugby Federation inviting South Africa to tour France and culminating in both British and French rugby teams touring South Africa in 1980. These tours provoked backlash and inspired African threats to the Moscow Olympic Games.

This chapter will argue that concern over sports contacts with South Africa was the most important fissure in the international community in the lead up to the Moscow Olympic Games - up until the moment the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. It examines how the French and British rugby unions contributed to growing tensions surrounding the Moscow Olympics, raising the specter of another African boycott. The first section of this chapter will discuss historical rugby contacts between Britain, France, and South Africa. The second section will examine a failed attempt to organize a Springbok tour of France in 1979 that was stopped by combined African and Soviet threats to France's participation in the 1980 Olympics. The third section will look at how rugby contacts between Britain and South Africa during 1979 and 1980 provided a challenge to the Moscow Olympics and to Britain's links with other Commonwealth countries. Finally, the chapter presents France's renewed relations with South Africa in 1980 that

have been largely ignored and took place without much furor after the 1980 Olympic boycott discussion having moved on from South African contacts to Afghanistan.

For South Africa, sports contacts were an important form of cultural cooperation with outside countries. Many of its sports connections were rooted in historical ties to the British Empire. South Africans played rugby, cricket, and soccer with the British Isles, New Zealand and Australia. But the sport that mattered most to South Africans, particularly to the Afrikaner population, was rugby. It had symbolic importance as a sport that highlighted South African strength, masculinity and ruggedness. It also allowed South Africans to compete against other countries to compare strength, making it an important part of both Afrikaner identity within South Africa and in the larger world.<sup>726</sup> The importance of South African rugby contacts was well-known to anti-apartheid activists, who would choose rugby as the most important sport to protest to make their voices heard and challenge the South African state.

The British relationship with South Africa through rugby was important for both states. South Africa's first international rugby matches were against a touring British Lions side in 1891; it faced the Lions again in 1896 and 1903 and toured Britain in 1906. These tours were an important political and social battlefield between Afrikanerdom and Britain, colony and metropole. Rugby in many ways replaced the struggles of the Boer Wars (1880-1881 and 1899-1902) and demonstrated George Orwell's later quip that sport "is war minus the shooting" quite aptly.<sup>727</sup> South Africans valued the sporting relationship against New Zealand the most but the idea of getting one over on the British gave the matches added importance. For British rugby fans, the rugby contacts with South Africa were also a way of holding on to last vestiges of the

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<sup>726</sup> John Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (Leicester University Press, 1997), 77; Grundlingh, "Playing for Power?" 413-4.

<sup>727</sup> George Orwell, "The Sporting Spirit," *The Tribune*, 14 December 1945.

British Empire and retaining connections between the white settler colonies.<sup>728</sup> Both parties had a vested interest in keeping the rugby relationship alive. When it came under threat by the anti-apartheid protests in the 1970s, British teams started to travel more to South Africa to keep the connections going: England travelled to South Africa for a one-match series in June 1972 and the British Lions toured the country in 1974. But in 1976, with the furor around New Zealand's tour, even the British rugby unions hesitated in engaging in tours with South Africa for a while, despite the historical and social links.

In contrast to Britain, France's rugby relations with South Africa were largely based on the latter's desire to play internationally. France and South Africa had no linguistic connections or imperial ties, few cultural similarities, and had developed a close rugby relationship only after World War II. The first French-South African match took place as an afterthought to the Springbok's tour of the British Isles in 1913. France toured South Africa for the first time in 1958 and both countries played single matches on the other's home turf in 1961. The frequency of French-South African rugby contacts accelerated in the late 1960s, starting with a four-match series in 1967. This acceleration occurred at the same time as alternative avenues of competition closed down and the international boycott grew in strength. While countries such as Britain, Australia and then New Zealand made it harder for the Springboks to tour abroad and were more hesitant to send teams to South Africa, France appeared to buck that trend. Much like conservatives in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, French rugby officials and players believed that playing with South Africa was necessary to keep the country from isolation and to

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<sup>728</sup> Toby C. Rider and Matthew P. Llewellyn, "Barbarians, Bridge Builders, and Boycott: The British Sports Council's Fact-Finding Mission to South Africa," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, no.1 (2019): 25.



encourage slow change.<sup>729</sup> As the global anti-apartheid boycott began to block off historical sparring partners, the French remained as valid, international opposition as successive French governments refused to block connections with South Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. It was not until 1976 and the Montreal boycott that France's rugby relationship with South Africa would come under sustained pressure and grow to global importance.

### **French Rugby Relations with South Africa 1974-1979**

France's rugby relationship with South Africa had only really developed during the 1960s and early 1970s. Perhaps because rugby was a relatively new and small sport within France, it did not seem to attract much government attention for its relationship with South Africa. At the same time, the French government did not have much of a set policy on South Africa sports connections in the early 1970s anyway. When the gymnastics federation asked if it could send a team to the 1973 Pretoria Games, the French government advice was that it was "not opposed to French athletes going to South Africa" but had reservations about sending a large team "of international renown whose presence in a country practicing racial segregation is likely to arouse unfavorable reactions in black Africa."<sup>730</sup> The gymnasts were not considered to be important enough to warrant the attention of the SCSA and so were allowed to go. But the French rugby team, as the French government found out in 1974-5, was important enough to draw the ire of the SCSA.

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<sup>729</sup> Philip Dine, *French Rugby Football: A Cultural History* (Berg, 2001), 165.

<sup>730</sup> Note for the General Directorate of cultural, scientific and technical relations: Cultural and Socio-Cultural Exchanges, Section of International meetings, 28 December 1972, AMAE, dossier 559.

In 1974, the French Rugby Federation (FRF) hosted the Springboks in October and November with seven games between South Africa and regional opposition before two matches between the French team and the Springboks in Toulouse and Paris. In October, before the South African rugby team toured France, Ganga warned the French Minister for Sport, Pierre Mazeaud, that “If the [South African] tour is maintained, it is more than likely that Africa will then be led to re-examine its attitude towards French sport.”<sup>731</sup> Albert Lévy, head of the Movement Against Racism, Anti-Semitism and for Peace (MRAP), mobilized protests against the tour and condemned France as “the last refuge of South African racist sport” if it allowed the Springboks to play.<sup>732</sup> But Mazeaud argued in the French Assembly the same month that the government followed the Olympic Charter’s principles against “any link between sports and politics” and that “any discrimination against a country or a person because of its race, religion or political regime is prohibited.”<sup>733</sup> Hiding behind the Olympic Charter would be a common defense in both the 1974 and 1975 tours involving South Africa, but in private the Foreign Ministry was not even sure that it had the power to stop sports tours from taking place.<sup>734</sup>

The 1974 Springbok tour of France encouraged Albert Ferrasse, the head of the French Rugby Federation, to pursue a tour of South Africa. Ferrasse understood the political difficulties that the 1974 tour had caused the French government and so in December he sent a letter to the Foreign Ministry about whether it would condone his plans to set up a South African tour for 1975. The Foreign Ministry gave the go ahead but only “on the condition that it was not an

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<sup>731</sup> “D’un sport a l’autre,” *Le Monde*, 25 October 1974, 32.

<sup>732</sup> “Manifestation a L’Arrivée des Springboks a Nice,” *Le Monde*, 29 October 1974, 12.

<sup>733</sup> Note for the General Directorate of Cultural, Scientific, and Technical Relations, 23 December 1974, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid.

opportunity for inappropriate publicity.”<sup>735</sup> Instead of opposing the tour, the French government leant into it. The Foreign Ministry was unsure whether it could prevent the tour from taking place so instead it asked Ferrasse to ensure that the tour had a positive impact on racial politics in South Africa by making it a condition that “our sports teams are opposed by multiracial South African teams.”<sup>736</sup> After the tour, the government again stated that it only let it happen because Ferrasse had negotiated “a meeting with a multiracial team selected purely according to sporting criteria...if this request had been rejected, [the Secretary of State for Sport] would have advised against sending the French team.”<sup>737</sup>

But to the SCSA and anti-apartheid groups, the French team playing a multi-racial South African team was not the point. The French tour should not take place. Jean-Claude Ganga wrote to Prime Minister Jacques Chirac in March 1975, complaining that the “the support of France...is a significant endorsement for the racist regime of Pretoria.”<sup>738</sup> In private meetings between Ganga and the French ambassador to Cameroon, Hubert Dubois, the SCSA leader explained that the SCSA would have to condemn the tour and possibly call for a boycott of France because of the similar boycott of Britain in 1974 for touring South Africa. Ganga hoped for a letter from the Prime Minister that would “allow him to give the 40 African countries [of the SCSA]...sufficient guarantees to prevent the matter from becoming too important.”<sup>739</sup> But

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<sup>735</sup> Letter from Jacques Perrilliat, Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport, to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, date obscured (stamped as arriving 31 July 1975), AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>736</sup> Note for the General Directorate of Cultural, Scientific, and Technical Relations, 23 December 1974, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>737</sup> Letter from Jacques Perrilliat, Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport, to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, date obscured (stamped as arriving 31 July 1975), AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>738</sup> Letter from Jean Claude Ganga to Prime Minister of France, 11 March 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>739</sup> Telegram from Ambassador Hubert Dubois, Yaoundé, to Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 28 March 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

after seemingly receiving no such guarantees from the French government, Ganga warned in May 1975 that the SCSA would have to “break relations with France after its rugby team’s tour to South Africa.”<sup>740</sup> Finally, in a June announcement released the week the French rugby team started its tour of South Africa, the SCSA declared that sports contacts with South Africa were to be taken as a “challenge” to the continent and authorized members “to break all bilateral sporting relations with any country which encourages racism by taking part in sporting competitions with a racist country.”<sup>741</sup>

While France’s tour of South Africa took place in May and June 1975, the French government was concerned about the SCSA’s heightened rhetoric on the issue and became more wary of the organization. Dubois argued that France should try to build bridges with SCSA officials, reporting that grants of as little as 22,000 Francs to the SCSA, given in October 1975, had bought some goodwill from its executive, making it an intervention that “would be inexpensive and would have significant impact.”<sup>742</sup> Ganga also wrote a letter thanking the French embassy for its financial support of the SCSA and “called for regular [French] consultation with Africa so that we find ourselves in the right place on the same side of debates.”<sup>743</sup> However, there were some within the government who argued that the SCSA had been all bluster. Jacques Perrilliat, from the Ministry for Sport, believed that the French government should distinguish

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<sup>740</sup> Telegram from Yaoundé to Foreign Ministry, 22 May 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>741</sup> Letter from Hubert Dubois, French Ambassador to Cameroon, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 6 June 1975, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>742</sup> Letter from Hubert Dubois, French Ambassador to Cameroon, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 29 March 1976, AMAE, dossier 493.

<sup>743</sup> Letter from Jacques Negre, Chargé D’Affaires of French Embassy of Cameroon, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 12 May 1976, AMAE, dossier 493.

between the SCSA's public statements designed to scare countries into submission and "concrete actions...on the part of African states."<sup>744</sup>

The French were aware that tensions were rising. In 1974 the SCSA had boycotted all sports contacts with Britain. It had then followed that up with a threat to boycott France over its South African contacts. When in late 1975 the SCSA started to threaten New Zealand, French embassies started to report on the issue almost immediately. Embassies looked at SCSA statements to see if this was just bluster or concrete action. Jacques Negre, the Chargé D'Affaires at the French Embassy in Yaoundé, reported back to the Foreign Ministry about a Ganga press conference in May 1976 that described the SCSA's position on New Zealand as "a definite evolution compared to that adopted in 1975 during the tour of our rugby players in South Africa."<sup>745</sup>

When the SCSA boycotted the Montreal Olympics over the All-Blacks tour of South Africa, French embassies again debated whether this was bluster or the sort of concrete action they had long feared. Robert Mazeyrac, ambassador to Mali, reported that the country was slow to withdraw because of its hope to win a medal but in the end was forced to maintain its reputation as a leading fighter in the campaign against apartheid and boycott.<sup>746</sup> The Consul General in Montreal reported that the boycott campaign had been orchestrated by countries "who had nothing to lose by withdrawing from the Games, like Mauritius, or which usually rank

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<sup>744</sup> Letter from Jacques Perrilliat, Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport, to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, date obscured (stamped as arriving 31 July 1975), AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>745</sup> Letter from Jacques Negre, Chargé D'Affaires of French Embassy of Cameroon, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs, 12 May 1976, AMAE, dossier 493.

<sup>746</sup> Telegram from Robert Mazeyrac, French ambassador to Mali, to Jean Sauvagnargues, Foreign Minister, Directorate of Information Services and Press, 22 July 1976, AMAE, dossier 679.

among the extremists, like Uganda.”<sup>747</sup> But while dismissing some of the intentions behind the Montreal boycott, making the boycott seem opportunistic rather than a determined action, the Consul General was also concerned for the future of the Olympic movement. Both the New Zealand government’s refusal to prevent its rugby team from travelling to South Africa and the IOC’s siding with New Zealand had given “rise to a feeling of unease towards a significant part of the Third World in an area to which public opinion is sensitive and at a delicate moment for relations of developed countries with Africa.”<sup>748</sup> There was a real possibility that world sport could be split over the South Africa issue. The French government, to keep world sport together, now understood that rugby tours could break the Olympics.

After the 1976 boycott, the French government began to shift its policy on sports contacts with South Africa. Previously, Mazeaud and other French politicians had cited the Olympic Charter and argued for no politics in sport. But after Montreal the French government hesitated about contacts with South Africa and took a more active stance in advising federations and teams about apartheid sports contacts. French government officials told the French Judo Federation in 1977 that it would be “inappropriate” to host the 1979 World Judo Championships if South Africa were invited because it would “in fact be considered an unfriendly gesture by African states.”<sup>749</sup> When the French Parachuting Federation was set to host the 1978 World Cup of Parachuting in Vichy, the French government vacillated. It advised the Federation that inviting South Africa “could pose certain problems for the organizers, because Eastern countries generally threaten to withdraw from international competitions to which South Africa is invited,

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<sup>747</sup> Letter from Consul General of France in Montreal to the Ambassador of France to Canada, 22 July 1976, AMAE, dossier 493.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

<sup>749</sup> Note for the General Directorate of Cultural, Scientific and Technical Relations, 6 October 1977, AMAE, dossier 515.

in order to demonstrate their hostility to the apartheid regime,” but it conceded that it was “up to the French Federation to assess this real risk.”<sup>750</sup> Similarly, the Foreign Ministry indicated that while it was uncomfortable engaging in “authoritarian intervention” to stop the Skydiving Federation from attending the 1977 Skydiving World Cup in South Africa, the French government could not allow one of its Federations to “reinforce the policy of apartheid practiced in South Africa” by participating.<sup>751</sup>

The French Rugby Federation’s relationship with South Africa initially dampened in the years after Montreal. Ferrasse paused discussions on France-South Africa matches in 1976, rescheduling them to 1977 and then to 1978. In November 1978, feeling that enough time had passed since Montreal, Ferrasse announced that the FRF would invite South Africa to tour France the following year, but only “subject to the approval of the French government.”<sup>752</sup> This shifted the pressure from the FRF to the government to stop the tour. Immediately after Ferrasse’s announcement, Ganga wrote to the minister for sport, Jean-Pierre Soisson, demanding that he intervene and prevent a tour “aimed at encouraging the persistence of racial discrimination in sport in South Africa” and “avoid a situation with unpredictable consequences.”<sup>753</sup> Ganga’s threat of “unpredictable consequences” was vague. But given the proximity of the tour to the 1980 Olympics, rumors immediately started that the Springbok tour of France could lead to another African boycott of the Olympic Games.

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<sup>750</sup> Letter from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry for Youth, Sports and Leisure, 24 May 1978, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>751</sup> Note for then General Directorate of Cultural, Scientific and Technical Relations, 29 September 1976, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>752</sup> Letter from Jean-Claude Ganga to Jean-Pierre Soisson, Minister of Youth and Sport, 22 November 1978, AMAE, dossier 515.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

The danger was not lost on the International Olympic Committee. At the IOC's January 1979 meeting in Lausanne, Lord Killanin described the timing of the tour as "inopportune" and told reporters that he had expressed his "dissatisfaction to one of the French members of the IOC."<sup>754</sup> The French tour also became a frequent topic during Lord Killanin's tour of Central and Western Africa in February 1979. Congolese officials asked Lord Killanin about "the French Rugby tour and why [the IOC] could not stop it," leaving the IOC President struggling to explain why "this was not possible although we had expressed our disapproval of it."<sup>755</sup> Ganga also raised the question when the two men travelled together for part of the tour, with Ganga complaining about "the unfortunate situation regarding the French Rugby Football accepting a South African team...as he was obviously most anxious not to have a repetition of Montreal and was therefore obviously anxious to go to Moscow."<sup>756</sup> Despite the concern of so many officials and journalists on the African continent, the IOC President argued that the situation would blow over. "It is quite clear everybody is anxious to go to Moscow and my own feeling is that whatever the French do, the politics and the strength of France will not result in the type of boycott that happened with New Zealand at Montreal," he said, adding "I can possibly be very wrong on this."<sup>757</sup>

However, the issue continued to develop back in France. None of the French institutions with the authority to block the rugby tour wanted to do so. Unlike New Zealand in 1976, the French National and Olympic Sports Committee (CNOSF) had power over rugby. The CNOSF nonetheless refused to prevent the tour. Albert Ferrasse continued to assert that the rugby

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<sup>754</sup> AFP, "Olympic chiefs rap tour," *South China Morning Post*, 2 February 1979, 15.

<sup>755</sup> Lord Killanin, "Rapport de visite en Afrique du Sud," D-RMO1 AFRIS/040, SD 2, OSC, 16.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid, 40-41.



federation would heed to the French government's wishes, but the government claimed it had no power to intervene in the matter. Soisson said that, while his government opposed apartheid, its policy was of "non-intervention as long as this tour did not disturb public order."<sup>758</sup> Only after the IOC "threatened to suspend France from the Olympic movement and to withhold an invitation to next year's Games if the Springboks' tour went ahead" did Soisson confront CNOSF president Claude Collard over the rugby tour.<sup>759</sup> However, the CNOSF refused to budge. Pressure from the IOC and the French government hardened its position; Collard argued that this intervention demonstrated the "more and more aggressive" politicization of sport during the 1970s, which it condemned.<sup>760</sup> The CNOSF and the FRF would only cancel the tour with a direct government order.

Pressure developed from the anti-apartheid movement as well. Chris de Broglio, the Secretary General of South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), declared that "If the tour is held with the agreement of the French Government...it could lead to a boycott of the Moscow Games."<sup>761</sup> De Broglio predicted two possible endgames: One in which France attended, triggering an exodus of African countries and their allies from the Olympics, and one in which France was excluded. The former possibility "would be a mass boycott of the Games, which would lose their universal character and may not even take place," he wrote. "It could mean the death of the Olympic Games." Sam Ramsamy, the SANROC vice-President, agreed that the French government's "silence on the tour could be interpreted as a backing for the

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<sup>758</sup> "M. Soisson: le gouvernement n'a pas à intervenir tant que l'ordre n'est pas troublé," *Le Monde*, 15 March 1979, 13.

<sup>759</sup> "Cancel tour, or miss the Games," *South China Morning Post*, 14 April 1979, 15.

<sup>760</sup> Frederick B. Hill, "France contemplates visit by S. African team," *Baltimore Sun*, 2 May 1979, C9

<sup>761</sup> AFP, "Stop Tour, of Face Olympic Boycott," *South China Morning Post*, 23 March 1979, 21.

politics of apartheid” and that therefore “everything possible would be done to stop the tour from taking place.”

Jean-Claude Ganga threatened an SCSA boycott if the French government did not intervene. If the Springboks toured in 1979, then France would “suffer the consequences.”<sup>762</sup> It was up to one of the organizations, the CNOSF, FRF, or the French government, to take responsibility and cancel the tour. Ignati Novikov, the president of the Moscow OrgCommittee, joined in, warning that countries maintaining “sports contacts with South Africa or Rhodesia would be excluded from the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games.”<sup>763</sup> The logic was clear for the Soviet official: “we prefer to sacrifice one country for the sake of ten.” Novikov hoped that the increased pressure from the SCSA, anti-apartheid groups, the IOC, and the USSR would force the French government to cancel the tour and thus protect the Moscow Olympic Games.

The French government began to shift its position starting in May. In that month, Soisson met with Lord Killanin to discuss the tour and the government’s possible moves. The CNOSF maintained its position, but the French government wished to avoid damaging its reputation among Francophone African countries as well as being held responsible for a second Olympic boycott.<sup>764</sup> One suggestion that Soisson explained was for the French government to refuse visas to South African players.<sup>765</sup> This was a drastic step. However, as the summer rolled on and with the CNOSF and FRF refusing to cooperate, the French government was forced into action. In August, the government changed its immigration policy towards South Africa, getting rid of

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<sup>762</sup> Frederick B. Hill, “France contemplates visit by S. African team,” *Baltimore Sun*, 2 May 1979, C9

<sup>763</sup> “Russia Warns France Over Olympics,” *Korea Times*, 12 April 1979, 6.

<sup>764</sup> “France may call off tour,” *Guardian*, 4 May 1979, 28.

<sup>765</sup> “Cancel tour, or miss the Games,” *South China Morning Post*, 14 April 1979, 15.

visa-free travel that had been in place since 1958.<sup>766</sup> From September onwards, South Africans would have to apply for visas to travel to France. This meant that the French government could now control which South Africans were allowed into France, specifically excluding those on the Springbok roster.

Backlash was immediate. The Springbok rugby team threatened in August to apply for visas so as “to force the French government to take responsibility for cancelling the trip” and to reinforce the notion of state interference in sport.<sup>767</sup> The FRF was also frustrated. Ferrasse, responding to the decision, said he was “sorry, not to say disappointed” with the government’s change of policy.<sup>768</sup> He conceded “that politics trumps sports... Thus, the government found a way to remain master of the game.”<sup>769</sup> On the other hand, the SCSA hailed the French government’s intervention as a major success. Ganga thanked the French government for its “courageous decision to refuse visas of entry into France to the South African rugby team.”<sup>770</sup> This decision, Ganga said, was an “eloquent testimony of your country’s loyalty to the thoughts of Pierre de Coubertin and an important contribution to the triumph of the Olympic ideal.” The French government, however, framed its choice in terms of pragmatism rather than Olympic ideals. Soisson said that the government intervened to protect the country’s standing in the world.<sup>771</sup> The government “judged that contacts with South African teams could present

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<sup>766</sup> Alain Giraudo, “En rétablissant les visas pour les Sud-Africains Le gouvernement peut empêcher la tournée des Springboks,” *Le Monde*, 3 August 1979, 22.

<sup>767</sup> “Les Sud-Africains Demanderont Leurs Visas,” *Le Monde*, 4 August 1979, 8.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid.

<sup>770</sup> Telegram from French Embassy in Yaoundé to Foreign Ministry, 4 September 1979, AMAE, dossier 679.

<sup>771</sup> “M. Soisson Explique La Position Du Gouvernement Dans L’Affaire des Springboks,” *Le Monde*, 6 September 1979, 9.

disadvantages for French diplomacy, particularly with regard to the countries of black Africa.”<sup>772</sup>

Thus a self-interested move to protect France’s reputation in Africa saved the Moscow Olympic Games from another boycott.

### **Britain and the Barbarians, 1979**

The Springbok tour of France was not the only South African rugby tour to threaten the Moscow Games. British and South African rugby unions discussed two tours during 1979: one for the end of 1979 and another for the middle of 1980. The first would be an October tour of Britain by the South African “Quagga” Barbarians team, a multi-racial side composed of equal parts white, colored, and black players.<sup>773</sup> The second was a British Lions tour of South Africa to take place from May to July 1980, just before the start of the Moscow Olympic Games. Britain’s rugby contacts with South Africa were provocative. It was as if the British Rugby Unions had deliberately chosen this moment to cause a massive problem for the IOC and USSR.

During 1978-1979, after a fallow period of contacts between Britain and South Africa, connections developed once again. British and South African regional, club, and school teams in cricket and rugby started to tour each other’s countries, often in secret, to build relations through sport. Early in 1979, Britain’s tours garnered more attention, especially as the French crisis threatened the Olympics. Proposals of a British Lions tour of South Africa emerged in March and April to much condemnation. In May, the Surrey Rugby club travelled to South Africa and Rhodesia to play a series of matches that angered anti-apartheid activists.<sup>774</sup> Over the summer,

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<sup>772</sup> Ibid.

<sup>773</sup> The “Quagga” moniker was given to the team because of the Quagga’s three colored stripes: white, brown and black.

<sup>774</sup> “Tempers Flare as Rhodesians down powerful Surrey,” *South China Morning Post*, 21 May 1976, 21.

Welsh rugby clubs Llanelli, Cardiff, and Newport all organised tours of South Africa. These tours appeared to have the blessing of the establishment with former Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath giving a farewell speech to Llanelli in May.<sup>775</sup> At the event, Heath, accompanied by Dawie de Villiers, the new South African ambassador to Britain and former Springbok rugby player, “declared his opposition to breaking of sports ties” with South Africa and instead “called for the strengthening of sports ties with the apartheid regime.”<sup>776</sup> Contacts were increasing at such a rate that Peter Hain, organizer of the Stop the Seventy Tour protests, remobilized Stop All Racist Tours (SART) to “combat what is seen as a growing rapprochement between British and South African sportsmen.”<sup>777</sup>

A key reason for the resurgence of sports contacts was the return of the Conservative Party to power under Margaret Thatcher in May. The previous Labour governments under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan opposed apartheid sports contacts, but historically the Conservatives had been “bridge builders” who wanted to maintain contacts through sport with South Africa to effect change.<sup>778</sup> Dennis Thatcher, the Prime Minister’s husband, was known to favor rugby contacts with South Africa. Margaret Thatcher did not come into power with a set policy on sports contacts with South Africa, but South African officials believed that the new Thatcher government would promote “a softer line towards sporting contacts” and allow them an opportunity to send “a representative multi-racial side to Britain” in the near future.<sup>779</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> “N/a,” *Socialist Challenge*, 21 June 1979, 11.

<sup>776</sup> “British oil for South Africa?” *Daily World*, 13 July 1970, 11.

<sup>777</sup> David Beresford, “Hain warns on sporting links,” *Guardian*, 26 June 1979, 4; SART had been created originally in 1973 to stop the 1974 British Lions tour of South Africa.

<sup>778</sup> Rider and Llewellyn, “Barbarians, Bridge Builders, and Boycott,” 25.

<sup>779</sup> Chris Lander, “Rugby Plan to Beat Ban,” *Daily Mirror*, 27 March 1979, n.p.

The growing connections between South Africa and Britain, as well as the proposals over the British Lions rugby tour in 1980, sparked discussions over Britain's exclusion from the Moscow Olympics to prevent an African boycott of the 1980 Games. Hain argued that "the growing list of sports contacts between Britain and South Africa is turning us into the black sheep of international sport."<sup>780</sup> Vladimir Popov, one of the OrgCommittee Vice-Presidents, issued a clear threat at a press conference in Moscow in July. "The doors of Olympic Moscow will be tightly shut for the advocates of racism and apartheid," he said. "We have always denounced any contacts in any sport with teams and countries having racist regimes, with South Africa and Rhodesia."<sup>781</sup> Popov argued that "there need be no British blood on Russian hands" as long as the British government adhered to its international obligations under the UN and Gleneagles declarations.<sup>782</sup> At the press conference, Popov repeatedly said that it was not up to the USSR or the OrgCommittee who came to the Games, but rather it was the decision of the IOC. However, journalists in Britain understood that "if the tour is made, the British Olympic team will not be welcome in Moscow - will, indeed, be prevented from participating in the Games" to prevent further difficulties with African participation.<sup>783</sup>

Despite the warnings, the British Rugby Unions and the South African Rugby Board decided on a multi-racial rugby tour in October with games in England, Scotland and Wales against club sides. The reaction from anti-apartheid campaigners was forthright; Hain claimed that "the rugby authorities are hell-bent on a showdown over the 1980 Olympics, doing something so blatant as bringing over a disguised Springbok tour."<sup>784</sup> Conservative minister for

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<sup>780</sup> David Beresford, "Hain warns on sporting links," *Guardian*, 26 June 1979, 4.

<sup>781</sup> John Rodda, "Lions the big worry," *Guardian*, 28 July 1979, 23.

<sup>782</sup> Ian Woolridge, "We mean it - Popov," *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1979, n.p.

<sup>783</sup> Alan Watkins, "Sport and politics do mix - messily," *Observer*, 12 August 1979, 9.

<sup>784</sup> John Rodda, "Storm grows over SA rugby tour," *Guardian*, 28 August 1979, 1.

sport, Hector Monro, a former president of the Scottish Rugby Union, tried to stall the tour by appealing to the rugby authorities in a letter, arguing that while the Conservative government valued “the independence of our sporting bodies...I believe that they should consider their wider responsibilities too.”<sup>785</sup> However, the rugby unions had little interest in the impact of their connections with South Africa and did not cancel the tour.

The Barbarians tour placed the British government and the British Olympic Association in a difficult position. The tour immediately brought international pressure on Britain over its failure to adhere to the Gleneagles Declaration and threatened its position at the 1980 Olympic Games. Michael Manley, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, sent a telex to Thatcher expressing his fears that through inaction Britain was aiding apartheid.<sup>786</sup> Akporode Clarke, the Nigerian Chairman of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid, released a statement calling on the British government to forbid the Barbarians tour, which he described as “subterfuge and a provocation” on the part of South Africa.<sup>787</sup> An editorial in Tanzania’s *Daily News* claimed the Barbarians tour left the Thatcher government with two choices: “either [Britain] cuts off sporting ties with South Africa...[o]r it must accept isolation from the rest of the world in the sports arena.”<sup>788</sup> The SCSA’s Abraham Ordia issued the clearest threat to British sport and the Moscow Olympic Games. In a letter to Hector Monro, Ordia wrote that if Britain’s contacts with South Africa continued then “Africa will have no alternative but to act if we are driven up against the

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<sup>785</sup> “Letter from Hector Monro to JGM Hart,” 1 September 1979, The National Archives, Kew, UK (hereafter TNA): FCO 105/291.

<sup>786</sup> “Telex from Jamaican High Commission to the Prime Minister,” 27 September 1979, TNA: FCO 105/292.

<sup>787</sup> “Statement by Chairman of Special Committee Against Apartheid Regarding Ireland’s Ban on South African Rugby Team,” 20 September 1979, TNA: FCO 105/292.

<sup>788</sup> “Comment,” *Daily News*, 9 November 1979, n.p.

wall by the actions of selfish sportsmen and women, or by the failure of Governments to act in a sufficiently committed way. Africa will not hesitate to put principles before medals.”<sup>789</sup>

Yet, the Barbarians tour went ahead in October 1979. The Barbarians played seven matches across England, Wales, and Scotland. SART’s protests of the games were underwhelming. Protestors “failed to disrupt extensively or force the abandonment of any of the seven tour matches.”<sup>790</sup> At Coventry, seven hundred anti-apartheid protesters were successfully contained by the more than two thousand police officers stationed at the stadium to ensure the game took place. Hain estimated that extra security for the Barbarians tour cost taxpayers £27,000 and cost rugby authorities £47,000; this meant that a two-month, twenty-five match Springbok tour, as had been the case in 1969-70, remained financially unfeasible. But that was not the point of the tour. The Barbarians’ tour was proof that a tour could take place, and the government would do nothing to prevent it.

The Barbarians tour, according to *Guardian* correspondent John Rodda, was a symbolic victory that established a “bridgehead” between the two countries, with the growing possibility of a Lions tour next year.<sup>791</sup> Chick Henderson, the manager of the touring Barbarians side, described the tour as having “gone wonderfully well, both on and off the pitch. If I was one of the people organising the demonstrations, I would be a terribly disappointed man.”<sup>792</sup> Johannesburg’s *Sunday Times* said the tour showed “that there is a large body of rugby opinion in Britain which will support vigorously next year’s proposed Lions’ tour.” The tour had been a

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<sup>789</sup> “Letter from Abraham Ordia to Hector Monro,” 20 October 1979, TNA: FCO 105/293.

<sup>790</sup> David Beresford, “Conflicting Claims to Final Score as Rugby Tour Ends,” *Guardian*, 29 October 1979, 28.

<sup>791</sup> John Rodda, “Bridgehead established,” *Guardian*, 29 October 1979, 25.

<sup>792</sup> David Beresford, “Conflicting Claims to Final Score as Rugby Tour Ends,” *Guardian*, 29 October 1979, 28.



successful “water-testing venture.” Rugby reporter John Hopkins said the tour’s “relative success convinced the Home Unions and South Africa that there was no reason why they shouldn’t continue their policy of maintaining contact.”<sup>793</sup>

The tour sparked reactions from both the USSR and the SCSA to express their unhappiness with Britain’s South African contacts. Aviator Kiev, the Soviet rugby champions, cancelled the USSR’s first rugby tour of Britain at the last minute in protest at the Barbarians tour.<sup>794</sup> The Soviet Rugby Federation announced that it had, “in the name of Soviet sportsmen, made a decisive protest against the appearance in Britain of the South African team.”<sup>795</sup> OrgCommittee official Vladimir Prokopov informed British officials at the Central Council of Physical Recreation conference in November that “We in the Soviet Union stand against sports contacts with South Africa, against all manifestations of apartheid in sport, and against the anti-human policies.”<sup>796</sup> Prokopov warned delegates that the OrgCommittee was determined to prevent a second Montreal at all costs, though he did not explicitly threaten the British presence at the Games in order to ensure African participation.

The Barbarians tour also drew the attention of the IOC, which had watched on with horror as France and then Britain had reconnected with South Africa. After the IOC had spent the last year fighting the UN’s Convention Against Apartheid in Sport, the last thing it wanted was to have to fight another boycott campaign. During the IOC’s Tripartite Commission meeting in November 1979, Vitaly Smirnov, the IOC vice-President, expressed his “strong fears that recent actions in the field of European rugby could jeopardize all that had been done

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<sup>793</sup> John Hopkins, *British Lions 1980* (World’s Work Ltd, 1980), 32.

<sup>794</sup> David Irvine, “Aviator with a mission,” *Guardian*, 24 October 1979, 25; “Kiev cancel their British Tours,” *Guardian*, 27 October 1979, 22.

<sup>795</sup> “Soviet Rugby Team Pulls Out,” *Los Angeles Times*, 3 November 1979, B11

<sup>796</sup> “Russia Warns on Olympics,” *Bournemouth Evening Echo*, 15 November 1979, 3.

previously.”<sup>797</sup> His primary concern was Britain’s rugby tour to South Africa that had “raised strong opposition in African countries, and some of them were now speaking of a possible boycott, or the exclusion of Great Britain from the 1980 Olympic Games.”<sup>798</sup> Mohamed Mzali, another IOC vice-President, also expressed his concern since there “were no legal or statutory steps the IOC could take, as rugby is not an Olympic sport.”<sup>799</sup> There was little the IOC could do except condemn the tour and hope.

Lord Killanin worried that this was a repeat of Montreal. The situations were eerily similar. He called for patience on the matter. The IOC had to “await the outcome of the [SCSA’s] Yaoundé meeting” in December before taking any further action.<sup>800</sup> He hoped that the SCSA would not rise to the bait. Charles Palmer, the British head of International Judo Federation, wanted the IOC to get more involved and warn the British government to not do anything to risk the Games. The British Sports Council had proposed a fact-finding mission to South Africa, which Palmer believed “would not help towards finding a solution” and would be seen as just another provocation by African states.<sup>801</sup> Lord Killanin agreed and the IOC issued critical statements concerning Britain’s rising sports contacts with South Africa, but did not make any demands, instead leaving the decision up to sports organizations.<sup>802</sup> The IOC’s lack of action on Britain’s South African connections meant that the decisions concerning the Olympics would be made by the SCSA once again.

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<sup>797</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting of the Tripartite Commission - Lausanne (1979),” 2.

<sup>798</sup> Ibid.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid.

<sup>800</sup> Ibid.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid.

<sup>802</sup> “IOC calls for peace,” *The Gazette*, 21 November 1979, 56.

Ordia had threatened before the Barbarians tour that Africa would not think twice about sacrificing medals for dignity. Towards the end of the tour, the SCSA announced that it was formulating a plan to punish Britain. It wanted to organize a “campaign with other Asian, Caribbean and socialist nations, seeking their support to exclude Britain from the Olympic Games if it persists in intensifying its sporting links with apartheid South Africa.”<sup>803</sup> The Barbarians tour was egregious. The British government had not intervened, and it had even seemed to condone the tour by providing so much protection. What was worse, the gleeful response by rugby enthusiasts to the tour’s success increased the chances that the bigger Lions tour would happen the following year. The British Rugby Unions had not officially announced the tour; it seemed only a matter of time before they would. Given this, the SCSA issued its warning that if the tour went ahead, then it would seek to have Britain kicked out of the Olympics. And if that didn’t work, then Africa could boycott. As it had in 1976, the SCSA now held the fate of the Olympic Games in its hands.

### **SCSA Assembly, December 1979**

The SCSA meeting in Yaoundé, December 11-17, was a showdown over Britain’s contacts with South Africa. The Barbarians tour had raised the stakes as the first South African tour of Britain since 1969-70. However, it was the prospective British Lions tour set for the middle of 1980, just before the start of the Moscow Olympics, that appeared to Soviet and African officials as a deliberate provocation designed to either force a boycott of Moscow or break relations between Africa and Britain. The Lions tour of South Africa was designed to grab headlines in both countries and restart the long-running traditional rivalry between the two

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<sup>803</sup> “Une Campagne du C.S.S.A. Contre la Grande Bretagne,” *Le Monde*, 24 October 1979, 22.

countries. It would provide relief to a beleaguered South African sporting public and flout the apartheid sports boycott. The SCSA, then, had a choice to make in Yaoundé: how should it react to the proposed British Lions tour of South Africa and what tactics would either force Britain to back down or punish the country for its intransigence?

The Soviet Union had attempted for years to prevent exactly this situation. Since the Montreal Olympics, the OrgCommittee had reported that one of the biggest risks facing the Moscow Olympics was “if some state decided to establish relations with South Africa for provocative purposes on the eve of the Olympic Games. The threat...could lead to reduced number of participant countries...which would be extremely undesirable because the number of participating states serves as an indication of a successful Games.”<sup>804</sup> The OrgCommittee had used the next four years to “expose and neutralize the actions of reactionary forces, directed in ultimate aim to disrupt the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.”

To the British, the Soviet fear of a boycott worked in their favor. Lord Killanin had informed Monro, through backchannels, that “the Russians will not welcome significant disruption of the Games” but “are believed to be in touch with the major pressure groups to cool the issue” and thus prevent the SCSA from launching a second boycott even if Britain remains a provocative issue.<sup>805</sup> Perhaps mollified by these comments, the British government did not appear to send anyone to the SCSA meeting to plead their case and British media provided little coverage of the events, surprising given that Britain’s future in the Olympic Games was up for debate. Instead, the OrgCommittee went to work for Britain in Cameroon.

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<sup>804</sup> “Document 32,” *Five Rings*, 119.

<sup>805</sup> “Extract from Brief for Sir John Garlick’s Lunch at Buckingham Palace,” 6 November 1979, TNA: AT 60/163

The Soviets, as Lord Killanin predicted, did Britain's job and sought to lessen tensions within the SCSA. The OrgCommittee had worked for years to win support from African states and increased those efforts in the second half of 1979 as conflicts over Britain and France escalated. One worry was that the SCSA would launch another boycott over Britain's sports contacts, spurred by the aggressive rhetoric of Abraham Ordia, as had been the case in 1976 over New Zealand. But Ordia in August 1979 promised the OrgCommittee to tone down the anti-apartheid rhetoric to avoid disrupting the Moscow Olympics.<sup>806</sup> When Novikov spoke to Ordia on the eve of the SCSA General Assembly on December 12, Ordia stated that the SCSA would not give in to "western provocation" on the South Africa issue.<sup>807</sup> African politicians understood that the "provocative actions of South Africa cannot be viewed as anything other than a manifestation of a conspiracy of imperialist power against the African continent, against the unity of the Olympic movement and, in particular, Olympiad-80."<sup>808</sup> Seemingly, the Soviets had managed to calm matters before the debate could start.

However, could Ordia, and others, be trusted? Ordia had promised to remain quiet on the apartheid issue and not generate problems for the Moscow Olympics in August. But he had then raised the prospect of an African boycott in response to the Barbarians tour in October. The Soviets took hope from statements from Zambia, where Walumino Mundia, the Chairman of the Zambia's Youth and Sports Committee, said his country would not boycott Moscow: "We should not victimise ourselves by not attending the Olympic Games, for we have not violated any of the rules."<sup>809</sup> Mundia continued: "It is Britain which has violated the rules" so why should

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<sup>806</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 58-61.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid.

<sup>809</sup> "Zambia will not boycott Games," *Guardian*, 1 December 1979, 25.

Zambia suffer? Yet, when the topic was introduced in the SCSA General Assembly, Zambia and Nigeria pushed for a discussion of a boycott. A frustrated Novikov wrote in his report that “despite the assurances of sincere aspiration to take part in Olympiad-80, [Nigeria and Zambia] at the same time persistently thought about the threat to boycott the Moscow Games of continuing sporting contacts of Western countries with SA.”<sup>810</sup> A relief for Novikov was that the majority of countries at the meeting refused to discuss a boycott of the Olympic Games.

SCSA members were frustrated by Britain’s renewed contacts with South Africa but did not want to boycott another Olympic Games. A General Assembly resolution called for member states to “stop...bilateral sporting relations with any countries having sporting contact with South Africa.”<sup>811</sup> This punishment echoed the last British Lions tour in 1974, when the SCSA had forbidden members from competing against British teams or athletes. In fact, it was more limited than the boycott in 1974 since it did not ban athletes from competing against British athletes, such as in Moscow. However, under pressure from the Nigerian delegation, the SCSA said it would reconsider Britain’s position at the Olympics if the Lions tour went ahead.<sup>812</sup> For the Soviets, this was a partial win. It indicated that African states did not want to take part in a boycott of the Moscow Olympics over Britain, but it also appeared that the topic would have to be revisited after the Lions tour was inevitably announced in 1980.

As a result of the SCSA meeting, the Moscow Olympics appeared safe. John Rodda, reporting for the *Guardian*, wrote from Yaoundé that “if any doubts remained before the Supreme Council met that Africa would mount a Montreal-style boycott of the Moscow Games,

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<sup>810</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.76, D.200, 84.

<sup>811</sup> “Document 92,” *Five Rings*, 256.

<sup>812</sup> “Olympic Warning,” *Guardian*, 19 December 1979, 1.

there were none after the Russians had flown home.”<sup>813</sup> On Christmas Eve 1979, IOC-Vice President Mohamed Mzali, who had also participated in the SCSA meeting, wrote to Lord Killanin that SCSA members had made “a distinction...between the freezing with Great Britain...and the boycotting the Olympic Games.”<sup>814</sup> “In conclusion, I believe that we will have no trouble in Moscow on this side, unless unforeseeable events occur,” Mzali wrote in his summary.

### **Afghanistan and the British Lions**

The same day Mohamed Mzali told Lord Killanin there would be no boycott of Moscow, the first Soviet soldiers entered Afghanistan. Western and Islamic countries debated how to punish the USSR’s aggression. Very quickly, in early January, NATO members began bandying the idea of an Olympic boycott to demonstrate their opposition to Moscow’s incursion in Central Asia. On January 20, President Carter announced to the world that if the Soviet Union refused to withdraw from Afghanistan within a month, then the US would not compete in Moscow.

Rising tensions over Afghanistan distracted the world from Britain’s continued contacts with South Africa at the start of 1980. British rugby officials met on January 6 to confirm what everyone already knew: the Lions would tour South Africa starting in May.<sup>815</sup> The timing was not lost on observers in the Soviet Union. An article published in *Sovetskii Sport* argued that

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<sup>813</sup> John Rodda, “Russia determined on a full house in Moscow,” *Guardian*, 20 December 1979, 17.

<sup>814</sup> “Letter from Mohamed Mzali to Lord Killanin on the SCSA meeting in December 1979,” 24 December 1979, E-REO2-CSSA/013, SD1, OSC.

<sup>815</sup> Another important date here is that the British Sports Council started its “fact-finding” mission to South Africa on January 14. The three-person delegation was ostensibly in South Africa to learn more about the changes taking place, but its report would be taken as a recommendation on whether sport links between Britain and South Africa could restart in full.

conservative British forces were using the anti-invasion boycott campaign of Moscow “as a cover for legalizing British rugby links with South Africa.”<sup>816</sup> Sentiment within the pro-rugby crowd proved as much. John Reason, a journalist who accompanied the Lions through South Africa, commented that after Afghanistan, “if all the countries of the free world wanted to send Rugby teams to South Africa simultaneously, they could have done it with impunity, as far as international athletics were concerned, in 1980.”<sup>817</sup> The invasion of Afghanistan had changed the political situation around the Moscow Olympics completely. Before, the question had been whether the Soviet Union would bar Britain from the Olympics to avoid an anti-apartheid boycott. Now, the question was whether the British team would make it to Moscow because of the Thatcher-backed, US-led Olympic boycott over Afghanistan.

For the British government, the invasion of Afghanistan provided a welcome relief from the pressures of the previous six months over sports contacts with South Africa. On a Foreign and Commonwealth Office letter discussing the impact of Afghanistan on the Moscow Olympics and possible reactions, a handwritten note claimed that “a transfer [of the Games from Moscow] wd. also make the UK’s exclusion from the Olympics over S. Africa rather less likely.”<sup>818</sup> The boycott campaign appeared to help the British government avoid the humiliation of being kicked out of the Olympics as the tables turned. Suddenly the USSR sought to encourage Britain’s participation in Moscow rather than threaten it. But the relief was temporary. The British government would spend the next six months justifying its hesitance in blocking the Lions tour,

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<sup>816</sup> “Telegram from Moscow to FCO: Possible Olympic Boycott,” 14 January 1980, TNA: FCO 13/967.

<sup>817</sup> John Reason, *Backs to the Wall* (Rugby Football Books Ltd., 1980), 2.

<sup>818</sup> “Afghanistan: The Olympics,” 3 January 1980, TNA: FCO 105/525.



while proactively seeking to stop the British Olympic Association (BOA) and other countries from competing at the 1980 Olympic Games.

Thatcher's support for the Moscow Olympic boycott created new problems for the British government. This became clearer as the British government sought to campaign for the US-led boycott but came up against opposition from countries and the SCSA who were angry that the British government still refused to do anything about the British Lions tour. The hypocrisy was particularly galling to many. In 1979, the Thatcher government repeated that sport and politics did not mix. But after Afghanistan, the opposite appeared to be true. Between mid-January and mid-May, Thatcher wrote four times to the BOA asking British athletes to boycott the Moscow Olympic Games. Thatcher's struggle with BOA Chairman Dennis Follows was covered extensively by the press. Tensions grew in Britain as the BOA refused to follow the government's desires even after Parliament voted 305-147 to boycott the Olympics.<sup>819</sup> This contrasted with Thatcher's handling of the British Lions tour, where the Thatcher had even withdrawn funding for the BOA to try and force the team out of the Olympics. Hector Monro had been left in charge of preventing that tour through weak letters that did not inspire much fear.

The British government knew it was demonstrating double standards, but still wanted to appear as if it were treating both boycotts the same. In a letter from the Foreign Office to the Embassy in Cape Town, Lord Gordon-Lennox argued that the government needed to "treat the Lions Tour to South Africa on the same basis as that of any British teams which may attend the Olympic Games in Moscow. It would be politically damaging both internationally and at home

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<sup>819</sup> Ian Aitken, "315 MPs vote for Olympic Boycott," *Guardian*, 18 March 1980, 1.

for us to appear less concerned over the Lions Tour.”<sup>820</sup> But because of the public nature of Thatcher’s struggle with BOA Chairman Dennis Follows, it was already clear that the government was less concerned about the Lions than the Olympics.

Anti-apartheid campaigners and several Commonwealth states complained about this double standard. Sam Ramsamy, the vice-President of SANROC, wrote several times to Thatcher in 1980, criticizing her decision to speak about the Moscow boycott debate but remaining “noticeably silent” on the Lions tour in the same period.<sup>821</sup> The Halt All Racist Tours movement in New Zealand argued that because “the Prime Minister has made absolutely no doubt of where she stands regarding a British boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics” it was now necessary to take “an equally forceful stand against the British Lions tour of South Africa.”<sup>822</sup> Hain complained that “the government is guilty of double standards in taking a vigorous position over British athletes going to Moscow but not being prepared to actively oppose the international crime of apartheid in sport.”<sup>823</sup> The British government’s attempts to appear equally concerned about both South Africa and the Soviet Union had failed to appease anti-apartheid activists.

African officials and politicians also noted this inconsistency in their discussions with British officials. The High Commissioner to Nigeria, Mervyn Brown, tried to ask Abraham Ordia about the SCSA’s position on Afghanistan and the American-led boycott of the Moscow Olympics, but Ordia turned the conversation back to Britain’s position on South Africa. In

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<sup>820</sup> “Letter from Lord N Gordon-Lennox to R B Dorman Esq.,” 17 April 1980, TNA: AT 60/202.

<sup>821</sup> “British Lions Tour to South Africa,” 3 March 1980, TNA: FCO 105/525.

<sup>822</sup> “Submissions Presented by the Halt All Racist Tours Movement to the British High Commissioner Sir Harold Smedley,” 24 January 1980, TNA: AT 60/202.

<sup>823</sup> “Letter from Peter Hain, Stop All Racist Tours, to Prime Minister Thatcher,” 10 March 1980, TNA: FCO 105/525.

Brown's account, Ordia "said with some relish that on the issue of the Moscow Games he was happy to accept the advice constantly given him by British sporting leaders in the context of South Africa, that sport should not be mixed with politics."<sup>824</sup> The SCSA President lectured Brown on how "Britain had never given him any support in imposing a sporting boycott on South Africa" and that while the SCSA would not put pressure on the IOC or USSR to disinvite Britain to the 1980 Olympics, he would make sure the SCSA used the 1982 Commonwealth Games to make its anger known. "Mr. Ordia is not making idle threats," a handwritten note in the margin of Brown's report warned. "He relishes using the SCSA's boycott power."

Britain's reputation in Africa was harmed by both the Lions tour and the British government's double standard when it came to Moscow and South Africa. The Zambian Prime Minister Kenneth Kaunda was reportedly angered by Britain's apparent condoning of the Lions tour of South Africa in light of its efforts to prevent athletes going to Moscow.<sup>825</sup> President William Tolbert of Liberia questioned why Britain would support the anti-Soviet boycott in protest of the USSR's subjugation of the Afghan people, but could not support action on South Africa given the apartheid government's subjugation of its non-white populations.<sup>826</sup> Perhaps most surprising was a letter from Senegalese President Léopold Senghor to Thatcher criticizing the British government's lack of action over the British Lions tour. Senghor warned that Britain's actions "will not fail to have political repercussions," and demanded that in the future the government should make "an effort to ban these sporting connections between [her] country

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<sup>824</sup> "British Rugby Tour of South Africa," 29 February 1980, TNA: FCO 105/525.

<sup>825</sup> "Afghanistan, Soviet Union and the Olympics," 12 February 1980, TNA: PREM 19/374.

<sup>826</sup> "Letter from President Tolbert Jr to Prime Minister Thatcher," 13 March 1980, TNA: 105/525.

and South Africa, the country of apartheid.”<sup>827</sup> That even Senghor, who had complained of politics and sports being mixed at the 1976 Montreal Olympics, now demanded state intervention in sports policy was a true indictment of Thatcher’s approach.

Britain’s record of promoting a firewall between sports and politics now hampered its attempts to rally support for the Moscow boycott in sub-Saharan Africa. The British embassy in Zambia said that the Moscow Boycott was an unpopular topic since the instigators were “the same countries which criticized (and ‘laughed at’) Africa over the Montreal Games walk-out.”<sup>828</sup> In Nigeria, President Shehu Shagari’s new government “resent[ed] outside attempts to bounce them into a boycott” and did not want to associate themselves with Britain and the United States, both of which had “abandoned Black Africa at Montreal in 1976.”<sup>829</sup> British embassies sent complaints back to London from the Ghanaian and Botswana governments, two countries that eventually decided to boycott the Moscow Olympics, criticising Britain’s lack of assistance in Montreal and its chiding of Nigeria’s boycott of the Commonwealth Games in 1978.<sup>830</sup> The Olympic boycott in Montreal weighed heavily in the debates within Africa about whether to support the Moscow Olympic boycott.

Britain’s attempt to persuade Commonwealth and African states to join the anti-Soviet boycott of the Moscow Games was made even harder by an inconvenient sporting result: South Africa won the four-match series against the British Lions. In 1974, the reputational damage of the Lions tour had been mitigated by the fact that the British team had won convincingly. John

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<sup>827</sup> “Letter from President Senghor to Prime Minister Thatcher,” 26 February 1980, TNA: 105/525.

<sup>828</sup> “Telegram from Lusaka to FCO: Olympic Boycott,” 24 January 1980, TNA: FCO 13/969.

<sup>829</sup> “Telegram from Lagos to FCO: Olympic Games,” 19 February 1980, TNA: FCO 13/973.

<sup>830</sup> “Telegram from Accra to FCO: Olympic Games,” 19 February 1980, TNA: FCO 13/973; “Telegram from Gaborone to FCO: Olympic Games,” 19 February 1980, TNA: FCO 13/973.

Leahy, Britain's ambassador to South Africa, reported back to Foreign Minister Lord Carrington that South Africa's victory over the Lions in 1980 "did the morale of white South Africans no end of good...For three months people could and did talk nothing but about rugby: other things were relegated to the inside pages of the press."<sup>831</sup> That victory buoyed white South Africans, who felt themselves to be vindicated against a world that had locked them out of international sport. Leahy concluded that there were positives, though limited, "we ourselves can perhaps draw some modest satisfaction from the twin facts that we opposed the tour and yet the tour took place. It may sound cynical to say it, but, leaving aside the wider considerations, in the context of South Africa today I believe both decisions were right."

Lord Gordon-Lennox from the Foreign Office and Hector Monro, on the other hand, argued that the tour would undermine Britain's ability to influence Commonwealth and African states. Gordon-Lennox was concerned about the wider impact of Britain's role in the post-imperial space: "Our sporting links with South Africa could therefore undermine our credibility in black Africa and weaken still further our ability to exercise a moderating influence on black African countries over South African issues."<sup>832</sup> Hector Monro had similar concerns, "it is certainly possible...African (and Caribbean) feelings might find expression in action prejudicial to the UK's economic interests and her ability to play a full, and influential, part in the broader activities of the Commonwealth."<sup>833</sup> To E.J. Sharland in the Cultural Relations department, the only real silver lining of the Lions tour was that it would now lead to South Africa's tour of New Zealand in 1981, which "would divert some of the African anger from our handling of the Lions'

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<sup>831</sup> "The 1980 Lions' Tour of South Africa," 7 August 1980, TNA: FCO 105/527.

<sup>832</sup> "Subject: The 1980 Lion's Tour of South Africa," TNA: FCO 105/527.

<sup>833</sup> "Subject: South Terrace at Twickenham: Sports Council Grant," 19 September 1980, TNA: FCO 105/527.

tour.”<sup>834</sup> But this could further damage the Commonwealth unity. The “price therefore, that the Commonwealth (and New Zealand) might pay for our partial escape from criticism over the Lions’ tour could be very high,” Sharland wrote. “This is cold comfort indeed.” British officials worried that by reconnecting with South Africa, Britain’s influence within the Global South would diminish and that the Commonwealth could be split. A high political price to play with South Africa.

The British Lions tour failed to provoke an anti-apartheid boycott of the Moscow Olympics, as the New Zealand tour had in 1976. The SCSA, despite earlier threats, repeatedly refused to act — either to demand Britain’s removal from the Olympics or to threaten a boycott of the Moscow Games. There were three reasons for this. African states were firstly tired of boycotting the Olympics to punish apartheid sports contacts, which they saw as a punishment to themselves. They refused to fall for what they saw as deliberate provocation. The Soviets had secondly done good work to establish that the Moscow Games were for African states. They had repeated the message that South Africa and conservative forces would try to use apartheid sports contacts to ruin the 1980 Olympics. The invasion of Afghanistan, thirdly, split global attention between the anti-apartheid issue of Britain and South Africa, on one hand, and the Cold War issue of USSR and Afghanistan, on the other. The combination of these three factors prevented a repeat African boycott over South African sports contacts in 1980.

## **France 1980**

The French government had intervened in August 1979 to prevent South Africa from touring France and to protect France’s place at the Moscow Olympic Games. But questions

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<sup>834</sup> “Sporting Contacts with South Africa,” 3 September 1980, TNA: FCO 105/526.

remained about what the country's sports contacts with South Africa should look like, with conservative elements calling for a report on what relations France could allow. On October 18, 1979, as the Barbarians tour took place in Britain, the French parliament voted to send a delegation to South Africa in January to "examine the rules being violated [in South African sport] according to the definitions of the project of the International Convention Against Apartheid."<sup>835</sup> Deputy Bernard Marie, mayor of Biarritz and former rugby referee, would lead the tour. Three experts joined the delegation: Albert Ferrasse, Jean Joseph, President of the Regional Committee of Rugby of the Caribbean, and a Mr. Martin, the French Rugby Federation's relationship manager. Ferrasse was included on the tour because of his extensive contacts with South African sports officials, having travelled to the country often either accompanying French teams or solo. The investigation had a clear rugby theme to it beyond the addition of three FRF officials: the first stop on the tour would be a meeting with South African rugby officials Dr. Danie Craven, from the white federation, Charles Loriston from the colored (Proteas) federation, and C.G. Mdyesha representing the black federation. The tour was designed to give a recommendation about the state of South African sports reforms, but it appeared clear that the reforms that mattered most were in rugby.

The French delegation spent just over a week in South Africa before making its recommendations. Marie concluded in his report that South African sport had made progress at integration and that the French government should allow "the resumption of relations with the integrated Federations after on-site verification by the competent national and international

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<sup>835</sup> Bernard Marie, "Rapport de la Délégation parlementaire d'Etude sur l'Apartheid dans le sport en Afrique du Sud et rapport du Sports Council of Africa 1980," D-RMO1 AFRIS/041, SD 1, OSC.

sports bodies.”<sup>836</sup> Marie also argued that if a body was “in the process of integration” then it would be “up to the international bodies to judge whether it is appropriate” to allow contact and not individual governments. South African rugby, through the country’s multi-national approach, gave the false impression that it was in the process of integration. The International Rugby Football Board did not have problems with contacts with South Africa, so therefore, according to Marie’s logic, the French Rugby Federation could make its own decision on contacts.

Ferrasse waited until the British Lions tour was attracting global attention before travelling to South Africa to plan a French tour in 1980.<sup>837</sup> Ferrasse understood that while the French government would not allow South Africa into France, there was nothing the French government could do to prevent his team from travelling abroad. This was the same issue the British government faced over the Lions. Ferrasse organised one match against South Africa at the beginning of November. This tour, though, was not about maintaining the French-South African relationship. Instead, it was seen as Ferrasse’s “personal tour,” according to *Le Monde* correspondent Patrice Claude; Ferrasse wanted to “take revenge on the French government” for its actions in 1979.<sup>838</sup>

Despite the tour being rushed and ending in an easy South African victory over France, Ferrasse wrote in his autobiography that his decision to have the tour was vindicated by the symbols of racial barriers being broken in South Africa: “At the end of the match, we were surprised to see young white people rushing towards this star [black player Errol Tobias] to carry him in triumph.”<sup>839</sup> However, Ferrasse later found out this “triumphant outing had been

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<sup>836</sup> Marie, “Rapport de la Délégation parlementaire.”

<sup>837</sup> David Frost, “Ferrasse arrives on double mission,” *Guardian*, 11 July 1980, 21.

<sup>838</sup> Patrice Claude, “Les Springboks écrasent (37 à 15) le XV de France” *Le Monde*, 11 November 1980, 23.

<sup>839</sup> Albert Ferrasse, *Mêlées Ouvertes* (Albin Michel, 1993), 157.



organised for the purposes of a film,” leading to questions as to what had really changed. The tour was a confusing mix of the personal and the political. France had broken the apartheid sports boycott possibly out of Ferrasse’s desire to get revenge over the government’s intervention in 1979 rather than a symbolic effort to force integration, as had been the excuse in 1975.

The tour created another scandal for the French government. Before the rugby players flew to South Africa, Jean-Pierre Soisson was forced to reiterate in a Radio France Internationale interview that “we do not have the legal possibility to prohibit a French team from travelling abroad.”<sup>840</sup> The SCSA’s new Secretary General, Lamine Ba, who had unseated Jean-Claude Ganga with French support, immediately criticized the French government’s impotence over the South Africa tour. By doing nothing, the state appeared “to endorse, by its silence, the tour that its national rugby team has decided to start in South Africa,” he wrote.<sup>841</sup> Ba wanted the French government to intervene in some way to prevent the tour from taking place. The French ambassador in Yaoundé, Robert Mazeyrac, attached his own note to the SCSA telegram to Paris, stating that Ba did not visit him to “give his approach a more solemn tone or to match it with particular commands” — Ganga’s method of explaining what it was he really wanted from the French government in the past. In reply to Ba’s telegram of concern, the Foreign Ministry noted that it “disapproved” of the rugby tour but clarified again that “the French government does not have any of the means to allow it to oppose the organization of this tour, any French citizen having the right to go freely abroad.”<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>840</sup> Alain Giraudo, “Le Gouvernement ne peut pas interdire la tournée du Quinze de France en Afrique de Sud,” *Le Monde*, 16 October 1980, 30.

<sup>841</sup> Telegram from SCSA Secretary General to Foreign Ministry, 23 October 1980, AMAE, dossier 858.

<sup>842</sup> Telegram from Foreign Ministry to Yaoundé, 28 October 1980, AMAE, dossier 858.

But while in 1979 the French government had changed the law to prevent a Springbok tour of France, on this occasion the French government went back to its old position of avoiding political action in sport. A big reason for this was that there was little the SCSA could now do to scare the French government. In 1979, the SCSA and anti-apartheid groups had threatened France's participation at the Moscow Olympic Games. The USSR was so worried about an African boycott that it too had pressured the French government to intervene. But with the Moscow Olympic Games now behind, the SCSA had little leverage. The SCSA's power was cyclical and peaked before each Olympics.

The SCSA and Africa's weakened position was evident at the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sport of Francophone Countries held October 16-17 in Liege. Both Ba and Soisson participated in the conference. Even though the French tour was about to start, there was little discussion of France's contacts with South Africa except for some "rather weak protests...from the ministers of Benin, Mali and Congo."<sup>843</sup> These protests were ineffectual and appeared to be for show, to demonstrate each country's independence and anti-apartheid credentials, rather than a coordinated attempt to rally support to punish France. During the meeting, Ba maintained a moderate position on the issue and kept the ministers focused on the issues of developing sport among Francophone territories. He even thanked the French government for its grants to the organization, praising its leading role in the group. Ba would send his critical message to Soisson about a week after the Liege meeting, making it seem performative rather than a genuine attempt to effect any change in position from the French government.

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<sup>843</sup> Alain Giraudo, "Les Ministres Francophones Condamnent l'Apartheid...sans désapprouver la tournée des Français en Afrique du Sud," *Le Monde*, 20 October 1980, 10.

France's tour of South Africa prompted little response from the SCSA and other African states in comparison with the British tour just a few months earlier. A few factors appeared to inspire this changed response. The first was that the French tour was much smaller than the British tour. A second reason was that the Lions tour and the struggle around the 1980 Moscow Olympics had drawn most attention in 1980. France was at the end of the year and followed on from this unsuccessful attempt to enforce the anti-apartheid cordon. It is also clear that the French gained credit from the SCSA when it changed its visa laws to prevent the 1979 tour even if it could not prevent the 1980 tour. This was a stronger and clearer policy than the British government's actions in 1979-80. Lastly, France's influence over the SCSA had grown tremendously through the second half of the 1970s: the French backed Lamine Ba's candidature in the 1979 elections and it provided grants to the SCSA, which were very important due to the organization's budget crisis. All these changes allowed France to restart sports relations with South Africa with minimal consequences, which would not have been possible after Montreal.

## **Conclusion**

1979 to 1980 were difficult for the anti-apartheid movement. While the SCSA managed to pressure the French government to deny access to the Springbok team in 1979, the general trend saw South Africa finding ways to bypass the international boycott. The Barbarians tour of Britain in October 1979 opened the possibility of the British Lions tour in 1980, played right before the start of the Moscow Olympics. The French Parliament and Rugby Federation responded to the government's refusal to grant visas to South African rugby players by sending investigatory committees to South Africa, followed by a brief rugby tour to demonstrate sport's independence from the state. Contacts with South Africa had been in decline during the 1970s

because states and international sports organizations feared the SCSA's wrath. But this fear appeared to have dissipated among those intent on playing with South Africa in 1979 and 1980 despite the Montreal boycott in 1976.

The events surrounding 1979 and 1980 showed the tight links between the Moscow Olympic Games and the struggle against South Africa. The French government's intervention in 1979 to prevent the Springbok tour was a response to the joint threats issued by the IOC, SCSA, and USSR to either ban or disinvite France to prevent another boycott from taking place. The French government jumped into action and decided to change immigration laws to stop the tour. This intervention initially prevented South Africa from becoming a major thorn in the side of the Moscow Olympics, particularly since the French Rugby Federation was managed by the CNOSF meaning that, in this case, rugby was tied to the Olympic movement. The IOC's excuses in Montreal that rugby was not tied to the Olympics were not true in the case of France. The legacy of Montreal scared countries and organizations into action to stop South African contacts to prevent a future boycott.

In the case of the Barbarians tour of Britain, the South African and British rugby authorities determined to test the resolve of the new Thatcher government to stop the tour. For rugby authorities, the result of a boycott of Britain would be the disinvitation of the British Olympic Association from Moscow, which was not their problem. The Barbarians tour occurred without much government involvement, and this left open the door for a British Lions tour the following year. The British Rugby Unions announced the Lions tour after the SCSA had decided not to boycott the Moscow Olympics and after the USSR had invaded Afghanistan, which redirected global attention away from the anti-apartheid boycott and towards the possibility of a Cold War boycott of Moscow 1980. The invasion of Afghanistan relieved some of the pressure

on the British government and the British Olympic Association, though issues remained about the future of the Commonwealth Games and Britain's standing in Africa and the Caribbean.

The major turning point in the anti-apartheid struggle, which had been of heightened importance in the post-1976 era of global sport, was the invasion of Afghanistan. Though the British government and rugby unions remained unmoved by pressure surrounding the Barbarians tour in 1979 and likely would have allowed a British Lions tour to take place in 1980 regardless of the repercussions for Britain's Olympic participation, the invasion made it easier for the Lions to tour and meant that Cold War issues overtook anti-apartheid ones. The anti-apartheid struggle had been at the forefront of global sporting issues - a fixation of the SCSA, USSR, and IOC from 1976-9. The anti-apartheid struggle could be the focus during periods of détente between the superpowers, such as in 1979, but not during periods of superpower conflict, such as 1980.

The French and British connections with South Africa would lead to a short burst of South African sports contacts. In 1981, South Africa played an Irish touring side at home, then travelled to New Zealand and the United States of America. In 1982 and 1984, a touring, multi-national 'South American' team played in South Africa both years. England toured South Africa in 1984. By 1985, contacts were beginning to dwindle again: New Zealand's tour of South Africa was cancelled due to the protests and violence surrounding South Africa's tour of New Zealand in 1981. There was an unofficial, 'rebel' New Zealand Cavaliers tour of South Africa in 1986. In the second half of the 1980s, South Africa was limited to rebel and unofficial tours as the boycotters reestablished their power. But for a few years, from 1979-1984, South Africa managed to exploit the situation surrounding the Moscow Olympics and the weakening of the anti-apartheid boycott to play a series of international rugby matches against a variety of

opposition with the intent of demonstrating that South Africa was not as isolated as many hoped it would be.

## Chapter 7 AFRICA IN THE 1980 BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN

By December 1979, it appeared that the issues facing the Moscow Olympic Games were resolved. The Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, which had led the mass walkout of African teams from the 1976 Montreal Olympics, voted to attend Moscow despite the provocative actions of the British Lions rugby team planning to play South Africa in 1980. However, very quickly matters would change. Just as the IOC and OrgCommittee celebrated the SCSA's decision not to call for a second straight Olympic boycott, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The Soviets enacted a regime change in the country on December 27, assassinating Khalqist Hafizullah Amin and replacing him with the more amenable Parcham faction leader Babrak Karmal. As Soviet soldiers poured over the northern border of Afghanistan and took control of Kabul and cities across the country, questions emerged within the Western and Islamic worlds as to what should be the appropriate reaction to this invasion.<sup>844</sup>

NATO members discussed possible responses to the invasion of Afghanistan in a meeting in Brussels at the beginning of January. The West Germans proposed a Moscow Olympic boycott, but this received little initial support.<sup>845</sup> At the same time, the United States began to enact measures aimed to hurt the Soviet Union, including a grain blockade, embargo on technology sales, and other efforts targeted at the Soviet economy. But the idea of an Olympic boycott featured regularly within the White House from the first days of January 1980. A CIA assessment, produced at the beginning of the month, argued that while “a widespread boycott of the Moscow Olympics would not hurt the USSR economically, it would tarnish the leadership’s

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<sup>844</sup> Saudi Arabia and Somalia had already announced their intention to boycott the Moscow Olympic Games before the invasion of Afghanistan.

<sup>845</sup> “Keep off sports, leaders urged,” *Daily Nation*, 3 January 1980, 1.

image badly” and could “humiliate the leadership and deny the USSR of the prestige and propaganda opportunities it clearly hopes to extract from a well-run, noncontroversial Olympics.”<sup>846</sup> In Carter’s *White House Diary*, in his entry on January 2, he wrote that “Olympic issues would cause me the most trouble and be the most severe blow to the Soviets. Only if many nations act in concert would it be a good idea.”<sup>847</sup> A boycott would be high-risk, but it could also be high reward in getting the point across to the USSR. Vice President Walter Mondale was also in favor of moving against the Olympics over other policies, such as the grain embargo, writing to Carter on January 3 that “I hope we would really go after the Olympics - I don’t see why that is sacrosanct.”<sup>848</sup>

On January 4, President Carter suggested a Moscow Olympic boycott during televised remarks from the Oval Office informing the American public about events in Afghanistan.<sup>849</sup> Though the boycott had been a suggestion at the end of the broadcast about possible responses available to the American government, the national press took to promoting the idea of a boycott and rallying public support behind attacking the Soviet Union’s prized jewel.<sup>850</sup> The rising fervor around the boycott in the press, according to Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, pushed the Carter administration towards the option rather than the White House directing national policy. Polls conducted across the country indicated most Americans were in favor of boycotting the Olympic

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<sup>846</sup> Document 250, “Overview of an Intelligence Assessment Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency”, Washington, January 1980” in ed. Melissa Jane Taylor. *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1977-1980, Vol. VI: Soviet Union* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2013)

<sup>847</sup> Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 387.

<sup>848</sup> Document 253, “Memorandum from Vice President Mondale to President Carter,” Washington, January 3, 1980, in *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1977-1980, Vol. VI: Soviet Union*.

<sup>849</sup> Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 82.

<sup>850</sup> *Ibid*, 84.



Games. The American government sent out feelers to allies with Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, meeting with British government officials to discuss the matter on January 15. Positive noises had already come from Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser's cabinet.<sup>851</sup>

On January 20, President Carter announced America would boycott the Moscow Olympic Games unless the Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan within a month. The State Department sent a transcript of Carter's announcement and his letter to Robert Kane, the head of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), informing the USOC of the government's plans to all American embassies prior to the announcement. After the announcement, the State Department instructed ambassadors to deliver this transcript and a copy of the letter to world leaders to demonstrate the seriousness of Carter's position.<sup>852</sup> With this announcement, Carter officially started America's Olympic boycott campaign. By the US linking Moscow's right to host the Olympics to the invasion of Afghanistan and assuming the mantle of leadership on this issue, the boycott assumed a Cold War guise that both raised its importance and increased the weight of the decisions that countries would be asked to make. This was no longer a campaign just condemning the Soviet Union's actions, it was now a global call by the American government for support in its Cold War struggle against the USSR.

Carter's announcement both strengthened and weakened the boycott campaign by making it a Cold War matter. Nations now had to decide on where they stood on the Afghanistan issue and whether they wanted to associate with America's retaliatory strike against the USSR.

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<sup>851</sup> "IOC won't switch Olympics elsewhere," *Daily Nation*, 16 January 1980, 26; Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 90.

<sup>852</sup> Document 259, "Telegram from the Department of State to All Diplomatic Posts, the Embassy of Pakistan, and the Embassy in Libya," Washington, January 20, 1980, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Vol. VI: Soviet Union*.

Governments had to think about the impact their decision might have on their own domestic popularity and international standing, both within the Cold War and outside. Nowhere was this clearer than in Africa, which had a history of boycotting events and opposing imperialism but also where many states had a strong tradition of non-alignment that would complicate their positioning on the matter. This chapter will examine the importance of Africa in the 1980 Moscow Olympic boycott campaign by both looking at how the United States and Soviet Union sought to win support on the continent following the invasion of Afghanistan and examining the debates on the continent about whether to support the Moscow Olympic boycott and what that support would mean within the larger Cold War world, which can be contrasted to earlier understandings of the 1976 boycott in Chapter two.

## **US Policy towards Africa**

The United States' boycott strategy focused first on winning Western support rather than on the developing world. Early conversations with Margaret Thatcher, Malcolm Fraser in Australia, and Helmut Schmidt in West Germany indicated that the Carter Administration believed it could hurt the Soviet Union the most by stripping the Olympics of Western sports powers. Kenya was the only African country on America's list of "the most influential nations in terms of sports competition and participation in the Olympic movement."<sup>853</sup> American officials focused first and foremost on Western Europe, believing if those countries agreed to participate in a boycott, this would discredit the Moscow Olympics and would cause "a number of

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<sup>853</sup> Document 262, "Summary of Conclusions of a Special Coordination Committee Meeting," Washington, February 26, 1980, 9-10:15 a.m. in *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1977-1980, Vol. VI: Soviet Union*.

additional Africans and Latin Americans...[to] follow suit.”<sup>854</sup> Africa was largely an afterthought in the United States’ original boycott plan.<sup>855</sup>

The USA did not completely ignore Africa but understood that it was at a disadvantage on the continent. Its close relationship with South Africa and the ongoing frustrations over negotiations at Lancaster House on Rhodesia-Zimbabwe contributed to a feeling among many African states that America was a problem for the continent. Since the US recognized it was on the back foot when it came to winning support in Africa, it decided to adopt a radical approach to change public opinion: send the newly retired world heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali on a tour of several African countries to campaign for the boycott. A memorandum from Richard Moose, the Secretary of State of African Affairs, to Warren Christopher, the Deputy Secretary of State, emphasized the importance of this tour to American efforts. The African Affairs office believed that “the Ali Mission is exactly the kind of energetic public diplomacy we need to employ to have a fighting chance to bring the 40-50 African nations around to our point of view.”<sup>856</sup> Moose said he expected “this trip to generate a lot of publicity, and believe it will be very well received by American and African public opinion...It will be seen, inter alia, as a sign of the President’s commitment to his Olympic policy.” Perhaps most fatefully given how Ali’s

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<sup>854</sup> Document 265, “Telegram from the Department of State to All Diplomatic and Consular Posts,” Washington, March 1, 1980, in ed. Kristin L. Ahlberg. *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1977-1980, Vol. XXX: Public Diplomacy* (Washington: Government Publishing Office, 2016).

<sup>855</sup> David Kanin, “The Olympic Boycott in Diplomatic Context,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 4, no.1 (1980): 21; There is a certain amount of debate on this point in the field. David Kanin has argued that “Africa was the scene of the most superpower attention in the third world,” but this does not seem to be the case from the US perspective. I would argue that the evidence shows that the USSR paid a lot of attention to Africa and the US was found lacking in comparison.

<sup>856</sup> Document 201, “Briefing Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State of African Affairs (Moose) to the Deputy Secretary of State (Christopher),” Washington, January 31, 1980, in *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1977-1980, Vol. VI: Soviet Union*.

mission proceeded, Moose reckoned “downplaying the Mission does not seem in accord with the spirit of the adventure” and the State Department would do best to amplify its status. The mission initially garnered support from other members of the Carter administration with White House Counsel Lloyd Cutler defending the selection of Ali as “part of an effort to enlist ‘useful contacts, both public and private’ to win support for the American position.”<sup>857</sup> Carter noted later in his diary that his choice was natural since “as an extremely famous black Muslim he had access to almost any world leader.”<sup>858</sup> Ali’s personal connections and popularity on the African continent appeared to be very important in selecting him over an established, official diplomat from State.

Ali’s tour of Africa was a disaster. He travelled with a State Department delegation to Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Liberia and Senegal between February 3-10. The tour began with Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere snubbing Ali since he was not an official diplomat. Journalists in Dar es Salaam questioned a bewildered Ali about why he was campaigning for Carter on Afghanistan while the US continued to support South Africa.<sup>859</sup> In Kenya, Ali could not take credit for persuading President Moi to boycott as the Kenyan leader had already taken the decision days before Ali arrived. The Champ received praise from supportive journalists in Nairobi and got back on track before heading off to another unfriendly visit to Nigeria. In Nigeria, the State Department sent Andrew Young, former Ambassador to the United Nations, to steady the ship and get Ali back on message.<sup>860</sup> Once again Ali was snubbed by both President Shehu Shagari, whose inauguration Ali had attended the previous November, and the Nigerian

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<sup>857</sup> “State Department Confirms Request,” *New York Times*, 1 February 1980, A8.

<sup>858</sup> Carter, *White House Diary*, 400.

<sup>859</sup> Hamid Bisanga, “Ali ‘uninformed’ on US policy,” *Daily News*, 5 February 1980, 12.

<sup>860</sup> “Nigeria to go to Moscow,” *Daily News*, 9 February 1980, 10.

Olympic Committee. The local press was particularly critical of his trip and students in Lagos protested his presence.<sup>861</sup> The trip ended with a visit to Liberia, which had already declared its intent to boycott, and Senegal, which had announced it would attend Moscow in line with its previous position on Montreal.<sup>862</sup> The tour generated a lot of publicity and public debate, but it did not get any leaders to change their positions.<sup>863</sup>

Ali's contemporaries and historians writing on the event have summarily dismissed his diplomatic efforts. The tour was "energetic," as Richard Moose had wanted. But Ali repeatedly committed gaffes, including threatening to call off the mission, insulting Carter, and threatening to beat up journalists. Sarantakes described how "Ali had no reason to feel proud. He changed no policies on his trip. Instead, he managed to generate a good deal of ridicule."<sup>864</sup> For historian David Hulme, the selection of Ali was the main mistake because sending the boxer "created friction and misunderstanding, and may well have lost the United States a degree of support" due to the perceived insult of sending a sportsman and not a diplomat.<sup>865</sup> David Kanin's assessment was similar, arguing that "Ali, for all his stature, was not a political leader capable of impressing Africans with how seriously the United States took African support."<sup>866</sup> Ali's selection was outside of the box. It was acknowledged as being a gamble at the time, but the general

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<sup>861</sup> "Yaba students condemn Mohammed Ali's mission to Africa," *Nigeria Standard*, 9 February 1980, 12.

<sup>862</sup> "Senegal will participate in the Moscow Olympics," *Le Soleil*, 24 January 1980, 4.

<sup>863</sup> James Alexander Ivey, "'Welcome, Ali, Please go Home': Muhammad Ali as Diplomat and African Debates on the 1980 Moscow Olympic Boycott," *African Studies Review* 66, no. 2 (2023): 490-508.

<sup>864</sup> Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 118.

<sup>865</sup> Hulme, *The Political Olympics*, 111.

<sup>866</sup> Kanin, *Political History*, 143.

assessment was that it demonstrated the “patronising attitudes at work in the Carter White House,” especially toward African states.<sup>867</sup>

The Ali mission to Africa was an example of the disorganization and improvisation put into the American boycott campaign. The US sought to build connections with African countries that it perceived as sympathetic on the issue of Afghanistan or with whom it already had close connections. After President Moi had announced Kenya’s support for the boycott on February 3, he was invited to the White House for the first state visit by a Kenyan leader on February 20. Carter thanked Moi for his “leadership...in condemning the brutal invasion by the Soviet Union of Afghanistan;” Moi responded that Kenya’s boycott stand was meaningful because “Kenya would secure medals, gold medals, silver medals. There are others who may speak, but they have no prospects for medals.”<sup>868</sup> The Kenyan ambassador to the United States was included in a committee formed to set up alternative games in the summer of 1980 to demonstrate the value that the US placed on Kenyan support.<sup>869</sup> At the same time, the United States announced that it would increase aid funding to Kenya, which appeared a clumsy effort to reward the country for following the US line on the boycott.<sup>870</sup> The Carter administration increased aid to Kenya by \$5 million for that year, bringing it to a total of “\$53 million in development and agricultural aid,” and promised “105,000 tons of grain to ease the food shortage caused by prolonged drought.”<sup>871</sup>

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<sup>867</sup> Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 118.

<sup>868</sup> “Carter Praises Moi,” *Daily Nation*, 21 February 1980, 1.

<sup>869</sup> Document 173, “Memorandum of Conversation,” Washington, February 20, 1980, 10:30 a.m., in ed. Louise P. Woodroffe. *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1977-1980, Vol. XVII: Part 2 Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington: Government Publishing Office, 2018).

<sup>870</sup> Sara Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History* (Princeton University Press, 2019), 55; The US use of aid to further its Cold War aims started in earnest in 1950s and made it difficult to distinguish between aid and furthering Cold War objectives. Often it was both simultaneously.

<sup>871</sup> “\$53m new US aid for Kenya,” *Daily Nation*, 22 February 1980, 1; “US food aid bonanza,” *Daily Nation*, 23 February 1980, 1.

Similarly in Ghana, the US ambassador brought up the boycott during discussions with the Ghanaian minister for sport and education. The conversation drifted then from Moscow, which the Ghanaian minister appeared hesitant about, to other topics such as a new deal on cocoa prices and aid packages “to assist Ghana generally in its present economic difficulties...in agriculture, health and the educational sectors.”<sup>872</sup> To many in Ghana, the US ambassador was using developmental aid to encourage or force the Ghanaian government to boycott the Moscow Olympic Games. When the country did boycott, many critics in Ghana argued that the country had sacrificed its participation “because of US promises of aid” and so sacrificed its non-aligned principles in doing so.<sup>873</sup> The White House may have seen these offers of assistance as building connections, but with Cold War tensions stoked after the Afghan invasion many within Africa were suspicious of such offers and viewed them as tantamount to bribes.

The US also appeared to misunderstand the positions of nations and the history of the boycott movement in sport. In one infamous example, the US approached South Africa, kicked out of the Olympic movement in 1970, to join the Moscow boycott and even listed the country as a possible attendee at its alternative games.<sup>874</sup> Another example was its efforts to pressure Senegal to boycott Moscow despite its clear positions in January “in favor of participating in these Games.”<sup>875</sup> The Senegalese government had set its policy on sports boycotts at Montreal and would remain “consistent” in its approach. The New Zealand tour of South Africa had been “a problem that affected us more closely...but we had separated politics from sport and took part in these games,” according to Senegalese minister Daouda Sow. Despite this clear position, the

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<sup>872</sup> “Ocran: Ghana Not Yet Decided on Moscow Games,” *Daily Graphic*, 31 January 1980, 8.

<sup>873</sup> “Dissolve Olympic C'ttee - Pan-African Research Affairs Centre,” *Ghanaian Times*, 5 June 1980, 1.

<sup>874</sup> Eaton, “Decentering US Sports Diplomacy,” 214.

<sup>875</sup> “Senegal will participate in the Moscow Olympics,” *Le Soleil*, 24 January 1980, 4.

Carter Administration still believed it could persuade President Léopold Senghor to change his position. In a meeting at the White House on April 8, Senghor once again rebuffed the American efforts, stating his support for the United States on the issues of Iran and Afghanistan, but remaining firm on “his position that Senegal would not be able to support the Olympic boycott, because this would be inconsistent with the refusal to boycott the Montreal games in 1976”<sup>876</sup> Senghor promised that “he would do everything possible to support the President short of an actual boycott.”<sup>877</sup>

American attempts to rally support for the boycott also sought to mobilize countries via proxies. The Carter administration understood that many countries were wary of American intentions or being seen as cooperating with the United States. To avoid this, the US government sought to use third parties to introduce legislation to the UN and to make approaches to African nations.<sup>878</sup> Egypt, for example, vigorously campaigned for the boycott across Africa and the Middle East. They were particularly eager to assist due to their reduced position in the Middle East, Africa, and the global Islamic community after Anwar Sadat signed the Camp David Accords bringing peace with Israel in September 1978.<sup>879</sup> Egypt was supportive of the boycott as a way of re-integrating with the wider Islamic community through the Afghanistan issue, while at the same time demonstrating their value to the United States as an ally.

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<sup>876</sup> Document 54, “Memorandum of Conversation,” Washington, April 8, 1980, 9-9:25 a.m., in *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1977-1980, Vol. XVII: Part 2 Sub-Saharan Africa*.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid.

<sup>878</sup> Document 205, “Memorandum from the Acting Director of the International Communication Agency (Bray) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski),” Washington, April 7, 1980 in *Foreign Relations of the United States. 1977-1980, Vol. XXX: Public Diplomacy*.

<sup>879</sup> Eaton, “Decentering US Sports Diplomacy,” 210.



The American Embassy in Cairo reported on the Egyptian government's "aggressive campaign to boycott the Olympics, particularly with Africans," that included distributing material including letters to the SCSA President, the leaders of Arab, African, and non-aligned countries, and to regional sports leaders.<sup>880</sup> Copies of these letters were joined by statements from the Egyptian government condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and calling for a global response to humiliate the USSR. American cooperation with allies helped build the appearance that the boycott was not just Carter's personal project but rather a global coalition opposed to Soviet actions in Afghanistan. However, Egypt's position as a pariah in Middle Eastern politics during this period lent more credibility to the argument that the boycott was an American-led project with Egypt acting as its stooge.

The United States attempted to rally support across the world, but success differed from region to region. Even though twenty African countries boycotted the Moscow Olympic Games, the US campaign in Africa was ostensibly unsuccessful. American efforts in Africa, which relied on unorthodox diplomacy in the form of Muhammad Ali, showed a lack of understanding of the continent's politics. One area where the Carter administration really struggled was America's history as an imperialist power and supporter of South Africa. When it came to public debates across Africa about the boycott, the issue of Afghanistan was an important issue, but it was one among many. Letter writers and journalists would regularly cite American support for apartheid, its criticisms of the 1976 Montreal Olympic boycott, and imperialist US foreign policy among the reasons that Africans should not support the Moscow Olympic boycott. Twenty African countries would boycott Moscow, but this might have been despite of American efforts rather

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<sup>880</sup> "Embassy Amman to Secretary of State," Telegram 5114, March 5, 1980, 80AMMAN5114, Department of State, FOIA Request: F-2022-03518.

than because of them. Joseph Eaton has argued that “while the African boycott was impressive, the Carter administration’s ignorance of international sport nearly doomed the boycott in Africa.”<sup>881</sup> This contrasted with the Soviets, who were very knowledgeable about international sport and were actively promoting the Moscow Olympics on the African continent before the boycott discussion started in January.

### **Soviet Policy towards Africa**

The Soviet Union had spent four years courting African support for its Moscow Olympic project, seeking to prevent a second African boycott after Montreal. Since 1976, the OrgCommittee and other Soviet organizations had campaigned across Africa, providing coaching and equipment, spreading positive propaganda about the Moscow Olympics and USSR, publicly stating the importance that the Soviets placed on African participation, and reiterating its commitment to isolating South Africa in world sport. These policies were successful in alleviating African concerns about the Moscow Olympics. They were so successful that when a similar issue to Montreal arose involving a British Lions rugby tour of South Africa, the SCSA voted in December 1979 to ignore the provocation and attend Moscow.

The invasion of Afghanistan changed little about Soviet policy towards Africa. Within Africa, the OrgCommittee and other Soviet organizations continued the work that had been taking place over the previous four years attempting to prevent a second African boycott. Perhaps the irony of the Afghanistan invasion was that it came when the USSR was already deep into a campaign to prevent a boycott of the Olympic Games. The Soviet Union wanted a well-attended Olympics to demonstrate the success of the event; in the OrgCommittee’s Montreal

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<sup>881</sup> Eaton, “Decentering US Sports Diplomacy,” 214.

report, it had tied the number of nations at the Games to its success.<sup>882</sup> The OrgCommittee's objective remained the same: to get the most countries as possible to the USSR. The same efforts continued into 1980, OrgCommittee delegations travelled to Africa and Soviet sports officials wooed politicians and organised a new propaganda campaign hitting newspapers and radio waves across the continent.

The OrgCommittee's work across Africa had been very successful between 1976 and 1979 in establishing close relations with individual nations. This work continued to prove fruitful in 1980. Soviet officials travelled to various African countries to address concerns about the Games after the invasion and help with athlete registration. The OrgCommittee's visits coincided with announcements from countries that they would attend the Olympic Games, such as Tanzania and Zambia. Both countries were visited by Vladimir Prokopov, the OrgCommittee's head of foreign relations, at the end of March. After discussions between Prokopov and the Tanzanian Olympic Committee on how the Moscow Games could be improved for the East African nation, the two parties held a press conference announcing Tanzania sending a forty-person delegation to Moscow.<sup>883</sup> Prokopov followed his discussions in Tanzania with a visit to Lusaka, where, after similar discussions with the Zambian NOC, the two groups announced that Zambia would send twenty-six people to Moscow.<sup>884</sup> Other members of the OrgCommittee travelled to Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, and Ethiopia in the months leading up to the Games.<sup>885</sup> In addition, Soviet embassies provided useful go-betweens for the OrgCommittee and national leaders in Africa. Soviet officials' four years of diplomacy with non-aligned Africa allowed them

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<sup>882</sup> "Document 32," *Five Rings*, 119.

<sup>883</sup> Hamidu Bisanga, "40-man Tanzania team for Olympics," *Daily News*, 29 March 1980, 12.

<sup>884</sup> "Soviet Games chiefs here for final details," *Times of Zambia*, 1 April 1980, 8.

<sup>885</sup> RGANI, F.5, Op.77, D.131, 71.

to persuade countries to attend the Moscow Games even when those same states condemned the invasion of Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union also sought to induce cooperation and larger commitment from African countries through financial and material support. In Nigeria, the Soviet ambassador Sneguirev announced on May 22 that “All African athletes including Nigerians would be provided free air-tickets, board and lodging at the Moscow Olympic Village.”<sup>886</sup> The OrgCommittee had promised discounted rates and some free tickets to many developing countries in the past, but this program was expanded as a result of the threatened boycott to induce African countries to send larger delegations to Moscow to make up for the other boycotters. In the case of Zimbabwe, which attempted to re-join the Olympic movement after its independence in April 1980, the Soviets used their political weight to get the IOC to readmit Zimbabwe in time.<sup>887</sup> Without Soviet assistance, the Zimbabwean team would never have made it to Moscow or won their first gold medal at the Games.

Friendship societies and non-sporting connections between countries were also utilized to persuade countries to attend. Ghana came under sustained pressure to send a team to Moscow with visits from a “Soviet peace team,” including Nikolai Norikov, deputy chief editor of the newspaper *Izvestiya*.<sup>888</sup> The Soviet delegation’s visit was followed by a three-week visit to the USSR by a Ghanaian delegation led by Minister for Education, Culture and Sports Yeboah-Akyeampong.<sup>889</sup> The delegation included Dr. Augustine R. Adda, the President of the Ghana-Soviet Friendship Society, which renewed its agreements with the USSR and continued to

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<sup>886</sup> Dapo Adalemo, “Free Air-Tickets to Moscow Olympics,” *New Nigerian*, 22 May 1980, 15.

<sup>887</sup> Ivey, “Rhodesian Readmission,” 95-116.

<sup>888</sup> “Soviet peace team on visit,” *Ghanaian Times*, 19 March 1980, 1.

<sup>889</sup> “Bulgaria's offer to Ghana,” *Ghanaian Times*, 22 May 1980, 7.

support Ghanaian students studying in the Soviet Union. Student groups in Ghana, in particular, were opposed to the Ghanaian Olympic Committee's announcement in May 23 that it would not send a team to Moscow.<sup>890</sup> The National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) and the African Youth Command (AYC) both called for "the government to intervene and reverse the unpopular decision which is an embarrassment," accusing Ghanaian sports officials of bowing to US pressure.<sup>891</sup> The Soviet Union granted a large number of university scholarships, 175 in 1980, and the fear was that by supporting the boycott this would have an impact on students already in the USSR, as well as future opportunities and cooperation between the states.<sup>892</sup> Soviet connections through education and friendship societies were successful in rallying popular support for the Moscow Olympic project, even if they struggled among members of the Ghanaian Olympic Committee.

The SCSA remained an important target for the OrgCommittee. SCSA President Abraham Ordia proved to be a very capable cheerleader for the Moscow Olympics. He remained committed to the Moscow Games, announcing after Carter's threat on January 20 that "Africa will be there in full force. We will not boycott the Games."<sup>893</sup> In February, Ordia continued to claim that the SCSA had not changed its mind about the boycott and would remain above politics, "the controversy is one of a political nature over which the SCSA has no control."<sup>894</sup> Ordia also gave a series of interviews to journalists about the boycott during the build-up to the Games where he regularly claimed to have no opinion. "I have told you I am not a politician. I

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<sup>890</sup> "Ghana won't be there," *Daily Graphic*, 24 May 1980, 1.

<sup>891</sup> "NUGS is disgusted with N.O.C. stand on Moscow Games," *Ghanaian Times*, 28 May 1980, 1; "Reverse decision on Moscow games - A.Y.C.," *Ghanaian Times*, 31 May 1980, 1.

<sup>892</sup> "Ghana-U.S.S.R. Co-Operation," *Ghanaian Times*, 1 July 1980, 4.

<sup>893</sup> Edward Ameyibor, "Africa won't join Boycott," *Daily Graphic*, 24 January 1980, 15.

<sup>894</sup> "Games boycott not our business - Ordia," *Times of Zambia*, 27 February 1980, 8.

am a sportsman,” he said in one interview.<sup>895</sup> In another, when asked about Moscow he responded that, “for me that is a political question. I am not an expert...I don’t know politics.”<sup>896</sup> The SCSA now, ironically, only concerned itself with participating in sports events and would tell its members to ignore the surrounding political struggle. Ordia travelled to Moscow in May and declared on his return to Nigeria that he was “fully satisfied with Soviet preparation” for the Games, restating his opinion that “since Russia had fulfilled the conditions in the contract with the IOC, no one has the right to change the venue” and athletes should prepare to compete in Moscow.<sup>897</sup>

The SCSA President’s vocal support was important for the USSR because some countries based their stance on Moscow off the SCSA’s position. The organization had voted to attend the Olympics back in December 1979, but that was before the invasion of Afghanistan. Ordia’s refusal to change the SCSA’s position, and his refusal to call an SCSA meeting to discuss whether Afghanistan changed matters, meant that the original decision from 1979 held through this period. The Nigerian government said its attendance was “guided by the decision of the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa.”<sup>898</sup> Zambia’s minister for sport cited the “resolution of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa...calling on Africa to attend the Moscow Olympic Games” when she explained the government’s pro-participation position to parliament.<sup>899</sup> The SCSA’s deliberate avoidance of the conflict and its repeated citation of its December 1979 statement on participation purposely gave cover to countries that wanted to attend. In some cases, it provided

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<sup>895</sup> Hector Wandera, “Last decision up to individual countries?” *Daily Nation*, 16 February 1980, 17.

<sup>896</sup> Joe Lartey, “Why We’re for the Moscow '80 - Abraham Ordia,” *National Concord*, 1 June 1980, 15.

<sup>897</sup> “SCSA Satisfied with Olympic Preparations,” *Chronicle*, 26 May 1980, 15.

<sup>898</sup> “Nigeria for Moscow Olympics - Shagari,” *New Nigerian*, 10 March 1980, 23.

<sup>899</sup> “We won’t be nose-led from Games - Ndhlovu,” *Times of Zambia*, 7 February 1980, 8.

pro-Moscow countries ammunition to criticize those states that decided to boycott, such as Zaire, whose decisions “conflicted with official African sport policy laid down by” the SCSA.<sup>900</sup> The Soviet Union’s work over the previous four years to win Ordia and the SCSA’s backing for its Olympic project paid dividends yet again.

Propaganda was central to the Soviet retaliation against America’s campaign. The work produced by TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) and APN (Novosti Press Agency), and distributed by the OrgCommittee, attempted to “expose the activities of the US administration and some of its allies,” by claiming that the White House was making the Olympics political. They argued that attacking the Moscow Games would “undermine generally the Olympic movement as a positive phenomenon of modern public life,” and that the US was directly contradicting the “content and specific provisions of the...meetings for security and cooperation in Helsinki, [thus] violating human rights” through its boycott.<sup>901</sup> The Soviet Union also called on its “mass media [to] take a sustained, calm position on the issue of appeals to boycott the Moscow Olympiad, citing statements of opponents of the boycott, [and] statements of prominent sportsmen.”<sup>902</sup> An example of both of these approaches was an article published in the *Daily Graphic* in Ghana ostensibly written by the Soviet gymnast and Olympic champion Nelli Kim, arguing that “each sportsman and woman must be given an Olympic chance” and that the American boycott was “an encroachment on each sportsman’s inalienable right to participate in the Olympic Games.”<sup>903</sup> The argument that the boycott violated human rights was part of a general strategy, largely used in Europe, and not as common within Africa. Generic propaganda

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<sup>900</sup> “Zaire joins games boycott campaign,” *Times of Zambia*, 2 February 1980, 8.

<sup>901</sup> “Document 190,” *Five Rings*, 562.

<sup>902</sup> “Document 184,” *Five Rings*, 541.

<sup>903</sup> Nelli Kim, “The Sportsman's Right,” *Daily Graphic*, 14 March 1980, 15.

articles emerged in sponsored sections on a range of other topics. A supplement in Ghana's *Daily Graphic* celebrating the 57<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Soviet air carrier Aeroflot in February reveled in the "failure" of the boycott and advertised comfortable ways to travel to Moscow to watch the upcoming competitions.<sup>904</sup>

The Politburo instructed Soviet embassies in Africa to promote articles and other propaganda that explained how the "Soviet people rejoice in the success of peoples embarking on the path of genuine national independence, their achievements in political, economic and social fields."<sup>905</sup> The Politburo wanted articles focused on how the "sportsmen of Africa have written glorious pages in the story of the Olympic Games" and that many more pages would be written in Moscow. Articles distributed to many African newspapers highlighted African voices and their positive opinions about the Moscow Olympics or the role of the Soviet Union in developing African sport. Comments made by Stephen Malonga, the head of the African Sports Journalists' Union, during a visit to Moscow were published widely. Malonga commented that "no other Organising Committee throughout the entire history of the Olympic Games would have thrown the doors more wide open for the African athletes who wished to take part in the Games, than the 1980 Olympic Games Organising Committee."<sup>906</sup> He also cited the "70 Soviet coaches...now working in Africa" in preparation for the Olympics Games as proof of the USSR's commitment to the continent's participation and success. Even after the event, stock articles still appeared that described what took place as a "Great Olympics" and provided a range

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<sup>904</sup> "Proposals against Games rejected," *Daily Graphic*, 14 February 1980, 9.

<sup>905</sup> "Document 190," *Five Rings*, 564.

<sup>906</sup> "In the Spirit of Olympics," *Daily Graphic*, 15 February 1980, 15.



of opinions from African officials, including SCSA General-Secretary Lamine Ba and IOC member Louis Guirandou-N'Diaye, praising their experiences in Moscow.<sup>907</sup>

The Soviets continued cooperating closely with the IOC during the first half of 1980 to prevent the boycott from escalating. Throughout 1980, the lines taken by the Soviets and the IOC stressed the political nature of the American boycott and the impossibility of moving the Games. The OrgCommittee met regularly with the IOC in the months leading up to the Games and attempted to persuade Olympic leaders to use their influence within their own nations to ensure maximal participation at the Olympics. The Soviets made repeated requests to Lord Killanin to speed up the recognition of countries like Mozambique, Grenada, and North and South Yemen, to ensure more countries attended Moscow.<sup>908</sup> This was successful in so far as Mozambique was recognised and attended Moscow.<sup>909</sup> So were Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, both of which then joined the boycott. The OrgCommittee also asked IOC officials Mohamed Mzali of Tunisia and Louis Guirandou-N'Diaye of Ivory Coast to persuade their countries to participate. Guirandou-N'Diaye was asked to “influence NOCs of Francophone African countries so that a majority of them send their teams to the Games in Moscow;” this was important since the OrgCommittee understood that Senegal, despite not boycotting itself, was influencing Francophone countries to withhold their teams.<sup>910</sup> However, both Tunisia and Ivory Coast would boycott despite Mzali and Guirandou-N'Diaye’s best efforts. The Soviet Union’s close relationship with the IOC and its focus on international sports leaders was a markedly different approach from how the Americans approached the boycott. Sarantakes noted that “Carter and

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<sup>907</sup> “The Great Olympics,” *Daily Graphic*, 8 August 1980, 7.

<sup>908</sup> “Document 202,” *Five Rings*, 607.

<sup>909</sup> “Document 203,” *Five Rings*, 911.

<sup>910</sup> “Documents 202,” *Five Rings*, 607; Senegal would participate but opposed Moscow hosting the Olympics, which meant it campaigned for a boycott it would not participate in.

others in his administration never took the Olympic movement and its ideology seriously.”<sup>911</sup>  
They did not attempt to engage with the IOC in the same way that Moscow did.

Importantly for the Soviets, their positions against white-settler regimes such as South Africa and in favor of liberation movements provided goodwill towards the Games in Moscow. While nations broadly condemned the Soviet action in Afghanistan, many were appreciative of Soviet efforts on the continent against “imperialism” and in support of “progressive forces,” presenting the USSR as a counterbalance to American and European interference on the continent. The Soviet Union’s position on these issues was often cited as the reason why countries should attend the Olympics. The Soviets had an added advantage in that the non-aligned position was not to get involved in the American boycott. Most non-aligned countries in Africa saw it as an American boycott rather than participating in a Soviet Olympics, which meant that the Soviets had less work to do to persuade many countries to attend the Games.

### **Africa and the 1980 Boycott**

Africa was an important terrain of contention during the Moscow boycott struggle. Its 41 National Olympic Committees out of a total of 147 meant that just over a quarter of total competing teams came from the African continent. African participation, then, could make or break the Moscow Olympic Games. In addition, from the experience of the Montreal boycott, and the threats to boycott Mexico City and Munich, the US, USSR, and IOC knew that African states were more coordinated than other regions at political action within sport. This meant that both sides believed they could amass a large contingent of African states to their respective sides. However, surprising both the USSR and USA, African states did not act in unison for the first

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<sup>911</sup> Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 118.

time in four Olympics and instead split into two camps over the boycott. Twenty NOCs boycotted the Olympics for various reasons, ranging from economic to political, while twenty-one nations participated in Moscow.<sup>912</sup>

This section will examine the debates within several African newspapers about the boycott. Journalists and the letter-writing public discussed the US's failure to take an anti-apartheid stance in sport. They questioned whether boycotting was consistent in the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement. There was a diversity of opinions within the press. The Moscow Olympic boycott debate encouraged African public discussion of the Cold War more widely. As Joseph Eaton has argued about the Moscow Olympic boycott, "within East Asia and Africa, the boycott was read to suit local perspectives, co-opted by national authorities and media. There was no single boycott."<sup>913</sup> Studying newspaper articles, letters, and editorials from a range of different countries allows us to show the various ways the boycott could be understood. In analyzing these papers, I have broken down the issues raised into three main areas: the legacy of the 1976 Montreal boycott, Afghanistan and the Cold War, and the continued issue of South Africa.

The newspapers referred to in this chapter come from countries on both sides of the boycott discussion. In the pro-boycott camp, there are the *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* from Ghana and the *Daily Nation* and *Standard* from Kenya. Kenya's newspapers present a more conservative outlook on the Moscow boycott, supporting their government's position; their

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<sup>912</sup> Liberia originally said it would boycott the Olympics under President Tolbert in February. Tolbert was overthrown in a coup d'état in April, whereupon the new military government committed itself to going to Moscow. Liberia sent a delegation of seven athletes who marched in the Opening Ceremony and then withdrew before they could compete, thus trying to join both camps at once.

<sup>913</sup> Eaton, "Decentering US Sports Diplomacy," 204.

editorials often pressed for harsher measures against the USSR. However, both papers published a wide range of letters offering both positive and negative opinions of the newspapers' coverage of the boycott decision and the government's position. There were so many letters to the *Daily Nation*, for instance, that the paper started setting aside a page just for public discussion of the 1980 boycott, with many letter writers sending their opinions multiple times and engaging in discussions with one another as if the *Daily Nation* were a town square. In contrast, Ghanaian papers, along with a large proportion of Ghanaian society, remained critical of their Olympic Committee's late decision to boycott. Both the *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* were state-owned papers that took different positions on the boycott, with the *Graphic* more critical of the decision to boycott than the *Times*, which appeared more neutral.

Most newspapers in Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia, and Senegal were opposed to the boycott and reinforced their governments' positions. *Le Soleil* in Senegal largely ignored the controversy, perhaps representing the government's awkward position of supporting a boycott of the Moscow Olympics without wanting to participate in it. State-owned media in Tanzania, the *Daily News*, Zambia, *Times of Zambia*, and Nigeria, the *Chronicle*, *Nigeria Standard* and *New Nigerian*, repeated their government's lines on no politics in sports while criticizing the US-led boycott mission. However, the privately owned *Punch* offered criticism of the Nigerian government and its pro-participation position, often to the chagrin of both the government and other media outlets. *Punch*, though, also maintained a critical attitude towards the US and its boycott, but without lauding the Nigerian government as a leader in the fight against apartheid.

## 1976 Montreal Olympic Boycott

As the United States campaigned across the world for a boycott of Moscow, the calls often fell on deaf ears in parts of Africa. For many, the Carter Administration was acting hypocritically, asking Africa to boycott the Olympic Games over a political issue just four years after the United States had castigated twenty-six African countries for withdrawing from Montreal in protest at New Zealand's connections with apartheid South Africa. The legacy of the Montreal boycott hindered American efforts to raise support from African politicians and their publics. In letters, editorials, and statements from politicians, the issue of Montreal featured regularly as a reason not to support the United States when it came to the Moscow boycott.

The accusation that the West was acting hypocritically was important in the discussions surrounding Montreal and Moscow. One journalist for the Nigerian newspaper *Punch* reminded readers that "When African nations decided to boycott the Olympics because of the presence of New Zealand notorious for her sporting ties with apartheid regime, the very same United States accused Africa of trying to distort[sic] the aims and spirit of the Games by introducing politics in sports."<sup>914</sup> However, now that America was doing the same thing over Afghanistan "it is Africa's turn to teach the US a lesson in sport and politics." In Ghana, the All-Africa Students Union appealed to the government and to the public to rally behind sending a team to Moscow by citing the example of the Montreal Games: "In this the United States and the other imperialist countries forget that in 1976, when African countries decided to boycott the Montreal Olympics over New Zealand's sporting links with apartheid South Africa they were heard stridently declaiming that we should not mix sports with politics. Today, they are asking African countries and other

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<sup>914</sup> "1980 Olympics: The Soviets are Confident," *Punch*, 7 February 1980, 5.

countries of the world not to go to Moscow on the pretext of developments in Afghanistan.”<sup>915</sup>

For many, the hypocrisy of the US move to boycott the Olympics after decades of arguing sports and politics do not mix, was reason enough to turn away from the boycott project.

Even in countries where the boycott received governmental support, such as Kenya, letters continued to stream into newspapers complaining about the United States’ previous position in Montreal. Writing to the *Daily Nation*, N. Njengah Maiganu complained that “In the past Western countries have been opening their mouths wide whenever African countries opted to boycott...due to these countries economics, sports and social links with the apartheid South African regime.”<sup>916</sup> But now the United States was asking countries to boycott over the issue of Afghanistan: “Is this not politics being imposed over the very games the US, Russia, Britain and other, have been so bitter about?” Vitalis Olwoe also wrote to the *Nation* to describe Carter’s boycott as “hypocritical” since “America has always opposed Africa's call to use sport to isolate South Africa because of the latter's policy of apartheid.”<sup>917</sup> Montreal touched a nerve for many across Africa. America’s refusal to support the boycott against sports contacts with South Africa and its rebuke after the event contributed to a feeling of ill-will toward the Moscow boycott campaign from the outset.

For many, though, it would not have taken much from America to win African support in Moscow if things had been different in 1976. In Tommy Sithole’s regular column for Tanzania’s *Daily News*, he mused that “if the Western countries had at least shown some understanding of the African argument in 1976, our use of the Olympics for peaceful protest against the barbarian Boers in the south, at least we would not be questioning their wisdom of involving the Olympics

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<sup>915</sup> “Reconsider boycott of games - AASU,” *Ghanaian Times*, 26 June 1980, 7.

<sup>916</sup> N. Njengah Maiganu, “They Refused Past Boycott (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 6 February 1980, 7.

<sup>917</sup> Vitalis Olwoe, “Boycott call is...(letter),” *Daily Nation*, 8 February 1989, 7.

now in Super Power politics.”<sup>918</sup> This was not the only time this idea of Montreal dictating policy towards Moscow came up in Tanzania. President Nyerere, after Muhammad Ali had left Dar es Salaam, “criticised the United States for waging a campaign to boycott this year’s Olympic Games when that country and other western nations have in the past refused to support Africa’s appeals for the boycott of South Africa for its racist policies.”<sup>919</sup> Nyerere went on to explain “it was incredible that when the OAU appealed against South Africa on moral grounds, the United States, Britain and other western countries refused to lend their support... They never supported us on this moral issue. But we are now being appealed to on a political issue to abandon the Moscow Olympic Games.” *Chronicle* columnist Bob Samson Akpan presented a similar attitude. Akpan wanted the government to inform the American ambassador “that Africa at this point in time shares America’s 1976 views about sports and politics.”<sup>920</sup> Lack of support in the past was a key reason why politicians, journalists, and letter writers could not bring themselves to support the US boycott.

President Nyerere and Tommy Sithole also suggested that boycotts could be reciprocal. The idea of supporting each other’s campaigns was popular. That the US and Britain had not supported Africa in 1976 led *Nation* reader E.K. Thuku to ask “then why should we join in their boycott?”<sup>921</sup> Njengah Maiganu’s letter claimed that “next time when African countries want to boycott games, US and Canada should overwhelmingly support them” as a fair exchange.<sup>922</sup> The idea of reciprocal boycotts, though, did not find support from all corners. M.J. Owino complained that “there has been a lot of African opposition to America’s Olympic boycott

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<sup>918</sup> Tommy Sithole, “The Politics of Moscow Olympics,” *Daily News*, 20 January 1980, 9.

<sup>919</sup> “Nyerere criticises U. States,” *Daily News*, 7 February 1980, 10.

<sup>920</sup> Bob Samson Akpan, “Ali’s Mission Impossible to Africa,” *Chronicle*, 8 February 1980, 7.

<sup>921</sup> E.K. Thuku, “We should not be misled (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 8 February 1989, 7.

<sup>922</sup> N. Njengah Maiganu, “They Refused Past Boycott (letter),” *Daily Nation*, 6 February 1980, 7.

proposal for the simple reason that America did not support the African Canada Olympics boycott.”<sup>923</sup> Yet, this was not the main issue defining the Moscow boycott: “We are forgetting the fact that the boycott is to protest against the Russian aggression over Afghanistan.” Focusing on Montreal as a reason not to support the Moscow boycott missed the point and worked into the hands of those supporting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

If it was a sign of disrespect from America and Western countries not to support Africa in its Montreal boycott, why did the USSR get a free pass when it too refused to leave the Olympic Games? In Ghana’s *Daily Graphic*, Nana Essilfie-Conduah asked a simple question to those who complained about the US response in 1976: “Did the Soviet Union and its allies stay away?”<sup>924</sup> The answer was no, and the USSR had offered very little public support of the boycott either; the Soviets had been more focused on protecting their own upcoming Olympics. One anonymous author in the *Nigeria Standard* took a bold position in reminding anti-boycott Nigerians that despite all this talk of the Soviet Union providing assistance against South Africa in the past, “it should be clear to all that the USSR and its allies did not join in that [Montreal] boycott either, and therefore Africans have no indebtedness to Moscow on that score.”<sup>925</sup> Abbe Richard complained that both superpowers “change like a chameleon,” altering their policies to try to win support, but it was important to ask what had actually happened: “Did [the USSR] support the African countries in their boycott of the Montreal Olympics?”<sup>926</sup> The idea of *quid pro quo* boycotts could be extended to the Soviet Union, which had provided assistance in removing South Africa from international sports organizations but had not backed the protest by African

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<sup>923</sup> M.J. Owino, “Mailbox,” *Daily Nation*, 14 February 1980, 7.

<sup>924</sup> Nana Essilfie-Conduah, “Why Ghana Cannot Go to Moscow,” *Daily Graphic*, 5 June 1980, 4-5.

<sup>925</sup> “Third World’s Stake in Moscow ‘80,” *Nigeria Standard*, 27 March 1980, 15.

<sup>926</sup> Abbe Richard, “Carter Can’t Fool Us (letter),” *Daily News*, 9 February 1980, 9.



countries in Montreal or in the drafting of the Convention Against Apartheid in Sport. Therefore, there was a question of what African states owed the Soviets over the last four years.

Despite all the discussion over how the Montreal Olympic boycott should influence African states' responses to the Moscow boycott campaign, a key difference remained in the popular understanding of what had taken place in Montreal. Letters repeated the claim that the Montreal boycott had been an African matter while the Moscow boycott was something that did not involve the continent. In one letter to the *Daily Nation*, L.K. Arap Wai argued that "the 1976 boycott was logical because an African issue was involved. Not so with the Afghanistan issue."<sup>927</sup> Other authors, such as Chomnjor S.K. writing to the *Nation* from Indiana University, argued that they were fine with the Montreal boycott because it had been "in the name of so-called African unity...it appeared genuine," but in the case of Moscow it was not clear what the boycott was about: "Is the Afghanistan invasion the only motive...or there are other selfish-hidden goals?"<sup>928</sup> This was a key difference between Africa's involvement in the Montreal boycott and its proposed involvement in the Moscow boycott. For many, protests against South Africa and apartheid felt closer to home than issues in Central Asia. But similarly, South Africa was an African issue while Afghanistan and the Moscow boycott was a Cold War problem that many in Africa wanted to avoid.

### **Afghanistan, Cold War and Non-Alignment**

The invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 transformed the threat to the Moscow Olympics from an African anti-apartheid boycott to a Cold War matter. With President Carter's

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<sup>927</sup> L.K. Arap Wai, "Mailbox," *Daily Nation*, 14 February 1980, 7.

<sup>928</sup> Chomnjor S.K., "Mailbox," *Daily Nation*, 14 February 1980, 7.

announcement on January 20 that the United States would boycott, countries were forced to take sides between an American-led boycott and a Soviet-hosted Olympic Games. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was unpopular globally. It was roundly condemned in the UN with 108 countries to 14 voting to condemn the invasion and demand the Soviet Union's withdrawal.<sup>929</sup> The *New York Times* celebrated the UN resolution as signaling "a new world lineup...Western, Moslem and other "nonaligned" nations coalesced" in opposition to the USSR.<sup>930</sup> While the Carter Administration took the voting in the United Nations to mean that the majority of countries were anti-Soviet, this did not mean that the non-aligned countries, especially those in Africa, were eager to throw their support behind the American boycott project. These countries argued that condemning the USSR in the UN was different from taking a stand over the Olympics, leading to extensive debate in African newspapers about what the appropriate reaction to the Afghan invasion should be and how the Olympic boycott fit into this.

For some countries, the Afghanistan invasion was reason enough to boycott the Olympic Games. Kenya, which was an early adopter of the boycott, repeated often that it opposed Moscow's invasion of a non-aligned country. President Moi argued that it would be "most inappropriate for any non-aligned nation to attend the Moscow Olympics while Soviet troops are in Afghanistan, in contravention of the basic principle of territorial integrity."<sup>931</sup> Kenya could not attend the Games while the Soviet army was still in that country. Kenyan sports officials backed Moi's position and used the same reasoning. Sharad Rao, the vice-chairman of the Kenya Olympic Association, explained "the way I look at it is that the Russians would have used our

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<sup>929</sup> Bernard D. Nossiter, "U.N. Votes 104-18 to 'Deplore' Soviet Moves in Afghanistan; Demands Troop Withdrawal," *New York Times*, 15 January 1980, A1.

<sup>930</sup> "Major News," *New York Times*, 20 January 1980, E1.

<sup>931</sup> "Ali's Mission May Not Succeed Says Ivory Coast Sports Minister," *Ghanaian Times*, 4 February 1980, back page.

presence in Moscow as a tremendous propaganda boost to show that we condoned their invasion of Afghanistan. We have to show our disgust by boycotting.”<sup>932</sup> In the opinion of Rao, showing up to Moscow would allow the USSR to move past recent events.

In wider Kenyan society, those who supported the Moscow boycott similarly cited the invasion of Afghanistan. *Daily Nation* editorials, from before Moi’s announcement, claimed the USSR was in the process of “colonising Afghanistan and it is doing so by ruthlessly killing anyone who comes in its way.”<sup>933</sup> Since Africa had a history of opposing “colonialism and the abuse of human rights as it is practiced in South Africa, why should they back expansionist moves of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan?” Yet, this was not limited to Kenya. An anonymous article in the *Nigeria Standard* called on Third World countries broadly to “demonstrate to the super power USSR what this attack on one of their number means” by participating in the boycott, which it presented as “a simple and effective answer” to the political problem.<sup>934</sup>

However, for many, the issues of Afghanistan and Moscow were separate. Zambian President Kaunda stated that “while we do not condone the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, we cannot support the attitude taken by President Jimmy Carter.”<sup>935</sup> Nigerian President Shagari argued that his country would “not hesitate to condemn the intrusion of big powers into the domestic affairs of smaller states,” but committed his country to attending the Olympics.<sup>936</sup> The idea that one could condemn both the invasion of Afghanistan and the Olympic boycott was visible in a *Punch* opinion poll in Lagos where “more than half (59.7 per cent) of our interviewees either strongly or simply condemned the USSR invasion of another country,” but at

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<sup>932</sup> Mohamed Warsama, “Big Support for Olympic boycott,” *Daily Nation*, 4 February 1980, 1.

<sup>933</sup> Editorial, “Africa ought to boycott Moscow games,” *Daily Nation*, 22 January 1980, 6.

<sup>934</sup> “Third World’s Stake in Moscow ‘80,” *Nigeria Standard*, 27 March 1980, 15.

<sup>935</sup> “Kaunda raps U.S. on ‘boycott Moscow’ campaign,” *Ghanaian Times*, 12 February 1980, 2.

<sup>936</sup> “Nigeria for Moscow Olympics - Shagari,” *New Nigerian*, 10 March 1980, 23.

the same time “more than half of our respondents (57.2 per cent) said the US call [to boycott] is either very unjustified or unjustified.”<sup>937</sup> In the same poll, 68.2% wanted Nigeria, and Africa more widely, to go to Moscow, while only 20.3% wanted Nigeria to boycott. The *Punch* poll showed that while Nigerians generally opposed the invasion of Afghanistan, they were not supportive of being part of any American boycott; more were interested in going to Moscow even if they felt that the invasion of Afghanistan was unjustified.

Part of the issue was that the boycott had created a Cold War binary in which it appeared to many that joining the boycott would mean siding with the United States. Yet, this did not necessarily mean going to Moscow meant siding with the Soviet Union. President Nyerere said that Tanzania opposed the invasion of Afghanistan but “the United States is making a lot of fuss. They are turning it into a super power struggle...There is a Swahili saying that when two elephants are fighting, it is the grass that suffers. Afghanistan and Tanzania are the grass.”<sup>938</sup> Presenting the boycott as part of the Cold War struggle meant those states which were determined to present themselves as non-aligned became increasingly resistant to attempts by the US to turn this into a Cold War, bipolar affair.

While the US and its supporters argued the boycott was about the invasion of a Third World, Non-Aligned country, many saw it as the Cold War forced onto sports. Most African states professed non-alignment but it was unclear what non-alignment meant in this case. In the case of Kenya, Moi used non-alignment as a reason to boycott Moscow in retaliation for the invasion of a fellow non-aligned country. However, there were those in Kenya who argued that non-alignment meant not getting involved at all. L.K. arap Wai wrote to the *Daily Nation*, “the

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<sup>937</sup> “‘Boycott Moscow Olympics’ call rejected,” *Punch*, 25 March 1980, 8.

<sup>938</sup> “Nyerere flays US campaign for Moscow Games boycott,” *New Nigerian*, 8 February 1980, 12.

Afghanistan issue is an American-Afghanistan-Russian worry. What difference does it make to African countries if Russia moves out and America takes over?...Remember also that the US is fighting solely for its own interests, but it has a way of involving the rest of the world.”<sup>939</sup>

Another reader, Jacob Kiplagat Sambu, argued that non-alignment also meant non-interference: “We are no better than Soviets since we have interfered with internal affairs of Afghanistan [by boycotting Moscow.]”<sup>940</sup> Arap Wai and Kiplagat’s views on the matter mirrored other understandings of non-alignment in Africa.

In Nigeria, for instance, the government was determined to prove its independence from the United States over Afghanistan and the Moscow boycott. The Nigerian Senate was divided over a bill condemning the Soviet Union’s incursion into Afghanistan, with some critics labelling it as “pro-American in tone” before having the bill thrown out on a technicality to avoid any notion that “Nigeria...be exploited by any foreign powers.”<sup>941</sup> Both critics and supporters of the boycott were keen to state that the most important thing was maintaining Nigeria’s non-aligned foreign policy. In an interview, Major-General Olufemi Olutoye, the former Federal Commissioner for Sport who had led Nigeria out of Montreal, complained that the country should “shun the current American boycott campaign” since “the big powers always feel that they can usually take Africa for a ride only to please their own selfish interests.”<sup>942</sup>

Concerns over being manipulated by the United States were common, as opposed to criticisms of the USSR. A *New Nigerian* editorial complained that with so many Western states lobbying Nigeria for its support in the boycott “we must be both firm and wise. A boycott of

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<sup>939</sup> L.K. Arap Wai, “Mailbox,” *Daily Nation*, 14 February 1980, 7.

<sup>940</sup> Jacob Kiplagat Sambu, “Mailbox,” *Daily Nation*, 14 February 1980, 7.

<sup>941</sup> Eric Teniola, “Senate throws out motion on Afghanistan,” *Punch*, 8 February 1980, 16.

<sup>942</sup> Sehinde Dagunduro, “Why Africa must go to Moscow - Olutoye,” *New Nigerian*, 5 March 1980, 23.

Moscow is solely in the interest of the Americans and their friends. We must not allow ourselves to be played on their draught boards. If we cherish our independence and integrity, then we must damn this stupid boycott.”<sup>943</sup> Obiota Ekanem, writing for the *Nigerian Chronicle*, explained that “Africans should resolve never to allow themselves to be used in the super power politics” and that “the issue of Soviet presence in Afghanistan which Moscow claimed to had been [sic] through invitation should be left as it is “a political issue”. ”<sup>944</sup> In the Nigerian case, non-alignment meant not becoming involved in the American boycott rather than thinking about how going to the Moscow Olympics could be considered siding with the USSR.

On the other hand, Ghana chose to boycott the Olympics also citing the same principle of non-alignment. For Ghanaians, it was important to be recognized as non-aligned given Kwame Nkrumah’s legacy as one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement back in 1961. When the Ghanaian Olympic Committee announced its intention not to send a team to Moscow, citing expenses and not enough Olympic standard athletes, accusations started flying that the country had buckled under American pressure and violated its own non-aligned principles. The National Union of Ghanaian Students argued that withdrawing showed Ghana’s position as a “neo-colony and consequently a puppet of imperialism.”<sup>945</sup> Another student group, the African Youth Command, accused their Olympic officials of having “seriously betrayed all Ghanaians and made the Government look a big hypocrite since Ghana was one of the founding members of the

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<sup>943</sup> Editorial, “To Moscow We Must Go,” *New Nigerian*, 7 February 1980, 1.

<sup>944</sup> Obiota Ekanem, “Boycott of Moscow Olympics is not for Africans,” *Chronicle*, 1 February 1980, 15.

<sup>945</sup> “NUGS is disgusted with N.O.C. stand on Moscow Games,” *Ghanaian Times*, 28 May 1980, 1.

Non-Aligned Movement” by falling for “cheap American propaganda” and bowing “to pressures from the manoeuvres of American agents.”<sup>946</sup>

Multiple editorials in the *Ghanaian Times* called for the government to intervene and send a team to Moscow since it would be a “great disappointment and a political tragedy if Ghana should be listed among the boycotting group.”<sup>947</sup> Government intervention was necessary, otherwise Ghana might be seen as pro-American. The Movement on National Affairs declared that “it should have been obvious to the committee that its decision could not be said to be non-political, regarding efforts of imperialist forces to disrupt the Moscow Olympics by calling for a boycott of the Games.”<sup>948</sup> Boycotting was seen as taking the American side in the struggle, but attending was not considered to be political by most African commentators.

When countries took sides on the boycott, their reasons were questioned by other states in Africa. Since almost all such nations professed non-alignment, those that sided with the American boycott came under scrutiny. The obvious target for this ire was Kenya. When Moi announced his country’s intention to boycott the Olympics, Kenya came under criticism for acting as an American puppet. Zambian and Nigerian journalists questioned Kenya’s non-aligned principles. The East African country had a close relationship with the US under its first President, Jomo Kenyatta, and that had continued under Kenyatta’s successor, Moi. Nigerian newspapers took aim at this cozy relationship, arguing that Kenyan support was tied to extracting more from the US government: “Arap Moi will frustrate Kenyan athletes and keep faith with Carter. That way he can secure his tenure of office and, may be, scrape a few million dollars in

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<sup>946</sup> “Reverse decision on Moscow games - A.Y.C.,” *Ghanaian Times*, 31 May 1980, 1.

<sup>947</sup> Editorial, “Ghana in Moscow,” *Ghanaian Times*, 31 May 1980, 2.

<sup>948</sup> “Imperialists Influence Ghana’s Decision - Movement alleges,” *Ghanaian Times*, 3 June 1980, b.p.

aid.”<sup>949</sup> Another report suggested that Kenya had “been playing host to America’s Third Fleet for such a long time now that it is actually beginning to see itself as part of America.”<sup>950</sup> Even in the more conservative Nigerian paper, *Punch*, commentators accused Moi of being a tool of US imperialism, arguing that “it is unfortunate that President Moi has found it fit to parrot the words of Jimmy Carter. One cannot but wonder what it is about the African personality that causes us to view events outside of Africa with greater seriousness than those unfolding inside the continent.”<sup>951</sup>

In the *Times of Zambia*, an article claimed that Muhammad Ali and the boycott proposal received favorable welcomes in Nairobi because the US was “beefing up [Kenya’s] air force with those sophisticated war planes!”<sup>952</sup> The announcement of increased American aid to Kenya after Moi’s State Visit in February added fuel to the accusation that Kenya was not actually a non-aligned state. However, the accusations went in only one direction. At the same time as the *Times of Zambia* criticized Kenya’s arms purchases from America, the Zambian government announced that it had “bought more than K70 million worth of arms, including 16 MiGs from the Soviet Union.... President Kaunda declared that as the West had declined to help Zambia, he would have no alternative but to look elsewhere for military aid.”<sup>953</sup> No questions were raised in Nigeria or elsewhere about whether Zambia’s anti-boycott position was tied to arms shipments from the USSR or indicated subservience.<sup>954</sup>

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<sup>949</sup> Ime Ikiddeh, “Afghanistan, Olympics Debacle,” *Chronicle*, 1 March 1980, 7.

<sup>950</sup> Pat Okon, “Muhammed Ali: Devil’s Advocate?” *Chronicle*, 10 February 1980, 6.

<sup>951</sup> Tunde Obadina, “Carter’s War,” *Punch*, 8 February 1980, 4.

<sup>952</sup> “Ali the Diplomat,” *Times of Zambia*, 7 February 1980, 4.

<sup>953</sup> “Zambia buys Soviet MiGs,” *Times of Zambia*, 7 February 1980, 1.

<sup>954</sup> Zambia turned to the USSR after the United States turned them down, see Andy DeRoche, “Asserting African Agency: Kenneth Kaunda and the USA, 1964-1980,” *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 5 (2016): 975.



Another argument critics used against joining the Moscow boycott was contrasting the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan against western foreign policy towards Africa and the Global South. Cecil Forde complained in the *Ghanaian Times* about the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan, but he also argued that the French deposing of Emperor Bokassa I in the Central African Empire (renamed Central African Republic after French intervention), foreign intervention in Zaire, and the US arming of Morocco in its struggle against Western Saharan separatists were similarly dangerous, imperialistic interventions.<sup>955</sup> The French coup in the Central African Empire/Republic was cited in other letters and contrasted with Moscow's own takeover in Afghanistan: "the coup by the French was hailed all over the world" while Afghanistan was condemned.<sup>956</sup> But what was the difference between these two coups except that one was organised by a Western power and the other by a Communist state? The *Punch* Opinion columnist asked why the United States should receive any support over Afghanistan since "was it not America which masterminded the brutal murder of patriots Patrice Lumumba in (now) Zaire and Allende in Chile?"<sup>957</sup> Boycotting over Afghanistan appeared weaker when critics pointed out the similar events organised and led by America and its allies.

Several examples were cited in letters and articles criticizing Western interventions, but the most common was to compare the invasion of Afghanistan to America's war in Vietnam. Abdulla A. Suleiman, writing for Tanzania's *Daily News*, argued that the US should have been boycotted during the 1960s and 1970s when it propped up "a puppet regime in Vietnam, [and]

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<sup>955</sup> Cecil V.M. Forde, "The Super-Powers over Afghanistan," *Ghanaian Times*, 29 February 1980, 4.

<sup>956</sup> Smart Samuel Agbemetsi, "Afghanistan and Moscow Games (letter)," *Daily Graphic*, 20 February 1980, 7.

<sup>957</sup> "Welcome, Ali, please go home," *Punch*, 6 February 1980, 5.

murdered a lot of Vietnamese.”<sup>958</sup> One letter writer to the Kenyan *Standard*, Birindwa Sibocha, asked readers to remember how “when the Olympic Games were going on in Tokyo and Mexico City, the United States was in the very process of intensifying its crimes against humanity in Vietnam.”<sup>959</sup> This was a common feeling across nations. When Paulinus Amadike, Nigeria’s minister for sport, dismissed Ali, he said that Nigeria deplored “any type of interference whether by the United States as it happened in Vietnam or by the Soviet Union as is now happening in Afghanistan.”<sup>960</sup> In journalist Eluem Emeka Izeze’s “Open Letter to Jimmy Carter,” Izeze described the US “call for the boycott of the Moscow Olympics [as] rather unfortunate...for no nation in the world raised the issue of boycotting the 1968 Olympics when your fellow countrymen were busy killing the Vietnamese in Vietnam.”<sup>961</sup> The United States’ actions during the Cold War, its interventions in Africa and the Global South, were weighed against the Soviet Union’s most recent intervention. And, for many, the US was found to be the worse offender of the two superpowers.

At the same time, there were several Soviet apologists arguing in the press that the situation in Afghanistan had been misrepresented or deliberately inflamed. Some readers argued that this was an internal matter: “Afghans themselves invited Soviets and they are the one to ask them to leave when they want.”<sup>962</sup> Amos Yenyi Sakaba explained to *Nigeria Standard* readers that the Soviets had not invaded anyone, rather “Russia’s involvement in Afghanistan is just to protect and assist the oppressed people of the country just like they have done in the case of

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<sup>958</sup> Abdulla A. Suleiman, “Afghanistan a mere pretext,” *Daily News*, 1 March 1980, 11.

<sup>959</sup> Birindwa Sibocha, “Let’s not be fooled over Olympic Games (letter),” *Standard*, 8 February 1980, 5.

<sup>960</sup> “Ali Gets Message for U.S. People,” *New Nigerian*, 11 February 1980, 31.

<sup>961</sup> Eluem Emeka Izeze, “An Open Letter to Jimmy Carter of USA (letter),” *New Nigerian*, 7 May 1980, 4.

<sup>962</sup> Jacob Kiplagat Sambu, “Mailbox,” *Daily Nation*, 14 February 1980, 7.

Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and other genuine liberation struggles against colonialism and imperialism.”<sup>963</sup> The boycott, then, made no sense as the Soviet Union had done nothing wrong. Joining “the West in boycotting the games, we are only losing a genuine friend of the oppressed peoples of the world. This would be too bad in fact we are likely to be colonized once again.” Sakaba’s version of events was a very positive interpretation of what took place in Central Asia. But Sakaba was not alone in this opinion. Tunde Obadina in *Punch* argued that the Afghanistan “action taken recently by the Russians was strictly an exercise in maintaining the status quo” and not about regime change because “for the past three years Afghanistan has been under Soviet influence.”<sup>964</sup> The All-Africa Students Union in Ghana also claimed that the USSR had extended assistance to the Afghan government and been invited into the country.<sup>965</sup> Therefore, the boycott was unnecessary since the Soviet Union was both an invited guest into Afghanistan and acting as a liberating power in Central Asia, just as it had across the Global South.

Aside from questions about what non-alignment meant and a desire to avoid being dragged into superpower conflicts, there was the one harsh reason that many readers and commentators did not want to boycott the Olympics: Afghanistan did not interest them. In Ghana, the former manager of the boxing team, Major Amarteifio, urged the country to “avoid super power politics” and that “for a sportsman to train for four years towards such a great event (which may be once in a life-time) only to be told at the point of fulfilling a dream that someone has fired a gun in a remote Himalayan village” and therefore the athlete must boycott the Olympics “is to apply torture to the heart of such athlete.”<sup>966</sup> Dismissing events in Afghanistan as

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<sup>963</sup> Amos Yeniyi Sakaba, “Ali and the Moscow Boycott,” *Nigeria Standard*, 12 February 1980, 12.

<sup>964</sup> Tunde Obadina, “Carter’s War,” *Punch*, 8 February 1980, 4.

<sup>965</sup> “Reconsider boycott of games - AASU,” *Ghanaian Times*, 26 June 1980, 7.

<sup>966</sup> “Let’s avoid super power politics - Amarteifio,” *Ghanaian Times*, 4 February 1980, 7.

someone firing “a gun in a remote Himalayan village” indicated the level of concern that Major Amarteifio felt over matters in Central Asia. Afghanistan was far away and did not affect Africans. Ime Ikiddeh in the *Chronicle* wondered “how many Nigerians would be able to locate Afghanistan on the world map...Need anyone be ashamed of an inability to accomplish such a feat? For the truth is that these countries are much too far away, some much too small as well, to compel our close attention and knowledge.”<sup>967</sup> While initially quite dismissive, Ikiddeh went on to state that “whether we can place them or not, our fate is tied to theirs in a way impossible to conceive a hundred years ago.” But Afghanistan, as Ikiddeh, Amarteifio, and others pointed out, was distant and there were problems on the African continent that demanded attention first due to their proximity.

Ali had understood this point during his travels. Repeatedly during press conferences, the former heavyweight champion had wanted to talk about the issues in Afghanistan but his “audience was unimpressed.”<sup>968</sup> Ali would then change his subject back to “African problems” to hold his audience’s attention. After one of Ali’s press conferences in Lagos, the boxer was told “to go home and tell [the] United States government [that] what is happening in South Africa and Zimbabwe bothers Africans more than events in Afghanistan, a country which most of them hadn’t heard of before.”<sup>969</sup> *Chronicle* journalist Pat Okon complained “Is Muhammed Ali’s mission to Nigeria to convince us that Russian troops in Afghanistan should concern us more than racist troops in Zimbabwe? I don’t know what this world is coming to.”<sup>970</sup> What was happening in Afghanistan was not a strong enough reason to be pulled into a Cold War conflict.

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<sup>967</sup> Ime Ikiddeh, “Afghanistan, Olympics Debacle,” *Chronicle*, 1 March 1980, 7.

<sup>968</sup> “Ali Defends Africa’s interests,” *Nigeria Standard*, 10 February 1980, 2.

<sup>969</sup> “I’ve taken no money: Ali,” *Daily Graphic*, 11 February 1980, 15.

<sup>970</sup> Pat Okon, “Muhammad Ali: Devil’s Advocate?” *Chronicle*, 10 February 1980, 6.

Especially when issues with South Africa and Zimbabwe continued to preoccupy many in sub-Saharan Africa.

The problem of Afghanistan as a catalyst to boycott the Olympics was that it was perceived as a Cold War issue between the two superpowers; Africa was caught in the middle. The Cold War colored all interactions on the matter. It raised questions about what non-alignment and support for Third World states looked like when the superpowers conflicted with one another. Was it non-alignment to compete in the Soviet Olympics after it had invaded a fellow non-aligned country? Some argued that Carter and the West were correct to say that going to Moscow would be tantamount to condoning Soviet policy in Afghanistan. But what about boycotting? Since the United States was leading the boycott effort, would boycotting mean becoming part of the US camp in this conflict rather than remaining independent? Each side was tainted by the Cold War nature of the boycott once Carter announced the United States' intention in January.

### **South Africa, Apartheid and Human Rights**

While there were plenty in Africa concerned about growing superpower tensions over Afghanistan, a real concern in many letters was the plight of non-white South Africans under apartheid. Human rights were a central issue within the boycott campaign. Carter and other leaders in the West cited the Soviet Union's poor record of human rights and its treatment of Afghans as reasons to boycott the Olympic Games. But to the people reading or listening to this argument in Africa, these criticisms came across as hollow. Africa had its own human rights concerns and wanted an answer about South Africa. That the West was unwilling to support the struggle against apartheid but now asked for support in the case of Afghanistan struck many

readers as hypocritical and racist. Andy DeRoche has argued that this was a major stumbling block in US foreign policy in Africa, since “American nonalignment in the struggle against racism exasperated black African leaders in the same way that African non-alignment in the Cold War frustrated officials in Washington.”<sup>971</sup> By framing the Moscow boycott around the issue of human rights while hesitating to end South African apartheid, America’s boycott campaign lost support among African states.

As the US campaigned across Africa, and especially during Muhammad Ali’s tour, they found the real issue was not what was going on in Moscow and Kabul but rather what was happening in Pretoria or Johannesburg. In Lagos, Ali gave up on trying to impress his audiences about the issues in Afghanistan and instead refocused his mission, stating “I will drive it home to Jimmy Carter that these people are not bothered in the least whether the Olympic Games are held. What they are concerned about is the total liberation of Africa.”<sup>972</sup> When pressed to compare what was going on in the USSR to that in South Africa, Ali declared, “to me, South Africa is worse than Russia. They kill my brothers daily, trade in them and subject them to all sorts of torture.”<sup>973</sup> What was worse, Ali had learned through conversations during his tour, was that “America is guilty of taking sides with apartheid...with the enemies of humanity.” Despite the diplomatic issues of Ali’s tour, the Presidential emissary understood where the issue lay and why he, on behalf of the United States, was struggling to win support for the boycott campaign. Afghanistan was a problem, but South Africa trumped it. Until the US shifted its position on

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<sup>971</sup> Andy DeRoche, “Non-alignment on the Racial Frontier: Zambia and the USA, 1964-68,” *Cold War History* 7, no. 2 (2007): 228.

<sup>972</sup> “Ali defends Africa’s interests,” *Nigeria Standard*, 10 February 1980, p.2.

<sup>973</sup> Iyiola Afolabi and Taiwo Hassan, “...And he blasts America,” *Punch*, 8 February 1980, 1.

South Africa, it would be impossible to win widespread, popular support across Africa for its positions.

There were some letter writers, particularly in Kenya, who agreed with the stand against the Soviet Union on the grounds of human rights. Harold Browning, who wrote to both the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard*, complained about the Soviet Union's "lamentable and disgusting performance in human rights, making an absolute mockery of the so-called Helsinki Agreement."<sup>974</sup> Benson Ohara Abelle agreed with Browning, arguing that Moscow should have been stripped of the Games back in 1978 when British foreign secretary David Owen had "voiced his timely concern about the violation of human rights" in the Soviet Union during the show trials of dissidents like Anatoly Sharansky and Yuri Orlov, both members of the Helsinki Watch Group.<sup>975</sup> Other criticisms from the *Nation* editorial board asked Third World leaders to be "concerned about the behaviour of a Super Power which completely disregards human rights," behaving "like an imperialist country."<sup>976</sup> Another editorial headlined "Africa ought to boycott Moscow Games" asked, "if the Africans oppose colonialism and the abuse of human rights as it is practised in South Africa, why should we back expansionist moves of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan?"<sup>977</sup>

However, while some praised the human rights approach to the Moscow Olympic boycott and challenged the Soviet Union's record on the issue, many journalists and writers sought to challenge the US government's own record, accusing Carter of hypocrisy and not following his own policies. Steve Chibale, writing to the *Times of Zambia*, accused Carter of using "human

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<sup>974</sup> Harold Browning, "Games are to prove greatness (letter)," *Daily Nation*, 1 February 1980, 7.

<sup>975</sup> Benson Ogada Abelle, "Mailbox," *Daily Nation*, 14 February 1980, 7.

<sup>976</sup> Editorial, "Soviet Union cares little about freedom," *Daily Nation*, 26 January 1980, 6.

<sup>977</sup> Editorial, "Africa ought to boycott Moscow games," *Daily Nation*, 22 January 1980, 6.

rights...merely as a cover.”<sup>978</sup> The US President claimed he was interested in human rights but his country “always sided with the racist aggressors because that is the side their bread is buttered. They directly or indirectly benefit from the oppression, exploitation, sweat and blood of the suffering black man in Southern Africa.” Chibale also questioned the sincerity of America’s interest in Afghanistan, “I just wonder what kind of rights they are talking about in Afghanistan - oil rights or Human Rights in the area?” Even in a supportive country, like Senegal, Bara Diouf criticized US human rights policy in the state-run *Le Soleil*, arguing that America had failed in its “obligations as leader of the free world. It cannot allow itself to tolerate the suffocation of freedoms and human rights in South Africa and Latin America and be angry because they are violated in Afghanistan.”<sup>979</sup> Carter, and the US government more widely, needed to appear consistent if they wanted countries to take its position on Afghanistan and the USSR seriously. For many, the US foreign policy “had allways[sic] been clothed in hypocrisy[sic] to deceive the third world to take sides with them in the name of fundamental human rights, right of self determination, non interference in internal affairs, detente and other sugar coated phraseologies.”<sup>980</sup> American foreign policy, from decades of experience, appeared to care less for human rights than it claimed and so countries were hesitant to trust Carter’s pronouncements on Afghanistan.

One letter to the *Nigeria Standard*, by Alas Welte Tyodem, pointed out the double frustration that Carter was known as a “Human Rights crusader” and had appealed to the world over the denial of human rights to Afghans and Soviet dissidents, yet the White House ignored

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<sup>978</sup> Steve Chibale, “US and allies trying to take us for a ride (letter),” *Times of Zambia*, 26 May 1980, 7.

<sup>979</sup> Bara Diouf, “The Challenge,” *Le Soleil*, 11 February 1980, 1.

<sup>980</sup> Obiota Ekanem, “Boycott of Moscow Olympics is not for Africans,” *Chronicle*, 1 February 1980, 15.



“15 million Africans denied their basic fundamental human rights” in South Africa because it was not convenient for its foreign policy aims.<sup>981</sup> The author called for African leaders and people to “ignore Carter’s hypocrisy” on human rights and go to Moscow. The double-standard was obvious to many readers and the US boycott provided an opportunity to voice their anger over this hypocrisy. Mohammed Hamza wanted readers to remember that “when African nations shout hue and cry in pursuit of justice for the oppressed Africans in the Southern block of the continent, it means nothing to America and her Western allies. Or may be to them those Africans were only humans but destined to have no RIGHTS.”<sup>982</sup> Abbe Richard in Tanzania followed a similar line of argument, confused as to why Carter cared so much about the human rights of every group but South Africans: “When a human being is oppressed, it does not matter where he is or the composition of his colour. The fact is that they suffer equally. How come that this Carter...feel the Afghanistan pinch and ignore the sufferings of millions in South Africa? Is it just because Afghans are not black?”<sup>983</sup>

In response to these criticisms of US policy and other calls to avoid Africa being drawn into the Afghanistan situation, angry letter writers complained about African double standards when it came to human rights. Many of these letters came from Kenya with its larger Muslim and Arab populations that appeared, from the passion of their letters, to have a stronger connection with events in Afghanistan. S. Muchiru wrote to the *Nation* arguing that the Soviet Union was “indiscriminately torturing, killing, and executing innocent and defenceless children

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<sup>981</sup> Alus Wetle Tyodem, “To Moscow Olympics African States Must Go (letter),” *Nigeria Standard*, 12 February 1980, 4.

<sup>982</sup> Mohammed Hamza, “Why Africa should go to Moscow ’80 (letter),” *Nigeria Standard*, 7 March 1980, 14.

<sup>983</sup> Abbe Richard, “Carter Can’t Fool Us (letter),” *Daily News*, 9 February 1980, p.9.

and women in Afghanistan.”<sup>984</sup> A boycott was necessary to show the Soviets that Kenyans “value the rights and lives of human beings to live [rather] than the rights of a human being to participate in sports.” That so many politicians, journalists, and readers were unwilling to give up participation in a sports event to show solidarity with Afghans baffled Muchiru and D.J. Shah. Shah’s letter called out the majority of readers and journalists for being hypocritical in their approach to human rights, since most African states “have threatened to boycott the games due to the oppressive policy of Rhodesia and South Africa,” but, with a similar situation in Afghanistan, “it now appears that these countries have no feelings for people outside of Black Africa.”<sup>985</sup> Shah described this as selfishness and asked whether this was “because African countries care only about Africans?”

## Conclusion

Despite the pleas of those who called for African states to come to the support of South Africa, the anger at US policy supporting apartheid South Africa and its disregard for the liberation struggles and suffering of millions of black Africans meant that appealing on the issue of human rights was unlikely to win broad support for the boycott across the African continent. This long-term failure of American foreign policy, combined with criticism over the Montreal Olympic boycott, and the perception that the US was making the invasion of Afghanistan into a Cold War rather than a non-aligned issue, all provided reasons for the public to turn away from the Moscow Olympic boycott. While African states generally condemned Soviet action in Afghanistan, the reasons given by the US to boycott the Moscow Olympics did not find

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<sup>984</sup> S. Muchiru, “I support games boycott,” *Daily Nation*, 6 February 1980, 7.

<sup>985</sup> D.J. Shah, “Double-Standard Africans Castigated,” *Standard*, 8 February 1980, 5.

widespread support among the African public nor persuade them to support a second boycott in a row.

Strangely enough, despite the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, the Moscow Olympics were in a remarkably safe position. The USSR's work over decades, but particularly in the previous four years since Montreal, had built much goodwill towards the Moscow Olympic Games and towards the Soviet Union in general. Despite the pressures globally, the condemnation in the UN, and the general feeling that what the USSR had done to Afghanistan was wrong, a unanimous African boycott of the Moscow Olympics was off the table. Politicians, letter writers, and journalists sought to separate what was going on in Central Asia from the upcoming sports festival in the capital of the Soviet Union. Soviet propaganda flooded newspapers across the continent, presenting the Moscow Olympics as a festival of friendship and peace, with comments from Soviet sportsmen and officials calling the boycott an imperialist ploy. OrgCommittee and Sports Committee members had travelled to Africa to continue building connections with African states, promising free travel, room and board for those willing to make the trip. These policies worked in rallying public support across Africa for the Moscow Olympics, especially when locals contrasted the assistance provided by the USSR across multiple fields with what the US had done.

## Chapter 8 REVIEWING THE MOSCOW OLYMPICS

For the Soviet Union, the two-week Olympic competition was an opportunity to amaze the world. The massive Opening Ceremony with dancers from every republic, hundreds of child-gymnasts dressed as Misha the Olympic mascot, and a live appearance from cosmonauts Leonid Popov and Valery Ryumin from Salyut 6 in orbit around the earth was supposed to dazzle spectators in the stadium and those watching or listening at home. In the sports competitions, the Soviets wanted to demonstrate the superiority of socialist sport and encourage countries to emulate their training methods and organizations. The OrgCommittee put on a cultural festival filled with ballet, opera, comedies, and circus acts to show foreign and domestic tourists the wonders of the Soviet Union. Moscow was refurbished with coats of paint, shops well stocked with Olympic-stamped items, and new hotels, restaurants, and tourist-friendly spaces built just for the Games. Tours took visitors on week-long trips to Central Asia, Siberia, or to different cities in European Russia, the Baltics and Ukraine. The Soviet Union was on display to the whole world. The OrgCommittee was counting on journalists broadcasting images on television, giving their impressions via radio, and writing up their experiences in newspapers and to spread an ideal of the USSR globally. This was a megaevent that had the whole world's attention, and the USSR wanted to exploit it for as much propaganda value as possible.

### **Soviet Success?**

The Moscow Olympics were an important moment for the USSR. The Soviet Union hoped to use the Games to persuade visitors and watchers of the success of the communist system. The Moscow Olympics were supposed to be the “pinnacle of modern sporting pageantry,

evidence of the self-ascribed vision of what modern society should be - and, by 1980, what the Soviet Union had officially become.”<sup>986</sup> This image would be sent around the world to persuade countries and people that the Soviet Union was a vibrant modern society with a model that was worth emulating. Yet, the question was, who were the Moscow Olympics trying to persuade of this fact?

Baruch Hazan argued that the Soviets focused primarily on athletes and spectators from the West, since the USSR was determined to demonstrate that it was not a backward nation and that it was the equal of those countries.<sup>987</sup> This is why the Soviet Union had spent so much time repairing buildings, constructing new, Western-style hotels, training staff in Western hospitality, and numerous other efforts to counter foreign conceptions of Soviet backwardness.<sup>988</sup> However, these athletes were not impressed by what they saw in the USSR. Hazan argued that while Westerners were the “prime target” of the Moscow Olympics, the invasion of Afghanistan “succeeded in turning them, or at least most of them, into ardent patriots” and left them largely unpersuadable as to the success of the Soviet system.<sup>989</sup>

Instead, the Soviets had great success with athletes from the Global South. Hazan wrote that athletes from developing countries “had a really good time. Brought to Moscow at the expense of the Olympiade-80 Organizing Committee and losing (in most cases) painlessly and hardly unexpectedly to their opponents, they efficiently disposed of their duties and were left with plenty of free time to enjoy the Olympic village and the cultural attractions so lavishly provided by the organizers.”<sup>990</sup> The Soviets understood this was an important target market for

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<sup>986</sup> Parks, *Red Sport, Red Tape*, xxi.

<sup>987</sup> Hazan, *Olympic Sports*, 201.

<sup>988</sup> Popov and Orlov, *Forgotten Modernization*, 139-178.

<sup>989</sup> Hazan, *Olympic Sports*, 202.

<sup>990</sup> *Ibid*, 201.

their propaganda. Western athletes and spectators were more numerous and easier to distribute propaganda to through television, radio, and the press. But the Cold War was not a struggle just over Europe, it was a struggle for the whole world. During the 1970s, it was primarily a struggle over the political systems of decolonizing nations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The Soviets had always been conscious of the fact that the Olympics were a chance to woo the states of the developing world more so than those in the West, which were established in their political systems and beliefs.

The Soviets were conscious to impress those from the Global South and particularly Africa. They spent a lot of time ensuring African athletes felt valued and were seen as part of the competitions rather than just lambs to the sporting slaughter. Soviet journalists trumpeted the potential of African athletes, arguing during the first week that “the veterans of the Olympic Games - European athletes - will meet tough competition from their African rivals.”<sup>991</sup> The Soviets feted African journalists who attended the Games and provided them with assistance to get reports sent back to their publications.<sup>992</sup> African politicians, such as the Nigerian sports minister, were honored guests. The Soviets gave them tours of Moscow’s sports facilities and held discussions about what sort of aid the USSR could offer to develop this sporting infrastructure back in Africa. This was an incredible opportunity for the USSR to show off its Olympic Potemkin Village and win the Cold War cultural battle.

The Soviets kept a close eye on the press coverage of the Games abroad. Novosti (APN) kept track of what sort of articles foreign newspapers published on the Olympic Games, noting that in the first week of the Olympics over 5,000 articles were written on Moscow and published

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<sup>991</sup> “Games: Focus on African Athletes,” *National Concord*, 23 July 1980, 15.

<sup>992</sup> “Document 271,” *Five Rings*, 749-750.

in countries competing and boycotting. By the end of the Games, APN estimated that it had published around 10,629 articles globally.<sup>993</sup> In Africa, newspapers in Guinea, Angola, Benin, Tanzania, and Nigeria published most of these pieces. An estimated 17,190 articles produced by APN also appeared around the world, with APN materials appearing in 73 African newspapers across 12 countries. These were positive articles highlighting the success of the Games, focused on the events and on the fact the Games took place despite American sabotage. Some positive examples from foreign papers were highlighted in Soviet reports, such as praise from the *Madagascar Matin* describing the Moscow Olympiad as representing “another world, without doubts, the world of the future.”<sup>994</sup>

While newspapers were one method of promoting positive feelings towards the USSR and the Olympics, Soviet officials were interested in how many people were watching events in Moscow, such as the Opening Ceremony. Out of the new Press Centre, which was a regular feature of puff pieces about the Moscow Olympics, and an updated television center, the USSR distributed video footage around the world so that countries could witness “a grandiose, festive performance from the capital of the USSR.”<sup>995</sup> A few days after the Opening Ceremony, Soviet reports indicated that around 1.5 billion people watched, making it a massive propaganda success. Another positive was the “overwhelming majority” of foreign media which presented the “Moscow Olympiad [as] an impressive victory for the Soviet Union.” It was such a success that even foreign, antagonistic news agencies were finding it difficult to find problems to broadcast back home - the Soviets excitedly noted an American Broadcasting Corporation

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<sup>993</sup> “Document 279,” *Five Rings*, 765-766.

<sup>994</sup> “Document 280,” *Five Rings*, 773.

<sup>995</sup> “Document 270,” *Five Rings*, 747-749.

interview with Tanzanian athletes, “who noted the high spirit of brotherhood and solidarity ruling at the Moscow Olympiad.”<sup>996</sup>

Moscow’s propaganda work was successful in terms of the numbers. Total television and radio hours broadcast about Moscow were used as a gauge to see how effectively Soviet propaganda was distributed. The day after the Opening Ceremony, there were 475 hours of radio broadcast from Moscow; additionally, 475 hours of television were broadcast globally.<sup>997</sup> The GDR showed 19 hours of coverage across its channels; Cuba and Great Britain broadcast 13 hours. The Soviets collected data on the broadcast in some African countries: Algeria broadcast 3.5 hours and Angola a full hour. The Soviet television service sent “special newsreel with overview of the day’s events” to 40 foreign organizations. Through these broadcasts the world saw a carefully manicured version of Moscow.

Soviet officials judged the success of the Moscow Olympics by interviewing tourists at the events. The ministry for tourism interviewed attendees from a variety of Western, socialist and Global South countries to see what people thought about Moscow and the events. One sports official from Algeria, Beder, explained that “carrying out of the Moscow Olympiad was very important especially today when there is restlessness in the world.”<sup>998</sup> A tour group from Cameroon said that “We expected a lot from the Olympic Games in Moscow, but not such a beautiful spectacle.” Two of the group said that Moscow had far surpassed Montreal in their experience. Participants from the Olympic youth camp were also asked about their experiences in Moscow.<sup>999</sup> The Congolese group praised the high level of preparation of the facilities and the

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<sup>996</sup> Ibid.

<sup>997</sup> Ibid.

<sup>998</sup> “Document 273,” *Five Rings*, 754-755.

<sup>999</sup> “Document 274,” *Five Rings*, 757.



organization of Olympic activities. Both the Mozambican and Algerian delegations lauded the “communist construction” projects and the “internationalism of the Soviet people.”

The final report from APN on the Moscow Olympics claimed that the Soviets had beaten the West in the boycott struggle. The USSR had succeeded in the Global South as negative commentaries from Western press agencies were replaced by “objective materials about the progress of competitions and positive assessments of the Olympiad.”<sup>1000</sup> What was more, the effects by “big, imperialist informational services” to use the “press of developing countries for anti-Soviet and anti-Olympic propaganda was generally unsuccessful.” The failure of the boycott and this negative coverage had “disavowed [the West] in the eyes of broad layers of the world public,” and put the Americans on the back foot in the global propaganda war in the Global South. In contrast, the Moscow Olympic coverage had promoted a positive view of the USSR and demonstrated “evidence about the USSR’s real contribution to the process of developing detente, cooperation and mutual understanding between peoples.”

### **African Reports on Moscow**

The success of the 1980 Olympics can be seen in the narratives around the competition in African newspapers that hailed Moscow and the Soviet system. Much of the coverage about the Moscow Olympics was positive, especially from those countries that had participated. Journalists focused on the general success of the Games and praised both the city of Moscow and the welcoming attitude of Muscovites.

Many African ministers traveled to the Olympics and witnessed the sports facilities around Moscow. Upon returning home, they gave glowing reports about their quantity and

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<sup>1000</sup> “Document 281,” *Five Rings*, 773-776.

quality, the technology on display, and the need to emulate Soviet investment in sports programs. This amazement was a consistent refrain in Nigerian coverage of the Olympics. Nigeria's Director of Sports, Isaac Akioye, looked at the facilities available to Soviet athletes with envy. "If [Nigeria] possesses one quarter of facilities now available in this USSR," then it would be "far ahead of other African countries in sports."<sup>1001</sup> Akioye was sold on the Soviet sports system; he even proposed emulating the system back in Nigeria rather than sending Nigerian athletes to college in the United States to train. Another official who travelled with the Nigerian delegation, Alhaji M.D. Shuaib, said he had been "highly impressed by the high qualities and enormity of the facilities and arrangement made for the games."<sup>1002</sup>

The Nigerian *Chronicle* was particularly taken with the idea of building new facilities to compete but did not want to use the USSR as a model. It suggested that the best model to follow was the GDR's and particularly the work of the University for Physical Culture in Leipzig. The editorial argued that "East Germany is a good example of a successful sporting nation" and a possible model for Nigeria.<sup>1003</sup> While Nigeria did not take sport seriously, the opposite was true in the GDR where sports was held up as "a test of the resilience and superiority of communist energy." The East Germans dedicated tremendous resources to the development of athletes "With well trained personnel, which include doctors, psychologists, dieticians and physiotherapists and with sophisticated equipment which include ultra-sonic muscle-toning devices, energy measuring and electro-cardiographic equipment." All of this allowed the GDR to dominate in international competitions, something to which Nigeria aspired. The *Chronicle*

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<sup>1001</sup> "Adegbite on Sports Facilities," *National Concord*, 2 August 1980, 15.

<sup>1002</sup> Ndanusa Aloa, "House Committee Chairman Impressed with Games Arrangements," *New Nigerian*, 1 August 1980, 23.

<sup>1003</sup> Editorial, "Olympic and Us," *Chronicle*, 9 August 1980, 3.

lauded the socialist sports model and called for its implementation, explicitly the GDR's version over the USSR's.

Extensive praise was not limited to Nigerian coverage. Tanzania's *Daily News* described the scene in Moscow as "glorious" and "as a model of success for the modern era games."<sup>1004</sup> Hamidu Bisanga described the facilities as leaving him "agape as to many millions the Soviet Union invested into the Olympics." The praise also extended to the quality of the facilities at the Games. Bisanga praised the Soviet desire to cater to every athlete and fan's needs "either in terms of food, entertainment or religion." Tony Stephen wrote an article series in *Le Soleil* praising Moscow for its facilities and accommodations.<sup>1005</sup> Upon Zambian sports minister Nalumino Mundia's return home from Moscow, he spoke to the National Assembly about what he had seen.<sup>1006</sup> Mundia explained his admiration for the ways the Soviet Union used "science and technology in sports development" and for the vision of the future that he had seen in the USSR.

Pathe Diallo, the head of the African Sporting Press Union, praised the Moscow Olympics as exemplary: "Moscow has well prepared for the Olympics. Sports facilities of international class have been built, and the necessary infrastructure has been created, which has been highly rated by the leaders of the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa."<sup>1007</sup> It was a model for Africa, and all future Olympic hosts, to follow. Diallo also praised the "Soviet coaches who work in Africa...generously sharing their experience and know-how with young sportsmen, sparing no effort in performing their duty...I would like to note their high competence and

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<sup>1004</sup> Hamidu Bisanga, "With (out) boycott Olympics glorious," *Daily News*, 17 August 1980, 12.

<sup>1005</sup> Tony Stephen, "VI - Moscou <<capitale olympique la plus sportive de monde>>," *Le Soleil*, 2 September 1980, 15.

<sup>1006</sup> Sports Reporter, "Biased Judging cost us dearly," *Times of Zambia*, 5 August 1980, 8.

<sup>1007</sup> "Games: Focus on African Athletes," *National Concord*, 23 July 1980, 15.

sincere wish to contribute to the development of African athletes.” The Soviets had done good work to get African states and athletes to the Moscow Olympics and it was time for the USSR to receive credit for this.

African athletes and visitors also offered positive opinions of what they had experienced in Moscow beyond just the amazement at the facilities. Tanzanian boxer Isaac Mabushi praised the “wonderful village where there are all conditions for training sessions, good rest and recreation;” Tanzania’s field hockey coach Belujan Singh described the Olympic village as full of “friendly contacts. People from all continents associate freely with each other here and find common ground easily;” Michael Musonda, who played football for Zambia, was amazed that a city of eight million people was “affable, great and clean,” and that the Soviets were gracious hosts and very friendly.<sup>1008</sup> Perhaps the funniest anecdote about the Moscow Olympic success came from *National Concord* reporter Adam Aliu, who praised the ticketing process and respect for reserved seats. Aliu was amazed that when “I entered the stadium only a few minutes to the opening ceremony and met my seat vacantly awaiting my buttocks. You don't need to fight yourselves physically in the bid to get seats.”<sup>1009</sup> He used this opportunity to also criticize the experience back in Nigeria, where “people don’t obey simple laws. They like to struggle for what they are not entitled to.”

Some of this glowing coverage was Soviet produced and distributed to newspapers abroad to create a positive impression of Moscow. One unattributed article in the *National Concord* entitled “Thank you, Olympiad, Thank you Moscow,” regaled readers with the smooth running of the Games and provided testimony from a range of figures, including “an outstanding

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<sup>1008</sup> “Athletes Comment on Moscow Olympic Games,” *National Concord*, 1 August 1980, 14.

<sup>1009</sup> Adams Aliu, “Moscow Olympics a Success!” *National Concord*, 29 July 1980, 14.

public figure” Lamine Ba. The article quoted the SCSA General Secretary praising the Olympics, “I have the most favourable impressions of Moscow, its residents, sports facilities. A friendly and natural atmosphere prevailed in Olympic Moscow. This may be put down not only to the credit of the organizers of the Olympic Games but to the credit of the Soviet people, especially Muscovites.”<sup>1010</sup> This sort of coverage was complemented by other, broad articles on the success of Moscow that quoted other African leaders. Despite Ghana’s boycott, its *Daily Graphic* published “The Great Olympics” that featured a number of African officials, including Ba, Louis Guirandou-N’Diaye, and Zimbabwe’s sports minister Joyce Mujuru, who all praised the events, facilities, and hosts.<sup>1011</sup> The article was based on quotes that journalists from APN had collected during the tournament and then packaged into an article for distribution to African nations.

Much of the press coverage focused on how the Games had beaten the boycott and their doubters. Sonny Ajeagbase, a journalist for the *National Concord*, praised the work done by the Soviets “not only making sure that many countries were represented but...doing everything to ensure that those who come will go away with a lingering memory of the show.”<sup>1012</sup> The lingering memories included the massive spectacle and the excellence of the facilities: “You won’t believe it,” Ajeagbase wrote, “but sports correspondents from western world are so dumbfounded with the lavishness and grandeur of the spectacle the Russians staged that they have made definite prediction that no other nation in the world can surpass the Kremlins[sic].” *Daily News* correspondent Hamidu Bisanga reveled in seeing Western journalists disappointed by the success of Moscow “What they expected did not come. They were interested in something

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<sup>1010</sup> “Thank you, Olympiad, Thank you Moscow,” *National Concord*, 16 August 1980, 15.

<sup>1011</sup> “The Great Olympics,” *Daily Graphic*, 8 August 1980, 7.

<sup>1012</sup> Sunny Ojeagbase, “Our Hope is Crashing in Moscow,” *National Concord*, 27 July 1980, 15.

political to crop up. Nothing happened.”<sup>1013</sup> The Moscow Olympics were a grand victory over those who had for years prophesied that a socialist Games would be a disappointment or lackluster.

These positive accounts pointed to the success of the Soviet Olympics and painted a positive picture of the country for the African continent. The Olympics had taken place in difficult circumstances, but the Soviets had held their nerve and provided an extravagant celebration. Reports back in Tanzania hailed Moscow as “a success, providing real competitions, fun and upholding the ideal of the Olympic Movement the friendship and sporting brotherhood among the 81 nations which participated.”<sup>1014</sup> Though the Games had been disappointing in terms of African medals, leaders like Abraham Ordia spoke about how African participants should focus “first of all friendship, then medals later.”<sup>1015</sup> Similarly, a *New Nigerian* editorial hailed the Olympics as “a very big victory for the Soviet Union not only because it won the greatest number of medals but more so because it was held at all.”<sup>1016</sup> The editorial even went so far as to refer to countries that had boycotted as “unprincipled and cowardly,” indicating that the struggle for the legacy of the Moscow Olympics had just begun.

The Soviets believed their Olympics had been a success and reveled in the positive coverage about Moscow. They believed that their Games had been a propaganda victory over the West and that an image of Moscow as an open, modern, and cultured capital had spread around the world. Much of the coverage of the Games, especially articles supplied by APN and TASS, highlighted these factors. And in countries which attended the Games, there was general, positive

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<sup>1013</sup> Hamidu Bisanga, “With (out) boycott Olympics glorious,” *Daily News*, 17 August 1980, 12.

<sup>1014</sup> Stephen Rweikiza, “From Russia with Lessons,” *Daily News*, 3 August 1980, 11.

<sup>1015</sup> “Games: what's our gain,” *National Concord*, 31 July 1980, 15.

<sup>1016</sup> Editorial, “Moscow Olympics,” *New Nigerian*, 6 August 1980, 1.

coverage of the events. Yet not all coverage was neutral or positive about Moscow. There were several issues cited about the Olympics that concerned African politicians, sports officials, and the public.

One criticism was that while the Opening Ceremony and competitions were exciting, once you left the stadium there was little of interest to do in Moscow due to security arrangements and a staid cultural show put on by the OrgCommittee. The “high culture” performances arranged by Soviet groups did not excite many journalists, who also resented being monitored by security with little freedom to explore the city. *Punch*’s Olympic correspondent, Owolabi Illori, complained about “boredom” and how all the journalists were “homesick because life has been very dull, uninteresting.”<sup>1017</sup> He described a dismal picture to his readers back home: “the excitement of the games is killed as soon as you step out of the arena and face the husky-looking security men at the gates. Security is so tight that it is now very irritating to those of us who enjoy the freedom in the west.” Illori wrote how journalists sat in the hotel bar, drinking “most of the time until the early hours of the morning.” After promises of an exciting cultural program and an open city, Illori claimed the city was practically a graveyard.

Larger complaints about the Moscow Olympics focused on how African athletes had been dominated, and perhaps humiliated, by their international competition. The medal count at Moscow revealed a massive sporting success for the socialist bloc countries. The USSR won 80 gold medals and 195 in total. The German Democratic Republic won 47 golds and 126 in total. The Olympics were dominated by these two countries that won 62% of the gold medals and 52% of the total. The competitions were about demonstrating the success of Communist sport. In contrast, the African total at the Games was three gold, four silver and two bronze medals,

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<sup>1017</sup> Owolabi Illori, “Moscow plans big for closing,” *Punch*, 30 July 1980, 1.

around the same as Sweden. Some African countries, therefore, looked at the USSR and GDR's domination and wanted to emulate their training programs and build new facilities. But the communist success came at the expense of everyone else. The imbalance between the success of socialist countries and the rest of Africa led to questions about whether these developing nations should keep competing in the Olympics if it meant repeating the humiliation of Moscow.

In Ghana and Kenya, both of which boycotted the Olympics, there were comments from sports officials and journalists that not going to the Olympics was the smarter decision when they saw how far behind African athletes were in comparison to Europe. Kenya's *Daily Nation* published articles describing African athletes as "pigmies in front of giants" and that they had been "humbled and annihilated by their peers in the ring, on the track and in the water."<sup>1018</sup> Perhaps to re-emphasize the sensibility of Moi's decision to boycott, the *Standard* published Associated Press articles describing athletes from the Global South as "stragglers" and "Olympic losers."<sup>1019</sup> Journalists mocked the performances of athletes drafted in at the last minute, thus taking away some of the glamour from the Olympics and at the same time humiliating those countries that chose to attend rather than boycott.

After the Games, Ghanaian boxing referee Nii Amaa Amarteifio argued that not going to the Olympics was the best thing that the Ghanaian NOC had done. Citing the level of competition, Amarteifio said that "Ghana's presence at the Games would not have been felt if she had participated because of the high standards displayed by European and Cuban sportsmen."<sup>1020</sup> What was worse, if Ghana had taken part, then it "would have been disgraced" in Moscow. Other African nations had been "a total flop." Only Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda

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<sup>1018</sup> Editorial, "Moscow Games were a farce," *Daily Nation*, 5 August 1980, 6.

<sup>1019</sup> "Olympic Losers...about half the 6,000 from the Third World," *Standard*, 30 July 1980, 22.

<sup>1020</sup> "G.W. praises N.O.C. stand," *Daily Graphic*, 14 August 1980, 7.



had proven their worth. Amarteifio took some glee out of “Nigeria’s dismal performances at the Games,” where they had been “hopelessly eliminated from all the events in which they participated.” But while the issues of competitiveness were important in Amarteifio’s report back to his fellow Ghanaians, he stressed that it was not all about Africa’s lack of medals that made the event lackluster. He had similar complaints to Owolabi Illori, describing how “the Moscow event lacked the usual fun and gaiety, and attributed this to the presence everywhere of security police and soldiers who were oppressive.” The Games were not the celebration he had been expecting. While it is easy to write off Amarteifio’s criticisms as trying to make Ghanaians feel better about not competing, the same sorts of criticisms appeared in other African nations.

Nigeria’s poor performances were a major issue for its government and sports organizations. The Nigerian team had travelled to Moscow with high hopes of winning a few medals but in the end were eliminated early in most competitions, only coming close in the 4x100m men’s relay: “Our efforts to get beyond Africa and join the ranks of top-rate sporting countries have once again come to naught.”<sup>1021</sup> After the failure to win a medal, the inquisition started with sports officials providing numerous reasons why Nigeria had failed. The Nigerian minister for sport, Paulinus Amadike, put it down to Nigerian athletes “operating in a completely different society using, maybe for the first time, sophisticated facilities.”<sup>1022</sup> Nigerians would either need to build their own facilities like these or train in the USSR to reach the same levels.

Other excuses for Nigerian failures in Moscow had included the entire boxing team getting heartburn in the leadup to competition.<sup>1023</sup> After the team returned home, officials then

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<sup>1021</sup> Sunny Ojeagbase, “The Game is Buck Passing,” *Sunday Concord*, 3 August 1980, 15.

<sup>1022</sup> “Nigeria Advises Soviet Union Over 1984 Olympic Games,” *National Concord*, 24 July 1980, 15.

<sup>1023</sup> “Games: Bassey speaks,” *National Concord*, 2 August 1980, 15.

claimed the boxers enacted a “mutiny” in Moscow and “decided to fight to loose[sic] because they were not given materials like tracksuits.”<sup>1024</sup> Another excuse was that American universities were not preparing Nigerian sportsmen properly or were distracting the athletes from their purpose of winning medals in Moscow. “I know one thing. America kills our sportsmen,” Director of Sport Akioye claimed, “Most of them here are thinking and planning on how to get to America after this Games. How can you expect athletes with unsettled mind to perform well?”<sup>1025</sup> But the biggest reasons, which drew the media’s attention, were “allegations of indiscipline, sex scandal which may turn out to be another sexgate, and the old story of officials leaving athletes to fend for themselves while they face other business.”<sup>1026</sup>

In the closing days of the Olympics, Nigerian coverage of the Games focused on the sex scandal engulfing the delegation’s leadership. Three female athletes, including Joan Elumelu and Comfort Ighagbon, were sent home early. Akioye described them as “an ulcer to the whole team. They were parading themselves about and contaminating others and in fact, one of them stabbed Peter Okogogbe, 'our finest athletes' who refused to yield to her stupid advances.”<sup>1027</sup> He demanded that the women be banned for life and blamed them for the nation’s poor performance. But when the women returned home, they “told the Press that some officials had made love overtures to them and because they refused they were being victimised.” The issue became a national scandal as it appeared the delegation leaders had tried to embargo all reports from Moscow to prevent an exposé.<sup>1028</sup>

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<sup>1024</sup> “NOC wants boxers’ performances in Moscow probed,” *Punch*, 8 August 1980, 15.

<sup>1025</sup> Sunny Ojeagbase, “The Game is Buck Passing,” *Sunday Concord*, 3 August 1980, 15.

<sup>1026</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1027</sup> Sunny Ojeagbase, “Believe Us!” *Sunday Concord*, 10 August 1980, 15.

<sup>1028</sup> Owolabi Illori, “The Telephone Calls,” *Punch*, 30 August 1980, 14.

By the time the Nigerian delegation returned home, the cat was out of the bag. At the airport, Akioye again blasted the women and then the press, complaining that “you people appeared to have made up your minds on who and what to believe. But you must believe us because we are the representatives of the nation.”<sup>1029</sup> For Nigeria, this would bring the curtain down on what one journalist would refer to as “one of the most disastrous sports pilgrimages outside the Nigerian shore.”<sup>1030</sup> Instead of focusing on the success of the Moscow Olympics, the legacy of the competition was an illicit sex scandal and a need for a cultural shift in the country’s sports organizations. The success of the Moscow Olympics was dependent less on what the USSR could control but rather what happened within individual delegations.

Poor performance in some sports similarly tainted Tanzania’s experience at the Olympics. Tanzania had success in track and field: Filbert Bayi, Tanzania’s hero who had lost his chance at a gold medal in 1976, won a silver in the 3000m steeplechase and Suleiman Nyambui won silver in the 5000m. The two silvers were Tanzania’s first Olympic medals. But the delegation had been uncompetitive at most other sports. The real horror was the Tanzanian hockey team’s performance. Invited to make up numbers at the last minute, the team lost 18-0 to India and 12-0 to Spain. This led to an inquest among readers who wanted to know “Who is to blame? The courageous poorly equipped hockey players who have never practised on smooth tarfs [sic] like the ones in Moscow, or the sports administration in the country?”<sup>1031</sup> Agnel de Souza, another reader, complained that “an 18-0 beating by India was too much to accept under

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<sup>1029</sup> Sunny Ojeagbase, “Believe Us!” *Sunday Concord*, 10 August 1980, 15.

<sup>1030</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1031</sup> Lutte Wa Lutte, “I feel like crying (letter),” *Daily News*, 26 July 1980, 11.

any excuse. Let us not repeat the mistake of sending an unprepared side to an international competition.”<sup>1032</sup>

Lack of preparation for the Olympics was laid at the feet of the government. But this led to infighting. Tanzania’s minister for sport, Ndugu Chediel Mgonja, returned from Moscow calling for more investment in the country’s athletics infrastructure otherwise medals and chances would continue to be limited.<sup>1033</sup> But critics said that the team struggled “largely because of lack of good planning and adequate training facilities and poor preparations.”<sup>1034</sup> This was backed up by Nyambui, who, despite winning a silver medal, believed that he would have done better had the Tanzanian Olympic Committee informed him earlier that he would be competing instead of “at the last moment.”<sup>1035</sup> He also complained that he had been bed-ridden for a few days leading up to his race with one of the many “Moscow viruses” said to be going around the Olympic Village. Illnesses could not be controlled, but preparations could, which left the onus on the Tanzanian Olympic Committee for missing out on the country’s first gold medal.<sup>1036</sup>

Zambian coverage, which was largely even-handed during the games, took a downturn in the aftermath of the competition. Upon Mundia’s return from Moscow, the sports minister proceeded to complain that “African countries were discriminated against...because of non-representation on various international sporting bodies.”<sup>1037</sup> Mundia called for an investigation

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<sup>1032</sup> Agnel de Souza, “Defeat was too much (letter),” *Daily News*, 2 August 1980, 11.

<sup>1033</sup> “Mgonja suggests: The poor must invest in sports,” *Daily News*, 2 August 1980, 12.

<sup>1034</sup> Stephen Rweikiza, “From Russia with Lessons,” *Daily News*, 3 August 1980, 11.

<sup>1035</sup> Willie Chiwango, “Nyambui on TOC,” *Daily News*, 10 August 1980, 12.

<sup>1036</sup> Nyambui lost to Ethiopian Miruts Yifter ‘The Shifter,’ which left some in Tanzania feeling it was a missed medal since an African rival had come in first and not a European or North American. Yifter also won the gold in the 10,000m.

<sup>1037</sup> Sports Reporter, “Biased Judging cost us dearly,” *Times of Zambia*, 5 August 1980, 8.

by the SCSA to get to the root of this issue. Why was judging suddenly an issue? Because Zambia had not done well in the boxing, and this was where he believed the most egregious judging had taken place. The Zambian Olympic Committee was also struck by bad fortune and mismanagement on its way back from Moscow. As the team travelled home via Rome, the team's allowance of 3,000 Kwacha and "an unknown amount of travellers cheques" were stolen from the team manager's wife.<sup>1038</sup> The failure of the team in Moscow and the loss of the money led to criticism from readers. The attention turned to whether it was necessary to "revamp the whole team which went to Moscow" and if it would not be better for the government to "disband the team and concentrate on building a new powerful one."<sup>1039</sup>

The failures of Africa allowed for some intra-African taunting to take place. While Kenya did not go to the Olympics, Kenyan journalists kept an eye on the successes of African athletes at the Games. *Standard* reporter Hector Wandera commented that Africans had only won three golds, three silvers, and two bronzes this time around. He could not resist pointing out that in 1968 Kenya alone had won "three gold medals, four silver and two bronze."<sup>1040</sup> Wandera's commentary was ostensibly about the success of Ethiopian Miruts Yifter's double gold in the 5,000m and 10,000m competitions. But it turned into a Kenya versus Ethiopia rivalry, with Wandera wondering "whether Kenya's absence paved the way for Yifter's magnificent double triumph...it all would have depended on Henry Rono, holder of court world records, which include those for the events which the Ethiopian won."<sup>1041</sup> Yifter may have won two medals at

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<sup>1038</sup> Sports Reporter, "Games team robbed," *Times of Zambia*, 7 August 1980, 8.

<sup>1039</sup> B. Mwelwa, "Olympic funds wasted (letter)," *Times of Zambia*, 12 August 1980, 10.

<sup>1040</sup> Hector Wandera, "Ethiopia keeps Africa's flag flying," *Standard*, 8 August 1980, 30.

<sup>1041</sup> Ibid.

Moscow, but only because Rono did not participate in the events. Wandera needed to make sure that Kenyans knew they were still the number one athletics country in Africa despite the boycott.

The *Daily Nation*'s editorials also continued to criticize the Moscow Olympics. As the Games opened, the *Nation* again railed against the IOC and USSR, reiterated its opposition to both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union's backing of the Vietnamese in Kampuchea, before restating its respect for "human life and dignity," which the Soviets apparently lacked.<sup>1042</sup> The paper continued to publish content from the Associated Press coming from Moscow, which varied from neutral to critical of the level of competition at the Games. This bias irritated some readers. Birindwa Sibocha, who had previously criticized the *Nation*'s coverage of the boycott in February, complained again about the "anti-olympic and anti-Soviet" tone of the paper's editorials.<sup>1043</sup> The *Daily Nation* could keep repeating the "negative aspects of the games so as to present the Moscow Olympics in a rather bad light," but at some point it would need to accept that Moscow was a "big success" and perhaps Kenya had been wrong to boycott.

The coverage of the Olympics in African newspapers ranged from exuberant praise (often written by Soviet journalists for redistribution) to mean-spirited criticism. Some journalists saw Moscow as a beacon of the future - a vision of sporting excellence with unrivalled facilities that would provide a map to future success for African states. But for others, the Moscow Olympics were humiliating and showed Africa's backwardness in world sport. The Soviets believed that their Olympics had been a massive propaganda success and that it had won the battle in the Global South against the US and now could push home its advantage in the coming years. But it is also possible to see that the biggest lessons for Nigeria and Zambia weren't to do with the

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<sup>1042</sup> Editorial, "Killanin should know we are independent," *Daily Nation*, 21 July 1980, 6.

<sup>1043</sup> Birindwa Sibocha, "Moscow Olympics a big success (letter)," *Daily Nation*, 16 August 1980, 21.

USSR's megaevent but rather the scandals that engulfed their teams and came to define their Olympic experiences. For Soviet officials, this must have been frustrating. They had done so well with events that they could control, but national scandals and issues trumped the international events that they were a part of. This made sport, to paraphrase Simon Kuper, a "slippery tool" for reputation building and international diplomacy.<sup>1044</sup>

### **Boycott Legacy**

The boycott question did not go away completely at the Olympic Games and afterwards. Arguments continued into the weeks, even years, after the event. For some the Moscow boycott remained a Cold War event that had threatened the Olympic movement, and that Africa had been dragged into. Tibebe Shiferrau, President of the Ethiopian, Peace and Solidarity Committee, complained that the US and West Germany had brought politics into sport for their own gain. Instead, ironically given Ethiopia's support of the 1976 Montreal boycott, Shiferrau argued that "sports should not be mixed with politics. Relations in sports should be sounded up in the running track, ring or swimming pool, while political problems should be settled at the negotiation table."<sup>1045</sup> However, in the process the West had been taught a lesson. The boycott, in Shiferau's opinion, was "a complete fiasco" and had suffered a "crushing defeat." It had damaged the United States' reputation across Africa and its persuasion attempts had supposedly fallen on deaf ears: "Independent Africa resolutely rejected any idea of boycott." But half of Africa had boycotted - Shiferau implied that lining up with the boycott camp meant subservience and neocolonial status, whereas attending was the only way to demonstrate independence.

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<sup>1044</sup> Simon Kuper, *Football Against the Enemy* (Orion, 2003), 27.

<sup>1045</sup> "Africa on the eve of the Olympics," *National Concord*, 18 July 1980, 14.

Many Nigerian commentators continued to emphasize their country's independent foreign policy and lambast the boycott effort. In the *National Concord*, Sonny Ajeagbase complained, "there is no way you can exist in this world without getting mix-up with the jealousy and rivalry of the Americans and the Russians;" the superpowers demanded that all countries pick a side, which had led to the "the tug-of-war over the on-going 22nd Olympiad."<sup>1046</sup> But Nigeria had done well to go to the Games while still condemning the USSR. The same sort of issues could be seen in the *Ghanaian Times*, which continued to lambast its government for joining the American boycott as the Opening Ceremony took place.<sup>1047</sup> Non-participation rankled and meant far more than just missing a sports competition; it meant the country losing an independent, non-aligned foreign policy. The boycott had forced many countries into uncomfortable decisions, to define themselves internationally within the Cold War struggle, even if they did not wish to do so.

Other journalists confronted issues with non-alignment in different ways. Mike Akpan, writing for the *Chronicle*, used the Opening Ceremony to start another conversation about "western hypocrisy" to boycott the Moscow Olympics "after they had threatened to punish OAU members which planned to boycott them in protest against Britain's participation shows the hypocritical stuff which America and its NATO allies are made of."<sup>1048</sup> But Akpan had expected western hypocrisy; it was the norm in sports. The real problem was that half of Africa decided to stand with the US and abandon their independence. Akpan was furious with those "OAU members [who] failed to read between the lines and have sheepishly announced their decision to boycott the Games because of a threat to Western interests in South-West Asia." That these

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<sup>1046</sup> Sunny Ojeagbase, "Our Hope is Crashing in Moscow," *National Concord*, 27 July 1980, 15.

<sup>1047</sup> Editorial, "Big Games: Falsehood Defeated," *Ghanaian Times*, 21 July 1980, 2.

<sup>1048</sup> Mike Akpan, "The Olympics and Western Hypocrisy," *Chronicle*, 18 July 1980, 7.



countries abandoned non-alignment was disappointing. But it was perhaps the loss of unity within the African bloc, after so many Olympic cycles, that hurt the most. The Moscow Olympic boycott shattered this unity.

The issues of Montreal, though, continued to hang over all the events in Moscow. Some journalists were still frustrated that 1980 was a bigger issue than 1976 - the Cold War over Apartheid. A *National Concord* editorial questioned the position of countries that chose to take a political stand in 1980 but had refused to do so in 1976: "No doubt, those third world countries that boycott the games on US instigation, must now be asking themselves the question whether they are truly independent. This is necessary for the same third world countries that participated at the 1976 Olympics in spite of an African boycott of the games. They had then pontificated after the US that sports and politics did not mix."<sup>1049</sup> But there were others who were upset that once again Africa had become a pawn within a larger game. Sam Sikazwe in his Sports Talk column for the *Times of Zambia* wrote about his concerns that "in the last two boycotts of the Olympic Games, it is the African athletes who have suffered in the end because our sports leaders are in most cases unable to make independent decisions on issues that affect the welfare of our athletes."<sup>1050</sup> Sikazwe appeared to be turning against what had happened in Montreal and also criticizing those states that had chosen to boycott a second time over participating. No doubt Sikazwe was correct - African athletes were hurt the most as many were denied participation in two Olympic Games with back-to-back boycotts.

The legacy of the Moscow Olympics is still up for debate now. Perhaps the most well-known fact about it is the boycott and the impact it had on the sporting competitions: an unlikely

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<sup>1049</sup> Opinion, "The Moscow Olympics," *National Concord*, 6 August 1980, 2.

<sup>1050</sup> Sam Sikazwe, "Sports Talk," *Times of Zambia*, 8 August 1980, 8.

victory for Zimbabwe in the women's hockey or Alan Wells winning the 100m for Britain. But walking down the tourist shops of the Arbat in 2018, the legacy of 1980 is alive and well and it has taken the form of Misha the bear. Just as Misha's face was everywhere in 1980, "smiling up from dinner plates, wristwatch dials, aftershave bottles," Misha now smiles back at you from t-shirts, fridge magnets and matryoshka dolls.<sup>1051</sup> Despite the best efforts of the USSR, the spectacular cultural performances, its incredible sporting achievements, and the state of the art sports facilities constructed for 1980, the longest-lasting legacy of this sporting megaevent was a bear with a mysterious, vapid smile.<sup>1052</sup> It shows how despite the best intentions of using the Olympics to promote an ideology and economic system, commercialism and anthropomorphic children's toys are what last.

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<sup>1051</sup> Anthony, J. Barbieri Jr., "Olympic 'souvenirs' were never like this," *Vancouver Sun*, 16 July 1976. A6.

<sup>1052</sup> "Misha the Mascot Bears Up Nicely on Return to Earth," *New York Times*, 6 August 1980, B6. At the closing ceremony, a giant, inflatable Misha floated out of the stadium. The next day, TASS issued a press release letting people know Misha was okay: it "rose to a height of 800 meters, flew for three and a half hours and came down in a meadow near Moscow University," where a search party found him unharmed.

## CONCLUSION

The 1980 Moscow Olympic Games suffered the largest boycott in history. The OrgCommittee invited 146 countries to compete. Eighty countries participated and 66 countries either rejected or ignored the invitation. Moscow featured the fewest nations since the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and the fewest athletes since Tokyo in 1964. The boycott was clearly visible in the opening ceremony, with large teams absent such as the United States, West Germany and Japan. Even teams who chose to compete in the games marked their disapproval of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by refusing to march under their country's flag, instead carrying an Olympic flag or the flag of their country's National Olympic Committee. Others sent only a flag bearer, while the rest of their team remained in the Olympic Village. IOC and Soviet officials, meanwhile, acknowledged the boycott only in oblique terms. Lord Killanin's speech at the opening ceremony singled out for special thanks the athletes and officials "who have shown their complete independence to travel and compete, despite many pressures placed on them."<sup>1053</sup>

Neither threats to move the Games nor a US-led boycott derailed the Moscow Olympics. Athletes set 36 new world records. New nations achieved spectacular results celebrated around the world, such as Zimbabwe's first gold medal in the women's hockey tournament. But the conspicuous absence of many competitors gave the games, at times, the quality of a farce. The USSR and GDR each won an unusually high number of medals, effectively turning the Olympics into a triumphant, two-team parade rather than a true contest of the world's sportspeople.

From the vantage point of 1980, it might have appeared that ever-larger boycotts would eventually spell the end of the Olympic movement. The number of boycotting countries had

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<sup>1053</sup> *Games of the XXII Olympiad Moscow 1980: Official Report*, 288.

more than doubled between Montreal and Moscow; if boycott campaigns continued at that pace, less than a dozen countries would be left standing by 1984. But Moscow would be the apogee of the boycott era. In 1984, only 19 nations boycotted the Los Angeles Games, a motley group that included the USSR, its allies and two countries that had independently severed diplomatic ties with the US. When Seoul hosted in 1988, the risk of a mass walkout again flared. The division of Korea had been a major Cold War event culminating in war in 1950. But while the USSR and some allies initially raised objections, in the end, only four countries sat out the games in protest: North Korea and a few sympathetic communist allies. The boycott era of the Olympics was officially over.

### **Redefining the Boycott Era?**

Historians have typically defined the “Boycott Era” in the context of the Cold War. The period begins in 1980, when the U.S. and its allies pulled out of the Moscow games, and ends in 1984, when the Soviet Union responded in kind.<sup>1054</sup> In this analysis, Olympic boycotts lose steam because of shifts in the Cold War battlefield. By 1988, the USSR had enacted Glasnost and Perestroika under Mikhail Gorbachev; Reagan’s anti-communism ameliorated somewhat in return. In this moment of thawing relations, the Soviet Union, GDR, and most other socialist bloc countries removed their opposition to playing in South Korea. Seoul was a success and returned the Olympics to the Cold War sporting battlefield it had been since Helsinki in 1952.

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<sup>1054</sup> Robert Simon Edelman, “The Russians are *not* coming! The Soviet withdrawal from the Games of the XXIII Olympiad,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 1 (2015): 31: Edelman has argued that the Soviet boycott was not a simple tit-for-tat boycott in response to Moscow but had its own reasoning based on growing anti-Soviet feeling in USA.

Terming 1980-1984 the Boycott Era is somewhat misleading. This approach prizes the Cold War boycotts over the larger struggles within sport. Other boycotts of the Olympics and similar global competitions had helped to shape sport in the post-war era, particularly with the growing number and importance of decolonized nations. The 1980 boycott was not the first mass Olympic boycott that threatened the Olympic movement; that was the Montreal boycott in 1976. The Montreal boycott was a product of the long-running anti-apartheid boycott campaign that had threatened the Commonwealth and Olympic Games since 1966. Africa's walkout in Montreal was the culmination of these threats. There were tangible results to the 1976 boycott as well: the Gleneagles Agreement and the UN's Convention Against Apartheid Sport. The 1976 boycott was so powerful that the USSR made Africa its priority from 1976-1979 to ensure the success of the Moscow Olympics. Montreal was, by any number of merits, a successful boycott of the Olympic Games with a significant impact on how global sport functioned until the end of apartheid in 1992.

Why then have the Cold War boycotts been so prized? Why is it that even when historians write about the 1980 Olympics, they are more likely to link it to events in 1984 than to the previous Games and second-largest boycott in 1976? Is it as simple as Malcolm Maclean argues that histories of the Olympics have experienced "at best a colonial blindness, if not an inherent white supremacy, in the historical narrative" by prioritizing and granting "agency to Western European and North American interests and perspectives" on Olympic boycotts over other groups?<sup>1055</sup> Perhaps this criticism is a little unfair because studying the 1980 boycott involves both superpowers in a Cold War conflict that drew in states from around the world, often with easily accessible source material from newspapers and archives. But by not studying

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<sup>1055</sup> Maclean, "Reclaiming the 1976 Montreal Boycott."

the effects that the 1976 Olympics had on 1980, the overlap between the decolonization struggle and the Cold War in sport has been missed. As this dissertation has shown, the Montreal boycott was complicated, and its legacy played out in various ways over the following four years. The links between 1976 and 1980 are clear, but they may not be as obvious as the Cold War link between 1980 and 1984.

A possible reason historians have largely ignored 1976's relationship to 1980 is the absence of a second, successful African boycott of the Olympics in 1980. The Montreal boycott was not repeated, despite threats by the SCSA to boycott Moscow in 1979 over provocative South African rugby tours by Britain and France. The SCSA also appeared to decline in power after Montreal. It had mobilized African states in 1968, 1972, and again in 1976. But after the actual boycott of the Olympics the SCSA leadership experienced a loss of popularity among its members. Senegal and Ivory Coast's refusal to participate struck a blow at African unity. The question of New Zealand remained. And many African states began to regret the boycott in Montreal. As chapter 4 demonstrated, the SCSA was not the same organization that could rally a united African bloc in 1979 and 1980. Ordia and Ba abdicated their authority in 1980 after the invasion of Afghanistan, stating that the SCSA was not a political organization but rather a sport one.

Even if there was not a second African boycott linking 1976 to 1980, that does not mean that the boycott era should focus on 1980-1984. Rather, as this dissertation argues, the 1976 boycott heavily influenced what took place in 1980. Chapter 3 showed how the Soviets sought to win African support for their Olympics after Montreal through developing connections, aid and propaganda. Chapter 5 explained the UN's effort to create a Convention to isolate South Africa and legitimize the Montreal boycott approach at future events, which would have threatened the

Moscow Olympics. Chapter 6 demonstrated that French and British sports contacts with South Africa in 1979 and 1980 could have led to another Olympic boycott by recreating the New Zealand scenario from 1976. Even when the Moscow boycott discussions shifted away from apartheid and towards the Cold War and Afghanistan, Chapter 7 showed how Montreal continued to affect how people and governments in Africa perceived contemporary events.

No matter the reason previous histories chose to exclude 1976, the consequence of that choice has been a fundamental misunderstanding of the modern sports boycott. The Olympic boycott was not a tool of western countries seeking to undermine the Soviet Union's legitimacy in the context of the Cold War. Rather, it was a tool of newly decolonized countries in Africa and the Global South to refashion sports organizations created a century earlier by the Global North. The 1976 Montreal boycott fits in the larger tradition of Global South countries using the threat of withdrawing their participation from major sporting events to effect change within larger, often undemocratic and western-led international bodies. African states forced the IOC to remove South Africa and Rhodesia from the Olympics by using the boycott threat. These countries may not have had many IOC members or much representation on the boards of the International Sports Federations, but they could withhold their participation in international competitions to delegitimize them. The boycott was a weapon of the Global South, of weaker countries against strong international organizations. And it proved successful – so successful that western countries started to contemplate using it themselves. Western-led boycotts inspired by the Montreal walkout targeted Argentina in 1978 and Moscow in 1980.

Historians' narrow focus on the period from 1980 to 1984 – and their insistence on defining the boycotts of those years as a Cold War phenomenon – has led them to ignore the overlapping period of the anti-apartheid boycotts where international sports competitions

provided a regular forum of political protest. The anti-apartheid boycotts both predated and outlasted the Cold War boycotts. The SCSA began threatening Olympic boycotts in 1968, executed a successful Olympic boycott in 1976, and continued boycotting international sports events as late as the 1986 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games.<sup>1056</sup> The Edinburgh walkout was itself a significant bookend. More than half of eligible countries boycotted in protest of Britain's continued pro-South Africa stance under Margaret Thatcher. As in Montreal, Munich and Mexico City, Edinburgh again showcased the power of the boycott as a weapon of the Global South, not merely as a tool of Cold War expedience.

A more broadly defined boycott era starting in the 1960s and ending in the 1980s would also allow historians to explore the continuities across ideologically diverse sports protests during these decades. The anti-apartheid movement pioneered the sports boycott but was by far not its only purveyor. The 1960s saw a diversity of countries form new international sports events and walk out of old ones in pursuit of political gain. The creation of GANEFO in 1963, the socialist boycotts of Chile after Pinochet's coup against Allende in 1973, and the Islamic boycotts of Egypt after the Camp David Accords show that the boycott was a popular weapon of varied groups seeking to send political messages outside of the Cold War. The boycott was well used during the 1960s-1980s, before largely vanishing from the sports world in the 1990s.

### **What do Montreal and Moscow tell us about boycotts?**

Sports boycotts have a long track record of failing to achieve their desired political ends. Looking back just a few years, the Western "diplomatic" boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics

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<sup>1056</sup> Matthew L. McDowell and Fiona Skillen, "The 1986 Commonwealth Games: Scotland, South Africa, Sporting Boycotts, and the Former British Empire," *Sport in Society* 20, no. 3 (2017): 384-397.



in 2022 had little effect on China. Despite threats by countries and LGBTQIA+ groups to boycott Qatar (2022), nothing happened to the football World Cup, and it went on undisturbed. Even historically, when we look at events such as Nazi Olympics in 1936, there was not enough appetite globally to develop a boycott based on human rights concerns at the time.<sup>1057</sup> In 1956, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Lichtenstein, and Spain boycotted in protest over the Soviet Union's repression of the Hungarian uprising; Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Cambodia boycotted in response to Britain, France, and Israel's involvement in the Suez Crisis.<sup>1058</sup> Despite these withdrawals, nothing happened. The protests were a failure: the USSR, Britain, France, and Israel all remained at the Melbourne Olympics.

The centrality of the Moscow and Los Angeles boycotts to historical narratives has reinforced the general assumption that boycotts are a weak tool of foreign policy. Nicholas Evan Sarantakes was quite dismissive of the Moscow boycott effort by the United States, as have been many other historians. The US-led boycott was massive and claimed to remove almost half of the competing nations from the competition. It should have been a clear representation of the world's anger at the Soviet Union's actions in Afghanistan. But the boycott did not generate any changes: the Olympics remained in Moscow, the Soviets remained in Afghanistan, and thousands of athletes remained at home instead of competing. The same can be said about the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics: the USSR did not change any US policies by boycotting. The best both boycotts can be said to have achieved is to send a political message.

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<sup>1057</sup> David Clay Large and Joshua J.H. Large, "A Most Contentious Contest: Politics and Protests at the 1936 Berlin Olympics," in *Sport, Protest and Globalisation: Stopping Play*, ed. Jon Dart and Stephen Wagg (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 51-76.

<sup>1058</sup> Erin Elizabeth Redihan, *The Olympics and the Cold War, 1948-1968: Sport as Battleground in the U.S.-Soviet Rivalry* (McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017), 129-139.

But by focusing on 1980 and 1984, we are missing the successful boycott: Montreal 1976. Malcolm Maclean argued that the remarkable thing about Montreal was that it was one of the few sports boycotts that affected real change and was part of a larger, successful campaign.<sup>1059</sup> The Montreal walkout may not have ended apartheid itself, but it placed undeniable pressure on the South African government. Sport was a good target because it was both something that white South Africans cared deeply about, and it was possible for ordinary people to disrupt in countries around the world. The Montreal boycott succeeded in scaring Commonwealth countries into agreeing to a new set of guidelines about sports contacts with South Africa in 1977. It also led to the UN Convention Against Apartheid in Sport. The damage caused by the African states to Montreal forced sporting organizations to react to preserve global sport.

Why, then, was Montreal a success and Moscow a failure? The first reason is that Montreal had a well-defined aim: to isolate South Africa and punish its allies. This was plain to those countries boycotting and to the rest of the world. The boycott was aimed at punishing New Zealand for its contacts with South Africa and it had a clear, achievable solution: stop South Africa's few remaining allies from playing with apartheid. In contrast, the U.S. boycott effort's goal was ambiguous and therefore difficult to achieve. The West had earlier proposed boycotts of Moscow previously based on human rights concerns. But with the invasion of Afghanistan, the reasoning shifted to an attack on a neutral country in Central Asia. The messaging, though, targeted the Soviet Union for both human rights and imperialism. This mixed messaging was supposed to gain the US boycott the most followers (Europeans cared more about human rights

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<sup>1059</sup> Malcolm Maclean, "Revising (and Revising?) Sports Boycotts: From Rugby against South Africa to Soccer in Israel," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 15 (2014): 1832.

than Afghanistan, for instance), but instead made it impossible to define the boycott. The objectives also remained unclear. At first, the US demanded that the Games be moved from Moscow unless the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan. If the USSR remained in Afghanistan and the IOC refused to move the Games, then the US would boycott the Olympics. The objectives were not clear, and they were not achievable. The IOC was not going to move the Olympics at the last minute. The USSR was not going to give up hosting the Games. The Soviet Union also had no intention of leaving Afghanistan because the US told it to. The objectives were unrealistic. The Moscow boycott, almost by design, failed.

Secondly, the Montreal boycott succeeded in 1976 because African states presented a (relatively) unified political bloc led by the OAU and SCSA. African states understood that cooperation as a group would bring them more influence; this kept the bloc together through 1968, 1972, and 1976. The SCSA, despite issues within the movement post-1976, stressed that it was important to present a united front because this was the source of Africa's strength. But in 1980, the US-led boycott attracted a cross-section of states representing no single bloc. Allies of the US, such as Britain and Australia, still went to the Olympics despite their political leaders' condemnations of the USSR's invasion. The US was joined by a range of other countries; some were Cold War allies interested in developing closer ties with the US, but others opposed the Soviet Union for their own, unrelated reasons. Two countries – Saudi Arabia and Somalia – boycotted even before the invasion of Afghanistan. The Islamic Conference asked members to boycott Moscow at almost the same time that the Carter Administration announced the US boycott. Iran – which told the Soviets it was unable to attend due to preparation issues but told the world it was boycotting over Afghanistan – stressed repeatedly that it was not a part of the U.S. boycott, never mind joining a cause also backed by Israel.

A key issue here is that the boycott creates a binary through participation. This is an issue that many countries faced during 1980. American prominence in the anti-Moscow boycott meant that boycotters, whether they liked it or not, were part of an American-led boycott against the USSR. By joining the boycott, for whatever reason, countries would be seen as taking the side of the USA. The Soviets, using similar logic, believed that going to Moscow demonstrated respect for the USSR and challenged the USA. Again, this was not necessarily true. But this was a false binary between the two superpowers that countries were forced to take a position on. It also created a problem when we discuss the idea of winning “hearts and minds” in the Cold War because going to the Games did not mean being pro-Soviet and boycotting was not always pro-American.

The fractured nature of the Moscow boycott makes it hard even now to identify who boycotted and who did not. The US claimed that all the countries who did not show up to the Olympic Games (66) boycotted. But that would include countries like Upper Volta and Mauritania, which “participated” in the boycott because they did not have athletes of Olympic quality and lacked the necessary funds.<sup>1060</sup> On the other hand, Senegal was very critical of the USSR and supported the American boycott, but it also sent athletes to the Olympics because of its standing policy since Montreal. The hodgepodge of states that boycotted the Moscow Olympics did so for a range of reasons often reflecting, as Joseph Eaton has argued, local rather than global reasoning, making it more difficult to identify commonalities within the group in contrast to the boycotters in Montreal.

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<sup>1060</sup> “Document 203,” *Five Rings*, 611.

## **What is the relationship between decolonization and the Cold War?**

The drivers of the two largest boycotts of the Olympic Games in 1976 and 1980 may initially appear separate. The first boycott was a struggle against apartheid by decolonizing nations. The second was framed by the US as Cold War retaliation against Soviet incursions in Central Asia. However, both cases ultimately demonstrate what James Hershberg has called the “murky nexus” where decolonization and the Cold War overlap.<sup>1061</sup>

The Olympics had been a Cold War struggle since the Soviets first competed in Helsinki in 1952. Sport became a proxy battlefield between athletes representing competing ideologies; victory in the stadium was a victory in the global Cold War. The Cold War tended to dominate the Olympic narrative because of the success of the USSR and the US, jostling for top spot in the medal table. The post-war Olympics were defined by this superpower competition.

The Olympic Cold War was fought also within the IOC and other sports federations. The USSR sought to democratize and decolonize the Olympic Committee during the 1960s. It saw the rising number of decolonizing nations as its allies against the western, elite-dominated IOC. It supported efforts to increase Olympic aid to these new countries and to isolate South Africa. The USSR pursued this policy in other sports federations and the United Nations; it effectively used the anti-apartheid struggle in sport to form bonds between countries across Africa and the Global South. The USSR had been an important supporter of the 1968 Olympic boycott threat, which forced South Africa out of the Games and demonstrated socialist-Global South unity. Contrastingly, the South Africa issue was something that the US would not address. The desire to use South Africa as a capitalist bulwark in southern Africa meant that the government would not isolate South Africa politically, economically, or even in sports.

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<sup>1061</sup> Hershberg, “Series Preface,” ix.

But this changed in 1976. The USSR, which had supported previous boycotts and the isolation of South Africa, did not throw its support behind African countries trying to force New Zealand out. It even tried to tell African countries to stay at the Games and forgo the boycott. Why this shift? Moscow was the next Olympic host, and the Soviets did not want to anger the IOC or cause a split in the Olympic movement. The Cold War gains of hosting the Olympics and demonstrating the success of the Soviet Union to a global audience outweighed the benefits gained from supporting the anti-apartheid struggle of decolonizing African states at this time.

However, the 1976 boycott was also a product of Cold War détente. Without the Cold War dominating the Olympic Games and world politics, the struggle against apartheid in sport surged during the mid-1970s and became increasingly militant. Détente allowed the African bloc to operate without the Cold War interfering to a high degree in sports. The relaxation of the Cold War also meant the bloc was not riven by divisions along Cold War lines and could pursue its own agenda, dominating the political space in Montreal.

The fact that the receding Cold War allowed for Montreal to flourish can be seen if we compare events in 1976 to 1980. The 1980 boycott took on a Cold War character with the invasion of Afghanistan and the US-led mission to oppose Moscow. The Cold War took up all the political space surrounding the Moscow Olympics. It was a Soviet Olympics opposed by an American boycott; the Cold War binary was in full effect. But in 1980, similar issues existed to 1976. The British were playing rugby in South Africa, just as New Zealand toured in 1976. African states felt that they had been ignored or, worse yet, chastised for their boycott of Montreal and resented Western countries now calling for a boycott of Moscow because of the Cold War context. The Cold War overwhelmed the anti-apartheid struggle. It showed how the Cold War politics of the superpowers would crowd out decolonization issues within sport.

However, local discussions about the boycott did compare the Cold War boycotts against the anti-apartheid ones and showed how the two overlapped during discussions about Moscow. The Soviet Union could be supported because it had struggled against New Zealand and helped during previous anti-apartheid campaigns. The US could not be trusted because of its support for South Africa. Even when countries chastised or openly disagreed with the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, discussions in African newspapers often returned to the issue of apartheid. In this dialogue, issues of decolonization affected the Cold War event with some African states claiming that America's positions on South Africa outweighed all other concerns. This was an example of how local or regional concerns could still influence the Cold War despite pressures from the US and USSR.

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E-RMO2-CSSA/015 – SCSA: Round table, interview with Lamine Ba, agreement with the OAU.

## Appendix 1 COUNTRIES THAT BOYCOTTED IN 1976

### African countries that did not participate

Algeria  
Benin  
Cameroon  
Central African Republic  
Chad  
Congo, Republic of  
Egypt  
Ethiopia  
Gabon  
Gambia  
Ghana  
Kenya  
Lesotho  
Libya  
Madagascar  
Malawi  
Mali  
Morocco  
Niger  
Nigeria

Somalia  
Sudan  
Swaziland  
Tanzania  
Togo  
Tunisia  
Uganda  
Upper Volta  
Zaire (financial difficulties)  
Zambia

### Additionally

Afghanistan  
Burma  
El Salvador  
Guyana (cited NZ)  
Iraq (cited NZ)  
Republic of China  
Sri Lanka  
Syria

## Appendix 2 AFRICAN (NON) PARTICIPANTS IN 1980

### Non-Participants (20)

Central African Republic  
Chad  
Egypt  
Gabon  
Gambia  
Ghana  
Ivory Coast  
Kenya  
Liberia (withdrew early)  
Malawi  
Mauritania  
Mauritius  
Morocco  
Niger  
Somalia  
Sudan  
Swaziland  
Togo

Tunisia

Zaire

### Participants (21)

Algeria  
Angola  
Benin  
Botswana  
Cameroon  
Congo, Republic of  
Ethiopia  
Guinea  
Lesotho  
Libya  
Madagascar  
Mali  
Mozambique  
Nigeria  
Senegal

Seychelles

Sierra Leone

Tanzania

Uganda

Zambia

Zimbabwe