

**UNITED NATIONS, INDIA
AND
BOYCOTT OF APARTHEID SPORT**

by
E.S. Reddy

**Former Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the
United Nations Centre against Apartheid**

*Paper presented at the Seminar of the Sports Authority of India
and the Arjuna Awardees Association, New Delhi, July 28-29,
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THE WRITER

Enuga S. Reddy's involvement with anti-apartheid activities began in 1946 when, as a student in New York, he took part in a demonstration against racial situation in South Africa. He joined the United Nations Secretariat in 1949 and dealt with the South African situation during most of the 35 years of his career as an international civil servant.

When the Special Committee against Apartheid was established in 1963, he became his first Principal Secretary. He subsequently became Director of the United Nations Centre against Apartheid and was appointed Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Centre in 1983.

Mr. Reddy has actively promoted the international campaign for the isolation of apartheid sport, in close co-operation with the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SAN-ROC), the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa and anti-apartheid movements around the world. He helped initiate the proposal for an international convention against apartheid sport in 1976. He was responsible for initiating the United Nations Register of Sports Contacts with South Africa in 1980. The publication of this register has helped greatly to reduce sports contacts with South Africa.

Mr. Reddy was chairman of the drafting committee at the International Conference against Apartheid Sport, held in Harare in November 1987. At that Conference, he was awarded the United Nations Citation for his valuable contribution to the international campaign against apartheid.

INTRODUCTION

The international boycott of apartheid sport has been a powerful means for sensitising world opinion against apartheid and in mobilising millions of people for action against that despicable system.

Hundreds of thousands of people have taken part in demonstrations against apartheid teams from South Africa, selected on the basis of race. Many thousands have even courted imprisonment in such demonstrations, especially in Western countries such as Britain, New Zealand, Australia and the United States. They have, by their actions, denounced the collaboration of their governments with apartheid South Africa, and in some cases helped change official policies.

The campaign against apartheid sport built unity and joint action among sports bodies, sportsmen and sports fans, anti-apartheid movements and governments - and set an example for similar action against other aspects of apartheid.

Apartheid sport became a national issue in several countries, like Australia and New Zealand. The mass action of students, workers, religious personalities and intellectuals opposed to any collaboration with apartheid, and the confrontations which followed helped change national attitudes to the problem of race in general.

The sports boycott was the first public action to force the arrogant white regime in South Africa to bend and make adjustments in its policy of rigid racial separation, however cosmetic they were. It showed that massive international pressure can be effective in promoting the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa.

By the early 1970s, apartheid sport was isolated internationally, but for the continued co-operation of sports bodies and sportsmen in some Western countries. The apartheid regime also began to try to restore some international contacts through misleading propaganda and the expenditure of millions of rand to entice sportsmen from abroad and build up pro-apartheid lobbies. The campaign had to focus on counteracting apartheid propaganda, upholding the Olympic principle of non-discrimination without any compromise and confronting the collaborators with apartheid sports.

The boycott is not yet complete and constant vigilance is required. But this year, the year of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SAN-ROC), significant new advances have been made and there is the prospect of plugging the remaining loopholes. For this, we need to study the past achievements and plan ahead.

This paper is by no means a full account of the role of the United Nations in the

campaign against apartheid sport and of the contribution of India. It only refers to some highlights which are relevant to the tasks ahead.

The sports boycott has involved sacrifices by many sportsmen and sports bodies around the world. Indian sports bodies and sportsmen can be proud that, acting in solidarity with Africa, they have not flinched from sacrifice in the struggle against apartheid.

But the greatest sacrifices have been by black sportsmen and women in South Africa - Africans, Coloured people and Indians - who have not only been deprived of equal opportunities, but subjected to persecution for their opposition to discrimination. It is heartening that sportsmen of Indian origin in South Africa have fully identified themselves with the struggle of the African majority for total equality and have made a significant contribution, perhaps beyond their small numbers in some respects. I refer to some of them in this paper to underline that the struggle in South Africa is India's struggle as much as it is of the continent of Africa.

I present this paper in the hope that it will help India in making its rightful contribution in the next phase of the struggle against apartheid sport and its collaborators.

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E.S. Reddy

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Racism in South Africa is all-pervasive. The white minority, constituting less than 15 percent of the population, has prospered by monopolising political and economic power and by segregating, discriminating and exploiting the rest of the people. The indigenous African majority, the Coloured people (people of mixed origin and of Malay origin) and the Indians (descendants of indentured labourers and some traders) and discriminated in employment, wages, housing, education, health, sport etc.

Apartheid was proclaimed as state policy in 1948, by a rabid racist regime which came to power that year, in a blatant and desperate attempt to streamline and entrench the abominable system of racism in the face of rising resistance in the country and a growing world abhorrence of racism. They had lost confidence in "white superiority": the blacks had to be kept down by force and denied opportunities to advance and to compete.

The struggle for freedom in South Africa has been long and difficult since white racist authorities receive support and sustenance from vested interests abroad. World support for the oppressed people and international sanctions against the apartheid regime have, therefore, been essential.

The issue of apartheid in sport is certainly not the most crucial - like the military and economic collaboration with the racist regime - but has a special significance.

Sport is governed by a moral code which prohibits racial and other discrimination. In South Africa, racial segregation is enforced in sport. The majority of the population is denied adequate facilities for sport - apart from the fact that they also suffer from poverty, and poor educational and health services which inhibit their advancement in sport. They are denied equal opportunities to compete in national and international tournaments. The issue is, therefore, clear and there can be no recognition of sport organised under the system of apartheid.

The movement for the international boycott of apartheid sport has provided an opportunity for millions of people around the world to demonstrate their abhorrence of apartheid and their support to the freedom movement in South Africa. The United Nations has encouraged and promoted the boycott. India, with its long tradition of opposition to racism in South Africa - since Mahatma Gandhi launched his first Satyagraha in that country - played an active role in the boycott campaign.

While the campaign has had great successes, the boycott is not yet complete. South Africa spends enormous sums of money on deceptive propaganda, and in enticements to sportsmen and women and sports administrators, and it has friends in the sporting world who protect it from total isolation.

All those who detest apartheid and value the moral code of sport must make a

determined effort, in the light of the experience of the campaign, to defeat the protectors of apartheid and drive it out of international sport. For so long as racist sports bodies are allowed in international sport, it ceases to be true to its code.

Legacy of Racism in Sport in South Africa

When modern sport was organised in South Africa, whites formed their own sports bodies excluding any people of non-European origin. The white sports bodies secured affiliation to international sports federations. They even staged so-called "open" championships from which blacks were excluded. Blacks were treated in effect as non-persons, as mere beasts of burden.

A few black sportsmen managed to go abroad and gain international recognition, but they could not hope to become national champions in South Africa.

There were no laws against mixed sport as such: segregation was the "custom", with a few occasional mixed games in Cape and Natal. Racism was enforced by the white sports bodies and administrators, with assistance from the government and local authorities. Resistance against discrimination in sport began soon after the Second World War when the struggle for equality assumed a mass character and spread to all fronts. The call for international sanctions against South Africa was first raised during the Indian passive resistance campaign of 1946-48 - to follow up on India's embargo on its trade with South Africa. Indian sports leaders demanded that the non-Europeans must be represented in international sport.

A Committee for International Recognition was formed by black sportsmen in 1955. The next year it was able to secure recognition of the non-racial South African Table Tennis Board (SATTB) by the International Table Tennis Federation: the white body from South Africa was expelled. (Ivor Montagu, the leader of the British body, deserves credit for this principled decision of the ITTF).

The SATTB team was able to participate in the world championships held in Stockholm in 1957, but immediately after the government began to refuse passports to its teams. It ruled that no black could compete internationally except through the white sports body.

The Committee for International Recognition was followed by the South African Sports Association (SASA) in 1958 and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SAN-ROC) in 1963 - to fight against racism in sport and press for international recognition of the non-racial sports bodies in South Africa. The South African Council on Sport (SACOS) was formed in 1973, uniting all the non-racial and anti-apartheid sports federations. Indian sportsmen and sports administrators have played an active role in these bodies.

The response of the authorities was repression against the non-racial sports movement.

Dennis Brutus, secretary of SASA and later President of SAN-ROC, was refused a passport to travel to Rome in 1960 to appeal to the International Olympic Committee. He was served with "banning orders" prohibiting him from meeting more than one person at a time: his speeches or writings could not be published. He was taken to court when he met a foreign correspondent and sentenced to prison. He managed to escape to Mozambique and tried to go to the IOC in 1963, but the Portuguese authorities handed him over to South Africa and he spent a long time in prison. John Harris, then Chairman of SAN-ROC, was also refused a passport, restricted and then detained. Utterly frustrated, he joined a white armed resistance movement and was executed in 1965. Because of the persecution, SAN-ROC was obliged to operate from London since 1966.

Meanwhile, India, the Soviet Union and other countries began to propose in international sports federations that South Africa be called upon to end racial discrimination in sport or be excluded from international competition. They were able to draw attention to the issue but had little success.

The sports administrators in the West, especially in the white Commonwealth countries, did not hesitate to accept all-white teams as representing South Africa or to send teams to South Africa to play only with the white teams.

South Africa was forced to leave the Commonwealth in 1961. It had to leave the Imperial Cricket Conference (later renamed International Cricket Conference) and the Commonwealth Games. But the white members of the Commonwealth continued to maintain sporting ties with the white racists in South Africa.

Beginning of International Action in 1963

International action against apartheid sport began in earnest in 1963, the year SAN-ROC was founded in South Africa.

Since SAN-ROC could not send representatives abroad, the British Anti-Apartheid Movement began to lobby Olympic Committees and other national sports bodies, to exclude apartheid sport from international competition. Abdul Minty, honorary secretary of the Movement, went to Baden Baden on behalf of SAN-ROC in October 1963 to contact delegations at the meeting of the International Olympic Committee.

The Afro-Asian delegations declared that they could not participate in the Olympics if South Africa was allowed to send racially selected teams in flagrant violation of the Olympic principles. Because of this threat, the IOC adopted a proposal by India which read:

"The National Olympic Committee of South Africa must declare formally that it understands and submits to the spirit of the Olympic Charter ... It must also obtain from its Government, before December 31, 1963, modification of its policy of racial discrimination in sport and competitions on its territory, failing which the South African National Olympic Committee will be forced to withdraw from the

Olympic Games."

South Africa was thus excluded from the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. Its friends in the IOC manoeuvred to have it invited to the Mexico Olympics in 1968: more than fifty Afro-Asian, Socialist and other nations threatened a boycott and forced a reversal of the decision. South Africa was formally expelled from the IOC in 1970.

Despite the decision of the IOC, there had to be a protracted struggles in many international sports federations to exclude apartheid South Africa as its friends tried every means to block action. Equally, there had to be campaigns in many countries, especially in the West, against national sports bodies which insisted on continuing sports exchanges with apartheid South Africa.

United Nations Involvement

The United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid was established in 1963 to follow the developments on the racial situation in South Africa and promote international action. The Committee was happy to note the growing campaign against apartheid sport, but took no specific action for several years. It was anxious not to give any pretext to the racists to complain that an organisation of governments was interfering in sport. But silence became impossible as the South African government blatantly interfered in the organisation of sport, resorting to brutal persecution of those demanding equality, and as boycott of apartheid sport became a powerful movement, especially in Western countries where sports bodies insisted on continuing links with the white sports bodies in South Africa.

The South African government issued a Proclamation in February 1965, under the "Group Areas Act", prohibiting any mixed sports or performances or even audiences, except by permit. In the few cases that permits were granted, the organisers were required to separate audiences by race, with six-foot wire fences, and provide separate entrances, toilets, canteens etc. In some events, only Coloured people and Indians were allowed, and Africans prohibited.

At the same time, the government began to make some so-called concessions to regain admission into the Olympics and retain bilateral sports exchanges with Western countries. In April 1967 it offered to send a mixed team to the Olympics - but to be chosen at separate trials. It also agreed not to prescribe the composition of teams invited from abroad. That became necessary as New Zealand had cancelled a rugby tour of South Africa that year when South Africa declared that Maoris would not be allowed in the team. A British cricket team was scheduled to tour South Africa in 1968, and South Africa was hoping to get other national teams to tour South Africa. If South Africa were to object to people of mixed blood in the foreign teams, that might have had political repercussions.

But Prime Minister Vorster made it very clear that this applied only to countries with which South Africa had traditional relationships. "We have no relations with West Indies,

India and Pakistan... we had no such ties in the past, nor did I regard it as necessary that we should have them in future."

The MCC, the English cricket association, obliged the Vorster regime by not including Basil d'Oliveira, a Coloured cricketer, in its team. There was a public uproar as he was a logical choice, and the MCC invited him to replace an injured player. Vorster then banned the tour.

That infuriated British public opinion and gave a fillip to the boycott campaign. A "Stop the Seventy Tour" Committee was formed, with Peter Hain as Chairman, as the MCC persisted in inviting the white cricket team from South Africa in 1970, Opposition became widespread.

A South African rugby tour of 1969 became a dress rehearsal. Large demonstrations took place wherever they went, and matches had to be played behind barbed wire fences.

The MCC, however, persisted with its plans, ignoring all protests and even an appeal by Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Reducing the tour to only 12 matches on 8 barricaded grounds, it had them patrolled for months in advance.

India and several African and other countries announced that they would not participate in the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh in July 1970 as the South Africans would be touring England. With the prospect of a fiasco in Edinburgh and responding to demands in the Parliament and by the public, the British Government formally asked the MCC to withdraw the invitation to South Africa.

Meanwhile, in 1968, the United Nations General Assembly requested all States and organisations "to suspend cultural, educational, sporting and other exchanges with the racist regime and with organisations or institutions in South Africa which practise apartheid."

Three years later, in 1971, the General Assembly adopted a special resolution on apartheid in sports - resolution 2775 D (XXVI) - calling on all sports organisations to uphold the Olympic principle of non-discrimination, expressing regret that some sports organisations had continued exchanges with racially selected South African teams and commending the international campaign against apartheid in sports.

With these decisions, United Nations began active support to the boycott of apartheid sport. Working in close co-operation with SAN-ROC, the anti-apartheid movements, and the Supreme Council on Sport in Africa, the Special Committee against Apartheid publicised and denounced all sports exchanges with South Africa, encouraged groups demonstrating against apartheid teams and contacted governments and sports bodies to take action. It organised a series of meetings at which sports bodies, anti-apartheid movements and committed governments could consult and decide on strategy. Apartheid sport became a public issue in every country with which South Africa sought sports exchanges.

Great successes were achieved, on the one hand by public action, especially in countries where the governments were against anti-apartheid action, and on the other by the willingness of Afro-Asian, Socialist and other countries to boycott international events to which apartheid South Africa was invited.

South Africa staged its own Games in 1969 and invited athletes from many Western countries. Many of those who initially accepted withdrew under public pressure.

In 1970 South Africa was expelled from the Olympic Movement. It was also excluded from most of the major world championships. Altogether 13 white South African sports bodies had been expelled or suspended from international sports bodies by that year. Apartheid South Africa's international contacts in amateur sport were reduced to tennis and golf and various minor sports, and bilateral exchanges with a few countries in cricket and rugby. But the struggle had to go on, and the next battlegrounds were in Australia and New Zealand.

Massive anti-apartheid demonstrations greeted the South African rugby tour of Australia in 1971. Initiated by the Australian Union of Students, the campaign received support by trade unions, churches and other organisations. The leader of the Labour Party, Gough Whitlam, opposed the tour and declared:

"Australians should never let an afternoon's entertainment blind them to a lifetime's repression for another nation."

R.J. Hawke, the leader of the trade union movement and now Prime Minister, actively opposed the tour.

The South African team had to be transported in Australian Air Force planes as the trade unions refused to service planes or trains transporting them. Seven hundred people were arrested and many were injured because of police brutality against demonstrators. The State of Queensland declared a ten-day State of Emergency during the tour, provoking a general strike by trade unions.

The Conservative Government hoped to arouse racist passions and win the next elections on the "law and order" issue. But its calculations backfired. The South African cricket tour, scheduled for later that year, had to be cancelled. A new Labour Government, headed by Gough Whitlam, came to power and announced an anti-apartheid sports policy in December 1972: that policy was followed even by subsequent Conservative Governments. The anti-apartheid sports action of 1971 had a lasting effect in educating Australian opinion on the issue of race.

New Zealand proved more difficult though public opinion there was equally aroused against apartheid sport. Apartheid sport was a national issue for many years

The New Zealand national rugby team, the All Blacks, toured South Africa in June-

July 1970, despite protests by many groups in New Zealand and appeals from the United Nations. South Africa had agreed to treat Maoris in the team and Maori spectators as "honorary whites." While major demonstrations could be held against visiting South African teams, it was difficult to organise equally effective protests against teams going to South Africa.

The South African rugby tour of New Zealand, scheduled for 1973, became the first real test of strength. Strong opposition was expressed by numerous organisations, some of which vowed non-violent disruption of the matches, but the rugby authorities remained stubborn and the Conservative government refused to intervene.

In April 1972, the Supreme Council on Sport in Africa announced that African Commonwealth countries would boycott the Commonwealth Games in Christchurch in 1974 if the tour went ahead. India confirmed that it would also boycott the Games.

A Labour Government, headed by Norman Kirk, came to power soon after and decided to stop the tour "in the larger interests of New Zealand."

But that did not end the problem in New Zealand.

The New Zealand rugby federation decided on a tour of South Africa in 1976, despite the opposition of the Labour Government and the public. It became adamant after a Conservative Government, headed by R.D. Muldoon, came to power in November 1985. Protests by many New Zealand organisations and numerous appeals from abroad proved of no avail. The Prime Minister even insulted Chief Abraham Ordia, President of the Supreme Council on Sport in Africa, in June 1976 when he visited New Zealand for consultations.

The tour took place from late June, even as there was a national uprising in South Africa, following the massacre of hundreds of African schoolchildren in Soweto. Indignant at this tour, a number of governments and sports organisations decided to boycott sporting events with New Zealand.

The issue came up soon after at the Montreal Olympics in August 1976. The New Zealand Olympic Association refused even to dissociate itself from the action of the rugby federation. African nations then withdrew from the Olympics in protest against the participation of New Zealand, and they were joined by Guyana and Iraq. The boycott had great effect in focussing attention on the issue of collaboration with apartheid sport.

Canada and other countries recognised that many other events, including the Commonwealth Games due to take place in Canada next year, would be endangered. To avert a crisis, the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government adopted the "Gleneagles Agreement" in June 1977, undertaking to take "every practical step to discourage contact or competition of their nationals with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa." A similar declaration was adopted next year by Sports Ministers of the members of the Council of Europe. These declarations helped greatly to

reduce sporting exchanges with South Africa.

The Muldoon Government in New Zealand, however, interpreted the agreement in the most restrictive way. It did little to discourage sporting exchanges with South Africa except for formal statements drawing attention to the Gleneagles Agreement.

The issue again came to a head in 1981 when the South African Springbok rugby team toured New Zealand. There were mass demonstrations and non-violent disruption of matches all over the country and some two thousand people were jailed.

The Conservative Party was defeated in the next elections in 1983 and the new Labour Government, led by David Lange, took active steps to prevent sports exchanges with South Africa.

Meanwhile, South Africa developed sports exchanges, especially in rugby, with France, the United States and other countries. Rugby authorities in these countries were insensitive to all appeals.

After public opposition and international representations, the French Government stopped the South African rugby tour of France in 1979 and announced that it was inappropriate for South African teams to tour France. It stopped a French rugby tour of South Africa in 1983.

In the United States, a South African rugby tour in 1981 was greeted by mass demonstrations. That put an end to similar tours.

To sum up, with 25 years of effort by many governments, sports organisations, anti-apartheid movements and others, the position has been reached where South Africa is excluded from the Olympics and most of the main international sports federations. Most governments are committed to prohibit or discourage sporting exchanges with South Africa.

But the boycott is, however, not yet complete. Governments of some countries, especially the United States, take no action, and some Governments, like that of Britain, take only a minimum of action. South Africa is able to maintain international contacts in rugby, cricket and several minor sports which are controlled by Western bodies, and in professional sports, especially tennis, golf and boxing.

(It is essential to clarify one aspect. The boycott of apartheid sport was intended to oppose apartheid sport and support non-racial sport in South Africa. Means for co-operation with non-racial sports bodies were discussed on several occasions. But the non-racial South African Council on Sport advised us that in order to prevent any manoeuvres by the apartheid bodies, there should be no sports exchanges with South Africa at present. The non-racial bodies were prepared to make the sacrifice and considered the boycott campaign the best assistance to them.)

Action against Collaborators with Apartheid Sport

By mid-1970s it became clear that efforts to boycott and exclude South African apartheid teams were not enough.

On the one hand, a number of sports bodies and sportsmen, especially in some Western countries, continued to support apartheid sport and play in South Africa. Many English cricketers, for instance, choose to spend their winter months in South Africa. Some international sports bodies, like the International Tennis Federation, not only rejected proposals to exclude South Africa but tried to penalise countries which boycotted South Africa.

On the other hand, South Africa, in its desperation, began to offer fabulous sums of money to sportsmen to play in South Africa. Some sportsmen succumbed to the temptations, especially because of unemployment. New types of action were required and the United Nations responded with the International Convention against Apartheid in Sports and a register of sportsmen and women playing in South Africa. Both involved, in a sense, a "third party boycott" - boycott not of apartheid South Africa alone but of those co-operating with apartheid sports.

Some African countries had spontaneously decided on a third party boycott already in 1970 and were soon joined by some Caribbean countries: they refused to allow sportsmen who competed in South Africa from playing in their countries. After the New Zealand rugby tour of South Africa and the boycott of the Montreal Olympics, there were moves for concerted international action.

International Convention against Apartheid in Sport

In May 1976, in a message to a United Nations Seminar in Havana, Prime Minister Michael Manley of Jamaica suggested an international convention against apartheid in sport, which would provide for action against those collaborating with apartheid sport. The proposal was endorsed by the Seminar and then by the Non-aligned Summit in Colombo in August 1976. On the proposal of the Non-aligned countries, the United Nations General Assembly appointed a committee to draft the Convention. (India was a member of the Committee.)

As an interim measure, the Committee prepared an International Declaration against Apartheid in Sport which was approved by the General Assembly on December 14, 1977.

The drafting of the Convention, however, proved difficult because of apprehensions about a legally-binding provision on "third party boycott". The Western countries were, in general, opposed to the Convention. The Soviet Union and several other countries expressed fear that the third party boycott would be complicated and might disrupt international sport.

After extensive consultations over several years, the Committee completed the draft Convention in 1985. It was approved by the General Assembly and opened for signature on May 16, 1986. Within one year the Convention was signed by 71 States and ratified by 21.

The Convention lays down that the States parties should prohibit entry into their country of sportsmen who participate in sports competitions in South Africa, or sportsmen or administrators who invite apartheid sports bodies or teams officially representing South Africa. They also undertake to secure sanctions against them by the relevant international sports bodies.

Register of Sports Contacts with South Africa

The United Nations "Register of Sports Contacts with South Africa" - a record of sports exchanges with South Africa and a list of sportsmen who have participated in sports events in South Africa - was initiated in 1980 and proved an effective instrument to discourage collaboration with apartheid sport.

Earlier, for many years, SAN-ROC, anti-apartheid movements and the United Nations had made appeals to sportsmen intending to compete in South Africa, but there was no follow up if the appeals were rebuffed. The matter was soon forgotten. The Special Committee against Apartheid initiated the register in 1980. so that the names of violators of the boycott would at least be kept on record. If they thought their decision was proper, as some of them claimed, surely they could not object to being named.

The register had an immediate effect. Though the United Nations did not recommend any specific action by governments or organisations. many African and other countries began to refuse visas to those on the register or otherwise prevent them from playing in their countries. Sportsmen had to choose between making money from apartheid, showing contempt to the oppressed people, and playing in countries committed against apartheid.

In order to assist those who were unaware of the issues or regretted their errors, the Special Committee agreed, at the request of SAN-ROC, to delete from the register the name of any sportsman who undertook not to play in South Africa again. The register became a tool for persuasion as well for retaliation.

As revulsion against apartheid spread around the world in recent years, more countries have begun to take action against those on the register. Hundreds of city councils and local authorities in Britain and other Western countries deny use of their sports facilities to persons on the United Nations register.

The initiation of the register helped dissuade many sportsmen from accepting invitations and even lucrative offers from South Africa. Scores of sportsmen have given undertakings not to play again in South Africa.

Commendation of Sportsmen against Apartheid

While taking action against collaborators with apartheid sport, the United Nations has publicised and commended the action of those who have promoted the boycott of apartheid sport and rejected enticements from apartheid. The Special Committee has presented citations to a number of them. It invited several sportsmen to its meetings in recognition of their contribution - among them two Indians, Bishen Singh Bedi in 1982 and Vijay Amritraj in 1988.

Task Ahead

Action against apartheid sport must be continued on several fronts.

South Africa must be expelled from the international sports federations of which it is still a member. Very firm action must be taken against these bodies and administrators who are so impudent as to penalise countries boycotting apartheid South Africa, by changing venues of meetings and championships unless the host country grants visas to South African racists and imposing fines on teams which refuse to play against racially selected teams claiming to represent South Africa.

Another issue is that of "passports of convenience". A number of South African sportsmen have obtained foreign passports while retaining their South African nationality, with the permission of the apartheid regime, and infiltrate into international sport. They are aided in this by some governments and interests.

Zola Budd, a South African runner, was able to obtain British nationality within days in 1984 and enabled to compete in the Olympics and other events as a member of the British team, while retaining her South African links. It was only because of persistent international protests that the International Amateur Athletics Federation took action recently.

The Government of Zimbabwe announced in November 1987 that it would withdraw passports of former Rhodesians who use the document to compete in international sport for South Africa. Other countries, especially the United Kingdom, must be pressed to take similar action.

Co-operation of committed governments and organisations with SAN-ROC must be further strengthened to launch an offensive for the total isolation of apartheid sport.

As a result of the campaign since 1963, an overwhelming majority of countries and sports bodies are now committed against apartheid sport. It is now possible to take firm and determined action to make the boycott complete.

The declaration of the International Olympic Committee on June 21, 1988, against "apartheid in sport" - urging all members of the Olympic Movement, particularly the

International Sports Federations, to consider further action for the total isolation of apartheid sport is an important development in this connection.

The friends of the racists have never been amenable to persuasion or half-hearted measures. They must be confronted. This is particularly important in cricket and tennis which are played in many countries totally committed against apartheid sport. If some of the Western sports bodies which dominate the international bodies in these codes threaten disruption, there should be no attempt to appease them; their bluff must be called.

The experience of India, which pioneered the boycott of apartheid in many aspects, is instructive. It was often able to secure international action, even though after a lapse of time, by being firm on the boycott. Her hesitation in recent years to ban collaborators with apartheid sport, and her acceptance of equivocal assurances, have proved futile and embarrassed the country more than once. It has become imperative for the government and sports bodies to formulate and proclaim a firm policy in order to rebuff the allies of apartheid. The campaign against apartheid sport must be seen clearly as a contribution to freedom in South Africa and Namibia, for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in sport and for the promotion of sport as a means for strengthening friendship and co-operation at national and international levels.

The non-racial sports organisations in South Africa have recognised this. While exposing and denouncing the manoeuvres of the apartheid regime in announcing spurious adjustments in its policy to deceive world opinion, the South African Council on Sport declared in 1976 that "there can be no normal sport in an abnormal society." There can be no equality in sport so long as there is gross inequality in society. Apartheid must be abolished and that has become more urgent than ever as it is causing enormous destruction and suffering in the whole of southern Africa.

PERSECUTION OF NON-RACIAL SPORTS LEADERS

The South African regime has prevented non-racial sports leaders from attending meetings of international sports federations by withdrawing their passports. Its police have often tried to intimidate them.

The regime has persecuted several of these sports leaders by serving "banning orders" on them under the "Suppression of Communism Act" even though they were not active in any political organisation. These arbitrary orders involve stringent restrictions which even make normal social life impossible. The victims cannot meet more than one person at a time, cannot communicate with other "banned persons" and cannot be quoted in the press.

For instance, George Singh, a football star, sports administrator and an early leader in the struggle against apartheid sport, was served with five-year banning orders in 1964.

M.N. Pather, President of the South African Bodybuilding and Weightlifting Association, Secretary of the Southern Africa Lawn Tennis Union and Vice-President of the South African Soccer Federation, was elected secretary of the South African Council of Sport, the umbrella organisation of non-racial sports bodies in 1973. He was refused a passport in 1975. He obtained a passport later, but the police seized it in June 1980 when he was due to leave for the United Nations for consultations.

The passport of Morgan Naidoo, President of the South African Amateur Swimming Federation, was withdrawn in August 1973 when he planned to attend the meeting of the International Swimming Federation in Belgrade. At that meeting, the ISF expelled the all-white South African Amateur Swimming Union. The apartheid regime then took revenge on Morgan Naidoo: it served him with five-year banning orders in November 1973.

SEWSUNKER "PAPWA" SEWGOLUM

Sewsunker "Papwa" Sewgolum, an Indian golf caddie, won the Natal Open Golf Championship in 1963. The whites had been pressed to allow him to compete, after he had won the Dutch Open Golf Championship in 1959 and 1960.

He was obliged to receive the trophy in heavy rain outside the clubhouse, while the whites were celebrating inside, as he was not allowed under the law to enter the clubhouse.

This incident received world-wide publicity and helped promote action against apartheid in sport. But it did not help Papwa much.

Papwa was runner-up in the South African Open Championship later in 1963. But from then on, he was banned successively from every major tournament in South Africa. His career as a golf champion ended because of apartheid.

JASMAT DHIRAJ

Jasmat Dhiraj, an Indian tennis champion from Johannesburg, went to Britain in 1966 under the sponsorship of non-racial South African Lawn Tennis Union. He won the North of England Men's Doubles Championship; and the South of England Singles Championship and Mixed Doubles Championship.

But he could not compete in the South African Open Tennis Championships because the white South African tennis union would not accept him. He was obliged to remain in Britain.

Dhiraj is a leader of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SAN-ROC) which fights for non-racialism in sports and promotes the total boycott of apartheid sport.

Proposals for the expulsion of South Africa have been repeatedly rejected in the International Lawn Tennis Federation because of the system of voting and the insensitivity of its leaders to the issue of racism.

Mr. Dhiraj was invited by the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid in March 1978 to speak at a press conference calling for the expulsion of South Africa from the Davis Cup tennis tournaments.

VIJAY AMRITRAJ

Speech at the special meeting of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid, May 6, 1988

My first official contact with South Africa came in 1974, at the age of 20, when as India's No. 1 tennis player, I had led my country to the Davis Cup final for only the second time since independence. We had beaten some strong nations to reach the final and felt that we had a better than even chance to beat South Africa and win the Davis Cup for my country which had always been my dream ever since I had started the game.

Until then I only knew what little I had read about South Africa's apartheid policies. Now, coming in direct contact with that country made me take a much closer look at South Africa, its policies, its people, its association and contact with the West in every walk of life and the incredible struggle of the non-white people of that country for what the rest of the world takes for granted. Morally, it was an easy decision to make not to play the final but as a sportsman two thoughts kept coming into my mind. One was that we might never play in another final and the second was that we might never have as good a chance to win the Davis Cup.

With the Government of India's strong stand against apartheid we chose not to play. As a sportsman at age 20 I felt a little disappointed but my heart felt wonderful that I had somehow supported the struggle of a people fighting just to live like everybody else. Because of our default in that final it took just a couple of years to expel South Africa from the Davis Cup competition and thirteen years for my dream to come true and play in another final.

Since that time I have watched closely with growing pain at the violence and deaths of so many human beings, not because of a national disaster but because of an adamant and stubborn thinking of a very small minority.

Sport is big business now and not just a game any more and sportsmen and women must realise the world over that with fame and fortune come an incredible responsibility which may affect the lives of people in different countries. It is very easy to say "let us keep sports out of politics", but practically that is just not possible in certain cases. There are some issues that we must support or oppose, because we must clearly understand in our minds that we are first human beings before being sportsmen or women....

Over the years as a professional, I have been made several offers including vast sums of money to play exhibition matches in South Africa which I have declined. I feel that every individual, important or unimportant, artist, diplomat, professional or sportsman, has a certain responsibility towards his fellow men and if I may add, hopefully, a conscience. It is thus up to each of us to contribute in our own way towards a better world - a world of equality, of dignity, of freedom.

