

“This Time for Africa”: FIFA, Politics, and South Africa’s Struggle for Human Rights

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Duke Immerse: Freedom Struggles in the 20th Century

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April 22, 2013

When you fall get up, oh oh

If you fall get up, eh eh

Tsamina mina zangalewa

Cuz this is Africa

Tsamina mina, eh eh

Waka waka, eh eh

Tsamina mina zangalewa

This time for Africa

In 2010, for the first time in the history of organized international soccer, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) held its quadrennial World Cup on the continent of Africa. “Waka Waka (This Time for Africa),” the official song of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, reflects the enthusiasm of the entire continent as the world’s most anticipated sports tournament catapulted South Africa to the world soccer stage. Behind the song’s cheery façade, however, lay the implicit acknowledgement of decades of struggle for black liberation. Forty-nine years after South Africa’s first suspension from FIFA for its discriminatory practices, thirty-five years after FIFA formally expelled South Africa following the deadly Soweto uprising, eighteen years after FIFA formally readmitted South Africa, and sixteen years after South Africa’s first democratic elections, the world was finally officially recognizing South Africa—and the rest of the continent—as a major player in the politics of international soccer.

The struggle for integration of South African soccer is a microcosmic representation of the overarching struggle for human rights in apartheid South Africa. The conflict between the pro-apartheid and race-segregated Football Association of Southern Africa (FASA) and the anti-apartheid and non-racial South African Soccer Federation (SASF) parallels, and in some cases

precedes, that of the apartheid government and leading anti-apartheid political organizations. Moreover, SASF's fight for recognition from FIFA through the sanctioning of FASA mirrors the liberation movement's struggles for international recognition through the condemnation and sanctioning of the apartheid regime. Lastly, the soccer struggle is linked to larger political and demographic transitions of the era, including the turn towards anti-colonialism. The "South Africa problem" mobilized the African delegation within FIFA around a common cause and culminated in the demise of FIFA's lingering Eurocentrism. From South Africa's first suspension from FIFA in 1961 to their re-admittance in 1992, this paper will explore the politics behind FIFA's decisions, and South Africa's reactions to them. In doing so, it seeks to prove that FIFA's condemnation of segregated soccer shaped both South Africa's domestic policy and the worldwide perception of South Africa, drawing attention to human rights violations in greater South African society and ultimately contributing to international pressure to end apartheid.

From its inception, black adoption of British colonial "football" became a threat to white colonists' desire to maintain white supremacy. Black South Africans' ability to merge indigenous sporting traditions with their acceptance of British football, coupled with soccer's capacity to bring together people of different races and different social classes, created the perception of soccer as "plebeian and black" and "emblematic of threatening, socially integrative forces within society."ⁱ At the same time, government officials capitalized upon soccer's growing popularity by using it to defuse political unrest and moderate the effects of economic deprivation.ⁱⁱ This strategy aimed at "keep[ing] the natives wholesomely amused" turned it into one of the few spaces in which black South Africans could take a break from the daily grind of endless work and enjoy themselves in an arena in which they were judged by how skilled they were at the sport, not by the color of their skin.ⁱⁱⁱ The sport that spread on the industrial and

commercial wings of British colonization was on its way to becoming the most inclusive national pastime, one that would soon provide an opportunity for a fledgling anti-apartheid movement to capitalize upon its popularity and target the regime's human rights violations from the unorthodox angle of sports boycotts.^{iv}

The commencement of apartheid in 1948 provoked an upsurge in popular protest throughout South Africa, as so-called "non-whites" faced increased discrimination and human rights violations both on and off the soccer field. Policies such as the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953, and the Natives Resettlement Act of 1954 ensured that, in historian Osheheng Kooniyaditse's words, soccer became "a vehicle through which to implement its policy of separate development."^v Anti-apartheid activists responded accordingly. In 1951, African, Coloured, and Indian soccer officials met in Durban to found the South African Soccer Federation (SASF), the first non-racial soccer body, to counter the white-only South African Football Association (SAFA) founded in 1892. SASF rapidly became the largest soccer organization in South Africa, bringing over 46,000 members into one multi-racial, anti-apartheid umbrella. The establishment of SASF as a direct threat to SAFA quickly made soccer the most contentious sport in the country.^{vi}

Long before anti-apartheid political parties began to lobby for international support, SASF began advocating for international recognition as an alternative to the pro-apartheid SAFA. As early as 1952, SASF challenged SAFA's right to represent South African soccer by applying to membership from FIFA.^{vii} Though unceremoniously rejected, they were not discouraged, and reapplied only two years later with a much stronger case. George Singh, a progressive Indian lawyer from Durban, led SASF's efforts, and they built their case around claims to be the legitimate representative of South Africa with 82 percent of the nation's players,

compared with SAFA's mere 18 percent.^{viii} Their pleas for "majority rule" echo those of political liberation groups who fought to end political domination by a white minority.

In order to fully comprehend the magnitude of SASF's challenge to FIFA, it is important to understand what FIFA was—and what it was not. The Fédération Internationale de Football Association was founded at the headquarters of the Union Française de Sports Athlétiques at the Rue Saint Honoré 229 in Paris on the 21st of May, 1904, by seven European nations whose intention was to form an international football federation in Europe. Though ostensibly democratic, FIFA's organizational structure has traditionally been characterized by conflict and inequality between their established European constituents and their more recent additions, namely their African ones. The development of football in Africa was deeply rooted in European colonialism. Former president Sir Stanley Rous of Great Britain, for example, once described an African referee-training course as "general missionary work."^{ix} In the post-World War II years, soccer on the African continent became a symbol of anti-colonial resistance, because it represented one of the only areas in which indigenous Africans could exert some form of self-organization and control. Newly independent nations then began lobbying FIFA for more equal inclusion. As more nations became independent and applied for entrance, FIFA's Eurocentrism was threatened, because each new member received the right to vote at the biannual FIFA Congresses. In historian Paul Darby's words, "In much the same way that African solidarity and a growing sense of national identity found expression through the medium of football...the world game's institutional infrastructure also increasingly figured as a site for articulating the growing confidence of African nations."^x

It was against this backdrop that the multiracial SASF applied to membership from FIFA. Despite the lack of official laws prohibiting integration in sport, the white-only SAFA refused to

admit any non-white athletes. This directly conflicted with FIFA's official regulations. According to Article 3 of the FIFA Statutes' General Provisions, "Discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of ethnic origin, gender, language, religion, politics or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion."^{xi} In May 1955, FIFA's Executive Committee concluded that the white association, SAFA, "does not comprise and control all the clubs and the players in South Africa and therefore it has not the standing of a real national association that can govern and develop football in accordance with the provision of Article 3 of the Statutes of FIFA."^{xii} However, FIFA again denied membership to SASF, claiming that their organization was also discriminatory because it did not include whites.

FIFA's decision is a reflection of the Eurocentrism of the organization's leadership, but it also parallels the challenges faced by activists of the larger political struggle for human rights in South Africa. Throughout its campaign for international recognition and support, the African National Congress, the leading anti-apartheid movement, faced resistance from major white Western powers who branded it as a terrorist organization seeking to overthrow white rule with black communist domination. Great Britain, for example, did not open talks with ANC president Oliver Tambo until 1986.^{xiii} A year later, the *Los Angeles Times* quoted House Rep. Jim Courier characterizing the ANC as a "violent, predominantly Communist organization."^{xiv} Though ostensibly supportive of equal rights for all people regardless of color, these governments initially refused to back what they saw as a militant black-only organization. FIFA's initial rejection of SASF foreshadows this refusal.

In applying for international recognition, SASF had targeted white South Africa at its most vulnerable point. Described as "the most sports-minded people in the world," even the

slightest threat of international condemnation of sport in South Africa wounded their pride and exposed the fragility of their proclaimed superiority.^{xv} Responding to this threat, SAFA offered membership without voting rights to the multiracial SASF, while declaring that the organization would not break any anti-integration laws in doing so. SASF unconditionally rejected this offer, declaring that the proposal “will involve our acceptance of racial and colour discrimination in the field of sport” and maintaining, “To our knowledge no legislation exists prohibiting mixed play between White and non-White races in this country.”^{xvi} In doing so, they refuted any legal justification SAFA might have for not including non-whites while simultaneously challenging SAFA to buck custom and integrate its organization.

Though denied recognition for a second time, SASF kept the pressure on FIFA to push for change within SAFA. Not surprisingly, FIFA remained sympathetic to the plight of the white-only SAFA. Headed by president and British delegate Arthur Drewry, FIFA’s leadership remained predominantly European. African members had just acquired their first spot on the Executive Committee a few years earlier—in 1953—but would not get another representative on the committee for eleven more years. To placate SASF and to satisfy their stated anti-discrimination provision, FIFA sent its first commission of inquiry to South Africa in early 1956 under the leadership of former Dutch colonial officer Karel M. Lotsky. The so-called “Lotsky Commission” was the very first international delegation to visit South Africa with the intention of addressing apartheid-related disputes.^{xvii} The commission reported that though SAFA did represent a minority group, soccer segregation was South African “tradition and custom.” Lotsky and his fellow investigators maintained that replacing SAFA “would retrograde [sic] football in South Africa.”^{xviii} They did, however, insist that SAFA remove racist clauses in its constitution, a first step towards condemning discrimination in South African soccer policies.

Thus, almost thirty years before the South African government drafted a “reformed” constitution designed to maintain apartheid while projecting abroad an image of substantial change, the pro-apartheid SAFA was making its own policy adjustments to quell pressure from FIFA.^{xix} At its annual meeting in March of 1956, SAFA renamed itself the Football Association of Southern Africa (FASA), deleted its racially exclusionary clause from its constitution, and promised to form an all-black team in the near future. Such acts “created the impression of significant change” without actually instituting any reforms.^{xx} At the same time, the government denied passports to SASF’s delegation to the biannual FIFA Congress in Lisbon in June of 1956. White South African intellectual and barrister-at-law Harry Bloom argued SASF’s case, asking that FIFA declare the election of SAFA (now FASA) to FIFA’s membership in 1952 invalid because “it does represent all those actively interested in the sport.”^{xxi} Despite Bloom’s best efforts, FASA’s deletion of the racist clause in their constitution placated FIFA and preserved their membership. The Congress decided to postpone any action on South African representation for two years until the next meeting in Stockholm.

The “Lotsky Commission” and the subsequent FIFA debates over sanctioning South Africa attracted national attention, contributing to the buildup of political pressure from within South Africa to address the issue of international condemnation. The *Natal Mercury* argued, “The time has come to revise our ideas about the colour bar in sport, and to give non-European sportsmen the recognition they deserve.”^{xxii} *The Star*, a Johannesburg evening newspaper, added, “Unless South Africa is to cut herself off from international contacts it is inevitable that limitations now imposed by the government policy on the movement of non-white players abroad should be lifted.”^{xxiii} Even pro-apartheid newspapers were paying attention to the soccer conflict. In an article entitled “Consequences of Equality,” National Party newspaper *Die*

Volksblad declared, “For those who talk so lightly about more political rights for the non-Europeans in South Africa, there is still a lesson to be learnt from the sports world. In South Africa the principle of equality cannot be applied without control passing eventually into the hands of the non-Europeans...If the liberalists in South Africa are able to impose the same principle, the eventual results in the political sphere cannot be different.”^{xxiv} *Die Volksblad*’s argument that a loosening of apartheid policies in sport would ultimately lead to the demise of white supremacy is evidence of the significance of the Lotsky commission’s investigation. Apartheid proponents could no longer ignore the push for integrated sport because it was beginning to threaten the very foundations of their political power.

The government responded defiantly by issuing its first apartheid sport policy. On June 27, 1956, Dr. T.E. Donges, the Minister of the Interior, announced that while the government was sympathetic towards “legitimate non-European sporting activities,” all sports must be practiced in accord with the regime’s policy of “separate development.” “Whites and blacks should organize their sporting activities separately, there should be no interracial competitions within the Republic’s borders, [and] mixing of races in teams should be avoided.”^{xxv} Donges went on to declare that those who attempted to force sports to integrate by squeezing white South Africans out of international competitions would be considered “subversive” and would not be permitted travel facilities.^{xxvi} However, the government was careful not to pass any new legislation that could be interpreted as discriminatory, relying instead on existing laws such as the 1950 Group Areas Act to keep sports segregated without passing laws that overtly violated black athletes’ human rights. Donges’ statements reflect the extent to which integrated sport challenged the central tenet of apartheid ideology—that institutionalized segregation was

necessary for development. Apartheid officials therefore had to keep a careful balance between eliminating the threat of multiracialism in sport and projecting a positive image abroad.

At the same time that the apartheid government was reaffirming its dedication to segregated sport, FIFA's African delegation was working tirelessly to strengthen its global power. At the 1956 FIFA Congress in Lisbon, South Africa was instrumental in working with the Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Sudanese delegation to form the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF), one of many FIFA-affiliated continental confederations. CAF's formation embodied the African block's emergent confidence and international influence, particularly in light of the region's anti-colonialist independence movements of the mid-20th century. The African independence movements of the late 1950s and early 1960s added more power to FIFA's African constituency, as new nations became members with full voting rights in both FIFA and CAF.

The growing pan-Africanism of emerging independent states manifested itself within FIFA by linking itself to the anti-apartheid struggle. Thus, advocating for stronger FIFA sanctions against South Africa—and in doing so, promoting black liberation and human rights—figured prominently in their agenda. South Africa's leading role in establishing CAF notwithstanding, the organization banned them from the first Cup of Nations in 1957 and again in 1959 for refusing to enter multiracial squads. At the 1958 FIFA Congress in Stockholm, CAF lobbied for South Africa's suspension from FIFA on the grounds of racial discrimination. SASF had again challenged FASA to integrate its teams, but FASA refused, citing "custom." They did, however, change their tactics, cajoling a few local black associations into accepting non-voting "associate membership" in FASA by promising greater access to facilities. Such paternalism satisfied FIFA, which again refused to take concrete action against FASA.^{xxvii}

Despite being an exclusively soccer-based governing body, FIFA was not blind to world events off the soccer field, particularly those that had the potential to threaten the organization's prestige. Accordingly, when South African police opened fire on peaceful demonstrators protesting the nation's oppressive pass laws on March 21, 1960, killing 69 and injuring almost two hundred more, FIFA's delegates felt they had no choice but to respond accordingly or face criticism for not abiding by their own claims of being nondiscriminatory towards players of all races. By 52 votes to 10, the FIFA Congress in Rome in August of 1960 passed a resolution declaring, "A National Association must be open to all who practice football in that country...without any racial, religious, or political discrimination."^{xxviii} FIFA demanded that FASA abide by their new anti-discrimination resolution within the next twelve months or face more severe repercussions. At a separate meeting in Rome, CAF expelled South Africa and increased their anti-apartheid lobbying efforts. By September of 1961, it became clear that FASA would not acquiesce to FIFA's demands for racial equality, and FIFA suspended FASA.

FIFA's sanctions of South Africa were some of the first anti-apartheid sanctions faced by the South African regime, and the ramifications were significant. South Africa could no longer enter a team for the World Cup; it could not have any soccer relations with any other member of FIFA; it could not host tours by any club or country in good standing with FIFA; and any players coming to South Africa from other FIFA-associated countries would automatically be suspended by FIFA. Additionally, FASA lost its membership in the nominally prestigious English Football Association. Thus, two years before the United Nations' Security Council adopted its first resolution calling for economic sanctions against South Africa, FIFA had already taken a dramatic step towards international condemnation of the apartheid state. Their actions were among the first to call global attention to the regime's human rights violations. SASF secretary

George Singh and the rest of SASF's officials expressed hope that FASA would abandon its racial discrimination and offer full and equal membership to all South Africans, now that their racist policies had been publicly denounced.^{xxix}

FASA's reaction to their suspension—token “reforms” aimed at including more non-whites while simultaneously increasing repression of multiracial sport—foreshadows the National Party government's response to later economic and political sanctions. FASA immediately created a “Top Level” committee of representatives from both FASA and the Africans-only South African Bantu Football Association (SABFA). The committee's stated brief was, according to FASA president Fred Fell, to “answer all the requests and demands made by FIFA.”^{xxx} Its less publicized goal was to undermine the activities of SASL, SASF's non-racial alternative to FASA's segregated sports leagues. Vivian Granger, a founder of the white National Football League and a member of the “Top Level” committee, conspired with the Johannesburg Non-European Affairs department and Minister of the Interior Jan de Klerk to deny SASL clubs access to municipal grounds. Internationally, Top Level Committee members continued to argue that political agitators ran non-racial football, and they held up FASA's African, coloured, and Indian affiliates as proof of their willingness to reform. Nationally, however, the government declared that “the use of all stadia and fields for Native football...[was] reserved for use by Associations affiliated to the Football Association of South Africa,” thereby undercutting any potential success for non-racial, non-FASA-affiliated leagues.^{xxxi}

At this point, FASA began what would prove to be a decades-long attempt to shift the blame from their association to the South African government. In doing so, they put FIFA in the unfortunate situation of either continuing to sanction South Africa and admitting that it was interfering with another country's government policies, or readmitting FASA and facing internal

and external repercussions for permitting racial segregation in one of its member associations. In May of 1962, a FASA delegation of Fred Fell, David Marais, and Bethuel P. Morolo of the FASA-affiliated South African Bantu Football Association (SABFA) attended the FIFA Congress in Chile to attempt to persuade FIFA to overturn the suspension. Morolo, president of SABFA, was one of the non-white soccer officials co-opted by the promise of greater access to facilities, funding, and, presumably, higher salaries to lead separate FASA-affiliated associations for non-whites—ones that would ostensibly provide for equality in sport for non-whites but that would still maintain the status quo of segregated soccer. Critics frequently accused Morolo of being “a stooge of the apartheid government” for publicly declaring opposition to apartheid but insisting that he could only work within government structures to promote social change.^{xxxii} FASA’s use of Morolo to bolster their own image adds legitimacy to this accusation. In the words of Fred Fell, “Mr. Morolo’s main duty was to mix as much as possible with the Afro-Asian delegates and explain the position of his association with FIFA.”^{xxxiii} After a hearing in which FASA protested that it controlled at least 90 percent of South Africa’s soccer players, both white and non-white, FIFA refused to lift its suspension until investigations clearly indicated that racial discrimination in the sport had been eliminated. A FIFA-sponsored fact-finding visit was scheduled for January of 1963.

The most critical aspect of FIFA’s 1963 fact-finding visit to South Africa was its composition. FIFA president Sir Stanley Rous of England and James McGuire of the United States were chosen to visit South Africa to investigate FASA’s alleged reforms. The same Rous who once described African referee-training course as “general missionary work” had been elected FIFA president on September 28, 1961—three days after FIFA suspended FASA.^{xxxiv} Rous was vocal about his opposition to FASA’s suspension. Not only had he proclaimed himself

philosophically averse to bringing national politics into sports, he had also been in correspondence with FASA following their suspension and had expressed sympathy for their plight. Prior to the commission's arrival, SASF sent a letter to FIFA demanding that Rous recuse himself due to his professed support of FASA: "If Sir Stanley insists on coming out as a commissioner...the confidence which the non-whites in this country have reposed in FIFA for their emancipation from racial oppression will be shattered."^{xxxv} Despite SASF's protests, Rous and McGuire arrived in South Africa in early January 1963 to begin their investigations.

From the moment he set foot in South Africa, Rous made clear where his sympathies lay: "All we are interested in is to see the controlling body of soccer in this country furthering the cause of football to the best of its ability."^{xxxvi} After meeting with both SASF and FASA representatives and touring the nation's soccer facilities, Rous and McGuire reported back to FIFA's Executive Committee meeting in late January 1963 with a glowing recommendation of FASA. According to the report, there was no other body that could take the place of FASA. SASF, the "dissident" body, acted in contrary to government policy, which "clearly indicated their inability to foster and propagate the game of football in South Africa." Moreover, there was no evidence of "willful discrimination" on behalf of FASA. Lastly, the report claimed, "If the suspension of FASA is not lifted, the progress of the game in the Republic of South Africa will be retarded...FIFA must not interfere with the internal affairs of any country." Debate ensued between supporters of FASA and what Rous later described in a letter to FASA official Aleck Jaffe as a "left-wing" block.^{xxxvii} Rous' description of the so-called "Third World" delegates who were more likely to show solidarity to black South Africans fighting white oppression than to white descendants of the European "old guard" emphasizes the extent to which soccer had been

politicized. The Executive Committee remained largely European, however, and ultimately agreed to readmit FASA. South Africa's soccer suspension was lifted in late January of 1963.

Reactions to South Africa's re-admittance reflected the global politics of the era. SASF spokesmen called Rous "partisan and dictatorial."^{xxxviii} The Rand Daily Mail quoted then-chairman of NFL called the lifting of the ban "a defeat for communism," again highlighting the relationship between SASF's soccer struggle and the greater fight between left-wing "communists" and right-wing white supremacists.^{xxxix} CAF members were unanimous in their opposition to South Africa's re-admittance, perceiving Rous's support of FASA as a direct insult to pan-Africanism. CAF general secretary Mustapha Fahmy declared that the organization would now regard South Africa "as if she belonged to another continent," and passed a resolution stating, "The African Football Confederation shall have nothing to do with the FASA until such time that its obnoxious apartheid policy is totally eliminated...[CAF] proposes to table a substantive motion for the complete expulsion of [FASA] from FIFA at the next Congress...if by that time the damnable apartheid policy was still practiced."^{xl} FIFA would not discuss the issue of South Africa until their next Congress in October of 1964.

The 1964 FIFA Congress in Tokyo was a watershed moment for both the history of South Africa and that of FIFA. The conflict over South Africa pitted FIFA's Third World delegations against the European neocolonialists of the FIFA Executive. Despite Rous's urgings, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Ghana put forth a proposal calling for South Africa's immediate expulsion. Prior to the Congress, SASF had sent a memo to all of FIFA's affiliated members detailing examples of FASA's racial discrimination. Rous prefaced the ensuing debate by citing his recent visit to South Africa and his finding that "[FASA], constituting a Committee representative of all the groups in South Africa, had been formed into an association which provided opportunities for

everyone...South Africa, as such, did not practice discrimination.” He further claimed, “As a Sportsman I could not, in all honesty, think it right for one country to interfere in the political decisions or policies of another” and accused CAF nations of being hypocritical for denouncing South Africa while evidence showed that they were discriminatory against “coloured” and white players in their own country. In a direct reference to the politicization of the issue and its ramifications for global politics, he declared the fight over South Africa to be a “cold war.”^{xli}

Ohene Djan of Ghana, chosen to represent the opposing party, refuted all of Rous’s accusations. He denied that Africa was using South Africa to propel pan-African nationalism and declared no desire to engage in “cold war” politics and instead argued that FIFA’s anti-discrimination Statutes had been infringed by South Africa barring “the best players from all over the world, irrespective of colour or country” from playing side by side. He claimed that he was not advocating black control of soccer in South Africa but rather “that both black and white come together” for its administration. Fred Fell of FASA spoke next, citing race-segregated but FASA-affiliated clubs such as the black-only SABFA as evidence of the lack of racial discrimination in soccer. In his words, “All non-whites [are] perfectly happy with the present situation.” Mr. Mzizi, vice-president of SABFA, repeated Fell’s argument, declaring it was “pure fallacy” to say that FASA brought non-white South Africans to the Congress “just for show.” Their urgings, however, did not sway the majority of FIFA’s associated members, many of whom aligned much more closely with non-white South Africa’s anti-discrimination struggles than with Rous’s badly concealed Eurocentrism. South Africa was re-suspended by a landslide vote of 48 to 15.^{xlii} In retaliation, the apartheid government imposed banning orders—including a 12-hour-a-day house arrest—on SASF secretary and anti-apartheid activist George Singh.^{xliii}

FIFA's reinstated suspension of South Africa drew enormous national attention from all sides of the political spectrum and subsequently forced the apartheid regime to take further notice of the sway of global opinion against it. Initially, many took aim at FIFA's venture into politics rather than at reassessing South African policies. *The Friend*, for example, maintained, "It will be argued that South Africa, by its apartheid policies, asked for trouble—and got it. But FIFA, by seeking to use sport for political objectives, has thrown overboard principles which are far more important to its existence than anything that can be achieved by the political vendetta by some of its members against the South African government." Similarly, *Die Vaderland* argued that the suspension "will have little effect on South Africa. It is international sport which will in the long run be harmed, since it applies standards which hardly conform to the spirit of sportsmanship."^{xliv} These analyses echo those of National Party Members of Parliament. When J.D. du P. Basson, Member of Parliament and founder of the anti-apartheid political pressure group the National Union, argued on the parliamentary floor, "...South Africa is being forced out of one international organization after another, not only political organizations but also bodies which have nothing to do with politics, even sports bodies," then-Prime Minister Verwoerd replied, "A State may cease to be a member of a particular body and yet its scientists or economists, etc., etc., can still remain in continual and intimate contact with the outside world... We are not at all isolated as the Opposition alleges."^{xlv} Verwoerd's analysis evidences the regime's attempts at self-delusion to comfort themselves over their increasing isolation rather than address the issue with substantive reform. Twenty-two years later, then-President Botha would echo Verwoerd in his response to global economic sanctions: "Not only will we survive (economic sanctions), we will emerge stronger on the other side."^{xlvi}

Others frankly admitted that the ramifications of FIFA's boycotts would be severe. The *Daily News* declared, "South Africa's interests are turning inwards and her view of life outside is being narrowed to a point where she can only see dark black corners and racial animosity." Most telling, however, was the National Party publication *Die Volksblad's* post-suspension analysis. While *Die Volksblad* denounced the "Communists" and "Afro-Asians" who had voted for South Africa's suspension and took consolation in FASA's white support within FIFA, it also acknowledged that FIFA's actions had larger implications. "The stark truth remains that a new fierce blow has hit South Africa. Our enemies who want to drive us out of world sport for political reasons can now chalk up another victory." George Singh's banning—a punishment ordinarily reserved for political dissidents—is further proof of the significance of FIFA's decision. FIFA's sanctions were among the first in the global fight against apartheid, but they would not be the last, and *Die Volksblad's* recognition of their implications suggests that the soccer boycotts harmed the regime more than Verwoerd cared to admit.

However, in order to fully comprehend the magnitude of FIFA's boycott of South African soccer, it is essential to dig deeper than top-level politics and understand the importance of ground-level protest in shaping it. Ground-level pressure ultimately forced the regime to stop deluding itself into thinking that international sports isolation would not hurt the government's monopoly on state power. Politically, the 1960s were a "silent decade."^{xlvi} Following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, the apartheid government had banned the major anti-apartheid political parties and forced its leaders underground, stifling their capacity to mobilize for change. Soccer therefore became one of the only outlets through which ordinary non-white South Africans could express their discontent with the apartheid government. As the major non-racial

league and an offshoot of the anti-apartheid SASF, the South African Soccer League (SASL) was one of the most effective examples of ground-level protest in the 1960s.

Ten African, Indian, and Coloured soccer officials formed SASL in February of 1961 to protest the government's post-Sharpeville crackdown. Known as the "People's League" for its popularity in the townships, its supporters identified closely with players who faced subordination, racial segregation, and economic hardships in the face of government repression. Supporting the "People's League" meant taking a stand against apartheid because it gave players and supporters alike an outlet for black self-validation and identity in a society that disenfranchised and exploited them. Alegi and Bolsmann argue, "Like the African National Congress and its allies in the liberation struggle, this league embodied the majority's demands for freedom and equal rights."^{xlvi} Moreover, support for the league was integral in the struggle for FIFA sanctions. Its popularity directly refuted FASA's argument that it represented the majority of soccer players in South Africa. By demonstrating that non-racial soccer in South Africa could be successful, SASL participants directly threatened the legitimacy of the regime's claims of the efficacy of separate development. Their support was crucial in showing the world the cruelties and contradictions of the apartheid regime. Unfortunately, the internal threat posed by SASL, combined with the external pressure from FIFA's sanctions, led to further repression, not reform. The government began banning all non-white spectators from all-white games and continued to refuse to allow non-whites to use playing facilities. SASL folded under such pressure in 1966, but the interest it sparked in nonracial soccer outlasted the league's existence.

The sports sanctions against South Africa were rapidly becoming a hot topic for political debate. On April 22, 1971, Sir De Villiers Graff, the United Party Member of Parliament and then-Leader of the Opposition, argued that international sport had become not only a reflection

of foreign policy but also a matter of national prestige. His party, he claimed, “would be prepared to consider a relaxation of any hindering legislative enactments in the same way as the Government has relaxed them in diplomatic spheres and in respect of the representatives of the Bantu homelands.” Accordingly, “We would also be prepared to accept mixed teams from overseas and would be prepared to see South Africa represented by mixed teams at the national level in South Africa.”^{xlix}

Sir De Villiers’ statement reveals the effects of international sports isolation on a society that placed a large emphasis on international prestige. The allusion to “diplomatic spheres” and the Bantu homelands is indicative of the interconnectedness of sports and politics, and the proposal for representation overseas by mixed teams suggests the extent to which the government was willing to change its policies in order to preserve segregation at the local and state level but put on a façade of reform internationally. Meanwhile, the sports boycotts were attracting national attention outside the realm of politics, as white South Africans made clear their frustration with the increasing international isolation of their favorite pastimes. The same day that the press reported De Villiers’ new sports plan, the front page of *Rapport* showed Minister of Sport, Frank Waring, being booed by the crowd at the South African tennis championship in Johannesburg—the first time that a South African Cabinet Minister had been booed in his own country by a sports crowd.

The sports boycotts put the apartheid government in an uncomfortable predicament: change their policies and risk integration, or maintain segregation and risk losing the support of their white political base. *Die Transvaler* called sport the “Achilles heel” of the apartheid government. *Die Vaderland* declared, “Acceptance of sport integration would mean only one thing for South Africa’s overseas enemies and the internal champions of mixing—their first

victory and an encouragement in the fight against preservation of white identity.” *The Star* was more realistic about the government’s dilemma: “The irony is that for apartheid itself to survive at the levels at which most of us like, it is becoming more and more necessary for there to be some multi-racialism at the top, and not only in sport.”^l Prime Minister Vorster apparently agreed. Though he denounced De Villiers’ plan as “rash” and unsuitable to solve the nation’s problems, the statement forced Vorster to issue his own reform plan. A few days later, he announced a new sports policy: “multinational sport.” The policy implied that South Africa was composed of several distinct “nations” of separate but equal status. Teams of these racially defined “nations” would compete against each other and against foreign opposition.^{li}

Vorster’s plan was clearly an attempt to lessen international pressure while maintaining authoritarian control. Stanley Uys at the *Sunday Times* called it “a bizarre blend of multi-racialism, multi-nationalism and undiluted apartheid.” *Die Burger* argued that it would “help to undermine overseas hostility and criticism without our social structure being undermined by the sport integration which our enemies demand as the price of acceptance.”^{lii} Most importantly, the new policy showed that international sports campaigns were putting major cracks in the regime’s staunch segregation policies, and FASA, like other government-supported sports bodies, was feeling its effects. By 1972 FASA had agreed to the selection of national sides based on merit. However, they remained against multiracial soccer at club and junior levels, exposing the limits to Vorster’s superficial change. To advertise the “reformed” policy of multinational sport, FASA began making preparations for the South African Games, a tournament that would include both international teams and multi-national South African teams. FIFA gave South Africa a “special dispensation” to allow the tournament, and Brazil and England provisionally accepted invitations to compete. When FIFA discovered, however, that the South African teams and stadium crowds

would still be segregated, it withdrew its approval, declaring, “We regret the Executive was misled and wrongly interpreted the term ‘multi-racial.’”^{liii} That June, the government refused a passport to SASF president Norman Middleton, who was scheduled to attend the FIFA Congress in Frankfurt to lobby for FASA’s expulsion from FIFA.

At the same time, FIFA was experiencing its own internal crises. As in the early 1960s, much of the tensions revolved around South Africa. Despite clear evidence of South Africa’s racial discrimination in soccer, President Rous continued to back FASA, both in FIFA meetings and in his correspondence with FASA. He even encouraged FASA to bring SASF’s alleged discriminatory practices to FIFA’s attention. A Kenyan delegate at the 1968 CAF General Assembly meeting spoke for all when he declared of Rous, “In his declaration we saw the manifestation of old and dying colonialism. It is of no avail of him to say that [FASA] has committed no crime because it is the government which is responsible of the Apartheid policy. It is the government which controls the affairs of FASA. We in Kenya wish to see that all means possible are used to bring about a change in South Africa so that our brothers there may enjoy the freedom of sports we have.”^{liv} By the 1974 FIFA presidential election, the African delegation was, in Tanzanian sports journalist Rhamadan Ali’s words, “fed up with Sir Stanley Rous’s FIFA and wanted a new man at the top who was more receptive to the interests of African football.”^{lv} Their savior came in the form of Joao Havelange, President of the Brazilian Football Federation.

As a member of the International Olympic Committee and a central figure in the withdrawal of the Brazilian team from the aforementioned 1972 South African Games, Havelange understood the importance of the “South Africa problem” in the upcoming election. South Africa became a standout issue in Havelange’s campaign because it had the capacity to both undermine Rous and attract the support of the Third World delegation, of which Africa was

a significant part. Ostracizing South Africa was “the carrot which Dr. Havelange brandished before Africa,” according to Nigerian delegate Oroc Oyo. He spent three years canvassing the Third World and building up his support, promising, “So long as I am in charge and apartheid still exists, South Africa will never come into FIFA.”^{lvi} Meanwhile, Rous reaffirmed his support for FASA. At the Frankfurt Congress in 1974, Havelange defeated Rous by 68 votes to Rous’s 52, supported heavily by Africa’s 37 votes. Ali noted, “In the vote it became clear that the battle was between the old guard and the Third World with Africa playing a decisive role.” The Third World won the battle and shifted FIFA’s balance of power. In doing so, it irrevocably changed the nature of the organization from its elitist Eurocentrism to a more global model.

Though Havelange undoubtedly capitalized upon the Third World power block to further his own aspirations, he understood many of the complaints of the African delegation, and he was much more likely to engage in political mediation than his predecessor.^{lvii} Accordingly, the South African issue moved to the top of the new FIFA agenda. Hundreds of people demonstrated and distributed leaflets outside the 1974 Congress protesting South Africa’s racial policies.^{lviii} Responding to this pressure and to the political leanings of its newly elected president, FIFA changed its anti-discrimination statute to read, “A national association which tolerates, allows, or organizes competitions marked by discrimination, or which is established in a country where discrimination in sport is laid down by law, should not be admitted to FIFA, or should be barred if it was.”^{lix} FASA rightly interpreted Havelange’s election and the change in FIFA’s statute as a sign that their days in FIFA were numbered, and they turned to the apartheid regime for help. As pressure mounted, FASA president Dave Marais suggested that Minister Koornhof “use soccer as the guinea pig for experimenting with multi-racial sport.” In March of 1975, Marais also recommended that FASA expand into a “multiracial body” with a “multiracial Executive,” and

the organization subsequently debated forming “an umbrella organization or expanding FASA into a multiracial body.”^{lx} They eventually concluded that the proposals would be sent to FIFA before their Congress in Montreal in July of 1976.

Their plans proved fruitless, however, due to events outside FASA’s control. On June 16, 1976, 700 peaceful student protestors were brutally murdered by policemen in what became known as the Soweto uprising. The state’s violence doomed any chance of South Africa regaining the confidence of the international soccer community. At the 1976 FIFA Congress in Montreal, FASA President Marais desperately appealed to the delegates to give South Africa another chance, but to no avail. Not even Rous stood up to defend them. The only delegate who spoke in favor of FASA was Sir Harold Thompson of England, who cited the “enormous progress” that had been made recently as hope for a solution in the near future. Havelange refuted Thompson’s claim: “In the 12 years since the suspension by the 1964 Congress in Tokyo, progress had been insignificant and insufficient.”^{lxi} Exactly one month after the Soweto uprising, South Africa was officially expelled from FIFA by a vote of 78 to 9.

In the wake of FASA’s expulsion, soccer became part of the government’s plan to “ameliorate apartheid” and win back international support.^{lxii} Marais resigned as president of FASA, and in October of 1976, the Football Council of South Africa was formed, bringing together the white-only FASA, the black-only South African Native Football Association (SANFA, formerly the South African Bantu Football Association—the derogatory “Bantu” was dropped in 1973), and two minor Indian and coloured organizations. In keeping with the regime’s larger divide-and-rule strategy meant to appease international pressure while simultaneously preventing black South Africans from forming a united anti-apartheid front, George Thabe, who had replaced Bethuel Morolo as president of SABFA in 1971, was named

president. While the council professed to reform and control soccer at all levels, they chose the Springbok, the symbol of apartheid sport, as their official emblem, suggesting the conservative nature of their “reforms.” Their attempts did little to appease FIFA, however. The greater international community had adopted the mantra, “No abnormal sport in an abnormal society;” nothing short of ending apartheid would convince FIFA to readmit South Africa.

On the ground level, integrated soccer was becoming steadily more popular, putting more “cracks in the edifice of apartheid.”^{lxiii} The white-only National Football League, which retained segregated stadiums and, in some cases, a whites-only attendance policy, became so desperate that general manager Vivian Granger actually encouraged the signing of blacks before the league folded in 1977. Integrated soccer’s growing popularity attracted the attention of large corporate sponsors who had been harmed by South Africa’s international sports isolation, and they too soon began pushing for reform. Later that year, the state declared a state of emergency due to increasing anti-apartheid insurrections. The multiracial National Soccer League (NSL), formed in 1985 in protest to segregated FASA-affiliated leagues, announced that it would not support the country’s readmission to FIFA until apartheid was dismantled, thereby earning them the support of the anti-apartheid African National Congress (ANC).^{lxiv} Moreover, as black liberation leaders and government officials began discussing peace and unity and an end to apartheid, pro-integration sports leaders and ANC officials began discussing the future of South African soccer. All agreed that the boycotts were “an important tool in the struggle for the destruction of apartheid” and should not be called off until a single, nonracial soccer body was created.^{lxv}

In February of 1990, after President De Klerk lifted the ban on banned political parties and began the four-year dismantling of apartheid policies, integrated sport finally became a foreseeable possibility. Only a few days before the landmark Convention for a Democratic South

Africa began discussions about a democratic constitution in December 1991, the nonracial and unified South African Football Association (SAFA) was formed in Durban. With the endorsement of the African National Congress, SAFA formally applied for readmission into FIFA in early 1992. That April, President Havelange and General Secretary Blatter traveled to South Africa to meet with SAFA officials. On July 3, 1992—two full years before the nation’s first democratic elections—South Africa officially became a full member of FIFA, marking a significant victory for a nation struggle to regain international support. SASA’s admittance “embodied the seemingly boundless potential of a liberated and united South Africa.”^{lxvi}

Twelve years later, on May 15, 2004, millions of South Africans erupted into thunderous cheers when FIFA President “Sepp” Blatter announced that South Africa had won the bid for the 2010 World Cup.^{lxvii} The nation’s collective anticipation and excitement is a testament to the years of struggle it took to reach this historical moment. Together with the African bloc and the global support of those against white supremacy, the nonracial and anti-apartheid South African Soccer Federation (SASF) fought for recognition by the international community through the sanctioning of the racially segregated and pro-government Football Association of South Africa (FASA). The struggle forced FIFA to abandon its lingering Eurocentrism while simultaneously garnering international awareness and eventual condemnation of the apartheid regime. In the words of sports activist Sam Ramsamay, the FIFA sanctions put the “first fissures in the apartheid wall.”^{lxviii} Though by themselves they did not bring down apartheid, their contributions were indisputable and remain a testament to the effectiveness of sports boycotts in the fight against oppression.

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- vi Alegi, *Laduma!*, 106
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<http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/organisation/52/00/03/fs110%5f01e%5fpresident.pdf>
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