British citizens protest apartheid South African sports tours (Stop the Seventy Tour), 1969-1970

Timing
1969 to: 1970

Location and Goals
Country: United Kingdom

Goals:

General: To withhold the United Kingdom's support of South African apartheid by isolating South African sports teams from competition in Great Britain

Methods
Methods in 1st segment:
Methods in 2nd segment:
Methods in 3rd segment:
Methods in 4th segment:
Methods in 5th segment:
Methods in 6th segment:

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 011. Records, radio, and television
- 024. Symbolic lights
- 039. Parades
- 061. Boycott of social affairs
- 063. Social disobedience
- 138. Sitdown
- 162. Sit-in
- 171. Nonviolent interjection
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction

Segment Length:
Approximately 2 months
Classifications
Classification:
Change
Defense
Cluster:
Democracy
Human Rights
National/Ethnic Identity
Group characterization:
- Catholic church members
- Social activists
- rugby fans
- rugby players

Leaders, partners, allies, elites
Leaders:
Peter Hain, head of Stop the Seventy Tour (STST)
Partners:
Fair Cricket Campaign
External allies:
Cricket correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, E.W. Stanton; former England captain Ted Dexter; John Arlott of the BBC; London Branch of national Union of Journalists; the Labour government; Institute of Race Relations; Thirteen African countries; The British Council of Churches
Involvement of social elites:
The 1970 Cricket Fund recruited many well-known personalities to oppose the STST, while the STST actually gained many elite recruits to support their side, including various members of Parliament, prominent cricket players, and newspaper correspondents

Joining/exiting order of social groups
Groups in 1st Segment:
Groups in 2nd Segment:
Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:
Additional notes on joining/exiting order:
Joining order not known
Segment Length:
Approximately 2 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence
Opponents:
South African apartheid government (National Party); Freedom under Law (FUL), an English group formed to
file lawsuits against demonstrators; South Africa Springbok rugby team
Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Not known
Campaigner violence:
On one occasion, sharp tacks were placed on a rugby field to be played on by the Springboks. Also, the
Springbok tour bus was hijacked but no one was injured.
Repressive Violence:
Not known

**Success Outcome**
Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
6 points out of 6 points
Survival:
1 point out of 1 points
Growth:
3 points out of 3 points
Total points:
10 out of 10 points
Notes on outcomes:
The campaign created considerable chaos during the 1969-1970 Springbok rugby tour and led to the
cancellation of the 1970 South African cricket tour in Great Britain.

The world voiced its opposition to the National Party’s apartheid government ruling in South Africa in a new
way in 1964. International sports tours and matches had become a focal point of cultural identity for whites in
South Africa. Victories, to them, demonstrated a kind of symbolic power of white South Africa. White elite
South Africa was considered “sports mad.” Once this became apparent to other countries in objection to the
political state of South Africa, they found a way to use the situation to send a message. In 1964, South Africa
was suspended from the International Olympic Committee and subsequently declined participation from the
Tokyo Olympic games. After 1970 almost every South African sport had been isolated from all levels of
international competition. However, the pride of the Afrikaners had yet to be diminished. Rugby became an
important battleground for the anti-apartheid movement around the world.

In Great Britain, the “D’Oliveira Affair” brought the topic of sporting competition with South Africa to the
foreground in 1967. The apartheid government had announced the inability of colored player Basil D’Oliveira
to compete in the upcoming English cricket tour of South Africa against their all-white teams. Strong British
opinion on the announcement came from two different groups of people. The first group supported competition
with South Africa normally but were appalled at the attempt to impose apartheid laws on their own country. The
second group was those in opposition of apartheid, generally political Leftists. As England canceled their tour in
response to the announcement, opinion on sporting competition and apartheid splintered further throughout
Great Britain.

were South Africa’s national rugby union team, made up entirely of Afrikaners and worshiped by the white
ruling elite of South Africa. Once the tour was announced, the strongest opposition came from the political Left.
The front-page article of the New Statesman read “Apartheid is not a game,” declaring that the tour should not
go on. Defense of the rugby tour came generally from the political Right. An article written in The Spectator
called attention to the fact that Great Britain competes with many other oppressive nations and no protests
ensue.

Things began to really escalate, though, once a South African cricket tour of Great Britain was announced to take place in 1970, following the rugby tour. A sector of the British population was already upset about the approaching rugby tour, but with the “D’Oliveira Affair” still fresh in their minds, the idea of hosting a cricket tour for South Africa was an outrage. Those in opposition began to see the up-and-coming rugby tour as an opportunity to set the tone for the cricket tour. They would give the South African government, along with the British government, a preview of the resistance to come during the cricket tour with their actions during the rugby tour.

The overall campaign was a unique one because of it’s scattered participants. Different sectors of the British population got involved in the protest. Nineteen-year-old Peter Hain emerged as the chairman of the Stop the Seventy Tour campaign in Great Britain. As mentioned above, the campaign was treating the rugby tour as a dress rehearsal for the cricket tour. The ultimate goal was for a cancellation of the cricket tour due to the demonstrations carried out during the rugby tour. Hain had lived in South Africa up until his parents, anti-apartheid protestors, were expelled from the country because of their political activity. He got involved in anti-apartheid protests in Great Britain and was given the nickname “Hain the Pain” during his organizing in the 1969-70 Springbok tour. The Catholic Church in Great Britain was another force in the campaign against the rugby tour. The Church added legitimacy to the campaign. The most distinguished group acting under the Church was the Bishop of Woolwich’s “Fair Cricket” campaign. Last of the categorized campaigners were those already committed to the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Great Britain.

Although these groups have been designated as participants, it’s hard to know who exactly was involved in which demonstrations during the campaign. The fact that there were many Brits opposed to the tours, who did not explicitly identifying themselves, further blurs campaigner specifics. Another result of the lack of unity among the opposition is an unclear timeline of the demonstrations. Methods of the campaign are known, but the time and often place within the tour is not. Most often, demonstrators invaded the rugby pitch while the Springboks played various British opponents and the game would have to be stopped. As a result, matches had to be played on fields surrounded with barbed wire fence. Campaigners glued shut the hotel door locks of South African players. In December 1969, a few Springbok players had boarded their bus in Twickenham, England, when it was hijacked. Player Tommy Bedford got his hands on the driver and forced a crash. No one was injured. Once, protestors placed sharp thumbtacks on one of the rugby fields.

Campaigners held an anti-apartheid torchlight procession when the team was in Coventry, England. Demonstrator Adrian Smith recounted, “I was starting to become politically aware and, as a rugby fan, I knew how important the game was to the Afrikaaners. It was time for a lot of us to make a stand. I’ll never forget the look of amazement on the Springbok players’ faces as they stood on their hotel balcony watching us parade underneath.”

Sometimes the Springboks faced demonstrations from the teams they played in the tour. Welsh flanker John Taylor abstained from playing in the match against South Africa. Coach Carwyn James refused to come out of the locker room during his team’s match in protest.

Regardless of an unclear timeline, the campaign was successful as “one of the most bitter sporting tours in the history of this country (England).” Not only that, the cricket tour scheduled for 1970 was cancelled due to the potential for similar demonstrations. This campaign’s victory was followed by numerous other anti-apartheid protests in sports competition.
In 1960, cricket players in Great Britain individually boycotted matches against South Africa. (1)

This campaign influenced the New Zealand Anti-Springbok Rugby Tour Protests, 1981 and the case "Australians campaign against South African rugby tour in protest of apartheid, 1971" (2)

Sources:


Additional Notes:

Why the classification was both “Social Defense” and “Social Change,” above:

In the Stop the Tour Campaign the campaigners were determined to keep the racist apartheid out of their country and in that sense were defending their country’s formal commitment to racial equality. Another theme among the campaigners was the potential use of Britain’s boycott to pressure the South African government to give up apartheid, a goal representing Social Change.

Regarding the role of the mainstream media in this case: although the STST faced a favorable political situation, the press was not always helpful. Peter Hain complains in Don’t Play with Apartheid about how hard the press made carrying out the nonviolent strategy. If the demonstration was big and peaceful, the press would hardly mention the event, and if the demonstration actually disrupted the match, the newspapers would report that the crowd was unruly and that the courageous police had to save the day. The way the press handled much of the reporting made nonviolent strategy a challenge at times.