

NATIONAL IDEALS OR NATIONAL  
INTEREST: NEW ZEALAND AND SOUTH  
AFRICA, 1981-1994

By

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Abstract

“National ideals or National Interest?” examines the making and implementation by successive New Zealand governments of policy toward apartheid South Africa from 1981 to 1994. Its main focus is the contradictory relationship between living up to New Zealand’s ideals against doing what was practicable in the context of the time.

The dilemma the apartheid state faced, in trying to solve its internal problems while not imperilling its external security was often not appreciated by the New Zealand government. These misconceptions helped shape New Zealand policy. Ironically once the South African regime began to investigate the possibilities of some sort of political transformation, their New Zealand counterparts were less willing to empathise with the risks involved with such an undertaking than they had been in the 1960s and 1970s.

“National Ideals’ also examines the role of civil society and what was often a parallel unofficial foreign policy based around these person -to - person contacts, including the problems posed for the government by the need to persuade groups such as the NZRFU to follow government policy without overstepping what were strongly entrenched principles of individual freedom. The conflicts within the two main political parties of New Zealand were also important in shaping policy, as was the adversarial relationship between the major parties.

“National Ideals” concluded that more often than not interests came first and indeed that at times policy decisions often to the product of accident and intrigue.

*Contents*

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	vi
Preface .....	viii
List of Abbreviations Used in the Text.....	x
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: The 1981 Springbok Tour, its Aftermath, and its Impact on the 1981- 1984 National Government. ....	36
Chapter Two: The Botha and Lange Administrations, 1985-1989.....	65
Chapter Three: The Period of the National Government and the End of Apartheid 1990-1994 .....	95
Conclusion .....	118

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arcane trivia about South Africa and New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s, and my opinions about the gremlins of the research process. For her patience and support, both emotional and practical, I am very grateful indeed.

My sister Estelle, who while I was working on “National Ideals,” recently completed, and graduated with her Bachelor of Design degree. With its strong practical component, heavy workload, and frequent deadlines this was not only a major achievement for Estelle herself, it has been for me an example of endurance and forbearance under what often seemed, to me personally, impossible conditions. It is her example that I have tried to follow throughout the work on “National Ideals.”

Preface

This thesis seeks to examine the foreign policy decisions of the New Zealand government during the period 1981-1994, in respect of its relations with apartheid South Africa. The period 1981-1994 was selected as this is not as well covered by historians as the 1960s and 1970s. 1981-1994 falls between the 1981 Springbok tour and the 1994 South African election. 1981-1994 therefore is crucial in terms of developments in South Africa. Of equal importance is the wider context of southern Africa, the Commonwealth, and the Cold War.

“National Ideals or National Interest?” has been written to try and take into account the historiographical advances that have taken place following the publication of the last major work on the topic Malcolm Templeton’s *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts: New Zealand Attitudes to Race Relations in South Africa 1921-1994*, published by Auckland University Press in 1998.

“National Ideals” incorporates archive material that was under restriction in 1997, and recent research about how the apartheid state in South Africa actually worked. The often contradictory demands of a powerful external security threat frequently conspired in preventing fulsome domestic reform. This dilemma was widely misunderstood not only in New Zealand, but also by much of the rest of the world.

The role of the major New Zealand political parties Labour and National, and the conflict *within* the major parties, is an important part of the approach to



explaining the formulation of New Zealand foreign policy that has been overlooked by other authors. Civil society groups and the pressure they could wield are also taken into account. Comparisons are made with Australia and Canada as these countries had similar problems and backgrounds to New Zealand. A comparative analysis of New Zealand's Israel policy has also been included for a sense of wider perspective on the topic, as this international view is often missing.

“National Ideals” is by no means a comprehensive investigation, still less a definitive work; it is more a broad interpretation in light of new research and increased historical perspective. All research has been original and my own. All scriptural references have been taken from the Australasian edition of the Good News Bible.

*List of Abbreviations Used in the Text*

ANC - African National Congress; the main anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

ANZUS – Australia, New Zealand, and United States; defence treaty.

AZAPO – Azanian People’s Organisation; one of the minor liberation parties.

CANZ – Canada, Australia, New Zealand; a UN voting bloc.

CER – Closer Economic Relations (also known sometimes as NAFTA); New Zealand’s main economic treaty with Australia.

CHOGM – Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

CODESA – Convention for a Democratic South Africa.

FPP – “First-Past-the-Post” (also known as Plurality Voting); New Zealand’s voting system prior to 1996.

HART – Halt All Racist Tours; New Zealand’s main anti-apartheid organisation.

IFP – Inkatha Freedom Party; a conservative Zulu based anti-apartheid party based mostly in KwaZulu – Natal and an opponent of the ANC in the run up to the 1994 election.

MP – Member of Parliament.

MMP – Mixed Member Proportionate; New Zealand’s voting system after 1996.

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation.

NIBMAR - No Independence Before Majority Rule; the main British policy regarding Rhodesian/Zimbabwean independence in the 1960s.

NZIIA – New Zealand Institute of International Affairs.

NZRFU – New Zealand Rugby Football Union (known after 2000 as NZRU.)

PAC - Pan Africanist Congress, another of the minor liberation parties.

SARFU – South African Rugby Football Union.

SACP – South African Communist Party.

SATO – South Atlantic Treaty Organisation; a hypothetical southern hemisphere equivalent of NATO promoted by the South African government from the 1960s until the 1980s.

SEATO – South East Asian Treaty Organisation; multilateral defence treaty that New Zealand was a member of until it was dissolved in 1977.

SWAPO – South West African People’s Organisation; the main Namibian liberation party.

UDF – United Democratic Front; a legal ANC front organisation in the 1980s

UDI – Unilateral Declaration of Independence; Rhodesian declaration of independence, mostly unrecognised internationally, to avoid implementation of the British policy of NIBMAR in Southern Rhodesia.

UN - United Nations.

UNSCA – United Nations Special Committee for Apartheid.

## Introduction

...I was relieved to learn that following the interim injunction granted by the high court of New Zealand, the New Zealand rugby football union has decided to cancel this year's proposed tour of South Africa. The people of New Zealand have traditionally been anti-racist and proud of being so. In this connection, your government has been an admirable representative of the proud tradition, particularly in the international campaign against apartheid [underlined in the original]. I recall with great pleasure my visit to New Zealand and the hospitality you extended to me at the time. I also wish to pay you tribute for your invaluable effort in assisting in the just struggle in South Africa, particularly in connection with your selfless commitment to the cancellation of the tour which left an indelible impression on me...

Joseph Garba, Chair of the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid to David Lange regarding the cancellation of the 1985 Springbok tour

The opening quote is from a letter written in 1985 in the files of Archives New Zealand, from Joseph Garba, Nigerian envoy to the UN and long-time chair of the special committee against apartheid, to David Lange, the then prime minister. The letter congratulates Lange on the outcome of the case of *Finnegan vs. NZRFU*, which had ended with a court injunction stopping the official tour.<sup>1</sup> However, this did not prevent an unofficial 'Cavaliers' tour from taking place in 1986. This quote illustrates in a succinct and elegant fashion the popular view and misconceptions surrounding apartheid and the New Zealand Government. The image of New

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<sup>1</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 102 NYP Pt. 38 "Political Affairs – South Africa – Apartheid: Sports Contacts [06/1985-12/1985]" 1985-1985

Zealand as a 'social laboratory', with a foreign policy based on morals and not expediency, and having 'the best race relations in the world', was (and to some extent, still is) widely spread. In reality, New Zealand foreign policy has leaned more strongly on the side of interest and expediency than on that of 'morals'. This is in fact the international norm, and need not be taken negatively. Although there has indeed been a long-standing liberal and socialist comment on of racism in New Zealand, this was a tradition that was more theoretical than practical. Despite official government disapproval, the decisions taken by bodies like NZRFU and others were theirs alone to make and the "selfless commitment" of Lange and the Labour Party is questionable. Well into the 1970s, there were a number of Labour MP's, in addition to National who were not averse to the charms and patter of the South African Consul-General and his staff. Moreover, the National Party was more divided over the issue of South Africa than most commentators were and later scholars are generally willing to allow.

Garba's letter illustrates another important fact; that despite being on the other side of the world, South Africa's policy of apartheid has been a source of contention in New Zealand. The primary sources relating to the subject make it clear, and the place events like the 1981 Springbok tour hold in New Zealand's collective memory support this. Although the 'age of apartheid' in South Africa, and the 1980s and early 1990s in New Zealand are bountiful as far as primary sources and contemporary comment are concerned there have been few attempts at retrospective analysis. This thesis will be an attempt to rectify this.

The closure of the South African Consulate, boycotts, to apply or not to apply sanctions to South Africa, and should visas for travel between New Zealand and South Africa be withheld. These questions were all part of a larger underlying theme that was often not articulated, but informed the debates surrounding the topic. This theme is the conflict between the limits of state power and the boundaries of civil society, and the rights of private individuals to make decisions that may have negative consequences or not be in their best interests. The debates surrounding boycotts, social contacts and the whole vexed issue of apartheid touched on the problem of the conflict between ideas of civil society for example between those who argued for the need to “keep politics out of sport” versus those involved in what was in effect an unofficial foreign service. This unofficial ‘Foreign Service’ comprised the men and women who, despite being private citizens, for good or ill represented New Zealand to the wider world in a variety of roles, such as aid workers, missionaries, athletes, foreign exchange students, tourists, scholars, and artists. It is clear there is not only a conflict of ideals and expediency that shapes this topic; but also a conflict between the ideal of the rights of individuals and the belief refusing to take a stand against apartheid was a betrayal of these rights, not only in New Zealand but also in South Africa.

Considering specifically the great upsurge of emotion and commotion that the issue of sporting sanctions provoked in New Zealand, the cause was the question of individual freedoms, including the freedom to be involved with

unsavoury characters and events; against the desire, or even need, to make sacrifices for the common good. Lurking behind the hoary slogan “keep politics out of sport,” was a deeper factor at work beyond racism, naïveté, or ignorance. There was a perceived need for government to respect the autonomy of civil society and the fear of the precedents direct political intervention might take. The concept of “civil society” describes groupings of peoples independent of the state, the family, and the market who associate to advance common goals. Civil society is generally perceived in the liberal democratic paradigm as a necessary bulwark against the potential tyranny of the state, the exploitation of the market and the tribalism and nepotism that can be inherent in ties of kinship. More often than not, these bodies are the drivers of public opinion and social change. The capture of these groups is often a major goal for political movements with hegemonic or authoritarian ambitions. It is no surprise therefore that both the apartheid government and the liberation movements went to great lengths to infiltrate such groups in South Africa to further their political aims; and that many in New Zealand were deeply suspicious when it appeared that either the New Zealand government or the anti-apartheid groups were to do the same.

Successive New Zealand governments were, with the above in mind therefore, highly reluctant to interfere too much in such bodies. This was due ultimately to an instinctual understanding of the limits of state power and New Zealand’s stronger tradition of independent institutions in comparison with South Africa, where civil society was limited and mostly but not completely confined to

the educated white enclaves. In retrospect, it is difficult to say if the pro-sanctions lobby simply failed to tune into these frequencies. It is possible that they were being influenced by the authoritarianism running through the radical wing of the western left for most of the twentieth century. In a liberal democracy, options for curtailing personal freedom against the greater good are limited; once corners are cut, no matter how tempting or well intentioned, dangerous precedents are set. Although some of those who supported maintaining contact with South Africa were racists, others wanted to maintain the status quo because they were worried about the precedent that might be set for the curtailment of other freedoms.

This sense of civil society boundaries along with the lack of a defined plan were the main reasons the New Zealand government floundered when dealing with South Africa in the period. Policy decisions were often the result of populist pandering for domestic electoral advantage. In 1978, Muldoon's government election campaign promised not to interfere with the NZRFU internal administration, thereby giving permission to let the 1981 Springbok tour go ahead; and at the Labour Party 1984 conference Jim Anderton promised to close the South African Consulate. He did this without clearing it with David Lange first, locking Labour into what was a popular but poorly reasoned policy.<sup>2</sup> Such tactics draw

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<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts: New Zealand Attitudes to Race Relations in South Africa 1921-1994*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, p.220. Speaking from a personal point of view, the closure of the Consulate, which served no positive purpose and was in many ways more trouble than it was worth, was long overdue, but was a decision taken for mostly the wrong reasons on both sides. Templeton speculates that Anderton's *coup de main* regarding the Consulate may have been motivated, in part, by a desire to punish at the South African authorities who refused him permission to see political prisoners during a projected visit to South Africa.



attention to government decision making, electoral calculation, and populist politics, which was often just as important as the response to conflicting goals and ideals.

### *Theoretical Issues*

The paradox that drives the foreign relations of most countries in the world is the conflict between living up to a country's ideals and balancing them with its practical interests. In addition there is a host of other factors that can shape decisions, such as populism, the choices of other nations be they friend or foe, and in this case study the changes in South Africa as it became less able to sustain its domestic policies. The main consequence of the latter being that many in New Zealand, both in and out of government, were forced to rethink their views on South Africa, a confronting and confusing process for many. Although most of the *causes celebres* of the twentieth century found their way to New Zealand's shores, the anti-apartheid movement, along with the movements to ban nuclear testing and the protests against the war in Vietnam, had the greatest impact and stirred the most passion. Less well known are the problems that South Africa posed for successive New Zealand *governments*. Although apartheid never enjoyed fulsome support amongst New Zealand's political elite, the way forward was not always clear.

International relations experts often present the relations between states as a smooth quadrille amongst statesmen and diplomats of great powers with clear

agendas; unencumbered by pesky distractions such as public opinion, human rights, or multilateralism (the allusions to the Congress of Vienna are intentional). This is not how it works at all.

At a domestic level, in a western democracy such as New Zealand, friction between political parties and within political parties, along with the vagaries of public opinion, are all major factors in the formation of a government's strategy for dealing with other governments, many of which also face the same problems. For the same reasons, the ways in which events, people and places are viewed in the popular imagination, even if these perceptions contradict the reality of what is actually happening, is of vital importance. In this thesis, it is clear that the divisions within Labour and National did as much as the divide between the two parties to shape government strategy regarding South Africa. Until the switch to MMP in 1996, elections were based on the Plurality Voting, that is, FPP system that usually returned with a few exceptions one party governments, and not the multi-party coalitions that have become the norm under MMP. The divisions within the parties therefore take on greater importance than under MMP.

Analysis of New Zealand policy should take into account the actual workings of the apartheid state. Because of its democratic deficit, the South African state in the years 1981-1994 was weaker and more vulnerable than it would have been under other circumstances. This weakness, and the posturing that the Nationalists adopted to compensate, was overlooked or misinterpreted by New Zealand policy makers, especially those in the Labour Party. Another

misconception that has surrounded the analysis of New Zealand foreign policy towards South Africa during apartheid is definitional - how does one define South Africa? It is easy to overlook, but for most of the period in question, the African National Congress ran its own “diplomatic” service parallel to that of the de jure South African government.<sup>3</sup> The anti-apartheid groups in New Zealand were frequently in touch with these de facto embassies. These offices were often the ones that helped with the attempts to campaign for third party sanctions. For the sake of New Zealand’s international reputation, the government had to take account of these ‘gadflies’ and relations with South Africa in this context and time period therefore meant both the official Afrikaner Nationalist South African or “apartheid” government in Pretoria *and* the de facto ANC “black” government in waiting.

In history, there is a temptation to divide groups into heroes and villains, victims and exploiters. This approach is both unhelpful and misleading as there are plenty of skeletons in the closets of all the major participants. To quote the then head of the South African armed forces General Constand Viljoen, “Why can’t we all agree we all have dirty hands? We fought a war that should have been avoided at the start or stopped at a much earlier stage. We fought a dirty war.”<sup>4</sup> The wider geopolitical setting also needs to be taken into account as well, and the unrest in South Africa in the period 1984-1994 needs to be seen in that context. Southern

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<sup>3</sup> See for example reports from the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra regarding the office of the ANC and how to juggle the two see, ABHS W5533 22128 Box 35 CBA 30/2/2 Pt. 1 150842 “South Africa Sporting Contacts 1982-1983 Canberra Files” 1982-1983

<sup>4</sup> Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, London: Hurst and Company, 2003, p. 655

Africa, for much of the period under consideration (1974-1990), following the collapse of the Portuguese empire and the destabilisation of its former colonies of Angola and Mozambique, became the subject of great power conflict, reflected in the stationing of 30,000 troops of the Soviet proxy Cuba near the border between Namibia, then under South African rule, and Angola. These facts were of great importance, along with perceived developments in UDI Rhodesia, after 1980 Zimbabwe, which was seen by many New Zealand policy makers as a dry run for potential developments in South Africa when apartheid was finally abolished and majority rule implemented.

*Apartheid and the International Opposition.*

Although this thesis concerns successive New Zealand governments of the 1980s and 1990s, it is important to convey a proper understanding of apartheid and of South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. It is not only important to understand what policy makers in New Zealand had to deal with but also the origins of their misconceptions about apartheid, such as that it was 'fascist' or that it was dominated by the military. Segregation and racial hierarchies were a part of life in South Africa; ranging from the master-servant relationships based on colour in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Cape Colony to the sorting of blood

transfusions by the race of their donors in the twentieth.<sup>5</sup> The development of these patterns of segregation and the growth of the modern South African state are closely intertwined. The modern South African state came into being in 1910, nine years after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) which ended the independent Afrikaner states; the older African kingdoms, most notable the Zulu empire, had been vanquished by the British some thirty years previously.<sup>6</sup> One of the reasons the Boers agreed to integration into the British Empire was the perceived need for a common “Natives’ Policy.” A result of this was the nationwide application of segregation laws that had previously been confined either to the British founded province of Natal or to the Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.<sup>7</sup> Another result of Union was a nationwide economic policy that allowed the government to unlock the economic potential of the country previously hampered by internal barriers and weak regional governments. The formation of the Union now made exploiting the black population as cheap labour for the mines and farms easier.

The Homelands<sup>8</sup> policy, the cornerstone of apartheid, involved creating a number of smaller states based around the main ethnic groups in South Africa,

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<sup>5</sup> Allister Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa: The Story Of The Rise And Fall Of Apartheid*, London: Mandarin, 1990, *passim*; Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, *passim*; R. W Johnson, *South Africa: The First Man, The Last Nation*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2004, *passim*; Donald L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991 *passim*

<sup>6</sup> Donal Lowry, “When The World Loved The Boers” in, *History Today*, Vol. 49, No. 5, May 1999, pp. 43-49

<sup>7</sup> All South African provincial terms refer to the pre 1994 regional boundaries.

<sup>8</sup> The Homelands are, however, better known by their pejorative term the Bantustans; a portmanteau of Bantu, a general term for all black South Africans that has now fallen out of

which would then be joined in a regional economic union with other states of the region; a clear forerunner to the modern Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the basis of much of contemporary South Africa's foreign policy.

In reality however, the Homelands were puny, and often they were on the worst agricultural land in South Africa. Despite the huge amounts of money that Pretoria pumped into them, they were in effect giant holding pens for a labour force for the farms, mines, and factories in white South Africa. The available evidence points to Hendrick Verwoerd as the originator of the Homelands policy, as well as a number of other major pieces of apartheid legislation. The vicious crackdown on opposition to the government following the Sharpeville shootings was also Verwoerd's responsibility. Life on the ground in South Africa in this period was more complex and contradictory than reports would lead us to believe. The failings of the South African government's policies and the lack of concern for the majority of the country for whose interests they claimed to be acting was real enough; But it was not the whole story. The South African Government's paranoia and confusion is illustrated in a government White Paper from the 1970s in which the enemies of (white) South Africa were listed as

Leftist activists, exaggerated humanism, permissiveness, materialism,  
and related ideologies...black racism, exaggerated individual freedom,

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favour due to its political connotations, and the suffix “-stan”, a reference to the bogus internal republics of the USSR. The term Homelands will be used from this point onwards.

one-man one-vote...boycotts, isolation, demonstrations...undermining activities and limited violence.<sup>9</sup>

Hendrick Verwoerd was quite possibly the most able man to rule South Africa. His prime ministership of South Africa left a more lasting impact on the Republic than that of any South African politician since.<sup>10</sup> After becoming Prime Minister in 1958 until his assassination in 1966, the South African economy grew at an unprecedented rate, foreign investment flowed in, and South Africa gained the finest infrastructure on the continent.<sup>11</sup> Despite these very real achievements, Verwoerd's balance sheet is firmly in the deficit; he is not known as the "architect of apartheid" for nothing.<sup>12</sup>

To speak of apartheid, therefore, as a simple monolith, the "walls of granite" of South African Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd's turn of phrase, is not only misleading but also dangerous. Strictly speaking, the period from 1948 until 1994 falls into three phrases. The first phase, 1948-1960, was simply an intensification of the old British based segregation laws and colonial labour system following the social and economic upheavals of the Second World War.<sup>13</sup> The second phase from 1960-1983, the period the Homelands were created, is thought

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<sup>9</sup> "South African Government White Paper on Defence and Arms Production 1973" Quoted in Alexander Johnston "Weak States and National Security: The Case of South Africa in the Era of Total Strategy" in, *Review of International Studies*, Vol.17 No. 2, (April 1991), p. 151

<sup>10</sup> Hans Pienaar, "No. 3: Hendrick Verwoerd 1901-1966" in, *They Shaped Our Century: The Most Influential South Africans Of The Twentieth Century*, Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1999, pp. 22-26

<sup>11</sup> For an insightful analysis on Verwoerd and his legacy see Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, pp. 536-541

<sup>12</sup> Sparks, *The Mind Of South Africa*, pp. 192-202

<sup>13</sup> Giliomee *Afrikaners*, pp. xiii-xix

of as being the most stereotypically representative of apartheid. The draconian censorship and political laws from this period consolidated Nationalist rule but were also passed in reaction to the state of emergency following the Sharpeville shootings of 1960 and later the assassination of Hendrick Verwoerd in 1966. As well as internal problems, there was also the growing number of disasters that were taking hold in much of the rest of decolonised Africa.<sup>14</sup> The third phase from 1983-1994 covers the period in which a number of belated reforms were made and the need to find a way of combating the very well-orchestrated campaign by the ANC, the chief liberation movement, became the government's overriding priority.

The best interpretation of the apartheid years in South Africa is that of a clash of nationalisms between Afrikaner and African nationalism. African nationalism, a side effect of the Union of South Africa following the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) that the white rulers of South Africa had not anticipated, was a product of missionary education, the spread of English as the language of interethnic communication, and urbanisation. Although easily written off at the time, it was certainly less of a threat than the more virulent Afrikaner nationalism. Afrikaner nationalism was a reaction to the use of English as the official language and the humiliations of defeat and poverty. The two nationalisms developed around the same time for related reasons.

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid* pp. 487-541; for more information on the rest of southern Africa during the period see Martin Meredith, *The State Of Africa: A History Of The Continent Since Independence*, London: Simon and Schuster, 2011, *passim*



This clash of nationalisms explains a great deal but there are a number of other external factors at work. One of the reasons regimes are often unwilling to abandon power is because they fear what may take its place. This was the case with the Nationalist Party in South Africa. It needs, at this point, to be made explicitly clear that although the apartheid government made a number of unnecessary problems for itself, an even larger number of challenges that it faced were not of its own making. The challenges that South Africa faced in the 1980s, of which the most important were a rapidly expanding population, unorganised urbanisation, the Cold War, and the growing economic and social problems that defined Africa following the end of colonialism, were also faced by most of South Africa's neighbours.<sup>15</sup> The overwhelming sense of danger and encirclement that informed the governments thinking on the danger of abandoning the *laager* was clear in many of South African government's actions.

One of the main factors to influence the end of apartheid was the end of the Cold War; no USSR meant no Soviet money for the ANC. The repeated humiliations that (white) South Africa underwent in a number of international forums were having an impact, and few in South Africa enjoyed living in a fortress state. The importance of international forums to New Zealand policy makers increased due to cost constraints meaning that these forums were often the only places where New Zealand diplomats could sound out the views of their African counterparts on issues like sporting contacts and sanctions. Sporting contacts were a

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<sup>15</sup> Meredith, *passim*

particular headache. The majority of the ministry's cables on the subject of South Africa were about that issue. Of lesser public importance were cultural links. The New Zealand Film Commission during this period was able to sell films and television shows not only to South African distributors but to a number of film festivals as well.<sup>16</sup> It is easy at first glance to dismiss the subject of sporting ties as frivolous or unimportant. This is a mistake. Sporting ties were the main basis for person-to-person contact (this applies to cultural contacts as well) and often led to business and political links which were economically important. Using boycotts and sanctions and ensuring they were enforced and monitored was an important part of the strategy of isolation. It was all part of the broader disinvestment campaign.

There is also good anecdotal evidence that despite the effects on living standards the economic sanctions had, the sporting boycott, especially the ban on international rugby and cricket tours, had the most *psychological* impact. South Africa, like many new world states, including New Zealand, placed great store on international sporting contests as a form of national self-assertion, and regarded victories in such arenas with great pride. The denial of what was for many South Africans a very important expression of national identity was a major blow.

Informal negotiations to end apartheid began in the late 1978 when the possibility of both genuine power sharing and real economic reform on white terms

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<sup>16</sup> ADMA W5652 22513 Box 11 2 "South Africa [General Marketing and Sales] 1981-1983" 1981-1983; ADMA W5652 22513 Box 56 4 "South Africa - Festivals to 1985" 1983-1985; ADMA W5652 22513 Box 118 4 "South Africa [General Sales and Marketing] 1980-1981" 1980-1981; ADMA W5652 22513 Box 128 4 "South Africa 1984-1986" 1984-1986; ADMA W5652 22513 Box 173 5 "Sleeping Dogs - South Africa 1978-1983" 1978-1983 1986; ADMA W5652 Box 303 2 "South Africa General File 1987-1993" 1987-1993; ADMA W5652 22513 Box 303 "South Africa General File 1987-1993" 1987-1993

was possible.<sup>17</sup> There had been overtures from Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party<sup>18</sup> and Chief Minister of the KwaZulu Homeland. By far the most able of the Homelands rulers, Buthelezi in conjunction with members of the main white opposition MPs from the Progressive Federal Party<sup>19</sup> in the South African parliament proposed a plan for federal devolution to the provinces and reform of the economy and genuine power sharing. However due to a combination of political cowardice and internal opposition no progress was made.<sup>20</sup>

All of these issues would be of great significance to both the New Zealand policy makers in Wellington and the staff of the Harare High Commission in the 1990s. These unresolved issues were a partial cause of the wave of violence that swept South Africa. In 1978, John Vorster, then Prime Minister of South Africa, was forced to resign following the uncovering of the 'Information Scandal' or Muldergate. Muldergate, named for the Information Minister Connie Mulder, involved the use of illegal currency controls and a government slush fund to bankroll a propaganda campaign, including the establishment of a pro-government

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<sup>17</sup> Johnson, *The First Man*, p. 184

<sup>18</sup> The Inkatha Freedom Party, a mainly Zulu ethnic party with strong roots in KwaZulu-Natal, they initially enjoyed strong ties to the ANC but later became a major rival on the ANC's right flank in the 1980s and 1990s. The split seems to have been prompted by concerns within the ANC that certain ethnic groups, Zulu's in particular, were being overlooked for patronage and advancement within the party in favour of Xhosas, who formed the core of the ANC's leadership.

<sup>19</sup> The Progressive Federal Party was one of the many manifestations of the tearaway group of seven MPs who broke away from the now defunct United Party, then the main opposition party, as the Progressive Party in 1959, later becoming the Democratic Party in 1989, and is now the modern day opposition to the ANC in the South African parliament, the Democratic Alliance. For a number of years this fearless band of men and women probed, questioned and embarrassed the Nationalists every opportunity they got and in many ways did more to undermine Apartheid than the Liberation movements, with their slogans and bootleg weapons, ever could have hoped to do so.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, *The First Man*, p. 184

English language newspaper *The Citizen*.<sup>21</sup> The Information Scandal did much to undermine the prestige of the government, which otherwise compared favourably to other regimes in Africa on matters such as corruption and morality. Despite this fact, it does not seem to have had much impact on perceptions of the nationalists in New Zealand, as Muldergate is not mentioned in a number of New Zealand politician's memoirs. Nonetheless, Muldergate had a greatly negative impact on South Africa's already poor standing abroad. This left the stage open for greater involvement of the military in South African politics. Just how much influence the military had in South African politics during the 1980s and 1990s is open to debate. The appointment of a former Defence Minister, P.W Botha as Prime Minister, and an actively serving general, Magnus Malan, as the Minister of Defence, went against the convention in most parliamentary systems. These appointments along with a massive increase in military spending and tightening of conscription laws implied that South Africa might be heading for a military takeover.<sup>22</sup>

New Zealand perceptions frequently failed to consider these obstacles.

Instead, many in New Zealand saw a desire to dominate Southern Africa or at least a wish not to relinquish white South Africa's considerable wealth that had been

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<sup>21</sup> For more about Muldergate see; Johnson, *The First Man*, pp. 177-179; William Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2001 p 243; F.W de Klerk, *The Last Trek: A New Beginning*, London: Pan Books 2000 pp. 59-60; Helen Suzman, *In No Uncertain Terms: Memoirs*, London: Sinclair Stevenson 1993 pp. 195-197; James Barber, "BOSS in Britain" in *African Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 328 (July 1983) pp. 311-328. Ironically, *The Citizen* is still in publication today as a respected daily and has a predominantly black readership.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on the role of the military in South African politics see Deon Fourie "The New South Africa and the Armed Forces" in *South Africa: Designing New Institutions* ed. Murray Faure and Jan-Erik Lane, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications 1996 pp. 151-180

partially acquired at the expense and exploitation of the black population. The main motivating factors behind the actions of the Nationalist government were defensive and motivated by fear. These reasons are strongly grounded in South Africa's modern history and are the more likely explanations.

*The New Zealand Approach in Comparison: Australia, Canada, and Israel*

Taking the broader view of New Zealand policies in the 1980s, a comparative approach may be useful in understanding the challenges and the choices of successive New Zealand governments during the period. As a comparison, it is worthwhile to consider countries with similar histories and problems to New Zealand. The two countries that are similar enough to New Zealand in this context are Australia and Canada. Australian foreign policy is similar to New Zealand although more connected to Asia for reasons of history and geography. There is not a lot written on the subject on Australian foreign policy on apartheid, which is surprising. There were, however, similarities' to the problems that the New Zealand government faced. Both had ties to South Africa, had sent troops to the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, both had major sporting contacts with South Africa, both had on-going issues about colonisation and immigration, and both later grew to have large anti-apartheid movements with strong support within left leaning governments of the period.

These similarities did not lead to a common front on the issue of South Africa in the 1980s. Although the Hawke-Keating administrations held similar views on South Africa to their New Zealand counterparts, clashes over ANZUS and nuclear ships meant that despite much common ground between the two, there was never going to be a *simpatico* relationship and what could have been an effective united front was diluted by conflict over other issues and clashes of personalities.<sup>23</sup> Australia's anti-apartheid movement was capable of producing violence and civil disorder on the same scale as New Zealand, and like New Zealand coalesced around the issue of sporting contacts. In Australia, cricket was the main target of protests; rugby was a secondary concern, an inversion of the situation in New Zealand. Not only did the Australian government have to deal with the scandal of on-going rebel cricket tours of South Africa well until the 1980s, there was also a Springbok tour of Australia in 1971 that notoriously ended with some 700 people arrested across Australia and a month long state of emergency declared in Queensland. Unlike New Zealand, the South African government enjoyed full representation in Australia, and many Australian companies, in particular the mining sector, a vital industry in Australia, had significant investments in South Africa that they were anxious to maintain. Australia shared New Zealand's problems vis-à-vis apartheid but the stakes were higher.

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<sup>23</sup> Bob Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs*, Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1994, pp. 265, 279-286.

Hawke in particular is useful when used in conjunction with Michael Bassett's memoirs of the Lange government as a corrective to some of Lange's more outrageous claims about the anti-nuclear policy and other controversial aspects of New Zealand-Australian relations of the 1980s.

Canada is also an interesting case study. Canada's relationship to South Africa was similar to that of New Zealand in that like South Africa both were Commonwealth countries and former dominions of the British Empire, with similar issues on indigenous peoples and immigration. Beyond this, there is greater scope for contrast than the obvious comparison between New Zealand and Australia. Canada's ideas on foreign policy were more coherent, its stated goal being the need to "Build bridges of understanding between the affluent industrial white nations, and the poor, underdeveloped, non-white majority of the world."<sup>24</sup> Canada's South Africa policy caused relatively little controversy and was from 1960 onwards, consistent in comparison with stances taken in New Zealand. This relative lack of trouble may have stemmed from the fact that "The ties between Canada and South Africa...were more emotional than substantial," according to a one time Canadian High Commissioner to South Africa.<sup>25</sup> Canada-South Africa relations were not a source of trouble to Canada in itself. This did not mean they were not affected by the problems that South African issues could pose on the international stage. Canada had been negatively affected by the sporting boycotts of the Olympics and Commonwealth games, Montreal and Edmonton respectively. The Montreal

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<sup>24</sup> Brian Douglas Tennyson, "Canadian Policy towards South Africa" in *Africa Today*, Vol. 29, No. 1 Namibia, South Africa and the West, (First Quarter 1982), pp. 3-20; see also Ian O. Cameron, "Canada, The Commonwealth and South Africa: National Foreign Policy Making in a Multilateral Environment" in, *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (June 1989), pp. 205-225

<sup>25</sup> James Bartleman, *On Six Continents: A Life in Canada's Foreign Service 1966-2002*, Toronto: Douglas Gibson, 2004, p. 237. Bartleman was also displeased to discover that the ruling ANC simply saw Canada as a milch cow of development money and not as a business partner, noting ruefully that the countries that kept their trade offices open whilst sanctions had been imposed were being given preferential treatment.

Olympics were boycotted by 28 African nations following the refusal of the IOC to expel New Zealand from the Olympics after the 1976 All Blacks tour of South Africa. Edmonton only had the single boycott of Nigeria. It was still a major embarrassment for Canada and damaged New Zealand-Canada relations.<sup>26</sup>

Despite this ‘one off’, Canada was not burdened with having any major sporting contacts with South Africa as this Harare High Commission dispatch from 20 March 1991 makes clear,

We asked whether [the Canadian government] was considering any refinements to its application of Gleneagles. Edwards said that external was looking at this. But it might not be easy. As you know, Canadian legislation bans the entry of any South African wishing to come to Canada for sports-related activities. In effect (as you know too well) this ban has not been of great relevance in Canada’s situation given that they did not have any major sporting links in any of the key areas...They now had the case of an individual who wished to come and give a paper to a university related sports conference. Edwards noted that Gleneagles referred only to sport competition, not sport-related activities; she did not know what the outcome of their current deliberations would be. Perhaps Canada might wait for the CW [Commonwealth] to approve certain contacts as being in the interests of unification and sports development in SA e.g. entry into Canada of SA coaches. Perhaps Canada would use a guideline that persons from a unified sport would [be] permitted entry. But some of their applications were from balloonists, hang-glidiers and sail-boarders. Canada would want to consult further on this before the Delhi CFM [Commonwealth Foreign Ministers] but Edwards gave us to believe that they would probably

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<sup>26</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 41 “Political – South Africa – Apartheid Sporting Contacts [08/1989-12/1991]” 1989-1991



proceed slowly. She assured me she would stay in touch as their thinking progressed.

To conclude Edwards expressed Canada's concern that the sporting contacts issue not break down into a white CW versus black CW one. There would be a need to "manage our rhetoric" (she referred specifically to statements by Mr Hawke, including one made yesterday). This, she thought, tended to put pressure on the FLS [Front Line States] possibly making them difficult.<sup>27</sup>

The context of the strategies that the New Zealand government pursued can also be viewed in comparison with other countries that posed similar problems of contested nationhood and possible ostracism like those which South Africa posed, and in particular Israel.<sup>28</sup> A number of people made the linkage between the problems of the Middle East and apartheid in the period. The anti-apartheid groups were taken to task more than a few times by the leaders of the New Zealand Jewish community for what they, and many others, deemed unfair and inappropriate public comparisons and statements from the group on the Middle East.<sup>29</sup>

The approaches the New Zealand government has taken over the years to relations with Israel and to relations with South Africa during apartheid's heyday were quite different. New Zealand had been a supporter of the state of Israel,

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<sup>27</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 42 "Political Affairs – South Africa – Apartheid Sporting Contacts [01/1991-05/1994]" 1991-1994

<sup>28</sup> For students of New Zealand foreign policy who are more interested in finding out about New Zealand – Israeli relations see Malcolm Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire: New Zealand Involvement in Middle East Defence and the Suez Crisis*, Auckland: Auckland University Press 1994. This is not an endorsement of the Israel –apartheid analogy. The Israel-apartheid analogy is intellectually lazy and deeply flawed.

<sup>29</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/7 Pt. 2 "Republic of South Africa: Social Affairs – Apartheid: H.A.R.T [Halt All Racist Tours] [12/87-07/85] 1982-1985

having voted in favour of the 1947 partition resolution despite heavy British and Commonwealth pressure to abstain. Malcolm Templeton in his book on the Suez crisis puts this down to the Labour Party's sympathy for the socialist character of the early Israeli state as well as latent Holocaust guilt over restrictive pre-war immigration policies.<sup>30</sup> There are a number of parallels between contemporary Israel and South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Israel, like apartheid South Africa, was and is theoretically a liberal democracy with multiple political parties, a free press, healthy economy and vigorous (albeit limited) civil society. Both were and are countries that Pakeha New Zealand could more readily identify with than the neighbouring autocratic monarchies, secular dictatorships and later theocratic republics; or for that matter Africa's one party states, military dictatorships, and failed colonies.

All these comparisons show that New Zealand's South Africa problem, although irritating, was far from unique. The solutions, although often disappointing, were far from out of the ordinary. Australia was forced to navigate most of the same obstacles that New Zealand had to in its dealings with South Africa. Canada was not as affected by the same problems of New Zealand or Australia, but it did not completely avoid the trouble that South Africa could cause either. New Zealand's Israel policy shows that a lack of public interest can be a major asset for politicians and diplomats.

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<sup>30</sup> Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, *passim*

*Historiography*

Despite the heroic mythology that has been built around the events of the 1981 Springbok tour, public attitudes were divided and many still supported what could be termed constructive engagement with South Africa for a variety of reasons, some more noble than others. There is no definitive account of the 1981 Springbok Tour, only memoirs of varying quality, a chapter in Malcolm Templeton's *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts* and a number of retrospective articles in newspapers and magazines that appeared during anniversaries of the tour.<sup>31</sup> The best account of the 1981 Springbok Tour so far is the television documentary *1981: A Country at War*, commissioned by Television New Zealand in 2003.<sup>32</sup> Unlike much of the written material, it is even-handed, fair, and informative. A second documentary commissioned for Television New Zealand, *Try Revolution* (2006),<sup>33</sup> covers the reaction to the tour in South Africa providing the international context.

In addition to this, events in South Africa were more complicated than the traditional accounts would allow. The tide of historical opinion is beginning to turn as it is becoming clear that the roots of South Africa's social and political dysfunction go back longer than 1948, and that apartheid may well have been the

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<sup>31</sup> Trevor Richards, *Dancing On Our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999, *passim*; Redmer Yska "The Tour Files" in *The New Zealand Listener*, 9-15 July 2011, pp. 14-20; Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 178-290

<sup>32</sup> *1981: A Country At War*, dir. Rachel Jean and Owen Hughes, Frame Up Films, 2003

<sup>33</sup> *Exposé: Try Revolution*, dir. Leana Pooley, Pacific Films, 2006

symptom and not the cause. This assumption of apartheid being the cause of all of South Africa's ills had a huge bearing on how other nations related to South Africa in the period 1948-1994, and this in turn, affected South Africa's approach to overcoming these challenges.

The scholarship surrounding New Zealand-South Africa relations between 1981 and 1994 has been covered by first person accounts from those involved in the anti-apartheid movement in New Zealand and elsewhere. Trevor Richards' *Dancing on our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism*,<sup>34</sup> is a prominent example. These anti-apartheid movement accounts are not so much histories as memoirs with supplementary material. Because these are often participant memoirs, opinions and the settling of old scores can preclude fair and balanced accounts. This particularly applies to the treatment of those who supported continuing links to South Africa and argued that constructive engagement was more effective than sanctions and international ostracism. These accounts also overlook both the wider context of the Cold War and its ending. They also interpret any argument or ideas in support of contact as apartheid propaganda.

The main scholarly work on New Zealand-South Africa relations is Malcolm Templeton's *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*, authored by a former New Zealand diplomat.<sup>35</sup> *Human Rights* is based on research from the archives of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs covering the years 1921-1994. The

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<sup>34</sup> Richards, *passim*

<sup>35</sup> Malcolm Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts: New Zealand Attitudes to Race Relations in South Africa 1921-1994*, Auckland: Auckland University Press 1998

title implies a narrower focus than actually is the case as other factors such as business, sanctions, and the international context of New Zealand foreign policy are covered. Templeton was unable to conduct research in South Africa and at the time of writing could not access the archives of the New Zealand Rugby Union and the South African Rugby Union. Templeton's approach might have been influenced by the time he spent employed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The fact that many of the ministry's materials were still officially under classification in 1998 may also have importance.

Other major works useful for this study are those of political scientist and biographer Barry Gustafson. His biography of Robert Muldoon, which deals with the 1981 tour at length and his history of the National Party, written in 1986 provide valuable context. There is as yet no full-length biography of David Lange. The closest is a lengthy political study of the Lange cabinet by Michael Bassett. Other works include an early introductory study of Lange by Vernon Wright from 1984, Lange's own memoirs, posthumously published in 2005, and Barry Gustafson's entry on Lange in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.<sup>36</sup> In the

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<sup>36</sup> Barry Gustafson. 'Lange, David Russell', in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/611/lange-david-russell>; Michael Bassett, *Working With David: Inside the Lange Cabinet*, Auckland: Hodder Moe Beckett, 2008; David Lange, *My Life* Auckland: Viking 2005, *passim*; Vernon Wright, *David Lange: Prime Minister, A Portrait*, Wellington: Unwin Paperbacks 1984 *passim*; Jon Johansson, *Two Titans: Muldoon, Lange and Leadership*, Wellington: Dunmore Publishing, 2005, *passim*.

absence of a full-scale biography of David Lange, the Bassett study is of the greatest value.<sup>37</sup>

David J McCraw's "New Zealand's Foreign Policy in the 1990s: in the National Tradition?"<sup>38</sup> is one of series of articles on New Zealand's foreign policy and the approaches of the two main parties. These articles examines the policies of the National Party of the 1990s and the growing influence of public opinion on policy making, a factor that had become more important during the Fourth Labour Government. National's foreign policy was often unfairly seen as fawning over what once was the Empire, toadying to the Americans, or simply looking for markets.<sup>39</sup> This interpretation, although it certainly has a lot of truth in it, is not the whole story. It is true that the National Party had historically placed a greater emphasis on maintaining links to New Zealand's traditional allies and protectors as well as the necessity of promoting trade. For these reasons trade falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and not a department of commerce or economic development. Often overlooked was National's strong commitment to multilateralism and internationalism, evidenced by its support for the United Nations and persistence in giving monetary aid to various countries and

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<sup>37</sup> Barry Gustafson, *His Way: A Biography of Robert Muldoon*, Auckland: Auckland University Press 2000 *passim*; Barry Gustafson, *The First Fifty Years: A History of the National Party*, Auckland: Reed Methuen 1986 *passim*; Bassett, *passim*

<sup>38</sup> David J. McCraw "New Zealand's Foreign Policy in the 1990s: in the National Tradition?" in *Pacific Review* Vol. 13, No.4 2000 pp. 577-594

<sup>39</sup> Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence And Foreign Policy: New Zealand In the World Since 1935*, Auckland: Auckland University Press 1993, pp. 12-13

international funds.<sup>40</sup> National, as the 1981 Springbok tour illustrated, was as capable as a Labour government of making nationalistic stands on certain issues. There is also an unfair perception of the New Zealand National Party as racist in popular historical understanding in New Zealand. This undoubtedly is owing to the fact that with a few exceptions i.e. Barry Gustafson, the great majority of the New Zealand historical and political science profession are somewhere on the left of the political spectrum. In the 1970s one author, M.P.K. Sorrenson, could even go as far to say that the South African Nationalists and New Zealand National parties only differed in degrees as to their core philosophies and beliefs, especially regarding race, immigration, and indigenous issues.<sup>41</sup> These accusations are a reflection of unhappiness with the Muldoon government of the 1970s. Sorrenson ignores the fact that historically centre left parties in New Zealand, that is, the Liberals and their successors the Labour Party often pandered to the same ideas to win votes and elections, the only difference is that Labour abandoned support for race based immigration restrictions in the 1970s.

While the effectiveness of the campaign to withdraw financial investment from South Africa's corporations is debated, other boycotts, especially the sporting boycott, are generally agreed to have been successful. Two articles by Douglas Booth: "Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports

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<sup>40</sup> Merwyn Norrish "Introduction" in *New Zealand in World Affairs III 1972-1990* ed. Bruce Brown Wellington Victoria University Press in association with NZIIA, 1999, pp. 9-19

<sup>41</sup> M.P.K. Sorrenson "Uneasy Bedfellows: A Survey of New Zealand's Relations With South Africa" in *New Zealand, South Africa and Sport: Background Papers*, Wellington: NZIIA, 1976, p. 35

Boycott” in *Journal of Contemporary History* and “The Southern African Council of Sport and the Political Antinomies of the Sports Boycott” in *Journal of Southern African Studies* make this point.<sup>42</sup> John Carlin’s *Playing the Enemy* is a history of the politics behind the 1995 Rugby World Cup and its role in attempting to build a common sense of nationhood in South Africa.<sup>43</sup> These publications touch on many of the topics of this thesis including the impact of international boycotts and changing attitudes. Other aspects of relations covered in a number of contemporary scholarly articles deal with disinvestment, geo-strategic policy, and the impact of the collapse of the USSR on policy and changing internal dynamics within South Africa. Examples of contemporary analysis include, “South Africa: Is Botha’s Total Strategy a Programme of Reform?” in *Review of African Political Economy*; Timothy D. Sisk, “White Politics in South Africa: Polarisation under Pressure” in *Africa Today*; and Alexander Johnston, “Weak States and National Security: The Case of South Africa in the Era of Total Strategy” in *Review of International Studies*.<sup>44</sup> Also deserving of an honourable mention is the late Samuel P.

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<sup>42</sup> Douglas Booth, “Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott” in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 *Sport and Politics*, (July 2003), pp. 477-493; Douglas Booth, “The Southern African Council of Sport and the Political Antinomies of the Sports Boycott” in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 23, No.1, (March 1997), pp. 51-66

<sup>43</sup> John Carlin, *Invictus: Nelson Mandela and the Game that Made a Nation*, London: Atlantic Books 2009 [originally published as *Playing the Enemy*, London: Atlantic Books 2008], *passim*

<sup>44</sup> CEA/CEDIMO, “South Africa: Is Botha’s Total Strategy a Programme of Reform?” in *Review of African Political Economy* No. 19 *Conscientious and Class*, (September – December 1980), pp. 91-96; Alexander Johnston, “Weak States and National Security: The Case of South Africa in the Era of Total Strategy” in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (April 1991), pp. 149-166; Timothy D. Sisk, “White Politics in South Africa: Polarisation Under Pressure” in *Africa Today*, Vol. 36, No. 1 *Apartheid Under Siege: Challenge from the Churches, Sanctions and the White Right*, (First Quarter 1989), pp. 29-39



Huntington's 1992 article "How Countries Democratize" on the democratising of authoritarian regimes, which provide much insight into the challenges, and obstacles any would be reformers faced in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>45</sup>

There are only a few histories of New Zealand foreign policy, with most of the relevant literature falling into the category of International Relations and Political Science. In these areas, essays and chapters in *Beyond New Zealand* and *Beyond New Zealand II* as well as the *New Zealand in World Affairs* series, all contain useful material.<sup>46</sup> Single volumes include *Independence and Foreign Policy* by Malcolm McKinnon.<sup>47</sup> The article "New Zealand's Foreign Policy under National and Labour Governments: Variation on the "Small State" Theme?" by David J McCraw in *Pacific Affairs*, gives a good background on the general patterns of both major political parties during the period.<sup>48</sup>

The literature on apartheid South Africa often assumes that until the reform phase of the 1980s and 1990s government practice was stable, and impervious to outside influence. This is a result of both ignorance and propaganda. It is possible to acknowledge that apartheid was, paradoxically, a broad and flexible system of thought, without condoning it. A number of works that dispute the monolithic and

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<sup>45</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "How Countries Democratize" in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 4 (Winter 1991-1992), pp. 579-616

<sup>46</sup> *Beyond New Zealand: The Foreign Policy of a Small State*, ed. John Henderson, Keith Jackson and Richard Kennaway Auckland: Methuen Publications, 1980, *passim*; *Beyond New Zealand II: Foreign Policy into the 1990s* ed. Richard Kennaway and John Henderson Auckland: Longman Paul, 1991, *passim*; *New Zealand in World Affairs Vol. 3 1972-1990* ed. Bruce Brown, Wellington: Victoria University Press in association with NZIIA, 1999, *passim*

<sup>47</sup> McKinnon, *passim*

<sup>48</sup> David J. McCraw, "New Zealand's Foreign Policy Under Labour and National Governments: Variations On A "Small State" Theme?" in *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 67, No. 1, (Spring 1994), pp. 7-25

simplistic view of apartheid are now being published; unfortunately, they have appeared too recently to be able to be used in this thesis. Like most authoritarian states, South Africa was, in the period under consideration, fundamentally a weak state because of its democratic deficit. This Achilles heel is often ignored in the popular literature, but has been acknowledged by analysts and historians for some time.

Of general histories of South Africa, the best is R.W Johnson's *South Africa: The First Man, The Last Nation*.<sup>49</sup> Although Johnson is not a historian, this work is in many ways superior to the works often cited as the conventional Liberal and Marxist histories of South Africa. It includes a useful preface regarding the state of the writing of history in South Africa. Worthy of mention is Hermann Giliomee's *The Afrikaners*,<sup>50</sup> one of the few histories of the period that examines the ideas of the time with a critical eye. There are a number of journalistic accounts that can be used cautiously. The majority are the work of foreign correspondents stationed in South Africa in the 1980s -1990s whose knowledge was limited by both language and the dangers of travelling in certain parts of the country. This was a time of rapid change, some books dated very quickly as reasonable assumptions about conditions, and events often disproved trends. These books are still useful in capturing the *zeitgeist* of the times and illustrating popular perceptions of events in South Africa. Patti Waldmeir's *Anatomy of a Miracle*, David Ottaway's *Chained*

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<sup>49</sup> R.W Johnson, *South Africa, The First Man The Last Nation*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson 2004

<sup>50</sup> Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, passim

*Together*, and Sebastian Mallaby's *After Apartheid*; authored by the foreign correspondents for the *Financial Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *The Economist* respectively, are some of the better examples of contemporary accounts of this period.<sup>51</sup>

On a more general note, one of the major challenges of this topic is the abundance of material on the period because it was one of the great moral issues of the post-war era. This material is of variable quality. With the majority of it being high on rhetoric, platitudes and ill-concealed disdain, proceed cautiously. It is also very difficult to find anyone today who admits to supporting apartheid then. Nor should everything that those involved in "the struggle" say after the fact, be taken at face value. African nationalism is a potent ideology that strongly resists external examination and criticism. Put more bluntly, the line of thought seems to be that if you are a victim you can do no wrong. Therefore, the motivation and ideology of all writers needs to be considered when examining this era. The 'black and white' picture of apartheid was towards the end phase becoming increasingly murky. What was in effect a three way dirty war – with the ANC as the main aggressors – meant that critics of apartheid were frequently embarrassed by revelations of wrongdoing and atrocities. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War meant that for the ANC's

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<sup>51</sup> Patti Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of a New South Africa*, London and New York: W. W Norton and Company, 1997, *passim*; David Ottaway, *Chained Together: Mandela, De Klerk and the Struggle to Remake South Africa*, New York: Times Books, 1993, *passim*; Sebastian Mallaby, *After Apartheid*, London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1993, *passim*

critics the argument that apartheid, although far from ideal, was at least a bulwark against communism in Africa lost much of its force.

### *Structure and Layout*

Chapter One contains an outline of the aftermath of the 1981 Springbok tour. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the fallout of the 1981 Springbok tour was not the catalyst for change within National as many still supported contact with South Africa and remained suspicious of the liberation movements. It was the 1984 election that provided the catalyst for changing National's approach towards South Africa.

The Muldoon government's approach towards dealing with balancing the conflicting factions and commitments, and the problems this nationalistic stance posed for relations with the 'third world' and a number of other western countries needs to be seen against this backdrop. This needs to be set within the context of New Zealand perceptions of South Africa's recent history. The main argument is that by following an increasingly outmoded and inadequate approach to handling South Africa and in particular sporting contacts New Zealand's standing abroad was damaged. The ambiguous stance on South Africa increased the risk of harming the country's chance of entering new markets in the developing world.

Chapter Two covers the dramatic about face under the fourth Labour government and the worsening situation in southern Africa following the collapse

of Portugal's African empire. The public reaction to the closure of the South African Consulate in Wellington and the opening of the New Zealand High Commission in Harare are both analysed. The impact of the mostly negative perception of the Botha government in South Africa at the time and the increasingly militant attitude of the liberation parties also had a great impact on the thinking of New Zealand policy makers.

Chapter Three will cover the Bolger government, the modernisation of the National party and the move away from its previous Africa policy. The terrain it faced had changed from that of the previous National government, apartheid had been dismantled, and the Cold War was over. The New Zealand domestic environment had also changed. The precarious and uncertain nature of developments in South Africa, along with pessimistic reports from Harare meant that this reset was not a foregone conclusion. Also covered is the resumption of sporting contacts, a very brief overview of the main social and economic changes in South Africa that made the transition from apartheid to majority rule possible along with a brief overview of South African internal politics of the period. The structure of these chapters is overall chronological, with some thematic excursions.

*The Last Word*

In a topic as fraught and sensitive as apartheid and as recent New Zealand history is open to interpretation, personal influences have a major bearing. Therefore, I want to conclude my introduction by explaining my own background and how I came to this topic. I was born in 1989, apartheid came to an effective end when I was a toddler and therefore what has been for most historians current events was and is for myself history. Having lived in Africa (Tanzania) as a child for around 18 months, I have always been interested in the recent history of Africa; a curiosity that was magnified by almost inevitable diet of Springbok tests and cricket tours that often forms part of the mental wallpaper of a Kiwi upbringing. Having once lived in a country that was ruled along the lines that the ANC would have pursued if they had come to power before the end of the Cold War I am less willing to buy into the anti-apartheid propaganda that colours the understanding of the era. The same is true of having been born after the 1981 Springbok tour. Age I feel, gives me a greater objectivity than those who have lived through it. I am still convinced that apartheid was not only deeply morally wrong but also foolish and self-defeating, but I can now see that South Africa's alternatives were not much better. I have also come to see that the potential courses for action that the New Zealand government, Labour or National, were able to take over South Africa were not as simple as they would first appear. More often than not in history, what can seem simple and clear-cut, 'black and white' even, are usually anything but.

Chapter One: The 1981 Springbok Tour, its Aftermath, and its Impact on the  
1981-1984 National Government.

Leftist activists, exaggerated humanism, permissiveness, materialism, and related ideologies...black racism, exaggerated individual freedom, one-man one-vote...boycotts, isolation, demonstrations...undermining activities and limited violence.

South African Government, *White Paper on Defence and Arms Production 1973*. Quoted in Alexander Johnston, "Weak States and National Security."

One, two, three, four!  
We don't want your racist tour!

A popular 1981 Springbok Tour protest slogan. Quoted in *1981: Country at War 2003*.

The 1981 Springbok tour and its immediate aftermath is the context for examining the foreign policy thinking of the National Party of the early 1980s and the impact this had on New Zealand's international standing in the years 1981-1984. In this chapter, there are two opposing questions to be answered. To what extent did traditional ideas of 'kith and kin', the perceived failure of sanctions in Rhodesia, and the Cold War in southern Africa, along with the attempts at liberalisation in South Africa, give the New Zealand government reason to 'back pedal' on distancing themselves from the South African government of the time?

Alternatively, were differing opinions of ministers and officials weighted towards being prepared to 'pull the plug' on South Africa? Secondary to this is the question of how much influence the aftermath of the 1981 debacle had compared to the perceived preparations of international capital to disinvest from South Africa as the sustainability and stability of the regime looked less certain than it once had.

### *Touchdown in Auckland*

On 19 July 1981 a South African Airways jet carrying the Springboks touched down at Auckland International Airport for the South African rugby football team's first tour to New Zealand in over a decade. All Black – Springbok tours were the pinnacle of world rugby in the twentieth century; whoever won had the right to style themselves unofficial world champions. For fans in New Zealand, this tour had an added meaning; the All Blacks had lost the last series - played in South Africa - in 1976 and it was payback time. For the South African Rugby Football Union and the South African government, the fact the tour was happening at all was a major triumph. They may have been pariahs with a paralyzed economy and rebellious population, but they could still enjoy some rugby against their old rivals, yet friends, the Kiwis.

Not everyone shared the enthusiasm. While the rugby fans were waiting with anticipation, many others looked on with revulsion. The tour was, for these opponents, not only an endorsement of the South African government's policy of



apartheid; it was a betrayal of what New Zealand as a country stood for. For others the tour was a chance to draw attention to the poor treatment of non-Pakeha in New Zealand, and for some, a yelp of protest against the privileged status rugby enjoyed in New Zealand society and the macho-chauvinist values it represented. <sup>1</sup>

During the weeks that followed, protests and riots raged up and down a country that was, to John Carlin, “ordinarily one of the most politically placid countries in the world.” <sup>2</sup> Anti-apartheid groups were able to force the cancellation of one Springbok game against Waikato following an occupation of the pitch by a group of seminary students. The police were dispatched to save the protesters from assault by the angry crowd. This was the Springboks being stopped, not a team of Rhodesian “easy beats.” <sup>3</sup> These scenes carried on in much the same fashion until the last test match at Auckland’s Eden Park, which was to the amazement of observers, interrupted by protesters dressed as clowns, a light plane dropping flour bombs on the players on the field below. It was, in effect, a full-scale street battle between protesters, the police, and a number of local hooligans just outside the grounds. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History Of The New Zealanders, From The 1880s To The Present*, Auckland: Allan Lane, 2001, pp. 516-519; Geoff Fougere, “Sport, Culture and Identity: The Case of Rugby Football” in, *Culture And Identity In New Zealand* ed. David Novitz and Bill Willmott Wellington: GP Books, 1989, pp. 110-122

<sup>2</sup> John Carlin, *Invictus: Nelson Mandela And The Game That Made A Nation*, London: Atlantic Books, 2008, pp. 64-65

<sup>3</sup> Belich, pp. 517-518

<sup>4</sup> *1981: A Country At War*, dir. Rachel Jean and Owen Hughes, Frame Up Films, 2003. The author’s mother recalls that when she was visiting a house on one of the streets leading to Eden Park, protesters threw a firebomb at the foundations of the house. The resulting fire was easily extinguished with stomping. Gillian Peacock, conversation with author, 18/08/2013.

The 1981 Springbok Tour polarised New Zealand in a manner that had not been seen since the 1951 waterfront dispute, left the courts backed up with unheard cases for over a year, split families, and was both a serious blow to the prestige of New Zealand rugby and most importantly to New Zealand's international reputation.<sup>5</sup> The international opprobrium that resulted was met by the sitting government with defiance, even contempt. There were a number of institutional and cultural factors at work, but the unwillingness of the Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, to change course once he had made up his mind on a certain matter, was of crucial importance. All of the above served to reinforce the image of New Zealand as a redneck backwater and worse an ally of the apartheid regime in South Africa. The negative impact this had on New Zealand's international reputation cannot be underestimated. To take one example, it almost certainly cost the country a two year term on the UN Security Council in 1982.<sup>6</sup> This effect on New Zealand's international reputation and the approaches and attitudes of the National party towards South Africa are the focus of this chapter.

The 1981 Springbok Tour is problematic for a historian as there is limited academic analysis on the causes and effects of the debacle. It would be misleading to suggest that it was unimportant, a 'storm in a teacup'. It was not. The effects of

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<sup>5</sup> More detailed accounts of the 1981 Springbok tour and its aftermath can be found in Carlin pp. 64-67; Hugh Templeton, *All Honourable Men: Inside The Muldoon Cabinet 1975-1984* Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995, pp. 158-163; Malcolm Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts: New Zealand Attitudes to Race Relations in South Africa 1921-1994*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, pp. 178-290; Malcolm Mclean "Football As Social Critique: Protest Movements, Rugby And History In Aotearoa, New Zealand" in *The International Journal Of The History Of Sport*, Vol. 17 No. 2-3, (2007), pp. 255-277; Redmer Yska "The Tour Files" in *The New Zealand Listener*, 9-15 July 2011, pp. 14-20.

<sup>6</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 214-215

the 1981 Springbok Tour within New Zealand may have been exaggerated, but the international impact was undeniable.<sup>7</sup> Prompted in part by the political and economic climate of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the protests both for and against the ill-fated tour were intense and sometimes brutal. It was, in retrospect, fortunate that nobody was killed in the protests, as this was always a real possibility.<sup>8</sup>

The divisions and damage that the 1981 Springbok Tour left in its wake are hard to minimise.<sup>9</sup> It is one of history's ironies that overall it may have been better in the long run that the 1981 Springbok tour was allowed to go ahead instead of being cancelled, as the reaction it generated seemed to negate the problems of allowing an overwhelmingly white, with the exception of Errol Tobias, Springbok team to tour New Zealand. What made the passions of the 1981 Springbok tour so intense was the fact that for many in New Zealand, South Africa and apartheid was a proxy battle for New Zealand's own problems and tensions regarding the Treaty of Waitangi and racism against Maori and Pasifika Peoples.<sup>10</sup>

Prime Minister Robert Muldoon's motivations for allowing the tour to go ahead in spite of the opposition that it would provoke seem based on both principle and opportunism. As a matter of principle, Muldoon believed that governments

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<sup>7</sup> Carlin, *Invictus*, pp. 64-65

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Wright, *Fantastic Pasts: Imaginary Adventures in New Zealand History*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2007, pp. 215-227

<sup>9</sup> *1981: A Country At War*; Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 178-203; Belich, pp. 516-519; King, p. 485

<sup>10</sup> Richards, *passim*; Belich, pp. 516-519; Michael King *The Penguin History of New Zealand* Auckland: Penguin Books 2003 pp. 485-499

should not interfere with sporting bodies and their decisions.<sup>11</sup> Opportunistically, there was a need to shore up support in the rural regions ahead of the election later that year.<sup>12</sup> If this was the case, the Springbok tour served its purpose – National won the 1981 election, although only in a number of marginal seats and lost in terms of the party vote.<sup>13</sup> Muldoon's biographer Barry Gustafson attempts to make a case for Muldoon being forced into a *fait accompli* in allowing the tour to go ahead, the blame being on the NZRFU.<sup>14</sup> Gustafson's case is not entirely convincing. Muldoon was willing to take the risk of allowing the 1981 Springbok Tour to go ahead, although not as much as later commentators have attempted to claim.<sup>15</sup> The fact that Muldoon placed a *de facto* ban on the New Zealand Olympic team, following the example of the Americans, attending the 1980 Moscow Olympics in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, shows selective commitment to the autonomy of New Zealand's sporting bodies. This is the best proof that the decision to allow the Springboks to tour New Zealand in 1981 was a political decision.

Muldoon was not as eager to allow the tour to go ahead as left-wing demonology would have us believe. There were a number of mitigating factors including Muldoon's unwillingness to repeat Norman Kirk's 1973 mistake and

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<sup>11</sup> Barry Gustafson *His Way: A Biography Of Robert Muldoon* Auckland: Auckland University Press 2000 pp. 231-236, 309-321; Templeton, *All Honourable Men, passim*; Jon Johansson, *Two Titans: Muldoon, Lange and Leadership*, Wellington: Dunmore Publishing, 2005, pp. 66-68

<sup>12</sup> Templeton, *All Honourable Men*, pp. 153-164

<sup>13</sup> Johansson, pp. 66-68

<sup>14</sup> Gustafson, *His Way*, pp. 309-321

<sup>15</sup> Belich, p. 517; Templeton, *Human Rights*, p. 202; Templeton, *All Honourable Men*, pp. 158-159

renege on a campaign promise. The decision made sense, based on Muldoon and National's internal foreign policy logic. The tour was nonetheless a grave error that would dog both National and Muldoon for many years to come. The final responsibility was with the NZRFU. This was their decision and they were in a better position to stop the tour than the government.

It is not surprising that if such unofficial influence could affect an (albeit widely supported) boycott of the Olympics, then it was reasonable to assume that such influence could be brought into play to stop the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand. John Minto of HART, writing to Jim McLay, the then Attorney General and justice minister of New Zealand stressed that...

...in your role as Minister of Justice and Attorney General, you are in an ideal position to take the necessary steps to prevent the breakdown of law and order and massive upheaval of our society which must result from the New Zealand Rugby Football Union's selfish invitation to the South Africans. In light of your saying government should not act to stop the tour, we wonder whether you are therefore prepared to accept responsibility for any serious breaches of peace resulting from the tour and for any deaths or injuries that may occur during protests. Clearly, if you will not accept responsibility to stop this tour, you must accept personal responsibility for the breakdown of law and order in our society.<sup>16</sup>

McLay replied that since HART were expecting violence, the government would in that case hold HART responsible for any of the problems or disorders that

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<sup>16</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/7 Pt. 1 "Republic of South Africa: Social Affairs - Apartheid H.A.R.T [Halt All Racist Tours] [09/80-11/82]" 1980-1982

followed, and that such a line of thinking was "...a serious challenge to the rule of law which I could not condone."<sup>17</sup> McLay, and National, stuck to their guns and the tour went ahead. National were able to turn the problems of the 1981 tour in to a law and order issue, a plausible interpretation given the strident attitude of the protest groups, as Minto's quote illustrates.

Muldoon, unlike his successor David Lange, did not hold the portfolio of Foreign Affairs; he retained considerable influence over a subject that was strongly tied to his chief priority, the New Zealand economy, through his choice of foreign ministers.<sup>18</sup> It seems that Warren Cooper got the job due to his business experience and personal qualities. However, Muldoon's own personality was also an important factor in the maintenance of an increasingly controversial policy on South Africa. Chris Laidlaw, a critic of Muldoon, would in *Rights of Passage*, leave a vivid description of the man,

My first of numerous encounters with Rob Muldoon was in Paris in 1976. Before then I had only seen him at receptions for the All Blacks and had been struck then by the bristling machismo of this strange little man. He had seemed to be a political variation on the theme of Grant Batty:<sup>19</sup> small, stunted and radiating a single message to all around him "don't mess with me or I'll punch your lights out."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/7 Pt. 1

<sup>18</sup> Johansson, pp. 66-68

<sup>19</sup> Grant Batty – a diminutive, but effective, All Black wing from 1972-1977.

<sup>20</sup> Chris Laidlaw, *Rights of Passage: Beyond the New Zealand Identity Crisis*, Auckland: Hodder Beckett Moa 1999 pp. 101-102

Laidlaw then conceded that, of course, Muldoon was far more multi-dimensional than that, and that:

He was known and respected for his ability to grasp the detail of a brief. He was admired by Treasury and Foreign Affairs staff, at least in his early days as Finance Minister, for his mastery of essential economic policy and for his pugnacious determination. He was brilliant but he was flawed with what seemed to be an ugly chip on his shoulder.<sup>21</sup>

Laidlaw was also convinced that Muldoon's bad reputation and personal characteristics outlined above were the main reasons for New Zealand's increasing isolation in the Commonwealth and UN in the early 1980s. The fallout of the 1981 tour in the short term was a hardening of attitudes toward the anti-apartheid lobby within the National Party. This in turn increased the protesters' antagonism towards the government and it seems they were convinced that they were becoming victims of a campaign of political persecution.

It says a great deal for how much Muldoon's personality dominated his government, that many often overlook the presence of Foreign Minister Warren Cooper. Cooper often derided by both former colleagues and later commentators for his rural background and lack of polish that is frequently deemed a prerequisite for the foreign affairs portfolio.<sup>22</sup> Others have, highlighted Cooper's easy-going personality, dry wit and level-headed pragmatism, while still expressing surprise at

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<sup>21</sup> Laidlaw, *Rights of Passage*, pp. 101-102

<sup>22</sup> Templeton, *All Honourable Men*, pp. 166-167; Dr Jim McAloon, conversation with author, 24/01/2012. Hugh Templeton however admits in his memoir that he had been angling for the foreign affairs portfolio.

the choice of a proverbial 'Dark Horse'.<sup>23</sup> However, Cooper's letters to members of the public in New Zealand on the subject would suggest that the former assessment is not too far off the mark. In response to Alfred Ruffell dated 7 January 1983, Cooper states that he,

...make[s] no apology for taking exception to HART's description of the government of New Zealand as "outright racist" and appeal[s] to the Organisation of African Unity to make every effort "to force the Government to change its policy on apartheid" as well as to enforce sanctions against New Zealand. These and other statements reported in the African newspapers give a completely false and damaging impression of New Zealand.<sup>24</sup>

The following dénouement from the foreign minister Warren Cooper on 12 November 1982, in response to allegations that the government was keeping "political prisoners" following the 1981 Springbok tour,

The latest act of lying propaganda by New Zealanders Yvonne Cuthbert and Trevor Richards of HART is part of calculated international smear campaign aimed at sabotaging this country's good name abroad...without a shred of concern for the country of their birth these mischievous people are squeezing every last drop of bad odium from a rugby tour fifteen months past. It is ironical that they cannot recognise that such comments would not be tolerated in many countries where they would indeed, through such an approach, rapidly become political prisoners. The latest blatant untruths show just how desperate and despicable the leaders of HART have become. It is difficult enough unravelling the odd remaining misconceptions as the tour fades

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<sup>23</sup> Gustafson, *His Way*, p. 322; Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 205-209

<sup>24</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/7 Pt. 2 "Republic of South Africa: Social Affairs - Apartheid H.A.R.T [Halt All Racist Tours] [12/82-07/85]" 1982-1985 Archives New Zealand Central Office Wellington.



without HART's pusillanimous and weird distortions. They would be doing many New Zealanders a favour if they chose to remain overseas for an indefinite period.<sup>25</sup>

A fortnight prior to this statement, the same "mischievous people" had alleged to the UN Special Committee against Apartheid (UNSCAA) that the (New Zealand) government was holding a number of "political prisoners," and the UNSCAA in turn issued a message of concern to the New Zealand government. These "political prisoners" were in fact a number of protesters being held on misdemeanour charges whose cases were still being processed through the overburdened court system.

This led to a public rebuttal of the charges by the chief justice Sir Thomas Eichelbaum, who dismissed such talk as "...completely irrelevant" and maintained that the law and judiciary was impartial to political persuasion.<sup>26</sup> The official line of the ministry secretary M.J.C Templeton<sup>27</sup> advised placing the allegations in their context and expressed a hope that the committee would be discerning in their judgement of the letter.<sup>28</sup>

The official public tough line, in contrast to Templeton's recommendations, was for domestic consumption and was part of an attempt to shore up the support base of National as an election approached. The government believed they had the right to be angry over the false allegations; their hard-line response caused a great deal of offence abroad.

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<sup>25</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/7 Pt. 1 The statement referred to the attempts to exclude New Zealand from the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

<sup>26</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/7 Pt. 1

<sup>27</sup> Malcolm Templeton, the author of *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*.

<sup>28</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/7 Pt. 1

Like the 1976 All Blacks tour of South Africa, the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand had implications beyond the immediate context of New Zealand domestic politics or global indignation at apartheid. Recently released Australian government papers show that the Australian government was considering banning New Zealand from the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games, to prevent a mass boycott of African nations as had happened at both the 1976 Montreal Olympics and 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth games respectively.<sup>29</sup> Muldoon himself became an increasingly disliked figure on the international stage, and as the most well-known New Zealand politician up until the emergence of David Lange, this was bound to reflect badly on New Zealand abroad. Indeed, Chris Laidlaw considers that Muldoon might have been even more disliked than Margaret Thatcher might at Commonwealth meetings and other international forums during this period.<sup>30</sup>

*Rhodesia and Sanctions: Lessons for the National Party.*

Although tangential to the topic of New Zealand's foreign policy on South Africa, the problems posed by UDI Rhodesia, were, especially for National, a factor in decision making on South Africa and the two were seen rightly or wrongly as being analogous. Even if there was no direct reference to Rhodesia in official

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<sup>29</sup> Natalie Finnigan "Explosive Relations" in *New Zealand Listener* June 16-22 2012 pp. 21-23

<sup>30</sup> Laidlaw, *Rights of Passage*, pp. 103-105

thinking, it was always there in the background. The actions taken by the New Zealand government over the Rhodesia crisis in the 1960s and 1970s had a great impact on the thinking of those setting policy on South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s not only in New Zealand, but also in many other countries as well.

The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) and the later civil war were different from the long drawn out affair of apartheid in South Africa, but there were enough similarities to make comparison between the two plausible. Both were regimes that were holding a tenuous grip on power and were clearly floundering in their attempts to find a way out of the impasses in which they found themselves. Fearing the ‘calamitous effects’ of majority rule and having an understandable desire to hold on to power, the minority government of what was then called Southern Rhodesia<sup>31</sup> illegally rebelled from British rule and declared independence in 1965. In spite of the protestations to the contrary, this was an attempt to avoid having to go along with the British government’s policy of NIBMAR. The reaction was predictably one of indignation and fury. Sanctions were soon applied, but these were on a voluntary and not mandatory basis and in any case were often ignored. Eventually, protest spilled into a civil war in the 1970s that would drag on until the UK- supported Lancaster House talks and the eventual creation of modern day Zimbabwe in 1980.

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<sup>31</sup> Southern Rhodesia, so called to differentiate it from what was until 1964 Northern Rhodesia, that is, today’s Zambia.

It is therefore not surprising that many influential business leaders and politicians became convinced that sanctions did not work, did more harm than good and that there might be a better approach to dealing with wayward states. This belief was indeed stronger regarding South Africa than it had been with Rhodesia. New Zealand observers were not the only ones to see parallels between Rhodesia and South Africa. William Minter and Elizabeth Schmidt in a 1988 article for the journal *African Affairs* “When Sanctions Worked: The Case of Rhodesia Re-examined”,<sup>32</sup> reviewed the nature of economic sanctions and both the manner in which they were imposed and their effects. According to Minter and Schmidt, sanctions need time to work and often do, but do not sustain the short-term benefits associated with stimulating domestic industry.<sup>33</sup> “Some people feel that sanctions failed...I think they failed initially...but in the long term they exercised a very important element...certainly they did not help” was what one Zimbabwean businessman had to say of the effect of sanctions in the 1980s.<sup>34</sup>

As was the case with South Africa, there was the question of the effect of sustained war on the economy. In particular, the removal from the work force of able-bodied young men and the issue of political will.<sup>35</sup> The most powerful effects of sanctions are their psychological effects. This in the end was the real effect of sanctions in South Africa. The impact of the material consequences of sanctions at

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<sup>32</sup> William Minter and Elizabeth Schmidt, “When Sanctions Worked: The Case of Rhodesia Re-examined” in *African Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 347, (April 1988), pp. 207-237

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp. 208-209

<sup>34</sup> Anonymous interview with Elizabeth Schmidt in, *ibid*, p. 208

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pp. 207-237

first could be a nuisance and ways could be found around them. Eventually the constant subterfuge, dirty looks when overseas, shoddy local goods in the stores and the growing violence were in the end too much for most white South Africans. Soon it was accepted that something, *anything* had to be done to get out of the situation. This more than anything was proof that sanctions worked. This conviction was not universally held by all in the New Zealand, government or abroad.

*The “Total Strategy” and South Africa’s Security Dilemma.*

South Africa in the early 1980s was a country that was divided and facing a number of major existential threats from both without and within. A product of the civil war that followed Portugal’s Carnation Revolution and Angola’s independence in 1975 was the presence of some 30,000 Cuban troops and a large cache of Soviet weaponry and vehicles in Angola. This sense of siege was the main factor behind the Laager mentality.<sup>36</sup> The various black nationalist parties and their military wings were being armed and supplied by a variety of Eastern Bloc states. This was a problem for New Zealand politicians who were keen to keep groups that were under normal definitions terrorists at a polite distance, but support for these groups was a component of a number of UN resolutions on apartheid in the period.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Service, *Comrades. Communism: A World History*, London: Pan Books, 2007, p. 410. It is worth noting that South Africa and the USA were also supplying men and weapons in the Angolan Civil War, a conflict that would not end until 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 251-252

The perception of South Africa as an increasingly authoritarian government, determined on pursuing an aggressive foreign policy to attempt to prop up its illegitimate domestic regime, was a widely held one. It is this perception that explains why for many years, there were those who were willing to ignore many of the excesses of the liberation movements. These excesses being the rule of terror in the townships, the bombing, and sabotage campaigns in the cities and the appalling condition in the guerrilla armies training camps in Angola and elsewhere.<sup>38</sup>

During the period, most New Zealand politicians and much of the public took the malevolent intentions of the South African police and army as read. The fact that the South African police and army were often engaged in shocking and deplorable acts of violence is beyond doubt; but to what extent this was due to simple malevolence, or to the fact the police were under staffed, over worked and used as political scapegoats is open to debate. It needs to be said that in the 1980s over half the South African police and much of the South African armed forces in this period were non-white, thus throwing into question the old “defending white privilege” canard as well as lending weight to the anti-communist interpretation of the unrest of the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> However, there were those in New Zealand who, without condoning the excess of the Nationalists, were distrustful of the liberation movements, because of the perceived communist influence. It is not surprising,

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<sup>38</sup> Johnson, *The First Man*, pp. 168-172

<sup>39</sup> Deon Fourie, “The New South Africa and the Armed Forces” in, *South Africa: Designing New Institutions*, ed. Murray Faure and Jan-Erik Lane, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1996, pp. 151-180

therefore, that there were still many within the New Zealand government in the early 1980s who preferred a policy of sitting on the fence that was too often misinterpreted as support for Pretoria.

Another widely held misconception about apartheid is the perception that it was a hangover of colonialism. White rule in UDI Rhodesia *was* a hangover of colonialism, apartheid in South Africa was not. Apartheid as colonial hangover is in fact a profound misunderstanding of the nature of Afrikaner nationalism and its interaction with both ‘dominion nationalism’ and, more importantly, African nationalism. The African nationalist parties in South Africa were historically anglophone and anglophile, as most of their leaders had been educated by British missionaries and in English medium schools. This cultural and educational influence explains in part the strong anti-Afrikaner bias in their thinking. This anglophone influence is important as it meant that African nationalism was able, due to its superior command of English in comparison with its Afrikaner rivals, to make their case on the international stage, and in New Zealand, more effectively and with greater success.

African nationalism in South Africa is treated as if it existed in a vacuum or was simply a victim of the two forces of British imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism. This is both wrong and insulting to black South Africans. Post-colonial approaches to history of former colonial states can be enlightening; there are also important intellectual limitations. These post-colonial analyses often unintentionally deny agency and in more extreme cases end up falling for many of

the clichés and traps that colour older imperial accounts. The idea that there was a deliberate plan to bring the series of laws and policies that we have come to call apartheid into being is one such trap. Apartheid was guided by clear ideas and principle, but there was no plan. It would seem that apartheid was a remarkably haphazard affair, with major aspects of government policy often being made up on the hoof. To be fair, this was the standard view of apartheid until recently within the academy. It is not surprising that it would also prevail in the mind of the public and the politicians in New Zealand.

The problems with law and order were not the only misconceptions about South Africa that were commonly held in New Zealand. South Africa's geostrategic dilemma was overlooked. Apartheid contributed to South Africa's security problem, although it was not the sole factor. The root of the South African government's dilemma was that South Africa was much more advanced and powerful than its neighbours. However to maintain this primacy, economic growth and internal security were vital. Apartheid contributed to this in that labour costs were kept low and anti-government dissent was kept under control. In the end, this did much to undermine the initial advantages that had been gained from having a fifty-year head start over the rest of Africa in the areas of economic development and industrialisation. In a wider context, despite the political troubles and economic hardships that were common in post-colonial Africa, progress was being made in many other African countries. The discovery of oil in a number of states, most



importantly Nigeria, South Africa's only real competitor on the continent, meant that South Africa's primacy was becoming increasingly hard to maintain. The twin problems of external challengers to South Africa's status on the continent and their internal discontent, made breaking out of international isolation an urgent priority.

Linked to the need to maintain South Africa's standing in Africa against these rising regional challengers was the lack of membership in a major defence treaty. During most of the post war era South Africa was not party to one of the large American-led defence treaties such as NATO ( it was on the wrong side of the equator) or SEATO ( it was too far away from Asia) that were in vogue during the Cold War. South Africa being an official member of the broader "western alliance," post Sharpeville was simply out of the question. Although there were attempts at rectifying the situation throughout the 1960s and 1970s, by proposals for a SATO (Southern Atlantic Treaty Organisation) with the Americans and a number of Latin American right-wing military dictatorships, and similar plans for a Southern Hemisphere Defence Alliance, nothing eventuated.<sup>40</sup> There was a serious desire on the South African side to include New Zealand and a number of other countries in the southern hemisphere in these proposed alliances. Senior figures in the New Zealand government looked into this proposal with some interest. The alliance proposal was abandoned on the advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as being too damaging to New Zealand's international reputation to be in a full military

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<sup>40</sup> Klaus-John Dodds, "Creating a Strategic Crisis out of a Communist Drama? Argentine and South African Geographs of the South Atlantic" in, *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, No. 56, (June 1994), pp. 33-54

alliance with South Africa during the 1960s-1970s, even if the geo-politics behind such an alliance were sound.<sup>41</sup> South Africa's lack of membership in a major defence treaty and a group of reliable allies to fall back on was a major impediment to being able to solve its domestic problems satisfactorily. Adding to South Africa's security problems, the attempts to reach out to the rest of Africa and other decolonised nations did not happen until it was far too late for it to make any substantial difference to South Africa's poor reputation in the eyes of many.<sup>42</sup>

From the 1960s onwards, it could be argued that South Africa was in a state of *de facto* civil war with the various Liberation movements; namely the ANC, the PAC, and AZAPO, which were to a greater or lesser extent being aided by neighbouring hostile African states, and indirectly, by the communist states. The cynical idea that South Africa's poor image was *partially* the result of a conspiracy by the decolonised African states to draw attention away from their own internal problems is not true, but there is truth in it. For example, one of the most notorious aspects of the Nationalist's policies was the forced removals to the Homelands. These types of forced resettlements were also practiced in other parts of Africa, Tanzania being the most notable example.<sup>43</sup> The favouring of one ethnic group above others, although not as heavily entrenched in law as it was in South Africa,

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<sup>41</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 70-72

<sup>42</sup> For more information on South African foreign policy under Apartheid see James Barber and John Barratt, *South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search For Status and Security 1945-1988*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, *passim*

<sup>43</sup> Donald Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 1-41

was common.<sup>44</sup> This is not to excuse what was happening in South Africa during the era but places apartheid in its proper context. People of European descent do not have a monopoly on such behaviour and the action of black Ugandans towards their Asian population is an example. The constant worry about the Communist influence on the liberation movements was, in retrospect, a self-fulfilling prophecy. Overall, the biggest contribution to South Africa's security problems in the 1980s and early 1990s was that the legitimacy of the state became undermined to the point that it was unable to impose law and order or collect revenue effectively, but was not undermined to such a degree that it was going to collapse.<sup>45</sup>

South Africa's internal problems are fundamental to understanding a number of factors that were of great importance to New Zealand policy makers. The motivations of the Nationalists and the liberation movements, the origins of a number of important misconceptions and limitations that arose because of these problems, influenced the decisions of successive New Zealand governments and the attitudes of the New Zealand public.

*South Africa in New Zealand: The Role of the Consulate and Attempted Alliance Building.*

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*

<sup>45</sup> It was during this period that corruption and capital outflow began to reach unprecedented levels as both the homelands bureaucrats and civil servants of South Africa proper began to start embezzling state monies and became more bold in seeking bribes and kickbacks; a major factor in the weakening of morale in the Nationalist government. For more information see, Jonathan Hyslop, "Political Corruption: Before and After Apartheid" in, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4, (December 2005), pp. 773-789; and Tom Lodge, "Political Corruption in South Africa" in, *African Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 387, (April 1998), pp. 157-187

New Zealand and South Africa had a common background as dominions of the British Empire and were on the same side in both World Wars and the Korean War. Despite this shared history, the New Zealand High Commission to South Africa would not open until 1996. A reciprocal South African High Commission to New Zealand would not open until 2009. There were a number of reasons for this lacuna. The lack of substantial bilateral trade, geography and differing political priorities meant that for New Zealand there was not much purpose in having a post in South Africa. The majority of New Zealand's diplomatic energies were directed towards both Europe and Asia for trade, later extending into Latin America; or towards the South Pacific, as this was increasingly being seen by a number of policy makers in Wellington as New Zealand's particular sphere of influence.

South Africa on the other hand, for reasons of both national *amour-propre* and strategic political reasons, needed to win allies and friends in what the Nationalists perceived to be the 'civilised world'. In particular, to maintain the goodwill of the Americans and other Western states as well as maintain their position in Africa. It is for these reasons that, despite the geographic incongruity and lack of justification on the grounds of trade, the South African government was convinced that it was worth the time and money to maintain a consular post in New Zealand. New Zealand being Western, 'white', anti-communist, so the logic went, would be sympathetic to (white) South Africa and its dilemma. The South African government had made a number of good assumptions. There were for a long time

many in New Zealand who were of the opinion that South Africa was not only a potential trade partner of some value but also an old ally and friend who should be maintained as a bastion against Communism and for 'civilisation' in Africa. This was the main thrust of the 'kith and kin' argument that was still holding sway in New Zealand's National Party in 1981-1984. The 'kith and kin' argument dovetailed with the anti-communist argument. These twin conservative lines of thought were in 1981-1984 the underpinning of National's foreign policy and therefore South Africa held a great attraction for many on the right, as both an 'old friend' and as a fellow ally against international communism.

Before its closure in 1984, the South African Consulate was denounced by many in New Zealand as simply a base for the spreading of propaganda in support of the government in Pretoria. There was a South African Consul-General in New Zealand from 1966 until the last incumbent was withdrawn in 1984. Contrary to this, full diplomatic privileges were withheld from the Consulate, and there was no reciprocal presence of the New Zealand Foreign Service in South Africa. It was for this reason that most business involving visas was handled via the South African embassy in Canberra, (South Africa's full posts in the Commonwealth were referred to as Embassies and not High Commission due to the fact that between 1961 and 1994, South Africa was not a member of the Commonwealth). The South African government's plans for both a trading bloc and a defence alliance were

other reasons for the presence of the South African Consulate in New Zealand for much of the period.<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, for much of the 1960s and 1970s, most government ministers were tolerant of the various Consul-Generals and were often accepting of their hospitality.<sup>47</sup> This tolerance extended to occasions when diplomatic protocol was breached, notably in 1980 in the case of a number of pro-South Africa letters written to a variety of newspapers ostensibly from New Zealand authors but in fact produced on the South African Consulate's typewriter on official letterhead.<sup>48</sup>

South Africa was not the only country with a bad reputation with presence in New Zealand. A number of other nations with questionable reputations such as Iran, the Soviet Union, and Argentina prior to the overthrow its military dictatorship, and Saudi Arabia, all had consular representation in New Zealand in this period. Indeed, the Soviet embassy was suspected of donating illegally to a variety of communist-affiliated parties in New Zealand but the Soviet embassy itself was never closed down.

The South African Consulate did in fact carry out government business and work that was not of a suspicious nature. Examples include dealing with meat and dairy exports and animal hygiene regulations, censorship of films destined for film

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<sup>46</sup> Barber and Barrett, p. 156

<sup>47</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 219-220. Templeton notes that the Vorster Government requested that Muldoon open a New Zealand Embassy in Pretoria in 1975, Muldoon refused the request.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*

festivals in South Africa, and attempting to deal with the problem of pirated New Zealand films in circulation in South Africa.<sup>49</sup> The Consulate in Wellington was not only a base for its staff to maintain links and attempt to influence New Zealand government ministers and members of parliament; it was also used for facilitating trade and social links. The amount of trade between New Zealand and South Africa was in terms of revenue for both nations quite small. This trade was in influential sectors such as the meat and dairy industry. Dairy and meat exports to South Africa could be lucrative in times of drought, as can be gleaned from the correspondence of the South African Consulate as well as that from the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the South African Agriculture Department.<sup>50</sup> The letters in the file mainly concern the exports of meat products to South Africa and such matters as animal hygiene and export regulations. Later, there were circulars from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade attempting to determine and monitor which aspects of this trade needed to be suspended to comply with the government sanctions obligations.<sup>51</sup> Other issues influencing trade included the shipping unions refusal to work with goods being imported from South Africa, and Customs concerns about computer exports and whether these exports were aiding and abetting the regime.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> ABMF W4882 515 Box 267 15/5/7/30 “Export of Meat and Meat Products to South Africa 1978-1985”; ADMA W5652 22513 Box 56 4 “South Africa Festivals to 1985”; ADMA W5652 22513 Box 173 5 “Sleeping Dogs – South Africa 1979-1983”

<sup>50</sup> ABMF W4882 515 Box 267 15/5/7/30

<sup>51</sup> ABMF W4882 515 Box 267 15/5/7/30

<sup>52</sup> W3580 947 Box 488 48/5/293 Pt. 1 “Industrial Relations Act – Strikes – Ban on Cargo to and From South Africa by Waterfront Workers”; AALN W5217 7234 Box 74 540.064 Pt. 1 “Exports – Computers to South Africa”

*The Potential for a New Zealand Diplomatic Post in Africa.*

The other side of the widely held misconceptions about South Africa in New Zealand were the equally widely held misconceptions about New Zealand in decolonised Africa. The motivations and intent of the New Zealand government were often misunderstood by much of decolonised Africa because political and diplomatic decisions were made and conveyed via third parties, such as the African Embassies and High Commissions in Canberra, Ottawa, or London; the New York and Geneva Permanent Missions of the UN; and, the Commonwealth office in London. Unsurprisingly, matters often got “lost in translation” and wires were crossed since there were no New Zealand diplomatic posts in Africa until the opening of the Harare High Commission in Zimbabwe in 1986. Given the hostility that much of decolonised Africa felt for South Africa under apartheid, the South African Consulate in Wellington was in no position to fill the function of a go-between. New Zealand was not the only country to have these problems regarding the Republic. The general habit of the western governments of keeping the South African government at arm’s length was common (with the exception of Portugal prior to the Carnation Revolution of 1974.) The idea was far from universally accepted, and was widely criticised on the grounds of cost and practicality. The



suggestion of a diplomatic post in Africa was attractive to many. Harare was seen as the best option.<sup>53</sup>

Africa's relative lack of importance for those in government circles is reflected in the *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review (NZFAR)* from October 1981 until March 1984. The amount of space given to African affairs is much smaller than that given to regions considered more important for New Zealand such as Europe, Asia, the Americas, and the Pacific. The majority of entries focus on the question of sporting contacts as opposed to questions over possibilities of trade or building strategic diplomatic contacts.<sup>54</sup> In light of the then government's priorities, this was not surprising. The New Zealand National Party had historically placed its emphasis on trading partners and not on the more moralistic side of international relations. The lack of emphasis on Africa was also reflected in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs internal arrangements. There was only one desk for Africa and that desk was also responsible for covering the Middle East. In practice, the growing importance of the Middle East for New Zealand's meat and dairy exports in this period meant that Africa did not feature highly on the ministry's list of priorities. In any case, Africa for New Zealand policy makers meant anglophone Africa, and the Commonwealth desk at the ministry managed it. Nonetheless, given

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<sup>53</sup> Martin Holland, "Labour in Africa" in *The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand*, ed. Jonathan Boston and Martin Holland, Auckland: Oxford University Press 1987, pp. 255-257

<sup>54</sup> *NZFAR*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (October – December 1981) p 25; *NZFAR* Vol. 32, No. 1 (January – March 1982) pp. 22-24; *NZFAR* Vol. 32, No. 2 (April – June 1982) p 31; *NZFAR* Vol. 32, No. 3 (July – September 1982) p 14; *NZFAR* Vol. 32, No. 4 (October – December 1982) p 23; *NZFAR* Vol. 33, No. 1 (January – March 1983) p 11; *NZFAR* Vol. 33, No. 2 (April – June 1983) p 30; *NZFAR* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July – September 1983) p 24; *NZFAR* Vol. 34, No. 1 (January – March 1984) p 26; *NZFAR* Vol. 34, No. 4 (October – December 1984) p 18

the growing public furore over South Africa, there was a need for a coherent strategy on both apartheid and decolonised Africa, as it was becoming clear that the traditional approach was not working.

### *Conclusion*

Many New Zealand politicians and policy makers were alarmed by the escalating violence and disappointed by the perceived failure of sanctions in Rhodesia. A group of ministers and officials who stood by the interlocking arguments of 'kith and kin' and anti-communism were the people persuaded by the attempts at reform in South Africa. They retained the conviction that even if South Africa had problems, this was not a reason to abandon what had the potential to be a useful relationship.

However, despite the strong pull of anti-communism and older imperial ties, there were those in government who were becoming convinced that South Africa was not worth the trouble, but that being seen to be supportive of them was also damaging New Zealand's standing abroad, with potentially calamitous consequences for trade and the economy. This change in attitudes was not dramatic. The traditional approach of abstention and cautious neutrality that the New Zealand government took on apartheid was not tacit support for that regime; although it did look like it to many both within and outside New Zealand. These mistaken views made dealing with the fallout of decisions taken by private groups like the NZRFU

harder to address as the New Zealand governments motivations were open to negative interpretations. The other side of this was the erroneous views of South Africa, and indeed Africa in general, that were widely held by the politicians and much of the public in New Zealand. These views of South Africa as a potential military dictatorship had some influence in government circles. The fear over communist influence in the liberation movements frequently overrode distaste for the Nationalists, but only just. The anger the 1981 Springbok tour generated left many entrenched in their convictions, but also changed the minds of an equal number.

Chapter Two: The Botha and Lange Administrations, 1985-1989

...I am writing to congratulate your decision to close the South African Consulate. The Consulate served no useful purpose in this country...It is refreshing[sic] to know that we at last have a government which is prepared to do something other than simply express its abhorrence of the apartheid policies practiced in South Africa. I look forward to the early opening of a diplomatic post in Africa as this is long overdue...

Letter to David Lange regarding the closure of the South African Consulate  
August 1984

The strategies of the fourth Labour government and the particular importance of David Lange in his dual capacity as both prime and foreign minister for the years 1984-1987, outwardly involved a major shift in New Zealand's handling of South Africa. The stance taken towards South Africa in the period, with emphasis on the perceptions of the intentions of the Botha government, was negative. This had a significant impact on the decision to pursue sanctions more vigorously.

The closure of the South African Consulate and the opening of the New Zealand High Commission in Harare are the main events of this period, along with the case of *Finnigan vs NZRFU* and the 1986 Cavaliers tour. The closure of the South African Consulate in Wellington and the public reaction revealed a great deal about the variety of opinions and views of subject of South Africa. Following Labour's election in 1984, the leaders of the anti-apartheid movement assumed that

Lange and his government would be sympathetic to their cause. This did not happen. The difference of opinion between the anti-apartheid movement and the sitting Labour government is frequently overlooked but was important as the two were often at odds over civil rights (for example, freedom of travel). This conflict explains much of the on-going antagonism between the New Zealand government and the protesters. These debates also filtered into the tension over the planned 1985 All Blacks tour of South Africa, the case of *Finnigan vs NZRFU*, and the resulting Cavaliers tour of 1986. All these factors are discussed below, the overriding themes being the need for some sort of effective damage control following the disastrous Muldoon governments approach to South African relations, the conflicting demands of respecting the autonomy of civil society, and preventing potential international incidents, something that was easier said than done.

*1984: The State of the Nation and an Election.*

By 1984, it was obvious to most observers, both domestic and foreign, that South Africa was a country in trouble. President P.W Botha's attempts at constitutional reform, in the form of the 1983 Constitution and Tricameral Parliament, had backfired in spectacular fashion. A gruesome wave of violence swept the country, with the ANC declaring a "people's war" on the government, this in turn leading Prime Minister Botha to declare emergency rule in 1985,

producing cries in some quarters that South Africa was replacing a semi-authoritarian racial oligarchy with a full-blown military dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> Unrest in the townships surrounding most of the major towns and cities - Johannesburg, Pretoria, Vereeniging, Durban, and Port Elizabeth - had been common for much of the post war era; but this new round of unrest was different. Unlike the last major disturbances, of 1960 and 1976, the apartheid government in Pretoria, although still endowed with the will to suppress the unrest, was now not buffered by the Portuguese empire in Africa, white-ruled Rhodesia, and a world preoccupied with the Vietnam war. White South Africa's chickens, it would seem, had come home to roost.<sup>2</sup> After Mikhail Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, the threat of a Soviet-backed socialist regime in South Africa became less potent.

Botha's solution to finding the way out of the Verwoerdian stagnation that had hung over South African politics for the past two decades was the notorious and byzantine Tricameral Parliament and Constitution of 1983. The Tricameral parliament was a three-chambered house of parliament with one chamber a-piece for Whites, Indian, and Coloureds. It was assumed that Blacks would be politically represented in their 'Native Homelands'. Since this arrangement excluded the

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<sup>1</sup> To what extent the military rather than the civilian government was in charge of policy during Botha's tenure has been debated with one security expert writing in a liberal essay collection that "No doubt the myth of a military assumption of power was very useful to the opposition to the government, especially while the armed forces were engaged in a counterinsurgency programme which very much relied on the British approach of winning hearts and minds in contrast to the harsh methods of the police." Deon Fourie, "The New South Africa and the Armed Forces" in, *South Africa: Designing New Institutions*, ed. Murray Faure and Jan-Erik Lane, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1996, p. 165

<sup>2</sup> Allister Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa: The Story of the Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, London: Mandarin [pbk], 1991, pp. 329-36

Homelands and Blacks living in the cities from formal citizenship and politics. It is no great surprise that the result was sustained unrest throughout much of the country. The Botha administration also repealed many laws, the most notable being the numerous petty segregation laws, and the Mixed Marriage and Immorality Acts that blighted the lives of many; it carried out a significant number of important reforms. But the Liberation movements in exile and members of the underground within South Africa (known as the 'Inziles') issued what was in effect a declaration of civil war with the intent of making South Africa ungovernable.

The plan to do so involved a three-pronged attack. The first was a propaganda barrage and renewed sanctions to undermine what little credibility South Africa had abroad. The second was to use the newly legalised black trade unions within South Africa along with a number of civil society groups, known collectively as the UDF, to mobilise popular opposition to the government. The third, and most controversial, was a systematic campaign of attacks and assassinations targeted against the police, the armed forces and anyone who was perceived as collaborators with the regime, mainly the IFP and its followers and the rulers and officials of the Homelands.<sup>3</sup> South Africa in the 1980s was facing a number of very large problems and the options for solving them were seemingly running out. In retrospect the *real* threat to apartheid in South Africa came not from black discontent or white doubts; it came from the investors and businesses who

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<sup>3</sup> William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 254-263; Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, London: Hurst and Company, 2003, pp. 611-616; R.W. Johnson, *South Africa: The First Man, The Last Nation*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2004, pp. 168-172

kept the regime afloat with cash and skills. As important as the protests and of social unrest in South Africa in this period was the decision of Chase Manhattan Bank to call in the government loans in 1985.<sup>4</sup> This choice was not taken due to pressure from anti-apartheid groups but was a market based decision and a vote of no-confidence in Botha and his government. It is difficult to say to what extent the legitimacy issue the South African government faced contributed to Chase Manhattan's decision, although it would be surprising if it played no role at all. Other commercial banks and several major companies followed suit, and decided to disinvest from South Africa. The result was a collapse in the value of the Rand and a threefold increase of the national debt almost overnight.<sup>5</sup>

South Africa, like New Zealand and most new world and periphery nations, was (and is) a net importer of capital and direct investment. This is the reason why Chase Manhattan's decision to call in its loans was so important. Almost every major political crisis of the twentieth century in South Africa; the 1922 Rand Rebellion, the Great Depression and the beginning and end of apartheid had been preceded by an investment strike of one form or another, and on almost every occasion were followed by the collapse of the sitting government.<sup>6</sup> The efficacy of sanctions needs to be assessed in this context. Sanctions also would not only affect the Republic itself but a number of states in the southern African region that were

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<sup>4</sup> Johnson, *The First Man*, p 195

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, pp. 195-196

<sup>6</sup> The Rand Rebellion is the name given to a series of labour disputes on the Witwatersrand gold fields. It was not an attempt to restart the Anglo-Boer war nor was it a precursor to Sharpeville.



reliant on South Africa for trade and assistance. This was one of the reasons behind the reluctance to impose sanctions on South Africa.

*New Zealand under the Fourth Labour Government.*

Muldoon had faced problems with his younger MPs who were questioning his ability to lead. Following the sacking of one minister and two National MPs threatening to ‘jump the Waka’ Muldoon called a snap election in July 1984. On what was one of the highest turnouts for a post-war New Zealand election, Labour won by a landslide, making David Lange the youngest prime minister to date.<sup>7</sup> The election of the fourth Labour government would have far-reaching consequences on the economy, social policy, the relationship between the state and society, and on foreign policy. This period is best remembered for the economic restructuring popularly known as “Rogernomics” in acknowledgement of the high profile of the then Finance Minister Roger Douglas. There were also a number of important social reforms such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality and recognition the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>8</sup> The most well known foreign policy initiative of this government was the anti-nuclear policy directed towards both American nuclear ships and French weapons testing. The fourth Labour government’s policy

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<sup>7</sup>James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders, From the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland: Allan Lane, 1998, pp. 305-424; Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin, 2003, pp. 485-499

<sup>8</sup> King, pp. 485-499

on apartheid was also a major departure from earlier governments.<sup>9</sup> South Africa was a major topic of conversation in New Zealand during the period under consideration. However, it was never a major policy issue in the same way as CER, nuclear testing, and the ANZUS alliance were in the period.<sup>10</sup> For its part, Pretoria had larger problems to worry about than cancelled sporting tours and the closure of a minor consular post. These problems included war in Angola, the status of Namibia, and the rebellion in the townships and homelands that almost brought the whole of South Africa and its economy to its knees.

*The Closure of the South African Consulate.*

In keeping with a promise made at the Labour Party conference during the election campaign, the Labour government made moves to close the South African Consulate in Wellington, but the Consul was recalled before that could happen.<sup>11</sup> Linked to this was the attempt to stop a repeat of the 1981 Springbok Tour; with a highly publicised campaign being waged to convince the board of the NZRFU to call off the planned rugby tour of South Africa in 1985. The official tour was called off but this did not stop a rebel tour from taking place in 1986.

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Bassett *Working With David: Inside the Lange Cabinet* Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 2008, *passim*; David Lange *My Life* Auckland: Viking, 2005, pp. 185-265

<sup>10</sup> CER.: Closer Economic Relations – the main New Zealand-Australia free trade treaty

<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts: New Zealand Attitudes to Race Relations in South Africa 1921-1994*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, p. 220

The closure of the South African Consulate was a sordid and bitter business and no one emerged unscathed. Roelf “Pik” Botha, the South African Foreign Minister was fast to discredit the closure. Botha was also of the view that the Consulate closure would not make New Zealand a more attractive trading partner in black Africa. Sympathisers and fellow-travellers of the apartheid regime in New Zealand voiced their indignation that the government had bowed to pressure from “foreign influence” and “internal subversives.” Those holding contrary views were outraged that in addition to the closure travel bans and other harsh measures were not put in place or that the government still refused to donate to the ANC or SWAPO.<sup>12</sup> When Pretoria decided to withdraw the Consul-General because he was being unduly harassed, but in reality to avoid the further humiliation of being forcibly expelled, there was a distinct feeling of disappointment among the anti-apartheid protesters along the lines of “The bastard got away!” It was the Labour party organisational apparatus, *not* the members of parliament had pushed for closure. This indicated a split between the more enthusiastic “rank-and-file” and the cautious party bosses over South Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Pushing for the closure of the Consulate, thus embarrassing the Labour party MPs and forcing the hands of those involved, was almost certainly linked to the broader battles beginning to be waged over New Zealand’s economic policy. The left wing

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<sup>12</sup> SWAPO – South West African Peoples Organisation, the main liberation movement of Namibia.

<sup>13</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, p. 220

were beginning to lose to the centre-right of the party over the economic restructuring programme, and although the battles were only starting to take shape, the Consulate closure was a warning that an intra-party split would be hard to avoid in the future.

Closing the South African Consulate aroused strong feeling up and down the country. This is reflected in a number of letters sent to the prime minister both before and after the 1984 general election.<sup>14</sup> Most striking is that letters favouring the closure of the Consulate outnumber those against, almost two to one. The relative uniformity of the letters in favour of closure and the number of women writing outnumbering the men is surprising. Some examples of the correspondence are a letter in favour of the Consulate from Auckland dated 20 August 1984 stating that, "...This move will be met and supported in the rest of Africa where our *long term* [emphasis added] interests are. Your *moral stance* [emphasis added] on this issue is a courageous move and supported by all my friends."<sup>15</sup>

In agreement a correspondent from Hamilton wrote that the decision to close the Consulate had "...raised a storm of protest from the overt and covert supporters of apartheid in this country..." but that despite this there were "...

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<sup>14</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1 "New Zealand Affairs: External Relations – South Africa – Ministerial Letters Closure South African Consulate 1984"; ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.2 "New Zealand Affairs: External Relations – South Africa – Ministerial Letters Closure South African Consulate 1984"

<sup>15</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1

thousands (and, indeed, probably hundreds of thousands) of New Zealanders, like myself who support the action taken by your government.”<sup>16</sup>

Most of these letters as well as proffering their congratulations and support also request that the then government put pressure on the NZRFU to cancel its planned tour of South Africa, and to hold firm on the anti-nuclear issue. Some, such as a woman from ‘Wanganui’ [sic] simply wanted to say that this stance on the Consulate was a “...effective protest against the injustices of their [i.e. the South African] government. When action such as this is taken I feel very proud of N.Z. [sic].”<sup>17</sup> The most touching letters were those from children, which even if written at the behest of their parents or teachers, were sincere enough.

More surprising is the diversity of reasons against the closure of the Consulate. Most were written by people living in the well-heeled suburbs of the main centres, but there were also many from the provinces and the more blue-collar suburbs of the major cities.<sup>18</sup> Based on the letters in the files, a majority of those in the cities were in favour of closure.<sup>19</sup> Those in the rural areas, on the other hand, had their doubts. These men and women cited the need to maintain active engagement with the South Africans. There were accusations of left-wing mischief, which was a dog-whistle term for the influence of the liberation parties, their

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<sup>16</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1

<sup>17</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1

<sup>18</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1; ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.2

<sup>19</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1; ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.2

putative communist backers, and their local supporters in New Zealand, and naïve pleas to acknowledge the good intentions of the Botha administration.<sup>20</sup>

A woman from Greytown deplored the closure of the Consulate on the grounds that a gradual approach to ending apartheid was the correct course of action and that since Lange, in her eyes had aligned himself with "...the Hart[sic] mob and [therefore] lost all credibility as a result. For the first time in my 53[sic] years I am ashamed to be a New Zealander."<sup>21</sup> Another woman felt that the closure was inconsistent as New Zealand still maintained diplomatic ties with "Russia" [i.e. the USSR] "...whose internal policies are far more destructive than that of South Africa."<sup>22</sup>

Proving the old maxim that it is impossible to please everyone, there was a third group, those anti-apartheid campaigners who wanted to see further action, such as third party sanctions, or donations to the ANC on behalf of the New Zealand government (as opposed to the contributions made to the UN trust funds).<sup>23</sup>

There are a number of letters from outside New Zealand, such as a letter from residents of the Szechenyi Homestead, Harare, Zimbabwe which supported the closure of the Consulate, and enclosed with it a copy of the *Zimbabwe Herald*, mistakenly reporting that that the consul had been expelled from New Zealand

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<sup>20</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1; ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.2

<sup>21</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1

<sup>22</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1

<sup>23</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/7 Pt. 1 "Republic of South Africa: Social Affairs – Apartheid: H.A.R.T. [Halt All Racist Tours] [09/80-11/82]" 1980-1982

when he had in fact been withdrawn.<sup>24</sup> Another was from a young New Zealand missionary in Zambia whom Lange had to reassure would not be stranded without due recourse when the Consulate closed.<sup>25</sup> One man living in Cape Town thought the closure was “...narrow minded, short sighted and incredible. It deserves full Marx.”<sup>26</sup>

In the case of letters in support of government policies the replies followed a set formula of thanks. Responses to letters in disagreement with government policy often personally written by the minister in question refuted the reasons offered against the closure. One such letter written in reply to one woman from south Taranaki, who attempted to argue against the Consulate’s closure with appeals to Holy Scripture (Matthew 5:44-46<sup>27</sup> and Romans 12:2<sup>28</sup>) was told that,

Everyone has been able to find biblical language which they consider justifies the policies the government believes [they] should pursue. I could in turn invite you to read in succession Galatians 3:28<sup>29</sup> and Romans 16: 17-18<sup>30</sup>. But I would not want you [to] think that I believe those verses are relevant to a

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<sup>24</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1. The copy of the *Zimbabwe Herald* was missing from the file.

<sup>25</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.2

<sup>26</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1

<sup>27</sup> “But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become so that you may become the children of your father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and those who do evil.”

<sup>28</sup> “Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let god transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and what is pleasing to him and is perfect.”

<sup>29</sup> “So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus”

<sup>30</sup> “I urge you my friends to look out for those who cause divisions and upset people’s faith and go against the teachings which you have received. Stay away from them! For those who do such things are not serving Christ our Lord, but their own appetites. By their fine words and flattering speech they deceive innocent people.”

policy that was adopted with no reference to scripture but with the interests of this country very much in mind.<sup>31</sup>

The reasons why many thought the closure of the consulate was a good idea are not hard to imagine. The Consulate was not doing anything to improve South Africa's reputation in New Zealand. Most of the consuls, the unappealing Allan Harvey deserving special mention, were involved in questionable activities that sometimes bordered on the illegal. The scandal uncovered in 1980 involving the letter writing circle which was sending letters drafted by the South African Information Department to organs of the New Zealand press on Consulate letterhead is one example.<sup>32</sup> Allowing South Africa to maintain a consular presence was sending the wrong signals about New Zealand to the wider world.

The arguments for not closing the Consulate were more diverse and interesting. The most common reason was that a more constructive approach would yield better results and that isolation would only reinforce negative approaches to domestic policy in South Africa. These letters, sent to Lange's office in his dual capacity as foreign and prime minister, were little better than racist screeds or excuses to vent spleen over the parlous state of the New Zealand economy. A large number of these also cited, as justification, New Zealand's willingness to maintain relations with a variety of countries whose reputations were less than spotless.

These criticisms overall were part of a broader phenomenon that Labour had not

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<sup>31</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.2.

<sup>32</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights* pp. 219-220. Consul-General Harvey claimed that he was simply helping those who wanted to present the South African side of the story get their facts straight. He was let off with a warning.



anticipated while in office, the pro- South Africa lobby. 'Pro South Africa' a better label than pro-apartheid lobby as it covers the fact that a number of those opposed to sanctions were against apartheid and were convinced rightly or wrongly that cutting contact would only encourage Nationalist policies, and that positive persuasion was what was required to end apartheid. It included those who supported segregation in one form or another, along with the anti-communists who hated the idea of an enhanced communist presence in Africa, and believed that a white-ruled South Africa was a bulwark against that.

Labour had the same problems as National with the anti-apartheid lobbyists and with the pro-South Africa groups, especially those who were anti-apartheid but disagreed with sanctions. An opposition party can overlook dissenting voices on such matters but in government, this is no longer an option. The sheer diversity of competing groups would disprove the caricatured view of a straightforward left-right split on the matter of what to do about South Africa. There were many in the anti-sanctions camp that were not on the right by any stretch of the imagination and a great many pro-sanction types who could be as bigoted and small-minded as the regime they opposed.

These influences go a long way to explaining the disorganisation and lack of coordination in New Zealand policy. Malcolm Templeton tries to make a case for a set of coherent ideas that guided policy makers, but with much wriggle room that was often prone to outside pressure. This is not entirely convincing. Templeton was writing mainly from the point of view of the ministry and was himself a former

Foreign Service officer. A background in the New Zealand Foreign Service undoubtedly gave him much valuable insight into policymaking, but less obvious when one first reads *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*, is to what extent the work is an apologia for the oft-criticised actions of the ministry at that time.<sup>33</sup>

The letters to the government demonstrate that South Africa was an emotive and controversial matter. This made it difficult to implement a sensible and coherent policy. The ambiguous behaviour of the South African government, wavering between repression and reforms meant that it was often hard to decide what the correct course of action was. Unsurprisingly it was not until the Nationalist government in South Africa had entered into serious negotiations with the liberation movements and the parliamentary opposition, that the New Zealand government was able to decide on a settled strategy to, stick with sanctions and encourage negotiations between the main antagonists.

*Finnegan vs. NZRFU and the 1986 Cavaliers tour of South Africa.*

The 'reset' of New Zealand's South Africa policy was not without its bumps and false starts. One of the most infamous moments in New Zealand sporting history, the 1986 Cavaliers tour, has been misunderstood. It was a sign of major internal administrative problems within the NZRFU and a disappointing setback for the government's attempt at rehabilitating the country's image on the

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<sup>33</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, passim

international stage. The “Cavaliers’ tour” was in fact two tours, a first official tour that never took place, and a second unofficial tour that did take place.

The official tour that had been sanctioned by the NZRFU and was to go ahead in 1985 was stopped by a court injunction. This was the result of the court case known as *Finnegan vs. NZRFU*.<sup>34</sup> The court case was not a government intervention, but a private suit brought by a pair of lawyers acting on their own behalf. It is easy to see why the idea that *Finnegan vs. NZRFU* was a crown prosecution arose, as it coincided with a number of government initiatives on South Africa in the mid-1980s. The logic behind the eventual granting of the injunction was not that the Rugby Union was breaking the law of the land, but that it was violating its own charter by touring South Africa, and by extension alienating the population, which required it to promote the game of Rugby Union in New Zealand. Emotive testimony from the Reverend Makhenkesi ‘Arnold’ Stofile, who had travelled illegally to New Zealand from South Africa via Zimbabwe, on the possible effects that such a tour would have, probably contributed to the outcome. According to John Carlin, Stofile’s testimony was responsible for public support for sanctions against South Africa jumping from 40% to 75% in New Zealand.<sup>35</sup>

The verdict of *Finnegan vs. NZRFU* had an impact beyond New Zealand.

This impact ranged from approval, such as the quote from Joseph Garba that opens

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<sup>34</sup> Finnegan being the name of one of the main plaintiffs, P.T. Finnegan, the other was P.J. Recordon.

<sup>35</sup> John Carlin, *Invictus: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation*, London: Atlantic Books 2008 p. 67. Unfortunately, for his pains Stofile was arrested and sentenced to twelve years prison on his return to South Africa, but later went on to become a prominent figure in the post 1994 government.

the introduction, to this gem from the Paris embassy cables, dated 22 July 1985,  
from a New Zealand Embassy worker

A gentleman who introduced himself as Didier Brault (and had no hesitation in spelling out his name when I asked) telephoned today. He said he simply wanted to say that he thought it was a pity that New Zealand had decided not to play rugby against South Africa. He said he thought it was bad for rugby and “illogical” since we played against the USSR and certain other South American countries who did not exactly have stainless records. M Brault was polite and spoke in excellent English. He made his point quickly and having done so simply said “that’s all.” I took him to be French although his accent might just have had a hint of South African in it. I said nothing back to him [*handwritten*: he wasn’t looking for an argument so I didn’t see any point in taking issue with him] except to ask him a second time for his name and at the end to thank him for his call. He was clearly looking for no response from us and apparently wanted just to register his point.<sup>36</sup>

In the court proceedings of *Finnegan vs. NZRFU*, the judge ruled for an injunction and the official tour was cancelled. This was far from the end of the story. The following year an unofficial tour, organised by private business interests in South Africa and indirectly backed by the South African government, went ahead anyway.

<sup>37</sup> The Cavaliers’ tour, unlike the 1981 Springbok tour, was a failure from a rugby standpoint, New Zealand losing the series. As well as that, it was also a political embarrassment. It did not augur well for the inaugural Rugby World Cup that was

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<sup>36</sup> ABHS W5402 18069 Box 54 BRU 198/1/1 “Country Series RSA General 01/1979-1985” 1979-1985

<sup>37</sup>Max Du Preez, *Louis Luyt: Unauthorized*, Cape Town: Zebra Press 2001 pp. 42-44

to be hosted jointly between New Zealand and Australia in 1987 and it imperilled the 1990 Commonwealth games.<sup>38</sup>

The Cavaliers' tour of 1986 was, and still is, assumed to have had official sanction of one form or another. It did not. This fallacy arose because the tour was promoted in South Africa as an All Blacks tour. Nonetheless, such niceties did not matter in the grand scheme of things. As far as the Africans were concerned the New Zealand government had broken its promises and was back in the 'doghouse'

The Cavaliers' tour is the most well known in New Zealand of all the "rebel" tours of the 1980s but it was not the only one. The cricket tours (these are better known internationally) in 1983, 1986 and 1990, and other illicit rugby tours (British and Irish Lions tours) and many other sporting events went against sanctions and caused anger and offence.<sup>39</sup> Like the 1986 Cavaliers tour, these were ostensibly private ventures but also had the backing of the South African government in the form of tax breaks and the unofficial influence the politicians had on the sporting bodies.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, p. 219. At this time the Commonwealth Games Committee awarded the hosting rights of the 1990 Games to Auckland. This was due to Lange convincing the Africans that the sporting tours were a thing of the past. Secondly, it was a means of enforcing good behaviour on behalf of the New Zealand government and the sporting bodies.

<sup>39</sup> AAXO W4246 22539 Box 47 "Calypso Cavaliers – West Indian Cricketers in South Africa: The Story of the 1983 Tour"; for a more general overview of the rebel tours of the 1980s see Graeme Wright, *Betrayal: The Struggle for Cricket's Soul*, London: H.F and G. Witherby 1993 pp. 7-10, 138-159, 201-213, Carlin pp. 65-67, Max Du Preez, *Louis Luyt: Unauthorized*, Cape Town: Zebra Press 2001 pp. 42-44, David Kirk, *Black and Blue*, Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett 1997 pp. 75-94. Peter Hain, *Don't Play with Apartheid: The Background to the Stop the Seventy Tour*, London: George Allen and Unwin 1971 although dealing with an earlier period, is useful for background and context.

<sup>40</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 268-272

The Cavaliers' tour and the problems it caused did eventually subside. Nonetheless, the tour had major repercussions on the tentative attempts to repair the damage of the 1981 Springbok tour. It alienated African leaders that the government wished to court over anti-nuclear measures and potential trade deals. Lange gave the Africans the impression that the subject was a dead issue, when it was not and this did not help this state of affairs. By far the greatest quantity of material in the files of the government and the ministry from this period is about the tour and the problems it caused. It provided the content to most of the dispatches of New Zealand overseas diplomats. It was the subject of many letters to the office of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, David Lange.<sup>41</sup>

*David Lange's tour of Africa 1985 and the 1980s CHOGM Meetings.*

David Lange was a gifted orator and a man of great intelligence. He was also a deeply flawed character. He was emotionally needy and over sensitive in a degree dangerous to a politician, as his libel suits in later life would attest. Lange often began projects with zeal but would lose interest prior to their completion. His chief achievement was to be “the great salesman” at least until he began to question what he was selling.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> AAXO W4246 22539 Box 47; ABHS W5579 6958 Box 102 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 37  
“Political Affairs – South Africa – Apartheid: Sports Contacts [04/1985-05/1985]” 1985

<sup>42</sup> Barry Gustafson. 'Lange, David Russell', in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*  
<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/611/lange-david-russell>

Lange's replies to letters critical of the closure of the South African consulate as well as an acrimonious correspondence with HART coordinator John Minto illustrate his problems in dealing with criticism and his inability to suffer fools gladly.<sup>43</sup> It is however possible to postulate from these sources the probable motivations and factors behind a number of Lange's major decisions as prime and foreign minister. Since Lange was, for his first term in government, foreign minister and prime minister, he had a stronger influence on foreign relations than Robert Muldoon and more so than Jim Bolger. In the second term of the fourth Labour government, Lange ceded the portfolio of foreign affairs to Russell Marshall. Not tied down holding two major portfolios, Marshall was in a better position than Lange to concentrate on the task was, making him an excellent choice to finish what Lange had started. Marshall had visited Africa during the 1970s and had been involved in the founding of the Africa Information Centre, a semi-official effort at improving New Zealand's public knowledge of Africa. This and his background as a veteran anti-apartheid campaigner made him, in many ways, the ideal man to follow through with greater concentration what his predecessor had started.<sup>44</sup>

A number of African leaders had visited New Zealand in the 1970s, the first and most notable being Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who had struck up something of a friendship with the then prime minister Norman Kirk. Following

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<sup>43</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.2 ; ABHS W4627 950 Box 3842 204/6/8/1/5 Pt. 1 "Republic of South Africa: Social Affairs – Apartheid: Letters [01/80-03/85]" Archives New Zealand Central Office Wellington

<sup>44</sup> For more information on Marshall as Foreign Minister see Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 225-281

Kirk's death and Muldoon, taking power relations deteriorated, and there would be no such visits again until the 1990s. Lange's 1985 tour of Africa, although not as well-known as the Oxford debate or the suspension of the ANZUS alliance, was of great importance. In the words of one contemporary commentator, Lange's foreign policy, and Lange himself, represented an "emerging national self-confidence."<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, the trip to Africa was also about mending fences. Lange himself said at a University of Otago foreign policy conference in 1985 that he found the perceptions of New Zealand held by the politicians of those countries that he visited to be "fundamentally misinformed."<sup>46</sup> Lange believed of the visit "Whatever else was achieved in Africa it was at the very least made plain that the government of New Zealand is no ally of South Africa."<sup>47</sup> Lange himself was optimistic about the results of the visit claiming that the long-term benefits would be "very great."<sup>48</sup> Lange was also using his tour to scout for locations for the High Commission to be established somewhere on the continent.<sup>49</sup> To judge from the newspaper clippings included in the files about the visit, the Africans themselves felt the same optimism as Lange did.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Martin Holland "Labour in Africa" in *The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand*, ed. Jonathan Boston and Martin Holland, Auckland: Oxford University Press 1987 p. 242

<sup>46</sup> David Lange "The Fourth Labour Government: New Directions in Foreign Policy" in *New Directions In New Zealand Foreign Policy: Twentieth Foreign Policy School, University of Otago, 1985*, ed. Hyam Gold Auckland: Benton Ross 1985 p. 34

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*

<sup>49</sup> Holland, p. 256

<sup>50</sup> AAWW W4640 7109 Box 10 "[Overseas Trips: Africa and India]" 1985. It needs to be noted that due to the censorship that was the norm in much of Africa in this period, these newspapers reflect official elite opinion and are a useful source for official reactions.



One of the major features of the 1980s diplomatic scene for the New Zealand Foreign Service was the series of CHOGM meetings. CHOGM meetings in the 1980s were fraught affairs with the racial cleavage between the white and non-white Commonwealths widening. It must have been a relief to New Zealand politicians and diplomats that following the closure of the South African consulate in Wellington and the “reset” of New Zealand’s policy on apartheid, the country and its government was no longer in the hot seat with decolonised Africa as it used to be. The other main reason for this positive development is that for most of the 1980s it was in fact Britain which was often the subject of attacks over the refusal of the Conservative party and prime minister Margaret Thatcher to implement sanctions. Indeed, to some observers, it seemed that Thatcher was doing all she could to sabotage the sanctions campaign. This was not in fact the case. Thatcher disliked apartheid but her hatred of communism was stronger and thus working with the pre-1990 ANC was not an option. Lange said of this period that,

Commonwealth Conferences were dominated in those days by the continuing struggle between Mrs Thatcher and the Africans. The latter wanted the Commonwealth to do something about South Africa and she was determined to stop them. She really was not happy unless she was falling out with the whole African bloc. She always tackled them head-on, spitting phrases like ‘unfit to govern’ right at them.<sup>51</sup>

Lange, despite later admitting a begrudging admiration for the British prime minister’s ability to be her own woman, disliked her mightily in this period and the

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<sup>51</sup> Lange, *My Life*, p 215

two disagreed on many things. Chris Laidlaw did not have a very high opinion of “the Iron Lady” calling her a “...self-righteous hand-bag brandishing bigot.”<sup>52</sup> These comments are but a small sample of the criticisms levelled against Britain and Thatcher in the 1980s over the sanctions issue, and gives only the faintest of impressions of how nasty and bitter the whole subject became. It also shows effectively why New Zealand receded into the background on the international stage on this subject. This was for New Zealand a positive development as this gave the government some valuable time and space to regroup on South Africa.

All sanctions on South Africa up until this time had been *voluntary*. What was under debate in the CHOGM meetings of the 1980s was making these sanctions mandatory, which would have negatively affected the considerable business interests of a number of countries like Britain but also the USA and a number of continental European countries that Britain needed support from in the EEC. South Africa was also in possession of a number of rare minerals that were only found in the Republic. This gave the South African government leverage against sanctions. It is likely that New Zealand would under National have supported the ‘anti-sanctions’ campaign in a tit-for-tat effort to retain important contacts over exemptions in EEC related agriculture negotiations. Under the Labour government, the reset of policy was pro sanctions on sport, culture, and academia. It was less definitive on economic sanctions and due to the reforms of the agricultural

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<sup>52</sup> Chris Laidlaw, *Rights of Passage: Beyond the New Zealand Identity Crisis*, Auckland: Hodder Moe Beckett 1999, p. 81

market and the perceived importance South Africa had to the dairy and meat export industries.

*The Harare High Commission and Improving New Zealand's Image in Africa.*

Even the most ardent pro-Africa supporters in the New Zealand government would have admitted that there was going to be a struggle to convince the touchy leaders of decolonised Africa of the new government's good intentions, with senior government ministers on record (albeit in the 1960s) condoning apartheid in South Africa.<sup>53</sup> This had meant that, combined with issues of priority, cost, staffing and so on, a consular post and relations with Africa was not a priority before the 1980s. Trade was negligible and thus Africa was ruled out on economic grounds.<sup>54</sup> The majority of the business involving African states could be handled in a very cost effective fashion by the Permanent Delegation to the UN in both New York and Geneva, and the Commonwealth desk at the New Zealand High Commission in London. The decision then to establish the High Commission in Harare was fundamentally political.

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<sup>53</sup> Barry Gustafson, *Kiwi Keith: A Biography of Keith Holyoake*, Auckland: Auckland University Press 2008, pp. 189-206

<sup>54</sup> There has been an increase in trade over the past decade, mostly with South Africa following the removal of sanctions but also with a number of other regions. For more information see John Allan, "Changing the conversation about Africa," transcript of the opening address given at the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, October 2010 <http://www.nzembassy.com/south-africa/relationship-between-new-zealand-and-south-africa/new-zealand-and-south-africa/speech-c>

However, if official representation, diplomatic posts and trade deals, were the only way a country's impact and affairs were to be judged, the picture becomes unbalanced. There is another side to the way in which states interact, based around unofficial connections. This is the civil society connections and despite the lack of official representation there were in the 1980s numbers of New Zealand ex-patriates living in southern Africa, mostly aid workers, missionaries, and contract workers. There were therefore a number of unofficial ambassadors for New Zealand in Africa, and these men and women did much to help counteract the problematic image the government was presenting. They were also able obliquely to influence events and decisions back home. A great many letters written to the government during the 1980s about the consulate closure and the Cavaliers' tour were from New Zealand citizens living in African states worried about how the locals were going to react.<sup>55</sup> Those concerned about the tour were worried for New Zealand's reputation in Africa and those writing about the Consulate closure were afraid of being left stranded without representation based on a misunderstanding of the Consulate's role in New Zealand.

The opening of the New Zealand High Commission in Harare in May 1986 was, therefore, important in a number of ways. The first and most obvious was that it was the first time that New Zealand had had a diplomatic and consular post in Africa. The second was that it was a convenient post from which to observe

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<sup>55</sup> ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.1; ABHS W4627 950 Box 1465 58/204/1/1 Pt.2

unfolding events in South Africa. The third was that it was a move beyond the more traditional areas of Europe, North America, and the Pacific. Unsurprisingly, it was around this time that a number of new posts began to open elsewhere, in Latin America, the Middle East and the soon to be former communist bloc, and the High Commission in New Delhi re-opened after having been closed by the Muldoon government.<sup>56</sup> Harare, as the location of the New Zealand high commission, was in the words of Chris Laidlaw "...the natural, logical choice."<sup>57</sup>

Despite this, there had been debate over the location and to judge; it would seem that Harare was simply the least bad option in terms of location safety and living standards.<sup>58</sup> Harare was the most convenient location for cross-accreditation to other African states in southern and eastern Africa. It was, in the 1980s, due to the sanctions and restrictions in South Africa, a major hub of diplomacy and trade; Martin Holland estimates some 70 overseas posts in Harare in the 1980s.<sup>59</sup>

The choice of the first High Commissioner was also very much a strategic decision. Chris Laidlaw, had long experience in Commonwealth politics, well known sympathies for the developing world, progressive stance on indigenous issues, and that he had also been an All Black did not hurt.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Hyam Gold "Introduction" in *New Directions In New Zealand Foreign Policy: Twentieth Foreign Policy School, University of Otago, 1985*, ed. Hyam Gold. Auckland: Benton Ross 1985 pp. 4-5

<sup>57</sup> Holland p. 255

<sup>58</sup> *ibid* p. 256

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*

<sup>60</sup> Chris Laidlaw "New Zealand and the Third World" in *New Directions In New Zealand Foreign Policy: Twentieth Foreign Policy School, University of Otago, 1985*, ed. Hyam Gold Auckland: Benton Ross 1985 pp. 108-117; Laidlaw, *Rights of Passage, Passim*; Holland pp. 255-259

Despite the effort put into improving New Zealand's image in decolonised Africa, there were still those who had either not got the message or did not care. In his political manifesto-cum-memoir, Chris Laidlaw recalls a time where he was forced to save the proverbial bacon of a certain Christopher Martin, a New Zealand national and a former member of the French Foreign Legion. Martin had joined the South African army in a mercenary capacity and had been imprisoned in Zambia for his role in an attempted car bombing on ANC office in Lusaka. Laidlaw, much against his better instincts and preferences was forced to bail out this man to avoid a major international incident and escort him back to New Zealand. Laidlaw himself admitted that he would have rather have sent Martin back to South Africa and leave him to his fate.<sup>61</sup>

*The Shadow of Rhodesia: Sanctions in Context*

The New Zealand government of the 1960s probably overall found Rhodesia more challenging than later New Zealand governments in the 1980s found South Africa. Unlike apartheid South Africa with its aggressively 'Boer' character, stolidly 'British' Rhodesia was far more congenial to Pakeha New Zealanders, many of whom had relatives or friends in Rhodesia. The communist factor was far more plausible in the 1960s as well and it was still socially acceptable to hold contemptuous attitudes towards Black Africans, which became

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<sup>61</sup> Laidlaw, *Rights of Passage*, pp. 88-90

less acceptable in the 1980s. In the case of Rhodesia, the government of New Zealand attempted to find a middle way between the need to show support for an important trading partner, in this case Britain and its desire to impose sanctions on the obstinate colony, and a need to placate a powerful conservative faction within the New Zealand government. In the end, the solution was a half-hearted attempt at following economic sanctions that were never really enforced thus allowing the New Zealand government to draw the erroneous conclusion that economic sanctions did not work.<sup>62</sup>

However unlike Rhodesia, which was relatively small and dependent on agriculture, South Africa was home to some very large international investments, had a relatively advanced industrial economy, and a number of mineral deposits not found anywhere else in the world. It was also in the 1980s the world's main exporter of gold. Sanctions against South Africa therefore were going to have global ramifications, with potentially harmful impact on New Zealand via their effects on Britain, the EEC, the USA, and a number of Asian countries. Thus although Rhodesia was seen by many as a useful analogue to South Africa the comparison was not entirely appropriate for the reasons above. It is also important to note that the effectiveness of sanctions is, in practice, very difficult to determine. Central to the shifting attitudes and sanctions towards South Africa in New Zealand was the generational change, first in the public and later in the government, as well

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<sup>62</sup> For more information see Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence And Foreign Policy: New Zealand In the World Since 1935*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993, pp.230-251; Gustafson, *Kiwi Keith*, pp.189-206; Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 66-67

as a well-fought campaign to change public attitudes by anti-apartheid groups. This was one of the most significant facts working to the advantage of the fourth Labour government. By the late 1980s there was no single line taken by all western powers on South Africa. Only the USA and UK continued to offer conditional support in the form of a refusal to impose sanctions whereas the CANZ group had begun to do so. A number of western European EEC member states already were or had begun to impose their own sanctions. The third world countries, needless to say, had been following their own sanctions programme independent of the West, for many years.

### *Conclusion*

In closing, the decision to force the closure of the South African consulate and the decision to open the Harare High Commission were in fact two sides of the same coin, with the goal of improving New Zealand's image in the developing world. The belief that South Africa was sliding towards a military dictatorship along with questions about Botha's political reliability, convinced much of the New Zealand population to go along with the realignment, although as the letters written over the closure of the consulate show, not everyone felt comfortable about these developments. When compared with a number of other countries, however, the New Zealand approach was conventional, given the restrictions and limitations that had to be taken into account, although the ramifications had often been far from



conventional. In the broader context of the period 1981-1994 the developments of the fourth Labour government was on the surface an attempt to emphasise ideals, and up to a certain point it was. However there was also an element of pragmatism to this as well; as there was no benefit whatsoever to New Zealand in being seen as supporting South Africa. Although the South African Consulate closure was fundamentally an empty gesture, it was nonetheless a very effective one in terms of New Zealand's image abroad. The Consulate closure certainly helped the government acquire enough credibility to allow the embarrassing Cavaliers tour to blow over with none of the recrimination that followed tours in 1976 and 1981. Labour faced most of the same issues that National had done in the early 1980s except from a different angle. National had to juggle an obdurate rural base with more liberally minded suburban dwellers. Labour on the other hand, were often attempting to balance the perspective of a centre and left mostly urban base that comprised the protest movement, and its more conservative wing, and not always with success.

Chapter Three: The Period of the National Government and the End of

Apartheid 1990-1994

Liberal reformers tended to see liberalization as a way of defusing opposition to their regime. They would ease up on repression, restore some civil liberties, reduce censorship, permit broader discussion of public issues, and allow civil society – associations, churches, unions, business organisations – greater scope to conduct their affairs. Liberalizers did not, however, wish to introduce fully participatory competitive elections that could cause current leaders to lose power. They wanted to create a kinder, gentler, more secure and stable authoritarianism without altering fundamentally the nature of their system. Some reformers were undoubtedly unsure themselves how far they wished to go in opening up the politics of their country. They also at times undoubtedly felt the need to veil their intentions: democratizers tended to reassure standpatters by giving the impression that they were only liberalizing; liberalizers attempted to win broader popular support by creating the impression that they were democratizing. Debates consequently raged over how far Geisel, Botha, Gorbachev, and others “really” wanted to go.

Samuel P. Huntington, *How Countries Democratize* 1992

The 1990 Bolger National government had altered its traditional approach to South Africa in the face of changing political circumstances. South Africa’s transformation took many, not the least the National party, by surprise. It was a cautious change as not all were enthusiastic or optimistic about changes, in South Africa or New Zealand. The relatively passive stance taken by the National government was a result of the priority that domestic affairs took in the years 1990-1994, and an international situation that did not allow for acts that could be interpreted as support for the increasingly shaky Nationalist government in Pretoria.

The period 1990-1994 was probably the most complex and challenging period from a South African standpoint. Following the forced resignation of P.W. Botha in 1989 and the assumption of the presidency by F.W de Klerk, the liberation parties were re-legalised and negotiations to determine the future constitutional settlement of South Africa were pursued with varying degrees of success. This culminated in the 1994 election and appointment of the first ANC government in South Africa. In New Zealand, the National Party, which came to power in the 1990 election, was more preoccupied with domestic affairs but shared the outgoing Labour government's desire to improve New Zealand's image in the developing world. It was therefore happy to maintain its predecessor's policies albeit in scaled down form due to budget issues.

#### *After Botha*

To understand properly the challenges that the Bolger government faced with respect to relations with South Africa in the years 1990-1994, it is necessary to appreciate the speed and uncertainty with which events in South Africa unfolded. Following the forced retirement of P.W Botha in 1989, following a stroke, long time cabinet minister, and Nationalist party apparatchik, F.W de Klerk replaced him. The older segregation laws had been scrapped by the Nationalists in an attempt to show their *bona fides* to the outside world, and to their internal opposition. The three main apartheid laws, the Natives Land Act (1913), the Group

Areas Act (1950), the Population Registration Act (1949), and the restricted franchise stubbornly remained in place, as did much of the draconian security legislation and censorship laws.<sup>1</sup> The Homelands were still officially in existence. Without the legitimising context of the Cold War, White South Africa's need to find a settlement looked more pressing than ever. Political prisoners were released, including Nelson Mandela. Commenting on these events prominent anti-apartheid journalist Allister Sparks observed in 1991 "Verwoerd was right. Concessions don't ease pressure or buy time and the introduction of piecemeal reforms do introduce illogicalities that make it harder to hold one's ground."<sup>2</sup> President P.W Botha's "concessions," the 1983 Constitution and Tricameral Parliament, had backfired in spectacular fashion.

Officially, the traditional story of the end of apartheid is that the Nationalist party, unable to live with its own wickedness anymore, and the ANC being the forgiving paragons of popular repute, decide to begin negotiations in 1991 with the CODESA. Following a false start, these negotiations come to a triumphant conclusion with the first full election of April 1994, the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president, the Springbok's victorious campaign in the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and the adoption of the 1996 Constitution.<sup>3</sup> This version of history

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<sup>1</sup> David R Penna "Apartheid, The Law and Reform in South Africa" in *Africa Today* Vol. 37, No. 2 Dismantling Apartheid: Problems and Possibilities (Second Quarter 1990) pp. 5-21

<sup>2</sup> Allister Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa: The Story of the Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, London: Mandarin Paperbacks 1991 p. 329

<sup>3</sup> John Carlin, *Invictus: Nelson Mandela And The Game That Made A Nation*, London: Atlantic Books 2009, *passim*; Allister Sparks, *Tomorrow Is Another Country: The Inside Story Of South Africa's Road To Change*, New York: Hill and Wang 1995, *passim*; Patti

serves as a plot line for a number of popular histories and Hollywood films, including Clint Eastwood's 2009 film *Invictus*. However, it is lacking and gives no indication of just how fraught and complicated the whole process was, or even that it happened at all.

Sanctions and sporting contacts remained an issue. In 1992, the ANC, finding that F. W de Klerk was a man that they could do business with, stated that sporting contacts were going to resume.<sup>4</sup> The first major outing was South Africa's surprise showing in the 1992 Cricket World Cup (co-hosted by New Zealand), when it reached the semi-finals. This was followed by South Africa's return to the Summer Olympics at Barcelona. Later, in August of 1992, seven years after the Cavaliers Tour, the first official All Blacks tour of South Africa in over twenty years took place. This however did not end well in either political or rugby terms. The refusal of the South African rugby officials to follow ANC requests meant that sanctions were re-imposed.<sup>5</sup>

In retrospect, it was only a matter of time until P.W. Botha's aggressive behaviour caught up with him. Many of his 'colleagues' had been looking for a way to give *die Groot Krokildil* the push for some time. The Total Strategy was not working, as was evidenced by the continued violence in the townships, now spreading to the Homelands, the rural areas and even into the (white) suburbs.

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Waldmeir, *Anatomy Of A Miracle: The End Of Apartheid And The Birth Of The New South Africa*, New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company 1997, *passim*

<sup>4</sup> Max du Preez, *Louis Luyt: Unauthorised*, Cape Town: Zebra Press 2001 pp. 65-75; Carlin, pp. 112-113

<sup>5</sup> Carlin, pp. 112-113

Attempts to reach out to the opposition had not been a success. The border war was grinding on, costing lives, and money that South Africa could not afford to waste. The article “How Countries Democratize” by Samuel P. Huntington, published in the winter of 1991-1992, is an analysis of the so-called “Third Wave Democratization” of 1974-1990, starting with the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974 and ending with the collapse of Communism in 1990, in which a number of authoritarian regimes gave way to (mostly) democratic governments.<sup>6</sup> Huntington in his article classified four varieties of transition. Transformation, when a democratic regime grows out of an older authoritarian one in a controlled fashion for example Spain after the death of Generalissimo Franco and Hungary under Communist rule. Replacement, when the incumbent regime is overthrown by means fair or foul, for example East Germany or Argentina. Intervention, in which the regime is overthrown by outside actors.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Transplacement, when negotiation between regime and opposition are needed to break the stalemate.<sup>8</sup> South Africa according to Huntington was an example of Transplacement, Pretoria was too strong to be overthrown, but it was hobbled by its legitimacy crisis, financial problems, and external security problems.<sup>9</sup> As Huntington puts it,

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington “How Countries Democratize” in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 4 (Winter 1991-1992) pp. 579-616

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p. 582

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 616

<sup>9</sup> Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: A Biography Of A People*, London: Hurst And Company 2003 pp. 611-634

In transplacements, the eyeball to eyeball confrontation in the central square of the capital between massed protesters and serried ranks of police revealed each side's strengths and weaknesses. The opposition could mobilize massive support; the government could contain and withstand opposition pressure.<sup>10</sup>

The negotiations to bring the ANC to power were not the result of principle but necessity. As the quote from Huntington at the start of this chapter states, it is difficult to draw the line over what was intentional and what were the unintended consequences of the decisions to liberalise the system in the 1980s. The opening quote of the chapter instances Botha but the same could be said of de Klerk.

*The Modernisation of the National Party and the 1990 Election.*

In New Zealand, the fourth Labour government was losing momentum, internally divided and lacking leadership; following the ousting of finance minister Roger Douglas in 1988 and the resignation of David Lange in 1989. Geoffrey Palmer and Mike Moore both served some of the shortest tenures as prime minister in New Zealand history, adding to the sense that the government had lost control of the country. It came as no surprise when Labour lost the general election of 1990. The National party won by a landslide under the leadership of the outwardly amiable and easy-going Jim Bolger.

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<sup>10</sup> Huntington , p. 610

Labour's ambitious, some would say unrealistic, approach towards international relations was traditionally disdained by National which preferred to focus on trade and strengthening relations with traditional Western allies. In contrast, relations with decolonized Africa were historically a problem for the National Party. There were two reasons for this. The first was the trade-based small-state mentality that overlooked areas that held little trading potential. The second was that National, because of being a conservative party, was awkward in dealing with third world nations and problems in the developing world. As a result, when white rule in South Africa ended, a National government had to do more to show its good faith to the incoming ANC than a Labour government would needed to have done. National initially had greater difficulty in adjusting to these changes because of its historical views on sporting contacts and its support for the 1976 All Blacks tour of South Africa and the disastrous 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand.

Prime Minister Bolger was mainly concerned with domestic issues in New Zealand during this period and did not have the same interest in foreign affairs as Lange. He was by nature a pragmatist and a problem solver. His cabinet colleague and later successor as Prime Minister Jenny Shipley thought that Bolger was not "...a leader of ideas" but "...a leader capable of dealing with the issues of the time..."<sup>11</sup> New Zealand in 1990 was a different place than New Zealand in 1980.

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<sup>11</sup> Jenny Shipley "Reform and Reaction" in *The Bolger Years 1990-1997* ed. Margaret Clark Wellington: Dunmore Publishing 2007 p 162



The feelings of dissatisfaction and malaise that hung in the air were a common thread between the two. The 1987 stock market crash had hit the New Zealand markets harder than most other nations and the economy took longer to recover. The economic restructuring - "Rogernomics" - of the 1980s was not yielding the results its supporters had promised, and another dose of pain was on the way courtesy of Finance Minister Ruth Richardson - "Ruthanasia." The New Zealand sesquicentennial year was blighted by a series of protests and government blunders over the Treaty of Waitangi claims tribunal. The electorate was growing increasingly dissatisfied with politicians. If foreign affairs came low on the list of the government's priorities, as opposed to trade, which could boost the economy, then one can hardly blame it.

Comparing the different personalities and backgrounds of Bolger and his predecessor as National Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon can yield insight into these changes Bolger was in a number of ways a typical National MP. He came from a pleasingly bucolic background being a dairy farmer from the King Country, was conservative on social issues (was anti-abortion) and was able to project the image of a good family man (fathered nine children). Bolger had supported the 1981 Springbok tour at the time although he later changed his mind about it, and was sceptical on the reset of foreign policy by Lange's Labour government. Bolger, unlike Muldoon, despite being a supporter of the western alliance, was never really in sympathy with the 'kith and kin' line of reasoning that still resonated for many in the National Party. Almost certainly, this was because of his Irish and

Catholic background; his mother and father were immigrants from Ballyconran, County Wexford, Eire. Unlike Muldoon, who was beside himself with joy when he received his knighthood, and a very keen supporter of the monarchy, Bolger was the only National prime minister to date to refuse a knighthood and was an outspoken supporter of New Zealand becoming a republic. This was previously a position traditionally held by Labour. Muldoon was born in 1921, lived through both the Great Depression, and served in the Second World War, both of which heavily coloured his outlook on international politics and domestic policy. Bolger on the other hand was born in 1935 meaning that both the Second World War and the Great Depression were no more than childhood memories and not as much of an influence on his political thinking, as was the case interestingly enough, with David Lange (born in 1942).<sup>12</sup>

These ‘maverick’ traits of Bolger in many ways overlapped with the modernisation of the National party, which began in earnest following the electoral drubbing of 1984. It involved renewed emphasis on National’s historic liberalism and pragmatism. The modernisation of the National Party’s foreign policy was also tied to external factors. The shift in New Zealand’s stance vis-à-vis South Africa was at its root demographic and ideological. Demographic in that a newer generation of voters were coming of age, and ideological in that following the end of the Cold War, most if not all of the main planks for defending apartheid were no

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<sup>12</sup> Jim Bolger, *Bolger, A View from the Top: My Seven Years As Prime Minister*, Auckland: Viking 1998 *passim*; Barry Gustafson, *His Way: A Biography of Robert Muldoon* Auckland: Auckland University Press 2000 *passim*

longer perceived as having any weight or validity. Domestic opinion had shifted in favour of a twofold approach of sanctions and encouragement for negotiations. It was no longer politically sensible to swim against these currents, no matter how tempting it was to hold on to the past.

In comparison to the two previous governments, Prime Minister Bolger did not attempt either to run foreign policy by stealth by appointing a less than adequately qualified candidate, as was Muldoon's strategy with Warren Cooper; or simply to just take over the portfolio himself as David Lange had. Bolger was more than happy to leave foreign affairs in the hands of Don McKinnon who was in the opinion of Bolger

...a very effective and loyal deputy on whom I could place absolute trust. His non-flamboyant style meant he tended to undersell his success. His long tenure as Foreign Minister [Bolger was writing in 1998] means that he is one of the experienced wise heads on a huge range of international issues. Many in the Commonwealth believe he would make an ideal Secretary General of the Commonwealth when the position becomes vacant in 1999.<sup>13</sup>

Malcolm McKinnon states in *Independence and Foreign Policy* that, the foreign policy of the National party has not attracted as much attention from scholars as that of the Labour Party.<sup>14</sup> Passages in Malcolm Templeton's *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*, and the journal articles of David McCraw, are the major

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<sup>13</sup> Bolger, *A View from the Top*, p. 62. McKinnon did indeed become Secretary General of the Commonwealth in 2000, a position he held until 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence And Foreign Policy: New Zealand In the World Since 1935*, Auckland: Auckland University Press 1993, pp. 12-13

exceptions. Barry Gustafson has little to say about foreign relations in his history of the National Party but dedicated substantial passages to the subject in his biographies of Holyoake and Muldoon. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify a very general common theme across National administrations, namely a greater emphasis on pragmatism than was the case with Labour.

*The CHOGM meetings of the 1990s and the CODESA negotiations.*

The last time a New Zealand prime minister met his (and until 1999 they were all ‘he’s’) South African counterpart was in 1960 (Keith Holyoake and Hendrick Verwoerd respectively) when South Africa made its exit from the Commonwealth. It was appropriate that Jim Bolger met Nelson Mandela at the Harare CHOGM summit in 1991.<sup>15</sup> Mandela was not president of South Africa yet. The Commonwealth might have seemed to be an anachronism. “...a sort of rapidly concocted salve applied to the wound Britain suffered from the loss of empire after the Second World War.”<sup>16</sup> Despite this, it was for years the main forum for sanctions and negotiations on South Africa. This was because of the Commonwealth’s historic links to southern Africa and the weaknesses of the USA’s

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<sup>15</sup> Bolger, *A View from the Top*, pp. 220-222. A fictionalised meeting between Bolger and Mandela features in the film *Invictus* where both men watching the 1995 Rugby World Cup final between the All Blacks and the Springboks. Bolger unnamed and credited as “New Zealand Prime Minister” but recognisable because of the poor New Zealand accent, offers Mandela a wager of swapping South Africa’s gold for sheep. Mandela counters Bolger’s wager with an offer of a case of wine. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1057500/quotes>.

<sup>16</sup> David Adamson, *The Last Empire: Britain and the Commonwealth*, London: I B Taurus and Company 1989, p. 34

Africa policy. Because of the USA's own history of racial discrimination, the ability of the Americans to play the role of honest brokers in the region was too limited to make any difference. In addition, the USA's anti-apartheid movement was small and developed late by comparison with those in the Commonwealth countries, meaning that the sort of public pressure and political cost was simply not a factor for American policy makers that it was for say Britain, Australia, or New Zealand.

The CODESA negotiations and debates over social and economic policy became intense because both sides wanted the same things; peace, prosperity, and a common nation where all could feel they belonged and to which they could contribute. The conflict was over means not ends. It would seem that de Klerk, like many in the 1980s and 1990s, had caught the neo-liberal 'bug' and decided that now was as good a time as any to engage in liberalisation and privatisation of the South African economy. The ANC, which was livid at the thought of having what was in effect a large spoils system and the basis of any future patronage taken away from it, made a very effective appeal to black public opinion. This effectively ended any real economic reform for the near future. Accusations that de Klerk's attempts at reforming the economy were a pre-emptive attempt to nix any major redistribution were widely believed. Washington Post journalist David Ottaway, in the book *Chained Together* states that...

...de Klerk was just as crafty in his choice of words in his discussion of the economy and economic reforms. His terminology made it seem he was

addressing the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund rather than the South African parliament. He used words like *structural readjustment* and *privatization* and *deregulation* and talked of restructuring government expenditures and shrinking government control over the economy. “We still persist with the implementation of the required structural adjustments,” he said. He even seemed to have an eye on Washington, where the Regan and Bush administrations had made a fetish of supply-side economics. De Klerk promised that his government would “give particular attention to the supply side of the economy.”<sup>17</sup>

Official negotiations ran into a wall in 1992, following a series of sensational killings and massacres involving the security forces and militia groups. Following a resumption of mass protests, negotiations reverted to talks between the ANC and the Nationalists; the head of the South African Communist Party Joe Slovo was able to break the impasse in part by suggesting a sunset clause for all civil servants for the next five years. There were a great many others including the chiefs, much of the white right, and the IFP, who were refusing to participate in the broader talks that followed.

The New Zealand diplomats observing in Harare were despite numerous research trips to South Africa and fact-finding missions, uncertain and fearful about what was going to happen next.<sup>18</sup> The overall tone was pessimistic and the High Commission staff did not hold out much hope for a peaceful settlement. They were greatly concerned over the divide and lack of mutual understanding between the

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel Ottaway, *Chained Together: Mandela, De Klerk, And The Struggle To Remake South Africa*, Toronto: Random House, 1993, p. 77

<sup>18</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 42 “Political – South Africa – Sporting Contacts 1991-1994” 1991-1994

protagonists. The New Zealand High Commission staff were worried about the possibility of negotiations falling apart due to the widely held belief of South African government complicity in attacks on the ANC and its supporters.<sup>19</sup> One cable from Harare dated 26 June 1992 illustrates the on-going anxiety, regarding the possibility of a boycott of the Barcelona Olympics (some of the text is partially obscured, reconstructions are in square brackets),

First Pan African Congress (PAC) claiming to speak on behalf of all liberation movements in South Africa asserted that Black South African athletes would be included in the South African Olympic team. African boycott [of the games] would inevitably occur if South African [team went to Bar]celona. Second, senior Spanish diplomat [(who are) like us, for Security Council lobbying] told us [that the sug]gestion of African boycott is intolerable to [to them and] that Spanish government would make (had made?) that [clear] to the SAG (South African Government) already. De Klerk was in Spain last week.

In claiming ANC has strong evidence of SAG complicity in recent bloodshed, Mbeki<sup>20</sup> asserted on 26 June that it was committed to negotiation within South Africa and will keep under review how SAG reacts to ANC list of actions required to defuse violence in South Africa (circulated in OAU meeting) including disbandment of security force units. He called for strong international condemnation and “maximum pressure” on SAG so that regime was unable to block process of change. He spoke of emergence of broad-based anti-apartheid front within South Africa that extends beyond liberation movements. It was carefully constructed. Strong but non-radical speech.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 42

<sup>20</sup> Thabo Mbeki, senior ANC strategist and negotiator; later successor to Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa in 1999

<sup>21</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 42

This was at the peak of the violence and uncertainty of events in South Africa.

What this meant for the politicians back in Wellington was a need to prepare for the possibility of a military takeover in South Africa, a possible influx of refugees to New Zealand via the High Commission in Harare, or even civil war or a foreign invasion of South Africa. None of these were desired outcomes by the diplomats in Harare, who had to remain vigilant about what may happen next, but also try to use their good offices to persuade the main actors in South Africa not to stop negotiations.<sup>22</sup>

*The End of the Cold War and Namibian Independence.*

The final collapse of the Soviet Union and the Soviet system at the end of 1991 had massive ramifications for South Africa. One of the chief reasons apartheid lasted until the 1990s was that the Nationalists were able to stoke fears over an African “domino theory,” lending credence to the idea of apartheid South Africa as an anti-communist bulwark. The letters sent to the New Zealand government over the closure of the South African Consulate frequently stated that white-ruled South Africa was a bulwark against the communist influence in Africa. The removal of

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<sup>22</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 102 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 40 “Political Affairs – South Africa – Apartheid: Sports Contacts [11/1987-07/1989]” 1987-1989; ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 41 “Political – South Africa – Sporting Contacts 1989-1991” 1989-1991; ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 42



the communist factor left apartheid without what was for many a major justification. A large number of influential people believed this to be so. The influence of the South African Communist Party within the ANC had always been a point of controversy. Robert Service in his survey of world communism in the twentieth century, states that the SACP as a political force was overestimated and even the Soviets did not think much of them, the ANC generally perceived as being the 'winning horse'.<sup>23</sup> This link was personified by the SACP head and for many years chief ANC tactician Joe Slovo. The important role he played in the CODESA talks was a major source of unease for many. To judge from the contents of the Harare High Commission cables, this communist factor was not the paramount problem from an official New Zealand point of view it had once been. The problems with the IFP and rogue elements of the police, armed forces, and white rights activists being a greater cause for concern.<sup>24</sup>

Another development, in addition to the end of the Cold War, was the eventual negotiation of Namibian independence in 1990. Namibia had been a South African administered territory since the days of the Great War and the League of Nations, in the same way Samoa was under New Zealand suzerainty until 1962. There was a white settler population of both Afrikaner and German descent in

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Service, *Comrades. Communism: A World History*, London: Pan Macmillan 2007 pp. 392-393. The alliance was to a certain extent born out of necessity following the post Sharpeville clampdown, but over the years, this link to the eastern bloc had been both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, this alliance had given the ANC links to the European left which provided a much-needed source of revenue and ideas. On the other, many of the ideas that sprung from this alliance, the nationalisation of land, banks, the mines, and "monopoly capital," along with potential political reprisals and institutional purges made many nervous.

<sup>24</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 102 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 40; ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 41; ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 42

Namibia and hence it had value on demographic grounds, as it boosted the numbers of the white population of South Africa, Namibia was also a drain on the South African government's resources. South Africa's continuing refusal to recognise Namibia's independence was in direct violation of a number of UN resolutions on decolonisation. The solution of the Namibian problem gave the South African government more leeway and resources to focus on the internal situation that was becoming more precarious. Again, the reaction in New Zealand was mostly positive, as the transition was relatively smooth.

The third change in the international scene was a moderation in the stance of a great many of the liberation governments in the rest of decolonised Africa based on economic stagnation, loss of international support and internal discontent. Some were overthrown; others allowed themselves to be voted out of office. Either way, the older way of "one man, one vote, once only" was by no means dead, but no longer had to be the default mode, a very promising sign for the future

*The case for optimism...*

Changes in the international situation combined with important internal factors took much of the sting out of the South African government's predicament. The first major change was that by 1990 the majority of white South Africans, although distrustful of the liberation movements and their intentions, had moved on from a belief in 'separate development'. A younger generation of whites,

Afrikaners in particular, had not experienced the same deprivations of their elders and were embarrassed by the negative image of their country. The cultural liberalisation of white South Africa was significant and can be traced back to the introduction of television in 1975. More books and films, both foreign and local, began to get past the censors with greater frequency. A more sceptical attitude on the part of the white intelligentsias, both Anglophone and Afrikaans, meant that a great many whites were more willing to take a critical attitude towards apartheid, although it did not lessen their anxiety over the possible effects of black rule.<sup>25</sup>

South Africa's changing demographics was the more significant domestic development. The black population explosion of the second half of the twentieth century, combined with a declining white birth rate, meant that the ratio needed to maintain control over the official economy and the monopoly on violence (*pace* Weber), was becoming less sustainable.<sup>26</sup> The New Zealand's government's conservative approach and attitude of cautious optimism meant many doubted the sincerity or reality of these changes. A number of New Zealand observers would later express a great deal of admiration for Mandela's handling of the situation, including former sceptic Jim Bolger.<sup>27</sup> In the eyes of New Zealand diplomats and politicians, the possibility of Mandela becoming South Africa's next president after de Klerk was reassuring. Even a number of former sceptics were coming around to the prospect of black rule in South Africa. Appeasing the pro-South Africa groups

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<sup>25</sup> Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, pp. 593-595

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Bolger, *A View From The Top*, pp.220-226

in New Zealand became less pressing, and granted Bolger and McKinnon greater freedom to act. The anti-apartheid groups, meanwhile, were perhaps worried that their cause was coming to an end and refused to believe what was happening in South Africa was real. They continued to lobby for cancellations of a variety of resumed contacts, even though this was *against* the wishes of the liberation movements in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> In some ways, it was in keeping with the patterns and trends of the past decade but in other ways, it was a novel development that the anti-apartheid groups were being chastised by those they were, technically, meant to be supporting.

Overall, the general effect on New Zealand foreign policy on South Africa was to encourage the continuation of the Lange reset that had taken place in 1985. There was little point in reverting to older practice although there might be need to prepare for the worst.

*...And the case for pessimism.*

In spite of all the positive developments, there was still cause for concern. Civil war was a possibility as South Africa's security forces lost their internal discipline and morale was low. One of the most enduring legends of apartheid that has been actively propagated by the current South African government is that much of the violence of the period 1990-1994 was caused by a so called "third force."

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<sup>28</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, pp. 288

This was said to consist of the security forces and IFP supporters who were seen as attempting to destabilise the negotiation process and prolong the rule of the Nationalists and the white right. The third force was a myth. There was no organised campaign by the government to derail negotiations. Much of the violence was the result of the ANC's hegemonic ambitions, a police force that had been pushed to its limits of capacity and undermined by a nasty propaganda campaign, and an ethnic dimension to black politics that few wished to address. The Xhosa monopoly on senior positions within the ANC and the resulting Zulu alienation was the main cause of the ANC-IFP split, and a major factor behind the ensuing violence. Giliomee, summed up the character of much of the violence as being a fight for the prize of the South African state "...with an understaffed and often undisciplined police force on the one side, and embittered, sometimes desperate freedom fighters on the other."<sup>29</sup> New Zealand diplomats stationed in Harare were preparing for the worst and did not share the cautious optimism of their colleagues back in Wellington. The fact that the situation in South Africa did not deteriorate any more than it did owe a great deal to the good faith and honourable intentions of F.W. de Klerk. Nelson Mandela often gets the credit and the praise for the 'peaceful' and 'miraculous' end to apartheid in South Africa, de Klerk's contribution is often either ignored, diminished or derided. He did not use the

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<sup>29</sup> Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, p. 640

military as a base to negotiate from, allowed a relatively impartial investigation into the violence, and knew when to step aside with his dignity intact.<sup>30</sup>

The National government in New Zealand was never in doubt about de Klerk's intentions. There was however, a concern that the New Zealand government would be called upon for peacekeeping troops and aid money if the South African situation deteriorated further.<sup>31</sup> There was still cause for pessimism.

*The 1994 Election in South Africa.*

The 1994 South African general election was, for many, a hopeful symbol of redemption and reconciliation. In reality, it was not so much an election in that it was a contest of ideas but a confirmation of a foregone conclusion. Donald Horowitz memorably said that it was not an election but a census. Professor David Welsh went as far to write that

...For reasons of State South Africans have been required to subscribe to the latest national myth, namely that the elections were 'substantially free and fair' they were nothing of the kind and hardly any of the sanctimonious foreign observers who fell about themselves to declare it so would have for one moment have accepted the validity of an election subject to such flaws in their own country.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, pp. 637 Giliomee is however critical de Klerk's approach, viewing it as weakness and a misguided strategic blunder.

<sup>31</sup> ABHS W5579 6958 Box 103 NYP 3/7/3/1 Pt. 42

<sup>32</sup> David Welsh quoted in R.W Johnson, "How Free? How Fair?" in *Launching Democracy In South Africa: The First Open Election, April 1994* ed. R.W Johnson and Lawrence Schlemmer, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1996 p 323

There were doubts over the honesty of the vote in the rural areas and in the townships, both virtual fiefdoms of the Nationalists and its breakaway, the Conservative Party, and the ANC respectively. It was almost impossible for smaller parties such as the Democratic Party or the PAC (Pan Africanist Conference) which lacked the influence and the funds of the two larger parties to gain a foothold in the polls and the vote in KwaZulu – Natal was not honest by any stretch of the imagination.<sup>33</sup> It would have been however been politically impossible to take a second election under the circumstances and for good or ill, the results stood as they were.<sup>34</sup> If the New Zealand government, or any other western government, had questioned or objected to the results of the first full election in South Africa or refused to accept the results, the outcome almost certainly would have been renewed conflicts between the third world states and the New Zealand government, with negative consequences for New Zealand abroad. The desire to move on from the long drawn out affair of apartheid was strong in the New Zealand government. If the price meant accepting one flawed election, then that was a price they were willing to pay. It seems that the New Zealand government may have been swept up in the euphoria of the South African election. That the election went ahead at all was a major achievement. Many had thought that this would never happen at all. It was a truly inspiring sight to see the long winding queues waiting peacefully in the sun. The atmosphere of jubilation, reconciliation, and the seeming lack of rancour,

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<sup>33</sup> R.W Johnson, "How Free? How Fair?" in *Launching Democracy In South Africa: The First Open Election, April 1994* ed. R.W Johnson and Lawrence Schlemmer, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1996 p 323

<sup>34</sup> Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, pp. 646-647

was remarkable.<sup>35</sup> In New Zealand, the reaction was mostly one of relief and satisfaction that one of the twentieth century's most contentious chapters had concluded. Parliament passed a resolution of approval and many breathed a sigh of relief that it was all over. Prior to Mandela's inauguration as president, Bolger made a public statement that the 1981 Springbok tour had been a mistake and later apologised on behalf of the National party.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Sparks, *Tomorrow Is Another Country*, pp. 226-239

<sup>36</sup> Templeton, *Human Rights*, p. 290



### Conclusion

The South African experience has gripped the attention of the world because it represented the result of ethnic, tribal and religious instincts being given tragically free reign. In South Africa, what many other countries fear could happen to them was actually played out for all to see. Many New Zealanders know in their hearts that had circumstances been different in this country we could have quite easily have gone down the same road ourselves.

Chris Laidlaw, *Rights of Passage*, 1999

“National Ideals or National Interests” has been an attempt to investigate the workings of policy making in a sphere of New Zealand’s foreign relations prone to rapid changes and heated public emotions. The process was a balance of the idealistic and the pragmatic. Interaction is paramount. Far from being straight forward, decisions were often the results of accident, personal agenda, or self-fulfilling prophecies. More often than not, economic interests came first, but this did not mean that the ideals were lost in the process, merely placed on the back burner until circumstances would allow. The change in New Zealand foreign policy towards South Africa in the 1980s was as much a reaction to changes in New Zealand society as it was to third world hostility and the threat this hostility posed to both trade and multilateral efforts relating to the Nuclear-Free South Pacific campaign. Alienation of the third world states from New Zealand was not trivial; it was a very real threat to the country’s prosperity and potentially its security. The sporting controversies are the most well remembered facet of the period of New

Zealand–South Africa relations but they have to be seen in the broader context of attempts to induce successive New Zealand governments and opposition parties, Labour and National, to take a hard line on investment, trade and third party sanctions. Some groups and individuals also tried to lobby for the ban of immigration of white South Africans into New Zealand lest their 'racist' attitudes infect the rest of the population. It is ironic therefore that bilateral trade spiked following the imposition of sanctions and that immigration increased. It also shows that while sanctions might send a strong note of disapproval, they are difficult to police and if individuals are sufficiently determined, can be circumvented.

In chapter one it was argued that the decision to allow the 1981 Springbok tour to go ahead was motivated by domestic politics, particularly Muldoon's desire to secure the votes in the rural areas and the marginal suburbs. But it was the loss of the 1984 election, not the 1981 tour, which was the catalyst for change within the National Party on South Africa. Mild sanctions were imposed against UDI Rhodesia in the 1960s and 1970s, but little was done to enforce them. New Zealand's policy makers in the early 1980s erroneously concluded that such an approach was at best of limited effectiveness. From the point of view of those affected in New Zealand sanctions were more trouble than they were worth. Rhodesia is not explicitly mentioned in the primary sources, but the linkage to South Africa on sanctions is common in the secondary sources. The conclusion can be drawn that the disappointment over the 'failure' of Rhodesian sanctions must

have been a tacit assumption in the minds of the majority of New Zealand policy makers in the period. There was an unwillingness to impose sanctions unless absolute necessity demanded it.

The interlocked arguments of 'kith and kin' and anti-communism still held powerful attraction for National and for Muldoon. Following the 1981 tour, such logic was losing its attraction for many within the New Zealand government and among policy makers. Questions were raised within the National party about Muldoon's strategy and leadership, and about the damage that was being done not just to the party's image with the domestic electorate but also to New Zealand's image abroad. But it is easy to exaggerate these doubts. The majority of New Zealand policy makers and politicians were still distrustful of the liberation parties and their ties to the communist bloc. There were no attempts to cut ties, and the approach of National to dealing with the fallout was that of 'duck and weave' to avoid further trouble.

The main findings of chapter two were that the about face following the election of the Labour party in 1984 was as much about damage control as it was about the implementation of a 'principled policy'. Popular memory may like to recall the Lange approach to foreign policy as 'moral' and patriotic, but this does not apply in a number of circumstances. Lange's approach of rapprochement with black Africa and a stronger sanctions campaign was in the international context, a sensible move as the pendulum began to swing in favour of a more rigorous sanctions campaign. Policy towards South Africa also needs to be seen against the

backdrop of longer term broadening of New Zealand's external relations in regions beyond Britain, Western Europe, and North America. Although it is trite to say so, the impact of the changing nature of New Zealand's trade patterns had on the country's foreign policy cannot be underestimated. Since the British market was becoming less accessible due to the increasing integration of the European Economic Community (later European Union), new markets needed to be sought and no stone could be left unturned, meaning even long shots like Africa needed to be explored along with surer bets like the Communist Bloc, Latin America and the Middle East. It is hard to say just how beneficial the newfound interest in Africa had been, as trade was not the primary goal of the bridge building exercise, although signs were positive. Lange's tour of Africa and the opening of the Harare High Commission, both initiatives that were of interest to Lange, certainly helped to clarify where the New Zealand government stood on South Africa. This proved invaluable after the 1986 Cavaliers tour. The Labour government was often at odds with the protest movement, which was pressing for a more comprehensive programme of action against South Africa, like bans on travel and immigration. These were in fact unconstitutional and contrary to accepted definitions of New Zealand civil rights. The closure of the South African Consulate was another source of controversy for the New Zealand government. Its closure was an effective piece of political theatre as it gave the Labour government increased credibility to deal with the fallout of the 1986 Cavaliers tour. Another stroke of luck for Lange and New Zealand was that during the 1980s much of the international anger over

sporting contacts and investment was directed at Margaret Thatcher and Britain.

This shift in focus allowed New Zealand to regroup without provoking excessive external criticism.

Unlike the two National governments that bookend it, personalities take on a greater importance in the fourth Labour government, especially that of Lange himself who for the first term was both foreign minister and prime minister.

Although he stamped his personality on the portfolio, overall, like Muldoon's decision to hold the portfolios for prime minister and finance, his effectiveness was diminished by the intensive nature of both portfolios. Given his habit of exhaustively answering personally letters sent to him, Lange may have been hampered by too much trivia to take control of the bigger picture, a problem Michael Bassett makes clear in his memoir. Russell Marshall, as Foreign Minister, was able to give the portfolio the attention it needed.

Chapter three argued that it is likely that if the Nationalists in South Africa had not decided to negotiate with the liberation parties, then the New Zealand National Party would probably have maintained its established positions on South Africa. This move would not have been unanimously accepted, as there was support for the change of policy within the Party. The split was mainly generational but also geographical, with the older hard line supporters being focused mostly in rural electorates and the more liberal wing in the swing seats in the suburbs where the Party had to compete against Labour and the minor parties. The attempts to reach out to black Africa need to be seen in the broader context of the widening approach

to New Zealand foreign policy. Bolger, overall, was happy to follow the lead of the outgoing Labour government on Africa. Despite this, questions were raised over the viability and cost of the Harare High Commission. Returning to the older pattern of shying away from sanctions and allowing contacts to be maintained had been for the most part discredited. This approach was simply not politically feasible, even if it continued to enjoy support in some quarters. It was also very helpful that South Africa did not descend into a civil war as had been feared by many.

New Zealand foreign policy in this period did not 'do' doctrines. None of the three governments in power in the years 1981-1994 had an overarching strategy about South Africa. That is not to say that these parties did not have plans that were based around the expedience of the immediate present and the individual party's political philosophies. The popular perception of the actions of the New Zealand government in the years 1981-1994; that National was an active supporter of the Nationalists in South Africa and that Labour had been opponents and even 'world leaders' in the sanctions campaign, are not supported by the evidence and lack credibility. Domestic factors, such as dissatisfaction with the economy and the polarising nature of the Muldoon and Lange governments cannot be overlooked. That successive governments lacked consistent plans and policies, were subject to internal faction fighting and horse-trading with other parties, is undeniable. However, such controlled chaos was and is the norm in an open society, is a vital part of the democratic political system and not a sign of weakness or incompetence. The trick for the politicians is to make these elements work to their advantage, often

by judicious management of personalities and clever public relations to give the impression of a united front on such matters. Probably the most important, but often unarticulated, fact is that New Zealand in comparison with South Africa had a stronger tradition of civil society. This explains the reluctance of successive governments to impose direct sanctions and of the inability to persuade these groups to stop their contacts with South Africa. Governments in South Africa often made use of nominally independent bodies to pursue government policies and to provide patronage to its supporters. This kind of behaviour was for a great many in New Zealand inconceivable. It is for this reason the most meaningful opposition to contact with apartheid South Africa, sporting or otherwise came in the form of private protest lobbies such as HART, and not government action. *Finnegan vs. NZRFU* was a private suit in the civil courts, not a criminal prosecution under crown auspices. This approach, though, needs to be balanced against parochialism and unwillingness of groups like NZRFU to consider the impact maintaining contacts with South Africa would have on New Zealand's reputation abroad.

For most of the twentieth century, it is important to remember that much of the world was under the rule of one colonial power or another. Following the Second World War, one by one, these former colonies became independent states. In reality, most of these new countries became clients or allies of the USA or USSR. Through weight of numbers, this disparate and often internally divided group of nations could be a powerful bloc in its own right and frequently found itself in the position of holding the balance of power in crucial decision-making.

This voting power was important in forums like the United Nations and to a lesser extent the Commonwealth. However, this power had its limits. The Americans, a few European states and other allies including New Zealand could stop motions in these global forums supported by the majority of its members, often by virtue of the United States' veto in the UN Security Council. This growth of former colonial states in the world was a major factor in the international efforts to end apartheid. It was one of the few subjects in which smaller countries could claim influence beyond their size. This was as true of first world nations as of third world ones. This growing influence was part of the diplomatic efforts of most black African states against South Africa and later against New Zealand. International organisations, the equality of sovereign states and multilateralism have been, on paper at least, some of the most influential developments in post-war international relations. In practice, the traditional pattern of power rivalry and skulduggery often prevailed. Such behaviour was masked with courteous language and pious platitudes about fellowship of nations, liberty, and self-determination. Of course, this was to assume this was an outside problem to solve. Like most things in life, the South Africans had to solve this for themselves, and largely they did. For New Zealand, this meant that when a situation arose where these decolonised states were able to wield real influence, the threat of sanctions and of ostracism against New Zealand, the potential consequences were serious. The value in not alienating or offending these countries was a lesson that for New Zealand came almost too late.



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All newspaper articles are taken from the archive sources. Some articles and other printed sources have been placed in the category of primary sources depending on how they have been used in the text. I acknowledge that this is somewhat arbitrary but this is mostly for the sake of clarity rather than consistency. Likewise I have included a number of sources that, while they have not been cited in the text directly, I feel have contributed to the overall direction of my thesis and thus warrant inclusion. All archive sources are stored on the central office of Archives New Zealand in Wellington. Archive material with an (\*) appearing before the citation means that the particular file was on restricted access and needed MFAT permission for viewing.

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