

Boycotts and Sanctions against South Africa: An International History, 1946-1970

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation analyzes the role of various kinds of boycotts and sanctions in the strategies and tactics of those active in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. What was unprecedented about the efforts of members of the global anti-apartheid movement was that they experimented with so many ways of severing so many forms of interaction with South Africa, and that boycotts ultimately came to be seen as such a central element of their struggle. But it was not inevitable that international boycotts would become indelibly associated with the struggle against apartheid. Calling for boycotts and sanctions was a political choice. In the years before 1959, most leading opponents of apartheid both inside and outside South Africa showed little interest in the idea of international boycotts of South Africa. This dissertation identifies the conjuncture of circumstances that caused this to change, and explains the subsequent shifts in the kinds of boycotts that opponents of apartheid prioritized. It shows that the various advocates of boycotts and sanctions expected them to contribute to ending apartheid by a range of different mechanisms, from bringing about an evolutionary change in white attitudes through promoting the desegregation of sport, to weakening the state's ability to resist the efforts of the liberation movements to seize power through guerrilla warfare. But though the purpose of anti-apartheid boycotts continued to be contested, boycott had, by 1970, become established as the defining principle of the self-identified anti-apartheid movement.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
AAPC	All-African People's Conference
ACOA	American Committee on Africa
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
AFSAR	Americans for South African Resistance
ANC	African National Congress
ARCA	Archive for Contemporary Affairs
BAT	British American Tobacco
CAA	Council on African Affairs
CAO	Committee of African Organisations
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CNETU	Council of Non-European Trade Unions
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
FASA	Football Association of South Africa
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IAD	International Affairs Department
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

ICJ	International Court of Justice
INC	Indian National Congress
IOC	International Olympic Committee
ITTF	International Table Tennis Federation
JPRC	Joint Passive Resistance Council
KFL	Kenya Federation of Labour
LBJ	Lyndon Baines Johnson
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MCC	Marylebone Cricket Club
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAHECS	National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre
NAZ	National Archives of Zambia
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NIO	Natal Indian Organisation
NSF	National Security Files
NUS	National Union of Students
NRC	Native Representative Council
NSCF	National Student Christian Federation
OAU	Organization of African Unity

PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PAFMECA	Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa
PHM	People's History Museum
PNP	People's National Party
PRAAD	Public Records and Archives Administration Department
PREP	Peace Research and Education Project
RG	Record Group
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADET	South African Democracy Education Trust
SAFA	South African Football Association
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SANROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SAOCGA	South African Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association
SASA	South African Sports Association
SASF	South African Soccer Federation
SATTB	South African Table Tennis Board
SATTU	South African Table Tennis Union
SAUF	South African United Front
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
STST	Stop the Seventy Tour
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress

TIYC	Transvaal Indian Youth Congress
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UAW	United Automobile Workers
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UKNA	United Kingdom National Archives
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNO	United Nations Organization
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USNA	United States National Archives
USNSA	United States National Student Association
UTC	United Tobacco Company
WFDY	World Federation of Democratic Youth
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

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When South African anti-apartheid activist Albie Sachs went into exile in 1966, he entered a Ph.D. program in Britain. Doctoral study, he later joked, was just as stressful as underground political work in South Africa had been: “I discovered... this whole community of Ph.D. students, you get it all over the world, they all have that same rather haunted look, because it never leaves you, instead of going to bed worrying about the Special Branch, you’re going to bed worrying about your Ph.D.”¹ That my own doctoral experience was not nearly so terrifying – and was, indeed, tremendously enjoyable – is due to the support of many individuals and institutions.

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¹ “First Recording: Albie Sachs,” vol. 13, Hilda Bernstein Interviews on the Experience of Exile, UWC-Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town.

I did not enter the doctoral program at Columbia intending to write about South Africa or the anti-apartheid movement. Subsequently, Marcia Wright and Gail Gerhart were patient and generous in orienting me in South African history and historiography. In my final year, I have benefited from the advice of Saul Dubow, who proved that “dream mentor” was not an empty phrase.

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INTRODUCTION

Strategies of Struggle

By the time Nelson Mandela was elected the first black president of South Africa, in non-racial democratic elections in 1994, millions of people around the world had taken part in some kind of anti-apartheid activity. So had many governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations of all kinds. Indeed, it has already become a cliché to observe that the struggle against apartheid was one of the largest, most widely supported, most significant, and most influential transnational movements of the twentieth century. At the heart of this globe-spanning mobilization was the concept of boycott: the refusal to interact or engage – and efforts to encourage or coerce others not to interact or engage – with another entity, its products, institutions, or representatives. By the 1970s, acceptance of the principle that apartheid South Africa should be boycotted was how the self-identified anti-apartheid movement defined itself.

Efforts to boycott South Africa took many forms. These included consumer boycotts of South African goods such as fruit, wine, cigarettes, and lobster tails; sanctions (boycotts enforced by governments) on trade and investment with South Africa; diplomatic boycotts (the refusal to have diplomatic relations with South Africa and the expulsion of South Africa from intergovernmental organizations); sports, cultural, and academic boycotts of interaction with South African institutions or individuals in those spheres; disinvestment (boycotts undertaken by firms withdrawing or liquidating their investments in the country); divestment (the boycott of publicly-held corporations by shareholders) against firms with investments in South Africa;¹ industrial boycotts (the refusal by

¹ The terms “disinvestment” and “divestment” are now often used interchangeably. In this dissertation I distinguish them using the definitions given here. This is how the two terms were usually used by activists and observers in South Africa and the United States during the period under study. (In Britain, “disinvestment” was often used to denote both forms of action).

organized labor to handle or transport South African goods, sometimes also referred to as “black bans” or “worker sanctions”).

Some of these forms of action were novel: though there had been calls in the United States for boycotts of sporting, cultural, and academic interactions with Nazi Germany in the 1930s, for instance, the anti-apartheid boycotts in these spheres were the first organized, sustained campaigns of their kind.² Other kinds of boycotts have much longer histories. Indeed, the practice of boycotting long predates the term itself, which comes from Captain Charles Boycott, a British land agent in colonial Ireland who in 1880 was the target of a campaign of social and economic ostracism organized by the Irish Land League, which left him unable to obtain labor, goods, or services from the local community.³ Consumer boycotts are as old as the birth of “consumer society” in the eighteenth century, when consumer goods began to be manufactured in large quantities in Britain and elsewhere. Two of the first consumer boycotts were boycotts of slave-produced sugar by anti-slavery activists in Britain,⁴ and boycotts of British products by American colonists in the period before the Declaration of Independence of the United States.⁵ Economic sanctions by states have an

² Calls for boycotts of sporting relations with Germany focused on the 1936 Berlin Olympics and on the German boxer Max Schmeling. See Lewis A. Erenberg, *The Greatest Fight of Our Generation: Louis vs. Schmeling* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 57, 75-76, 112-113; Allen Guttmann, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 70-81; David Clay Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 69-109; David Margolick, *Beyond Glory: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling and a World on the Brink* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 2005), 31, 35, 39, 118, 204-13; Robert G. Weisbord, *Racism and the Olympics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2015), 25-48.

On efforts to organize boycotts of various forms of cultural interaction with Nazi Germany, see Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood and Hitler, 1933-1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 174-85, 293-310; Gerald M. Monroe, “The American Artists Congress and The Invasion of Finland,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 15, no. 1 (1975): 15; Dorothy Connell Carroll, “Cultural Boycott – yes or no?” *Index on Censorship* 4, no. 1 (March 1975): 35. On calls to boycott academic interactions with Nazi Germany, see Stephen H. Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower: Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³ Charles Arthur Boycott, *Boycott: The Life Behind the Word* (Ludlow, UK: Carbonel Press, 1997); Joyce Marlow, *Captain Boycott and the Irish* (London: Deutsch, 1973).

⁴ Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (London: Routledge, 2007), 41-64; Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713-1833* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁵ Larry G. Bowman, “Virginia and the Continental Association” (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1966); T.H. Breen, “‘Baubles of Britain’: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present* 119,

even longer history: Thucydides records that imposition of trade sanctions on Megara by the Athenian leader Pericles was one of the causes of the Peloponnesian War in the fifth century BC.⁶

In their efforts to end apartheid, South Africa's system of white-dominated racial segregation, opponents of that system grappled with the fundamental question of how to bring about political change in a repressive society. While this is a question that political actors have grappled with throughout human history, opponents of apartheid did so within an international system that was being transformed by the creation of new international institutions and the globalization of trade, investment, sport, and culture. What was ultimately unprecedented about their efforts was that they experimented with so many ways of severing those various globalizing forms of interaction, and that boycotts ultimately came to be seen as such a central element of their struggle. Outside South Africa, action against apartheid took many other forms too, of course, from fundraising for the "defence and aid" of South African political activists on trial and in prison, to pickets and sit-ins at South African diplomatic missions, to providing material assistance and military training to the exiled South African liberation movements.⁷ But it was the extensive use of boycotts, at multiple non-governmental and governmental levels, that distinguished the struggle against apartheid from many other political struggles – and that politicians and political activists on diverse international and domestic causes have subsequently often sought to replicate. Reflecting on the

no. 1 (May 1988): 73-104; T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Martin Hammond, ed. P.J. Rhodes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 32, 68-69, 72; Philip A. Stadter, "Plutarch, Charinus, and the Megarian Decree," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 25, no. 4 (1984): 351-372.

⁷ On "defence and aid" see, especially, Al Cook, "The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa," in South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 3, pt. 1, *International Solidarity and Support* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004); Denis Herbstein, *White Lies: Canon Collins and the Secret War against Apartheid* (Oxford: James Currey, 2004).

On the use of pickets and sit-ins, see, especially, Gavin Brown and Helen Yaffe, "Non-Stop Against Apartheid: Practicing Solidarity Outside the South African Embassy," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 12, no. 2 (2013): 227-34; Gavin Brown and Helen Yaffe, "Practices of Solidarity: Opposing Apartheid in the Centre of London," *Antipode* 46, no. 1 (January 2014): 34-51.

death of Nelson Mandela in 2013, the British comedian and activist Mark Steel captured the lesson that is frequently drawn from the movement of which Mandela became the figurehead: Mandela's "most important achievement," Steel argued, "was to prove that bastards and their bastard regimes can be overthrown, against seemingly impossible odds, by all of us, as no one knows which unsold grape was the one that finally brought down a tyranny."⁸

The question of what role external boycotts and sanctions played in the transition to democracy in South Africa in the early 1990s remains a topic of heated debate among scholars and activists.⁹ Much relevant archival material, in South Africa and elsewhere, currently remains classified or otherwise unavailable to researchers.¹⁰ This dissertation shifts chronological focus and turns the

⁸ Mark Steel, "Tributes Have Flooded In," marksteelinfo.com, 7 December 2013, <https://perma.cc/5DSC-46FS>.

⁹ It is notable, however, that very few professional historians have published research on this topic. Since 1994, important contributions to this debate – primarily by economists, political scientists, scholars of sports and cultural studies, and former participants – have included: Neta C. Crawford and Audie Klotz, eds., *How Sanctions Work: Lessons from South Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Jennifer Davis, "Sanctions and Apartheid: The Economic Challenge to Discrimination," in *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World?*, eds. David Cortright and George A. Lopez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); Jon Gemmill, *The Politics of South African Cricket* (London: Routledge, 2004), 179-204; Adrian Guelke, *South Africa in Transition: The Misunderstood Miracle* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999); Lorraine J. Haricombe and F.W. Lancaster, *Out in the Cold: Academic Boycotts and the Isolation of South Africa* (Arlington, VA: Information Resources Press, 1995); Richard Hengeveld, and Jaap Rodenburg, "The Impact of the Oil Embargo," in *Embargo: Apartheid's Oil Secrets Revealed*, eds. Richard Hengeveld, and Jaap Rodenburg (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 194-205; Jonathan Hyslop, "The South African Boycott Experience," *Academe* 92, no. 5 (September-October 2006): 59-64; Lee Jones, *Societies Under Siege: Exploring How International Economic Sanctions (Do Not) Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 52-92; Philip I. Levy, "Sanctions on South Africa: What did they do?" *American Economic Review* 89, no. 2 (May 1999): 415-420; Merle Lipton, *Liberals, Marxists, and Nationalists: Competing Interpretations of South African History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 90-96, 165-171; Anton David Lowenberg and William H. Kaempfer, *The Origins and Demise of South African Apartheid: A Public Choice Analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Robert Kinloch Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 620-71; Rob Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 131-54; Kenneth A. Rodman, "Public and Private Sanctions against South Africa," *Political Science Quarterly* 109, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 313-334; Siew Hong Teoh, Ivo Welch, and C. Paul Wazzan, "The Effect of Socially Activist Investment Policies on the Financial Markets: Evidence from the South African Boycott," *Journal of Business* 72, no. 1 (January 1999): 35-89; Les de Villiers, *In Sight of Surrender: The U.S. Sanctions Campaign against South Africa, 1946-1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 165-207; Elisabeth Jean Wood, "An Insurgent Path to Democracy: Popular Mobilization, Economic Interests, and Regime Transition in South Africa and El Salvador," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 8 (October 2001): 862-85; Stephen Zunes, "The Role of Non-violent Action in the Downfall of Apartheid," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37, no. 1 (March 1999): 137-69.

¹⁰ In the late 1990s the Investigative Unit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission collected documents relating to the actions of the National Party government, especially during the 1980s. These included the records of key decision-making bodies such as the State Security Council. This massive document collection was subsequently deposited at the National Archives in Pretoria, but has not been processed and is largely inaccessible to researchers. Catherine Kennedy, "Opening the TRC Archive: a SAHA case study," *Archival Platform*, 7 August 2014, <https://perma.cc/R5LL-KQYL>. On

question around. Even to ask the question of whether or how boycotts and sanctions “worked,” we first need to understand how their advocates *intended* them to work. This dissertation thus asks two interrelated questions. First, how and why did boycotts become such a prominent element of the global struggle against apartheid? And second, how did boycott advocates believe that boycotts would contribute to achieving the ultimate objective of ending South Africa’s racist regime?

Despite the explosion of research in the last two decades on both the internal and external dimensions of the struggle against apartheid, these are not questions that have concerned previous scholars. Existing studies take the use of boycotts by anti-apartheid activists for granted: boycotts are treated self-evident and natural responses to apartheid – and therefore responses that do not require explanation. The sociologist Håkan Thörn, for instance, notes in his influential study of the anti-apartheid movement in Britain and Sweden that boycotts were the movement’s “most important form of collective action.”¹¹ But Thörn offers no explanation for why and how this came to be the case. Researchers with different geographical expertise and different thematic concerns have suggested a diverse array of origins or starting points of the campaigns for sanctions, disinvestment, and boycotts against South Africa. But these are usually treated as moments when a truth – that South Africa should be boycotted – was first revealed. The subsequent story then becomes one of growing recognition and support for this self-evident truth.

Calling for boycotts and sanctions was a political choice, however. It was not inevitable that international boycotts would become indelibly associated with the struggle against apartheid. As this

archival access in South Africa, see Kate Allan, ed., *Paper Wars: Access to Information in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009); Verne Harris, *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006), 269-349, 383-426; and, more generally, Matthew Graham, “Finding Foreign Policy: Researching in Five South African Archives,” *History in Africa* 37, no. 1 (January 2010): 379-87; Jamie Miller, “South African Political History Archives,” *Archives Made Easy*, 18 April 2011, <https://perma.cc/7VLW-UPCT>; Sue Onslow, “Research Report: Republic of South Africa Archives,” *Cold War History* 5, no. 3 (August 2005): 369-75.

¹¹ Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2006), 8. See also Håkan Thörn, “The Emergence of a Global Civil Society: The Case of Anti-Apartheid,” *Journal of Civil Society* 2, no. 3 (December 2006): 258; Rob Skinner, *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States, c.1919-64* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 11, 151, 201-2.

dissertation shows, most leading opponents of apartheid both inside and outside South Africa showed little interest in the idea of an international boycott of South Africa in the years before 1959. *Domestic* consumer boycotts were a prominent feature of many twentieth-century anti-colonial struggles: between the 1920s and the 1950s anti-colonial movements in Africa and other parts of the world urged colonial subjects not to purchase goods imported from the imperial metropole.¹² In most cases, however, these boycotts of the imperial power were not internationalized beyond the colony itself.¹³ Algerian nationalists, for instance, consciously fought their struggle for independence from France not only in Algeria, but also in the international arena.¹⁴ But neither they nor their supporters abroad sought to organize *international* boycotts and sanctions against France as part of that struggle. In the case of South Africa, this dissertation seeks to denaturalize the boycott. It shows that international boycotts and sanctions first became prominent forms of opposing apartheid in the specific circumstances prevailing inside and outside South Africa in 1959 and 1960, and analyzes the reasons why opponents of apartheid subsequently made conscious political choices to incorporate particular kinds of international boycotts into their repertoires of action.

It is not only the use of boycotts by the anti-apartheid movement that has traditionally been treated as self-evident. So too has their purpose. It is now almost universally assumed that the purpose of boycotts and sanctions was to exert pressure on the South African government itself to

¹² For an in-depth study of the use domestic consumer boycotts by anti-colonial activists in Uganda, for instance, see Dharam P. Ghai, "The Bugandan Trade Boycott: A Study in Tribal, Political, and Economic Nationalism" in *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, eds. Robert I. Rotberg and Ali A. Mazrui (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 755-70. On the use of boycotts by Kenyan opponents of colonial rule, see below, pages 117-18.

¹³ Perhaps the most notable exception was the nationalist movement in Indonesia, which in 1947 called on supporters outside Indonesia to boycott Dutch goods. In Australia, labor unions operated an industrial boycott against Dutch shipping from 1945 to 1949. See below, page 166.

¹⁴ Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

alter its discriminatory policies and negotiate with the opponents of apartheid.¹⁵ In part, this reflects beliefs that characterize the study of sanctions more generally. The assumption that the purpose of sanctions is always to compel a “target” government to comply with changes in policy demanded by the “senders” of sanctions underlies almost the entire subfield of political science devoted to studying whether sanctions “work.” As one recent critic of this theoretical literature observes, the prevalence of this unquestioned assumption has meant that scholars “have virtually ignored the mechanisms by which [sanctions] are supposed to operate.”¹⁶ In the case of boycotts and sanctions against South Africa, their various advocates – as we shall see – expected them to contribute to ending apartheid by a variety of different mechanisms, from bringing about an evolutionary change in white attitudes through promoting the desegregation of sport, to weakening the state’s ability to resist the efforts of the liberation movements to seize power through guerrilla warfare.¹⁷

The absence of these various alternative models of change from existing studies of the

¹⁵ See, for instance, Douglas Booth, “Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 3 (July 2003): 477; Colin Bundy, “National Liberation and International Solidarity: Anatomy of a Special Relationship,” in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, eds. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 216; Connie Field, *Have You Heard from Johannesburg: Seven Stories of the Global Anti-Apartheid Movement*, Episode 7, *Free at Last*, DVD (San Francisco, Clarity Films, 2010); Christabel Gurney, “‘A Great Cause’: The Origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959-March 1960,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 1 (March 2000): 123, 144; Haricombe and Lancaster, *Out in the Cold*, 7, 12; Gregory Houston, “International Solidarity: Introduction,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 3, pt. 1, *International Solidarity*, 21; Ryan M. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 43; Eric J. Morgan, “Into the Struggle: Confronting Apartheid in the United States and South Africa” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Colorado, 2009), 54-55; John Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 135, 156; Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 119, 185, 194; Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid*, 61, 72.

Rare analyses of alternative mechanisms of change by which advocates of boycotts and sanctions expected them to work, include Tom Lodge, “Sanctions and Black Political Organisations,” in *Sanctions Against Apartheid*, ed. Mark Orkin (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), 34-51; Scott Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation: The Foreign Relations of the ANC since 1960* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 10-12. See also footnote 17 below.

¹⁶ Jones, *Societies Under Siege*, 1, 6. Earlier critiques of what James Lindsay called “the naiveté of the research on trade sanctions” include James Barber, “Economic Sanctions as a Policy Instrument,” *International Affairs* 55, no. 3 (July 1979): 367-84; James M. Lindsay, “Trade Sanctions as Policy Instruments: a Re-examination,” *International Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 1986): 153-71.

¹⁷ For two of the only previous analyses to address this issue explicitly, see Newell M. Stultz, “Sanctions and Models of Change in South Africa,” *South Africa International* 13, no. 2 (October 1982): 121-29; Neta C. Crawford and Audie Klotz, “How Sanctions Work: A Framework for Analysis,” in *How Sanctions Work: Lessons from South Africa*, eds. Crawford and Klotz, 25-42.

struggle against apartheid reflects a tendency to read history backwards from 1994. It is now almost universally assumed that the purpose of boycott campaigns was always to bring about the end of apartheid in the way in which it ultimately occurred. In her classic 1987 study of *The Making of Apartheid*, the sociologist Deborah Posel showed that liberal, Marxist, and Afrikaner nationalist scholars of that topic – for all their heated debates and disagreements – shared the underlying assumption of a “grand design” or “comprehensive master plan” for apartheid. Confronted by the scale of the Afrikaner nationalists’ achievement in social engineering, this earlier generation of scholars had concluded that the making of apartheid had been “an essentially systematic, cumulative process, which proceeded according to a single pre-existing plan,” and in doing so had “fundamentally misrepresent[ed] the political processes whereby apartheid was built, greatly exaggerating the extent of the continuity, control, and long-term planning involved.”¹⁸ As research agendas have shifted to studying the “unmaking” of apartheid, scholars in our own time have produced almost a mirror image of this interpretation.

The political scientist Tom Lodge noted while the struggle against apartheid still continued that there was a tendency for many participants in South Africa’s political struggles to re-interpret history “with the wisdom of hindsight... as the careful unfolding of a continuous grand strategy”: past intentions would be recast to conform with unintended consequences and new strategic perspectives.¹⁹ After the “miracle” of South Africa’s transition to non-racial democracy in the 1990s, such a teleological reading of the past has exerted an even more powerful pull, on both former

¹⁸ Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948–1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 1-5.

¹⁹ Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London: Longman, 1983), 153. Lodge was referring specifically to discussions of black politics in the 1950s, but his comment applies more generally. A similar observation is made by Howard Barrell in his classic but never published study. Howard Barrell, “Conscripts to Their Age: African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976-1986” (D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993), 4.

participants and researchers.²⁰ Such an approach has the effect of homogenizing anti-apartheid strategy across time: the story becomes essentially a cumulative one, of gradually increasing support for, and effectiveness of, a grand strategy that been elaborated early on and that remained consistent. One recent study of anti-apartheid activists in Britain and the United States concludes, for instance, that “the latter part of the 1950s would see the emergence of forms of anti-apartheid activism that, in terms of strategic initiative, would set the framework of the movement for the duration.”²¹

What is missing from such accounts of strategic continuity is what one scholar calls the dialectic between “structure and struggle.”²² The “structures” within which opponents of white supremacy were operating, both domestically and internationally, did not remain static. South African politics, society, and economy underwent dramatic changes in the second half of the twentieth century. So too did the international system: the creation and transformation of international institutions, decolonization and the independence of much of Africa, shifting geopolitical configurations, the expansion of multinational corporations, and the globalization of sport were among the many changes that transformed the international environment in which opponents of apartheid were operating. Unsurprisingly, therefore, they altered the strategies and tactics of their struggle over time, as their perceptions changed of the opportunities and constraints presented by circumstances both in South Africa and internationally, as they sought to learn from the successes and failures both of their own past efforts, and of political struggles elsewhere.

²⁰ See also the discussions of teleology in Stephen Davis, “Cosmopolitans In Close Quarters: Everyday Life In The Ranks Of Umkhonto We Sizwe (1961-Present)” (Ph.D. Diss, University of Florida, 2010), 10-15, 200-202; Saul Dubow, *The African National Congress* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), xiii-xiv, 106-7; Ryan Irwin, “The Gordian Knot: Apartheid & the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order, 1960-1970” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2010), 326-27; Daniel R. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968-1977* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 4-5.

²¹ Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 117; see also 11, 201, and Rob Skinner, “The Moral Foundations of British Anti-Apartheid Activism, 1946-1960,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (June 2009): 399, 415, as well as Simon Stevens, “The External Struggle Against Apartheid: New Perspectives,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7 (forthcoming).

²² Dale T. McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), xiv.

That such issues have received little study is in part a consequence of changing currents in the historical discipline in the past two decades. Dane Kennedy, a historian of the British Empire, neatly summarizes the shift that has occurred in the study of the colonial (and, indeed, the postcolonial) world as a reorientation of scholars' interests "from politics to cultures, from institutions to identities, from the intentions of imperial elites ('the official mind') to the experiences of colonial subjects ('subalterns' in all their variety)."²³ These reorientations of scholarly interest have been so complete – and so simultaneous – that there is a danger that our histories create the impression that "subalterns" had cultures, identities, and experiences, but not ("high") politics, institutions, and intentions. Thus despite a renaissance in the study of "grand strategy" in recent years, scholars in this tradition have retained an almost exclusive focus on the strategic thinking of western elites.²⁴ Similarly, while historians have taken a new interest in international institutions, they have focused predominantly on the ideas and policies of the western governments and elites that initiated and shaped them.²⁵

Historians have, of course, recently begun to pay much more attention to the growing role in international politics of non-state actors, both western and non-western. But here too they have generally been more interested in culture and ideology than in strategy. One of the most vibrant sub-fields within this new international history, for instance, is the history of human rights. The focus of

²³ Dane Kennedy, "The Imperial History Wars," *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 1 (January 2015): 12.

²⁴ One notable exception is Matthew Connelly, "Rethinking the Cold War and Decolonization: The Grand Strategy of the Algerian War for Independence," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 2 (May 2001): 221-45. See also "Part III: Strategy from Below," in Lawrence Freedman's magisterial *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 245-456. On the revival in the study of grand strategy, see John Lewis Gaddis "What is Grand Strategy?" (Karl Von Der Heyden distinguished lecture, Duke University, Durham, NC, 26 February 2009); Thomas Meaney and Stephen Wertheim, "Grand Flattery," *The Nation*, 28 May 2012, 27-31.

²⁵ See, for instance, in the case of the United Nations: Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin, 2012); Stephen Wertheim, "Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy in World War II" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2015). Important exceptions include Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 59-91; Irwin, *Gordian Knot*; Meredith Terretta, "'We Had Been Fooled into Thinking that the UN Watches over the Entire World': Human Rights, UN Trust Territories, and Africa's Decolonization," *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (May 2012): 329-60.

most scholars in this new field of inquiry has been primarily on the content, geographical scope, and salience of “rights talk” in the past.²⁶ But the danger of too narrow a focus on the history of human rights is not only, as Samuel Moyn suggests, that it can obscure the significance of other ideologies that may have had far greater salience than human rights to the historical actors we study.²⁷ It is also that we lose sight of, or simply take for granted, the strategies and tactics that advocates of human rights – and of other idealisms – have used in their efforts to realize their objectives. Indeed, the ideology of human rights and the strategies to secure human rights are sometimes simply conflated: in one recent study of anticolonial activists in Cameroon in the 1950s, for instance, “the ideology and the practice of human rights” themselves become a “liberation strategy.”²⁸ “Human rights talk” might have been used to express the ultimate objectives for which groups were struggling. More instrumentally, rights talk might have been deployed for tactical reasons to win support or a hearing for a political struggle in certain constituencies or institutional venues. But invoking human rights is not in itself a strategy.

In the case of South Africa, historians have studied the ideologies, moral economies, and imagined futures that animated those who opposed apartheid, exploring their relationship to ideas of human rights, race, nationalism, Christianity, and socialism.²⁹ But the question of precisely how

²⁶ Samuel Moyn, “Substance, Scale, and Salience: The Recent Historiography of Human Rights,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8 (December 2012): 123-40.

²⁷ Samuel Moyn, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in the History of Cosmopolitanism,” *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 4 (Summer 2014): 365-84.

²⁸ Terretta, “Human Rights, UN Trust Territories, and Africa’s Decolonization,” 332.

²⁹ Among the most notable studies of these topics are Saul Dubow, *South Africa’s Struggle for Human Rights* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012); Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba [Oyama Mabandla], *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile* (London: James Currey, 1991); David Everatt, *The Origins of Non-racialism: White Opposition to Apartheid in the 1950s* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009); Irina Filatova, “The Lasting Legacy: The Soviet Theory of the National-Democratic Revolution and South Africa,” *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2012): 507-37; Gail M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*; Oliver M. Murphy, “Race, Violence, and Nation: African Nationalism and Popular Politics in South Africa’s Eastern Cape, 1948-1970” (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2013).

apartheid's opponents planned to get from the present to the futures they imagined has received much less attention. In 1985, while the struggle against apartheid still continued, the sociologists Dennis Davis and Robert Fine published a trenchant critique of scholars and activists studying social movements in general, and South African liberation movements in particular, for their "inclination to avoid thorny questions of strategy and tactics." Instead,

definite strategic decisions may be naturalised as the only possible response to a particular situation or set of 'structural predeterminations'. They may be idealised as rational modes of action which make sense in the context of their application. They may be ignored in favour of a celebration of the struggle or a denunciation of its suppression... Left out of the picture is the conscious, rational side of social movements: their capacity to make programmatic and operational choices, to learn from the past and from theory, to combine their own experience with the experience of other movements abroad, to question themselves through debate and criticism and to rebuild afresh.³⁰

If Davis and Fine's charge that "the question of strategy has not yet been adequately 'de-natured' nor opened up to critical thought" was true in the 1980s (when they were among a small group of scholars – many of them leftist critics of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party – who sought to draw lessons from the past for future anti-apartheid strategy³¹) it is all the more applicable to scholarship today. And it applies not only to the study of domestic resistance to apartheid, but also to its international dimensions – and indeed to the study of transnational activism more generally.

³⁰ Dennis Davis and Robert Fine, "Political Strategies and the State: Some Historical Observations," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 12, no. 1 (October 1985): 25, 48.

³¹ Robert Fine with Dennis Davis, *Beyond Apartheid: Labour and Liberation in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1990); Barrell, "Conscripts to Their Age"; Robert Vincent Lambert, "Political Unionism in South Africa: The South African Congress of Trade Unions" (Ph.D. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988); McKinley, *ANC and the Liberation Struggle*; Richard Monroe [Martin Legassick], "Lessons of the 1950s," *Inqaba Ya Basebenzi: Journal of the Marxist Workers Tendency of the African National Congress* 13 (March-May 1984): 2-48; E.C. Webster, "Stay-Aways and the Black Working Class Since the Second World War – The Evolution of a Strategy" (seminar paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, April 1979). Martin Legassick characterized the theoretical perspective that he and several of these other scholars brought to their study of the past to as "class struggle' Marxism" (as distinct from then-popular structural Marxism). Ciraj Rassool, "History Anchored in Politics: An Interview with Martin Legassick," *South African Historical Journal* 56, no. 1 (2006): 32.

The spectacular growth of transnationally connected social and political movements in the twentieth century was significant not only because these movements transcended the nation state borders that often bounded the studies of earlier generations of scholars, nor only because they often constructed new ‘imagined solidarities’ beyond the state. Such movements were also significant because they sought to find ways to project power and influence across national borders in an increasingly globalized world. This dissertation analyzes the shifting role of one set of ways of trying to do this – external boycotts, in their various forms – in the strategies of those seeking to end apartheid, inside and outside South Africa.

This is necessarily an international history. The global anti-apartheid movement was, in the words of United Nations official E.S. Reddy, “a coalition of anti-apartheid organisations and individuals, as well as a growing number of governments, which in the 1960s was able to secure the active involvement of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and many other international organisations. This was a coalition which encompassed the world and consisted of international, regional, national and local bodies.”³² We already possess many fine-grained studies of the anti-apartheid activity of particular organizations or governments,³³ or in particular countries or regions.³⁴ By taking a step back, this

³² E.S. Reddy, “AAM and UN: Partners in the International Campaign Against Apartheid,” in *The Anti-Apartheid Movement: a 40-year Perspective* (London: Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee, 2000), 40.

³³ Such as, for instance: E.K. Dumor, *Ghana, OAU and Southern Africa: An African Response to Apartheid* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1991); Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Enuga S. Reddy, “The United Nations and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 3, pt. 1, *International Solidarity*, 41-139; SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 5, *African Solidarity*; Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot ‘Cold War’: the USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008); Pauline Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the World Council of Churches in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994).

³⁴ The only attempt to tell a global history of the struggle against apartheid has been in video form: Field, *Have You Heard from Johannesburg*. Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid* and Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid* each focus on activism in two countries (Britain and Sweden, and Britain and the U.S., respectively). Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995) includes brief case studies of three countries (Britain, the U.S., and Zimbabwe), and three intergovernmental organizations (the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and the Organization of African Unity). The most comprehensive account of activism around the globe is SADET, *Road to*

dissertation seeks to analyze major shifts in the strategic and tactical perspectives that animated much of that activity. It does not seek to narrate the history of the anti-apartheid activity of international, regional, national and local bodies in every part of the world. Instead, it focuses on moments of strategic and tactical innovation, analyzing how and why new ideas emerged and spread (or were resisted) about the role that various forms of boycotts might play in the struggle against apartheid.

Such new ideas did not emanate from a single group of protagonists in one part of the world. Most anti-apartheid campaigners outside South Africa understood their activities to be acts of “solidarity” with the South African opponents of apartheid, and – especially – with the two liberation movements that came to be officially recognized by the Organization of African Unity: the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).³⁵ But this did not mean that non-South African opponents of apartheid simply took directions from the South African movements. The campaigns for boycotts and sanctions against South Africa were not a straightforward case of what the political scientists Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink have theorized in their study of transnational advocacy networks as “the ‘boomerang’ pattern of influence,” according to which, “when channels between the state and its domestic actors are blocked... domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.”³⁶ The development of anti-apartheid boycott campaigns

Democracy, vol. 3, *International Solidarity*, but this consists of individually-authored chapters that each focus on activity in a single country, region, or organization, and gives little sense of the interactions between them.

³⁵ This understanding contributed to the cautious, ambiguous, and in some cases hostile response of many foreign opponents of apartheid to the emergence of new movements inside South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, including the black consciousness movement and the independent trade union movement. See, for instance, Christabel Gurney, “The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Movement’s Difficult Decade,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (June 2009): 472, 481; Genevieve Klein, “The British Anti-Apartheid Movement and Political Prisoner Campaigns, 1973-1980,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (June 2009): 464-65.

³⁶ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 12-13. See also Rob Skinner, “Struggles on the Page: British Antiapartheid and Radical Scholarship,” *Radical History Review* 119 (Spring 2014): 217.

was a much more interactive process between South African and foreign opponents of apartheid than this call-and-response model would suggest. Indeed, as we shall see, ideas about new forms of external anti-apartheid action were often first developed by bodies that were not exclusively concerned with the struggle to overthrow apartheid, and that believed that such anti-apartheid actions would also contribute to the achievement of their other domestic or international objectives.

In writing this history, I have therefore drawn upon the vast documentary record created by individuals, organizations, and governments that were involved in taking part in, debating, monitoring, or resisting anti-apartheid activity around the world.³⁷ In the course of researching this dissertation I consulted archival collections in more than seventy repositories in six countries. In addition, I have also drawn upon on those collections of documents that have now been digitized.³⁸ Some of these collections – like the archive of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, now held by the University of Oxford, and the microfilmed (and now digitized) records of the American Committee on Africa – have been mined extensively by previous scholars. Others have been rarely, if ever, used by researchers of this topic.

I have nevertheless barely scratched the surface of the potentially relevant material that is held around the world. As a study of political strategy, this dissertation is not a social history of how the anti-apartheid struggle was experienced “from below” by grassroots participants. Within the (often non-elite) bodies whose activities I analyse, my focus has been on elites, on the leaderships

³⁷ Peter Limb, Richard Knight, and Christine Root, “The Global Antiapartheid Movement: A Critical Analysis of Archives and Collections,” *Radical History Review* 119 (Spring 2014): 161-77.

³⁸ On relevant digitization projects, see, for instance, Allen Isaacman, Premesh Lalu and Thomas Nygren, “Digitization, History, and the Making of a Postcolonial Archive of Southern African Liberation Struggles: The Aluka Project,” *Africa Today* 52, no. 2 (Winter, 2005): 55-77; Richard Knight, “The African Activist Project: Preserving the History of the Solidarity Movement,” *Peacework* 35, no. 382 (February 2008): 4-6; Christopher Saunders, “Digital Imaging South Africa (DISA): A Case Study,” *Program: Electronic Library and Information Systems* 39, no. 4 (2005): 345-52.

One problem that has accompanied the increasing availability of so much relevant primary source material online is that scholarly citations now frequently suffer from “link rot.” To avoid this, in citations in the footnotes below to online sources that can be accessed without a subscription, I provide links created using the [Perma.cc](#) archiving service developed by Harvard Law School Library.

that were (usually) responsible for defining strategy and tactics. And I pay particular attention to bodies located in Britain and the United States. Of course, Britain and the United States were far from the only places where there were organized and enduring campaigns against apartheid. But it was the variety and extent of the economic, political, and cultural connections between these two states and South Africa that helped produce the variety and extent of the efforts by opponents of apartheid to target those connections by campaigns for various kinds of boycotts.

I also pay much closer attention than most previous studies of external anti-apartheid activity to other forms of resistance used by South Africans themselves inside the country. If we wish to understand how boycott advocates believed that external boycotts would contribute to ending apartheid, we cannot study external anti-apartheid activity as a discrete phenomenon, analytically separable from those other forms. This dissertation therefore analyzes how South African and foreign opponents of apartheid understood various forms of anti-apartheid activity – internal and external – to relate each other, and thus to the ultimate objective of bringing apartheid to an end. These understandings not only varied between different groups and individuals, but changed dramatically over time. Previous studies of external anti-apartheid action, in contrast, have tended to exaggerate the consistent significance of international action in the strategies of South African opponents of apartheid, and thus to underplay the strategic significance of domestic action, including the South African liberation movements’ “turn to violence” after 1960.³⁹ This interpretative tendency is part of a broader scholarly trend. If the fundamental issue for earlier generations of students of international history was the question of war and peace, recent research

³⁹ See, for instance, Connie Field, “Response,” *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 5 (November 2012): 812; Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 130, 154, 173, 179-80; Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 154, 185.

Commenting on the literature on the internal struggle against apartheid in the 1980s, Gay Seidman notes that “Recent social movement analysts appear reluctant to engage directly with movements’ use of violent tactics, remaining silent about the interplay between violent and nonviolent tactics” and suggests that one reason may be researchers’ “discomfort around [the] morality” of the use of violence. Gay Seidman, “Guerrillas in their Midst: Armed Struggle in the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement,” *Mobilization: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 111-27.

has focused more on the role of what one scholar calls “unarmed forces” in the history of international relations.⁴⁰ Indeed, the pioneering international and transnational historian Akira Iriye excludes “military” bodies from the category of “international nongovernmental organizations” by definition. For Iriye, then, “A history of international relations as seen through the activities of nongovernmental organizations” becomes a history of peaceful “transnational cooperation,” that stands in stark contrast to the violent and conflict-prone history of relations between states.⁴¹

When historians bring such assumptions to the study of the struggle against apartheid, the result is profoundly misleading. The reader would never guess from most studies of external anti-apartheid activity that for nearly three decades leading strategists of both the ANC and the PAC were focused on the “seizure of power” by armed force.⁴² The ANC and the PAC may never have posed a serious military threat to the South African state, let alone have come close to riding tanks victoriously into Pretoria, as Mao Tse-Tung entered Beijing in 1949, Fidel Castro entered Havana in 1959, and the North Vietnamese army entered Saigon in 1975. But it is only with the “enormous

⁴⁰ Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999). Brad Simpson notes, for instance, that while both “human rights and terrorism are topics ideally suited to the recent methodological and theoretical turns in foreign relations history,” historians of American foreign relations have produced much research on the former and very little on the latter. Brad Simpson, “Bringing the Non-State Back In: Human Rights and Terrorism Since 1945,” in *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, 2nd ed., eds. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 260-83.

⁴¹ Akira Iriye, “Internationalizing International History,” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 47-62; Akira Iriye, “The Making of a Transnational World,” in *Global Interdependence: The World After 1945*, ed. Akira Iriye (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 679-847.

⁴² This is despite the recent upsurge of research on the liberation movements’ “turn to violence” by domestic South African historians. Garth Benneyworth, “Armed and Trained: Nelson Mandela’s 1962 Military Mission as Commander in Chief of Umkhonto we Sizwe and Provenance for his Buried Makarov Pistol,” *South African Historical Journal* 63, no. 1 (March 2011): 78-101; Janet Cherry, *Umkhonto weSizwe* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2011); Saul Dubow, “Were There Political Alternatives in the Wake of the Sharpeville-Langa Violence in South Africa, 1960?,” *Journal of African History* 56, no. 1 (March 2015): 119-42; Stephen Ellis, “The Genesis of the ANC’s Armed Struggle in South Africa 1948-1961,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 4 (December 2011): 657-76; Paul Landau, “The ANC, MK, and ‘The Turn to Violence’ (1960-1962),” *South African Historical Journal* 64 (2012): 538-63; Bernard Magubane *et al.*, “The Turn to Armed Struggle,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 1960–70, 53-145; David James Smith, *Young Mandela: The Revolutionary Years* (New York: Little, Brown, 2010), 206-94. As in the earlier work on the ANC’s armed struggle by Howard Barrell, however, these studies have “limited interest in the ANC’s broad range of strategies” after 1961, focusing largely on their violent dimension and leaving unexplored the question of how this related to non-violent forms of external anti-apartheid activity. Barrell, “Conscripts to Their Age,” 5.

condescension of posterity” that we can simply ignore ANC and PAC strategists’ beliefs at the time that they would do so.⁴³ If, however, we choose not to ignore those beliefs, then our research question becomes how boycotts and sanctions were (or were not) believed by contemporary actors to relate to this model of change.

This dissertation, therefore, analyzes how various forms of external boycotts emerged and developed as elements of the struggle against apartheid, and how they were understood in relation to other forms of action against apartheid as these too changed over time. Chapter 1 shows that in the period between the Second World War and the end of 1958, most leading opponents of apartheid inside South Africa were uninterested in international boycotts and sanctions as a means to assist their struggle. They were instead focused on domestic campaigns against apartheid. Boycotts by South African consumers and commuters became a prominent feature of domestic resistance to apartheid in this period, but the specific objectives they were intended to achieve could not have been assisted (and in some cases might have been hindered) by attempts to organize counterpart international boycotts. Indeed, the earliest discussions of using international economic boycotts against the racist policies of the South African government occurred not in South Africa itself, but in India. In 1946 India had become the first country in the world to impose economic sanctions against South Africa. This action was intended as a unilateral effort to compel the South African government to the negotiating table on the specific issue of its treatment of Indians in South Africa. When South African Indian leader Yusuf Dadoo subsequently called for India’s action to be replicated by other states, the Indian government did not support him. Dadoo subsequently dropped the idea and like other South African resistance leaders focused over the next decade on domestic campaigns.

⁴³ The phrase is E.P. Thompson’s: Thompson was referring to orthodox historiographical treatments of working people in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including those whose “insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy.” E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: V. Gollancz, 1963), 12-13.

Chapter 2 analyzes the specific conjuncture of circumstances that caused boycotts of South African goods to break out across the world in the fifteen-month period beginning in December 1958. It shows that, contrary to the assumptions of existing studies, this was not the result of an initiative by the ANC. When the All-African People's Conference (AAPC) in Accra, Ghana passed a resolution in December 1958 calling for African states to impose sanctions against South Africa, this was primarily a consequence of the advocacy of Reverend Michael Scott, a former missionary in South Africa who was at time one of the only outspoken supporters of the idea of sanctions. Meanwhile, though both the ANC and the newly-founded PAC remained focused on resisting apartheid inside the country, the fact that the AAPC resolution coincided with decisions by both congresses to launch domestic consumer boycott campaigns gave important inspiration and legitimacy to the subsequent efforts to organize consumer and industrial boycotts overseas. Those overseas boycott efforts were in large part the result of efforts by a single individual, Kenyan labor leader Tom Mboya. Crucially, the incipient boycott campaigns gained the support of the British Labour Party and – as a result of Mboya's efforts – the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Though both organizations adopted the boycott of South African goods primarily in order to appeal to constituencies outside South Africa, rather than to influence events inside the country, their support further spread and entrenched the idea that overseas opposition to apartheid could best be expressed in the form of boycott.

Chapter 3 investigates the four year period after the Sharpeville Massacre, when, for the first time, the leadership of the South African Congress movement came to believe that international economic sanctions could play a significant role in their efforts to overcome apartheid. This first occurred in the specific circumstances that prevailed immediately after the massacre: almost all options for resisting apartheid domestically were closed down, the South African economy appeared suddenly vulnerable, the United Nations was being transformed by the entry of sixteen new African

states, and non-governmental boycotts had already been gaining popularity around the world at the exact moment that the massacre occurred. The ANC now embraced sanctions. So too did the governments of the independent African states, which had previously opposed the idea. Initially, most advocates of sanctions believed that they could contribute to the struggle against apartheid by creating economic hardship that would lead both white business and white voters to defect from the ruling National Party. Even after Nelson Mandela and other Congress leaders gave up hope in the idea of a peaceful transition to democracy and turned to armed struggle, they continued to believe that sanctions could play a crucial role by facilitating that struggle by degrading the state's capability to resist it. The campaign for sanctions reached its apogee in 1964, when an independent "Group of Experts" appointed by the UN Security Council endorsed the idea. But though many African, Asian, and Soviet bloc states unilaterally broke off trade with South Africa, the African bloc ultimately proved unable to exert sufficient leverage on Britain and the United States to compel them to acquiesce in a compulsory sanctions regime.

The fourth and final chapter analyzes the five-year period after the collapse of the effort to secure governmental sanctions through the United Nations. As both the African states and the South African liberation movements became disillusioned with the United Nations – and with each other – both the ANC and the PAC focused increasingly exclusively on the use of guerrilla warfare to achieve the armed seizure of power. They no longer expected international action to play a significant role in facilitating this. But they did fear that if their guerrilla operations ever managed to pose a military threat to the South African state, the west might intervene on the side of the government. Anti-apartheid campaigns in the west were now focused on reducing the likelihood of such an intervention. Inspired by the efforts of new left groups who shared anti-apartheid activists' disillusionment with achieving political change through governmental action, boycott campaigns were now redirected at western firms with investments in South Africa. At this stage, the organizers

of these campaigns did not expect to be able to compel firms to disinvest. The campaigns were intended to create a constituency that would oppose western intervention in the future war that opponents of apartheid believed in this period was the only way by which apartheid could be ended.

CHAPTER 1

Boycotts and Sanctions against South Africa: The Prehistory, 1946–1957

Yusuf Dadoo was desperate to get to the United Nations in 1948. The headquarters buildings of the new international organization were still under construction in New York, and the UN General Assembly was being held that year in Paris. South Africa's new National Party government, elected in May 1948, was determined to stop Dadoo getting there. Dadoo was the president of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). In September, after he had boarded his plane out of the country, he was hauled off by a customs officer and told that his passport was being confiscated on the orders of the Minister of the Interior. Since no airline would allow him to travel without his passport, Dadoo immediately attempted to sue the Minister in the Supreme Court for its return.

Unwilling to wait for the legal wrangling to be resolved, Dadoo instead chartered a private plane to take him out of the country. The aircraft's owners demanded that the TIC put up £100,000 as a guarantee in case the government impounded the plane, but in the event the ageing Dakota – with Dadoo the only passenger on board – was allowed to leave without further obstruction. Having finally made it to London, however, Dadoo was then refused a visa by the French authorities. Sympathetic friends in Britain attempted to hire a helicopter: their plan, according to one account, was “that Dadoo should land on the grounds of the Palace at which the UN session was taking place, as that was international territory.” When the scheme fell through, Dadoo finally had to reconcile himself to sending a young South African Indian living in London in his place.¹

¹ “Travel ban on Naicker, Dadoo,” *Durban Leader*, 18 September 1948; “Dadoo sues Minister for return of passport,” *Durban Leader*, 2 October 1948, in *Passive Resistance – 1946: A Selection of Documents* eds. E.S. Reddy and Fatima Meer (Durban: Madiba Publishers, 1996), 217-18; Essop Pahad, “Dr Y.M. Dadoo: A People's Leader,” typescript, 1979, pp.201-203, File 10.26, Brian Bunting Collection (MCH07), UWC-Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Archives,

The year before, Dadoo had called for a “world trade boycott” to compel the South African government to comply with a United Nations resolution on its treatment of Indians in South Africa. His herculean efforts to get to the UN in 1948 reflected the importance attached to international action in the period immediately after the Second World War by some South African opponents of white supremacy. Racial segregation had been institutionalized in the Union of South Africa since its creation in 1910, in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War. By the 1940s, a system of separate, subordinate, and largely powerless political institutions had been created for Africans, and African land ownership was restricted to so-called “native reserves.” There had been brief hopes that the Second World War might mark the beginning of a move towards reform: Prime Minister Jan Smuts famously declared in 1942 that “segregation has fallen on evil days.” The pass law system, which restricted Africans’ movement within the country, was briefly relaxed. But in 1943 Smuts broke an earlier promise that he would not introduce new segregation legislation during the war. The government passed new laws that further extended segregation to South Africa’s Indian population, the descendants of indentured laborers and migrants who had come to southern Africa in the late nineteenth century.

In 1946, the government of India responded to Smuts’ anti-Indian measures by imposing trade sanctions against South Africa. Inside the country, radical leaders of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) launched a campaign of passive resistance to attract international attention and action. Representatives of the passive resisters also traveled to New York to lobby delegates at the first session of the UN General Assembly. When the General Assembly subsequently passed resolutions on the treatment of Indians in South Africa and on the status of the South African-

University of the Western Cape, Cape Town; Enuga S. Reddy, “Notes on meeting with Dr. Cassim Jadwat,” 1997, South African History Online, <https://perma.cc/3DJX-LVYB>.

administered territory of South West Africa, the news was greeted with euphoria by South African opponents of segregation.

This chapter begins by analyzing India's imposition of sanctions in 1946, and the efforts by Dadoo and other South African Indian activists to internationalize their struggle. It shows that the idea of boycotting South African trade originated in India, where there was already a long tradition of economic boycotts. Indian sanctions advocates expected sanctions to work in the way usually assumed by political scientists: they believed they would compel the South African government to comply with their demand that it enter into talks with the Indian government regarding the treatment of Indians. The Indian sanctions initiative was also a unilateral one: sanctions advocates believed that Indian economic leverage alone would be sufficient to achieve this outcome. Subsequently, the Indian government refused to take up Dadoo's call for sanctions to be adopted on a multilateral basis in order to increase the pressure on South Africa. No other state responded to Dadoo's appeal.

Though they did cause considerable economic dislocation for a short period, India's sanctions failed to alter the course of the South African government. Indeed, the South African position became even more intransigent after the general election of 1948, in which Smuts' United Party was defeated by the Afrikaner nationalists of D.F. Malan's National Party, committed segregationists who had run on a platform of *apartheid* (apartness or separateness). Dadoo's unsuccessful attempts to get to the UN later that year were in fact the last gasp of a strategy of internationalization that was subsequently abandoned. Instead, as the leaders of the SAIC, the African National Congress, and the Communist Party began to cooperate increasingly closely in the 1950s, their strategic focus was internal. Many leading figures in what became known as the Congress Alliance travelled abroad in the 1950s, and international solidarity and support was

welcomed and encouraged. But international action was not now expected to play a significant role in liberating South Africa from white minority rule.

A few individuals and organizations in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, made occasional suggestions of using various kinds of economic pressure against South Africa. But – with the important exception of the Caribbean – none of these generated much interest or support among opponents of apartheid either inside or outside South Africa. Though various kinds of boycotts became an increasingly central focus of the Congress movement’s activity in the 1950s, these were domestic campaigns whose objectives did not lend themselves straightforwardly to internationalization. Indeed, this chapter shows that Congress leaders had several reasons to believe that international economic boycotts might in fact be detrimental to the strategies they were pursuing in this period.

Rather than economic isolation, it was the idea of some form of cultural and sporting boycott of South Africa that gained some traction in this period and around which an incipient transnational network began to crystallize. The network of groups and individuals inside and outside South Africa who took up this idea were in most cases connected only peripherally – if at all – to the Congress Alliance. Colin Legum, an émigré South African journalist who became involved in the campaign in Britain, later observed that one of the “remarkable features” of the sports boycott was that “it was initiated, promoted and sustained by individuals and groups outside of the structures of the anti-apartheid movement.”² The initiators of the early cultural and sports boycotts saw them as means *not* to exert direct pressure on the intransigent National Party government, but to promote inter-racial harmony and an evolution in white attitudes by desegregating South African sports and culture. This model of evolutionary change through the transformation of culture had little appeal

² Colin Legum, “A contribution to the study of the sanctions campaign against South Africa,” Item D68.1.58, Colin Legum Papers (BC1329), Manuscripts and Archives Department, University of Cape Town. Legum was presumably defining “the anti-apartheid movement” narrowly here as consisting only of the ANC and its allies.

for the leaders of the Congress movement, who remained optimistic that they could achieve rapid political change through their domestic campaigns.

I. ‘The best and surest measure which India can adopt to bring South Africa to her knees’:

India’s Imposition of Sanctions.

In March 1946, India, then still part of the British Empire, announced its intention to sever its trade relations with South Africa. India thus became the first country in the world to impose economic sanctions against South Africa because of its government’s racist policies.³ Indeed the earliest discussions of imposing economic sanctions against South Africa took place in India, not in South Africa itself. Both the use of economic boycotts and concern about the treatment of Indians in South Africa and elsewhere had deep roots in Indian politics. India’s most prominent anti-colonial leader, Mohandas Gandhi, had first come to fame when he led South African Indians in civil disobedience campaigns against segregatory legislation in South Africa in the early twentieth century. Subsequently, in the years following Gandhi’s return to India in 1915, both the Indian colonial government and the anti-colonial Indian National Congress (INC) frequently expressed concern about discrimination against the Indian diaspora in South Africa, British East Africa, and elsewhere.

³ India’s imposition of sanctions is ignored in many of the major studies of the external dimensions of the struggle against apartheid, though it is briefly discussed in de Villiers, *In Sight of Surrender*, 1-6; Vijay Gupta, “Solidarity: India and South Africa,” in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 3, pt. 2, *International Solidarity*, 1262, 1274, and is referred to in passing in Houston, “International Solidarity,” 22; Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*, 5n; Lodge, “Sanctions and Black Political Organisations,” 34; Thomas, *Diplomacy of Liberation*, 5. The scholarly tendency to treat sanctions as self-evident responses to racial discrimination in South Africa means, however, that none of these works explain the India government’s decision to adopt this particular form of action. Although there has been a recent resurgence of scholarly interest in India’s challenge to South African discrimination in 1946, this has been exclusively focused on India’s diplomatic initiatives action at the United Nations (see note 29) and ignores India’s simultaneous initiatives in the economic sphere. As Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie puts it, “independent India’s efforts against apartheid beyond the UN [are] very underresearched.” Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, “The Place of India in South African History: Academic Scholarship, Past, Present and Future,” *South African Historical Journal* 57, no. 1 (January 2007): 31. The fullest studies of Indian policy towards South Africa in this period, which do discuss the Indian government’s decision-making on sanctions are Lorna Lloyd, “‘A Family Quarrel’: The Development of the Dispute Over Indians in South Africa,” *Historical Journal* 34, no. 3 (September 1991): 703-25; Bridglal Pachai, *The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question, 1860-1971* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1971), 151-207; Hugh Tinker, *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth* (London: C. Hurst, 1971), 219-39, 247-53, 263, 292-303.

At almost the same moment that Gandhi was launching his first *satyagraha* (truth-force) campaign in South Africa, radical nationalists in Bengal responded to the British partition of the province in 1905 by launching a campaign of *swadeshi* (indigenous manufacture) and boycott of British goods. From 1920 onwards, *swadeshi* was taken up by the INC under Gandhi, who encouraged Indians to wear home-spun cloth, rather than imported fabrics.⁴

The idea of using of economic boycott to counter discrimination against Indians overseas was raised as early as 1919, by Satyendra Sinha, then Under Secretary of State for India, a moderate nationalist and former president of the INC, and the first Indian member of the British House of Lords. When the South African parliament passed new anti-Indian laws that year, Sinha suggested that India should retaliate by legislating to prohibit “all forms of intercourse with South Africa.” As a first step, the Government of India did threaten to deny Indian mining concessions to South African companies.⁵ In 1923, Srinivasa Sastri – a leading member of the Indian Liberal Party and a former representative of the Indian government in London – responded to the British government’s decision in favor of unequal representation of Indians and white settlers in the legislature of the British colony of Kenya, by calling for the Indian government to boycott the 1924 British Empire Exhibition in London and to bar the importation of British goods into India.⁶ Sastri’s call was not taken up by either the Indian central or provincial governments, though some of those who would later play leading roles in imposing sanctions against South Africa were involved in the efforts to

⁴ C.A. Bayly, “The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian society, 1700-1930,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 285-321; Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 89-90, 163-64, 219, 225; Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903-1908* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1973); Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi’s Nation: Homespun and Modern India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

⁵ Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, 31-32.

⁶ Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 138; Robert G. Gregory, *India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 252-58; Deborah L. Hughes, “Kenya, India, and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924,” *Race & Class* 47, no. 4 (October 2006): 66-85; Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, 69-70.

implement it at provincial level. Narayan Bhaskar Khare – an INC member of the Legislative Council of Central Provinces and Berar – unsuccessfully attempted to pass a resolution forbidding departments of the provincial government from purchasing goods manufactured anywhere in the British Empire outside India. Among the supporters of Khare’s resolution was Govindrao Deshmukh, another INC legislator, who explicitly linked his support for Khare’s resolution to the restrictions on trade, franchise, immigration, and land purchase imposed on Indians in some British colonies.⁷

Following these abortive efforts to organize governmental boycotts, the INC organized a non-governmental consumer boycott to counter discrimination against Indians overseas in 1937. This time the flashpoint was the British island protectorate of Zanzibar, off the coast of East Africa, where new laws were introduced that cut Zanzibari Indian traders out of the clove business. In response, the INC established an All-India Clove Boycott Committee to co-ordinate a boycott of the island’s main export. The campaign was remarkably effective: by the end of the year Zanzibar had already lost £30,000 in revenue. In May 1938, the Zanzibar government negotiated a settlement with representatives of the Indian government and the INC, and removed the offending restrictions.⁸

By 1943, when the Smuts government in South Africa passed a “Pegging Act” that restricted sales of property to Indian South Africans, there had thus been several previous attempts by Indians to organize economic boycotts to oppose discrimination against Indians overseas. Narayan Bhaskar Khare, who had broken with the INC in the 1930s and subsequently became, in his own words, “a

⁷ R.R. Pateriya, *Provincial Legislatures and the National Movement: A Study in Interaction in Central Provinces and Berar, 1921-37* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1991), 89.

⁸ Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, 133-34; 143-47. See also Erik Gilbert, *Dhows and the Colonial Economy in Zanzibar, 1860-1970* (Oxford: James Currey, 2004), 106; William Kuracina, *The State and Governance in India: The Congress Ideal* (London: Routledge, 2010), 66; Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. II, 1935-1947 (Bombay: Padma Publications, 1947), 69, 100-101.

relentless and irreconcilable critic of Gandhi and Gandhism,” was now the member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council in charge of the Department of Indians Overseas. (Khare speculated that the Viceroy had appointed him to this cabinet position in the belief that his “anti-Gandhism” would prove helpful to the British).⁹ Khare immediately responded to the Pegging Act by securing the passage by the Indian Central Legislative Assembly of a “Reciprocity Act.” Reciprocity, which been repeatedly suggested by INC members of the Assembly – including Govindrao Deshmukh – since the mid-1930s, empowered the Government of India to treat residents of other parts of the British Empire in the same way that those British possessions treated Indians. In October 1944 the Indian Government announced that it would begin enforcing the Reciprocity Act against South Africa. India’s premier hotel, the Taj Mahal in Bombay, was one of several hotels and temples that subsequently put up large notices declaring that “South African Europeans are not allowed.”¹⁰

Given that there were just one hundred and twenty white South Africans in India at the time, and that they were usually unidentifiable, the enforcement of reciprocity was, however, essentially symbolic, as Khare himself recognized.¹¹ Deshmukh – a friend of Khare’s for more than two decades – had been suggesting since the early 1940s that economic sanctions would be a more effective measure. After taking office, Khare became an enthusiastic supporter of the idea: in 1943 he commissioned Lanka Sundaram, the editor of the New Delhi journal *Commerce & Industry*, to study it further.¹²

⁹ N.B. Khare, *My Political Memoirs; or, Autobiography* (Nagpur, India: J.R. Joshi, n.d. [ca.1959]), 15, 46-47, 155.

¹⁰ George Padmore, “India War on S. Africa Asked Over Color Ban,” *Chicago Defender*, 25 November 1944, 2; Ronald Stead, “The South African Riots,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 January 1949, 9; Khare, *Political Memoirs*, 162; Lloyd, “Family Quarrel,” 712; Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, 138-39, 232. The immediate inspiration for this specific form of retaliation was the British government’s own Government of India Act of 1935, which had provided for reciprocity in the treatment of Indians in Britain and Britons in India.

¹¹ Khare, *Political Memoirs*, 162.

¹² “Severe Criticism of ‘Pegging’ Legislation,” *Times of India*, 31 July 1943, 5; Khare, *Political Memoirs*, 527; Lloyd, “Family Quarrel,” 710-11. See also Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, 225-26.

Sundaram's study, for which he recruited two prominent South African Indians resident in India as co-authors, concluded that "trade and economic sanctions are the best and surest measure which India can adopt to bring South Africa to her knees." Citing the success of the clove boycott in securing the rights of Indians in Zanzibar, Sundaram and his co-authors argued that trade sanctions against South Africa could be similarly successful. Their report found that India's economic leverage with South Africa lay not in reducing Indian consumer demand (as in the case of the clove boycott), but in cutting off supply: South Africa's dependence on Indian jute sacks as packing materials for agricultural produce, and the use of Indian oil seeds, fats, and wax in the manufacture of South African soap and other products meant that a cessation of Indian exports to the country would cause "considerable paralysis of the Union's economy" and thus "make an impression on the Union government and its white population."¹³ By the end of 1944 majorities in both the Legislative Assembly and the Viceroy's Council wanted to impose trade sanctions against South Africa. The British cabinet in London, however, refused to allow "what amounts to a declaration of economic warfare by one part of the Commonwealth on another in the middle of the war."¹⁴

By January 1946, when Smuts announced his intention to introduce new anti-Indian legislation to replace the expiring Pegging Act, the possibility that India might impose trade sanctions on South Africa had thus already been extensively discussed in political circles in India. The discussions in India also generated some interest among Indian activists in South Africa, though

¹³ Bhawani Dayal Sanyasi, Mahomed Ahmad Jadwat, and Lanka Sundaram, *Economic Sanctions against South Africa: Their Need and Feasibility* (New Delhi: Commerce & Industry, 1944), 3, 5. See also Lanka Sundaram, *India in World Politics: A Historical Analysis and Appraisal* (Delhi: Sultan Chand, 1944), 215-20; K.N. Raj, "Sanctions and the Indian Experience," in *Sanctions Against South Africa*, ed. Ronald Segal (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1964), 198-99.

¹⁴ Lloyd, "A Family Quarrel," 712-14; Dowlat Ramdas Bagwandeem, "The Question of 'Indian Penetration' in the Durban Area and Indian Politics: 1940-1946" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Natal, 1983), 237; Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, 236-37.

there was initially no unanimity on the idea.¹⁵ Smuts' announcement, however, had a galvanizing effect on the South African Indian Congress, which had for several years been divided between "old guard" moderates who had traditionally led South African Indian political organizations, and a younger generation of more confrontational "radicals," led by Yusuf Dadoo in the Transvaal and by Monty Naicker in Natal. When Smuts refused to countenance an SAIC delegation's request that he convene a conference with the Indian government to discuss the position of Indians in South Africa, the SAIC's warring factions temporarily united around a new approach. The Congress's traditional approach of sending deputations to try to persuade the South African government to change its mind clearly offered no further hope in the immediate future.¹⁶

In February 1946, the SAIC's national conference passed a sweeping resolution "to mobilise all the resources of the Indian people in this country to take every possible measure to secure the lapsing of the Pegging Act and to oppose the proposed legislation." Specifically, the conference resolved to send a deputation to India to ask the Indian government to impose diplomatic and economic sanctions if the South African government refused to convene a roundtable conference to discuss the proposed legislation. The SAIC, meanwhile, would immediately "prepare the Indian people [in South Africa] for concerted and prolonged resistance." A further resolution affirmed the SAIC's "faith and hope in the principles of which the foundation of the Charter of the United Nations is based" and stated that "as an unrepresented minority," the South African Indian

¹⁵ Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, 239; I.C. Meer, "I Remember: Reminiscences of the Struggle for Liberation and the Role of Indian South Africans, 1924-1958," typescript, 2006, p.196, South African History Online, <https://perma.cc/5ATF-5J3Z>.

¹⁶ "Report of the deputation that waited on the Rt. Hon. General J.C. Smuts," 11 February 1946, File ICS 1/2, African National Congress papers (ICS 1), Archives & Manuscripts, Senate House Library, University of London; Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, *Monty Naicker: Between Reason and Treason* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter, 2010), 161; Essop Pahad, "The Development of Indian Political Movements in South Africa, 1924-1946" (D.Phil thesis, University of Sussex, 1972), 204; W.B. White, "Passive Resistance in Natal, 1946-48," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 5 (1982): 3-4.

community “claims its human rights to be heard before the General Assembly and Security Council” of the new United Nations Organization (UNO).¹⁷

The SAIC’s resolution represented a significant internationalization of the South African Indian community’s struggle against segregation. Indians in South Africa had always maintained close links with India, in both the personal and political realms.¹⁸ The Second World War further magnified interest in international affairs: allied leaders’ declarations of war and peace aims had raised hopes about major economic, social, and political change in the South African Indian community, as they did in many other parts of the world. South African Indian leaders were especially struck by the contrast between Smuts’ introduction of segregationist legislation at home and his reputation as an international statesman credited with drafting the ringing preamble to the United Nations Charter, including its invocation of “fundamental human rights.” This point was made repeatedly by the leaders of the SAIC deputation that had visited Smuts. SAIC secretary A.I. Kajee, for instance, “appealed to General Smuts as the originator of the preamble of the UNO charters to put into practice the principles of those charters in his own country.” When Smuts refused to budge, Kajee told him that by introducing the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill, he might gain support among those white South Africans obsessed with Indian “penetration” into white areas, but that he would “lose his international soul.” The approach the SAIC adopted in the wake of the meeting reflected Indian leaders’ hopes that by internationalizing their own struggle they could force Smuts to rethink this choice.¹⁹

¹⁷ South African Indian Congress, “Resolutions Passed at the Seventeenth Session, held at the Mayor’s Hall, Cape Town,” 8-13 February 1946, File ICS 1/1, ANC papers, Senate House.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Parvathi Raman, “Yusuf Dadoo: Transnational Politics, South African Belonging,” *South African Historical Journal* 50 (May 2004): 29-41, and, for a brief historiographical overview of this topic, Dhupelia-Mesthrie, “Place of India in South African History,” 28-30.

¹⁹ “Report of the deputation that waited on the Rt. Hon. General J.C. Smuts,” 11 February 1946, File ICS 1/2, ANC papers, Senate House. On Smuts’ role in drafting the preamble to the UN charter, see Saul Dubow, “Smuts, the United Nations and the Rhetoric of Race and Rights,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 1 (January 2008): esp. 52-64.

In India, the Viceroy's Council had in fact decided to impose sanctions against South Africa on March 6, 1946, even before the deputation sent by the SAIC met with Archibald Wavell, the British Viceroy, to present their requests.²⁰ As the beleaguered Wavell recorded in his journal, he had “managed to keep [the imposition of trade sanctions] in abeyance for about two years.” But the war effort against the Axis was no longer an obstacle. And the imposition of sanctions against South Africa was one of the few issues on which there was agreement between the INC and the Muslim League, whose divisions would lead the following year to the partition of independent India and Pakistan. Britain's new Labour government, committed to a rapid withdrawal from India, expressed its regret at the Council's decision, but did not attempt to intervene. On March 12, the same day that Wavell met with the SAIC delegation, Khare announced publicly that India's efforts to arrange a roundtable conference with South Africa had failed, and that the Indian government therefore intended to impose economic sanctions. Two weeks later, as the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill received its second reading in the South African parliament, the Indian government formally gave the required three month notice of the termination of its trade agreement with South Africa.²¹

The other two concrete suggestions made by the SAIC delegation – withdrawing the Indian High Commissioner and bringing the issue before the United Nations – were subsequently also accepted by the Viceroy's Council. The High Commissioner quietly set sail in May, leaving the Indian High Commission in South Africa in the charge of a junior official. Meanwhile Khare, as Wavell confided to his journal, had become “entranced with the prospect of ha[u]lling Smuts before

²⁰ Lloyd, “Family Quarrel,” 719; Sorabjee Rustomjee, S.R. Naidoo, A.S.M. Kajee, and A.A. Mirza, to Viscount Wavell, memorandum, 12 March 1946, File ICS 1/3, ANC papers, Senate House.

²¹ Bagwandeem, “The Question of Indian Penetration,” 280; David Carter, “Organized non-violent rejection of the law for political ends: the experience of blacks in South Africa” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham, 1978), 168n2; Desai and Vahed, *Monty Naicker*, 165; Lloyd, “Family Quarrel,” 717-19; Pachai, *International Aspects*, 191; E.S. Reddy and Fatima Meer, “Chronology of Resistance,” in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 51, 58; White, “Passive Resistance in Natal,” 3n11.

the bar of world opinion as a naughty boy.” Anomalously, India was a founder member of the United Nations, despite not yet being independent. A study by Khare’s department concluded that taking the complaint to the UN might have “considerable effect” on the South African government’s treatment of Indians. Smuts planned to ask the first session of the new UN General Assembly to approve the annexation of South West Africa, the former German colony over which South Africa had been granted a “mandate” by the now-defunct League of Nations in 1920. The South African government’s desire to maintain “a most spotless appearance” while making this request would give India leverage, the study argued. In June, therefore, when the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act became law, the Indian government formally requested that the issue be placed on the agenda of the General Assembly.²²

In South Africa, meanwhile, Indian radicals organized to give effect to the “concerted and prolonged resistance” called for in the SAIC’s February resolution. The still-cautious national leadership of the SAIC left the planning up to the more confrontational provincial leaders in Natal and the Transvaal, who established a Joint Passive Resistance Council (JPRC) to coordinate a campaign of civil disobedience when the new anti-Indian legislation went into force. The campaign took the form of selected volunteers pitching tents on an empty housing plot in Durban that the new law prohibited Indians from occupying. Each time the protesters were arrested, the JPRC assigned a new batch of selected volunteers to occupy the plot and be arrested in turn. By early October a total of almost 750 protesters had been jailed. On 24 October 1946 a “UNO batch” of 355 passive resisters – by far the largest batch yet – occupied the plot to coincide with the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York.²³ Indeed, more than any other campaign in South

²² Reddy and Meer, “Chronology of Resistance,” 52; Lloyd, “Family Quarrel,” 704, 719-23.

²³ White, “Passive Resistance in Natal,” 5-7; “UNO Day Arrests: Police Work all Night,” *Durban Leader*, 26 October 1946; “355 Resisters (UNO Batch) arrested on Opening of UN Assembly,” *Durban Leader*, 26 October 1946, in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 148-51.

Africa's history – before or since – the strategy of the JPRC's passive resistance campaign was premised on its international impact. Though the campaign took its inspiration from Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaigns in South Africa in the early twentieth century, the campaign's organizers placed little store in Gandhi's belief that exemplary sacrifice and suffering could bring about a change of heart on the part of the oppressor. Rather they hoped that the arrest of resisters in South Africa would provoke an international outcry. Pressure from the Indian government and/or from the United Nations would then, it was hoped, force the South African government to agree to a roundtable conference with India.²⁴

In addition to these efforts to attract international attention, the JPRC also sent two representatives, H.A. Naidoo and Sorabjee Rustomjee, to attend the UN General Assembly in New York. Naidoo was a labor organizer and leading radical in the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) who, like Yusuf Dadoo, was also a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa. Rustomjee, a leading member of the 'old guard,' had led the SAIC deputation to India earlier in the year. While other old guard moderates remained aloof from the passive resistance campaign, Rustomjee had returned home inspired by the discussions he had held with Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. He had led a batch of resisters during the first month of the campaign and was sentenced to three months of hard labor. After his release in October, he flew immediately to New York.

Rustomjee was also responsible for arranging the presence of a third South African in New York. Influenced by Nehru's advice that Indians in South Africa should start co-operating with the

²⁴ Anthony Sampson, *The Treason Cage: The Opposition on Trial in South Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1958), 180-81. Similar assessments of the strategy of the passive resistance campaign are made by Bagwandeem, "The Question of 'Indian Penetration,'" 314-15; Carter, "Organized non-violent rejection of the law," 129, 141, 156; Robert E. Johnson, "Indians and Apartheid in South Africa: The Failure of Resistance" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1973), 92; Jon Soske, "'Wash Me Black Again': African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora, and Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1944-1960" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 2009), 87; White, "Passive Resistance in Natal," 5, 9, 20-21. Compare the suggestion in Desai and Vahed, *Monty Naicker*, 163, that the radical leaders who organized the passive resistance campaign were dismissive of the idea that action by India or other overseas could contribute to their struggle, and instead "concentrated on their own course of locally based protest." A similar claim was also made retrospectively by at least one member of the radical faction of the SAIC: Ismail Meer, *A Fortunate Man* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2002), 89-90.

African majority in the country in their opposition to racial discrimination, Rustomjee concluded that the deputation to the UN would have greater impact if it included an African. He therefore asked Alfred Xuma, president of the African National Congress, to join him.²⁵ Founded in 1912, the ANC is celebrated today as Africa's oldest liberation movement. Despite occasional flirtations with mass mobilization, for most of the period before the Second World War the Congress was a small pressure group, led by members of the tiny African professional middle class. After a period in the 1930s when it had been essentially moribund, it had been revitalized and reorganized by Xuma, who became president in 1940. A new branch structure was established, and paid-up ANC membership increased, from a thousand in the 1930s to five and a half thousand in 1947.²⁶ Though committed to "educat[ing] the people to know they were being oppressed," Xuma was cautious of mass action and remained wedded to the politics of respectability and moderation. Like most of his predecessors, he preferred to advocate for Africans' interests through petitions, memoranda, and deputations to South African government bodies. Rustomjee's suggestion that he join the JPRC deputation to petition the United Nations in New York was thus an extension of Xuma's preferred approach into the international arena. Xuma responded enthusiastically, and Rustomjee sent him a suitcase of cash to cover his travel expenses.²⁷

The issues of South West Africa and South Africa's treatment of Indians dominated the UN General Assembly session. Smuts himself had traveled to New York to make the case for annexing South West Africa. Nehru, the leader of the new "interim government" that had assumed office in

²⁵ I.C. Meer, "Foreword," in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 22-23; Meer, "I Remember," 227; Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 90-91.

²⁶ Peter Limb, "Introduction," in *A.B. Xuma: Autobiography and Selected Works* ed. Peter Limb (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society for the Publication of Southern African Historical Documents, 2012), xi; A.B. Xuma, "Unpublished Autobiography," 1954, in *Xuma: Autobiography*, ed. Limb, 45. On the ANC under Xuma, see also Steven Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 110-64; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 24-26; Peter Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: The African National Congress, 1912-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

²⁷ Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 90-91; Meer, "Foreword," 22-23; Gerhart, *Black Power*, 102. See also Gish, *Xuma*, 145-46.

India in September, had embraced Khare's idea of appealing to the United Nations and appointed a high-powered delegation led by his sister, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Nehru's government assigned great significance to the UN in the postwar international order. "The world was full of hope," Pandit later recalled. "The Charter of the United Nations was a challenge to the most cynical, and it was a moment in time when it seemed possible to remold the world to a design in which justice, equality and opportunity would help establish the peace for which an exhausted humanity yearned." Once in New York, Rustomjee, Naidoo, and Xuma worked closely with Pandit's Indian delegation on both the South African Indian and South West African issues. Xuma submitted to the UN a lengthy memorandum – also published as a pamphlet – in which he argued that South Africa, "by reason of its own policy of race and colour discrimination," was not fit to administer South West Africa.²⁸

The Indian and South African efforts were also assisted by the radical Council on African Affairs (CAA), led by Paul Robeson and Alphaeus Hunton, who provided publicity, logistical, and lobbying support. On November 17, for instance, Pandit, Xuma, and Naidoo all addressed a mass meeting on South Africa organized by the CAA. The intensive lobbying by the Indian delegation, by the CAA, and by Xuma and JPRC deputation paid off. South Africa, backed by Britain and the United States, had argued that the UN was not competent to discuss its treatment of Indians because this was a matter within its domestic jurisdiction, as defined in Article 2(7) of the UN Charter. But after a tense twelve-hour debate on December 8, thirty-two of the fifty-four members of the General Assembly voted in favor of a resolution that declared that the treatment of Indians in South Africa should conform with previous agreements between the Indian and South African governments, and with the UN Charter, and that asked the two governments to report to the

²⁸ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1979), 209; A.B. Xuma, *South West Africa: Annexation or United Nations Trusteeship?* (New York: H. A. Naidoo and Sorabjee Rustomjee, 1946), 1.

Assembly's next session on the measures they had taken to ensure this. By one vote, the resolution thus secured the two-thirds majority necessary to pass. Three days later, the Assembly dealt Smuts an even harder blow, when it rejected his request to annex South West Africa and instead adopted a resolution drafted by the Indian delegation that invited the South Africa to submit a United Nations trusteeship agreement for the territory.²⁹

The UN resolutions on the treatment of Indians and on the status of South West Africa were greeted with elation in the black communities of South Africa. Africans and Indians held "United Nations Victory Day" meetings around the country. Xuma returned home to a hero's welcome: ANC Secretary General James Calata wrote to him in January that "People everywhere are talking about you and congratulating you for your recent achievements... You fought a good fight over there. Your people in Africa admire you and are proud of your leadership. You have brought your enemies to their knees." At a rally of several thousand Africans and Indians organized by the NIC, Xuma told the crowd that "If India comes of age, there is hope for world peace."³⁰ The JPRC, meanwhile, having achieved its immediate objective of attracting international attention, scaled back

²⁹ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Resolution 44 (I), "Treatment of Indians in the Union of South Africa," 8 December 1946, <https://perma.cc/2EXP-TG96>; UNGA, Resolution 65 (I), "Future Status of South West Africa," 14 December 1946, <https://perma.cc/8AE3-TFJP>; Pandit, *Scope of Happiness*, 210-16; Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 83-95; Gish, Xuma, 147-49.

On the debates and resolutions on South African issues at the 1946 General Assembly, see also Bagwandeem, "The Question of 'Indian Penetration,'" 319-35; Timothy Bennett-Smyth, "Transcontinental Connections: Alfred B Xuma and the African National Congress on the World Stage" (paper presented at workshop on South Africa in the 1940s, Southern African Research Centre, Kingston, Canada, September 2003); Manu Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 56-73; Dubow, "Smuts, the United Nations," 65-71; Ryan M. Irwin, "Imagining Nation, State, and Order in the Mid-Twentieth Century," *Kronos* 37 (November 2011): 13-18; Lorna Lloyd, "A Most Auspicious Beginning: The 1946 United Nations General Assembly and the Question of the Treatment of Indians in South Africa," *Review of International Studies* 16, no. 2 (April 1990): 131-53; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 173-83.

³⁰ "Boycott of George VI Talked of in Africa," *New York Times*, 20 December 1946, 13; Gish, Xuma, 150; Soske, "Wash Me Black Again," 82.

the passive resistance campaign, deciding that batches of volunteers should now be sent to the resistance plot once a week rather than every day.³¹

In the course of 1946 the Indian government had taken three measures to pressure the South African government to agree to a roundtable conference: the economic sanction of breaking off trade, the diplomatic sanction of withdrawing the High Commissioner, and the referral of the dispute to the UN General Assembly. Advocates of economic sanctions had been divided on the extent and nature of the impact they expected trade sanctions to have. While, as we have seen, some Indian sanctions advocates believed that an Indian embargo would cause “considerable paralysis,” Rustomjee’s SAIC delegation to India had expressed the belief that sanctions “may mean very little material loss to South Africa” and had emphasized instead their “moral value.”³² In fact, in the short term the sudden cessation of imports from India did have a significant material impact. Without Indian groundnuts there was an immediate shortage of oil for making soap: in early August newspapers reported an “acute” soap shortage and a run on remaining stocks. Moreover, many South African farmers used jute sacks from India to pack and transport their produce. At the start of August – a fortnight after India’s legal prohibition on trade with South Africa went into effect – a ship carrying a large cargo of sacks docked at Cape Town, but on the instructions of the Indian consignors it was not unloaded. No further shipments followed. Though the South African corn harvest had begun, farmers without sacks to pack their corn hesitated to begin threshing. South African importers immediately began making arrangements to purchase packing materials from elsewhere, but this could not alleviate the shortage immediately, and the effects were felt well into 1947. South African farmers were forced to start recycling previously used sacks. One of the most

³¹ Reddy and Meer, “Chronology of Resistance,” 62; “1718 Resisters Jailed,” *Durban Leader*, 24 May 1947, in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 187.

³² Rustomjee, Naidoo, Kajee, and Mirza, to Wavell, memorandum, 12 March 1946, File ICS 1/3, ANC papers, Senate House.

tragic consequences of the Indian embargo was the death in early 1947 of at least twenty-three black South Africans in Natal. They had eaten food stored in re-used sacks that had previously contained arsenic compounds for sheep dipping.³³

Though India's sanctions thus had a material impact on South Africa in the months immediately after their imposition, they did not have either the moral or the political effect their advocates had hoped for. Welcoming the Indian embargo, Dadoo had expressed the hope that the "crisis of the first order" caused by the shortage of soap, sacks, and other products would "drive home to the European people the hard lesson that their rulers cannot carry on with impunity, and this with their consent, the policy of racial and colour oppression."³⁴ In the event, however, the immediate effect of the sanctions was to exacerbate animosity against Indians amongst whites. Anti-Indian animus quickly coalesced around the idea of a retaliatory boycott. In January 1947 a group of white farmers in the Transvaal who were suffering from the shortage of grain sacks initiated a boycott of stores run by Indians. In March, four hundred delegates at an "Indian Boycott Congress" resolved that "the Indians must be systematically excluded from the economic life of this country, so that it will not be worth their while to remain in South Africa." In many small farming towns, Indian stores were picketed: shoppers who patronized them were ostracized, intimidated, and sometimes assaulted.³⁵

³³ "Indian Reprisal Brings S. Africa Soap Shortage," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 August 1946, 27; "South Africa Pinched by Indians' Boycott," *New York Times*, 5 August 1946, 6; "Arsenic Illness in South Africa," *New York Times*, 17 February 1947, 9; "Foodstuffs in Jute Bags Poisoned," *Times of India*, 5 February 1947, 4.

³⁴ "Dadoo speaks on his release, 29 September 1946," *Johannesburg Passive Resister*, 7 October 1946; Y.M. Dadoo, "Five Months of Struggle: A Brief Account of the Passive Resistance Struggle from 13 June to 13 November 1946," in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 146, 71.

³⁵ Chesly Manly, "India Charges Defiance of U.N. by South Africa," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 September 1947, 9; Carter, "Organized non-violent rejection of the law," 178-79; Dan O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 168-70; Newell Stultz, *Afrikaner Politics in South Africa, 1934-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 116; Christopher Webb, "Fighting Talk: Ruth First's Early Journalism, 1947-1950," *Review of African Political Economy* 42, no. 143 (March 2015): 12-13.

Any hope that the combination of India's diplomatic and economic sanctions and the resolutions of the General Assembly might cause the South African government to change course was dashed in the course of 1947. Though Smuts was angered and disappointed that the international organization he had helped to found had now given him his "first great knock," he was unwilling to comply with its resolutions. In the immediate term, the most significant direct outcome of the confrontation at the UN was that he did not receive international approval for the formal annexation of South West Africa. Instead, Smuts announced that South Africa would continue to administer the territory "in the spirit" of the original League of Nations mandate, and would report annually to the UN "for information." But the South African government would not submit a new trusteeship agreement, as the General Assembly had requested. And regarding the treatment of Indians, the Smuts government was immovable. In response to the General Assembly resolution, the Minister of the Interior immediately announced that the Asiatic Act would not be repealed.³⁶ In April, Smuts declared in parliament that the boycott of Indian stores was "the direct result of the harm, bitterness, and injustice brought about by the Indian government's sanctions" and suggested that the situation could only be resolved by discussions between the two governments. But no roundtable conference ensued. Though Smuts and Nehru did begin a personal correspondence, Smuts refused to accept Nehru's precondition that any negotiations between the two governments should be on the basis of the General Assembly's resolution.³⁷

Until this point, advocates of trade sanctions in both India and South Africa had discussed them in the context of the two countries' bilateral relations, as a means of pressuring the South African government to agree to a roundtable conference with the Indian government, as it had done

³⁶ Bagwandeem, "The Question of 'Indian Penetration,'" 334-35; Carter, "Organized non-violent rejection of the law," 159, 172-74; White, "Passive Resistance in Natal," 11.

³⁷ "India-South Africa Talks Likely," *Times of India*, 16 April 1947, 7; "Correspondence between Nehru and Smuts on the implementation of the United Nations' Resolution," *Durban Leader*, 23 August 1947, in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 338-341. See also White, "Passive Resistance in Natal," 18-19.

twice before, in 1926-27 and 1932. The model had been the consumer boycott of Zanzibari cloves in 1937-38, when Indian economic leverage had been sufficient to compel Zanzibar's rulers to negotiate a rapid retreat from their new anti-Indian measures. But in July and September 1947, in light of Smuts' refusal to heed the requests of the Indian government and the General Assembly, Dadoo now attempted to globalize the sanctions campaign, calling for all UN member states to sever their diplomatic and trade relations with South Africa. Dadoo hoped that the South African government would then be forced to comply with the General Assembly's demands in order "to stave off [the] serious economic crisis" that a multilateral trade embargo would cause.³⁸

This was the first time a South African resistance leader advocated worldwide economic sanctions against South Africa.³⁹ It did not, however, meet with a positive response. In October 1947 the JPRC again sent Rustomjee and two other representatives to New York to work with the Indian delegation at the second session of the General Assembly. Dadoo instructed the JPRC deputation to call for a world-wide boycott of South African goods. But even the Indian delegation rejected the idea and apparently prevailed on the JPRC representatives not to publicize it.⁴⁰ The Indian government advised its delegation that though the idea of a General Assembly resolution recommending sanctions against South Africa might seem "alluring," a draft sanctions resolution was unlikely to be adopted, since "In the present stage of its existence, the Assembly is not likely to

³⁸ "Enforcing U.N. Decision Against South Africa," *Times of India*, 28 July 1947, 11; "Boycott of South African Goods," *Times of India*, 30 September 1947, 6; "Old Guard condemns Dadoo," *Durban Leader*, 4 October 1947, in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 64, 237.

³⁹ Dadoo's appeal is nevertheless ignored in all of the major studies of the external dimensions of the struggle against apartheid. It is briefly mentioned in a handful of works on the passive resistance campaign: Carter, "Organized non-violent rejection of the law," 168n2; Reddy and Meer, "Chronology of Resistance," 64; White, "Passive Resistance in Natal," 19-20.

⁴⁰ "Boycott of South African Goods," *Times of India*, 30 September 1947, 6. The pamphlet the JPRC deputation distributed in New York, which was written after "long discussions with the Indian delegates," called for the UN to "be firm with signatories of the charter," but made no explicit mention of the multilateral sanctions regime Dadoo had instructed them to call for. Sorabjee Rustomjee, Ashwin Choudree, and A.I. Meer, *South Africa Defies United Nations: What Next?* (New York: self-published, 1947).

throw down a challenge which may involve desertions from the membership of the United Nations and weaken the authority of that organisation.”⁴¹ Committed to the UN as an institution that could lay the basis of a new world order, the Nehru government was unwilling to risk undermining it in this way.⁴² Dadoo’s appeal for a multilateral sanctions regime thus had no immediate effect. The only two governments to maintain trade sanctions against South Africa were India and Pakistan, the two successor states after Britain’s final withdrawal from India in August 1947.

At the United Nations, the Indian government’s caution proved prescient. The dramatic confrontation between Smuts and Pandit had been one of the most salient moments of the 1946 UN session. But in 1947 the General Assembly was dominated by debates on the future of Palestine. A South African diplomat reported with relief that “Mercifully for us at U.N.O. it looks as though the other bigger and more disturbing issues at the Assembly... have taken the edge off both the Indian complaint and S[outh] W[est] A[frica].”⁴³ A small stir was created by the arrival at the UN of Reverend Michael Scott, a British priest who had moved to South Africa in 1943, and had quickly become a committed opponent of racial discrimination. Scott had first come to international prominence the year before for being one of the only whites to participate in the passive resistance campaign against the Asiatic Act. He had traveled to South West Africa earlier in 1947, and had been asked by Chief Hosea Kutako of the Herero people in South West Africa to represent them at the UN. It was, Scott wrote later, “a very serious matter indeed, to go outside one’s own nation in an appeal to the nations of the world.” But given the “deteriorating” situation, “it seemed now as if the only hope for the African people was an appeal to the conscience of the world.” The Indian delegation to the UN appointed him an “official adviser” so that he could obtain a visa to visit New

⁴¹ Lloyd, “A Most Auspicious Beginning,” 149. See also Gupta, “Solidarity: India and South Africa,” 1264-65.

⁴² Manu Bhagavan, “A New Hope: India, the United Nations and the Making of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (March 2010): 321; Irwin, “Imagining Nation, State, and Order,” 13, 16-17.

⁴³ White, “Passive Resistance in Natal,” 20.

York.⁴⁴

Despite the interest generated by Scott's presence, however, the Indian delegation was unable to replicate the success it had enjoyed the year before. The draft resolution the Indian delegation submitted on the treatment of Indians – which expressed regret at South Africa's failure to accept the 1946 resolution as the basis for negotiations and called for talks between the governments of India, Pakistan, and South Africa on that basis – was twice watered down, and then still failed to win the two-thirds majority needed to pass the General Assembly. The Indian delegation's draft resolution on South West Africa likewise failed to secure a two-thirds majority. Instead the General Assembly simply adopted a resolution that again urged the South African government to adopt a trusteeship agreement.⁴⁵

The historian of international governance Mark Mazower has argued in his analysis of the 1946 session of the General Assembly that “it was over South Africa and its policies that the global possibilities inherent in the United Nations institutions first emerged.” But it was also over South Africa and its policies that the limitations of those same UN institutions became rapidly apparent, as the South African government ignored the 1946 resolutions with impunity. In her study of the efforts of African American activist W.E.B. du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to petition the UN to intervene to protect the human rights of African Americans in the United States – an effort in part inspired by the General Assembly's 1946 resolution on Indians in South Africa – the historian Carol Anderson has shown

⁴⁴ Michael Scott, *A Time to Speak* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), 219-33; Freda Troup, *In Face of Fear: Michael Scott's Challenge to South Africa* (London: Faber and Faber, 1950), 137-68; Michael Crowder, “Tshekedi Khama, Smuts, and South West Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 25, no. 1 (March 1987): 41; Carol Anderson, “International Conscience, the Cold War, and Apartheid: The NAACP's Alliance with the Reverend Michael Scott for South West Africa's Liberation, 1946-1952,” *Journal of World History* 19, no. 3 (September 2008): 304-11; Christopher Saunders, “Michael Scott and Namibia,” *African Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (December 2007): 28-33; Anne Yates and Lewis Chester, *The Troublemaker: Michael Scott and his Lonely Struggle against Injustice* (London: Aurum, 2006), 74-87.

⁴⁵ Lloyd, “A Most Auspicious Beginning,” 149-50; UNGA, Resolution 141 (II), “Consideration of proposed new trusteeship agreements, if any: question of South West Africa,” 1 November 1947, <https://perma.cc/N8PB-MPD4>.

that “in the span of three short years [from 1944 to 1947], the [NAACP’s] hope of the UN as a powerful weapon for systemic change had dissolved into the reality of the United Nations as little more than a pawn in the Cold War.”⁴⁶ The views of the JPRC leadership in South Africa followed exactly the same trajectory over the same period. In the pamphlet they published in New York in October 1947, Rustomjee and his fellow JPRC delegates noted that “the apparent inability of [the] United Nations to enforce its Charter is giving rise in many parts of the world, no less than in South Africa, to serious doubts as to whether the United Nations really can insure world peace and bring about freedom for all.” Such doubts were only reinforced later that year when the General Assembly failed even to pass a resolution on the treatment of Indians in South Africa.⁴⁷

The JPRC had predicated its strategy on the belief that the spectacle of civil disobedience would provoke effective international intervention. When this did not materialize, the organizers struggled to maintain interest in their ongoing campaign. Numbers of resisters declined rapidly after the December 1946 UN resolution. In October 1947 the JPRC organized a “UNO batch” of resisters, as it had the year before, but the number of volunteers was much smaller. A mass meeting called that month to relaunch the campaign attracted a crowd of just a thousand, compared to the seven to ten thousand who had attended similar rallies a year earlier. After another attempt to revive passive resistance in January 1948, the JPRC called off the faltering campaign in June, just as the new National Party government of Prime Minister D.F. Malan assumed office.⁴⁸

The unanimity of SAIC activists in February 1946 on the need for India to impose sanctions had meanwhile rapidly splintered. With the exception of Rustomjee, the conservative “old guard” of

⁴⁶ Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 152; Carol Anderson, “From Hope to Disillusion: African Americans, the United Nations, and the Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1947,” *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 562.

⁴⁷ Rustomjee, Choudree, and Meer, *South Africa Defies United Nations: What Next?*, 27.

⁴⁸ White, “Passive Resistance in Natal,” 20, 12-13, 25; “Resistance Suspended,” *Durban Leader*, 6 June 1948 in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 208-9. On the decline of the campaign after December 1946, see also Carter, “Organized non-violent rejection of the law,” 156-60, 188-89; Johnson, “Indians and Apartheid,” 79-81.

the SAIC had remained aloof from the JPRC's passive resistance campaign. The wealthier Indian merchants who had traditionally dominated the SAIC were especially concerned about the rapid spread of the retaliatory boycott of Indian stores. In a speech in April 1947, A.I. Kajee, who had served as SAIC secretary from 1927 to 1946, described the treatment of Smuts as the UN as a "humiliation" for all South Africans, and called on India to withdraw its sanctions and restore full diplomatic relations, "in order to remove the Indo-Union dispute from the purview of the UN." The next month Kajee, P.R. Pather, and other old guard moderates broke from the NIC to form a new Natal Indian Organisation (NIO) as a vehicle for their preferred approach of dialogue rather than confrontation. The NIO was especially critical of Dadoo's "mischievous" proposal for worldwide sanctions: Pather argued that Dadoo's appeal would do "irreparable harm to the South African Indian cause."⁴⁹ In India too, some former sanctions advocates now backed away from the idea, including Bhawani Dayal Sanyasi, one of the co-authors of the study Khare had commissioned in 1943 that had argued that Indian sanctions could "bring South Africa to her knees." In February 1949, Sanyasi called on the Indian government to rescind its sanctions. Sanctions had failed to achieve their objective, he argued, and were now "purposeless and detrimental to the interest of our own people."⁵⁰

Dadoo himself did not publicly reverse his call for multilateral sanctions, but he recognized that they were unlikely to be forthcoming. The treatment of Indians in South Africa had become a "hardy annual" on the UN's agenda, he wrote in 1949, a few months after his abortive efforts to get to the General Assembly in Paris, but this had not stopped the new National Party government

⁴⁹ "The 'Old Guard's' view of racism against Indians – A.I. Kajee," *Durban Leader*, 19 April 47; "Kajee accused of betrayal at NIC mass meeting," *Durban Leader*, 26 April 1947; "Old Guard condemns Dadoo," *Durban Leader*, 4 October 1947, in *Passive Resistance – 1946*, eds. Reddy and Meer, 271-73, 229-30, 237; Meer, "I Remember," 271. See also Soske, "Wash Me Black Again," 83; White, "Passive Resistance in Natal," 9, 17-18.

⁵⁰ Quoted in P. Kodanda Rao, "Sanctions against South Africa: A Critique," *Triveni*, May 1949, <https://perma.cc/43GY-NPXD>.

from introducing even more “drastic and stringent” anti-Indian measures. One of the new government’s first pieces of legislation was the Asiatic Laws Amendment Act of 1948, which repealed the provisions in Smuts’ 1946 law for the Indian community to be represented in parliament by four white MPs elected on a separate electoral roll. (The provision had never been implemented, in the face of unanimous Indian rejection of such differential representation). By appealing to India for sanctions and “inciting world opinion” at the UN, Malan argued, South African Indians had proven they were a “foreign element” with no right to representation.⁵¹

The National Party government was equally defiant of the UN’s resolutions on South West Africa. With help from non-governmental organizations in New York, including the International League for the Rights of Man and the NAACP, Michael Scott continued to attend the annual sessions of the General Assembly as a representative of the Herero people. Scott won a series of procedural victories. In 1949 the General Assembly’s committee on trusteeship allowed him to present an oral petition on conditions in South West Africa, even though he did not represent a member state. And in 1951 the committee voted to invite “representatives of the indigenous peoples of South-West Africa” to participate in oral hearings themselves. But though Scott’s dogged persistence thus helped to transform the United Nations, opening up its procedures to greater participation by non-state actors, it did not transform the situation on the ground. South West Africa was incorporated into South Africa in all but name in 1949, when the South West Africa Amendment Act gave white settlers in the territory direct representation in the South African parliament. The National Party government ended its predecessor’s practice of submitting reports to the United Nations in accordance with the requirements of the original League of Nations mandate.

⁵¹ Yusuf Dadoo, “India, South Africa, and UNO,” *Indian News Chronicle*, 25 September 1949, in *Dr. Yusuf Mohamed Dadoo: His Speeches, Articles and Correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi (1939-1983)* ed. E.S. Reddy (Durban: Madiba Publishers, 1991), 148-52; Margaret Hubbard, “Curb on Non-Europeans Pushed in South Africa,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 August 1948, 13; Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34.

And when the International Court of Justice (ICJ) gave an advisory opinion to the General Assembly in 1950 that the mandate was still in force and South Africa must continue to adhere to its stipulations, Malan's government simply ignored it. The following year the government declared Scott himself a "prohibited immigrant" and refused to permit the invited South West Africans to travel to the UN in 1951.⁵²

For Yusuf Dadoo, the "impunity" with which the South African government acted only underlined "the weakness of the United Nations Organisation in taking effective action." Dadoo laid the blame for this squarely on what he called "the shameful role played by the United States of America, Britain, the white Dominions and the colonial Powers making it almost impossible for the United Nations to take effective steps against South Africa." He castigated the Indian government's approach of refusing to propose multilateral sanctions because of this western opposition and of instead submitting weaker resolutions designed to attract broad support in the Assembly. "A watered-down resolution without proper sanctions to enforce the decision of the United Nations can, in present circumstances, serve no useful purpose," Dadoo argued. "Such a resolution can only help to maintain the illusion which has lasted long enough that something is being done by the United Nations." If India proposed a stronger draft resolution calling "for the most drastic action in terms of the Charter," it might fail to pass but its defeat on the floor of the General Assembly would at least serve to "unmask the role of the imperialist Powers."⁵³

India declined to take this approach, however. Nehru's government ignored calls from the NIO and others to rescind its sanctions policy. In August and September 1948 Indian

⁵² Anderson, "International Conscience, the Cold War, and Apartheid," 316-23; James Barber and John Barratt, *South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security 1945-1988* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 54-55; Roger S. Clark, "The International League for Human Rights and South West Africa 1947-1957: The Human Rights NGO as Catalyst in the International Legal Process," *Human Rights Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (November 1981): 110-16, 135-36, 125-26, 122-24; Saunders, "Scott and Namibia," 33-34.

⁵³ Dadoo, "India, South Africa, and UNO," 148-52.

representatives successfully fought off an attempt by the new National Party government to have India's sanctions ruled illegal at a twenty-two-nation conference in Geneva on the new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).⁵⁴ The Indian government meanwhile continued its efforts to achieve a resolution to the dispute through the UN. After the anti-climax of 1947, the third session of the General Assembly passed a resolution in May 1949 inviting the governments of India, Pakistan, and South Africa to "enter into discussions at a roundtable conference" on the issue of South Africa's treatment of Indians. Representatives of the three governments did in fact meet for "talks about talks" in Cape Town in early 1950, but the Indian and Pakistani governments subsequently withdrew from the planned roundtable conference when, just before it was to take place, the South African government passed the Group Areas Act.⁵⁵ The National Party government was keen to remove the irritant of the annual debates at the UN on the treatment of Indians, but not at the cost of any delay to the implementation of apartheid. Indeed, it was in 1950 that several of the cornerstones of apartheid were set in place. The Group Areas Act enabled the government to proclaim designated urban areas to be for the exclusive occupation of a single racial group. The Population Registration Act assigned a racial category to every member of the population. The Immorality Amendment Act made interracial sex illegal. And the Suppression of Communism Act not only made the Communist Party itself illegal but gave the government broad powers against anyone committed to bringing about radical change.

⁵⁴ "India's Boycott of S. African Trade: Malan's Cabinet's Move," *Times of India*, 21 August 1948, 1; "No Relaxation of Boycott of Trade with South Africa," *Times of India*, 23 August 1948, 6; "South Africa's Refusal to Sign Trade Pact," *Times of India*, 25 August 1948, 7; "Boycott of South African Trade: India's Stand Vindicated," *Times of India*, 3 September 1948, 1; "Geneva Trade Conference: Indian Delegate's View" *Times of India*, 14 September 1948, 14.

⁵⁵ India Not Given Notice of Group Areas Bill," *Times of India*, 10 June 1950, 1; Rawle Knox, "India May Challenge Malan at UN," *London Observer*, 11 June 1950, 1; "Pakistan Asks Delay in South Africa Bill," *New York Times*, 17 June 1950, 4. See also Pachai, *International Aspects*, 227-30, 236-37; Hussein Solomon and Sonja Theron, "Behind the Veil: India's Relations with *Apartheid* South Africa," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 33, no. 1 (May 2011): 107.

II. ‘The national liberation of Africans will be achieved by Africans themselves’: The Primacy of Domestic Strategies of Resistance

In the 1940s, the advocates of exerting economic pressure on South Africa, both within the Indian government and the South African Indian Congress, had focused on governmental sanctions on trade. Although the consumer boycott of Zanzibari cloves was an important model to some Indian sanctions advocates, neither they nor Dadoo suggested extending the governmental boycott of trade with South Africa into the non-governmental sphere. The only prominent figure to make such a suggestion in this period was George Padmore, a prominent Trinidadian pan-Africanist organizer, journalist, and propagandist who was then based in London. Padmore, who had written enthusiastically about the debates on economic sanctions in India in 1944, came to believe that non-governmental boycotts could be used to support the struggles against the South African government not only of Indians but also of Africans. He reported in February 1946 that “British colonial experts in London” feared that a boycott of South African goods might be organized in British colonies of West Africa. A boycott organized by West African labor unions and backed by the main anti-colonial nationalist groups in the region would cause “unemployment and serious political repercussion” in South Africa, Padmore argued, and might force the South African government to grant Africans’ demands. “Today,” Padmore concluded, “the natives of West Africa hold in their purse the economic key to the salvation of their black brothers in South Africa.”⁵⁶

Padmore’s enthusiasm for industrial and consumer boycotts of South African goods was not shared, however, by the African nationalist organizations inside South Africa that he intended them to help. And Dadoo’s call for governmental trade sanctions was not only ignored by the Indian

⁵⁶ George Padmore, “India War on S. Africa Asked Over Color Ban,” *Chicago Defender*, 25 November 1944, 2; George Padmore, “Liberian Lashes Europe ‘Madmen,’” *Chicago Defender*, 9 February 1946, 7. On Padmore’s interest in South Africa and his 1940s journalism in London see Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 69-95. James notes that unnamed “British colonial experts” were one of Padmore’s most commonly cited sources.

government. It was not taken up further inside South Africa either. Indeed, rather than seeking to cause an “economic crisis” through sanctions, some of Dadoo’s comrades in the Communist Party believed that the Party should be trying to promote the growth of South Africa’s manufacturing sector. Founded by socialist white immigrants in the 1920s, the CPSA had torn itself apart in sectarian disputes during the 1930s, but enjoyed a resurgence during the Second World War. As the Party basked in the reflected glory of the Soviet Union’s struggle against Nazi Germany, its formal membership increased from less than three hundred in 1939 to around two thousand by the end of the forties; the circulation of the *Guardian* newspaper, the CPSA’s unofficial mouthpiece, reached fifty thousand by 1945.⁵⁷ Though the relationship between nationalism and socialism remained the subject of heated debate within the Party, Communists took a renewed interest after 1941 in strengthening the ANC, which many had previously dismissed “either as irrelevant or as a potential handicap in the struggle,” given the Congress’s elitist, middle-class character and organizational disarray. The CPSA General Secretary, Moses Kotane, was one of three prominent African Communists on the ANC National Executive by 1945.⁵⁸

From the late 1930s onwards, leading members of the CPSA also threw themselves into organizing black workers into labor unions. It was a propitious time for labor organizing, as the massive growth of secondary industry during the war caused rapid African urbanization and proletarianization.⁵⁹ In 1945 the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) – which had

⁵⁷ Tom Lodge, “Class Conflict, Communal Struggle and Patriotic Unity: The Communist Party of South Africa During the Second World War” (paper presented at the African Studies Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, October 1985), 1, 6; H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1969), 538-39.

⁵⁸ Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 67; Rusty Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting: Memoirs from a Life in South African Politics, 1938-1964* (London: Viking, 1999), 59-60; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 29. On the emerging collaboration between Communists and the ANC in this period, see also Lodge, “Class Conflict, Communal Struggle and Patriotic Unity,” 4, 12; Patrick J. Furlong, “The Bonds of War: The African National Congress, the Communist Party of South Africa and the Threat of ‘Fascism,’” *South African Historical Journal* 36, no. 1 (May 1997): 68-87.

⁵⁹ Lodge, “Class Conflict, Communal Struggle and Patriotic Unity,” 13-15; Jonathan Grossman, “Class Relations and the Policies of the Communist Party of South Africa, 1921-1950” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1985), 316-20.

been established on the Rand four years earlier and in which Communists occupied the majority of leadership positions – claimed a total membership of 158,000 workers in 119 unions.⁶⁰ Labor organizing efforts suffered a severe setback in August 1946, when the Smuts government brutally crushed a week-long strike by seventy thousand African miners, killing at least nine and injuring over a thousand. CNETU never recovered from this blow. But members of the CPSA were nevertheless impressed by what Joe Slovo – an up-and-coming white lawyer on the Party’s Johannesburg District Committee – called “the awesome potential of the new social force which was emerging – the black proletariat with its collective instruments of struggle.”⁶¹

This new social force was the product of secondary industrialization, a process that some Communists believed they should actively seek to encourage. In September 1947 – the very same month that Dadoo instructed the JPRC delegates to call for worldwide sanctions – the CPSA-aligned *Guardian* newspaper launched a “buy South African goods” campaign. This was not directed at overseas consumers, but at the *Guardian*’s own South African readers, whom the paper feared were prejudiced in favor of foreign-made imports. But the logic of the paper’s argument that “buying South African means jobs for South Africa’s workers” would have been incompatible with attempting to reduce overseas sales of South African products either by the trade sanctions that Dadoo was calling for or the industrial and consumer boycotts that Padmore had advocated.⁶²

When South African resistance activists talked about “the boycott” in 1946-49 they were

⁶⁰ Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, 554.

⁶¹ Joe Slovo, *Slovo: The Unfinished Autobiography* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1997), 52.

⁶² “Buying South African Means Jobs For South Africans,” “Buy South African Goods,” “Quality Clothes: Industrialist and Trade Unionist Interviewed,” “Our Boots and Shoes,” Cape Town *Guardian* [newspaper clippings], n.d. [September 1947], File ICS 117/1/4/1/4, Ruth First Papers (ICS 117), Senate House. The acting editor of the *Guardian* at this time was Brian Bunting, a member of the Party’s Propaganda and Organisation Committee. On the relationship between the *Guardian* and the CPSA in this period see James Zug, *The Guardian: The History of South Africa’s Extraordinary Anti-Apartheid Newspaper* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 41-42, 84-86, 273n60.

According to Jack and Ray Simons, both leading members of the CPSA in this period, Communists had argued during the war that: “A complete mobilization of resources would lead to complete liberation from national oppression. If Africans were trained for skilled work and to use arms, they could no longer be treated as inferior.” Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, 536.

referring not to isolating South Africa internationally, but to the boycott of differential political institutions within the country. This had been a subject of heated controversy in black politics since the mid-1930s, when the South African government had established new, segregated political structures to represent Africans, including a national “Native Representative Council” (NRC). While leaders of groups including the ANC and the CPSA had ultimately decided to participate in NRC elections, advocacy of “non-collaboration,” including the boycott of all segregated political institutions, became the defining feature of small group of Trotskyists led by I.B. Tabata, who in 1943 founded the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM).⁶³

Little more than a footnote – if that – in most histories of the liberation struggle in South Africa, the NEUM’s ideas had a significant influence that extended far beyond the Movement’s own following, which was concentrated in the coloured community of the Western Cape. Perhaps most importantly, the boycott policy was taken up by the ANC Youth League, formed in 1944 by a younger generation of Congress activists who were frustrated with Xuma’s ongoing reliance on advancing African interests by petitions, memoranda, and deputations.⁶⁴ Prominent Youth Leaguers such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo were inspired by the grassroots mobilizations during the ferment of the war years, including the proliferation of wildcat strikes, the series of bus boycotts over rising transport costs in the Johannesburg township of Alexandra from 1940 to 1944, and the growth of squatter movements. For the Youth League, boycotting the NRC

⁶³ On Tabata and the NEUM’s understanding of boycott, see Mpumelelo Temba [I.B. Tabata], “Boycott as a Weapon of Struggle” [June 1952], in *The Contribution of the Non-European Peoples to World Civilization* ed. Maurice Hommel (Braamfontein, South Africa: Skotaville, 1989), 165-200; Neville Alexander, “Aspects of Non-Collaboration,” *Social Dynamics* 12, no. 1 (1986): 1-12; Allison Drew, *Discordant Comrades: Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 267-70; Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 68-73.

⁶⁴ Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Ngqele Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2015), 153; Soske, ““Wash Me Black Again,”” 75; Clive Glaser, *The ANC Youth League* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 23; Robert Edgar, “Changing the Old Guard: A.P. Mda and the ANC Youth League,” in *South Africa’s 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, eds. Saul Dubow and Alan Jeeves (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005), 163. As Soske notes, “The intellectual influence of the NEUM, both as a source of ideas and a constant critical presence, continued throughout the 1950s and is rarely accorded its proper weight in the development of the ANC’s politics.”

was a necessary step in turning the ANC away from a reliance on pleading for government concessions, and towards an embrace of these kinds of mass struggles.⁶⁵

The boycott controversy came to a head during the suppression of the miners' strike in August 1946. When the government refused to allow the NRC members to visit the site of the police attack on the strikers, the Council unanimously adopted a motion to adjourn indefinitely. Acceding to pressure from Youth League militants, an "emergency conference" called by Xuma in October resolved to boycott future elections for the NRC and for "Native Representatives" in the South African parliament. A coalition of communists and members of the ANC's liberal old guard reversed this policy the following year, however. Both groups feared that by boycotting elections to segregated bodies they would simply be denying themselves a useful platform to oppose segregation and ceding the field to more pliant representatives. Professor Z.K. Matthews and other ANC leaders therefore participated in the NRC elections in 1947.⁶⁶ And in 1948 Sam Kahn of the CPSA became the first Communist to win election to parliament as a "Native Representative" for the Western Cape. One of Kahn's exploits was to insert of the full text of *The Communist Manifesto* into the parliamentary record, meaning that it could not be banned and would always be available from the government printer. For Joe Slovo Kahn's performance as an MP provided "an excellent example of the way in which critical participation can sometimes do more to expose the iniquity of an institution than a thousand boycotts."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 76; Gerhart, *Black Power*, 80-82.

⁶⁶ On "the emergence of the boycott issue in 1946" see Paul Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism, 1921-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 87-90; Janet Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa, 1948-1963* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 31-33; Gish, *Xuma*, 142, 154-56; Xuma, "Unpublished Autobiography," 1954, in *Xuma: Autobiography* ed. Limb, 47; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 20, 45; [Thomas Karis], "Moderation and Militancy, 1937-1949," in *From Protest to Challenge: a Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, vol. 2, *Hope and Challenge, 1935-1952*, ed. Thomas Karis (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), 92-98.

⁶⁷ Slovo, *Slovo*, 56-57. On the Communist Party's participation in South African elections, see also Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 69, 101; Stephen Clingman, *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary*, 2nd ed. (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2013), 152-53; Lodge, "Class Conflict, Communal Struggle and Patriotic Unity," 6-7, 10; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, 538-39, 580-81, 590-91, 593-94; A. Lerumo [Michael Harmel], *Fifty Fighting Years: The Communist Party of*

Among those who did call for the boycott of segregated political bodies during this ongoing controversy, this advocacy did not translate straightforwardly into enthusiasm for international economic boycotts of South Africa. The strategic vision of ANC Youth Leaguers was focused on action by African people themselves, inside South Africa. The Youth League Manifesto, drawn up in 1944, declared that “the national liberation of Africans will be achieved by Africans themselves. We reject foreign leadership of Africa.”⁶⁸ By “foreign,” the Youth Leaguers meant all non-Africans, both inside and outside South Africa: they opposed cooperation with communists, both white and black (all were seen as adherents of a “foreign ideology”), with white liberals, and with the Indian Congresses. In January 1947, the Youth League’s deputy president, A.P. Mda, had congratulated Xuma on his visit to the United Nations, telling him that his “monumental work over in the States will go down in history.”⁶⁹ But the Youth Leaguers subsequently showed no interest in following up Xuma’s overseas campaigning. Despite the euphoric reception given to Xuma after his return from New York, no ANC representative was sent to the General Assembly’s second session in 1947, or to any of the four annual sessions thereafter. Indeed, the historian John Soske has found that in the course of 1947 African newspapers in Natal began characterizing India as a potential new empire and South African Indians as its agents. As early as March 1947, for instance, *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, edited by ANC Youth League leader Jordan Ngubane, warned of “the imperialistic ambitions of the new India,” and suggested that “certain Asiatics might support our own cause so that they should have our people’s support for their expansionist ambitions.”⁷⁰

South Africa, 1921-1971 (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 80-81; Sheridan Johns, “Contesting Segmented Elections: Communists at the Polls in the 20s, 30s, and 40s” (paper presented at conference on ‘Democracy: Popular Precedents, Practice, Culture,’ University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, Johannesburg, 13-15 July 1994).

⁶⁸ Provisional Committee of the Congress Youth League, “Congress Youth League Manifesto,” March 1944, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, *Hope and Challenge*, ed. Karis, 300-308.

⁶⁹ Gish, *Xuma*, 150.

⁷⁰ Soske, “Wash Me Black Again,” 115.

As Youth League leaders increased their influence within the ANC, they shifted the Congress towards more confrontational domestic action. In December 1949, a year and a half after the National Party government took office, Youth League leaders secured the support of the ANC's annual conference for a new "Programme of Action." The Programme committed the ANC to the Youth League's policy of boycotting "all differential political institutions" and to employing "the following weapons: immediate and active boycott, strike, civil disobedience, non-co-operation and such other means as may bring about the accomplishment and realisation of our aspirations."⁷¹ The cautious Xuma, who argued that the ANC needed to develop mass support before it could undertake these kinds of mass actions, was ousted from the ANC presidency. The Youth Leaguers, who believed, conversely, that only by launching mass action would the ANC be able to win mass support, engineered Xuma's replacement by James Moroka, a prominent African doctor who was prepared to endorse their position. Seven Youth Leaguers were elected to the ANC National Executive, including Walter Sisulu, who took up the powerful post of Secretary-General. When Xuma resigned from the Executive altogether in early 1950, another Youth Leaguer, Nelson Mandela, was co-opted to replace him.⁷²

The ANC's new Programme of Action was more a catalog of methods to be used than a detailed strategic program. As the political scientist Tom Lodge concludes, the Youth Leaguers "were never to demonstrate any clear conception of exactly how and in what order these tactics should be employed to achieve their goal of 'national freedom'. Rather it was assumed that in the course of an almost mystic communion between leaders and the popular classes the path would

⁷¹ ANC Annual Conference, "Programme of Action," 17 December 1949, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, *Hope and Challenge*, ed. Karis, 337-39.

⁷² Gish, *Xuma*, 159; Edgar, "Changing the Old Guard," 163-66; [Thomas Karis], "Joint Action and the Defiance Campaign, 1950-1952," in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, *Hope and Challenge*, ed. Karis, 403, 428n1.

become clear.”⁷³ On 26 June 1950 the ANC made its first attempt to employ one of the methods enumerated in the Programme, a “national stoppage of work for one day as a mark of protest against the reactionary policy of the government.” The previous month the SAIC, the Communist Party, and the Transvaal ANC had pre-empted the new ANC leadership by organizing their own “stay-at-home,” to protest against low wages and the government’s “banning” of Dadoo and other leading Communists. In Johannesburg, this May Day stay-at-home had been observed by a significant proportion of African workers but ended in violent clashes with police, in which nineteen people were killed.

Before the May strike ANC Youth Leaguers had tried to disrupt the efforts of its organizers – one white communist remembered Mandela as the “heckler and disrupter in chief” – but in the wake of the government’s vicious response they joined with the CPSA and the SAIC to organize the second stay-at-home on June 26 to protest the killings and the imminent passage of the Suppression of Communism Act. This time, however, the response from black workers in the Transvaal was disappointing; the ANC would subsequently not attempt to organize another nationwide political strike until 1958.⁷⁴ But the initiative marked the beginning of a remarkably rapid turnaround in the views of leading Youth Leaguers on cooperation with Communists and with other ethnic groups. The CPSA, meanwhile, dissolved itself immediately before the Suppression of Communism Act came into force. In 1953 some of its former leaders established a new South African Communist Party (SACP) as an underground organization whose members worked through the ANC, the SAIC,

⁷³ Lodge, *Black Politics*, 22. See also Gerhart, *Black Power*, 77-80.

⁷⁴ Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 116; Ahmed Kathrada, *Memoirs* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 66-69; Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1995), 136; Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 122-25. See also [Karis], “Joint Action and the Defiance Campaign,” 405-410; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 33-36. The stay-at-home was more successful in some other parts of the country, including Port Elizabeth and Durban.

and their allies.⁷⁵

In 1951, the ANC and its new allies began making plans to implement another strand of the Programme of Action by launching a campaign of civil disobedience. A joint planning committee including Sisulu of the ANC and Dadoo of the SAIC devised a 'Defiance Campaign' of six "unjust laws," including the Group Areas Act and the Suppression of Communism Act. According to the plan, selected volunteers would engage in civil disobedience of these laws in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and other major cities. In subsequent stages of the campaign the number of volunteers and the number of sites of defiance would be increased, before finally there would be "mass action during which as far as possible the struggle should broaden out on a country-wide scale and assume a general mass character."⁷⁶

The Defiance Campaign, which was launched on June 26, 1952, was understood by most of its national organizers mainly as a means of developing a mass following for the ANC and its new allies. Like the Indian passive resistance campaign of 1946-48, the Defiance Campaign closely followed the form of Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaigns. But, as Slovo later wrote, few if any of the leading organizers "believed seriously that through filling the jails, or by other forms of self-inflicted suffering, they could thaw the ice-cold heart of white supremacy."⁷⁷ Rather, in the words of Indian

⁷⁵ Sheridan Johns, "Invisible Resurrection: The Recreation of a Communist Party in South Africa in the 1950's," *African Studies Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 7-24; David Everatt, "Alliance Politics of a Special Type: The Roots of the ANC/SACP Alliance, 1950-1954," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 1 (March 1991): 19-39.

⁷⁶ J.S. Moroka, J.B. Marks, W.M. Sisulu, Y.M. Dadoo, and Y. Cachalia, "Report of the Joint Planning Council of the ANC and the South African Indian Congress," 8 November 1951, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, *Hope and Challenge*, ed. Karis, 458-65.

⁷⁷ Slovo, *Slovo*, 107. Other participants – and some scholars – have made the same point: Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 143; Oliver Tambo, "Passive Resistance in South Africa," in *Southern Africa in Transition*, eds. John A. Davis and James K. Baker (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1966), 217-28; Ben Turok, *Nothing But the Truth: Behind the ANC's Struggle Politics* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2003), 31-32; Leo Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), 103; Soske, "'Wash Me Black Again,'" 218-19. Compare, however, the frequent portrayal of the campaign by scholars as a "Gandhian" attempt to achieve a "moral re-awakening" of the South African authorities. See, especially, Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 119-20, as well as Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 155; Scott Couper, *Albert Luthuli: Bound by Faith* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010), 55; James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 124.

youth leader Ahmad Kathrada, “the underlying motivation was to transform the ANC into a people’s organisation.” Indeed, the ANC-SAIC planning committee was explicit about this when it proposed the campaign: the objective was to prepare for later stages of the struggle against apartheid by using mass action that would “gradually embrace larger groups of people, permeate both the urban and rural areas and make it possible for us to organise, discipline and lead people in a planned manner.”⁷⁸

The organizers of the Defiance Campaign did not see it primarily as a way of attracting international attention and intervention, as Dadoo and other Indian leaders had seen passive resistance six years earlier. The passive resistance campaign was an important inspiration for the Youth Leaguers who turned the ANC towards civil disobedience, and the organizers of the Defiance Campaign included leading passive resisters like Dadoo. But the strategic rationale of the Defiance Campaign was quite different. In 1946-48 the JPRC had sent some of its most prominent leaders to India, the UN, and elsewhere to mobilize international support and action, and had carefully coordinated their campaign in order to maximize its international impact. In early 1952, in contrast, Mary Benson, a white South African based in London who was serving as secretary to Reverend Michael Scott, urged Sisulu that it was “important and urgent” for the ANC “to have their own, African, representatives” overseas. Sisulu replied, however, that there was “no question of being able to send [the ANC’s] own people abroad at this time.” Scott continued to attend the UN General Assembly every year to campaign on the South West Africa issue. The ANC “wholeheartedly supported” Scott’s work, Sisulu explained, but it was “wholly preoccupied in organising” the

⁷⁸ Kathrada, *Memoirs*, 75; J.S. Moroka, J.B. Marks, W.M. Sisulu, Y.M. Dadoo, and Y. Cachalia, “Report of the Joint Planning Council of the ANC and the South African Indian Congress,” 8 November 1951, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, *Hope and Challenge*, ed. Karis, 465. See also, for instance, “Statement taken from Chief Albert J. Luthuli,” n.d. [ca. 1957], Item B.9, Collection: Albert Luthuli, Various Papers (A333), Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand [‘Wits’], Johannesburg; “Albert Lutuli” [notes on an interview by Mary Benson], n.d. [ca. 1961/1962], Folder 3, Box 1, ‘Mary Benson research material about the African National Congress, South Africa, 1961-1962,’ Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The argument made here accords with that made in Lodge, *Black Politics*, 41-42; Dubow, *African National Congress*, 43.

Defiance Campaign inside the country.⁷⁹

In terms of transforming the ANC into a mass organization, the Defiance Campaign enjoyed considerable success. More than eight thousand volunteers were arrested for acts of civil disobedience, such as using “white” entrances or facilities at post offices or train stations or (for non-African volunteers) entering African townships without permission. Chief Albert Lutuli, who succeeded Moroka as ANC president in December 1952, reported that in the course of the year the formal membership of the ANC had rocketed from seven thousand to one hundred thousand.⁸⁰ The Defiance Campaign definitively established the ANC as the pre-eminent organization opposed to apartheid, an outcome that had been by no means assured in the 1940s. The NEUM, previously the ANC’s chief rival, was left increasingly marginalized. Nevertheless, the campaign began to flag in October, and there were few new volunteers. In late October and November riots broke out in Port Elizabeth, Kimberley, and East London. Police killed more than two hundred Africans in these violent clashes, and hundreds more were injured. Six white bystanders, including a Catholic nun, were killed by rioters. The ANC national leadership was horrified and immediately suspended the campaign in those areas.⁸¹ In January 1953, after the government introduced harsh new penalties for

⁷⁹ Mary Benson, *A Far Cry: The Making of a South African* (London: Penguin, 1990), 83. On Scott’s ongoing campaigning at the UN in this period, see Yates and Chester, *The Troublemaker*, 145-56.

⁸⁰ Edward Hughes, “Defiant South African Leader Calls for Showdown on Malan’s Race Policies,” *Wall Street Journal*, 21 April 1953, 2; Kuper, *Passive Resistance*, 146; Albert Lutuli, *Let My People Go* (London: Fontana, 1963), 118. In another interview in 1953, Lutuli gave the pre-Defiance Campaign membership of the ANC as 25,000. Gerhart, *Black Power*, 89. These membership figures are questioned as “suspect” in Baruch Hirson, “The Defiance Campaign, 1952: Social Struggle or Party Stratagem?,” *Searchlight South Africa* 1, no. 1 (September 1988): 100. As Karis notes, “Undoubtedly the surge of enthusiasm during the campaign increased the volume of the ANC’s support, but the perennial problem remained of estimating the numbers of members whose dues were not currently paid-up as well as the number of adherents or sympathizers. Only the most politically conscious could be relied upon to renew their membership by paying dues each year.” [Karis], “Joint Action and the Defiance Campaign, 1950-1952,” 427, 438n72. See also Lodge, *Black Politics*, 61.

⁸¹ Much new evidence on the riot and police massacre in East London is analyzed in Murphy, “Race, Violence, and Nation,” 83-106. See also A. Mager and G. Minkley, “Reaping the whirlwind: the East London Riots of 1952,” in *Apartheid’s Genesis, 1935-1962*, eds. Philip Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel (Braamfontein, South Africa: Ravan Press, 1993), 229-51. We lack similar studies of events in Port Elizabeth and Kimberley, which are briefly summarized in Kuper, *Passive Resistance*, 133-140; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 59-60; [Karis], “Joint Action and the Defiance Campaign,” 421-22.

civil disobedience, including flogging and jail terms of three years, Lutuli officially called off the flagging campaign nationwide.⁸²

Generating international action was not the primary objective of the Defiance Campaign, as it had been for the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign. But ANC and SAIC leaders did believe that international support could help them prosecute the campaign inside the country. It would boost the morale of the volunteers, and might also restrain the government's response.⁸³ Above all, the campaign needed money. The joint secretaries of the campaign, Walter Sisulu of the ANC and Yusuf Cachalia of the SAIC, sent out reams of letters to organizations overseas requesting contributions. Fundraising was "one of the greatest handicaps our people are faced with," Sisulu explained in one letter. "We need money for propaganda, and to assist some of the needy families of those people who are going to court imprisonment."⁸⁴ The organizers' appeal for funds evoked a considerable response: British diplomats in Pretoria reported in November 1952 that funds raised overseas were "directly helping to keep the campaign alive."⁸⁵

In Britain, John Collins, Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, had become interested in South Africa after reading *Cry the Beloved Country*, the 1948 novel by the liberal South African writer Alan Paton. Collins was the founder of Christian campaign group Christian Action. He now threw himself into supporting the Defiance Campaign, urging his congregation to "support the cause of the ANC with love," soliciting donations from wealthy friends, and writing appeals in the church

⁸² Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, 130; Kuper, *Passive Resistance*, 145.

⁸³ See, for instance, the comments of Z.K. Matthews quoted in Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 104.

⁸⁴ Elinor Sisulu, *Walter & Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime* (London: Abacus, 2003), 117; W.M. Sisulu to George M. Houser, 26 March 1952, File 100/1; Walter Sisulu and Y. A. Cachalia to George M. Houser, 18 June 1952, File 100/2, Records of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), Organizational Records and Personal Papers: Part 1, The Black Freedom Struggle in the 20th Century, *Proquest History Vault*.

⁸⁵ Herbstein, *White Lies*, 17.

press.⁸⁶ In the United States, a small group of liberal pacifists and civil rights activists (including civil rights leaders Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph) established a new group, Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR), to support the campaign. George Houser, a Methodist minister and executive secretary of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), became secretary of the group, and began corresponding with Sisulu, Cachalia, and other South African opponents of apartheid. AFSAR published a small and irregular newsletter about the campaign and appealed for funds to support it: it sent \$1,500 to South Africa in the course of 1952.⁸⁷

The Council on African Affairs also mobilized to support the Defiance Campaign, though it had been greatly weakened since its heyday in the mid-forties, when it had assisted Xuma and the JPRC deputation at the UN. In the era of McCarthyist anti-communism, the prominent role in the Council of radical critics of the United States like Paul Robeson attracted harassment from the U.S. government, and liberal bodies like AFSAR and the NAACP now kept their distance. The efforts by CAA director Alphaeus Hunton to organize a coalition of civic, religious, and labor leaders in support of the Defiance Campaign were rebuffed. Nevertheless, the CAA organized a large rally in Harlem in April 1952 in support of the Defiance Campaign, followed by a week-long picket of the South African consulate in New York. By the end of the year the CAA had collected \$2,000 to send to the campaign organizers in South Africa.⁸⁸

The Defiance Campaign also generated new attention at the United Nations. Debates on both South West Africa and the treatment of Indians in South Africa had become annual events at

⁸⁶ L. John Collins, *Faith Under Fire* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1966), 186-89; Diana Collins, *Partners in Protest: Life with Canon Collins* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1992), 189; Herbstein, *White Lies*, 15-16, 32; Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 105-8.

⁸⁷ George Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa's Liberation Struggle* (New York: Pilgrim Press 1989), 10-20; The fullest study of AFSAR is Charles Denton Johnson, "African Americans and South Africans: the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United States, 1921-1955" (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 2004), 171-80, 183-88. On AFSAR's fundraising during the Defiance Campaign, see also Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 112, 115.

⁸⁸ Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 113-15; Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 19-23.

the UN. Now in 1952 the Assembly considered the issue of apartheid itself for the first time, after India and twelve other Asian and Middle Eastern states requested that the “Question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid” be added to the agenda. Despite the opposition of South Africa itself, which continued to insist that the UN was not competent to discuss its domestic policies, and of Britain and the U.S., the General Assembly voted in favor of India’s proposal to establish a three-man “Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa.” The South African government refused to cooperate with the Commission or allow it to enter the country, however. And in 1955 and 1956 it withdrew its delegation from the General Assembly to protest the ongoing inclusion of the apartheid issue on the agenda. After submitting detailed annual reports for three years on the racial situation in South Africa, the Commission was disbanded in 1955, though the General Assembly continued to pass resolutions every year calling on the South African government to alter its racial policies. The South African government, meanwhile, continued to ignore them.

By the time of the Defiance Campaign, some overseas opponents of apartheid had already gone beyond Sisulu and Cachalia’s requests for “moral and material support,” and sought on their own initiative to exert economic pressure in support of the struggle in South Africa. Though the Indian and Pakistani governments made no attempt to persuade other governments to join them in cutting off trade with South Africa, the Indian action sparked interest in the idea elsewhere. Newspapers in Trinidad, where – as in southern and eastern Africa – there was a substantial population descended from Indian indentured laborers, reported on the Indian sanctions.⁸⁹ Journalists and political and labor organizations in several British colonies in the Caribbean subsequently took up the idea of a boycott of South African goods, both at governmental level, and

⁸⁹ E. Irving Lackshmana, “Voice of India,” *The Vanguard* (Trinidad), 18 January 1947. I am indebted to Leslie James for this reference.

by consumers and organized labor. In August 1948, for instance, the opposition People's National Party (PNP) of Jamaica asked their counterparts in St Kitts to join them in protesting to the Secretary of State for the Colonies about the newly-elected National Party's program of apartheid, and called for an "embargo on imports" from South Africa. In September 1950, the St Kitts and Nevis Trades and Labour Union resolved to advise waterfront workers not to handle cargo from South Africa "on account of [the] deliberate and systematic application of its dreadful policy of apartheid." The following month motions protesting apartheid and calling for a ban on imports from South Africa goods were tabled in the legislatures of Jamaica and Barbados; in Jamaica, the PNP's motion specifically attacked the Group Areas Act, passed months earlier, as "an insult and threat to all persons of African or Asiatic descent."⁹⁰

As the British ambassador to South Africa later put it, the UK government did "everything in its power" to kill these legislative proposals.⁹¹ But although the PNP's attempts to legislate governmental sanctions were stalled for the time being, the St Kitts and Nevis Trades and Labour Union maintained its commitment to refuse to handle South African goods, and there were further efforts to organize industrial and consumer boycotts elsewhere in the Caribbean throughout the 1950s.⁹² In Cape Town, exporters of wines and canned fruit were alarmed by the efforts in the West

⁹⁰ Gerald Horne, *Cold War in a Hot Zone: The United States Confronts Labor and Independence Struggles in the British West Indies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 169-70; John Worrall, "Boycott on South African Goods: West Indian Island's Action," *The Scotsman*, 25 December 1950, 6.

⁹¹ Eric Louw, "Aide Memoire: The Jamaican Question," 2 July 1959, File 105, Private Collection of E.H. Louw (PV 4), Archive for Contemporary Affairs (ARCA), University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

⁹² The executive committee of the St Kitts and Nevis Trades and Labour Union confirmed in October 1952 that its members were not prepared to handle "goods of any kind originating in the Union of South Africa." Horne, *Cold War in a Hot Zone*, 170. In 1951 the killing of a Barbadian seaman by police in Cape Town led to protests across the Caribbean. The Grenada Workers' Union called on all Caribbean labor unions to enforce an industrial boycott, though it is unclear whether any unions outside St Kitts and Nevis did so. "B.G. Will Protest Beating of B'dian in South Africa," *Barbados Advocate*, 11 July 1951, 1; Alan Gregor Cobley, "'Far from Home': The Origins and Significance of the Afro-Caribbean Community in South Africa to 1930," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 2 (June 1992): 370; Jason C. Parker, *Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 88.

The efforts to organize consumer and industrial boycotts and governmental sanctions in the Caribbean in the 1950s remain almost completely unstudied and unknown: the SADET chapter on anti-apartheid solidarity in the

Indies to organize boycotts: though South African exports to the Caribbean were worth less than £50,000 annually, South African traders feared the boycott might spread elsewhere.⁹³ Indeed, at a meeting organized by Christian Action in London in 1951, the secretary of the League of Coloured Peoples, an anti-racist organization led by West Indians in Britain, suggested “a campaign of isolation and boycott against South Africa.” This early suggestion of a boycott campaign in Britain did not have any immediate effect, however: the League of Coloured Peoples collapsed soon after, and no one from Christian Action took up the idea.⁹⁴

In the United States, early attempts to exert economic pressure in opposition to apartheid focused not on imported goods but on loans and economic assistance to the South African government by the World Bank, the U.S. government, and private American banks. In February 1951, Walter White, the Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, responded to news that the Bank was planning to loan \$80 million to the South African government by writing to the president of the Bank, Eugene Black, to oppose any such loans until South Africa ceased defying the UN over South West Africa and abandoned its “dangerous and racist policies.”⁹⁵ At the protests they organized in support of the Defiance Campaign in April 1952, Paul Robeson and other leaders of the Council on African Affairs called on the U.S. to end loans and other financial assistance to the South African government. In June that

Caribbean, for instance, makes no mention of boycotts before 1959. Anthony Bogues, “‘We are an African people.’ Anti-colonial internationalism and black internationalism: Caribbean and African solidarities,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 5, *African Solidarity*, 121-52.

⁹³ John Worrall, “Boycott on South African Goods: West Indian Island’s Action,” *The Scotsman*, 25 December 1950, 6.

⁹⁴ “Racial Problems: Protectorates ‘Could be Self-Supporting,’” *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1951, 3. On the League of Coloured Peoples and its demise, see David Killingray, “‘To do something for the race’: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. Bill Schwarz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 51-70; Anne Spry Rush, “Imperial Identity in Colonial Minds: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-50,” *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no. 4 (December 2002): 356-83.

⁹⁵ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 16; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 116-17. See also “Resolutions Adopted by the 42nd Annual Convention of the NAACP at Atlanta, Ga., June 30, 1951,” *The Crisis*, August-September 1951, 492.

year the NAACP annual convention adopted a resolution that brought together and expanded upon these demands and White's earlier initiative, urging "the United States Government, the [World] Bank, the [U.S. government's] Import-Export Bank and all private banks to refuse any loans or [to] extend any credit to the Union of South Africa as long as it continues its present policies."⁹⁶

This brief flurry of calls for exerting economic pressure on South Africa did not, however, lead to any concerted campaign in the U.S. In July 1952 the CAA announced plans to collect 100,000 signatures on a petition to President Harry Truman that urged him to "halt United States assistance in any form to the government of the Union of South Africa, and to denounce publicly that government's racist program as an international menace." In the end, however, just 3,800 signatures were collected.⁹⁷ These efforts turned out to be one of the CAA's last campaigns. In 1953 the attorney general ordered the CAA to register with the Subversive Activities Control Board as a communist front. In 1954 the U.S. government launched a further investigation into the Council on the pretext that it was acting as a "foreign agent" for the ANC and the SAIC. Unable to meet the spiraling costs of defending itself, the CAA disbanded in 1955.⁹⁸

In October 1952 the NAACP organized a picket of the South African delegation to the UN in order to demonstrate support for the struggle against apartheid, and in 1953 Walter White briefly resumed his correspondence with Eugene Black about further World Bank loans to the South African government. But the NAACP did not follow up its resolution with any attempt to organize a campaign to put pressure on the U.S. government, American banks, or the World Bank to change

⁹⁶ Johnson, "African Americans and South Africans," 180-81; Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 19-20; "Resolutions Adopted by the 43rd Annual Convention of the NAACP at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, June 28, 1952," *The Crisis*, August-September 1952, 455.

⁹⁷ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 19-20; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 114.

⁹⁸ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 141-43, see also 1, 124, 134; Johnson, "African Americans and South Africans," 246-55; Lindsey R. Swindall, *The Path to the Greater, Freer, Truer World: Southern Civil Rights and Anticolonialism, 1937-1955* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 146-56.

their lending policies, which continued unchanged. The Association's attention and resources were increasingly focused on domestic racial issues, especially after its landmark victory in the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling on segregated schools in May 1954.⁹⁹ In 1953, meanwhile, members of the ad-hoc Americans for South African Resistance established a new permanent organization in New York, the American Committee on Africa (ACOA). The Committee, with George Houser as its energetic executive director, provided a new focus for liberal American support for African liberation, not just in South Africa but across the continent. But ACOA did not take up the issue of loans to South Africa that had been raised by both the NAACP and the CAA. In its early years, the Committee focused mainly on publicity, fundraising, and organizing meetings, speaking tours, and assistance for African leaders visiting the U.S.¹⁰⁰

In South Africa itself, the idea of economic isolation was taken up by Trevor Huddleston, an Anglican priest from Britain and member of the monastic Community of the Resurrection, who had ministered in Johannesburg since 1943. In his early years in South Africa, Huddleston had focused his attention on pastoral care and social work, but he subsequently came to the conclusion that “it wasn't the symptoms but the disease itself that had to be fought.”¹⁰¹ He became close to leading

⁹⁹ Carol Anderson has recently challenged the prevailing scholarly consensus that the onset of the Cold War caused the NAACP to abandon anti-colonial causes; she chronicles ongoing NAACP interest and activism in a variety of anti-colonial causes in the late 1940s and at the beginning of the 1950s. But Anderson concurs with earlier scholars that “throughout the 1950s... the NAACP faced internal and external conditions that crippled its anticolonialism efforts by channeling its attention and resources in other directions,” and suggests that “as early as May 1952, the NAACP was prepared to pass the anticolonial baton” to what would become the American Committee on Africa. Carol Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 304, 322. See also Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 117-118; William Minter and Sylvia Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States-South Africa Relations: From the Margins to the Mainstream,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 3, pt. 2, *International Solidarity*, 753.

¹⁰⁰ Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 63-66. See also Lisa Brock, “The 1950s: Africa Solidarity Rising,” in *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950-2000*, eds. William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles Cobb, Jr. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008), 63-65; David L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 23-24; Minter and Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States-South Africa Relations,” 755-56.

¹⁰¹ Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort* (London: Fontana, 1957), 44; Yates and Chester, *The Troublemaker*, 37; Collins, *Partners in Protest*, 188-89; Robin Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston: A Life* (London: Pan Books, 2000), 22-26.

members of the ANC: it was Huddleston who had written to Canon Collins in London to ask him to raise funds for the Defiance Campaign in 1952.¹⁰² The government's introduction of "new Acts of tyranny" to suppress the campaign inspired Huddleston to declare publicly for the first time that he identified himself "entirely" with the ANC's struggle. But the harsh new laws also provoked in Huddleston a profound pessimism that internal action would be unable to bring about a new, non-racial order in South Africa. This pessimism was further reinforced in June 1953, when armed police broke into a protest meeting at which Huddleston was speaking to arrest Yusuf Cachalia, one of the other speakers on the platform. "I had seen and felt in those moments, the terrifying spectre of the police state," Huddleston later wrote. In a letter to the London *Observer* newspaper soon after this incident, he explained his view that "*Within* South Africa, in spite of every effort that can be made, there is, humanly speaking, no hope of influencing the present Government."¹⁰³

From early 1953 onwards, therefore, Huddleston began to argue in a stream of private letters to Canon Collins and in public letters to the British press that "intervention in a big way from outside will be the only hope for South Africa." Initially, Huddleston was concerned solely with public, verbal criticism, both from the foreign press and from foreign governments.¹⁰⁴ Collins did his best: he castigated apartheid from the pulpit of St Paul's Cathedral, to the horror of Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher, who shared the view of the Anglican church establishment in South Africa that external criticism did more harm than good.¹⁰⁵ But Huddleston began to consider how external condemnation of apartheid might be reinforced in more material ways. In October 1953, he

¹⁰² Herbstein, *White Lies*, 11-12.

¹⁰³ Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, 56-57; Denniston, *Huddleston*, 37-39; Trevor Huddleston, "For God's Sake, Wake Up!" *London Observer*, 30 August 1953, 3; emphasis in the original.

¹⁰⁴ Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 132-35; "South Africa: An Appeal in Britain," [Africa Bureau] *Information Digest*, August 1953, 5. Huddleston suggested in March 1953, for instance, that other members of the British Commonwealth should consider "a vote of censure on South Africa" for her racial policies. "The Union of South Africa," [Africa Bureau] *Information Digest*, January-March 1953, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Collins, *Faith Under Fire*, 214-15; Collins, *Partners in Protest*, 192, 213; Herbstein, *White Lies*, 18-20.

wrote to Reverend Michael Scott in London, suggesting that during his next visit to New York Scott should urge that the United Nations impose economic sanctions on South Africa.¹⁰⁶

Huddleston's sanctions proposal was considered by the Africa Bureau, a small non-partisan lobby group of influential British figures with connections to Africa that had been established in London to support Scott's campaigns on African issues.¹⁰⁷ Those members of the Bureau's committee who expressed opinions on the issue were almost universally opposed to Huddleston's suggestion. One expressed his "shock that such a policy should be advocated by a priest." Arthur Creech Jones (the former Secretary of State for the Colonies in the postwar Labour government) and Raymond Raynes (the superior in the Community of the Resurrection, and Huddleston's immediate predecessor in South Africa) both argued that such a call would be unpopular with the British public. Raynes believed that "it would be a tactical mistake and set things back," though he did not rule out such a campaign at some point in the future: "There is not sufficient knowledge about S[outh] A[frica] and the public conscience not aroused enough yet to support such a proposal, and we should be considered fanatics and warmongers by the unenlightened public and the press would not help." The chairman of the committee, the Conservative peer Lord Hemingford, opined simply that Huddleston's proposed course of action "would not achieve anything."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Huddleston's actual proposal has not survived, so its contents can only be inferred from the discussions of "Father Huddleston's Letter" in the Africa Bureau's minutes and correspondence, cited in note 108 below.

¹⁰⁷ The leading figure in the formation of the Bureau was David Astor, the wealthy editor of the liberal *Observer* newspaper, who became the impecunious Scott's primary patron. A serial founder of lobby groups on causes he supported, Astor was concerned that Scott's existing informal support network in Britain was "chronically oppositional and crankish" and included "near-fellow-travellers." Yates and Chester, *The Troublemaker*, 122-29. See also Scott, *Time to Speak*, 269-74; Benson, *Far Cry*, 64-66, 88-89; Anthony Sampson, *The Anatomist: The Autobiography of Anthony Sampson* (London: Politico's, 2008), 54, 89; David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics 1945-1961: From 'Colonial Development' to 'Wind of Change'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 255-60, 264-68.

¹⁰⁸ "Minutes of a Meeting..." 1 October, 1953, Folder 2, Box 1; Raymond Raynes to 'Dear Father' [Michael Scott?], 24 October 1953, Folder 1, Box 190, Records of the Africa Bureau and related organisations, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

Scott himself was more open to Huddleston's proposal. His discussions of the idea do not suggest that he had a clear idea of precisely how he expected economic sanctions to contribute to ending racial discrimination in South and South West Africa. But he viewed sanctions as an untried third way, an alternative both to ineffective rhetorical exhortations at the United Nations, and to the use of force. After attending the debates on South West Africa at the United Nations every year since 1947, Scott was increasingly frustrated with the ineffectiveness of the UN's resolutions, which South Africa continued to defy with impunity. There had "just been words and debates, [but] no action to make the white population come to its senses," he commented, and "there would be a disaster unless something could turn the direction of events, and that required more than resolutions, diplomatic action by Gov[ernmen]ts., etc."¹⁰⁹ After South Africa had simply ignored the ICJ's 1950 advisory opinion that it must continue to observe the terms of the original South West Africa mandate, Hersch Lauterpacht, a prominent international jurist at the University of Cambridge, had advised Scott to seek a compulsory judgment (rather than an advisory opinion) from the ICJ, since the UN Charter empowered the Security Council to enforce such judgments with measures such as economic sanctions. Lauterpacht suggested that contentious proceedings should be initiated by the governments of Ethiopia and Liberia, the two independent African states that had been members of the League of Nations when it had originally granted South Africa a mandate over the territory. Despite the misgivings of his fellow Africa Bureau committee members about Huddleston's suggestion, Scott raised this idea during his 1953 visit to the UN, and then traveled to both Ethiopia and Liberia in 1954 to try to persuade the two governments to follow Lauterpacht's advice. The response he received was guarded, however: policymakers in both

¹⁰⁹ "Minutes of a Meeting..." 1 October, 1953, Folder 2, Box 1, Africa Bureau Records. See also Yates and Chester, *The Troublemaker*, 155.

countries were friendly, but said they would act only if they could be sure of “substantive support” from other countries. For the time being, the proposal died.¹¹⁰

Perhaps deterred by the lack of enthusiasm from either the Africa Bureau or the UN, Huddleston, meanwhile, did not publicize his suggestion further. But in private, like Scott, he remained interested in the idea of using economic sanctions against South Africa. Huddleston may have discussed the idea of isolating South Africa economically with Canon Collins when Collins visited South Africa in June and July 1954. In newspaper articles he wrote about his visit, Collins mentioned somewhat tentatively that “the British public may have to consider a personal boycott of South African goods,” though he did not take any steps to implement this suggestion.¹¹¹

Between 1950 and 1954, therefore, foreigners in several parts of the world who wanted to support the struggle against apartheid considered a variety of forms of external economic action against South Africa, including unilateral and multilateral trade sanctions, consumer boycotts, industrial boycotts, and cutting off loans to the National Party government. Only in the Caribbean, however, were there sustained efforts to implement any of these suggestions. In the United States and Britain, as we have seen, there was a variety of reasons why the organizations and individuals involved were unwilling or unable to organize sustained campaigns to implement any of these ideas. But one crucial reason that the various suggestions did not coalesce into an international movement for boycott and sanctions was that these ideas received very little support from the ANC or any other anti-apartheid group inside South Africa.

The ANC’s apparent disinterest in encouraging external boycotts or sanctions might seem

¹¹⁰ A. Paul Hare and Herbert H. Blumberg, eds., *A Search for Peace and Justice: Reflections of Michael Scott* (London: Rex Collings, 1980), 77; Yates and Chester, *The Troublemaker*, 155; Solomon Slonim, *South West Africa and the United Nations: An International Mandate in Dispute* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 139-40n69; Peter H. Katjavivi, “The Rise of Nationalism in Namibia and its International Dimensions” (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1986), 175; Clark, “The International League for Human Rights and South West Africa,” 133n155.

¹¹¹ L.J. Collins, “The Disgrace We Must Stamp Out,” *Daily Herald*, 29 July 1954, 4; Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 157, 121-22.

especially surprising, given that it was in exactly this period that the Congress leadership took up the idea of using *domestic* consumer boycotts as a weapon in their struggle. There was a long history of boycotts by African consumers in South Africa: in 1929-30, for instance, Africans in Durban had organized a famous boycott of municipal beerhalls, and there were boycotts of buses and trams to protest fare rises in several areas in the 1940s, including, most famously, the Johannesburg township of Alexandra.¹¹² In 1952 some local ANC leaders had incorporated calls for consumer boycotts into the Defiance Campaign: one grassroots organizer in East London, for instance, told a mobilizing meeting in East London in March 1952 that “we want nobody to go and eat the meat of the Dutch [i.e. Afrikaners].” After the Defiance Campaign had been called off, the organizers were reported in April 1953 to be drawing up a plan for a new “second phase” that would include the “withdrawal of native buying power from ‘European merchants.’” The ANC’s focus soon shifted, however, from a general boycott of white merchants to pressuring specific businesses to “open up avenues of employment” for Africans, and to improve African workers’ pay and conditions.¹¹³

This shift differentiated the ANC’s initiative from the anti-colonial consumer boycotts of goods imported from the imperial metropole that had been used in the American colonies in the 1770s, in India in the 1920s, and in some British colonies in Africa in the 1940s and 1950s. Adopting that model was a difficult proposition in a country suffering from what some South African Marxist theorists were coming to characterize as “internal colonialism” or “colonialism of a special type,”

¹¹² Paul la Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts: A History of Liquor in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988), 29-38; Baruch Hirson, *Yours for the Union: Class and Community Struggles in South Africa, 1930-1947* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1990); John Nauright, “Black Island in a White Sea?: Black and White in the Making of Alexandra Township, South Africa, 1912-1948” (Ph.D. thesis, Queen’s University [Kingston, Ontario, Canada], 1992), 299-322; Alf Stadler, “A Long Way to Walk: Bus Boycotts in Alexandra, 1940-1945,” in *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, vol. 2, ed. P. Bonner (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), 228-55.

¹¹³ Murphy, “Race, Violence, and Nation,” 55; Edward Hughes, “African Tempest: Natives in South Africa Vow Strikes, Boycott if Anti-Blacks Win Voting,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2 April 1953, 1; “Africans to Boycott S. African Industries,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 28 November 1953, 3.

where colony and metropole were both located in the same geographic space.¹¹⁴ Instead, the ANC's initiative more closely resembled the ways consumer boycotts had frequently been used by organized labor in conflicts with employers in the United States in the late nineteenth century, and, in particular, the "don't buy where you can't work" campaigns waged during the depression by African Americans in Chicago, New York, and elsewhere – a model in which some Youth Leaguers had first taken an interest in the mid-forties.¹¹⁵ In the wake of the Defiance Campaign, the ANC's priority remained to consolidate and extend its support: campaigning on specific issues that affected the immediate well-being of black South Africans, such as employment, was one way Congress leaders hoped to do this.¹¹⁶

When the ANC's annual conference in December 1953 called for a "campaign of economic boycott directed against selected individual firms, business undertakings and government enterprises," this was immediately taken up in Port Elizabeth, where working-class labor leaders such as Raymond Mhlaba and Wilton Mkwayi dominated the ANC's leadership.¹¹⁷ The local ANC branch sent out ultimatums to bakers, butchers, and other white shopkeepers whose stores were patronized by Africans, demanding that they employ African workers, promote Africans to "responsible positions," and increase their pay. Several firms complied, and those that did not were

¹¹⁴ Filatova, "Lasting Legacy," 526-527; Everatt, "Alliance Politics of a Special Type," 32-34.

¹¹⁵ Walshe, *Rise of African Nationalism*, 340. On the use of consumer boycotts by organized labor in the U.S., see, in particular, Michael A. Gordon, "The Labor Boycott in New York City, 1880-1886," *Labor History* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1975): 184-229; David Scobey, "Boycotting the Politics Factory: Labor Radicalism and the New York City Mayoral Election of 188[6]," *Radical History Review* 28 (September 1984): 280-325. On African Americans' use of consumer boycotts against racially discriminatory employers, see, for instance, Cheryl Greenberg, *Or Does it Explode? Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 114-39; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 41-53.

¹¹⁶ On the ANC leadership's increasing focus on "local issues which affected most immediately the material well-being of Africans" see Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, 153-54, though Robertson does not discuss the specific issue of consumer boycotts.

¹¹⁷ "ANC Annual Conference of December 18-20, 1953: Resolutions," in *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence, 1953-1964*, eds. Thomas Karis and Gail M. Gerhart (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 126; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 45-55; Janet Cherry, "The Myth Of Working Class Defeat: Port Elizabeth In The Post-War Years," *Kronos* 20 (November 1993), 66-91.

boycotted, with ANC pickets stationed outside their premises to tell shoppers not to enter. After three or four days, several more firms capitulated to the ANC's demands.¹¹⁸ After a request from farmworkers in the rural areas around Port Elizabeth, the Port Elizabeth ANC also organized a boycott of oranges. This was so successful that the citrus farmers were forced to make a pilgrimage to the Congress office in the city to negotiate a settlement on working conditions on the citrus farms.¹¹⁹ Later in 1954, the ANC and its allies responded to an appeal from the African Tobacco Workers' Union by launching a nationwide boycott of cigarettes made by the United Tobacco Company (UTC), which had sacked several hundred workers in Durban after a strike. The boycott caused significant losses to UTC and achieved partial success: though not all the workers were reinstated, UTC's owners in London, British American Tobacco (BAT), sacked the Durban manager and ordered improvements to wages and working conditions.¹²⁰

The domestic consumer boycotts the ANC organized in 1954 had been targeted at selected local firms, most of which – with the exception of UTC – had no international presence. Moreover, the boycott organizers' objectives had been to force these businesses to improve pay and working conditions and “open up avenues of employment” for Africans. An international boycott of

¹¹⁸ Examination of Native Detective Sergeant Daniel Sogoni, regarding ANC meetings in the Eastern Cape in January-February 1954, Treason Trial Preparatory Examination: Transcript, vol. 21, pp.4148-61, 4179-82, 4194, File: A(1)b1, Collection: Records Relating To The 'Treason Trial' (Regina vs F. Adams and others on Charge Of High Treason, etc.), 1956-1961 (AD1812), Wits Historical Papers; “Cheesa Cheesa Arson Threat,” *Manchester Guardian*, 6 March 1954, 1; “The Eastern Province is a Political Time-Bomb,” *Drum*, October 1956, 55, 57; Nelson Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ p.315, Nelson Mandela Foundation, <https://perma.cc/BW9T-FAYW>; Raymond Mhlaba, *Raymond Mhlaba's Personal Memoirs: Reminiscing from Rwanda and Uganda* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2001), 101-102.

There has been little research on these early consumer boycotts, but for brief discussions see Mary Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1985), 166; Janet Mary Cherry, “The Making of an African Working Class: Port Elizabeth, 1925-1963” (M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1992), 150-51, 156; Edward Feit, *South Africa: The Dynamics of the African National Congress* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 65.

¹¹⁹ Mhlaba, *Personal Memoirs*, 102; Govan Mbeki, *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: A Short History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992), 74.

¹²⁰ “Report of the National Executive Committee,” ANC Annual Conference, 16-19 December 1954, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 153; Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ 318-19; Billy Nair, “Through the Eyes of the Workers,” in *Reflections in Prison* ed. Mac Maharaj (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 170-71; Ken Luckhardt and Brenda Wall, *Organize... or Starve! The History of the South African Congress of Trade Unions* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), 274.

UTC/BAT cigarettes might conceivably have helped (though it does not appear that the ANC and its allies called for this). But blanket trade sanctions or industrial or consumer boycotts of all South African goods would have risked increasing African unemployment – the exact opposite of what the ANC leaders organizing these boycotts were trying to achieve.¹²¹

Encouraging external economic boycotts would also have risked alienating whites the ANC was hoping to woo. In the early 1970s, radical scholars associated with the ANC in exile would put forward the argument that apartheid served the needs of South African capital, unleashing a debate on the relationship between race and class that would dominate South African studies for the next two decades.¹²² In the 1950s, however, both Marxist and liberal opponents of apartheid believed that the National Party was driven by atavistic, irrational racism and that its apartheid policies were incompatible with economic growth.¹²³ Congress leaders expected that many white voters would defect from the National Party once they realized that apartheid was hurting them economically.¹²⁴ In the second half of the 1950s ANC and SACP strategists therefore pursued a “United Front” policy, attempting to bring together all South African organizations and individuals who were

¹²¹ Compare accounts that posit a more straightforward relationship between internal and external boycotts: Gurney, “A Great Cause,” 123-26; Arianna Lissoni, “The South African Liberation Movements in Exile, c. 1945-1970” (Ph.D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2008), 41, 62-65; Skinner, “Moral Foundations,” 411-13; Lodge, “Sanctions and Black Political Organisations,” 34-35; Webb, “Fighting Talk,” 16; Elizabeth Williams, *The Politics of Race in Britain and South Africa: Black British Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 29.

¹²² Among the seminal articles on this topic, by scholars then aligned with the ANC, were: Harold Wolpe, “Capitalism and Cheap-Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid,” *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425-56; Martin Legassick, “Legislation, Ideology and Economy in Post-1948 South Africa,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1, no. 1 (October 1974): 5-35. The subsequent debate is surveyed in William Beinart and Saul Dubow, “The Historiography of Segregation and Apartheid,” in *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* eds. William Beinart and Saul Dubow (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1995), 1-24; Lipton, *Liberals, Marxists, and Nationalists*; Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1988), 165-91.

¹²³ Grossman, “Class Relations,” 441-42; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 78; Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 188-92; Martin Legassick, *Towards Socialist Democracy* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007), 234-35.

¹²⁴ See, for instance, W.M. Sisulu, “South Africa’s Struggle for Democracy,” *Africa South*, January 1957, 27-31; [Michael Harmel], “South Africa After the Nationalists,” *Liberation*, September 1957, 1-6.

opposed to the Nationalists' apartheid policies, even if they agreed on nothing else.¹²⁵ As the political scientist Gail Gerhart has argued, if the ANC's "objective was to woo as many whites as possible away from support of the Nationalist government and thereby eventually to isolate what was assumed to [be] the minority of whites who were bedrock racists," then it "could not afford to antagonize any of the swing elements of white opinion."¹²⁶ When Walter White of the NAACP canvassed Z.K. Matthews's views on the World Bank's loans to the South African government in 1953, Matthews concurred with White's opposition to the loans, arguing that they bolstered racist policies that "violate economic principles."¹²⁷ The ANC had no reason to support financial assistance to the government that might help the National Party to offset the perceived economic irrationality of its policies. But neither did it have an interest in antagonizing potential white opponents of those policies by calling for more generalized trade or financial sanctions.

ANC leaders and their allies had a further reason for wishing to avoid the kind of serious economic dislocation that multilateral sanctions or boycotts might cause. Looking back in the late 1950s at the ANC's strategy over the course of the decade, Lutuli commented "It is certainly not correct that we visualized achieving a breakdown of the functions of government. It has never been our intention to create chaos."¹²⁸ In the 1940s, the supporters of the Programme of Action had believed that "all we are required to do is show the light and the masses will find the way," as one Youth Leaguer, Robert Sobukwe, put it in 1949. But former Youth League leaders like Mandela,

¹²⁵ Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 169-70, 188-92; Everatt, *Origins of Non-racialism*, 203-5; Legassick, *Towards Socialist Democracy*, 199-201, 209, 231-33.

¹²⁶ Gerhart was referring to ANC leaders' abandonment of the Youth League's racially exclusivist African nationalism, but the concern applied equally to the economy. Gerhart, *Black Power*, 96-97. Congress concerns not to alienate potential members of a united front on issues of economic policy (such as nationalization of industry) are discussed in Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 170, 189-90; Legassick, *Towards Socialist Democracy*, 208.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Carol Anderson, "'Hang your conscience on a peg': The African National Congress and the NAACP's Efforts to End the World Bank's Support of Apartheid South Africa, 1948-1953" (unpublished paper, 2015).

¹²⁸ "Statement taken from Chief Albert J. Luthuli," n.d. [ca. 1957], Item B.9, Albert Luthuli Papers, Wits Historical Papers.

Sisulu, and Tambo became more circumspect after the mass action of the Defiance Campaign degenerated in some areas into an “unfortunate, reckless, ill-considered return to jungle law” – as ANC leaders in the Eastern Cape described the riots and killings of white bystanders in Port Elizabeth in October 1952. Throughout the 1950s, ANC leaders resisted frequent requests from supporters to supply weapons for violent resistance, and frequently sought to restrain popular militancy.¹²⁹ Self-identified “Africanists” within the ANC, including Sobukwe, attacked this restraint as a retreat from the Programme of Action. But many within the ANC’s national leadership feared that if they did attempt to bring about a complete breakdown of authority, they would be unable to exert control in the chaos that followed, and this might degenerate into violence along racial lines. “We could bring this country to its knees in six months,” one unnamed ANC leader told a foreign journalist in 1958. “But if we tried, we in the middle of the road would be the first to go.” The speaker was almost certainly overestimating the ANC’s domestic strength, but his comment

¹²⁹ “Statement on violence in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, on October 18, by local ANC leaders...” 20 October 1952, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, *Hope and Challenge*, ed. Karis, 484-85.

A number of historians of the ANC’s armed struggle have recently begun to argue that in the wake of the suppression of the Defiance Campaign, several of the younger generation of ANC leaders, including Mandela and Sisulu, came to believe that it was inevitable that they would eventually have to use violence to achieve their goals. See, especially, Magubane *et al.*, “The Turn to Armed Struggle,” 54; Ellis, “Genesis of the ANC’s Armed Struggle,” 658-660.

In 1953 Mandela did indeed ask Sisulu to visit China during his travels abroad and request that the Chinese government supply the ANC with weapons. Chinese officials refused Sisulu’s request, however: they cautioned that a violent struggle was “a very serious matter to undertake,” questioned whether conditions in South Africa had “matured sufficiently,” and advised that an armed struggle “required considerable political and practical preparation.” In memoirs and interviews decades later – long after the ANC had indeed turned to violence in the early 1960s – Sisulu and Mandela would sometimes suggest that, in the 1950s, “though we believed in the policy of non-violence, we knew in our heart of hearts it wasn’t going to be a satisfactory answer.” Mandela recalled driving through the Eastern Cape in 1955 and privately noting to himself that in the dense forests there were “many places a guerrilla army could live and train undetected.” Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ 142-43; Kathrada, *Memoirs*, 96; Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 183, 185, 218-19.

But when asked explicitly by one interviewer whether in the late fifties there was still “a significant part of the ANC who thought that a constitutional path was possible,” Sisulu replied: “The whole, the whole of it. You must know that these ideas [of violence] are present in the... people’s minds, not as a properly formulated idea... The point is that at no stage did our movement, both the ANC and the Communist Party, abandon the idea of legal struggle, however limited the chances were.” Nor, Sisulu stressed, had he personally abandoned that idea. Indeed, Sisulu said he had been “persuaded” by the arguments of the Chinese officials. Neither Mandela nor Sisulu made any move to begin the “considerable political and practical preparation” that the Chinese had warned were a necessary prelude to any turn to violence. “Mr. Walter Sisulu: Interview with Professor Phil Bonner at Shell House,” 15 July 1993, pp.14-15, File B21.4, Barbara Harmel Interviews (Collection A3301), Wits Historical Papers. For a similar interpretation of Mandela’s attitude to that given here, see also Tom Lodge, *Mandela: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 58-60, 62-65, 69-70.

highlighted another reason ANC leaders were not calling for overseas supporters to take economic action to bring the country “to its knees.”¹³⁰

The ANC’s disinterest in encouraging external boycotts or sanctions did not mean that Congress leaders were disinterested in the world beyond South Africa’s borders. Indeed, Ben Turok – a member of the SACP and of the Congress of Democrats, an organization of white supporters of the ANC formed in wake of the Defiance Campaign – later characterized the mid-fifties as the period when “suddenly we discovered the world.”¹³¹ In 1953, for instance, Walter Sisulu began trying to organize a pan-African conference: he sent a conference call to African nationalist organizations and governments elsewhere on the continent urging that they should begin coordinating their activities.¹³² Though ultimately nothing came of Sisulu’s pan-Africanist initiative, an unofficial South African delegation of Moses Kotane (general secretary of the SACP and a senior member of the ANC executive) and Maulvi Cachalia, an SAIC leader (and brother of Yusuf) attended the Asian-African Conference at Bandung, Indonesia in April 1955, the conference of twenty-nine states that is often seen as marking the birth of the “Third World.” Kotane and Cachalia circulated a memorandum to the Conference delegates detailing the effects of apartheid. The memorandum made no mention of boycotts or sanctions, but appealed to delegates “to use their good offices internationally to persuade other civilised and freedom-loving nations of the world to prevail on the Government of the Union of South Africa to abandon its unjust and disastrous policy of apartheid and racial discrimination.”¹³³

¹³⁰ Richard P. Hunt, “Negro Unit Weak in South Africa,” *New York Times*, 11 February 1958, 6.

¹³¹ “Interview with Ben Turok, conducted by Howard Barrell,” 21 February 1990, p.1324, Folder 2, Box 3, Research papers of Howard Barrell (MSS.Afr.s.2151), Rhodes House.

¹³² W.M. Sisulu, “The Development of African Nationalism,” *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, July-September 1954, 213; Sisulu, *Walter & Albertina Sisulu*, 127, 131-32; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 139-40.

¹³³ Brian Bunting, *Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary; A Political Biography*, 3rd ed. (Bellville, South Africa: Mayibuye Books, 1998), 215-16; *The Asian-African Conference: Views and News* (Jakarta: National Committee for the Commemoration of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Asian-African Conference, 1985), 35-36. On the discussion of South Africa at the

There was a flurry of international travel by South African activists in this period. In 1951 sixty young South Africans from various anti-apartheid organizations flew from South Africa and Britain (where many of them were studying) to East Berlin to attend the third biennial World Festival of Youth and Students, sponsored by the Soviet-aligned World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). For many it was a moving event: “young people met and talked, sang, danced, ate, drank, kissed, embraced and pledged everlasting friendship,” recalled Ahmed Kathrada, the secretary of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and a member of the Communist Party, who led the South African delegation. “Thus Vietnamese met the French, Koreans talked to Americans, and Israelis consorted with Germans.” Kathrada stayed on in Eastern Europe for two years after the festival. In a period when, as he put it, “foreign travel was still something of a novelty,” the connections he built up helped secure invitations and travel assistance for other South African activists to visit the communist world in the early and mid 1950s.¹³⁴ These included Walter Sisulu, who was one of thirty South Africans to attend the next Festival of Youth in Bucharest, Romania, in August 1953. Accompanied by other young ANC leaders including Duma Nokwe and Alfred Hutchinson, the ANC Secretary General spent most of the second half of 1953 traveling abroad, visiting Britain, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Soviet Union, China, and Israel. Other South African activists attended events in the mid-1950s organized by other Soviet-aligned international organizations, including the World Peace Council, the World Federation of Trade Unions, and the Women’s International Democratic Federation.¹³⁵

conference, see also Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 3-5; George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1956), 33.

¹³⁴ Kathrada, *Memoirs*, 88-91, 95-96; Lodge, *Mandela*, 47-48.

¹³⁵ Sisulu, *Walter & Albertina Sisulu*, 128-137, 147; Norma Kitson, *Where Sixpence Lives* (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 104, 108; Turok, *Nothing But the Truth*, 35-36. On other South African activists’ travels in this period to events organized by Soviet-aligned international organizations, see, for instance, Clingman, *Bram Fischer*, 182-92; Nicholas George Grant, “‘We shall win our freedoms together’: African Americans, South Africa and black international protest, 1945-1960” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 2012), 209-14.

The experience of these trips may have further strengthened the disinclination of Congress and SACP leaders to support the idea of external boycotts and sanctions. For their communist organizers, the World Festivals of Youth were intended, as the WFDY president told the first festival in 1947, to create international friendships that would be “used as weapons to destroy the barriers and fictive iron curtains that some people want to build between the nations.”¹³⁶ Economic sanctions were one kind of “barrier” that came in for heavy criticism from communist governments and their supporters, at a time when the Soviet bloc was hit hard by the American-organized embargo on “strategic exports” from the west. In April 1952, for example, an “International Economic Conference” of nearly five hundred businessmen, trade unionists, and economists from forty-nine countries was convened in Moscow on the theme of “peaceful coexistence through means of world trade.” The conference had been conceived by the World Peace Council, one of the Soviet-aligned organizations that was responsible for arranging South African activists’ international travel in this period. Convened to discuss “ways and means to restore and develop normal economic relations between nations, irrespective of their economic and social systems,” conference delegates duly condemned “artificial barriers” to trade such as the U.S. strategic embargo.¹³⁷

The ANC’s strategic focus in the years after the Defiance Campaign remained on consolidating, organizing, and further extending its mass support inside the country. Despite the

¹³⁶ Nick Rutter, “The Western Wall: The Iron Curtain Recast in Midsummer 1951,” in *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange Across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s-1960s* eds. Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 82.

¹³⁷ *International Economic Conference in Moscow, April 3-12 1952* (Moscow: Committee for the Promotion of International Trade, 1952); Alec Cairncross, “The Moscow Economic Conference,” *Soviet Studies* 4, no. 2 (October 1952), 113-132; Angela Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik: The Political Economy of West German-Soviet Relations, 1955-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 31-34. Soviet opposition in this period to the idea of economic sanctions did not stop the USSR maintaining an economic embargo against the dissident communist regime of Josip Broz Tito in Yugoslavia from 1949 to 1954. Robert Owen Freedman, *Economic Warfare in the Communist Bloc: A Study of Soviet Economic Pressure against Yugoslavia, Albania, and Communist China* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 18-57.

On South African resistance activists’ commitment to “peaceful coexistence” as a potential obstacle to their supporting boycotts of South Africa, see A.M. Kathrada, “Towards a Cultural Boycott of South Africa,” *Liberation*, August 1956, 16-19.

enthusiasm the organization's 1953 conference for consumer boycotts as a means of doing this, the United Tobacco boycott was the only one that gained traction outside the ANC's Port Elizabeth stronghold. By the end of 1954, the national ANC leadership was backpedalling on the previous year's resolution: the Executive Committee's report to the annual conference in December 1954 stressed "the need for great care in the use of the boycott weapon," advising that "where conditions are considered unfavourable at any particular centre, that centre need not embark on the [consumer] boycott campaign."¹³⁸ Instead, the Congress leadership directed its attention to other issues. In 1954-55, the ANC launched high-profile though ultimately unsuccessful campaigns against the government's forced removal of residents from Sophiatown (a freehold residential area west of Johannesburg that was one of the few areas of apartheid South Africa where Africans had legal property rights), and against the government's introduction of a new program of academically limited "Bantu Education" for African schoolchildren.

Together with the SAIC, the white Congress of Democrats, and the South African Coloured People's Organisation, the ANC also launched a campaign to solicit grassroots suggestions on the nature of a post-apartheid South Africa. Once again, the main objective was to mobilize support: the purpose, explained one ANC leader, was to give supporters a "vested interest in the freedom struggle."¹³⁹ The suggestions were collated by a committee into a "Freedom Charter," which opened with the ringing declaration that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white," called for a government "based on the will of all the people," and cataloged the freedoms that should be enjoyed by all without discrimination. Adopted by nearly three thousand delegates at a multiracial "Congress of the People" in June 1955, the Freedom Charter also established the basis for what was

¹³⁸ "Report of the National Executive Committee," 16-19 December 1954, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 153.

¹³⁹ Duma Nokwe quoted in Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, 164.

formalized later that year as the “Congress Alliance.” This consisted of the African, Indian, coloured, and white congresses, as well as the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), a new confederation of non-racial labor unions founded that year.

III. ‘How can you love your neighbour, if you are never allowed to meet him?’: the first cultural and sports boycotts

While there was little interest among most opponents of apartheid inside and outside South Africa in economic boycotts or sanctions, another idea for international action gained much more immediate traction. This was a proposal for “a cultural boycott of South Africa,” an idea first publicized by Trevor Huddleston in an article in the London *Observer* in October 1954. The immediate impetus for Huddleston’s article was the government’s banning of Oliver Tambo, who had taken over as acting Secretary-General of the ANC after the earlier banning of Walter Sisulu. Tambo was a devout Anglican and one of Huddleston’s closest friends in the Congress leadership. Huddleston was outraged at the complete lack of interest in Tambo’s banning among white South Africans, the vast majority of whom, he pointed out, professed to be Christians: “white South Africa remains silent, either approving wholeheartedly such totalitarian methods or tacitly accepting them as part of a pattern of life which has become familiar.” It was in these circumstances that Huddleston made his novel appeal: “In God’s name, cannot the church bestir itself all over the world and *act*? Cannot Christians everywhere show their distress in practical ways by so isolating South Africa from all civilized communications that she realises her position and feels some pain from it? *I am pleading for a cultural boycott of South Africa.* I am asking that all those who believe racialism to be sinful or wrong should refuse to encourage it by accepting any engagements to act, to perform as a musical artist or as a ballet dancer – in short to avoid any contacts which would provide entertainment for only one

section of the community.”¹⁴⁰

Huddleston’s initial call for a cultural boycott thus envisaged foreign entertainers refusing to play only to all-white audiences in South Africa. In a co-authored letter to the London *Times* nine months later, he expanded the idea to a boycott of all-white South African teams participating in sporting events abroad, urging that the organizing committees of the Olympic Games and the British Empire Games should “make it a condition of South African participation that the teams be chosen without regard to race.”¹⁴¹

There were few precedents in international history for Huddleston’s calls for those overseas to impose cultural and sports boycotts. Instead, Huddleston’s proposals consolidated and extended a number of earlier scattered initiatives by himself and others in South Africa. For several years, Huddleston had tried to persuade prominent foreign artists who toured South Africa to play not only to all-white audiences, but also to his black parishioners in Sophiatown.¹⁴² In the sporting world, South African sports had, by the 1940s, become almost totally segregated on ethnic lines, with an alphabet soup of separate organizations in each sport not only for whites, but also for African, coloured, and Indian athletes. But in the late 1940s and 1950s, the various black governing bodies in several sports began to co-operate, establishing new, non-racial national federations in sports including soccer, cricket, and rugby. Some of these non-racial federations then appealed to

¹⁴⁰ Trevor Huddleston, “The Church Sleeps On,” London *Observer*, 10 October 1954, 6; emphasis in the original. See also Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 227.

¹⁴¹ Trevor Huddleston and Patrick Duncan, letter to the editor, London *Times*, 8 July 1955, 9. See also Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, 149-50. Earlier, Huddleston had privately broached with Canon Collins the idea of a boycott of South Africa in both sport and other forms of cultural interaction, during Collins’ visit to South Africa in mid-1954. Collins, *Partners in Protest*, 205.

¹⁴² One of the first artists to do so was the British-based violinist Yehudi Menuhin, in 1950. When Menuhin’s white South African hosts told him he would be breaking his contract if he played to an African audience at Huddleston’s church in Sophiatown, and threatened to take out a legal injunction to stop him, he warned that he would “see to it that no other artist visits South Africa” if they did so. The threat worked. It may also have been the immediate inspiration for Huddleston’s call for a cultural boycott four years later. Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, 151-52; Yehudi Menuhin, *Unfinished Journey* (London: Methuen, 1976), 253-54; Humphrey Burton, *Menuhin: A Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 307-310.

the international governing bodies in their sports, arguing that they, rather than South Africa's all-white sports organizations, should receive international recognition.¹⁴³

From 1948 onwards, for instance, both the all-white South African Table Tennis Union (SATTU) and the newly-formed non-racial South African Table Tennis Board (SATTB) applied every year to the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) requesting affiliation. After investigating the situation, the ITTF concluded that neither body could claim to be the *de facto* governing body of table tennis in South Africa and called on the two organizations to negotiate with each other to form a single representative committee. In the meantime the non-racial SATTB was held to be in "good standing" with the ITTF, meaning that its players could compete in international table tennis competitions, while the all-white SATTU's applications were rejected on the grounds that it violated the ITTF's rules prohibiting discrimination. The SATTU was recognized merely as a "corresponding body," with which the ITTF was in contact; its players were permitted to play against other ITTF players only if the SATTB consented.¹⁴⁴ In soccer, meanwhile, the non-racial South African Soccer Federation (SASF) applied to the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) for membership in 1952 and again in 1954, arguing that the all-white South African Football Association (SAFA) – which FIFA had officially recognized in 1952 – represented only a small minority of the country's soccer players. In May 1955 an emergency FIFA committee meeting concluded that SAFA did "not comprise and control all the clubs and players in South Africa... [and] therefore [did] not [have] the standing of a real National Association." FIFA did not

¹⁴³ Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa, from its Origins to 2010*, 2nd ed. (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010), 88, 107-113; Bruce Murray and Christopher Merrett, *Caught Behind: Race and Politics in Springbok Cricket* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004) 47-54. See also, for instance, Henry Nxumalo, "Rugby Test," *Drum*, September 1951.

¹⁴⁴ I.T.T.F. Congress: Annual General Meeting of the Council, Stockholm, "Minutes of First Session," 5 February 1949; "Handbook of the International Table Tennis Federation 1948-49," p.28; International Table Tennis Federation Annual Meeting, "Minutes 1949/50... 1st Session," 1 February 1950; "International Table Tennis Federation Handbook Supplement 1949-1950," p. 5; "South Africa Committee Report," April 1955, International Table Tennis Federation Archives [online], <http://www.ittf.com/museum/archives/index.html>. See also Ivor Montagu, "Table Tennis and South Africa," n.d. [1971], International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Museum, Lausanne.

immediately withdraw SAFA's membership, however, instead suggesting that the two South African bodies form a "South African Interfederal Committee" to liaise with FIFA.¹⁴⁵

There was initially little co-ordination between these efforts to secure international recognition by various black sports bodies. But this began to change after the issue was taken up by *Drum* magazine, a publication with which Huddleston was closely associated.¹⁴⁶ Founded in 1951 by Jim Bailey, the heir to a white South African mining fortune, *Drum* was edited from December 1951 to March 1955 by Anthony Sampson, an aspiring journalist from Britain whom Bailey recruited straight out of college. Under Sampson, the illustrated monthly became, as one of its writers, Lewis Nkosi, later put it "a symbol of the new African cut adrift from the tribal reserve – urbanized, eager, fast-talking and brash." It was not an explicitly political magazine: "to those working on the paper day-to-day," recalled Sylvester Stein, who succeeded Sampson as editor in March 1955, "more important than politics seemed matters of football, crime, sex, social, music, magic and mumbo, and freakballs." Few of the journalists and short-story writers associated with the magazine were members of the ANC or other political organizations, and Bailey, the white proprietor, was concerned that it should neither be too "confrontational" nor too closely aligned with the ANC.¹⁴⁷ Still, in its coverage of black township life, *Drum* reported sympathetically on the Defiance Campaign and other ANC initiatives. The magazine also became famous for its social exposés: in 1952, for instance, investigative reporter Henry Nxumalo wrote a first-hand account of working conditions on the potato farms in the eastern Transvaal.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Chris Bolsmann, "White Football in South Africa: Empire, Apartheid and Change, 1892-1977," *Soccer & Society* 11, nos. 1-2 (January–March 2010): 35-37; Alegi, *Laduma!*, 107, 112-13.

¹⁴⁶ On Huddleston's association with *Drum* and its editors Anthony Sampson and Sylvester Stein, see Anthony Sampson, *Drum: An African Adventure – and Afterwards* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1983), 29, 87, 130; Sylvester Stein, *Who Killed Mr Drum?* (Cape Town: Mayibuye Books, 1999), 36, 67.

¹⁴⁷ Lewis Nkosi, "The Fabulous Decade: The Fifties," in *Home and Exile and Other Selections* (Harlow: Longman, 1983), 16; Stein, *Who Killed Mr Drum?*, 38.

¹⁴⁸ "Bethal Today," *Drum*, March 1952, 4-9.

When Bailey recruited Stein from the liberal *Rand Daily Mail* newspaper to succeed Sampson as editor of *Drum* in early 1955, Stein thus felt that he had inherited the challenge of working up “a feature with world impact from time to time.” Stein decided that the May 1955 issue – the second for which he was responsible – would include a feature demanding that black athletes should be included in South Africa’s previously all-white Olympic team. Under Sampson, *Drum* had devoted extensive coverage to black boxing, soccer, and other sports, but Stein now wanted to cover sport in an “avowedly subversive” manner. Bailey was initially reluctant, warning that the government “would have Stein shot and the paper banned,” but he eventually allowed Stein to press ahead. “I had long felt a strong and obstinate urge to handle that sports feature,” Stein later recalled. “Yes, it was more truly political than what we usually tackled, but I was a more politically motivated man than Bailey, more even than most of the blacks on the paper. And sport, in my opinion, certainly related closely to politics.”¹⁴⁹

In the May 1955 feature article, Nxumalo – who had originally been recruited as *Drum*’s sports editor before he moved into investigative journalism – noted that the Olympic charter prohibited racial discrimination and reported that various non-racial South African sports bodies were therefore attempting to “break the Olympic ring” by applying to participate. Nxumalo argued that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was bound by its own rules to boycott any future South African team selected on a discriminatory basis: “the South African Olympic Games Association should not retain a colour bar clause in its constitution, and if it does it should not be entitled to retain recognition from the international Olympic body.”¹⁵⁰

The combination of Huddleston’s October 1954 appeal in the *Observer* for a cultural boycott and *Drum*’s May 1955 feature on discrimination in sport had several important effects. In South

¹⁴⁹ Stein, *Who Killed Mr Drum?*, 53.

¹⁵⁰ “South Africa’s Colour Bar Breaks the Olympic Law,” *Drum*, May 1955, 20-23.

Africa, Dennis Brutus, a coloured teacher in Port Elizabeth, responded to *Drum's* call for “a national all-races federation of all the Olympic sports” by forming a Co-ordinating Committee for International Recognition in Sport to promote the principle that “all people should have the right to represent their country in sport on the basis of ability.”¹⁵¹ In subsequent decades, Brutus would go on to become the individual most closely associated with the campaign for a sports boycott of South Africa. At college in the 1940s, he had been outraged to discover that black athletes he studied with could not represent South Africa in the Olympics even if they performed better than whites. As a manager and coach for his school's sports teams Brutus had subsequently become involved as an administrator in several national non-racial bodies in different sports, making him uniquely well-placed to co-ordinate their efforts.¹⁵²

The formation of the Co-ordinating Committee was followed by further appeals for international recognition in sports including cricket and weightlifting. And in soccer, after the all-white SAFA rejected the SASF's suggestion of a merger on equal terms, the SASF decided to renew its appeal for recognition at FIFA's biennial congress in Lisbon in June 1956.¹⁵³ Most international sports federations were unreceptive to these appeals, however: their initial response was usually to refer the non-racial South African bodies back to the all-white bodies that were already recognized. Though several international federations, including the IOC, formally prohibited discrimination, most were still dominated by European and American administrators who had longstanding ties to white South African sport. The exception was table tennis, the field in which the non-racial sports

¹⁵¹ Stein, *Who Killed Mr Drum?*, 62; Dennis Brutus, “The Sportsman's Choice,” in *Apartheid: A Collection of Writings on South African Racism by South Africans* ed. Alex La Guma (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972), 155.

¹⁵² Dennis Brutus, “Memoir: From Protest to Prison,” in *Poetry & Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader*, eds. Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006), 27, 36-39; Bernth Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography* (New York; James Currey, 2011), 136-37; Murray and Merrett, *Caught Behind*, 70.

¹⁵³ Douglas Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa*, (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998) 75; Murray and Merrett, *Caught Behind*, 68; Gemmell, *Politics of South African Cricket*, 89; Alegi, *Laduma!*, 112-13.

movement achieved its first international victory. Among international sports federations, the ITTF was unusual: its aristocratic founder and president, Ivor Montagu, who had codified the rules of table tennis in the 1920s, was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, a Soviet spy, and a committed opponent of racial discrimination. After failing to resolve the years-long deadlock between the rival South African table tennis bodies, in April 1956 the ITTF withdrew its recognition of the all-white SATTU as a “corresponding body,” and recognized the non-racial SATTB as the sole controlling organization for table tennis in South Africa.¹⁵⁴

In Britain, meanwhile, the jazz musician Johnny Dankworth announced in February 1955 that he was turning down a £10,000 contract to tour South Africa since such tours could only be attended by a section of the South African population. In April 1956 the British Musicians’ Union ruled that all its members should refuse to perform in South Africa, unless their contracts specified that performances must be given to all sections of the population.¹⁵⁵ Huddleston’s call for a cultural boycott also prompted the Africa Bureau to begin lobbying in support of the idea. In May 1956 the Bureau convened a private meeting at the House of Lords that brought together sympathetic British performers and athletes with representatives of several of the nodes of the loose network involved in campaigning on apartheid in sport and culture, including Huddleston and former *Drum* editor Anthony Sampson (both of whom had now returned to Britain), as well as Harold Bloom, a white South African lawyer who was on his way to represent the non-racial SASF at the FIFA congress in Lisbon. Another attendee was Reverend David Shepard, an Anglican priest and international

¹⁵⁴ “South African Non-White Body is Recognised,” *Times of India*, 9 June 1956, 10; Booth, *The Race Game*, 75. See also Ivor Montagu, “Table Tennis and South Africa,” n.d. [1971], ITTF Museum. On Montagu, see Nicholas Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: Ivor Montagu and the Astonishing Story Behind the Game that Changed the World*. (London: Simon and Schuster, 2014).

¹⁵⁵ “How the Colour Bar Has Been Countered By Some Individuals and Organisations,” 26 June 1956, File 1, Box 197, Africa Bureau Records; Africa Bureau, *Sport, The Arts and the Colour Bar*, 7-8; “South Africa Plans New Curb on Critics,” *New York Times*, 18 April 1956, 13; “Musicians Hit at Colour Bar,” *Daily Mirror*, 18 April 1956 [newspaper clipping], File 2, Box 196, Africa Bureau Records.

cricketer. Huddleston told Shepard that “nothing would jolt people in South Africa more than if the MCC [the governing body of English cricket] were to refuse to send a team.”¹⁵⁶

Two months later the Africa Bureau achieved a partial victory, when actors with whom it had been collaborating proposed a resolution at the annual meeting of Equity, the British actors’ union, which would have instructed all members “not to work in any theatre in which any form of colour bar operates.” After a heated debate that lasted several hours, this was eventually qualified with an amendment: “unless there is a clause in the contract to ensure that a definite proportion... of performances under the contract shall be open to all non-Europeans or, if possible, to persons of any colour, race, or creed.” Despite this watering down, the Africa Bureau welcomed the initiative, noting in its publicity materials that opponents of apartheid were divided over whether it was better to refuse to perform in all-white venues in South Africa in any circumstances, or to make performances in all-white venues conditional upon *also* giving performances to mixed or black audiences.¹⁵⁷

For most of the leading figures in the loose network around Huddleston, the Africa Bureau, *Drum* magazine, Dennis Brutus, and South African non-racial sports bodies, the immediate objective of promoting boycotts of all-white institutions and audiences was to cause white South Africans to reassess their attitudes towards the segregation of sport and culture. This in turn, some hoped, would create opportunities for racial reconciliation and for a more wide-ranging reassessment by whites of apartheid and white supremacy. Most of those who argued for international boycotts of

¹⁵⁶ Africa Bureau, Working Party on South Africa, “Minutes of Meeting in House of Lords,” 30 May 1956, File 3, Box 196, Africa Bureau Records; David Sheppard, *Steps Along Hope Street: My Life in Cricket, the Church and the Inner City* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2002), 83. The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) was the governing body of English cricket.

¹⁵⁷ Gerald Croasdell to Stuart Borwn, 9 July 1956, File 1, Box 196, Africa Bureau Records; “Equity Wary of Politics,” *London Times*, 25 June 1956, 5; George Clay, “Equity Shock for Theatres in South Africa,” *London Observer*, 8 July 1956, 4. The idea of a compromise amendment along these lines had originally been suggested by Huddleston. Trevor [Huddleston] to Mary [Benson], 16 June 1956, File 1, Box 196, Africa Bureau Records.

South African theaters, sports bodies, and so on, did so because their specific targets were all-white institutions that denied black South Africans equal participation, not simply because they were South African. It was implicit in these initiatives that any South African institutions that adopted non-racial policies would not be boycotted.

Brutus and other representatives of non-racial sports bodies stressed that their objective was not to have white South Africans excluded from international sporting competition, but to have South Africans of all races included. The purpose of calling for international sports organizations to boycott all-white bodies and recognize non-racial ones was to desegregate South African sport, starting with the teams that represented the country abroad, even if segregation and apartheid continued in all other spheres of life. The SASF, for instance, repeatedly suggested to SAFA that their affiliation battle at FIFA could be resolved by a merger of the two bodies.¹⁵⁸ *Drum's* May 1955 feature on discrimination in sport had asked whether white South Africa would “stick to its rigid colour bar in sport and stand the risk of being barred from international competition and the Olympic Games, or will they allow non-whites to strengthen their teams in the same way as does the Negro in the United States?” To *Drum* journalists and others, it did not seem inconceivable that white South African sports administrators might choose the latter option if faced with this choice. In 1956, *Drum's* sports editor published his selections for a desegregated national soccer team: the starting side, made up of four white, three African, two Indian, and two coloured players, would be “a world-beater anytime,” he declared.¹⁵⁹

To some black South African athletes, basic fairness in the selection of sports teams was an end in itself. Indeed, this was how Brutus himself had initially viewed the issue. But for others such

¹⁵⁸ “South African Non-White Body is Recognised,” *Times of India*, 9 June 1956, 10; Booth, *The Race Game*, 77.

¹⁵⁹ “South Africa’s Colour Bar Breaks the Olympic Law,” *Drum*, May 1955, 21; Dan Chocho, “My All-Race Soccer Team!” *Drum*, March 1956, 28-29. See also Jim Bailey, “Letting the Genie out of the Bottle,” in *The Beat of Drum: The Story of a Magazine that Documented the Rise of Africa* ed. Angela Caccia (Braamfontein, South Africa: Ravan Press, 1982), 130.

as Huddleston, the political ramifications of supporting what he called “the movement for cultural and athletic non-racialism in South Africa,” had been central from the beginning. As we have seen, the immediate impetus for his original call for a cultural boycott had been the banning of the ANC’s Oliver Tambo. Huddleston’s October 1954 article had marked an important shift in his thinking. His earlier calls for external intervention, in the immediate wake of the Defiance Campaign, had been based on the idea that this would “shake” the government itself, responsible as it was for the repressive legislation that had suppressed the campaign.¹⁶⁰ But what had outraged him most about Tambo’s banning was the indifference of ordinary white South Africans, whether they voted for the National Party or the opposition United Party. “It is because the vast majority of the European population accept [white supremacy],” Huddleston wrote, “that they are fully prepared to remain supine when it is implemented in act” – as in the case of Tambo’s banning. In calling for a cultural boycott, Huddleston thus shifted his target from the government to the white South African population as a whole. A boycott of performance contracts that provided entertainment only for whites, he argued, would “give White South Africans an opportunity of tasting the medicine they so freely give to their Black fellow-citizens – the medicine of deprivation and frustration.”¹⁶¹

One of the central themes in *Naught for Your Comfort*, Huddleston’s 1956 bestseller about his time in South Africa, was his concern that the overwhelming majority of white South Africans had “no conception whatever of human relationships except that based on racial domination.” Whites knew Africans only as servants or employees: “This is contact. It is not a relationship. It can never be love – the thing which Christianity is all about.” Huddleston explained that what he was trying to defend was “this most precious human treasure, the opportunity of love itself.” He put it another

¹⁶⁰ Trevor Huddleston, “Foreword,” in Africa Bureau, *Sport, The Arts and the Colour Bar*, 1; Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 133, 135.

¹⁶¹ Trevor Huddleston, “The Church Sleeps On,” London *Observer*, 10 October 1954, 6.

way to Canon Collins during Collins' 1954 visit to South Africa: "How can you love your neighbour, if you are never allowed to meet him?"¹⁶² For Huddleston, the achievement of "cultural and athletic non-racialism" through international boycotts would be one way of creating opportunities for South Africans of different races to meet and to establish personal relationships across the color line. And this in turn, he believed, would undermine the entire edifice of white supremacy. Huddleston himself had "woken up" – a favorite metaphor – to the evil of apartheid, not "through academic reading or study" but "through seeing apartheid in its impact on the people who I had responsibility for as a priest."¹⁶³ Enabling opportunities for inter-racial relationships to develop in sport and the arts would create the conditions for more white South Africans to be shaken awake.

This understanding of the potential role of sport and culture in undermining apartheid had a long genealogy. Since the late nineteenth-century sport had been viewed by British liberal imperialists and missionaries – in South Africa and elsewhere – as a means of civilizing non-Britons, strengthening their ties to their British rulers, and minimizing anti-British antagonism. In South Africa in the inter-war period, liberal whites had, as the sports historian Douglas Booth argues, "introduced Africans to institutionalized amateur sports, especially football, as a broad strategy of co-option and pacification." Dorothy Maud – a British missionary who worked at the Community of the Resurrection's mission in Sophiatown in the inter-war years, and who was still there when Huddleston first arrived in 1943 – had been involved, for instance, in bringing white students to Sophiatown to do community service such as coaching soccer, tennis, cricket, and boxing. It was a

¹⁶² Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, 17, 47, 183; Collins, *Partners in Protest*, 209. See also, for instance, "I will pray for Africa" – Huddleston," *Drum*, December 1955, 27.

¹⁶³ Trevor Huddleston, *Father Huddleston's Picture Book* (London: Kliptown Books, 1990) 60, 20.

“blessed truth,” Maud wrote in 1929, that “games break down colour prejudice quicker than anything else.”¹⁶⁴

Huddleston’s advocacy of a sports and cultural boycott to advance cultural and athletic non-racialism thus built on a long tradition of efforts by liberal whites to promote inter-racial harmony through sport. The fears held by many liberal opponents of apartheid in the postwar period had been concisely expressed by one of the characters in Alan Paton’s novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*: “I have one great fear in my heart, that, when they [whites] are turned to loving, they will find we [Africans] are turned to hating.”¹⁶⁵ This kind of fear – further exacerbated by events such as the outbreak of the “Mau Mau” uprising in Kenya in 1952 and by the killing of white bystanders in the riots at the end of the Defiance Campaign – was vividly expressed by Canon Collins during his 1954 visit to South Africa: “a black Hitler could arise, a black nationalist, playing on wrath and superstition, and leading a rising aimed at cutting every white throat.” Huddleston shared such fears: for him, using boycotts to promote cultural and athletic non-racialism was in part a means of stopping Africans from turning to hatred and anti-white bitterness.¹⁶⁶ But even more importantly, it was a way of encouraging whites to turn to love, by making them see Africans as humans rather than as servants or as abstract problems. Huddleston’s liberal and missionary predecessors had seen sport as a way to “civilize” indigenous peoples; Huddleston now hoped to use it to civilize racist whites as well.

¹⁶⁴ Booth, *The Race Game*, 42-43; Alan Gregor Cobley, “A Political History of Playing Fields: The Provision of Sporting Facilities for Africans in the Johannesburg Area to 1948,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 11, no. 2 (1994): 216. See also Alan Gregor Cobley, *The Rules of the Game: Struggles in Black Recreation and Social Welfare Policy in South Africa* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 17-41; and, more generally, J.A. Mangan, ed., *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London: Frank Cass, 1992).

¹⁶⁵ Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (London: Vintage, 2002), 38. See also Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, 36.

¹⁶⁶ L.J. Collins, “Fear.. It may drive the whites into a shooting war, or the blacks to follow a Hitler of their own,” *Daily Herald*, 28 July 1954, 4; Huddleston, “Foreword,” in Africa Bureau, *Sport, The Arts and the Colour Bar*, 1.

In the 1970s non-racial sports activists began to argue that there could be “no normal sport in an abnormal society” and therefore that – even if South African sports were formally desegregated and South African teams were no longer all-white – the sports boycott of South Africa should be maintained until apartheid itself was ended. In contrast, Huddleston and other early advocates of sports boycotts in the 1950s hoped boycotts would help to bring about “normal” or non-racial sport *within* South Africa’s abnormal, white-dominated, segregated society. And if this could be achieved, they believed, it would have a transformative effect on that society. Such beliefs rested on a liberal understanding of racism, not as something structurally determined, but as a problem of individual personal failings. If individual South African whites could be “woken up” from racial prejudice through inter-racial contact in sport and the arts, then the racist structures of South African society would necessarily be transformed.¹⁶⁷

This understanding of how international boycotts of segregated sports and cultural bodies could contribute to undermining apartheid and averting violence was not unique to Huddleston. Lewis Nkosi, who joined the staff of *Drum* magazine in 1957, recalled the mid-1950s as a period when “there was a surge of optimism... that art might yet crack the wall of apartheid”: “It was a time when it seemed that the sound of police gunfire and jackboot would ultimately become ineffective against the resolute opposition and defiance from the new ‘fringe society’ coming together in a spirit of tolerance and occupying a ‘no man’s land’ between the two warring camps.”

¹⁶⁷ The mechanism by which early advocates of sports and cultural boycotts expected them to work was thus quite different from that assumed by most histories of external anti-apartheid activism. Thörn claims, for instance, that the “ultimate aim” of cultural and sports boycotts of South Africa “was to put pressure on the South African government through isolating the country culturally.” Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid*, 61. See also Gemmell, *Politics of South African Cricket*, 123; Houston, “International Solidarity: Introduction,” 21; Morgan, “Into the Struggle,” 54, 104.

In contrast, a number of scholars who study South African sport and culture have noted that the objectives of the sports and cultural boycott shifted over time. Douglas Booth, for instance, argues that whereas “the early boycotters pursued a simple goal, to deracialize sport,” boycotters in the 1970s “reconceptualized the [sports] boycott as a strategy of broad social change,” as it became “one of a raft of resistance strategies aimed at isolating the South African regime.” What such interpretations ignore is that for many early boycott advocates, “simply” deracializing South African sport was itself conceptualized as part of a “strategy of broad social change.” Douglas Booth, “Hitting Apartheid for Six?” 477, 492.

Or as Nkosi's *Drum* colleague Bloke Modisane put it, "if South Africa could not be subverted politically then perhaps culturally and socially the whites could be seduced into realising that integration was a sane policy, particularly since it was an alternative to violence."¹⁶⁸ Some figures involved in the campaign for international recognition of non-racial sports bodies held similar views. At an assembly of the South African Soccer Federation in 1956 to discuss the SASF's appeal to FIFA, for instance, the keynote address was given by Willy Rip, the president of the Cape Soccer Association. The purpose of the assembly, Rip declared, was to initiate a movement to break down racial barriers in sport, and this would have not only sporting but political significance: "If you can only get two people making football together not war, you have a good start." ("Twenty-two still better" quipped a heckler in the audience).¹⁶⁹ By the end of the 1950s Dennis Brutus too had come to see sport as a "political instrument," arguing that the achievement of non-racial sport could threaten "the entire indivisible structure of racial rule." "Once white South Africans can be influenced in their judgements by merit they will certainly come to think seriously of white and black sportsmen alike," Brutus contended. "And in a country which eats, drinks, lives, and sleeps sport, the entire mental climate of the country could be changed."¹⁷⁰

Among the explicitly political organizations in South Africa, some of the most notable support for international boycotts in support of the movement for cultural and sporting non-racialism came from members of the Liberal Party. This had been formed in 1953 by whites who had until then placed their hopes in the idea that the opposition United Party might adopt a more liberal position on racial issues. The Liberal Party was committed to the extension of constitutional

¹⁶⁸ Nkosi, "The Fabulous Decade," 17; Bloke Modisane, *Blame Me on History* (London: Panther, 1965), 260. See also Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 19.

¹⁶⁹ Stein, *Who Killed Mr Drum?*, 59.

¹⁷⁰ Dennis Brutus interviewed in Field, *Have You Heard from Johannesburg*, Episode 5, *Fair Play*; Dennis Brutus, "Sports Test for South Africa," *Africa South*, July-September 1959, 39.

rights and the franchise, though Liberals disagreed on how far the right to vote should be extended: until 1959 the party's official position was in favor of a qualified franchise. To achieve the implementation of its principles, the Liberal Party's founders agreed, they would use "only democratic and constitutional means." As the historian Janet Robertson has put it, "To the Liberals, it was not the parliamentary system that appeared to have failed, but the United Party. What was *most* needed, so it seemed, was a new party to work within the parliamentary process."¹⁷¹

The Liberal Party thus focused initially on trying to persuade white voters through rational argument. But from early on prominent Liberals also backed the use of external boycotts to promote non-racialism in sport and the arts. In 1957, for instance, Alan Paton, the prominent novelist and party president, began writing to foreign patrons of the "International Arts League of Youth," a South African cultural organization that organized an annual all-white "Festival of Youth," asking them to resign if the League refused to lift its color bar. The letters were, Paton declared, the "first shots" in a campaign to draw the attention of individuals and organizations overseas to the segregated nature of South African bodies that they were associated with.¹⁷² Later, In January 1959, Paton was invited by Dennis Brutus to give the opening address at the founding meeting of the South African Sports Association (SASA), a new coordinating body for the non-racial sports federations. Paton, who became an honorary Vice President of the new Association,

¹⁷¹ Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa*, 108-17. See also: Michael Cardo, *Opening Men's Eyes: Peter Brown and the Liberal Struggle For South Africa* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2012); Randolph Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid: A History of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-68* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

¹⁷² John Hughes, "Global Groups Hit African Color Bar," *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 December 1957, 6; Meer, "I Remember," 483-84. For the views of other prominent Liberals see also, for instance, O.D. Wollheim, "The position is extremely complicated..." n.d. [fragment of letter], File 1, Box 197, Africa Bureau records; Trevor Huddleston and Patrick Duncan, letter to the editor, *London Times*, 8 July 1955, 9.

gave his full support to SASA's efforts to end racial discrimination in sport, declaring that "sportsmanship and the colour bar are incompatible."¹⁷³

Within the Congress movement, the sports and cultural boycotts were actively promoted by the youth wings of the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses. The Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC) took up the issue of discrimination in sport immediately after the publication of *Drum's* May 1955 feature article: later that month the TIYC's annual meeting passed a resolution calling on all world sports bodies – and especially the organizing committees of the Olympic and British Empire Games – to “debar white South Africa and to demand a non-colour bar representation.” In the run-up to the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, representatives of the Congress subsequently began to press this demand in correspondence with the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne, and in the media.¹⁷⁴ The Natal Indian Youth Congress, meanwhile, wrote to foreign artists asking them not to perform to all-white audiences in Durban, and picketed those who still came.¹⁷⁵ In May 1956, the TIYC Executive passed a resolution calling for “a cultural boycott of South Africa as part of a universal move to isolate this country and bring about pressure

¹⁷³ “Conference of National Sporting Bodies convened by the Steering Committee of the South African Sports Association, January 10th and 11th, 1959... Opening Address by Mr. Alan Paton,” Folder: BRU/1/3/1 South African Sports Association 1958-1960, Box 2, Dennis Brutus papers on sport, anti-apartheid activities and literature, Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York, UK. On the little-known role of Paton and other Liberals in supporting the sports boycott, see also Peter Alegi, “Soccer and Human Rights: Chief Luthuli, Alan Paton, Dennis Brutus and the 2010 World Cup” (17th Alan Paton Memorial Lecture, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 14 May 2010), 4-5; Christopher Merrett, “‘We don’t Want Crumbs, We Want Bread’: Non-Racial Sport, the International Boycott and South African Liberals, 1956-1990,” *English Academy Review: Southern African Journal of English Studies* 27, no. 2 (2010): 81-93. Merrett argues that the sports boycott was “liberal in principle and practice; a non-violent means to support the oppressed and bring pressure to bear on a police state that became increasingly authoritarian and violent in its methods.” The argument presented here is that the sports and cultural boycotts advocated in the 1950s were indeed “liberal in principle”: they were intended *not* to bring direct pressure to bear on the South African state, but to achieve the longstanding South African liberal objective of a “change of heart” among whites through promoting non-racialism in sport and the arts.

¹⁷⁴ [Transvaal Indian Youth Congress], “Resolution on Sports,” 15 May 1955; M. Moolla and S. Eskajee to The Secretariat, International Olympics Committee, 26 May 1955, both in Kéba Mbaye, *The International Olympic Committee and South Africa (Analysis and Illustration of a Humanist Sports Policy)* (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1995), 271-272; “An Appeal for a Ban on South Africa’s Entry for the Olympics,” *Times of India*, 30 July 1956, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 214.

to bear in the fight against racial discrimination.” A cultural boycott, the TIYC declared, would give encouragement to black South Africans in their political struggle, it would “impress upon racialist South Africans that in their Herrenvolk policies they stand isolated from the rest of the civilized world” and it would “give rise to greater political consciousness among European South Africans and... contribute to bringing about more sympathy and support for the national liberation movement.”¹⁷⁶

Despite the enthusiasm of the Indian youth congresses, this view of the potential significance of cultural boycotts received little support in the wider Congress movement in the 1950s. Ahmed Kathrada of the TIYC pointed out in August 1956 that the Congress movement had “no defined policies” on the issue of cultural relations between South Africa and the outside world. On the “spontaneous” boycott initiatives abroad, the “national organisations” that made up the Congress Alliance had, Kathrada noted with frustration, “remained silent.”¹⁷⁷ In their private lives, leaders of the Congress Alliance reveled in transgressing the norms that segregated South African social life: Ben Turok recalled that white activists viewed small gestures, such as conspicuously entertaining black comrades in the all-white suburbs, as “our own small contribution to the erosion of apartheid.”¹⁷⁸ And while some members of the Congress movement or the SACP may have dismissed sport as “non-revolutionary or even counter-revolutionary” (as the youthful Kathrada had done himself in the 1940s), many others were enthusiastic players or spectators. ANC President

¹⁷⁶ Executive Committee, Transvaal Indian Youth Congress, “Resolution Calling For A Cultural Boycott,” 26 May 1956, File Em6.3.3, Records Relating To The ‘Treason Trial,’ Wits Historical Papers.

¹⁷⁷ A.M. Kathrada, “Towards a Cultural Boycott of South Africa,” *Liberation*, August 1956, 16-19. In June 1956, the conference of the Natal Indian Congress passed a resolution calling on international sporting and cultural organizations to disaffiliate discriminatory South African bodies. But – unlike its youth wing – the NIC did not subsequently campaign on the issue. Meer, “I Remember,” 459-60.

¹⁷⁸ Turok, *Nothing But the Truth*, 84-85. See also, for instance, Clingman, *Bram Fischer*, 176, 202.

Albert Lutuli was a “compulsive football fan” who had served in a variety of executive positions in local, provincial, and national African soccer bodies in the 1930s.¹⁷⁹

But the Congress leadership did not treat the active promotion of cultural and athletic non-racialism as a significant tactic in the struggle to achieve the South Africa envisaged in the Freedom Charter. Inter-racial co-operation in sport and the arts was to be welcomed, but it was not viewed as strategically significant. Ezekiel Mphahlele, literary editor of *Drum* from 1955 to 1957 and one of the few *Drum* writers to join the ANC, commented in 1959 that the ANC leadership had never viewed “cultural matters as an important flank to its activities. All its time had been taken up in organizational work around purely political ideology.”¹⁸⁰ When Alfred Hutchinson, an ANC leader who had been a college classmate of Dennis Brutus, first tried to persuade Ruth First and the other editors of *Fighting Talk* magazine – “the thinking Congressite’s guide to the political scene” – to publish an article by Brutus on sport he was told “Sports really has nothing to do with politics. We don’t have to waste our time with it.”¹⁸¹

The Congress leadership were confident the end of apartheid would be achieved much more quickly than would be possible through the gradual evolution in white attitudes envisaged by liberal advocates of cultural and sports boycotts. And in the short term there seemed to be little evidence that the movement for cultural and athletic non-racialism was causing any evolution in white attitudes. “We didn’t realise how small and powerless we were,” Lewis Nkosi later wrote.¹⁸² The

¹⁷⁹ Kathrada, *Memoirs*, 35; Alegi, *Laduma!*, 81; Peter Alegi, “Sport, Race, and Liberation before Apartheid: Albert Luthuli, 1920s-1952,” in *Sport and Liberation in South Africa: Reflections and Suggestions*, ed. Cornelius Thomas (Alice, South Africa: National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre, 2006), 66-82.

¹⁸⁰ Es’kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 203-4. See also Lewis Nkosi, “Literature and Liberation,” in *Home and Exile*, 161-63; Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 19. Mphahlele later changed his first name to Es’kia.

¹⁸¹ Brutus, “Memoir: From Protest to Prison,” 34. *Fighting Talk* eventually published an article by Brutus (writing under a pseudonym) in September 1958. See John Player [Dennis Brutus], “Lifting the Colour Bar in Sport,” *Fighting Talk*, September 1958, 12-13. The characterization of *Fighting Talk* is from Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 141.

¹⁸² Nkosi, “Fabulous Decade,” 17.

white South African entertainment industry responded to the initiatives by Equity and the British Musicians Union not by integrating theaters and concert venues, but by arranging for touring British actors and musicians to give additional “token performances” for black audiences in inferior venues, thus complying with the minimum requirements of the resolutions.¹⁸³ And in sport, though the Africa Bureau claimed that “the ping-pong crisis reverberated through South Africa” in 1956, the ITTF’s recognition of the non-racial SATTB as the sole controlling organization for table tennis in South Africa did not lead even to the integration of table tennis. The all-white SATTU continued to refuse to merge with the SATTB, preferring instead for its players to be barred from international competition.

Other all-white sports bodies that retained international recognition responded to pressure from the non-racial federations by offering them forms of “affiliation” that still maintained the complete segregation of sport. The all-white SAFA, for instance, responded to FIFA’s calls for compromise by removing the “color bar clause” from its constitution in 1956, renaming itself the Football Association of South Africa (FASA), and offering the non-racial SASF the option of becoming a non-voting affiliate organization, an offer that the SASF unsurprisingly rejected.¹⁸⁴ Backed by the government – which began denying passports to black sports representatives and preventing them from traveling abroad to lobby international organizations – the white sports bodies maintained a united front against any moves towards integrated sport. The council of the all-white South African Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (SAOCGA) ruled in November 1957 that there would be no competition between white and black athletes under its auspices, and that therefore no black athletes would be selected to represent South Africa

¹⁸³ George Clay, “Equity Shock for Theaters in South Africa,” London *Observer*, 8 July 1956, 4. In 1956 and 1957, tours by Yehudi Menuhin, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the British musical *The Pajama Game* went ahead on this basis.

¹⁸⁴ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 112-15; Bolsmann, “White Football,” 37-38.

internationally. SAOCGA president Reg Honey called on all of the white sports bodies affiliated to the Association “to stand together and, if it came to that, get thrown out together from international bodies.”¹⁸⁵

Events in Johannesburg in 1957 meanwhile put domestic boycotts back on the agenda of the Congress Alliance, even as the South African government stepped up its efforts to cripple domestic resistance to its policies. In December 1956, one hundred and fifty six leading members of the Congress Alliance were arrested and charged with treason, initiating the mammoth “Treason Trial,” which for some of the accused would last until 1961. But, in January 1957, just as the trial’s “preliminary examination” was beginning, a massive bus boycott broke out in the township of Alexandra, nine miles north of the center of Johannesburg. For many African workers, transport costs consumed a significant proportion of their income, and when the bus company attempted to increase fares from Alexandra by a penny, thousands of African commuters began boycotting the buses, choosing instead to walk up to twenty miles a day. This campaign, with its slogan of “*Azikhwelwa!*” (“We will not ride!”) was, in Lutuli’s words, “a spontaneous movement of the people” that “the ANC had no part in organising.” The boycott was coordinated by a People’s Transport Committee, which included members of the local ANC branch, but also many others.¹⁸⁶ (One of the few organizations in Alexandra to refuse to join the Committee was the youth wing of the NEUM: according to one member of the Committee, others in the township joked that the NEUM, “which

¹⁸⁵ Arun Gandhi, “Sporting Treason in South Africa,” *Times of India*, 13 April 1958, 12; Christopher Gell, “A Colour Bar at Cardiff,” London *Observer*, 8 December 1957, 23; “South Africa: Sport,” *Africa Digest*, January-February 1958, 152-53.

¹⁸⁶ Lutuli, *Let My People Go*, 155-57. The precise nature of the genesis and internal dynamics of the bus boycott remains unclear and disputed. Dan Mokonyane, *Lessons of Azikhwelwa: The Bus Boycott in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (London: Nakong Ya Rena, 1994); Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001), 143-48; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 153-71.

always preached the boycott weapon and evinced attachment to it, boycotted everything including the bus boycott.”¹⁸⁷)

This spontaneous initiative became, Nelson Mandela later wrote, “a live bomb and a national issue.” Sympathy bus boycotts quickly spread to other African townships surrounding Johannesburg, and to cities further afield including Pretoria, Bloemfontein, and Durban.¹⁸⁸ In early February, the ANC provincial leadership in the Cape called for a bus and local train boycott in solidarity with the boycotters in Johannesburg. In Port Elizabeth, where ANC organization remained strong, this solidarity bus boycott was eighty or ninety per cent effective at the outset, despite the fact that there was no fare dispute in the city. The initial enthusiasm for boycotting Port Elizabeth’s buses began to wane, however. After two weeks, the ANC leadership in the city announced that it was suspending the transport boycott and moving on to “the second phases of the present struggle.” These second phases included a revival of the consumer boycott tactic that had been used so successfully in Port Elizabeth three years earlier. Now, however, the boycott was directed against “all products produced in Nationalist owned and Nationalist controlled factories, as well as... Nationalist controlled finance houses, such as Building Societies, Banks, Investment Corporations and Insurance Companies.” Shopkeepers were given a month to dispose of their stocks of the blacklisted products. Defiant traders who continued to stock “Nationalist goods” after this deadline were picketed by ANC patrols. Faced with plummeting sales, several stores quickly conceded.¹⁸⁹ In Alexandra itself, the bus boycott lasted for more than three months, during which

¹⁸⁷ Mokonyane, *Lessons of Azikwelwa*, 36.

¹⁸⁸ Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ 312-13; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 166.

¹⁸⁹ African National Congress (Cape), “Directive to Branches,” 23 February 1957, Item Da6, Records of the African National Congress (ANC), 1928-1975 (AD2186), Wits Historical Papers; Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ 314; “Govan Mbeki” [notes on an interview], n.d. [ca. 1961/1962], File 3, Box 2, Mary Benson collection (MS 348942), Archives and Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London; Bunting, *Kotane*, 234.

the public bus company lost nearly £90,000. The boycott finally came to an end in April, after a compromise agreement that led to the government passing legislation to subsidize bus fares. It was a rare victory for opponents of apartheid in this period: Anthony Sampson noted that the new legislation was “the first act of parliament in the forty-seven years of the Union to be passed directly as a result of African pressure.”¹⁹⁰

While the Treason Trial dragged on, as the prosecutors monotonously read thousands of pieces of evidence into the record, the Alexandra bus boycott and its repercussions in Port Elizabeth and elsewhere created a renewed interest in domestic boycotts on the part of the national leadership of the Congress Alliance. In February 1957, Walter Sisulu published a lengthy article on the subject of “boycott as a political weapon.” Sisulu was particularly concerned with the question of boycotting segregated political institutions, which continued to cause controversy amongst opponents of apartheid. As a leading Youth Leaguer in the 1940s Sisulu had supported the boycott of such bodies, but he now argued that in the prevailing conditions of the late 1950s, the ANC should revise its 1949 resolution on the issue. Boycotts, he argued, could be an effective weapon, in both the political and the economic spheres. The bus boycotts in Alexandra and elsewhere were just one illustration of this. But the central point Sisulu wanted to make was that “elevating a tactic of struggle into a fundamental principle” was a serious error. “Boycott is a tactic,” Sisulu stressed, “and only one of the methods to be used for the struggle for national independence and against white domination and discriminatory laws.” Like all tactics, the use of boycott should be “dictated... by the prevailing conditions” and “judged from their effect on the movement.”¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Sampson, *Treason Cage*, 214.

¹⁹¹ Walter Sisulu, “Boycott as a Political Weapon,” *Liberation*, February 1957, 12-15. Nelson Mandela published an article making the same argument exactly a year later. Nelson Mandela, “Boycott is not an Inflexible Principle: Our Struggle Needs Many Tactics,” *Liberation*, February 1958, 14-17.

In his argument that the boycott of discriminatory institutions was *not* a “fundamental principle” but a tactic whose use should depend on circumstances, Sisulu might also have been describing the approach of the Congress Alliance, the Communist Party, and other anti-apartheid bodies to international boycotts of South Africa in the period since the Second World War. In subsequent decades, the boycott of South Africa in almost every sphere would indeed become not just an important tactical weapon, but a central principle for the ANC and for many other groups opposed to apartheid, both inside South Africa and around the world. But this had not been the case in the 1940s and 1950s. After calling for multilateral trade sanctions in 1947, Yusuf Dadoo had subsequently dropped the idea.¹⁹² He and other South African resistance leaders instead concentrated their attention on the developing opposition to apartheid inside the country. The next two chapters show how – after consumer boycotts of South African goods spread out around the world in the course of 1959, and after options for domestic opposition were drastically restricted in 1960 – the ANC and its allies did subsequently come to view the international economic isolation of the country as a significant weapon in the struggle against apartheid.

¹⁹² The published collection of Dadoo’s speeches and articles contains no reference to sanctions between 1949 and 1961. Reddy, ed., *Dr. Yusuf Mohamed Dadoo*, 148-52, 194-95.

CHAPTER 2

The Spread of Anti-Apartheid Boycotts, 1957–1960.

Saturday December 13, 1958, the final day of the All-African People's Conference, was chaotic. Meeting in Accra, the capital of newly-independent Ghana, the three hundred official delegates – representing more than sixty political, labor, youth, and women's organizations from twenty-eight African territories – had spent the previous week discussing African liberation and pan-African unity. Each morning they had gathered in plenary to hear addresses from the heads of national delegations, before dividing in the afternoons into five committees tasked with hammering out specific resolutions. The conference had in fact originally been supposed to close on Friday December 12. But the final meeting of the heads of delegations, who met at 10am that Friday to consider the resolutions passed by the five committees, had continued until the early hours of Saturday morning – until at 5am a “strike” by the secretariat typists, unable to stay awake any longer, forced the discussions to an end.¹

When the delegates gathered in the Accra Community Center for the final time on Saturday December 13, therefore, the finalized texts of the conference resolutions were not yet available.² Tom Mboya, the twenty-nine year old Kenya labor leader and chairman of the conference, rose to give his closing remarks. Speaking in front of the conference logo – the silhouette of the African continent, with a huge torch superimposed upon it – and beneath a gigantic banner reading “HANDS OFF AFRICA! AFRICA MUST BE FREE!” Mboya began by declaring that the

¹ George Loft, “Report on All-African People's Conference,” 30 December 1958 Folder 1, Box 7, George Loft Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University; “People's Conference Plans Permanent Body,” *Africa Special Report* (February 1959); Homer Jack, “press collect Hintimes Newdelhi [sic],” 13 December 1958, Folder: ‘All African Peoples' Conference... Articles & Notes by Homer Jack,’ Box 19, Series VI, Homer A. Jack Papers (DG 063), Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA; E.G. Le Tocq to M.E. Allen, 15 December 1958, CO 936/580, [United Kingdom] National Archives (UKNA), Kew, UK.

² Loft, “Report on All-African People's Conference,” 30 December 1958, Folder 1, Box 7, Loft Papers.

conference had been “a historic moment for all the peoples of the world.” Turning to the specific decisions reached, he first briefly discussed the conference’s resolution on the conflict in French-ruled Algeria, before turning to South Africa. South Africa, he declared, was “the situation which no longer requires mere resolutions but action”: “We have agreed and we are going to urge that in fact the time has come when the Independent African States and any sympathetic governments and organisations anywhere in the world... should decide on positive action against South Africa.” Specifically, that positive action would take the form of “economic sanctions by refraining... against buying South African goods.” After discussing more briefly the conference’s other decisions, and affirming the conference’s determination that they be implemented, Mboya closed his oration by reading the conference slogan from the giant map of Africa on the wall opposite him: “Peoples of Africa, unite. We have nothing to lose but our chains. We have a continent to regain. We have freedom and human dignity to attain.”³

This was the first time an international gathering had resolved to use an economic boycott to assist the struggle against apartheid. And unlike the sporadic earlier appeals for economic boycotts and sanctions by individuals such as Yusuf Dadoo, Trevor Huddleston, and Michael Scott, the AAPC’s action generated a significant response. It was the AAPC’s resolution, ANC president Albert Lutuli later wrote, that “set the ball rolling” for the international boycott campaigns that became such a central feature of external action against apartheid in subsequent years.⁴ Studies of

³ “Speech by Mr Tom Mboya... at the Closing Session on Saturday, 13 December, 1958,” *All Africa-People’s Conference News Bulletin* vol. 1, no. 2, n.d., Folder 9, Box 36, William X. Scheinman Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁴ Lutuli, *Let My People Go*, 187. Similarly, accounts written in the years immediately after the AAPC by a diverse range of advocates and opponents of the boycott agreed almost unanimously that, as E.S. Reddy – the Indian official who was at the center of all United Nations activity on apartheid throughout the 1960s and 1970s – noted in 1965, “The international movement for sanctions against South Africa began in December 1958 [at] the All African Peoples’ Conference in Accra.” E.S. Reddy, “Notes on the Origins of the Movement for Sanctions Against South Africa,” February 1965, 1, South African History Online, <https://perma.cc/6CSP-39WT>. See also American Committee on Africa, “World Reaction against South African Apartheid,” n.d. [ca. late September 1960], File 103/21, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*; Cambridge University United Nations Association, “Report of the Commission Established to Investigate the Political and Economic Aspects of a Boycott of South African Goods,” 27 January 1960, File 1/9/1/3, Private Collection of H.F. Verwoerd (PV 93), ARCA; “Address by the Hon. Eric H. Louw... at the Opening of the

the struggle against apartheid have almost always presented the launch of economic boycott campaigns against South Africa in 1959 as responses to an appeal by the ANC.⁵ But the call for sanctions at Accra in December 1958 was not instigated by the *ad hoc* ANC delegation that attended the AAPC. The internationalization of boycotts of South Africa at the end of the 1950s was not initiated by the nationalist leadership in South Africa as part of any grand strategy for South African liberation. The ANC's attitude described in Chapter 1 – of welcoming foreign expressions of support, but not investing any significant time, resources, or personnel in international campaigns – continued to characterize ANC policy through the end of the decade.

Rather than being a straightforward “boomerang” response to an appeal from South Africa, the boycotts launched in 1959 reversed the process: it was the boycott initiatives by individuals and organizations outside South Africa that first interested the resistance movements inside the country in the potential usefulness of this kind of external action. Ronald Segal, the Congress-aligned editor of *Africa South* magazine and an early supporter of sanctions, commented decades later that

SABRA Congress,” 31 March 1959, 23, File 52, Louw Collection; P. Tlale [pseud. for Vella Pillay], “Sanctions Against Apartheid,” *African Communist*, January-March 1964, 35; Henry Simmons, “Overseas Ban on South African Trade Spreads,” *Contact*, 8 August 1959, 4; Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, “Projected South African Trade Boycott,” 2 September 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA; South African United Front, “Boycott and Economic Sanctions,” n.d. [1961], Folder 1, Box 3, Part II (ANC London), Collection: Records of the African National Congress: Lusaka and London (1960-1991) [formerly held by UWC-RI Mayibuye Archives], National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS), University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa.

⁵ Romeo Julius Barros, *African States and the United Nations Versus Apartheid: The Efforts of the African States to Affect South Africa's Apartheid Policy Through the United Nations* (New York: Carlton Press, 1967), 44; Benson, *Struggle for a Birthright*, 208; Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain* (London: Merlin Press, 2005), 9, 11; Houston, “International Solidarity: Introduction,” 22-23; Mark Israel, *South African Political Exile in the United Kingdom* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 161-62, 249n14; Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 36; E.S. Reddy, “United Nations and the African National Congress: Partners in the Struggle Against Apartheid” (unpublished paper, 2012), 2; Hans-Georg Schleicher and Ilona Schleicher, *Special Flights to Southern Africa: The GDR and Liberation Movements in Southern Africa* (Harare: SAPES Books, 1998), 10-11; Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in South Africa*, vol. 1, *Formation of a Popular Opinion 1950-1970* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999), 142; Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 161-62; Thomas, *Diplomacy of Liberation*, 6, 181; Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid*, 61, 128; Williams, *Politics of Race*, 25.

Even the few scholars who note that the ANC made no explicit public call for an international boycott of South African goods until the very end of the year – long after boycott campaigns had been initiated in various parts of the world – argue that those boycott campaigns nevertheless “had wholly South African origins.” Christabel Gurney, “In the Heart of the Beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement 1959-1994,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 3, pt. 1, *International Solidarity*, 261; Gurney, “A Great Cause,” 124, 134. See also Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements in Exile,” 63, 33.

“Certainly there was no developed economic [sanctions] strategy at that point and I think that [in] a very very important period of the international movement it was outside the country that new ideas were generated and new policies formed. I don’t think the ANC believed in the efficacy of economic sanctions.”⁶

Inside South Africa, the ANC and the newly-formed Pan Africanist Congress both launched new domestic consumer boycott campaigns in 1959. But the organizers of these boycotts adopted them above all because of their expected impact *not* on those boycotted, but on the South African boycotters themselves. They did not attach any great strategic importance to a counterpart international boycott, and did not devote significant time or resources to encouraging one. Nevertheless, subsequent efforts elsewhere in the world to implement the AAPC resolution by launching boycotts of South African goods gained inspiration and legitimacy from the fact that the adoption of the AAPC resolution happened to coincide with the launch of domestic boycott campaigns inside the country.

Indeed, there was a high degree of contingency in the spread of boycotts of South African goods between 1958 and 1960. The AAPC’s adoption of a resolution on sanctions can be traced back to Michael Scott’s ongoing interest in the idea, which went back to the early 1950s, as we have seen. But Scott only decided to attend the AAPC at the last minute, and had not planned to use the conference as a forum in which to proselytize for sanctions. In Britain, the consumer boycott campaign was launched after the maverick Ronald Segal gave a speech in Cape Town in which – without consulting ANC leaders – he prematurely launched the ANC’s consumer boycott. Attempts

⁶ “Anti-Apartheid Movement Witness Seminar,” 12 November 1998, Folder: ‘Anti-Apartheid Workshop Papers,’ Uncatalogued materials, Rhodes House.

to organize boycotts of South African goods elsewhere in the world were primarily the result of the persistence of a single individual, Kenyan labor leader and AAPC chairman Tom Mboya.⁷

The leading supporters of economic boycotts of South Africa in this period suggested a diverse array of mechanisms by which they hoped boycotts might contribute to the struggle against apartheid. Some suggested that the purpose was to put pressure directly on the National Party government. Others dismissed this as hopelessly naïve and argued that boycotts would put pressure either on the white business community or on the white electorate in South Africa. In Britain in early 1960, the publicity materials of the newly-formed Boycott Movement stressed that the purpose of the British consumer boycott was not to damage the South African economy but to make a “moral gesture” of self-denial that would trouble the consciences of white South Africans. For members of the South African Liberal Party who endorsed and promoted external boycotts, meanwhile, the most important effect of boycotts would not be on whites at all, but on black South Africans who the Liberals feared might turn to violence. And for the leaders of the two overseas organizations that played the greatest role in entrenching and popularizing the idea of a boycott of South African goods, the British Labour Party and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, their primary purpose was not to impact the situation inside South Africa at all, but to appeal to constituencies elsewhere in the world that they were anxious to woo.

I. Setting the Ball Rolling: The All-African People’s Conference

The All-African People’s Conference was one of a number of international convocations in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The international order was in flux, as former colonial territories were rapidly gaining their independence, and leaders of the new states were engaged in what the political scientist

⁷ Mboya’s role in promoting the boycott of South Africa is entirely absent from previous studies. He is not mentioned, for instance in the volume on *African Solidarity* in SADET’s *Road to Democracy Series*.

Robert Vitalis has called “a multifront war of position” to establish which particular global solidarities would define the postcolonial era. This competition was characterized by a series of “sometimes rival, sometimes simply orthogonal convocations,” at both state and non-state levels. These included the Bandung Conference in 1955; the conference of Afro-Asian Peoples in Cairo in 1957; the first Conference of Independent African States and the AAPC, both held in Accra in 1958; the Conference of Non-Aligned Heads of State or Government in Belgrade in 1961; and the founding conference of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa in 1963.⁸

Kwame Nkrumah, the Ghanaian Prime Minister, and George Padmore, the Trinidadian activist who now served as Nkrumah’s ‘Adviser on African Affairs,’ both had long associations with the pan-African movement: together they had been the joint organizing secretaries of the fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945. Nkrumah and Padmore perceived the first of the post-colonial international convocations, the “Asian-African Conference” at Bandung in 1955, as a potential threat to their own Afro-centric ambitions: a few months after the Conference, Padmore suggested to Nkrumah the idea of a “conference to match Bandung on an African scale with Asians as observers.”⁹ Subsequently, the ambitions of Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt to project his influence into both Asia and Africa – marked most notably by Egypt’s hosting of the conference of Afro-Asian Peoples in December 1957 and the subsequent establishment of the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organisation as a permanent body headquartered in Cairo – worried Nkrumah and Padmore even further. When Ghana hosted the first Conference of Independent African States in April 1958, this was, according to one contemporary account (possibly written by Padmore’s

⁸ Robert Vitalis, “The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-doong),” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4 (July 2013): 262, 267-68.

⁹ George Padmore to Kwame Nkrumah, 5 August 1955, Folder 14, Box 154-41, Kwame Nkrumah Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC; Vitalis, “Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah,” 275. See also James, *Padmore*, 164-83; Marika Sherwood, “George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah: A Tentative Outline of Their Relationship,” in *George Padmore: Pan-African Revolutionary*, eds. Fitzroy Baptiste and Rupert Lewis (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2009), 162-79.

widow), “in order to keep for Black Africa priority over the Afro-Asian movement in Cairo.”¹⁰ Billed as the sixth in the series of pan-African congresses that had begun with that organized by the great African American activist W.E.B. du Bois in 1919, the December 1958 All-African People’s Conference offered much greater opportunities to pursue this agenda, involving as it did non-governmental groups from almost every territory in Africa, rather than only those states that were already independent.¹¹ (In April 1958, these had been – apart from South Africa – Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Nasser’s United Arab Republic). The AAPC thus brought together leading anti-colonial nationalists from across the continent, many of whom were meeting for the first time. The most prominent, in addition to Nkrumah himself, included Hastings Banda of Nyasaland, Franz Fanon of Algeria, Abeid Karume of Zanzibar, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Patrice Lumumba of the Belgian Congo, Mboya of Kenya, Joshua Nkomo of Southern Rhodesia, and Holden Roberto of Angola.

For Nkrumah, the primary purpose of hosting this gathering was to strengthen ties of pan-African solidarity among leaders from across the continent and to enhance Ghana’s leading role within the pan-African movement – and, ultimately, within the “pan-African commonwealth of free and independent United States of Africa” that he saw as the ideal end-point of the process of decolonization.¹² Nkrumah did not intend the AAPC to be the site of the launch of a boycott

¹⁰ Vitalis, “Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah,” 275.

¹¹ Though organizers and participants in the AAPC frequently referred to it as the sixth pan-African congress, this was not recognized subsequently by the organizers of the “Sixth Pan African Congress” held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 1974. On the latter, see, for instance, Fanon Che Wilkins, “A Line of Steel: The Organization of the Sixth Pan-African Congress and the Struggle for International Black Power, 1969-1974,” in *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism* ed. Dan Berger (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 97-110.

¹² “All-African People’s Conference: Forward to Independence Now!” flyer, n.d., Folder 8, Box 36, Scheinman Papers; *All-African People’s Conference: Speeches by the Prime Minister of Ghana at the Opening and Closing Sessions on December 8th and 13th, 1958* (Accra: Government Printer, n.d. [1958/1959]); James, *Padmore*, 181-82; Joshua Nkomo, who represented the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress at the AAPC commented that “The main topic of the conference was not so much African liberation as African unity. This was Nkrumah’s great dream, and we had to go along with our host – although most of us were more concerned with the freedom of our own territories than with his vision of the future.”

campaign or any other kind of specific new initiative against the white regime in South Africa. The AAPC's subsequent adoption of a resolution calling for the independent African states to impose trade sanctions against South Africa was, indeed, an unexpected and unwelcome development for the Ghanaian hosts.

In South Africa, leaders of the Congress Alliance welcomed Nkrumah's initiative in calling the conference as the belated fruition of Walter Sisulu's attempts to organize a pan-African congress several years earlier. But Congress leaders likewise did not expect or intend for the AAPC to initiate a new boycott campaign against South Africa. The South African government had refused to grant passports to any delegates from the ANC wishing to leave South Africa to attend the conference, with the consequence that, as Lutuli put it, the ANC had "to rely on a 'delegation' of people who were by chance already out of the country."¹³ The ANC delegation was led by Ezekhiel Mphahlele, the former literary editor of *Drum* magazine, who had left South Africa in 1957 to take up a teaching post in Nigeria. After hearing about the planned AAPC, Mphahlele had written to Nelson Mandela in South Africa offering to represent the ANC.¹⁴

The rest of the ANC delegation consisted of Roy Mdudu and Mohan Govan, two largely unknown South African expatriates then living in Ghana and Nigeria respectively, plus Mary Louise Hooper, a white American who had worked an aide to Lutuli before being deported from South Africa in 1957. Like Mphahlele, Hooper had written to the ANC leadership in South Africa to request that they nominate her to be an ANC delegate. On the third day of the conference the delegation was joined by Alfred Hutchinson, an ANC defendant in the ongoing Treason Trial who

Joshua Mqhabuko Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life* (Harare: SAPES Books, 2001), 65. See also Kanyama Chiume, *Autobiography of Kanyama Chiume* (London: Panaf, 1982), 109.

¹³ UK High Commission, Pretoria to Commonwealth Relations Office, telegram, 3 November 1958; T.W. Aston to J.H. Ellis, 17 November 1958, CO936/580, UKNA; Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, 187.

¹⁴ N. Chabani Manganyi, *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), 174.

had escaped from South Africa the previous month by train, disguised as a migrant worker, and had subsequently made his way north to Ghana. Mphahlele recalled how Hutchinson had arrived in the middle of the morning plenary session: “Alfred Hutchinson stalks up the aisle, six feet of him, just like one of those outlaws on the screen who come to tame and civilise a noisy, lawless town of the Wild West. I rush from the platform to embrace him, beside myself with excitement. Mboya introduces him to the conference amidst loud applause.”¹⁵

Perhaps on account of the *ad hoc* nature of the ANC’s representation at the conference, the ANC National Executive in South Africa also sent a document to Accra entitled “Notes for Delegates to the All-African People’s Conference.” This submission made no mention of boycott or sanctions: it focused, first, on outlining the Congress’s reservations about the implication of the pre-conference material that AAPC would determine a common ideology and strategy for all participants, and, second, on explaining the current situation in South Africa and the ANC’s past efforts to alter it.¹⁶ Similarly, Mphahlele made no reference to boycott or sanctions in his in his speech to the AAPC plenary on the conference’s second day.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ezekhiel Mphahlele, “Accra Conference Diary,” *Fighting Talk*, February 1959, 6-7; [Mary Louise Hooper] to [M.B. Yengwa?], 4 October 1958, Folder: ‘Letters,’ Box 1, Mary Louise Hooper papers (MSS 283), Special Collections, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI; Alfred Hutchinson, *Road to Ghana* (Johannesburg: Penguin, 2006); UK High Commission, Accra, to Commonwealth Relations Office, telegram, 10 December 1958, CO936/580, UKNA. See also Jeffrey S. Ahlman, “Road to Ghana: Nkrumah, Southern Africa and the Eclipse of a Decolonizing Africa,” *Kronos* 37 (November 2011): 23-31; Nicholas Grant and Vincent Hiribarren, “Anti-Apartheid in Exile: Alfred Hutchinson’s *Road to Ghana*” [interactive online mapping project], <https://perma.cc/AVQ4-NPZR>.

¹⁶ “The Annual Report of the National Executive Committee,” 13-14 December 1958, Item Ba6.3; “Notes for delegates to the All-African People’s Conference to be held in Accra, Ghana in December 1958,” Item Ba6.4, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers. Gurney speculates that the ANC “Notes for delegates” did not mention boycott “perhaps because of the legal implications.” Gurney, “In the Heart of the Beast,” 261n32. This is unlikely: boycott advocacy was not made an offense in South Africa until March 1960, and – as we shall see – ANC, PAC, and South African Liberal Party leaders in South Africa were not inhibited from publicly advocating international boycotts in late 1959 and early 1960.

¹⁷ E. Mphahlele, “Address to the All-African People’s Conference... Presented by the Delegation of the African National Congress of South Africa,” Folder 1, Box 314, Africa Bureau Records; “The Atrocities of Colonialism – Down with Apartheid Policy,” *Accra Evening News*, 11 December 1958, 4. Subsequently, resolutions by the ANC annual national conference of December 13-14 1958, and by the joint executives of the Congress Alliance on February 21, 1959, announced that they “endorsed,” “approved,” and were “particularly inspired by the solidarity expressed by” the AAPC’s sanctions resolution, but made no suggestion that the resolution had originally been proposed by the ANC.

Rather than having been initiated by the ANC, the AAPC's sanctions resolution was adopted as a consequence of Michael Scott's ongoing interest in the idea of using sanctions against South Africa. In December 1956, Scott had used his testimony to the UN Trusteeship Committee to suggest again – as he had first done three years earlier – that the status of South West Africa should be referred to the ICJ for a compulsory judgment, which could then be enforced with economic sanctions.¹⁸ And in March 1957, while attending Ghana's independence celebrations, Scott raised the idea of sanctions in two private meetings with Nkrumah. Noting South Africa's decade-long defiance of the General Assembly's resolutions on the questions of apartheid, the treatment of Indians, and the status of South West Africa, Scott urged Nkrumah that "the question of what can be done must be thought out and a new plan of strategy devised." Specifically he suggested that the independent African states take action "both individually and jointly which will adversely affect South African trade and other relations"; such action, he proposed, could be discussed and coordinated at the Conference of Independent African States that Nkrumah was planning to convene.¹⁹ Though Nkrumah promised to study Scott's proposals, in public he confirmed in March 1957 that Ghana would continue to trade with South Africa. He wanted to "smash apartheid," he explained, but Ghana could not "interfere in the internal affairs of another country." Nkrumah and

"Resolutions adopted at the 46th Annual Conference of the African National Congress," 13-16 December 1958, Item Ba6.6; "Statement on the Conference of the Joint Congress Executives," 21 February 1959, Item Fa34, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers.

The earliest claim I have found that it was the ANC delegation who first called at the AAPC for an international boycott of South African trade was made in October 1960, that is, *after* the ANC and its allies had embraced the idea of sanctions following the Sharpeville massacre. [Central Committee of the South African Communist Party], "The Boycott of South African Trade," [October 1960], Folder 4, Box 3, Part II (ANC-London), ANC Records: Lusaka and London [former Mayibuye Archives collection], NAHECS.

¹⁸ "South-West Africa," *Africa Digest*, January-February 1957, 135-37; "South-West Africa," *Africa Digest*, March-April 1957, 166. Some delegations responded positively to the idea, and the General Assembly subsequently passed a resolution calling for the question of legal action to be studied further. UNGA, Resolution 1060 (XI), "Study of legal action to ensure the fulfilment of the obligations assumed by the Mandatory Power under the Mandate for South West The Africa," 26 February 1957, <https://perma.cc/KD9B-PVC5>.

¹⁹ Michael Scott, "South Africa versus the Conscience of the World," 22 March 1957, File 16, Box 20, Africa Bureau Records; "Africa Bureau Activities," *Africa Digest*, May-June 1957.

other Ghanaian officials instead expressed the hope that South Africa could be influenced through the pressure of world public opinion.²⁰ When the Conference of Independent African States met in Accra in April 1958, Scott's sanctions proposal was not on the agenda.

In convening the AAPC, however, Nkrumah created a forum in which Scott was effectively able to circumvent the Ghanaian government's opposition to trade sanctions. Nkrumah's desire to promote his own ideas and influence in decolonizing Africa had led him to convene the AAPC as a conference of non-governmental organizations, in which the governing parties of independent states – such as his own Convention People's Party, the formal hosts of the conference – interacted on a basis of formal equality with a variety of other non-state actors representing groups from around the continent. The ability of Nkrumah's government – and that of the other already-independent African states – to control the agenda and resolutions was thus much weaker than at the intergovernmental Conference of Independent African States. Shortly before the AAPC began, Nkrumah declared to a senior Ghanaian security official that he “intended to ensure that no resolution prepared by one of the sub-committees... would be put before the plenary without his personal approval.”²¹ In the event he proved unable to carry this out.

The end run that Scott performed at the AAPC around Nkrumah's continued opposition to sanctions was not, however, a pre-meditated action. Scott had received an invitation to attend the AAPC in November, but he appears not to have intended to accept until he received an emergency telegram from his longtime ally in South West Africa, Chief Hosea Kutako, urging that Scott should

²⁰ “Ghana's Leader Attack Apartheid,” *Irish Times*, 8 March 1957, 7; “Criticism of Apartheid: Dr. Nkrumah's Views,” *Times of India*, 10 March 1957, 10; “Ghana: Attitude Towards South Africa,” *Africa Digest*, March-April 1958, 195-96.

²¹ E.G. Le Tocq to M.E. Allen, 1 December 1958, CO 936/580, UKNA. Nkrumah's interlocutor was the head of Ghana's Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

represent the Herero people at the conference.²² Scott then traveled to Accra, arriving on the second day of the Conference. The arrival of “the world-famous white defender of Africans,” as the Accra *Evening News* characterized him, was announced during the conference plenary the following day amid what the official minutes described as “scenes of pleasure and hope.”²³ Scott was then invited to address the plenary, the only white attendee to be so honored. In his plenary speech, Scott made no explicit reference to boycotting South Africa. The main theme of his address was the “bankruptcy of military force” – at the time Scott’s primary concern – and the consequent need for “the peoples of the world to find new methods of resisting injustice in human relations and insanity in foreign policies.”²⁴

In addition to his own speech, however, Scott also circulated copies of a “Statement to the All African People’s Conference” by Mburumba Kerina, a young South West African student then studying in the United States who had worked closely with Scott the previous year to lobby the United Nations on the issue of the South West Africa mandate. Kerina’s statement did not, perhaps, accord fully with Scott’s own ideas. Its opening lines, “paying reverence to the thousands of dear ones who have shed their blood for the liberation of Africa in the MAU-MAU and the ALGERIAN WARS” contrasted starkly with Scott’s stress in his own speech on the bankruptcy of force.²⁵ But Kerina’s specific proposals were ideas that Scott himself had been promoting in 1957–58, and for which Scott was probably the ultimate source. (Indeed, when Chief Kutako wrote to Kerina in

²² A.K. Barden to Michael Scott, 4 November 1958, Folder 1, Box 314, Africa Bureau Records; Claude Wauthier, untitled newspaper clipping, *Daily News* Foreign Service, n.d., Folder: ‘All African Peoples’ Conference... Clippings,’ Box 19, Series VI, Jack Papers; Hosea Kutako to Michael Scott, telegram, n.d., Folder 1, Box 314, Africa Bureau Records.

²³ “Freedom army needed to oust colonialism,” Accra *Evening News*, 11 December 1958, 2; “Heads of Proceedings of Conference,” 10 December 1958, Folder: ‘All African Peoples’ Conference... Conference Documents,’ Box 19, Series VI, Jack Papers.

²⁴ “Address by Dr. Michael Scott – Plenary Session,” Folder 1, Box 314, Africa Bureau Records.

²⁵ “A Statement to the All African People’s Conference by Mburumba Kerina...,” Folder 6, Box 166; “Address by Dr. Michael Scott - Plenary Session,” Folder 1, Box 314, Africa Bureau Records. See also Yates and Chester, *The Troublemaker*, 193-94.

August 1958 appointing him his representative at the UN, he had instructed him to check everything he said there with Scott). Building on the Africa Bureau's activism on the sports boycott, Kerina suggested that the AAPC should request "the Olympic Games Executive Committee to oust South Africa from the Olympic Games as long as she refuses to accept Africans in her Olympic Team." And he proposed that Conference should "Request all independent African States to close down all communications and commercial exchanges with the South Africa Government as well as the servicing of aircraft proceeding to and from South Africa" until Pretoria placed South West Africa under the United Nations Trusteeship System.²⁶

Eleven years after Dadoo had first suggested the idea in 1947, the proposal for multilateral trade sanctions – made by Kerina and publicized by Scott – now found a large and receptive audience for the first time. British diplomats in Accra reported during the conference that the "main targets" of the AAPC were "the Union of South Africa and 'white settlers' generally," explaining that delegates "no doubt regarded the Union as *par excellence* the embodiment of all they disliked."²⁷ Addressing the plenary after Mphahlele's speech on Tuesday December 9, Mboya had commented that in the case of South Africa, "Something more than 'pious resolutions' was required."²⁸ In this context, the Kerina/Scott sanctions proposal, made the next day, must have appeared to be precisely the "something" that was needed. The idea of boycotting "commercial exchanges" with South Africa represented the internationalization at governmental level of a form of action with which many of the anti-colonial activists at the AAPC were familiar from their own domestic struggles. In

²⁶ "A Statement to the All African People's Conference by Mburumba Kerina..."; Hosea Kutako to Mr Mburumba, 4 August 1958, Folder 6, Box 166, Africa Bureau Records.

²⁷ I.M.R. MacLellan to the Earl of Home, despatch [on the All-African People's Conference], 30 December 1958, File CO936/580, UKNA. See also Jan-Bart Gewald, "Hands off Africa!! An Overview and Analysis of the Ideological, Political and Socio-economic Approaches to African Unity Expressed at the first All-African People's Conference held in Accra, Ghana in December 1958" (unpublished paper, 1990).

²⁸ UK High Commission, Accra, to Commonwealth Relations Office, telegram, 9 December 1958, CO 936/580, UKNA.

Kenya, for instance, “Mau Mau” rebels in the early 1950s had organized a series of widely-observed boycotts of European goods and services, including government-run buses and European beer and cigarettes. Mboya himself had recently taken up this tactic, organizing a two-day boycott of buses, beer, and cigarettes, earlier in 1958.²⁹

The sanctions proposal was considered by the conference committee on “Racialism and Discriminatory Laws and Practices,” of which Mphahlele was appointed the convener. The AAPC’s five committees met *in camera* each afternoon during the week of the conference, and we consequently know little about the committee’s discussions.³⁰ But, crucially, the committee greatly expanded the objective of the embargo Kerina had proposed. Rather than focusing only on South West Africa, the committee redirected the sanctions against the entire edifice of South African apartheid, proposing that the planned AAPC permanent secretariat “should urge any African independent states which conduct trade with South Africa to impose economic sanctions against the latter country as a protest against racial discrimination which the European minority are practising to the humiliation of the non-European majority. Such economic sanctions should include the boycott of South African goods.” In addition, the committee further proposed that African countries should withhold migrant labor from South Africa, and that no African state should have diplomatic relations “with any country on our continent that practises race discrimination.” (Kerina’s suggestion of a sports boycott was, however, ignored). The committee’s proposals were subsequently adopted

²⁹ Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs: History, Memory, and Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 70, 110; David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 194-95; David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget* (London: Heinmann, 1982), 97.

³⁰ Ezekhiel Mphahlele, “Accra Conference Diary,” *Fighting Talk*, February 1959, 6. The American embassy in Accra was able to obtain the working reports of four of the five conference committees, but reported to Washington that the report of the committee on Racialism and Discriminatory Laws and Practices had “not turned up.” American Embassy, Accra, to Department of State, telegram, 20 December 1958, Folder 770.00/12-1558, Box 3646, Central Decimal File 1955-1959, Record Group (RG) 59, [United States] National Archives (USNA), College Park, MD. Nor does the report – if one was ever written – appear in other collections of documentation relating to the conference, such as those in the Ghana Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) and the George Padmore Research Library in Accra.

as the Conference's "Resolution on Racialism and Discriminatory Laws and Practices" by the heads of delegations, during their marathon all-day and all-night meeting that began on Friday December 12.³¹

South African diplomats worried that "if ever anybody were foolish enough to implement" the AAPC's sanctions resolution, it "could indeed strike a serious blow to South Africa's economy." But in the short term nobody did implement the resolution.³² Unable to agree on who should be appointed Secretary-General of the new permanent organization the conference decided to establish, the members of the AAPC Steering Committee decided to put off establishing a full secretariat until their next meeting, scheduled for June 1959 in Cairo. In the meantime, a "skeleton staff" was appointed as a temporary secretariat in Accra, including a little-known Ghanaian bureaucrat as "Administrative Secretary without political responsibility." The Steering Committee left the details of the proposed boycott of South Africa to be worked out at their next meeting six months later.³³

The independent states whom the AAPC resolution had called upon to impose sanctions meanwhile showed no inclination to do so. Indeed, at a press conference in January 1959, Nkrumah declared that – far from observing the conference resolution proscribing diplomatic relations with any country that practiced racial discrimination – he planned to exchange ambassadors with Pretoria. Asked when the boycott of South African goods resolved upon by the AAPC would begin, Nkrumah reiterated his opposition to the idea, commenting only that he had "nothing to say at the

³¹ Ezekhiel Mphahlele, "Accra Conference Diary," *Fighting Talk*, February 1959, 8; *All-African People's Conference, Accra, 5th - 13th December, 1958: Conference Resolution on Imperialism and Colonialism* (Accra: Government Printer, n.d. [1958/1959], 9 [despite the title of this publication, it contains all of the resolutions approved by the AAPC].

³² Grant, "We shall win our freedoms together," 57.

³³ Kwame Nkrumah to Tom Mboya, 14 June 1959; Tom Mboya to Kwame Nkrumah, 1 July 1959, Folder 11, Box 6, Scheinman Papers; "Accra and Africa," *Information Bulletin on African Affairs*, n.d. [December 1958], File ADM 16/1/14, Ghana PRAAD, Accra.

moment. A boycott is the same as total war.”³⁴ In Ethiopia – which Mboya visited shortly after the conclusion of the AAPC and where, at a public meeting at the Ethiopian National Library, he described the AAPC’s discussions of economic sanctions – the government of Emperor Haile Selassie briefly considered banning South African imports, but decided against it.³⁵

Thus neither Ghana, nor Ethiopia, nor any of the other seven independent African states took any action to impose sanctions in 1959. There was little pressure on them to do so, even from Mboya, who had enthusiastically embraced the idea at the AAPC, but who was presumably waiting for the next AAPC Steering Committee meeting before doing anything further. In April and May 1959, Mboya made a whirlwind tour of the United States, giving more than one hundred speeches in six weeks. Contemporary reports of Mboya’s tour suggest he rarely mentioned the proposed boycott. In his most reported address, his keynote speech to the American Committee on Africa’s “Africa Day” celebration on April 15, he did not mention it all.³⁶

In mid-May, however, Mboya abandoned this hands-off approach to the boycott of South Africa. Immediately after he returned to Kenya from the U.S., Mboya chaired the East, Central and Southern Africa Area Committee of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the worldwide non-communist labor federation. Mboya had originally risen to prominence as the General Secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labour (KFL). Under the draconian “Emergency”

³⁴ “Ghana Wants to Appoint Envoy to Union,” *Cape Argus* [newspaper clipping], 15 January 1959; “Nkrumah envoy plan not official,” [newspaper clipping], File 1/9/2/3, Verwoerd Collection; I.M.R. MacLellan to the Earl of Home, despatch, 24 February 1959, CO 936/580, UKNA. Compare the claim that Nkrumah “strongly supported” the AAPC sanctions resolution made in Ama Biney, “Ghana’s contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle: 1958-1994,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 5, *African Solidarity*, 82.

³⁵ British Embassy, Addis Ababa, to The Secretariat, Nairobi, 12 January 59, FO 371/137937; British Embassy, Addis Ababa, to African Department, Foreign Office, 19 February 1959, File FO 371/137988, UKNA.

³⁶ For the most detailed overview of Mboya’s visit, see George M. Houser, “Mboya Visits the U.S.,” *Africa Today*, May-June 1959, 9-16. See also Mary Dudziak, *Exporting American Dreams: Thurgood Marshall’s African Journey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19-24; Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya*, 116-20; Tom Schachtman, *Airlift to America: How Barack Obama, Sr., John F. Kennedy, Tom Mboya, and 800 East African Students Changed their World and Ours* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2009), 69-78. South African Foreign Minister Eric Louw wrote in July that sanctions against South Africa had been “advocated by Tom Mboya in a nation-wide television interview in New York.” Eric Louw, “Aide Memoire: The Jamaican Question,” 2 July 1959, 4, File 105, Louw Collection.

regulations imposed by the British authorities in response to the Mau Mau uprising, all African political activity and organizations in the colony were prohibited. Labor unions were one of the few forms of African organization outside colonial control that remained legal. The relative freedom of action enjoyed by Mboya and the KFL in this period were in part a consequence of the support and protection afforded by the KFL's membership of the ICFTU, which provided the KFL with resources, encouragement, and international publicity. It was the ICFTU's support, Mboya believed, that ensured that KFL itself was never proscribed by the British authorities.³⁷

From the mid-1950s, the ICFTU had begun an intensive campaign to win the labor unions of decolonizing Africa to its side in its cold war competition with the rival communist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). In 1957 it established three Area Committees for its African affiliates. Mboya, who had developed a "deep attachment to the ICFTU" as a consequence of its support of the KFL, became chair of the four-man East, Central and Southern Africa Area Committee.³⁸ At the committee's meeting in Nairobi from May 16 to 18, 1959, it adopted a long resolution condemning apartheid, which concluded with "AN IMPASSIONED APPEAL to all governments, organisations and people concerned" to take actions including a boycott of South African goods, and a ban on migrant workers going to South Africa. The Regional Secretary of the ICFTU, Serge Claverie of the Mauritius Trade Union Congress, was assigned to organize and coordinate the boycott in East Africa.³⁹

³⁷ Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963) 29, 199, 257. See also Mboya's comments in ICFTU, East, Central and Southern Africa Area Division, "Draft Minutes of Proceedings of the Area Committee Meeting," 4-7 September 1961, 36-37; and "Mr T.J. Mboya Speech at the ICFTU East Central and Southern Africa Area Division Conference," 19-21 October 1962, Folder 1, Box 2, Edward K. Welsh Papers (TAM 074), Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

³⁸ Mboya, *Freedom and After*, 29, 199, 257. The Area Committee met for the first time on 27-28 July 1958. Apart from Mboya, the other members were El Jak Musa, Serge Claverie of the Mauritius TUC, and Laurence Katilungu of the Northern Rhodesian TUC. See "Report on the East, Central, and Southern Africa Area Committee Meeting," n.d. [ca. November 1959], Folder 1, Box 2, Welsh Papers.

³⁹ "Report on the East, Central, and Southern Africa Area Committee Meeting," n.d. [ca. November 1959], Folder 1, Box 2, Welsh Papers; "Resolution on South Africa adopted by the ICFTU East, Central and Southern Africa Area

The ICFTU Area Committee resolution represented a significant broadening of the AAPC's original proposal. In the text of the AAPC resolution, the only actors charged with implementing a boycott of South African goods had been the nine "African independent states." But as Mboya came to conceive of it in the course of 1959, "possible action" action against South Africa fell into three categories: "economic sanctions by various governments," consumer boycotts by "the ordinary man in the street," and "industrial boycotts" by labor unions refusing to handle goods being imported from (or, in some cases, exported to) South Africa. Moreover, action at these three levels was no longer restricted to the African continent. Later in the year Mboya told the U.S. ambassador to South Africa that he had "doubts as to the efficacy of a purely African boycott movement."⁴⁰

Mboya's decision in May 1959 to begin promoting the boycott through the structures of the ICFTU may have been connected not only to his concern about racial discrimination in South Africa, but also to the politics of international labor in decolonizing Africa. In particular, Mboya was concerned about the strength of the emerging African movement to disaffiliate from the Brussels-based ICFTU. At a fringe meeting of labor leaders attending the AAPC in December 1958, several delegates had proposed that African national labor federations should form an All-African Trade Union Federation and disaffiliate from all other international labor organizations, including both the WFTU and the ICFTU. Despite his frustrations with the "patronizing condescension" of some European ICFTU officials, Mboya, was staunchly opposed to disaffiliation; at the AAPC he and others managed temporarily to put off any decision on the issue. Writing to the African-American

Committee (Nairobi, 16-18 May 1959)," *Free Labour World*, July 1959, 311-12; "Record of a Meeting Held... to Discuss the Threatened Boycott of Goods of South African Origin by Kenya Trade Unions," 27 July 1959, FCO 141/6983; Governor's Deputy, Kenya, to Secretary of State for the Colonies, telegram, 7 August 1959, CO 822/1844, UKNA.

⁴⁰ "Speech by Tom Mboya," n.d. [ca. late 1959/early 1960], File 10, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), Rhodes House; [Philip] Crowe, "Chapter XVII" [of unpublished manuscript entitled *Embassy to South Africa*], 45, File 7, Box 28, Series 2, Philip K. Crowe Papers, Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University, Medford, MA. This broadening had been implicit in Mboya's discussion of South Africa during his closing speech to the AAPC, in which he had declared that "we shall not only rest on the help that independent African states or governments may render," and had called on "any sympathetic governments and organisations anywhere in the world" to take action. But until the May 1959 ICFTU Area Committee meeting he appears to have done nothing further to promote such an appeal.

labor leader A. Philip Randolph the following month, Mboya described the debate over disaffiliation, and continued: “the ICFTU is not particularly effective in Africa and consequently we cannot very well convince others to come to our side... If the ICFTU does not tighten up in her policy then she will only have herself to blame for the loss of Africa. We are doing our best, but we need stronger and positive policies from Brussels.”⁴¹

Mboya made the same point forcefully in his meetings with Walter Reuther, the powerful president of the United Automobile Workers (UAW), and other American labor leaders during his visit to the U.S. in April-May 1959. Above all, Mboya wanted greater financial, political, and educational support from the ICFTU, a larger African role in ICFTU decision-making, and greater autonomy for the nascent ICFTU structures in Africa. But Mboya may have come to see committing the ICFTU to implementing the AAPC’s boycott decision as another example of a “stronger and positive” policy from Brussels that would help “convince others to come to our side” in the struggle against pan-African disaffiliation.

II. ‘A devastating weapon’? Boycotts Foreign and Domestic

The coincidence of an independent but almost simultaneous development played a crucial role in ensuring that the boycott proposed by the AAPC would ultimately gain traction among opponents of apartheid both outside and inside South Africa. On the same day – Saturday December 13, 1958

⁴¹ Irving Brown, “Notes on Conversation: Tom Mboya,” 7 June 1959, Folder 3, Box 356; Irving Brown, “Meeting of the All African Peoples’ Conference,” n.d. [December 1958], Folder 1, Box 400; [Maida Springer], “Observations on the All-African People’s Conference...,” n.d. [December 1958], Folder 3, Box 356, Lovestone Papers, Hoover Institution; Tom Mboya to A. Philip Randolph, 30 January 1959, Folder 5, Box 18, Tom Mboya Papers, Hoover Institution.

On the affiliation struggle, see, in particular, Opoku Agyeman, *The Failure of Grassroots Pan-Africanism: The Case of the All-African Trade Union Federation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003); Anthony Carew, “Conflict Within the ICFTU: Anti-Communism and Anti-Colonialism in the 1950s,” *International Review of Social History* 41, no. 2 (August 1996): 174; Anthony Carew, “Charles Millard, A Canadian in the International Labour Movement: A Case Study of the ICFTU 1955-61,” *Labour/Le Travail* 37 (Spring 1996): 143; Margaret Legum, “Africa’s Divided Workers,” in Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (New York: Praeger, 1962); Yvette Richards, “African and African-American Labor Leaders in the Struggle over International Affiliation,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31 (1998): 301-34; John Charles Stoner, “Anti-communism, Anti-colonialism, and African Labor: The AFL-CIO in Africa, 1955-1975” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2001), 156-94.

– that Mboya and Nkrumah brought the AAPC to a close in Accra, three thousand miles away at the other end of the continent the ANC annual national conference was opening in Durban. Among the resolutions adopted by the two-day ANC conference was one declaring that domestic “economic boycott is one of the major political weapons which must be effectively applied by our organisation,” and instructing the ANC executive to “to prepare and embark on a nationwide economic boycott immediately of such commodities or institutions as may be decided from time to time.”⁴²

The previous year, the ANC national leadership had been impressed by the bus boycott in Alexandra, and by the success of the switch from a solidarity transport boycott to a consumer boycott in Port Elizabeth. In May 1957 the ANC and its allies had announced that a “national boycott of Nationalist-controlled firms and products” would commence across the country on June 10. In Port Elizabeth, the boycott continued to be effective: a British journalist who visited reported a sense of “hidden organization in place” ensuring “ruthless” enforcement.⁴³ But in the rest of the country things were more haphazard. In most places the ANC lacked the high degree of organization it had achieved in the Eastern Cape, and was unable to implement the boycott systematically.⁴⁴ This first attempt to launch a nationwide boycott campaign was also hamstrung by a legal challenge. For its first blacklist of products to be boycotted, the ANC had selected fourteen brands of cigarettes and tobacco produced by the Rembrandt group, on the grounds that Rembrandt’s first chairman had been Nico Diedrichs, a prominent National Party politician, and that the company had “a number of Nationalist members of Parliament, including Cabinet

⁴² “Resolutions adopted at the 46th Annual Conference of the African National Congress,” 13-16 December 1958, Item Ba6.6, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers.

⁴³ James Morris, “Long Sad Struggle: African Finds New Weapons,” *Manchester Guardian*, 20 June 1947, 1; Jan Morris, *South African Winter* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), 133-34.

⁴⁴ Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ 316-17.

Ministers, among its directors and shareholders.” Rembrandt responded vigorously, arguing that it was not “controlled” by any political party. Two days before the boycott was due to begin on June 10, 1957, the company obtained a temporary interdict from the Supreme Court prohibiting the distribution of materials calling for the boycott of its products. Police raids were launched to seize boycott pamphlets already printed.⁴⁵

Despite the legal difficulties and haphazard implementation, the boycott campaign generated considerable enthusiasm. “Congress offices received reports of spontaneous boycotts often from remote and unlikely areas,” Nelson Mandela later recalled. “The boycott, that’s the thing,” *Drum* journalist Todd Matshikiza told Anthony Sampson in December 1957, when the magazine’s former editor returned to South Africa to cover the Treason Trial. “It’s just rolling on – buses, oranges, cigarettes. Azikhwelwa! Don’t ride! Azidliwa! Don’t eat! Azibenywa! Don’t smoke! I tell you, man, the darkies love it: they don’t say a word, they just don’t buy. You just hear ‘azi’ at the street corner and you think ‘what shouldn’t I be doing?’” One man had snatched a packet of cigarettes from a blacklisted brand out of Matshikiza’s pocket, then returned later to give him a packet made by a different firm.⁴⁶ In early 1958 Sylvester Stein, Sampson’s successor at *Drum*, published a satirical novel – the central character was “a Non-European from Non-Europe” – in which the “African Congress of Equality” launched “a general boycott, from food to drink, from Cape Lusikisiki to Mount Sukunikuni, from now until victory.”⁴⁷

At the ANC national conference in December 1958, the Congress leadership sought to capitalize on this widespread enthusiasm by proposing that the consumer boycott campaign of

⁴⁵ “Cigarette Firms Named as Economic Boycott Starts on Monday,” *New Age*, 6 June 1957, 1, 3; Govan Mbeki, “Economic Boycott: The Silent Weapon,” *Fighting Talk*, March 1958, 6, 13; Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ 315; Ebbe Dommissie with Willie Esterhuyse, *Anton Rupert: A Biography* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2005), 132.

⁴⁶ Anthony Sampson, “Seeing Black,” *London Observer*, 8 December 1957, 4. For similar enthusiasm from another *Drum* journalist, see also, for instance, Can Themba, “The Election: An African View,” *Drum*, April 1958, 30-31.

⁴⁷ Sylvester Stein, *Second-Class Taxi* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983), 117.

products of National Party-aligned firms be relaunched, now that the legal wrangling with Rembrandt had at last been resolved. In its report to the conference, the Congress executive argued that “[t]he economic boycott is going to be one of the major political weapons in the country,” a sentiment echoed almost word-for-word in the conference’s subsequent resolution. Crucially, this was a period when the ANC leadership was concerned to find “new methods of struggle” in response to growing pressure from its membership for a more militant approach to the struggle against apartheid.⁴⁸ In particular, protests against the government’s extension of the pass laws to include African women, which had begun in 1955, had broken out again spectacularly in October 1958, when grassroots women’s leaders had surprised the ANC executive by organizing a massive women’s anti-pass protest. In the last two weeks of October, two thousand women deliberately courted arrest. The protest organizers had initially intended that those arrested should pay neither bail nor court-imposed fines, but they were overruled by the ANC leadership, which ordered that no more women should court arrest and that those already arrested should pay bail.⁴⁹

The Congress movement had not encouraged direct civil disobedience since the collapse of the Defiance Campaign and the government’s subsequent introduction of harsh new penalties for defiance. As the leading white communist Rusty Bernstein later recalled, many in the South African Communist Party leadership viewed protest against the pass laws by destroying passes as “a high-risk strategy”: “It [could] lead directly to eviction from municipal housing, loss of employment, and ‘endorsement out’ or banishment from the cities for all who [took] part. The state reaction [would]

⁴⁸ “Annual Report of the National Executive Committee,” 13-14 December 1958, Item Ba6.3, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers.

⁴⁹ Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 179-82; Shireen Hassim, *The ANC Women’s League* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2014), 35-38; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 78, 143-46; Cheryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991), 184-225; Julia C. Wells, *We Now demand! The History of Women’s Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), 105-26.

be fierce and unrestrained.”⁵⁰ The ANC executive’s report to the 1958 annual conference thus emphasized that the struggle against passes was “a prolonged struggle now taking one form and now another” and cautioned that “to hope that by striking one blow we would defeat the system would result in disillusionment.” Accepting this, the conference appointed an Anti-Pass Planning Council to study how the struggle against the passes could best be advanced. When it reported back in February 1959, the Council argued that “the economic boycott weapon can be used effectively in our struggle against the pass laws.”⁵¹ A domestic consumer boycott campaign would not risk the kind of disillusionment that might follow an unsuccessful attempt to organize civil disobedience. Boycott was – as Govan Mbeki, a leader of the ANC and the underground SACP in Port Elizabeth, had argued the year before – “one of those weapons which may silently used by all without fear of victimisation.” Whereas acts of civil disobedience like pass burning were punishable with heavy penalties, “Not all the police nor all the military are sufficiently powerful to compel one individual to spend one penny on a commodity he does not want.”⁵² The ANC leadership’s desire to respond to grassroots pressure for anti-pass campaign but to do so by less risky means than civil disobedience, and the possibility of reviving the internal economic boycott campaign after the resolution of the legal battle with Rembrandt, thus became intertwined.

ANC leaders had no illusions that a consumer boycott campaign would lead straight to “victory,” whatever enthusiasts like Sylvester Stein may have suggested. When he had first tried to launch the boycott of Nationalist products in June 1957, ANC Secretary-General Oliver Tambo

⁵⁰ Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 189.

⁵¹ “Annual Report of the National Executive Committee,” 13-14 December 1958, Item Ba6.3; “Resolutions adopted at the 46th Annual Conference of the African National Congress,” 13-16 December 1958, Item Ba6.6; “Statement on the Conference of the Joint Congress Executives,” 21 February 1959, Item Fa34, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers; “Report of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, submitted to the Annual Conference, December 12-13, 1959,” in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 471-72.

⁵² Govan Mbeki, “Economic Boycott: The Silent Weapon,” *Fighting Talk*, March 1958, 13. See also Anthony Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorised Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 2011), 125.

acknowledged that he was not expecting that the government would “fall overnight” as a result.⁵³ Rather, the boycott was to serve two intermediate purposes. First, the consumer boycott was intended to peel white voters and white capital away from the National Party. Despite the vocal opposition of “Africanist” dissidents, the national leadership of the Congress movement continued their efforts to establish a “United Front” of those opposed to the Nationalists’ apartheid policies. Their immediate priority was ousting the National Party from government.⁵⁴ The opposition United Party might be “a pale shadow of the Nats” that had frequently failed to forcefully oppose apartheid policies. But, declared a statement from the Congress Alliance in December 1957, “the defeat of the Nats and [the election of] a Government more yielding to pressures from within the country from the majority of the people would create opportunities for the people to press forward for their rights and grant opportunities for the rapid development and maturing of the Congress struggle.”⁵⁵

The most notable expression of this tactical perspective was the ANC’s attempt to influence white voters by calling for a stay-at-home to coincide with the April 1958 general election. But the consumer boycott had the same objective. When the idea of consumer boycotts had first been discussed in ANC circles back in 1953, a generalized boycott of “European merchants” had been mooted. But in 1957-59, the boycott was exclusively targeted at “Nationalist-controlled firms and products.” Hardly anyone in the Congress movement seriously expected the boycott to transform the attitudes and policies of the National Party politicians in government: “the best we can hope of them,” wrote SACP theoretician Michael Harmel, “is that they will, in due course, retire to that graceful obscurity earned by unsuccessful and unpopular politicians.” But many Congress leaders did hope that by reducing the profits of firms with close ties to the National Party, they might cause

⁵³ “Not Aimed at Whites or Afrikaners – Oliver Tambo,” *New Age*, 6 June 1957, 3.

⁵⁴ Nelson Mandela, “Boycott is not an Inflexible Principle: Our Struggle Needs Many Tactics,” *Liberation*, February 1958, 14-17. See also Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 188-92.

⁵⁵ “Congresses Back Lutuli’s Election Statement,” *New Age*, 5 December 1957, 1.

some Nationalist supporters to abandon the party. “The big business supporters of the Party, appalled by the chasm that has opened out under their feet through the Congress declaration of an economic boycott, and the far-reaching consequences that can follow, are beginning to have long and deep second thoughts about apartheid and Verwoerd,” Harmel wrote in September 1957.⁵⁶ Harmel’s optimism that the Nationalists had “come to the end of the road” proved misplaced: in April 1958, the National Party won its third consecutive general election, and further increased its parliamentary majority. But despite this setback, the leaders of the Congress Alliance continued to hope that a consumer boycott of “Nationalist” products could peel support away from the National Party.

Even more importantly as far as the ANC leadership were concerned, the boycott of Nationalist products was intended to generate and sustain mass support for the Congress movement inside the country. This had, as we have seen, been a primary objective of almost all of the ANC’s major campaigns in the 1950s from the Defiance Campaign onwards. Walter Sisulu had observed in February 1957 that the Alexandra Bus Boycott and the subsequent solidarity boycotts elsewhere had “raised the political consciousness of the people, [and] brought about a greater solidarity and unity among the masses.” The ANC’s consumer boycott campaign was intended to have the same result: persuading people of the reasons not to buy blacklisted products was, Tambo explained, “valuable educational and political work.”⁵⁷

The way in which persuading people not to buy particular products could contribute to mobilization and organization of support for the ANC was the primary connection that ANC

⁵⁶ [Michael Harmel], “Editorial: We’ve Got to Get Rid of the Nats!,” *Liberation*, September 1957, 3. See also Govan Mbeki, “Economic Boycott: The Silent Weapon,” *Fighting Talk*, March 1958, 13; “Not Aimed at Whites or Afrikaners – Oliver Tambo,” *New Age*, 6 June 1957, 3; and Lutuli comments on the boycott in British Broadcasting Corporation, *Panorama* (first broadcast on BBC1, 24 June 1957), <https://perma.cc/WE6Z-CUZU>.

⁵⁷ W.M. Sisulu, “Boycott as a Political Weapon,” *Liberation*, February 1957, 12-15; “Not Aimed at Whites or Afrikaners – Oliver Tambo,” *New Age*, 6 June 1957, 3; Luckhardt and Wall, *Organize... or Starve!*, 342.

strategists saw between the otherwise seemingly unrelated boycott campaign and the struggle against passes.⁵⁸ “This was to be an organizational, rather than a revolutionary effort,” wrote Ronald Segal, the Congress-aligned magazine editor who was closely involved in the 1959 boycott campaign.⁵⁹ The ANC executive was thus less concerned to reduce the total sale of boycotted products by any means than to ensure maximum participation by South African consumers. Whereas the boycott campaigns in Port Elizabeth in 1954 and 1957 had been prosecuted primarily by demanding that retailers cease stocking boycotted products or face a boycott themselves, in 1959 the ANC executive rejected such “wrong methods,” stressing that it was essential to “persuade the consumers not to buy the goods by conducting house to house campaigns.”⁶⁰

A “Mass National Conference” in Johannesburg over the weekend of May 30-31, 1959 gave a mass endorsement to the Anti-Pass Planning Council’s proposal that the boycott “products of Nationalist-controlled institutions” be re-launched on June 26, the date celebrated annually by the Congress movement as South African Freedom Day. In addition the mass conference decided upon the immediate launch of a nationwide boycott of potatoes. Throughout the 1950s, anti-apartheid journalists from *Drum* and other publications had reported on the horrific conditions on the potato farms in the Bethal area of the eastern Transvaal. In May 1959 conditions on the potato farms again made headlines when SACP and Congress activist and journalist Ruth First revealed in the Congress-aligned *New Age* newspaper that Africans convicted of minor offences, such as pass law

⁵⁸ Compare Lodge’s comment that this connection was “somewhat mysterious.” Lodge, *Black Politics*, 80. The December 1958 ANC conference had stressed that “The intensification of the struggle against the passes demands of Congress that it takes active steps to rally and organise the people.” “Resolutions adopted at the 46th Annual Conference of the African National Congress,” 13-16 December 1958, Item Ba6.6, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers.

⁵⁹ Ronald Segal, *Into Exile* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963), 204. See also “Duma Nokwe... Interviewed by Gail Gerhart,” 29 October 1970, Digital Innovation South Africa, <https://perma.cc/3ALB-N6M7>.

⁶⁰ Govan Mbeki, “Economic Boycott: The Silent Weapon,” *Fighting Talk*, March 1958, 6; “Report of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, submitted to the Annual Conference, December 12-13, 1959,” in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 473.

violations, were being sentenced to forced labor on the Bethal farms.⁶¹ The potato boycott, launched to protest this system of “farm gaols,” gained widespread support. Potatoes piled up unsold throughout the country. As one Congress-aligned labor activist later recalled, the campaign “was directed against a single product, the potato, and was easy to carry out, unlike a boycott aimed at selected products of Nationalist firms which workers did not know.”⁶² The argument for boycotting potatoes that were being produced in conditions of, effectively, slave labor, could be made in emotionally powerful terms: referring to reports of laborers being worked to death and buried in the fields where they died, ANC leaders who played prominent roles in promoting the boycott, such as Robert Resha, frequently compared eating potatoes to consuming the flesh of the dead workers. Joe Slovo later recalled that “Resha, whose oratorical campaign was sprinkled with figurative allegations that Transvaal potatoes contained the blood of black farm workers, became such a victim of his own passionate propaganda that for the rest of his life he was unable ever to eat a potato.”⁶³

The ANC leadership did not envisage a counterpart international trade boycott of South Africa as playing a significant role in its strategy in this period. The December 1958 ANC annual conference had resolved that the AAPC “was an historical event of great importance to South Africa,” and specifically “approved” the AAPC’s decision to launch a boycott of South African goods. Subsequently, the ANC Anti-Pass Council’s proposal for a domestic boycott campaign had included an oblique reference to international initiatives, declaring that “The economic boycott in South Africa has unlimited potentialities. When our local purchasing power is combined with that of

⁶¹ [Ruth First], “Memorial Meeting for Joe Gqabi, Maputo,” 15 August 1981, File 117/1/17/2/4, First Papers; Gillian Slovo, *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country* (London: Little, Brown, 1997), 45-49; Joel Carlson, *No Neutral Ground* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), 46-66; Cornelis Hermanus Muller, “Dealing with a hot potato: The commemoration of the 1959 ‘Potato Boycott,’” *Historia* 55, no. 2 (November 2010): 76-98; Cornelis Hermanus Muller, “Coercive Agrarian Work in South Africa, 1948-1960: ‘Farm Labour Scandal?’” (M.H.C.S. thesis, University of Pretoria, 2011), 94-133.

⁶² Luckhardt and Wall, *Organize... or Starve*, 344.

⁶³ Slovo, *Slovo*, 127.

sympathetic organizations overseas we wield a devastating weapon.”⁶⁴ But the ANC made no further attempt to encourage the activities of those sympathetic organizations overseas.⁶⁵ The Congress movement’s emphasis in 1959 on the two interlinked domestic boycott campaigns – against potatoes and against products of Nationalist-controlled institutions – was the consequence of the complex interaction of a number of factors, including the end of the legal battle with Rembrandt, growing grassroots pressure for an anti-pass campaign, the leadership’s desire to respond to that pressure with a campaign that was less risky than civil disobedience, outrage at the “farm gaol” revelations, and, above all, the ongoing desire to mobilize and organize support for the Congress Alliance. An international boycott was largely irrelevant to these primary concerns.

Nor did an international boycott feature prominently in the strategic thinking of the Pan Africanist Congress, the new organization formed by the ANC’s “Africanist” dissidents, who had finally broken away from the Congress movement at the end of 1958. The Africanists were strongly inspired and influenced by the AAPC. The PAC’s inaugural conference was held in April 1959 in a hall festooned with pan-Africanist slogans such as “Africa for Africans, Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar.” The new party committed itself to the ultimate objective of a United States of Africa, endorsed Nkrumah’s concepts of the “African personality” and of “positive neutrality” in foreign

⁶⁴ “Resolutions adopted at the 46th Annual Conference of the African National Congress,” 13-16 December 1958, Item Ba6.6; “Statement on the Conference of the Joint Congress Executives,” 21 February 1959, Item Fa34, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers; “Report of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, submitted to the Annual Conference, December 12-13, 1959,” in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 472.

⁶⁵ The one exception to this was a memorandum sent to the to the skeleton AAPC secretariat in Accra by an anonymous ANC representative (the memorandum was signed only “???”). This was reproduced in the AAPC *News Bulletin*, the publication of which represented the secretariat’s main activity in the first half of 1959. After describing the ongoing Treason Trial, the memorandum concluded with a section entitled “WHAT CAN YOU DO?” First, it suggested, supporters abroad could send monetary donations. And second: “You can boycott South African goods! Africans, you can refuse to buy South African oranges and other fruits, and you can refuse to [sell] them your tinned fish and other products. Make a sacrifice for your brothers! Stand together as Africans: show your solidarity with the Freedom Fighters in South Africa.” It is unclear whether the ANC leadership had given the memorandum its official sanction, or whether it was submitted by an ANC supporter acting on their own initiative. The impact of this appeal for a boycott seems to have been limited: I have not found any evidence that any of those who did subsequently organize external boycotts of South Africa were aware of the memorandum’s existence. “Liberatory Movement in South Africa to Boycott South African Goods,” All-African People’s Conference *News Bulletin*, week ending 20 February 1959, ADM 16/1/12, Ghana PRAAD.

relations, declared that the AAPC had “laid a promising organizational foundation for African nationalism on a Pan-African basis,” and adopted a flag that showed a black silhouette of the African continent with a gold star over Ghana.⁶⁶

Like the ANC, the PAC adopted a form of domestic boycott as its primary campaign in 1959. In August Pan Africanist president Robert Sobukwe announced that the PAC was launching a “status campaign” that would start with boycotts of stores or businesses that were discourteous to African customers. For Sobukwe, white domination could only be maintained by the “active cooperation and goodwill of the oppressed”: the status campaign boycotts were intended as a form of consciousness-raising of the African masses, from which, Sobukwe believed, mass action to achieve liberation would necessarily follow. “We are reminding our people that acceptance of any indignity, any insult, any humiliation, is acceptance of inferiority,” Sobukwe explained in his announcement of the status campaign. “They must first think of themselves as men and women before they can demand to be treated as such. The campaign will free the mind of the African – and once the mind is free the body will soon be free.” As in the case of the ANC’s consumer boycotts, therefore, and despite the PAC’s enthusiasm for the AAPC, the kind of international boycott of South African trade called for by the conference was largely irrelevant to the concerns that drove the PAC’s domestic boycott campaign.⁶⁷

Although neither the ANC nor the PAC took much interest in the idea of an international boycott of South African exports, the conjuncture of the AAPC’s appeal and the domestic boycott campaigns inside South Africa inspired boycott initiatives elsewhere, including in Britain. In later

⁶⁶ Gerhart, *Black Power*, 206-7; Inaugural Convention of the PAC, “Manifesto of the Africanist Movement,” 4-6 April 1959, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 523.

⁶⁷ Gerhart, *Black Power*, 186-87, 227-28; Benjamin Pogrud, *How Can Man Die Better: Sobukwe and Apartheid* (London: Halban, 1990), 108-9; Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 60-61. See also “Forward to 1958!” *The Africanist*, December 1957, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, 499.

years, leading members of this first British boycott campaign would almost unanimously remember their efforts as having been in response to a call by Lutuli for an international boycott.⁶⁸ This founding myth was always used in Anti-Apartheid Movement publicity materials in Britain over the next three decades, and has subsequently been repeated in most academic studies. But there is no evidence that any such call was made until December 1959 – six months *after* the first campaign to boycott South African goods was launched in Britain – when Lutuli, M.P. Naicker of the South African Indian Congress, and Peter Brown of the South African Liberal Party, issued a joint appeal endorsing external economic boycotts as “one way in which the world at large can bring home to South African authorities that they must either mend their ways or suffer for them.”⁶⁹ That joint appeal, moreover, had been issued after Patrick van Rensburg, the director of the newly-formed “Boycott Movement” in Britain, explicitly asked Lutuli for “a statement calling freshly and clearly for the boycott.” Van Rensburg’s request reflected the considerable confusion on this issue within the Boycott Movement itself: when van Rensburg commented at one meeting of the Boycott Committee that “this campaign arose out of a request from South Africa,” other committee members countered that “this was a British campaign, and the ANC had not yet made any direct call for an international boycott.”⁷⁰

The joint appeal from Lutuli, Naicker and Brown – which subsequently came to be regarded as the “founding statement” of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain – became central to the

⁶⁸ See, for example, Hilda Bernstein’s interviews with Ros de Lanerolle Ainslie, Kader Asmal, Mzizi Kunene, and Abdul Minty in vols. 1, 5, and 7, Hilda Bernstein Interviews on the Experience of Exile, Mayibuye Archives; Kader Asmal and Adrian Hadland, with Moira Levy, *Politics in My Blood: A Memoir* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2011), 36; Abdul Minty, “The Anti-Apartheid Movement – what kind of history?,” in *The Anti-Apartheid Movement: a 40-year Perspective* (London: Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee, 2000), 16.

⁶⁹ Boycott Movement, “Boycott of South African Goods – A One Month Campaign of Protest Against Racial Domination: Press Release,” 21 December 1959, File 3, AAM.

⁷⁰ Patrick van Rensburg to Chief Luthuli, 4 November 1959, File 5; “Minutes of boycott meeting,” 16 December [1959], File 2, AAM.

Boycott Movement's publicity campaign as soon as it was received.⁷¹ Emphasizing this origin story for the boycott was a deliberate decision by the campaign's organizers. David Ennals, who became the vice chairman of the Boycott Movement at the end of 1959, wrote in December that "The 'image' to be presented to the British public should be that of response to a request by the African Congress and the Liberal Party and other bodies in South Africa allied to the Congresses, for a boycott – rather than that of bodies initiating a boycott as a strategy or tactic of their own work in this country."⁷² Creating this "image" was important for tactical reasons. The claim that the British boycott was a response to "a direct appeal from South Africa" was the most effective counter to the two most common critiques directed at the campaign: that far from the boycott assisting black South Africans resisting apartheid, they would be the first to suffer from its economic impact, and that the logical conclusion of the campaign was that British consumers should boycott the products of every country with a government of which they disapproved.

Rather than being a straightforward "boomerang" response to an appeal from the ANC, then, the boycott campaign in Britain indicated how two initially independent initiatives – the AAPC's call for a boycott of South African goods and the announcement of the ANC's plans for an internal boycott – became intertwined in the course of 1959. Vella Pillay, a South African Indian living in London who became one of the central figures in the Boycott Movement, recalled decades later that "The boycott strategy... was given great impetus by the exposure [by] Ruth First of the slave labour conditions of the potato farms and the announcement by Ronald Segal in a speech in

⁷¹ Gurney, "In the Heart of the Beast," 263; "A Direct Appeal from South Africa," *Boycott News* 1 (c. January 1960), p.1, File 2198, AAM.

⁷² [David Ennals], draft terms of agreement between Christian Action and the Boycott Movement, 14 December 1959, Folder: 'South Africa-S.Af. Boycott Movement (A-AM) Correspondence 1959-1960' [hereafter: 'Boycott Movement Correspondence'], Box 130, Labour Party International Department Collection, Labour History Archive & Study Centre, People's History Museum (PHM), Manchester, UK. The quoted sentence was deleted from subsequent drafts of this memorandum.

Cape Town calling for a boycott of South African goods.”⁷³

On April 23, 1959, Segal had given a speech to students at the University of Cape Town that ANC deputy president Oliver Tambo later jokingly characterized as a “Unilateral Declaration of a Boycott of Nationalist Products.” The ANC’s intention to launch its internal boycott in June had been widely publicized during “Africa Day” celebrations the previous week, but the speech by the self-described “freelance rebel” had the effect of prematurely launching the boycott two months early. Segal’s focus was on the actions that should be taken by his South African audience, and he did not explicitly call for an international boycott. But he did quote at length from a leaked memorandum from the Transvaal Chamber of Industries on the domestic boycott campaigns, one section of which discussed somewhat fearfully the possibility of international action: “There is a distinct danger that any legislation to outlaw such boycotts would be viewed in a poor light in overseas countries... and might even lead to overseas boycotts against South African exports with consequences more harmful to South Africa’s economy than might be achieved by local boycotts.”⁷⁴ Segal’s speech and the leaked Chamber of Industries memo were reported the next day on the front-page of the British left-wing weekly *Tribune* under the banner headline “BOYCOTT SOUTH AFRICAN GOODS!” The *Tribune* article, which included a list of “Nationalist products” that were exported abroad, sparked the first interest in Britain in launching such a boycott.⁷⁵

⁷³ “Anti-Apartheid Movement Witness Seminar,” 12 November 1998, Folder: ‘Anti-Apartheid Workshop Papers,’ Uncatalogued materials, Rhodes House. See also Pillay’s comment in an earlier interview that “in South Africa, the ANC launched the potato boycott, and we [South Africans in Britain] began to develop a similar kind of boycott of South African products.” “First Recording: Vella Pillay,” vol. 13, Hilda Bernstein Interviews.

⁷⁴ Ronald Segal, “The Power of the Pound,” *Fighting Talk*, May 1959, 3-4; “Economic Boycott Now On,” *New Age*, 23 April 1959, 1. Though Segal wrote in 1963 that his actions had followed “consultations” with friends in the ANC, including the Congress Alliance Joint Boycott Council, Tambo recalled in a 1970 letter to Segal that his “unilateral” declaration of the boycott had “embarrassed” the ANC. Segal, *Into Exile*, 205-6; Oliver [Tambo] to Ronald [Segal], 25 March 1970, File 124, Papers of Anthony Sampson, Bodleian Library Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, University of Oxford.

⁷⁵ Myrna Blumberg, “Boycott South African Goods!,” *Tribune*, 24 April 1959, 1. It is presumably Segal’s April 23 speech that has led some scholars to date Lutuli’s call for an international boycott to an “ANC conference” in April 1959. See, for instance, Nicholas Owen, “Four Straws in the Wind: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, January-February 1960,” in *The*

One of the first people in Britain to take an interest in the idea was Rosalynde Ainslie. A white South African who had come to Britain to study in 1954, Ainslie had remained in London because the apartheid prohibition of “mixed marriages” would have prevented her from living with her Sri Lankan husband if she returned home. She had met Segal when they were both students in Cape Town in the early 1950s, and was now the London representative of Segal’s magazine, *Africa South*. Ainslie’s efforts to excite the interest of the small community of Congress-aligned South Africans living in London (most of them students, or – like both Ainslie and Pillay – forced to live abroad by the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act) initially met with little response, however. When she suggested it, she recalled more than three decades later, “They all looked terribly solemn... [They were] not at all convinced by this. The only person who was was Vella [Pillay]. He became my friend for life because he showed some bloody enthusiasm and he... really put himself behind it.”⁷⁶

Given the general lack of enthusiasm on the part of her fellow South Africans, Ainslie turned instead to the Committee of African Organisations (CAO), on which she was the representative of the South African Freedom Association, the loose grouping of Congress-aligned

Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization, eds. L.J. Butler and Sarah Stockwell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 128; Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation*, vol. 1, *Formation*, 142; Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 162; Thomas, *Diplomacy of Liberation*, 181; Williams, *Politics of Race*, 28. See also the unsigned note entitled “For John - and the archives of the Boycott Movement,” n.d. [ca. February 1960], File 2, AAM. The note states that the “The A.N.C. conference which first called for a boycott campaign was held on April 26th 1959.”

There was no “ANC conference” in April 1959, however. The ANC’s annual national conference was always held in December, and the extraordinary “Mass National Conference” to launch the anti-pass campaign was held on 30-31 May 1959. That early references to an international boycott appeal having been made by the ANC in late April 1959 are in fact references to the oblique discussion of overseas action in Segal’s premature “launch” speech on April 23 is further suggested by Rosalynde Ainslie’s comment in 1960 that “Congress first expressed the hope that international support for the economic boycott would be forthcoming when first it was launched in April, 1959.” Rosalynde Ainslie, “Beyond the Boycott,” *New Left Review*, March-April 1960, 22.

⁷⁶ “First Recording: Ros de Lanerolle Ainslie,” vol. 1, Hilda Bernstein Interviews. See also the comments of Margot Holness, who was involved in the Committee of African Organisations: “On the question of South Africa specifically, I think a number of people at that point, I know there is some controversy as to who decided it, did mention the idea of having a boycott, and this was brought to CAO... one of the people who was very much there at the beginning was Ros Ainslie and I remember she was one of the people who proposed starting the boycott movement...” “Anti-Apartheid Movement Witness Seminar,” 12 November 1998, Folder: ‘Anti-Apartheid Workshop Papers,’ Uncatalogued materials, Rhodes House. As Holness noted, there is considerable “controversy as to who decided it [the boycott].” The account I give here is the most plausible on the basis of the available – and often conflicting – evidence.

South Africans in London. The CAO had been formed in London in 1958 by several organizations of Africans (mainly students) in Britain, in order to co-ordinate their campaigning activities on African and international affairs. In early 1959 the CAO was, the British Security Service reported at the time, “transformed into an organisation of some importance... as the major representative African body in the UK” as a consequence of the declaration of States of Emergency in parts of the British-ruled Central African Federation.⁷⁷ Kanyama Chiume of the Nyasaland African Congress and Joshua Nkomo of the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress both subsequently fled to London in order to avoid arrest. Chiume and Nkomo lived initially at the CAO’s offices in the basement of a Bloomsbury medical practice. The Bloomsbury office became for a few months, Chiume recalled, “the centre of the struggle against the Central African Federation.” It was in the midst of this “feverish activity,” with hundreds of people coming to the office to help issue statements, produce publicity materials, and organize demonstrations, press conferences, and meetings, that Ainslie suggested that the CAO organize a boycott of South African goods.⁷⁸

In contrast to the skepticism of Ainslie’s fellow South Africans, the CAO enthusiastically took up the suggestion. This enthusiasm presumably derived in part from the fact that the CAO’s first objective was – according to the constitution it adopted that year – “To work with and promote the aims of the All-African People’s Conference.”⁷⁹ The composition of “Boycott Sub-Committee” the CAO established reflected the extent to which the boycott of South African goods was a pan-African project rather than solely a South African one. It was chaired by Femi Okunnu, a Nigerian

⁷⁷[British Security Service], “A Study of the External Threats Bearing on the Internal Security of Commonwealth Territories in Africa,” n.d. [c. April/May 1960], DO 119/1211, UKNA. See also Kwesi Armah, *Africa’s Golden Road* (London: Heinemann, 1965), 6-9; Hakim Adi, “The Committee of African Organisations” (unpublished paper, 2003); Williams, *Politics of Race*, 25-28.

⁷⁸ Chiume, *Autobiography*, 117-22; Nkomo, *Nkomo*, 67-71.

⁷⁹ “Constitution: Committee of African Organisations,” n.d., File 1, AAM. Initially a loosely-organized body, in 1959 the CAO, as MI5 reported, “provided itself with elected office-bearers, a constitution, and a fairly efficient office organization.”

law student, and of the other seven original members only two were South Africans: Ainslie and Steve Naidoo, a South African Indian student whom Ainslie had initially persuaded to join her at CAO meetings because she was unsure how a white South African would be received.⁸⁰

The lineup of speakers at the CAO's official launch of its consumer boycott campaign, at a public meeting of some two hundred people at Holborn Hall on June 26, 1959, symbolized how the external and internal boycott efforts were becoming intertwined. Two South Africans gave speeches: Vella Pillay and Tennyson Makiwane, a twenty-six year-old ANC Youth League leader, Treason Triallist, and *New Age* journalist, who had recently arrived in London. The others on the platform were Michael Scott, whose interest since 1953 in international economic action against South Africa had finally culminated in the AAPC resolution the previous December; Kanyama Chiume, the Nyasaland African Congress leader, who had become an enthusiastic supporter of the boycott after attending the AAPC; and Julius Nyerere, the president of the Tanganyika African National Union, who was then visiting London. The date of the Holborn Hall meeting was chosen to coincide with the launch of the anti-Nationalist boycott in South Africa. The leaflet distributed by the CAO, which called on consumers in Britain to "help defeat the South African racialists by boycotting all South African goods," explicitly echoed the language of the ANC Anti-Pass Council's report: "The internal boycott in South Africa coupled with external support from people overseas are devastating weapons against South Africa's racialism." More than 100,000 copies of this leaflet were distributed in the two months after the boycott launch meeting, as the CAO's Boycott Committee organized pickets, demonstrations, and poster parades at shopping centers around London.⁸¹

Though scholarly attention has tended to focus on the launch of the consumer boycott in

⁸⁰ "For John - and the Archives of the Boycott Movement," n.d. [ca. February 1960], File 2, AAM; "First Recording: Ros de Lanerolle Ainslie," vol. 1, Hilda Bernstein Interviews.

⁸¹ Committee of African Organisations, "Boycott Slave-Drivers Goods," leaflet, n.d. [June 1959], File 1, AAM; Gurney, "A Great Cause," 134-35. See also Williams, *Politics of Race*, 29-31. The leaflet also referenced the potato boycott and the "slave conditions" on South African farms.

Britain in 1959, the CAO's campaign was far from the only attempt outside South Africa to organize a boycott in this period. In the course of July 1959, a British diplomat in South Africa noted, "every day has brought reports, based variously on rumour or fact, of boycotts or calls for boycotts of South African goods in overseas markets."⁸² The first of these boycott announcements was in fact another entirely independent development: on July 2 the government of the British colony of Jamaica announced that it was banning trade with South Africa, as a protest against the government's racial policies, which were "revolting to the conscience of all decent peoples throughout the world."⁸³

This was the first time any country had imposed governmental economic sanctions against South Africa since India's initiative in 1946. Though contemporary observers assumed that the Jamaican decision was a response to the AAPC resolution, the Jamaican People's National Party had – as we saw in Chapter 1 – taken an interest in breaking off trade with South Africa as early as 1948. After the PNP won power in the 1955 elections in the self-governing colony, the party had come under pressure from its supporters to revive the idea. In September 1957 the PNP national executive had resolved in favor of an embargo, and in November 1958 – just before the AAPC – the Jamaican cabinet did the same. The British government had strenuously opposed the decision: Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Julian Amery traveled to Jamaica in May 1959 to attempt to persuade the Jamaican ministers to reconsider. But despite the "extreme pressure" exerted by Amery, the Jamaican government was constitutionally responsible for its own "regulation of trade,"

⁸² "Boycotts," [extract from report from UK Mission, South Africa, to UK Government, London], n.d. [ca. 7 August 1959], CO 822/1844, UKNA. In August Peter Brown of the South African Liberal Party commented that "Like a rash, boycotts are breaking out all over the place." Peter Brown, "Not to Boycott is Surrender," *Contact*, 8 August 1959, 7.

⁸³ "Jamaica Bans S. African Goods," *Daily Gleaner* (Jamaica), 2 July 1959, 1, 16. I am indebted to Steven Jensen for his assistance in locating relevant articles from the *Gleaner*.

and the British objections were ultimately overridden.⁸⁴ Like India, Jamaica did not seek to convince other governments to follow its example, but the coincidence of its action with the ongoing repercussions of the AAPC resolution, and with the launch of the ANC's internal boycott, further added to the momentum of the incipient international boycott movement.

In Africa, meanwhile, little action had initially followed the resolution of the ICFTU Area Committee in Nairobi in May. Serge Claverie, the Mauritian ICFTU Regional Secretary whom the committee had assigned to organize the boycott had delayed doing so, instead writing to ICFTU headquarters in Brussels to ask whether he should follow the Committee's instructions.⁸⁵ The members of the Executive Board of the ICFTU, meanwhile, meeting in West Berlin in early July, were divided over whether to endorse the Area Committee's resolution. The opposition was led by the representative of the British Trades Union Congress (TUC), who argued that any boycott would "lead to further misery amongst the under-privileged classes" in South Africa. Ultimately, the Board agreed to adopt a resolution that condemned apartheid but deliberately omitted any reference to the boycott proposal.⁸⁶ The ICFTU's official organ, *Free Labour News*, had, however, already published the Area Committee's resolution in full in its July 1959 issue. A supportive editorial opined that, whatever the legal and other difficulties of implementing a boycott, "the average worker and his wife" would be prepared to avoid purchasing South African fruit.⁸⁷ On July 5, soon after that

⁸⁴ K.W. Blackburne to [Alan] Lennox-Boyd, 14 February 1959; Wills O. Isaacs, "Cabinet Submission: Trade with South Africa," 11 November 1958, DO 189/92, UKNA; Eric Louw, "Aide Memoire: The Jamaican Question," 2 July 1959, 4, File 105, Louw Collection; "SA Ban Decided on Last Year," *Daily Gleaner*, 7 July 1959, 1, 11.

⁸⁵ Governor's Deputy, Kenya, to Secretary of State for the Colonies, telegram, 7 August 1959, CO 822/1844; Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, "Projected South African Trade Boycott," 2 September 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA.

⁸⁶ International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Executive Board, "Minutes of the 24th Meeting," 29 June - 3 July 1959, Folder 5; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Executive Board, "Resolution on South Africa," 29 June - 3 July 1959, Folder 2, Box 48, Victor G. Reuther Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit.

⁸⁷ "End slave labour in South Africa!," *Free Labour World*, July 1959, 278-79. See also "South Africa is Target: Free Trade-Union Group Will Resist Africans' Treatment," *New York Times*, 21 June 1959, 8.

month's issue of *Free Labour News* must have reached Ghana and three days after the Jamaican government announced its embargo, a conference of the Ghana TUC resolved "to refuse to do anything with the white minority of South Africa, and in solidarity with comrades of the maritime union to refuse to unload any South African goods meant for discharge at ports of Ghana."⁸⁸

The actions of the Jamaican government and the Ghanaian unions prompted Mboya to give up on waiting for Claverie and to take the boycott campaign into his own hands. Noting that "the original idea of a boycott" had been agreed at the AAPC under his chairmanship, he announced to the press on July 18 that union leaders throughout East Africa would meet in Kampala in August to arrange the details of the boycott in the region. The following day, at a public meeting of two thousand KFL members outside Nairobi, Mboya secured support for a resolution authorizing the KFL "to associate itself with the Ghana TUC decision," and implement a boycott "of all goods or foods from or to the Union of South Africa" both through individuals refusing to purchase them, and through dock and railway workers refusing to handle them.⁸⁹

As the Kenya Police Special Branch noted, there was "no doubt that MBOYA is determined to implement the boycott on as large a scale as possible and with the least possible delay."⁹⁰ In late July he contacted International Transport Workers Federation, the ICFTU, and the AFL-CIO (the American national labor federation), urging them to support the boycott.⁹¹ Mboya also recruited

⁸⁸ "Ghana Boycott Of S. African Goods," *London Times*, 7 July 1959, 6; "Ghana Protests French A-Test," *Washington Post*, 7 July 1959, A5.

⁸⁹ Governor's Deputy, Kenya, to Secretary of State for the Colonies, telegram, 7 August 1959, CO 822/1844; J.F. Marman, "The K.F.L.. Proposed Boycott of South African Goods: Opinion," 5 August 1959; Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, "Projected South African Trade Boycott," 2 September 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA; "Boycott is Planned," *New York Times*, 19 July 1959, 33; Leonard Ingalls, "Kenya Unions Act to Join Boycott," *New York Times*, 20 July 1959, 3.

⁹⁰ Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, "Projected South African Trade Boycott," 2 September 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA.

⁹¹ "Mboya Seeks Support for S.A. Boycott," *Natal Mercury*, 22 July 1959 [newspaper clipping], File 1/9/1/3, Verwoerd Collection; Tom Mboya to Walter Reuther, 31 July 1959, Folder 26, Box 39, Victor Reuther Collection.

the support of Walter Reuther, the president of the United Autoworkers and one of his most powerful patrons in the American labor movement. Reuther agreed with Mboya that it was necessary to “build a worldwide boycott, for it is this kind of practical economic pressure that will get results that no amount of moralizing will produce.”⁹² At the August meeting of the Executive Board of the AFL-CIO, Reuther secured passage of a resolution declaring that “the AFL-CIO looks with sympathy upon the consumer boycott of products made in the Union of South Africa which has been proposed by certain African Free Trade Union Centers, and we hope that this matter will be given consideration at the December 1959 world congress of the ICFTU.”⁹³

In order to ensure broader East African participation in the boycott beyond organized labor, Mboya also raised the boycott issue at the conference in Moshi, Tanganyika, from September 8 to 10, of the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA), a loose grouping of anti-colonial and labor leaders in the region that had been formed the previous year. The conference was chaired by Julius Nyerere, now back from the visit to Britain in June during which he had spoken at the launch meeting for the CAO’s consumer boycott. The thirty PAFMECA delegates resolved – “in accordance with the resolution passed by the first All-African People’s Conference... and being aware of the steps already taken by the ANC in boycotting certain products and goods produced in South Africa” – to undertake a series of measures. PAFMECA would launch a “trial” consumer boycott in east and central Africa from November 1 of South African wines, sheries, and hoes; instruct region’s upon labor movements in “to prepare and submit a detailed plan for a boycott by all the transport unions of all goods to and from South Africa”; send a letter to heads of state around the world calling on them “to help institute a world-wide campaign of economic sanctions against South Africa”; and call on the independent African states to “appeal

⁹² Walter Reuther to Tom Mboya, 11 September 1959, Folder 5, Box 18, Mboya Papers.

⁹³ AFL-CIO Executive Board, “South West Africa,” 20 August 1959, Folder 7, Box 104, United Automobile Workers – International Affairs Department (IAD): Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-1968, Reuther Library.

through the United Nations to all nations to join in the campaign against South Africa.”⁹⁴

Though the ANC’s domestic boycott campaign was an important source of inspiration and legitimacy for many of these initiatives outside the country, advocates of boycotting South African goods in mid-1959 did not explain the relationship they envisaged between the ANC’s boycott of the products of selected “Nationalist-controlled institutions,” and their own “blanket boycott” of South African exports.⁹⁵ To the extent that the mechanisms by which an external boycott was intended to work were discussed at all in this period, most of the prominent Africa-based boycott advocates framed their purpose as being to reduce South African trade sufficiently – in the words of John Tettegah, general secretary of the Ghana TUC – to bring “economic pressure on the South African government to liberalize its apartheid policies.”⁹⁶ To labor leaders and anti-colonial politicians used to using economic pressure – often with some degree of success – to wring reforms from British colonial regimes, this might have seemed a plausible mechanism of change. To many others, however, it seemed unrealistic: while acknowledging that a widespread boycott could have a “calamitous effect on the South African economy,” the *Irish Times* – one of the first newspapers to take a position on the boycott – editorialized that given the racial fanaticism of South African Prime Minister Verwoerd, “only the most naïve optimist [could] believe that an economic boycott [would] force the Nationalists to recant on apartheid.” The *Irish Times* editors did suggest, however, that a “prolonged and successful boycott of South African exports” might bring about a shift in attitudes, not of “racial extremists,” but of South African businessmen for whom avoiding financial ruin was

⁹⁴ Commonwealth Relations Office to UK Mission, Pretoria, telegram [enclosing full text of PAFMECA resolution], 9 September 1959, CO 822/1844; Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, “Projected South African Trade Boycott,” 17 September 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA; Richard Cox, *Pan-Africanism in Practice: PAFMECSA 1958-1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 32-33.

⁹⁵ See, for instance, Tennyson Xola Makiwane to Secretariat, All-African People’s Conference, n.d [ca. June 1959], File 4, AAM; “Brief Report of the Activities of the Committee of African Organisations, from latter part of 1958 to beginning 1960,” File 1, AAM.

⁹⁶ “Ghana Ban On Cargoes From S. Africa,” *London Times*, 15 July 1959, 6. See also, for instance, Julius Nyerere, “On the Boycott,” *Africa South*, October-December 1959, 7-8.

ultimately of greater concern than maintaining racial exclusion and domination.⁹⁷

In general, boycott advocates more familiar with South African politics envisaged the boycott bringing about change in this way. In Britain the CAO Boycott Committee, in which Tennyson Makiwane was now playing a leading role, urged a boycott on the grounds that it was the only remaining means for opponents of apartheid to persuade “South African industrialists and producers” to put pressure on the government. One of the most trenchant exponents of this position was Trevor Huddleston, who, as we have seen, had supported the idea of isolating South Africa economically since 1953. In a letter to the London *Times* endorsing the boycott, Huddleston argued that “if in fact those who hold economic power in South Africa to-day were prepared to use it to destroy apartheid, they could do so any time they liked. It is worth remembering that it is not the Nationalist Afrikaner who wields this power: and it never has been.”⁹⁸

The primary advocates of the various boycotts and boycott announcements that proliferated during the austral winter of 1959 were acting with little if any contact with the leaders of resistance to apartheid inside South Africa. In Britain, South African expatriates such as Rosalynde Ainslie, Vella Pillay and, above all, Tennyson Makiwane, played crucial roles in initiating and then legitimizing the boycott campaign, but at the time none of them were senior figures in the Congress movement, and there is no evidence that they were acting on instructions from South Africa.⁹⁹ At

⁹⁷ “Boycott!,” *Irish Times*, 21 July 1959, 7.

⁹⁸ Alao Aka Bashorun to J. Bailey, 21 July 1959, File 1, AAM; Trevor Huddleston, “South African Boycott,” *London Times*, 22 July 1959, 7. See also, for instance, Tennyson Makiwane, “Press Statement: Economic Boycott of South African Goods,” 23 July 1959, File 940, AAM. Compare Jones’s claim that “early consumer boycott campaigns were not aimed at the apartheid regime.” Jones, *Societies Under Siege*, 67.

⁹⁹ It is frequently assumed that Makiwane was sent to Britain by the ANC, as Skinner puts it, “with a mission to promote and assist the co-ordination of an international boycott.” Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 162; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 297; Thomas, *Diplomacy of Liberation*, 36, 181. There seems to be no evidence to support this assumption. The *New Age* report on Makiwane’s departure from South Africa made no reference to such a mission: it stated simply that Makiwane had “left South Africa to attend the Afro-Asian Youth Conference held in Cairo in February.” “Tennyson Makiwane Leaves the Country,” *New Age*, 26 March 1959, 5. Nor did Makiwane ever reference any specific mandate from the ANC leadership to promote the boycott in his many writings on the boycott issue in the course of 1959-60. See, for instance, Tennyson Makiwane, “The Boycott: From Breeze to Gale,” *Fighting Talk*, March 1960, 4-5. In 1975 Makiwane was one

the PAFMECA conference in September Julius Nyerere opened the debate on the boycott by explaining that he had received a letter from South Africa (he did not identify the author further) asking for certain South Africa goods to be boycotted by all African countries, and explained that he had replied with a telegram asking for further details. In the course of the subsequent discussion Mboya emphasized that “liaison with Africans in South Africa” should be one of PAFMECA’s priorities in planning its boycott.¹⁰⁰

In the United States, the lack of such liaison up to that point – and the consequent disconnect between the emerging international campaigns to boycott South Africa and the leaders of the internal resistance to apartheid – led the American Committee on Africa to view the boycott campaign with caution. At the end of September 1959, George Houser, the ACOA’s executive director, asked advice from Mary Louise Hooper, the American former aide to Lutuli who, like Houser himself, had attended the AAPC. The boycott campaign had been “picking up a little bit both in England and in various parts of Africa,” Houser noted, but he wanted to know “just what is happening in South Africa itself” in terms of “suggestions for some kind of boycott of South African goods to be taken up on a world-wide basis.” Hooper replied that ANC leaders had not offered “anything definite in the way of suggestions for our use” regarding an international boycott, though she knew that the ANC leadership were “anxious to have the boycott spread.” Houser feared that it would be “foolish” to launch an American boycott “unless one can follow through on it and have some real effect” – something he doubted, given that the paucity of “ordinary

of the “Gang of Eight” expelled from the ANC; an unidentified member of the ANC based in Lusaka alleged at that time that in 1959 Makiwane had “left South Africa without being sent or without permission of any organization.” “Who’s Who in the Expelled Group of Eight,” n.d. [ca. 1975], File 12.8, Bunting Collection.

¹⁰⁰ Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, “Projected South African Trade Boycott,” 12 October 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA.

consumers' goods" imported from South Africa to the U.S."¹⁰¹ While Houser continued to canvass ideas from various South African contacts and from AFL-CIO officials, the ACOA thus did not immediately throw itself behind the incipient boycott campaign.

Indeed, rather than continuing to gain additional support, the movement to boycott South African goods began to lose momentum from September 1959. The spate of boycott announcements came to an end. After the Jamaican decision, the trade ministers of the British West Indian colonies of Barbados, British Guiana, Dominica, and Grenada had each declared their intentions to advise their own governments to follow suit. But in no case was any action forthcoming, possibly as a result of lobbying by the British government.¹⁰² Meanwhile, those boycott campaigns that had already been announced struggled. In Britain, the chair of the CAO's Boycott Committee noted at the end of July that "after the initial impact [of the boycott launch], CAO had not been able to mobilise enough forces to broaden and intensify the campaign sufficiently." Patrick van Rensburg, a member of the South African Liberal Party who had just arrived in Britain, observed that by September the original boycott campaign "had virtually petered out."¹⁰³

In East Africa the implementation of the boycott resolutions of the ICFTU's Area Subcommittee, the KFL, PAFMECA, and other bodies quickly encountered difficulties. The fact that the initial decisions had been taken by Mboya and a handful of other labor and political leaders with little consultation began provoke resistance. At a meeting of the KFL executive in early September, Mboya was greeted by protests that the executive had not yet taken a formal decision on

¹⁰¹ George Houser to Mary Louise Hooper, 30 September 1959; Mary Louise [Hooper] to George Houser, 15 October 1959, Folder: '1958-62 Africa Work – MLH,' Box 2, Hooper papers.

¹⁰² Henry Simmons, "Overseas Ban on South African Trade Spreads," *Contact*, 8 August 1959, 4; "Boycotts," n.d. [extract from report from UK Mission, South Africa, to UK Government, London], n.d. [ca. 7 August 1959]; "Boycott of Trade with South Africa," ca. 8 September 1959, CO 822/1844, UKNA.

¹⁰³ "Committee of African Organisations South African Boycott Sub Committee Meeting," minutes, 29 July 1959, File 1, AAM; Patrick van Rensburg, *Guilty Land* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1962), 40.

the boycott, and that an industrial boycott by organized labor “would be doomed to failure unless supported by the [British] TUC and the ICFTU, and would almost certainly result in hardship for coloured workers in South Africa.” Implementation of an industrial boycott would depend primarily on the transport unions. But when the general secretary of the Railway African Union in Kenya unilaterally committed his members to refusing to handle South African goods, this provoked “uproar” at the next meeting of the union’s General Council, which condemned his action and instead adopted a majority resolution that endorsed a consumer boycott but carefully avoided any mention of industrial action.¹⁰⁴ In light of such opposition, Mboya seems to have feared the damage that announcing a boycott that failed to attract support might do to his credibility. He allowed PAFMECA’s scheduled launch date of November 1 to pass without any public announcement in Kenya, and indicated privately that he did not expect the boycott to “get into full swing” until December or January. In the meantime, he focused his attention on securing support for the boycott from the ICFTU. Only in Tanganyika was PAFMECA’s “trial” consumer boycott of South African alcoholic drinks and hoes actually launched, by Julius Nyerere in a speech in Dar es Salaam. By mid-November, it was reported that South African hoes had already disappeared from markets in the territory.¹⁰⁵

In Ghana, the TUC’s decision to refuse to unload cargoes from South Africa was quickly overruled by Nkrumah’s government. As we saw in Chapter 1, George Padmore, who served as Nkrumah’s Adviser on African Affairs until his death in September 1959, had been one of the very

¹⁰⁴ Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, “Projected South African Trade Boycott,” 17 September 1959; Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, “Projected South African Trade Boycott,” 12 October 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA. The general secretary of the Dockworkers Union in Kenya was more successful in securing his members’ support for an industrial boycott, but also appears to have decided that industrial action would not be possible without financial support from international labor bodies. Action was therefore postponed while appeals for such support were sent to the International Transport Workers Federation and other international bodies.

¹⁰⁵ Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, “Projected South African Trade Boycott,” 27 October 1959; F.J. Parnell, “South African Boycott: South African Minister for Economic Affairs,” 17 November 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA.

first people to advocate consumer and industrial boycotts of South African goods back in 1946. But Nkrumah himself remained resolutely opposed to the idea. Immediately after the AAPC, Nkrumah had dismissed the conference's call for governmental economic sanctions against South Africa, and he now moved to quash the unions' independent initiative to impose a boycott at non-governmental level. Nkrumah's cabinet agreed to reprimand the TUC – on the grounds that “formulation of policy in regard to trade and other economic matters was the sole responsibility of the Government” – and assured importers that the government would ensure an uninterrupted supply of commodities from southern Africa.¹⁰⁶

In part, Nkrumah's policy on South Africa was driven by Ghana's economic interests. Rapid industrialization lay at the heart of Nkrumah's vision for Ghana's postcolonial future, and the TUC's action appeared to threaten this. The white-ruled states of southern Africa were “the principle or sole supplier” of some products imported to Ghana, the Minister of Commerce and Industry noted, including machinery for mining, and it would be “economic suicide” to allow the TUC's boycott to proceed. An industrial boycott would, moreover, undermine the assurances the Ghanaian government had given that it would ensure a favorable climate for the foreign investment it believed essential for Ghana's industrial development.¹⁰⁷

Nkrumah's approach to South Africa was not purely a passive one, however, based solely on

¹⁰⁶ “Minutes of the [cabinet] meeting held at 4'o'clock...,” 4 August 1959, ADM 13/1/28, Ghana PRAAD. On the relationship between the Ghanaian government and the labor movement, see Lester N. Trachtman, “The Labor Movement of Ghana: A Study in Political Unionism,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 10, no. 2, pt. 1 (January 1962): 183-200.

¹⁰⁷ Minister of Commerce and Industry, “Proposed Boycott of Imports from South Africa and Banning of Tobacco Imports from Rhodesia and Nyasaland,” [for cabinet consideration on 4 August 1959], ADM 13/2/63, Ghana PRAAD. See also Ahlman, “Road to Ghana,” 29; W. Scott Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 43. On Nkrumah's commitment to industrial development see Peter J. Bloom, Takyiwaa Manuh and Stephan F. Miescher, eds., Special Issue: Revisiting Modernization, *Ghana Studies*, 12/13 (2009/2010); Kate Skinner, ‘Who Knew the Minds of the People? Specialist Knowledge and Developmentalist Authoritarianism in Postcolonial Ghana’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39, no. 2 (June 2011), 297-323.

the negative rejection of economic sanctions.¹⁰⁸ More than any other African leader of the time, Nkrumah passionately believed in both the desirability and the feasibility of achieving a continental “United States of Africa.” South Africa, freed from apartheid, was always envisaged as ultimately being part of this future pan-African federation.¹⁰⁹ But as Nkrumah explained in January 1959, the “method” Ghana would adopt to help end apartheid would depend on circumstances. For the first three years after Ghana’s independence, Nkrumah pursued a policy towards South Africa underpinned by the assumption that, as he later put it, “if only one was patient and negotiated and tried to understand the problems of South Africa, then the situation would gradually begin to improve and little by little, racial oppression would disappear.”¹¹⁰ Nkrumah therefore rejected not only economic sanctions, but any form of isolation, ostracism, or confrontation, believing instead that sustained contact with “the multi-racial example of Ghana” might moderate the South African government’s approach.¹¹¹

Nkrumah’s government recognized that such a strategy was not likely to be welcomed by “African nationalists in the Union of South Africa and in other parts” of the continent.¹¹² But it

¹⁰⁸ Compare Ahlman’s characterizations of Nkrumah’s approach to South Africa as “passive” and “hands-off.” Ahlman, “Road to Ghana,” 29.

¹⁰⁹ On the importance of South Africa to a future continental federation, see, for instance, George Padmore’s comment to the American scholar St. Clair Drake: “Ghana is... a base on which you stand, on which to mobilize your forces, to free and unify the rest of this continent. Ghana has to become a part of something bigger. If it doesn’t we’ll be just like those Central American republics... You have a man [Walt Rostow] that wrote a book about the ‘takeoff’. There isn’t going to be any ‘takeoff’ in thirty different little pieces. What self-respecting capitalists are going to invest in Burundi. No. The issue is not ‘takeoff’, the issue is ‘take it!’ That the ‘takeoff’ has been made in two places: in the Congo and in South Africa. The African problem is how do you take these two industrialized pieces and fit them into a whole. It isn’t ‘takeoff’, it’s ‘take it.’” George Shepperson and St. Clair Drake, “The Fifth Pan-African Conference, 1945 and the All African People’s Congress, 1958,” *Contributions in Black Studies* 8 (1986): 28.

¹¹⁰ “Ghana Wants to Appoint Envoy to Union,” *Cape Argus* [newspaper clipping], 15 January 1959, File 1/9/2/3, Verwoerd Collection; Kwame Nkrumah, “Freedom and Unity Address to National Assembly,” 21 June 1963, quoted in Dumor, *Ghana, OAU and Southern Africa*, 72.

¹¹¹ Quoted (without citation) in Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, 96.

¹¹² Minister of Foreign Affairs, “Mr. Eric Louw – Visit to Ghana,” [for consideration by the cabinet on 25 September 1959], ADM 13/2/64, Ghana PRAAD. These comments were made in the context of the Ghanaian government’s discussion of whether to invite South African foreign minister Eric Louw to visit Ghana, discussed below.

actively pursued this policy of constructive engagement from 1957 onwards. Nkrumah had personally invited the South African prime minister to Ghana's independence celebrations in 1957 and to the first Conference of Independent African States in Accra in 1958. (The South African government sent a non-cabinet representative to independence ceremony, and declined the invitation to the 1958 conference unless the European imperial powers were also invited).¹¹³ In January 1959, as we have seen, Nkrumah announced that Ghana hoped to establish diplomatic relations with South Africa "very soon."¹¹⁴ South African foreign minister Eric Louw scathingly dismissed this suggestion, drawing on longstanding racist tropes about the sexual peril to white women posed by black men: if diplomatic relations were established, African ambassadors would have to be invited to diplomatic receptions in South Africa, Louw pointed out, and white South African politicians in favor of such relations should "consult their womenfolk, who are generally interested in attending diplomatic and other social functions."¹¹⁵

Undeterred, Ghanaian Foreign Minister Ako Adjei informed the cabinet that "while the Union Government welcome the idea, they do not consider the time opportune for such an exchange [of ambassadors], having regard to their racial policy." Adjei suggested instead that an exchange of high-level diplomatic visits might create a "good atmosphere" for the future establishment of formal diplomatic relations. In September 1959, the Ghanaian government thus formally invited Louw to visit Ghana, a visit that Nkrumah argued to his cabinet might "contribute to a change of policy in the Union on African matters." Louw accepted the invitation, and suggested

¹¹³ Kwame Nkrumah to J.G. Strydom, 4 January 1957; Kwame Nkrumah to the Prime Minister of South Africa, 16 April 1957; J.G. Strijdom to Kwame Nkrumah, telegram, 26 January 1957; J.G. Strijdom to Kwame Nkrumah, 25 April 1957, File 102, Louw Collection.

¹¹⁴ I.M.R. MacLellan to Earl of Home, despatch, 24 February 1959, CO 936/580, UKNA.

¹¹⁵ "Address by the Hon. Eric H. Louw... at the Opening of the SABRA Congress," 31 March 1959, File 52, Louw Collection. See also Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 43.

that he visit in 1960.¹¹⁶ In the meantime, after an approach from a white South African businessman in late 1959, the Ghanaian trade ministry actively pursued the possibility of sending an unofficial Ghanaian trade mission to South Africa. Assurances were secured through the South African High Commission in London that such a mission would be received “on the basis of complete non-discrimination,” and its members accommodated in hotels usually reserved for whites only. These assurances foreshadowed the approach to high-profile black visitors that the South African government adopted in the 1970s and 1980s in order to minimize international criticism of apartheid. But to the Ghanaian Minister of Trade the South African assurances were “revolutionary” and could well, he informed his colleagues, “cause the beginning of a break in the rigid internal policies of apartheid which we all detest so much.” Though the proposed trade mission thus seemed to justify the Ghanaian government’s faith that constructive engagement could change racial policy in South Africa “little by little,” domestic “political considerations” led the Minister to recommend against sending the mission in the immediate future: any such mission would be sure to revive the question of the Ghanaian TUC’s proposed boycott that had only just been “resolved.”¹¹⁷

III. ‘A Gesture of Sympathy’: South African Liberals, the British Labour Party, and the ICFTU

Actively opposed by Ghanaian government, failing to spread beyond Jamaica to other governments in the West Indies, lacking the support of transport workers in East Africa, stalling in Britain, and of limited interest to the liberation movements in South Africa, the incipient boycott of South African

¹¹⁶ Minister of Foreign Affairs, “Mr. Eric Louw – Visit to Ghana,” n.d. [for consideration by the Cabinet on 25 September 1959, ADM 13/2/64; “Minutes of the [cabinet] meeting held at 10’o’clock...,” 25 September 1959, ADM 13/1/28, Ghana PRAAD; Ako Adjei to Eric H. Louw, letter, 29 September 1959; [Eric Louw] to Mr. Ako-Adjei, 1 October 1959, File 102, Louw Collection. See also, Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, 96-97.

¹¹⁷ Minister of Trade, “Proposed Unofficial Ghana Trade Mission to South Africa,” [for consideration by the Cabinet on 15 January 1960], ADM 13/2/68, Ghana PRAAD.

goods might have petered out in the second half of 1959. That it did not was largely due to the actions of the South African Liberal Party, the British Labour Party, and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. These three organizations are not traditionally associated with the campaign to isolate South Africa: in later years the leaderships of all three would be associated with arguments for constructive engagement with South Africa rather than economic boycott.

The crucial role the three organizations played in reviving and entrenching the boycott of South Africa in late 1959 is all the more striking given their initial ambivalence about the idea. The ICFTU Executive, as we have seen, had decided against endorsing the boycott in July 1959. In Britain, the Commonwealth Sub-Committee of the Labour Party executive had considered the boycott within a fortnight of its June 26 launch by the CAO, and had decided that official support by Labour would raise “widespread consequential issues” that required further study. In the meantime, the Party’s position was that participation in the boycott was a “matter of individual choice.”¹¹⁸ And in South Africa, members of the Liberal Party were clearly divided. When he had been questioned about the idea of an external economic boycott during a visit abroad in 1956, party president Alan Paton had opposed the idea: “one of the greatest factors in the improvement of the African people was the industrial revolution in South Africa,” he argued, and boycotts might inhibit this. In July 1959, Walter Stanford, one of the Liberal Party’s white “Native Representatives” in parliament, wrote to the London *Times* to condemn the proliferation of boycotts for the same reason.¹¹⁹

On the other hand, Patrick Duncan, a prominent Liberal activist and editor who had led the Liberal Party’s delegation to the AAPC, welcomed this development. Duncan declared that he

¹¹⁸ Labour Party, Commonwealth Sub-Committee of the National Executive Committee, minutes, 7 July [1959], Folder 5, Box 15, Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) Collection, PHM.

¹¹⁹ “Mr. Alan Paton’s Comments,” *Africa Digest*, May-June 1956, 11; Walter Stanford, “Effects Of A Boycott,” London *Times*, 20 July 1959, 7.

looked forward to the day that “not one ounce of goods or gold, and not one passenger, will be able to move in or out of South Africa by sea, land, or air.” The Party’s National Chairman, Peter Brown, was more circumspect, commenting that boycott was “a dangerous weapon, not one which any Liberal would use by choice.” But Brown concluded that it was “a legitimate means of bringing pressure to bear on a government which has shown itself quite impervious to argument or appeal.”¹²⁰

Subsequently, the hand of the South African Liberals was effectively forced by the actions of one of their leading members. Patrick van Rensburg was a twenty-seven year old former South African foreign service officer who, after resigning in 1957 in protest at the government’s racial policies, had been appointed the Liberals’ Transvaal Party Organizer. In the first half of 1959 van Rensburg had been an enthusiastic supporter of the ANC’s domestic boycott of Nationalist products, despite the lack of enthusiasm for the project on the part of many of his Liberal colleagues.¹²¹ After arriving in Britain in August 1959 intending to spend a few months in Europe, van Rensburg was asked by Tennyson Makiwane, to help with the boycott campaign in Britain; having pondered the issue for six weeks, he decided to throw himself into reviving the flagging campaign. At van Rensburg’s initiative, the campaign was refocused on a one-month “short and sharply intensified boycott” in March 1960. As he later explained, “if [the campaign] was to continue, it would do so only if it had an initial impetus; it would not get that if responsible backing were absent; and it was clear that this would not be given to an indefinite campaign. The campaign already launched had shown this.” For the remainder of 1959, van Rensburg tirelessly went about securing “responsible backing,” soliciting prominent public figures and organizations to be

¹²⁰ [Patrick Duncan], “The Boycott Must Grow,” *Contact*, 11 July 1959, 6; Peter Brown, “Not to Boycott is Surrender,” *Contact*, 8 August 1959, 7. See also “Boycott is Legitimate, Say Liberals,” *New Age*, 23 July 1959, 5.

¹²¹ Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, 104-6. On Liberals’ ambivalence regarding the ANC’s domestic boycott, see also Cardo, *Opening Men’s Eyes*; Debra Anne Fyvie Moffatt, “From ‘Conscience Politics’ to the Battlefields of Political Activism: The Liberal Party in Natal, 1953 to 1968” (M.A. thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1999), 110-11.

“sponsors” of the campaign, and dispatching reams of letters and articles to the British press.¹²²

Among those whose support van Rensburg solicited were the leaders of his own party in South Africa. Van Rensburg’s central role in organizing the boycott in Britain had already stirred controversy among South African Liberals: Peter Brown, the Party chairman, wrote to him in October that he had “come to the conclusion that the real reason for your trip overseas was to cause me as much trouble as you could. If it pleases you at all, you are succeeding admirably!” Many prominent Liberals remained committed to the Party’s founding principle of opposing apartheid only by “constitutional means” and to persuading white voters through reasoned argument, not coercion or punishment. It was in this sense that even Liberals like van Rensburg and Brown who supported an overseas boycott conceded that it was “hardly a traditional liberal instrument of opposition.” Nevertheless, though some white Liberals resigned from the Party over the issue, Alan Paton now abandoned his earlier opposition, and Brown secured a resolution from the Party’s National Committee on November 3 that endorsed his own view that despite “the many possible short-comings of, and hardships caused by, boycotts” they were a “legitimate political weapon.” Following van Rensburg’s request to Lutuli for an explicit statement of support, Brown also drafted the boycott appeal that he, Monty Naicker, and the ANC president co-signed in December.¹²³

In advocating the boycott, Liberals including van Rensburg, Brown, and Paton frequently framed its objective as being to “bring pressure to bear on [the] government,” or, more broadly, to achieve the longstanding objective of South African liberalism of bringing about “a change of heart

¹²² Van Rensburg, *Guilty Land*, 40; Van Rensburg’s correspondence promoting the boycott in 1959-60 is archived in File 5, AAM.

¹²³ Peter Brown to Patrick van Rensburg, 27 October 1959, File 5, AAM; Van Rensburg, *Guilty Land*, 49; Peter Brown, “Not to Boycott is Surrender,” *Contact*, 8 August 1959, 7; Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, 131; Cardo, *Opening Men’s Eyes*; Peter Brown to Patrick van Rensburg, 3 November 1959, File 5, AAM. See also Saul Dubow, “Uncovering the Historic Strands of Egalitarian Liberalism in South Africa,” *Theoria* 61, no. 140 (September 2014): 15-16; Moffatt, “The Liberal Party in Natal,” 109-14; David Everatt, “The Politics of Non-Racialism: White Opposition to Apartheid, 1945-1960 (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1990), 210-19; 258-60; Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, 107-9, 112; Gurney, “In the Heart of the Beast,” 263-63.

among whites.”¹²⁴ But their primary motivations for supporting the boycott were twofold. In the first place, in light of its failure to make any headway with the white electorate, and of the manifest inability of its handful of members of parliament – all “native representatives” – to have any impact on the spate of apartheid legislation passed in the mid-1950s, the Liberal Party’s focus was increasingly shifting to extra-parliamentary methods of opposition. Though the Party leadership remained white-dominated, it had some success in recruiting black members, and it was hoped that supporting the external boycott would facilitate this. Thus whereas more conservative members of the Party feared that van Rensburg’s boycott activities were “political suicide for the Liberal Party among potential [white] voting support,” the dominant and increasingly radical faction within the Party was now less concerned with trying to win over white voters than, as Brown put it, to “win Africans to support Liberalism before they are persuaded that their only hope lies in extreme nationalism.” Support for the overseas boycott was one way of enhancing the Liberal Party’s ability to win African support. To Liberal skeptics of the boycott, Brown emphasized that every African member of the Party with whom he had discussed the issue supported it.¹²⁵

Fear of violent revolution was the second reason for South African Liberals’ support of the overseas boycott. As one of van Rensburg’s Liberal correspondents in South Africa wrote to him, the Party had decided to back the boycott “because it is one of the few non-violent methods left of influencing policy in this country – the alternative is a violent method, which we do NOT support.”¹²⁶ Well-aware of the grassroots pressure for violent resistance throughout the 1950s, many

¹²⁴ Peter Brown, “Not to Boycott is Surrender,” *Contact*, 8 August 1959, 7; Patrick van Rensburg, letter to potential sponsors, 23 September 1959; Patrick van Rensburg, “Memorandum on Possible Intensified Boycott of South African Produce,” [23 September 1959], Folder: ‘Boycott Movement Correspondence,’ Box 130, Labour International Department Collection; Alan Paton, *The Christian Approach to Racial Problems in the Modern World* (London: Christian Action, 1959), 5-8.

¹²⁵ Cardo, *Opening Men’s Eyes*, 128-29; Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, 106-8.

¹²⁶ “J” to Patrick van Rensburg, n.d., File 5, AAM. See also Peter Brown to Patrick van Rensburg, 3 November 1959, File 5, AAM; Peter Brown, “Not to Boycott is Surrender,” *Contact*, 8 August 1959, 7.

Liberals feared that if government repression continued to close down options for peaceful opposition, and the ANC's campaigns did not appear to be having any success, African leaders committed to non-violence would be deserted by their own supporters. These fears were heightened by events such as the spontaneous riots in the Cato Manor township outside Durban in June 1959, when a municipal crackdown on illegal alcohol production provoked African women to invade and destroy government-run beer halls and other municipal buildings. The formation of the PAC also appeared ominous: PAC leaders' fiery rhetoric and celebration of spontaneous mass action often seemed to indicate their belief in the inevitability or even the desirability of violence. In these circumstances, Paton and Brown wrote in their widely-circulated "Statement on the Overseas Boycott" in November 1959, "it is only through evidence of convincing support for such campaigns as the present boycott that opponents of violence in South Africa can maintain their positions of leadership in their various communities." The alternative was a choice "between the *status quo* and revolution," both of which were "unacceptable."¹²⁷

In the 1970s and 1980s, Alan Paton would emerge as one of the few prominent individuals closely identified with the struggle against apartheid who actively campaigned against boycotts, disinvestment, and sanctions. In 1964 he explained that he had advocated the economic boycott of South Africa "only for some weeks" before changing his mind.¹²⁸ But during those few weeks in 1959-60 that Paton and the Liberal Party actively campaigned for an overseas boycott, in order to reinforce a reformist alternative to violent revolution, they made a crucial contribution to the boycott idea's spread and entrenchment. The ongoing international popularity of Paton's novel, *Cry*,

¹²⁷ "Boycott South African Goods," *Peace News*, 12 February 1960, 8. Van Rensburg made the same argument: Patrick van Rensburg, letter to potential sponsors, 23 September 1959; Patrick van Rensburg, "Memorandum on Possible Intensified Boycott of South African Produce," [23 September 1959]; Patrick van Rensburg, "The Boycott Movement," n.d. [1959], Folder: 'Boycott Movement Correspondence,' Box 130, Labour International Department Collection.

¹²⁸ "Extract of Evidence... Alan Stuart Paton," 12 June 1964, File A32.5, Collection: State vs Nelson Mandela and 9 Others (Rivonia Trial) (AD1844), Wits Historical Papers.

the Beloved Country, meant that in the west he remained by far the most well-known South African opponent of apartheid. In late 1959, Paton endorsed the boycott in an address at St Paul's Cathedral in London, in the letters pages of the *London Times*, in interviews with foreign journalists, and in the "Statement on the Overseas Boycott" he co-signed with Brown.¹²⁹ He fit well into the long-standing western trope of the "white savior," and his legitimization of the boycott as a new form of action for people opposed to apartheid outside South Africa carried significant weight.¹³⁰

In Britain van Rensburg's most decisive contribution was the re-focusing of the faltering boycott campaign on a single month of action. Van Rensburg always stressed that the one-month campaign "by no means [sought] to restrict those" who wished to maintain an ongoing boycott; rather, he argued, the publicity and attention generated by the intensified campaign would mean that the number of people who "might remember not to buy South African long after the intensified period is over" would be much higher. Van Rensburg's emphasis on a month-long boycott was resented by some existing members of the Boycott Committee, but it proved tactically astute.¹³¹ Whereas the CAO's boycott launch in June had gone unreported in the British press, the revamped campaign now generated significant interest and debate. British goods had often been targets of anti-colonial boycotts, but in Britain itself there was, as the anti-apartheid activist and researcher Christabel Gurney has noted, "no continuous tradition of boycott." The organizers of the anti-

¹²⁹ Paton, *Christian Approach to Racial Problems*, 5-9; Alan Paton, "A Tradition Abused," *London Times*, 3 December 1959, 13; Jack White, "Violence Growing In South Africa: 'This Is A Sick Country' Says Famous Writer," *Irish Times*, 9 March 1960, 8; "Boycott South African Goods," *Peace News*, 12 February 1960, 8. On the Liberal Party's promotion of the boycott abroad, see also Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, 108.

¹³⁰ Teju Cole, "The White Savior Industrial Complex," *The Atlantic*, 21 March 2012, <https://perma.cc/Z4SS-8Z9V>; Katherine M. Bell, "Raising Africa? Celebrity and the Rhetoric of the White Saviour," *PORTAL: Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 10, no. 1, (January 2013): 1-24. The term "white savior" was first used in film studies. Hernan Vera and Andrew M. Gordon, *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

¹³¹ Patrick van Rensburg, "Memorandum on Possible Intensified Boycott of South African Produce," [23 September 1959], Folder: 'Boycott Movement Correspondence,' Box 130, Labour International Department Collection; "First Recording: Ros de Lanerolle Ainslie," vol. 1, Hilda Bernstein Interviews.

apartheid boycott were, for instance, initially unaware of the anti-slavery sugar boycotts in Britain in the late eighteenth century. (Though after van Rensburg were alerted to this history by a supporter, this “precedent” was included in the Boycott Committee’s publicity materials.)¹³² The relative novelty and uniqueness of the idea of a politically-motivated consumer boycott of goods from another country helped attract attention to the British campaign: at the start of the boycott month in March, the Manchester *Guardian* commented that “‘The boycott’ begins today, and it is an indication of the organisers’ success so far that no-one needs to ask ‘boycott of what?’”¹³³

In Britain, by far the most important organization to join the boycott campaign was the opposition Labour Party, which on December 16 called upon all Labour members to support it. The mobilization of Labour’s nationwide machinery behind the boycott dramatically increased the size, reach, and prominence of the boycott campaign, and turned it into a major national issue in both Britain and South Africa. In South Africa the initial launch of the CAO’s boycott campaign in June 1959 had passed largely unremarked: white South African policymakers, businessmen, and journalists were at the time much more concerned about the actions of the Jamaican government and of organized labor in Ghana and East Africa. But the subsequent involvement of Britain’s official opposition, a party that might well form the next government in the imperial metropole, generated considerable interest and concern.¹³⁴

¹³² Gurney, “‘A Great Cause,’” 124; Robin Farquar to Patrick van Rensburg, 20 October 1959; Patrick van Rensburg to the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, 22 October 1959, File 5, AAM. A more recent precedent was the attempt in the mid-1930s to organize a boycott of German goods to protest Nazi anti-Semitism. Despite a number of high-profile supporters, however, the campaign does not seem to have gained widespread and sustained support. Richard A. Hawkins, “‘Hitler’s Bitterest Foe’: Samuel Untermyer and the Boycott of Nazi Germany, 1933-1938,” *American Jewish History* 93, no. 1 (March 2007): 25, 31, 44-46; Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 273. The anti-Nazi consumer boycott gained much greater traction elsewhere, especially in the United States and Palestine. Werner E. Braatz, “German Commercial Interests in Palestine: Zionism and the Boycott of German Goods, 1933-1934,” *European Studies Review* 9, no. 4 (October 1979): 481-513; Rona Sheramy, “‘There are Times When Silence is a Sin’: The Women’s Division of the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Nazi Boycott Movement,” *American Jewish History* 89, no. 1 (March 2001): 105-21.

¹³³ “The Boycott,” *Manchester Guardian*, 1 March 1960, 8.

¹³⁴ UK Mission, Cape Town to Commonwealth Relations Office, telegram, 22 March 1960, FO 371/146553, UKNA.

Labour's decision to endorse the consumer boycott month, and to devote significant resources to promoting it, was not primarily driven by ideas about the impact it would have in South Africa, but by domestic politics. In the wake of the Party's heavy and unexpected loss to the Harold Macmillan's Conservative Party in the October 1959 general election, Labour's General Secretary, Morgan Phillips, had argued that the Party needed "something that will make a moral appeal to the country," and proposed making 1960 an "African Year." A number of Africa-related events in 1960, Phillips suggested – including the forthcoming government-commissioned report on the future of the Central African Federation, the independence of Nigeria, the ongoing South African Treason Trial, and the boycott of South Africa goods – would provide "an opportunity for a sustained education and propaganda campaign" throughout the year. Supporting the boycott month in March 1960 would be one way of initiating the Party's year-long Africa-themed campaign.¹³⁵ Labour became closely involved in the running of the boycott campaign through the Secretary of the Party's International Department, David Ennals, who was also a member of Christian Action, the campaigning organization founded by Canon Collins. In November Collins had offered to take over the boycott campaign from the CAO's Sub-Committee, which was struggling for funds; subsequently an agreement was reached by which Christian Action would fund the newly renamed and increasingly autonomous "Boycott Movement" on the condition that it could nominate two new members of the Committee – one of whom was Ennals – with a right of veto.¹³⁶

The third organization whose support was crucial to reviving, entrenching, and spreading the boycott idea in late 1959 and early 1960 was the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

¹³⁵ M[organ] P[hillips], "1960 Campaign – Africa," December 1959, Folder 6, Box 15, Labour NEC Collection. See also Gurney, "A Great Cause," 136.

¹³⁶ M[organ] P[hillips], "1960 Campaign – Africa," December 1959, Folder 6, Box 15, Labour NEC Collection; [David Ennals] to Canon L.J. Collins, 22 December 1959, Folder: 'Boycott Movement Correspondence,' Box 130, Labour International Department Collection; "Christian Action and the Boycott Movement," memorandum, n.d. [ca. December 1959], File 7, AAM. See also Gurney "Great Cause," 137.

Though the ICFTU executive had initially decided against supporting the boycott campaign, Mboya maintained pressure on the ICFTU to endorse the boycott, especially after it became clear that it would not be possible to implement an industrial boycott in East Africa without strong ICFTU support. The KFL consequently proposed a resolution to biennial ICFTU's World Congress in December 1959 calling on all affiliated organizations to organize boycotts of South African goods.¹³⁷

Meeting in Brussels from December 3 to 11, the ICFTU World Congress did indeed adopt a resolution that instructed its affiliates "to take effective steps to organize the workers and consumers of their respective countries in a massive boycott of South African goods."¹³⁸ More than any other single event, it was this resolution that internationalized economic boycott of South Africa as a primary form of overseas activism against apartheid. The resolution called on the ICFTU executive to establish a "target date by which time the boycott shall become effective," but many national affiliates did not wait. The British TUC announced that it would join the Labour Party in supporting the March 1960 consumer boycott campaign. On January 9, the Cyprus Workers' Confederation announced that its members would refuse to handle South African products for the month starting on February 20. On February 11 the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO instructed its Department of International Affairs "to assist in the organization of a boycott by the American labor movement." And in the course of January and February, the national trade union federations of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and West Germany all announced that they would begin one- or two-month consumer boycott campaigns on April 1.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ ICFTU Sixth World Congress, "Proposals Submitted by the ICFTU Executive Board and affiliated organisations," 3-12 December 1959, Folder 3, Box 53, Victor Reuther Collection.

¹³⁸ International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Sixth World Congress, "Resolution on Boycott of South African Goods," 3-11 December 1959, Folder 7, Box 459, UAW President's Office: Walter P. Reuther Collection, Reuther Library.

¹³⁹ Vincent Tewson to General Secretaries of all affiliated unions *et al.*, "Boycott of South African Goods," 31 December 1959, Folder: 'Boycott Movement Correspondence,' Box 130, Labour International Department Collection; [untitled report], *Peace News*, 15 January 1960, 4; AFL-CIO Executive Committee, "Statement on the Boycott of South African

None of this would have occurred were it not for Tom Mboya. When the ICFTU Secretariat – responsible for preparing a report on the KFL’s proposed boycott resolution before the Congress – had canvassed several affiliates for detailed information, the only response received had again come from the KFL.¹⁴⁰ And it was primarily out of a desire to support Mboya that the ICFTU Secretariat and Executive decided to throw their weight behind the proposal. Like the British Labour Party, the ICFTU endorsed the boycott campaign for instrumental reasons that had little to do, in the first instance, with its impact in South Africa. At a meeting of a subcommittee of the ICFTU Executive in October 1959, at which the British TUC representative again forcefully opposed the proposal, the ICFTU General Secretary Jacobus Oldenbroek declared that “after having some experience of boycott actions, he could think of a hundred reasons why a boycott should not take place; but he was looking for one reason why it should. The one reason was that the friends of the ICFTU in Africa wanted it and were applying it. A boycott would not have much effect, but it would be a gesture of sympathy. He would think twice before refusing to make such a gesture.”¹⁴¹

For boycott advocates within the ICFTU, the campaign was primarily “a gesture of sympathy” for the “friends of the ICFTU in Africa.” Those African “friends” were certainly not the ANC-aligned South African Confederation of Trade Unions, which was secretly affiliated to the

Goods,” 11 February 1960, Folder 7, Box 104, UAW IAD – Reuther and Carliner Collection; “Why Boycott?,” *Free Labour World*, April 1960, 137; “Situation in South Africa and the ICFTU Boycott,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 27 June – 2 July 1960], Folder 4, Box 440, Walter Reuther Collection; American Committee on Africa, “World Reaction against South African Apartheid,” n.d. [ca. late September 1960], File 103/21, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

Robert Massie notes the impressive “number and diversity of boycott efforts, some of which preceded the Sharpeville massacre, reported in 1960.” Massie fails to note, however, that what connected almost all of the initiatives he lists (with the exception of those in the UK prompted by the Boycott Movement) was that they were responses to the ICFTU’s December resolution. Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 727. See also Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 228.

¹⁴⁰ “Proposals from affiliated organisations: Boycott of South African Goods,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 30 November – 2 December 1959], Folder 6, Box 48, Victor Reuther Collection.

¹⁴¹ International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Sub-Committee, “Minutes of the 13th Meeting,” 1-2 October 1959, Folder 5, Box 48, Victor Reuther Collection.

rival WFTU, and with which the ICFTU had an antagonistic relationship. When two officials from the ICFTU secretariat had visited South Africa in 1959, they had refused to attend SACTU's congress on the grounds that WFTU representatives had also been invited. The SACTU General Secretary had subsequently published an open letter furiously denouncing the ICFTU officials.¹⁴² Rather, the "friends" the ICFTU's boycott was intended to support were Mboya's KFL and other African ICFTU affiliates. Despite his poor relationship with many European trade unionists, Mboya had been a favorite of American organized labor since his first visit to the U.S. in 1956. Though divided among themselves on many issues, U.S. labor leaders were united in their support for Mboya: the AFL-CIO and individual American unions including Reuther's UAW provided significant financial and material support to the KFL in the late fifties. Whereas in this period European national labor federations tended not to stray far from the colonial policies of their own governments, American labor leaders embraced anti-colonialism, believing that rapid independence – and active support for that independence by bodies in the West – was the only way of counteracting the attractiveness of communism to colonial subjects.¹⁴³

American labor leaders believed that the development of "free" (i.e. non-communist) labor organizations in Latin America, Asia, and Africa – and the incorporation of those organizations into ICFTU structures – was of primary importance, not just for the labor movement, but for the "free world." As Reuther wrote privately to Arne Geijer, the Swedish president of the ICFTU: "In the absence of such a positive trade union force, the communists will get the people in these three great areas by default... The direction that these hundreds of millions of people in these three critical

¹⁴² Edward Feit, *Workers without Weapons: The South African Congress of Trade Unions and the Organization of African Workers* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1975), 136-40; Luckhardt and Wall, *Organize... or Starve*, 381-84; Roger Southall, *Imperialism or Solidarity? International Labour and South African Trade Unions* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1995), 103-104; Nair, "Through the Eyes of the Workers," 177.

¹⁴³ Carew, "Conflict Within the ICFTU," 147-81; Stoner, "Anti-communism, Anti-colonialism, and African Labor," 105-94.

areas will take will in large measure depend on the kind of practical aid we can give them in building effective, democratic trade union forces which form the essential foundation for building a free society.” By the late 1950s, despite the ongoing opposition of the British TUC, the ICFTU secretariat was moving towards this position and beginning to take a more active role in Africa in particular.¹⁴⁴ The sudden appearance of a pan-Africanist disaffiliation movement at the AAPC in December 1958 posed an obvious threat to these initiatives. Mboya’s emergence as the leading African opponent of disaffiliation further enhanced his significance to the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU.¹⁴⁵ Supporting Mboya’s demand for a boycott of South Africa was one “gesture of sympathy” with which the ICFTU could demonstrate the practical usefulness of affiliation to the Confederation, and further enhance the position of Mboya and other ICFTU allies in Africa as they battled the pan-Africanist disaffiliation movement.

The two non-South African organizations that did most to spread and entrench the boycott in 1959-60 had thus both done so primarily in order to increase their own standing with constituencies outside South Africa: the British electorate in the case of the Labour Party, and African trade unionists in the case of the ICFTU. In its official pronouncements the ICFTU framed the purpose of its boycott as being “to exert maximum economic pressure on the South African government with a view to bringing about a change in its inhuman racial policies.”¹⁴⁶ But in private many ICFTU leaders doubted the boycott would achieve this: General Secretary Oldenbroek believed that “a boycott would not have much effect,” while ICFTU President Geijer told South

¹⁴⁴ Walter Reuther to Arne Geijer, 22 July 1959, Folder 9, Box 438, Walter Reuther Collection.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, the comments in Irving Brown, “Meeting of the All African Peoples’ Conference,” n.d. [December 1958], Folder 1, Box 400; Irving Brown to George Meany, letter, 24 December 1958, Folder 2, Box 356; Irving Brown, “Report on Conversation: Tom Mboya,” 7 June 1959, Folder 3, Box 356, Lovestone Papers.

¹⁴⁶ International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Sixth World Congress, “Resolution on Boycott of South African Goods,” 3-11 December 1959, Folder 7, Box 459, Walter Reuther Collection. See also “Why Boycott?” *Free Labour World*, April 1960, 137.

African diplomats in Sweden in January 1960 that the boycott was “designed to bring pressure on South Africa to mend her ways,” but also commented, the diplomats reported to Pretoria, that he “feared we were so stubborn [that] a boycott would not succeed in causing us to alter our policy.”¹⁴⁷

In Britain, the Labour Party explicitly downplayed the economic impact of the boycott. Labour publicity materials stressed that the boycott was “a symbolic act” or “moral gesture.” “We have no illusions,” Labour explained in its first circular on the issue, “We shall not bring the Union Government to its knees.” David Ennals, the Party’s International Secretary and now the Vice-Chairman of the Boycott Movement, repeatedly stressed that, “In supporting the boycott in this country we are determined to ensure that it will not strike heavily at the South African economy.” Even in the entirely unlikely event of a totally effective boycott of South African consumer goods in Britain during March 1960, Ennals emphasized, the boycott would reduce sales of South African goods by just £2 million, and this would be a drop in sales in Britain, not in imports from South Africa.¹⁴⁸ For Ennals, the boycott was “a token action with far more significant political and moral than economic implications.” His conception of the boycott was that it would have an influence in South Africa not by depriving the country of revenue from exports, but by demonstrating that people in Britain cared so strongly about apartheid that they were prepared to deprive *themselves* of South African goods. The envisaged impacts in South Africa of Britons undertaking this “moral gesture” were that it would “trouble consciences in South Africa,” and that – even if this did not happen – such a “gesture of solidarity” would “demonstrate to opponents [of apartheid] that they

¹⁴⁷ “The Scandinavian Boycott,” memorandum, n.d. [ca. 1964], File 105, Louw Collection.

¹⁴⁸ “British Labour Party appeals to consumers to boycott South African goods,” Appendix VII in Kurt Christianson to Dear Comrades, 20 January [1960]; Labour Party Press and Publicity Department, press release, 5 February 1960 [releasing letter, drafted by Ennals, from Morgan Phillips to Duma Nokwe], Folder: ‘Boycott Movement Correspondence,’ Box 130, Labour International Department Collection.

are not alone.”¹⁴⁹ In particular, Boycott Movement publicity – all of which now was now vetted by Ennals before being printed – emphasized the theme that was so central for the South African Liberals: news of the overseas boycott would focus black South Africans’ hopes “on an effective non-violent weapon, and distract peoples’ [sic] thoughts from violence.”¹⁵⁰

The paradox of Labour Party and ICFTU support for the boycott was that in entrenching and spreading the idea of a boycott of South Africa, they also gutted the campaign of the aspect that Mboya – its primary sponsor – and the British and South African governments all judged would be “by far the most effective action” in terms of damage to the South African economy: industrial action by organized labor.¹⁵¹ Perhaps the most successful previous instance of this kind of “black ban” had been in Australia, in support of the Indonesian struggle for independence from the Netherlands. From 1945 until Indonesia became independent in 1949, the Australian Waterside Workers’ Federation had refused to load, unload, or crew Dutch shipping. More than 550 Dutch ships were held up during this period, and Dutch naval forces – nicknamed the “Black Armada” by one sympathetic author – had effectively been frozen in Australian waters.¹⁵² Mboya now envisaged similar action on a world-wide scale against shipping travelling to or from South Africa, a prospect that caused serious apprehension in the South African government.

¹⁴⁹ David Ennals to W.F. Vickers, 19 January 1960; David Ennals, “The Labour Party and the South African Boycott” [unpublished draft article], January 1960, Folder: ‘Boycott Movement Correspondence,’ Box 130, Labour International Department Collection; [David Ennals], “Secretary’s Report,” 10 December 1959, Folder 6, Box 15, Labour NEC Collection.

¹⁵⁰ Boycott Movement, “Press Statement,” n.d. [January 1960], File 3, AAM.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in “Proposals from affiliated organisations: Boycott of South African Goods,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 30 November – 2 December 1959], Folder 6, Box 48, Victor Reuther Collection. See also Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, “Projected South African Trade Boycott,” 2 September 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA.

¹⁵² Rupert Lockwood, *Black Armada* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1975); Margo Beasley, *Wharfies: A History of the Waterside Workers’ Federation of Australia* (Rushcutters Bay, Australia: Halstead Press, 1996), 127-130; Timothy Lindsey, *The Romance of K’ut Tantri and Indonesia: Text and Scripts, History and Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 197-201; Jan Lingard, *Refugees and Rebels: Indonesian Exiles in Wartime Australia* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), 183-276.

In July 1959 South African Foreign Minister Louw had twice summoned the British ambassador to protest, first at the Jamaican government's trade embargo (for which Louw insisted that Britain, as the imperial power, bore responsibility), and then at Mboya's announcement of plans for an industrial boycott in East Africa (if industrial action occurred, Louw tried to insist, the British colonial authorities in Kenya would have a responsibility to ensure that cargo from South Africa was landed).¹⁵³ Louw's concern was that, as he explained regarding the Jamaican government's embargo, "The consequences which may follow may be serious for the Union, not because of the small amount of trade [with Jamaica] that may be lost, but because of the political implications, in that it may act as a spur to other hostile countries to take similar action against South Africa."¹⁵⁴

Mboya's initiative in East Africa then provoked fears that the South African economy might be seriously damaged even if no further governmental action was forthcoming: the British embassy in South Africa reported that there was "no doubting the concern on all sides [of South Africa's white political establishment] lest the fashion should spread and particularly at the prospect of an international trade union ban (encouraged by the ICF TU) as a result of the activities of Tom Mboya."¹⁵⁵ In Britain, Harold Macmillan's Conservative government was sufficiently concerned by the support of the Labour Party and the TUC for the consumer boycott campaign that it convened a special Cabinet committee on the issue. At its first meeting on January 1, 1960, the high-powered Committee, which included Macmillan, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations Alec Douglas Home, and Secretary of State for the Colonies Ian Macleod, concluded that "a consumers' boycott could in practice do no harm." But Edward Heath, the Minister of Labour, was instructed

¹⁵³ Eric Louw, "Aide Memoire: The Jamaican Question," 2 July 1959, File 105, Louw Collection; UK Mission, Pretoria, to Commonwealth Relations Office, telegram, 28 July 1959, CO 822/1844; "Boycott of Trade with South Africa," n.d. [ca. 8 September 1959], CO 822/1844, UKNA.

¹⁵⁴ Eric Louw, "Aide Memoire: The Jamaican Question," 2 July 1959, File 105, Louw Collection.

¹⁵⁵ "Boycotts" [extract from report from UK Mission, South Africa, to UK Government, London], n.d. [ca. 7 August 1959], CO 822/1844, UKNA.

to “keep contact with the TUC with a view to discouraging any possibility of an industrial boycott.”¹⁵⁶

Macmillan and his colleagues need not have worried. The CAO and then van Rensburg after he joined the British campaign had planned to ask dockers, shop workers, and market porters to refuse to handle South African goods.¹⁵⁷ In October, van Rensburg had also canvassed the possibility of securing “a month of official boycott of South African goods” by some of the states represented at the UN.¹⁵⁸ But the Labour Party’s view, as Ennals repeatedly emphasized, was that “This is *only* a consumers’ boycott. We have not asked the Government to endorse it; we have not asked the trade unions to refrain from handling South African goods; we have not asked the general public to cease buying South African goods for ever; we have sought to persuade individuals, as a token of their opposition to apartheid, to refrain from buying South African goods for a period of one month only.”¹⁵⁹ In his correspondence with Labour Party headquarters, Ennals characterized himself as a “restraining influence” on the Boycott Movement committee, and reported that he had been able to “to discourage [the other members] from doing all sorts of things that would have been irresponsible and to keep them in line with the activities which the Party supports.” Above all, this meant ensuring that the Committee made no attempt to persuade British workers to support the boycott with industrial action.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ “Cabinet: Boycott of South African Goods: Minutes of a Meeting...,” 1 January 1960, CAB 130/170, UKNA.

¹⁵⁷ “Committee of African Organisations South African Boycott Sub Committee Meeting,” minutes, 29 July 1959, File 1; “South Africa Goods Boycott,” minutes, 4 November 1959, File 2, AAM; Patrick van Rensburg to John Hatch, 28 September 1959; Patrick van Rensburg, “The Boycott Movement,” n.d. [1959], Box 130, Labour International Department Collection.

¹⁵⁸ Patrick van Rensburg to Michael Scott, 26 October 1959, File 5, AAM.

¹⁵⁹ David Ennals to W.F. Vickers, 19 January 1960, Folder: ‘Boycott Movement Correspondence,’ Box 130, Labour International Department Collection; emphasis added.

¹⁶⁰ David Ennals to M. Phillips, 19 January 1960; see also [D. Ennals] to Morgan Phillips, 26 January 1960, Folder: ‘Boycott Movement Correspondence,’ Box 130, Labour International Department Collection.

The British TUC likewise remained unalterably opposed to an industrial boycott. In the wake of the ICFTU's resolution in December the TUC announced its support of the boycott as an "act of individual goodwill" and an expression of its members' "personal revulsion" against apartheid, but the TUC leadership were terrified of the impact that any attempt to take collective action as workers would have on labor on Britain. An industrial boycott, they feared, would damage the British economy, expose British transport workers to disciplinary action, and jeopardize trade union funds.¹⁶¹ The TUC leadership therefore maintained a somewhat hands-off stance even towards the consumer boycott. A leaflet calling on trade unionists to "make the consumers' boycott your own personal protest against apartheid" was circulated to all members in February. But none of the "leading personalities" on the TUC General Council were prepared to speak at the rally launching the boycott month in Trafalgar Square on February 28.¹⁶²

Though not explicitly endorsing an industrial boycott, the boycott resolution at the ICFTU's World Congress in December 1959 had not completely ruled it out either: General Secretary Oldenbroek was instructed to "explore with the International Trade Secretariats [i.e. international groupings of unions in the same industries] and affiliated organisations immediately concerned the practicability of reinforcing the consumers' boycott by industrial boycotts."¹⁶³ Though national labor federations in Cyprus and in several colonies in the Caribbean announced their willingness to

¹⁶¹ "The South Africa Boycott," *This Week*, 31 December 1959, Folder: 'Boycott Movement Correspondence'; Vincent Tewson to General Secretaries of all affiliated unions *et al.*, "Boycott of South African Goods, 2 February 1960, Folder: South Africa-S. Africa Boycott Movement (becomes AAM) Documents 1960, Box 130, Labour International Department Collection; John Major, "The Trades Union Congress and Apartheid, 1948-1970," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 3 (September 2005): 487-89. See also Tewson's comments in International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Executive Board, "Minutes of the 29th Meeting," 30 November – 2, 6, 10 December 1959, Folder 9, Box 48, Victor Reuther Collection; and those reported in Acting Director of Intelligence and Security, Kenya Colony, "Projected South African Trade Boycott," 2 September 1959, FCO 141/6983, UKNA.

¹⁶² Trades Union Congress, "Trade Unionists Back the Boycott of South African Goods," flyer, n.d. [February 1960]; Vincent Tewson to General Secretaries of all affiliated unions *et al.*, "Boycott of South African Goods, 2 February 1960, Folder: South Africa-S. Africa Boycott Movement (becomes AAM) Documents 1960; David Ennals to Hugh Gaitskell, 23 February 1960, Folder: 'Boycott Movement Correspondence,' Box 130, Labour International Department Collection.

¹⁶³ International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Sixth World Congress, "Resolution on Boycott of South African Goods," 3-11 December 1959, Folder 7, Box 459, Walter Reuther Collection.

undertake an industrial boycott, the Secretariat quickly concluded that there was a “lack of any widespread support”: in addition to the ongoing opposition from the British TUC, the International Union of Food, Drink and Tobacco Workers’ Associations responded to Oldenbroek’s enquiry that it did not believe a boycott by its members on handling South African goods would be possible. Having established May 1 as the “target date” for its affiliates to begin a two-month boycott, the ICFTU consequently restricted its efforts to appealing to its members to boycott as consumers, not as workers.¹⁶⁴

In part precisely because the Labour Party and powerful elements in the ICFTU were determined to minimize the economic disruption wrought by the boycott, the campaign’s impact had, by March 21, 1960, been in one sense very limited. No other governments had followed Jamaica’s example, and large-scale industrial action in any of South Africa’s major trading partners was a dead letter. Though fixed-term one- or two-month consumer boycotts were scheduled to start in many parts of the world in the near future, the primary damage inflicted on the South African economy so far had been the loss of the £237,000 export market in Jamaica and South Africa’s exclusion from the hoe market in Tanganyika. In Britain, the rally on February 28 in Trafalgar Square to launch the “intensified month of boycott” had been attended by as many as 15,000 people, one of the largest open-air gatherings in central London since the VE Day celebrations in 1945. But despite the media and public attention the British campaign had generated, the TUC subsequently reported that “nothing suggested the boycott had had an important impact on the consumption of South African goods.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ “Situation in South Africa and the ICFTU Boycott,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 27 June – 2 July 1960], Folder 4, Box 440, Walter Reuther Collection. The other international trade secretariat primarily concerned, the International Transport Workers’ Federation did not reply to Oldenbroek’s query until April, by which time the ICFTU had already decided to proceed only with a consumer boycott.

¹⁶⁵ Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 237; “Situation in South Africa and the ICFTU Boycott,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 27 June – 2 July 1960], Folder 4, Box 440, Walter Reuther Collection.

The South African government and business community were clearly concerned about potential future economic damage if the boycott were to spread, particularly at a governmental or industrial level. But as critics of the boycott were quick to point out, there was no evidence in the immediate term to suggest that this concern was producing any “change of heart” among South African politicians or businessmen. The immediate response of many South African exporters’ was to seek to confound potential consumer boycotts by removing from their products any indication of their place of origin. In December 1959 leading English-speaking and Afrikaner businessmen, including Harry Oppenheimer of the giant Anglo American conglomeration and Anton Rupert of Rembrandt, established a new organization, the South African Foundation, to try to head off boycotts by improving South Africa’s image overseas. “We attacked the double standards which were employed against us,” recalled one of the founders, and “explained the history and achievements of the white man in South Africa.” The businessmen “call themselves the South African Foundation but only present a South African Façade,” joked one South African satirist.¹⁶⁶

South African Foreign Minister Eric Louw meanwhile responded with bluster and threats. Well aware of the importance the British government attached to the Commonwealth as a vehicle for Britain’s continuing global power, Louw responded to the mid-1959 boycott announcements by trying to use this as leverage to compel Britain to take action against the Jamaican government and Mboya’s KFL. In private meetings with the British ambassador, he threatened to block the future admission of the West Indies Federation to the Commonwealth if the Jamaican action were not overturned, and warned that if the West Indies were admitted over South Africa’s objections, South Africa itself might withdraw from the organization.¹⁶⁷ The British government insisted that

¹⁶⁶ Special Branch Headquarters, Kampala, “The Proposed Boycott of South African Goods,” 9 October 1959, CO 822/1844, UKNA; Francis de Guingand, *From Brass Hat to Bowler Hat* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979), 106-7; Anthony Delius, *The Day Natal Took Off* (Cape Town: Insight Publications, 1963), 14.

¹⁶⁷ Eric Louw, “Aide Memoire: The Jamaican Question,” 2 July 1959, File 105, Louw Collection; UK Mission, Pretoria, to Commonwealth Relations Office, telegram, 28 July 1959, CO 822/1844, UKNA.

constitutionally it could not interfere in the Jamaican government's decisions on trade issues, but otherwise sought to hold the Commonwealth together by not antagonizing the South African government. When Harold Macmillan famously declared in a speech to the South African parliament in February 1960 that the "wind of change" was blowing through Africa, he was careful to avoid aligning himself with those opposed to white rule in South Africa itself. In his speech Macmillan also explicitly condemned the consumer boycott in Britain, warning that boycotts "will never get you anywhere."¹⁶⁸

If by March 1960 the impact of the boycott campaign had been very limited, both in economic terms and in terms of its political effects, the rapid international spread of the idea of isolating South Africa economically nevertheless had crucial consequences. The first was – just as the South African government had feared – to entrench the idea of international economic isolation as the primary means by which non-South Africans outside South Africa should oppose apartheid. When the Sharpeville massacre occurred on March 21, 1960, it was to these kinds of actions that those who wished to contribute to the struggle against apartheid immediately turned, including many who had been cautious or even opposed to the idea in the fifteen months after the Accra AAPC had set the ball rolling.

Crucially, this was true not only outside South Africa, but also for opponents of apartheid inside the country. As this chapter has shown, the ANC leadership had not initiated the first call for a boycott at the AAPC, and had subsequently played only a limited role in encouraging the international spread of the boycott campaign during the subsequent year. Encouraged by decolonization elsewhere in Africa and believing that South Africa's "colonialism of a special type"

¹⁶⁸ "Address by Harold Macmillan to Members of Both Houses of Parliament in the Union of South Africa, Cape Town," 3 February 1960, in Harold Macmillan, *Pointing the Way, 1959-1961* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 473-82. On the Commonwealth and British policy towards South Africa at the time of the speech, see Saul Dubow, "Macmillan, Verwoerd, and the 1960 'Wind Of Change' Speech," *Historical Journal* 54, no. 4 (December 2011): 1087-114; Michael Makin, "Britain, South Africa and the Commonwealth in 1960: The 'Winds of Change' Reassessed," *Historia* 41, no. 2 (November 1996): 74-88.

must similarly soon succumb to the same trend, Congress movement strategists were optimistic in 1959 that apartheid would soon be defeated. “We cannot tell what exact form the changes will take, how exactly or when they will come,” leading SACP theoretician Michael Harmel had written at the start of the year. But the defeat of apartheid was a “certainty,” and it need not involve violence: “There have been plenty of examples in history where a combination of factors have been compelling enough to make a ruling class give way for urgent and overdue changes, without dragging the people through the agony of civil war.”¹⁶⁹

This optimism was further reinforced by the widespread support for the Congress movement’s campaigns in 1959, and especially for the potato boycott, which had been an impressive demonstration of organizational strength and had forced minor concessions from the government on farm jails. Gillian Slovo, the daughter of Congress movement and SACP stalwarts Joe Slovo and Ruth First and aged 7 in 1959, recalled watching her mother arrive home “beaming” on the day in August that the boycott of potatoes and all potato products was called off. First pulled out a packet of potato chips for each of her three young daughters, and declared “Let’s celebrate!” As Slovo put it, “No wonder... Ruth was smiling... The ANC protest campaign which had dominated the fifties was building to a peak. Next year, the beginning of a new decade, it would be more successful, might even, perhaps, bring the government to its knees. Those people like my parents who had been part of a movement which every year gained in strength... were at a peak of optimism.”¹⁷⁰

Amidst the prevailing optimism about imminent change in South Africa, neither the ANC nor the PAC had initially assigned the international boycott any great strategic significance, especially given the unlikelihood that any of South Africa’s main western trading partners would participate. Nevertheless the unexpected spread of the international boycott campaign clearly caused the leaders

¹⁶⁹ Michael Harmel, “Revolutions are Not Abnormal,” *Africa South*, January-March 1959, 17.

¹⁷⁰ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 45, 49.

of both Congresses to begin to take greater interest in the idea of international economic action. The ANC National Executive reported to the Congress's annual conference in December 1959 that the "international response" to the June launch of their anti-Nationalist boycott had been "beyond all expectations." The same report declared that "the time has now come for the world to consider sanctions" against South Africa. That month ANC President Lutuli signed the statement Peter Brown had drafted endorsing the consumer boycott in Britain. Questioned in early 1960 about his views on overseas boycotts, Lutuli replied that he "strongly" believed that they might help to turn white voters against the National Party: "I feel that with the boycotts, when South African markets are affected, the people in South Africa who are affected might be angry and might feel that they would be better off with another form of Government if the present one did not see things in a reasonable way."¹⁷¹ The PAC also announced its support for the boycott of South African goods: "the crippling of the monopolistic South African White economy shall have the effect of bringing back some sense to Verwoerd's government of minority rule," declared the PAC executive in their report to their own national conference that December.¹⁷²

But although the proliferation of boycotts outside the country thus generated interest and support for the idea among anti-apartheid leaders inside South Africa, neither the ANC nor the PAC invested significant time, energy, resources, or personnel in encouraging an external economic boycott. In the immediate term, the focus of both the ANC and the PAC remained on internal action. Still under pressure from grassroots members, the ANC resolved at its December 1959

¹⁷¹ "Report of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, submitted to the Annual Conference, December 12-13, 1959," Item Ba7.3, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers; "Memorandum on a Consultation with Chief A.J. Luthuli," n.d. [post-3 February 1960, pre-21 March 1960], File 117/2/3/4, First Papers. For the comments of another Congress Alliance leader, see also "Presidential Address to the 12th Annual Conference of the Natal Indian Congress, Durban," 9 October 1959, in *Monty Speaks: Speeches of Dr G.M. (Monty) Naicker 1945-1963*, ed. E.S. Reddy (Durban: Madiba Publishers, 1991), 135.

¹⁷² "Report of the National Executive Committee of the PAC, Submitted to the Annual Conference," 19-20 December, 1959, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, 552.

conference to launch a campaign against the pass laws, starting on March 31. The Congress leadership remained wary of civil disobedience: the main feature of the planned campaign would be nationwide mass demonstrations on the launch day and then on selected days thereafter at approximately monthly intervals. The PAC leadership was likewise under pressure from its supporters to undertake more militant action than the status campaign boycotts, for which there had been little enthusiasm. A week after the ANC's conference, the PAC's first annual conference resolved that it too would launch an anti-pass campaign. This would be far more dramatic than the ANC's: on the appointed day – later set as March 21 – the PAC would call on all African men to leave their passes at home, and present themselves at their local police station for arrest. Once arrested they should adhere to the campaign slogan: “No bail! No defence! No fine!” With their faith in grassroots spontaneity, the Africanists had always believed that they needed only to provide inspirational leadership to spark off unstoppable mass action. Defiance of the pass laws would escalate, PAC leaders believed, and quickly send the country's economy and administration into chaos.¹⁷³

The leaders of the ANC and PAC remained focused on these internal campaigns in the first three months of 1960. But the rapid spread of boycott campaigns overseas had nevertheless raised the possibility of international economic sanctions on the very eve of the crisis that followed the Sharpeville massacre on March 21, after which South African opponents of the regime immediately began to explore new strategies by which they might achieve their objectives.

¹⁷³ Lodge, *Black Politics*, 86, 201-4; Gerhart, *Black Power*, 226-36.

CHAPTER 3

The Turn to Sanctions, 1960 – 1964

On March 30, 1960, the South African government declared a nationwide State of Emergency. In dawn raids, police began rounding up and imprisoning more than two thousand PAC and Congress Alliance activists under the emergency regulations. “That night the raids were huge,” recalled Congress of Democrats activist Ben Turok. “Thousands [were arrested]... all sorts of people. And so I sat, and...listened to the news. The whole world is collapsed.”¹ Troops were sent into African townships to force strikers back to work. Two days earlier the government had introduced legislation to ban both the ANC and the PAC; the law making both organizations illegal came into force on April 8.

The following day a white farmer narrowly failed in his attempt to assassinate Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, who was seriously injured. By then, however, the government had finally crushed the upsurge of resistance that had broken out across the country nineteen days earlier. On March 21 there had been little response in much of the country to the PAC’s call for Africans to defy the pass laws. But in the township of Sharpeville, outside Johannesburg, a large crowd had gathered outside the police station. The police had opened fire, killing more than sixty-nine people and wounding more than one hundred and eighty. Demonstrations, strikes, pass burning, and riots broke out across the country in the days following the massacre. The government briefly struggled to maintain control, and suspended implementation of the pass laws. On March 30, thirty thousand Africans participated in a largely unplanned march into the center of Cape Town.

On April 1, in the midst of the crisis, an “Emergency Committee” of the ANC made the Congress’s first public and explicit appeal for the immediate imposition of international economic

¹ Magubane *et al.*, “The Turn to Armed Struggle,” 73.

sanctions against South Africa. The Committee – which included Moses Kotane, Yusuf Dadoo, Michael Harmel, and Ben Turok – consisted of the few senior members of the Alliance leadership who had managed to escape the police net when the Emergency was imposed the day before. Their first public statement declared that the ANC would continue “to give leadership and organisation to our people until freedom has been won,” and called on “all the peoples and Governments of the whole world” to give their support. Specifically, the Emergency Committee urged “the United Nations to quarantine the racist Verwoerd Government by imposing full economic sanctions against the Union of South Africa.”²

This chapter analyzes the turn to sanctions made by the Congress Alliance and its allies in the external anti-apartheid movement in the years immediately following the Sharpeville Massacre. It shows that sanctions now became a central element in ANC strategy in the specific context of the domestic and international situation that prevailed in 1960. Public pressure after Sharpeville also caused Ghana and the other independent African states to reverse their earlier opposition to sanctions: the African Group at the United Nations now became the force that sanctions advocates hoped would be able to bring about a multilateral regime of trade sanctions that would cripple the South African economy. The focus on economic boycotts at governmental level was also adopted by the Congress movement’s supporters in the west: the earlier consumer and sports boycott campaigns that had been started before the massacre were now repurposed as forms of “political education” or consciousness-raising that were intended to create a constituency for sanctions among western publics.

In the immediate wake of Sharpeville, all sanctions advocates envisaged that they would

² “A Statement by the Emergency Committee of the African National Congress,” 1 April 1960, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 572-74. Since Dadoo was Indian and the other members of the committee were white, Kotane appears to have been the only member of the “Emergency Committee of the African National Congress” who was actually a member of the ANC. Turok later recalled: “We were the ANC. Moses was the ANC. If it comes to that, we all participated, there was no distinction, the Alliance was complete. It was one.” “B. Turok Tape 1,” interview transcript, typed October 1973, File 8.4.1, Box 13, Bunting Collection.

contribute to peaceful political change in South Africa by increasing the costs of apartheid to whites and bringing about a realignment of white politics that would isolate Verwoerd and other hardline racists. Many opponents of apartheid in the west clung to the hope of this model of change throughout the first half of the 1960s. But, crucially, those members of the Congress movement and the South African Communist Party who concluded that it was necessary to turn to violent resistance after Sharpeville continued to believe that the imposition of sanctions was of crucial strategic importance. The leaders of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the newly-formed armed wing of the ANC and the SACP, were divided over whether the ultimate objective of their armed struggle was to seize power by armed force or to compel the government to the negotiating table. But all agreed that achieving their ultimate aim would be facilitated by effective economic sanctions. Moreover, the imposition of a multilateral regime of trade sanctions appeared for a brief period to be a serious possibility: as decolonization transformed the membership of the United Nations, sanctions advocates were initially optimistic that the African states would be able to exert sufficient leverage at the UN to force British and American acquiescence.

I. 'A solution could only come from outside': Sanctions after Sharpeville

Once it became known abroad, the ANC Emergency Committee's call on April 1 for "full economic sanctions" gave a focus to the inchoate and varied responses to Sharpeville around the world over the previous eleven days. Some outside South Africa had already called for governmental sanctions immediately after the massacre. Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, wrote to U.S. Secretary of State Christian Herter the day after the killings asking him to recall the American ambassador to South Africa, and "cut off all economic aid and commerce with that country." United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther, the leading American supporter over the previous months of Tom Mboya's campaign for a boycott, followed

up with his own letter to Herter and President Dwight Eisenhower on March 24, urging a “complete economic quarantine.”³ In a debate in the Australian parliament two days after the massacre, the opposition Labor Party called for Australia to impose trade sanctions.⁴ On March 30, the government of the self-governing British colony of Antigua in the West Indies became the third government after those of India and Jamaica to declare an end to all trade with South Africa.⁵ On April 1, the government of Ghana took the more limited step of announcing an embargo on the importation of one specific South African product: *Drum* magazine.⁶

The belief that external opposition to the South African government’s behavior should be expressed through boycotts and sanctions was still far from universally shared, however, even among committed opponents of apartheid. The American Committee on Africa’s first flyer in response to Sharpeville, released on April 4, made no reference to boycotting South Africa, for instance. Under the heading “How individual Americans can respond” the flyer instead emphasized donations for assistance to the dependents of those killed and legal aid for those subsequently arrested.⁷ In Britain, in contrast, at a meeting of leading opponents of apartheid at the House of Commons on April 5 Tennyson Makiwane and Vella Pillay urged that those outside South Africa should now take a much more proactive role: the ANC and the South African Indian Congress, they

³ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, “NAACP Urges U.S. to Cut Off Relations with South Africa,” 24 March 1960, Folder 14, Box 194, Charles C. Diggs, Jr. Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 189; Walter P. Reuther to Dwight D. Eisenhower, Christian A. Herter, telegram, 24 March 1960, Folder 5, Box 18, Mboya Papers.

⁴ Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 173.

⁵ [Antigua Executive Council], “Union of South Africa (Import Prohibition) Order,” 30 March 1960, CO 1031/3864, UKNA.

⁶ “Minutes of the [cabinet] meeting held at 4 o’clock...,” 1 April 1960, ADM 13/1/29, Ghana PRAAD.

⁷ Africa Defense and Aid Fund of the American Committee on Africa, “The Shame of South Africa!” flyer, 4 April 1960, Folder 1, Box 37, Scheinman Papers.

declared, “felt that fund-raising was not enough and did not meet the urgency of the situation. We must try to stop the violence rather than alleviate its results.”⁸

Those at the meeting were uncertain exactly how they could do this, however. When Pillay suggested an embargo on labor from the British territories of Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland, others argued that this would be too difficult given the lack of alternative employment opportunities for migrant workers in southern Africa. The minutes of the meeting record that “the possibility of stopping exports of oil to South Africa and of imports of gold from there was briefly touched upon.” But the attendees were not yet aware of the ANC Emergency Committee’s appeal four days earlier, and in Britain there was little explicit discussion of the possibility of campaigning for economic sanctions in the weeks immediately after Sharpeville. In the meantime, the Boycott Movement had already decided just before the massacre that it would continue in existence after the March 1960 boycott month was over. After the massacre the Committee immediately decided that the consumer boycott campaign would now be continued indefinitely. It released a statement calling on the British people “to take every opportunity to express outrage and revulsion at the barbarous behaviour [of the South African government] and to further intensify the boycott of South Africa goods, as a practical expression of their attitude.” The statement also expressed the hope that the UN Security Council would “take the strongest possible action,” but did not offer any more specific suggestion of what form such action might take.⁹ The Security Council did in fact meet to discuss South Africa for the first time in the wake of the massacre. On April 1, the Council adopted a resolution deploring the South African government’s policies and recent actions, and calling on it “to initiate measures aimed at bringing about racial harmony based on equality.” UN Secretary-

⁸ “Notes on a Meeting in the House of Commons on 5 April 1960 on South Africa,” File 2, AAM.

⁹ “Notes on a Meeting in the House of Commons on 5 April 1960 on South Africa,” File 2; Boycott Movement, “Press Release,” n.d. [ca. late March 1960], File 3, AAM.

General Dag Hammarskjold was instructed to hold consultations with the South African government.¹⁰

The strategic focus of the nascent anti-apartheid movement in Britain – and beyond – was transformed by the arrival in Britain of Yusuf Dadoo in mid-April.¹¹ Thirteen years after he had first called for worldwide sanctions against South Africa during the SAIC’s passive resistance campaign, Dadoo had been one of the handful of Congress Alliance leaders who had escaped the police and issued the new appeal for sanctions on behalf of the ANC on April 1. He had then been assigned by the other members of the ANC Emergency Committee to leave the country. ANC Deputy President Oliver Tambo had already left South Africa, charged with establishing an “External Mission”: as soon as the government announced its intention to ban the liberation movements on March 28, Congress-supporting magazine editor Ronald Segal had driven Tambo across the border into British-ruled Bechuanaland (now Botswana). Dadoo joined up with Tambo and Segal there, and he and Segal then traveled on to London. The day after their arrival on April 19, Dadoo attended a meeting of the Anti-Apartheid Committee, as the Boycott Movement had now renamed itself. (By the end of the month it had settled on “the Anti-Apartheid Movement” or “AAM”). Emphasizing that “outside pressure on South Africa was most important,” Dadoo conveyed the ANC Emergency Committee’s request for UN sanctions, and suggested asking the labor movement and the independent African states to refuse to handle oil destined for South Africa. The Committee assigned Vella Pillay to draft a “Programme of Action” focused on the demand for economic

¹⁰ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Resolution 134, “Question relating to the situation in the Union of South Africa,” 1 April 1960, <https://perma.cc/2JNR-CXPS>.

¹¹ On the importance of the arrival in Britain of Dadoo and – shortly afterwards – Oliver Tambo, see “First Recording: Kader Asmal,” vol. 1; “First Recording: Vella Pillay,” vol. 13, Hilda Bernstein Interviews.

sanctions. It was, as another member of the Committee later observed, “a move that was to have profound implications for the future of the anti-apartheid struggle.”¹²

The ANC and its supporters abroad thus first came to focus on governmental economic sanctions in the specific context of the ongoing State of Emergency after Sharpeville. The mass arrests and the banning of the ANC left the Congress movement inside the country almost totally incapacitated. The kinds of domestic campaigns on which the Congress movement had focused its attention throughout the 1950s now became impossible. The Emergency Committee of Kotane, Harmel, and Turok spent the duration of the State of Emergency on the run, moving from safe house to safe house every few weeks to avoid detection. SACP activist Wolfie Kodesh, who spent the Emergency sleeping on a Johannesburg golf course to avoid arrest, acted as a liaison between the Emergency Committee and other Congress and Communist Party members who were still at large. Their primary objective was simply, he recalled, “to keep things moving and to keep things alive. And to show, as much as possible, that the Congress Alliance was still alive and kicking.” The main way of doing this was “giving people activities to perform, like... putting out leaflets, going door to door.”¹³ While such action was necessary to maintain any semblance of political organization at all, it was hardly sufficient to pose a serious challenge to the state. Congress leaders both in South Africa and abroad had no idea how long this paralyzed state of affairs would last: it was possible, they believed, that the Emergency would continue indefinitely. It was in this context, with the pursuit of almost any form of internal action against apartheid effectively impossible, that in May 1960 Tambo went so far as to claim that “a solution could only come from outside the country.”¹⁴

¹² “Minutes of Meeting of the Anti-Apartheid Movement,” 20 April 1960, File 2, AAM; Asmal, Hadland, and Levy, *Politics in My Blood*, 42.

¹³ “Interview with Wolfie Kodesh, conducted by Howard Barrell,” 3 March 1990, Folder 3, Box 1, Barrell Papers.

¹⁴ “South African Contrasts,” *Irish Times*, 18 May 1960, 7; Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 274.

Moreover, the State of Emergency shut down most internal anti-apartheid activity at the exact moment when Congress leaders' attention had been drawn to the idea of external boycotts. The Sharpeville massacre occurred in the midst of the boycott month in Britain, and nine days before the ICFTU-inspired consumer boycott campaigns by the national trade union federations of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and West Germany were due to start on April 1. Congress leaders were further impressed by the welter of international interest and condemnation that followed Sharpeville. In his cell in the 'Rooi Hell' prison in Port Elizabeth, ANC and SACP leader Govan Mbeki recorded in his diary during the Emergency that he and his fellow prisoners were "Greatly encouraged with [the] news of anti-apartheid feeling growing" internationally, and that "Probably one of the most striking things in this period of our history is the growing volume of opposition throughout the world to the apartheid racial policies." Those on the liberal nationalist wing of the ANC were just as struck by this phenomenon. M.B. Yengwa, a senior Congress official in Natal and close aide of ANC President Lutuli, wrote to Mary Louise Hooper in September that whereas in 1957 he had believed it would take ten or twenty years to free South Africa, the way in which "world opinion has swung almost solidly to our side and against the S.A. Government" had now convinced him that victory would be achieved in five years at the most. "The international front," Yengwa observed, "seems to be becoming the most important wing of the liberatory movement in this Country."¹⁵

Anti-apartheid activists' new focus on the "international front" was also influenced by the perception that decolonization was transforming the United Nations. In the 1940s, after his calls for multilateral sanctions had been ignored, Dadoo had castigated the "weakness" of the UN, which he believed had been rendered impotent by Britain, the U.S., and their allies. But as former colonies

¹⁵ "Extracts from Govan Mbeki's prison diary – Emergency 1960," Folder 4, Box 1, Benson research material, UCLA; Bonnie [M.B. Yengwa] to Louisa [Mary Louise Hooper], 19 September 1960, Hooper papers.

gained independence and joined the world body, Congress leaders believed that this could now be reversed. In 1960 sixteen new African states became members of the UN. This meant, an underground ANC newsheet explained that November, that there was now an “anti-colonial majority” in the General Assembly, and that “the United Nations Organisation, which was up to the middle of 1960 a stronghold of the big imperialists and colonial powers, has now become a stronghold of the anti-colonial forces, and that properly used, it could help in furthering the struggle for national independence and for equality and freedom.” Specifically, Congress leaders were confident that – as an underground bulletin produced by the Congress of Democrats in July 1960 predicted – the worldwide “horror” at apartheid following Sharpeville was “soon to find expression in crippling sanctions by the United Nations.”¹⁶

Congress leaders and their allies abroad were thus optimistic that UN was now a forum in which they could secure a multilateral sanctions regime. For sanctions to be “crippling,” they believed, they would have to be observed universally. A “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa” that the AAM circulated to all British political parties and labor unions in July 1960 pointed out that the impact of India’s unilateral sanctions against South Africa in 1946 had been undermined by South Africa’s ability subsequently to buy jute and tea from Ceylon and Pakistan instead, while a memorandum on “The Concept of Sanctions” circulated by the ACOA to UN delegations in October 1960 recalled the failure of the sanctions imposed by the League of Nations against Italy in 1935 because of the non-compliance of several of Italy’s trading partners.¹⁷ In the case of South Africa, sanctions advocates agreed that Anglo-American participation in a sanctions regime was

¹⁶ “U.N.O. and Colonialism,” *Congress Voice: An Occasional Bulletin*, November 1960, p. 6, File Hb1.5; “Editorial: Principles to Fight For,” *Counter Attack: Bulletin of the S.A. Congress of Democrats*, July 1960, p.1, File M24.4, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers.

¹⁷ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM; Thomas Hovet Jr. and Linwood Wall, “The Concept of Sanctions and their General Application and Use,” October 1960, File 120/7, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

essential if it was to be effective. “No combination of countries agreeing to cut off supplies to South Africa which did not include Great Britain and the United States would have any effect at all,” Patrick van Rensburg wrote bluntly in March 1962, in one of the earliest studies of anti-apartheid sanctions.¹⁸

Anti-apartheid activists believed that the transformation of the UN had turned it into a promising forum for exerting pressure on Britain and the U.S. to agree to a multilateral sanctions regime, because of the cold war struggle for the allegiance of the emerging Third World. The AAM’s June 1960 “Memorandum on Sanctions” argued that the desire to maintain the goodwill of African and Asian states might embarrass the United States and Britain into abstention on a sanctions resolution in the UN General Assembly, and that – once such a resolution had been passed – “failure to conform with sanctions would be a greater defiance than either country would be likely to wish to contemplate.”¹⁹

ANC leaders and their allies thus turned to sanctions in 1960 because options for opposing apartheid inside the country had been suddenly limited at the exact historical moment that the transformation of international politics by decolonization seemed to offer new opportunities in the international sphere. This new focus on sanctions was further reinforced by the perception that after Sharpeville South Africa was particularly vulnerable to international economic action, in a way that it had never been before. The massacre and its aftermath caused a precipitous drop in the confidence of international investors and was followed by a rapid flight of foreign capital and the depletion of South Africa’s foreign currency reserves. These developments were followed closely by opponents of apartheid: Govan Mbeki wrote in his prison diary that he and his fellow prisoners had “note[d]

¹⁸ Patrick van Rensburg, “Sanctions Against South Africa,” File 1702, AAM.

¹⁹ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM. See also, for example, Bonnie [M.B. Yengwa] to Louisa [Mary Louise Hooper], 19 September 1960, Hooper Papers; Patrick van Rensburg, “Sanctions Against South Africa,” File 1702, AAM.

every economic factor – rise of the bank rate in S.A. etc.” Newly-exiled in Britain, Ronald Segal argued in the left-wing weekly *Tribune* that South Africa was now “vulnerable as never before to the slightest assaults on her overseas trade.”²⁰ It appeared, moreover, that pressure on the economy could produce political change: in the immediate wake of Sharpeville prominent members of the business community publicly demanded changes in government policy in order to stabilize the situation. Some members of the government appeared to endorse such proposals, including Paul Sauer, the acting prime minister while Verwoerd recovered from the assassination attempt against him. Sauer announced that Sharpeville had “closed the old book of South African history” and that the government needed to “create a new spirit which will restore overseas faith, both white and non-white, in South Africa.”²¹

Sharpeville and its aftermath were thus not only a period of crisis for the ANC and its allies, but also one of hope. “For a few days,” SACP stalwart Hilda Bernstein later recalled, “the future of white supremacy hung in the balance.”²² Congress leaders believed that an effective international boycott would further exacerbate South Africa’s economic problems and tip the balance against apartheid. A memorandum on “Boycott and Economic Sanctions” circulated to delegates at the UN by Oliver Tambo in 1961 argued that the “setback of 1960” had created a situation that was “gloomy for South African capitalists, but hopeful for those who are convinced that the only weapon left against apartheid is economic. With a buoyant economy such as in the immediate post-

²⁰ “Extracts from Govan Mbeki’s prison diary – Emergency 1960,” Folder 4, Box 1, Benson research material, UCLA; Ronald Segal, “Cry South Africa,” *Tribune*, 20 May 1960, 5. Segal’s assessment was subsequently quoted in Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM.

²¹ Dubow, “Were There Political Alternatives,” 127-29; Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, 224; Dan O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Randburg, South Africa: Ravan Press, 1996), 104.

²² Hilda Bernstein, “Personal Comment,” 17 March 1968, File B6.2, Hilda and Rusty Bernstein Papers (A3299), Wits Historical Papers.

war years, the economic battle would have been formidable. With a weakened economy such as South Africa has at present, victory becomes a possibility.”²³

What kind of “victory” did sanctions advocates envisage that a sanctions regime would help to bring about? In their publicity materials the South African liberation movements and their allies in Britain, the U.S., and elsewhere sometimes implied that the objective of sanctions was to “break the intransigence of the Verwoerd government,” or to “compel the South African Government to abandon its policy of apartheid and white domination.”²⁴ In practice, however, most sanctions advocates in this period did not believe that Verwoerd’s National Party government could ever be compelled to negotiate away apartheid. As Lutuli put it in December 1961, the National Party government was “far too committed to the apartheid policy ever to change.” Rather than trying to achieve such a change on the part of the government, then, “what we hope, is that outside pressure might make the electorate take stock of the situation and act accordingly.”²⁵

Most of the leading opponents of apartheid in this period understood their immediate objective to be – as the ANC Emergency Committee put it in its statement on April 1, 1960 – the replacement of the Verwoerd government with “one less completely unacceptable to the people, of all races, ... a government which sets out to take the path, rejected by Verwoerd, of conciliation, concessions, and negotiation.”²⁶ This position was elaborated further by one of the members of the Emergency Committee, SACP theoretician Michael Harmel. During the Emergency, Harmel wrote an SACP discussion paper entitled “South Africa: What Next?” Among the issues Harmel addressed

²³ South African United Front, “Boycott and Economic Sanctions,” n.d. [1961], Folder 1, Box 3, Part II (ANC London), ANC Records: Lusaka and London [former Mayibuye Archives collection], NAHECS.

²⁴ South African United Front, “Press Statement: The Situation in South Africa,” 6 September 1960, File 973; African National Congress of South Africa, “Press Release,” 11 April 1962, File 922, AAM.

²⁵ “Lutuli Wants Pressure on S. Africa,” *Cape Times*, 9 December 1961 [newspaper clipping], File ICS 6/5/2/6, Mary Benson Papers (ICS 6), Senate House.

²⁶ “A Statement by the Emergency Committee of the African National Congress,” 1 April 1960, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 573.

was what government would follow that of Prime Minister Verwoerd. Harmel argued that though the Communist Party's long-term objective was "a revolutionary provisional government, headed by workers and peasants," the immediate task was to replace the National Party government with one which "may well fall short of what we want" but which would be "prepared, at the very least, to negotiate with all sections of the people for a peaceful settlement of such immediate grievances [as] passes, wages, representation in parliament. This would be a government of transition, between Verwoerd and national liberation." Harmel's position was not universally accepted. After the Emergency was lifted and activists were released at the end of August, the paper was circulated to all units of the underground SACP. It received "substantial criticism" from those Party members who believed that Verwoerd government could and should be immediately replaced by a "revolutionary provisional government." But the idea that the immediate objective of anti-apartheid activity was the replacement of the National Party regime with a more conciliatory and reformist one was accepted as official SACP policy.²⁷

This was also the model of change envisaged by Lutuli and others on the liberal-nationalist wing of the ANC, and by prominent advocates of sanctions who were now overseas. Among these was Patrick van Rensburg, the South African Liberal and former director of the Boycott Movement, who in 1961 was commissioned by the Institute of Race Relations in London to produce the first detailed study of sanctions and the specifics of South Africa's foreign trade.²⁸ While working on the sanctions study, van Rensburg also wrote an autobiography, in which he laid out a detailed scenario for how sanctions could contribute to ending apartheid. It was possible, van Rensburg argued, that

²⁷ [M. Harmel probably], "Comment on Discussion of 'S.A. What Next?'" n.d. [1960], Item 13.3.3, Box 134, Bunting Collection. This "comment" quotes extensively from the original discussion paper, of which I have been unable to locate a copy in South Africa. Ben Turok was responsible in this period for sending duplicates of all SACP documents to Moscow, where a copy of "South Africa: What Next?" has apparently survived. A short section is quoted in Vladimir Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, 2nd ed (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2008), 12-13.

²⁸ Patrick van Rensburg, "Sanctions Against South Africa," File 1702, AAM.

“the collapse of White supremacy would come about through a succession of White governments, each shorter and more troubled than the last.” In an economic crisis brought on by sanctions, there might be a parliamentary realignment in which the National Party would split, and some of its more moderate elements would form a government with the opposition United Party. Or, alternatively, in a crisis election, voters might elect a United Party government. Such a government would still, of course, be committed to white supremacy, but it “might be less drastic than the present one and more amenable to pressure.” Under sustained pressure from ongoing sanctions, a successor government might be compelled to work with the Progressive Party (formed by eleven MPs on the liberal wing of the United Party, who had broken away in 1959) or the Liberal Party. “Once the crisis had forced the successors of Dr Verwoerd to seek the aid of either of these groups,” van Rensburg believed, “the end of White supremacy would have begun.”²⁹

Advocates of sanctions rarely spelled out the scenarios they envisaged in such detail. But similar ideas about the role of sanctions could play were held not only by liberals like van Rensburg but by South African and overseas opponents of apartheid across the political spectrum. The SACP Central Committee, for instance, argued in October 1960 that trade sanctions could assist the struggle against apartheid in several vital ways. Not only would sanctions give inspiration and encouragement to the internal resistance, but they would also, first, contribute to “dividing the ruling class itself, driving in a wedge between those who are prepared to persist with the worst excesses of apartheid irrespective of the economic cost, and those who are prepared to relax some of the most reactionary aspects of the policy, in order to maintain prosperity.” Second, sanctions would “weaken popular appeal of the South African government to the white population generally” by associating apartheid with economic hardship. As SACP Central Committee member and ANC Secretary General Duma Nokwe explained in a 1961 article on UN sanctions, “the only way of teaching

²⁹ Van Rensburg, *Guilty Land*, 178-80.

Whites that racist policy must be abandoned is by removing the economic benefits they think they get from the system. Faced with unemployment and possibilities of starvation, the Whites will reject racialism and choose the path of sanity.”³⁰

Tambo and his embryonic “External Mission” thus threw themselves into campaigning for sanctions immediately after Sharpeville. So too did Nana Mahomo and Peter Molotsi, two members of the PAC Executive who had been sent out of South Africa the day before Sharpeville. According to Molotsi, the PAC leadership was concerned that Tennyson Makiwane of the ANC, who had risen to prominence through his role in the Boycott Movement in Britain, was “gaining all the sympathy abroad.” Mahomo and Molotsi do not appear to have received specific instructions before they left on what they should do, however, and they did not receive any after their departure. The Pan Africanists, who had always celebrated action over organization, were even more badly crippled after Sharpeville than the ANC. The senior PAC leaders had all been arrested for defying the pass laws on March 21, and though in some areas plans had been made for contingency tiers of leadership, all of these were subsequently swept up by the police. The PAC headquarters was left in charge of William Jolobe, a student who had previously served as a part-time typist and secretary for the Party. In these circumstances, Mahomo and Molotsi acted for the next two years on their own initiative, without any direction from inside South Africa.³¹ In May 1960, they agreed to form an exiled South African

³⁰ [Central Committee of the South African Communist Party], “The Boycott of South African Trade,” [October 1960], Folder 4, Box 3, Part II (ANC-London), ANC Records: Lusaka and London [former Mayibuye Archives collection], NAHECS; “Nokwe Replies to Crowe,” *Counter Attack: Bulletin of the S.A. Congress of Democrats*, November 1961, File M24.4, ANC Records, Wits Historical Papers.

Similar arguments are made by Wilton [Mkwayi], “Solidarity with South African Workers and People Against Apartheid,” n.d [1960], Item 4.6.8, Folder 5, Box 4, Dr. Yusuf Mohamed Dadoo Personal Papers (MCH05), Mayibuye Archives; “Walter Sisulu” (notes on an interview), n.d. [ca. 1961/1962], Folder 3, Box 1, Benson research material, UCLA; [Yusuf Dadoo?], “Conclusions,” n.d. [1962], Unlabeled Folder, Box 1, ANC London Collection (MCH02), Mayibuye Archives; Collin Gonze, George M. Houser, and Perry M. Sturges, *South African Crisis and United States Policy* (New York: American Committee on Africa, 1962), 58.

³¹ Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements in Exile,” 95-96; Gerhart, *Black Power*, 249-50; Pogrud, *How Can Man Die Better*, 140-41; Tom Lodge, “Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965” (Ph.D. thesis, University of York, 1984), 394; Arianna Lissoni, “The PAC in Basutoland, c. 1962-1965,” *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 1 (March 2010): 57-58.

United Front (SAUF) with Tambo of the ANC, Dadoo of the SAIC, and Jariretundu Kozonguizi of the South West African National Union, and joined with Tambo and Dadoo in calling for economic sanctions to be imposed against South Africa.³²

Despite the enthusiasm for sanctions on the part of the SAUF leaders and their supporters in Britain and the U.S., their demands initially met with a limited response from the governments whose support would be necessary to impose them. In May 1960 the only governments that prohibited trade with South Africa were India, Jamaica, and Antigua. In Africa, as we have seen, no independent state had implemented the original December 1958 resolution of the All African People's Conference calling for sanctions. Indeed, Kwame Nkrumah had again publicly denounced the idea of governmental economic sanctions in January 1960.³³ The unpopularity of this position amongst non-governmental pan-Africanist activists had, however, been vividly demonstrated at the second AAPC, held that month in Tunis. "Speakers after speakers [sic] directly and indirectly attacked Ghana on its luke-warm attitude towards the boycotting of South African goods," reported A.K. Barden, secretary of Ghana's Bureau of African Affairs. "I feel," Barden concluded, "that in order to uphold the envious prestige of Ghana in its relentless fight for independence for dependent countries, this matter [the boycott of South African goods] should be given further serious consideration."³⁴

Eleven days after Sharpeville the Ghanaian cabinet decided to ban the South African-owned *Drum* magazine "as a token of the government's abhorrence of the South African Government's

³² "Attempt At 'Genocide' of People of Indian Origin: 'Verwoerd Regime Mad' Says Dr. Dadoo," *Times of India*, 25 May 1960, 7. The most detailed account of the formation of the SAUF, which was officially announced in mid-June 1960, is Lissoni, "South African Liberation Movements in Exile," 94-100.

³³ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 97; J.J. Human, *South Africa, 1960: A Chronicle* (Cape Town: Tafelberg-Uitgewers, 1961), 11-12.

³⁴ A.K. Barden, "Report on the Second All African People's Conference..." 4 February 1960, SC/BAA/251, Ghana PRAAD. See also Ahlman, "Road to Ghana," 29-40; Barros, *African States and the United Nations*, 46.

policy of apartheid and the recent atrocities committed against Africans in South Africa.” This was presumably intended to reduce the damage being done to Ghana’s reputation among pan-Africanists by Nkrumah’s earlier outspoken opposition to sanctions – while still avoiding the economic dislocation in Ghana that a broader trade embargo could cause.³⁵ Selecting *Drum* as the sole South African item to be boycotted was ironic, as prominent friends of the magazine including Trevor Huddleston and Alan Paton quickly pointed out in telegrams to Nkrumah. As we have seen, the magazine had played an important role in popularizing the boycott of all-white sports teams. And it was a *Drum* photographer, Ian Berry, who had captured the only images of the police firing into the crowd at Sharpeville, and whose pictures of the massacre were flashed around the world. The magazine was nevertheless an attractive target for boycott for the Ghanaian government, which objected to the sensationalism and anti-CPP slant of *Drum*’s Ghanaian edition. As far as Nkrumah was concerned, *Drum* was publishing “material that was not only unhelpful but also unhealthy.” The conclusion of *Drum* owner Jim Bailey, who rushed to Accra to try to reverse the ban, that “this banning was nothing to do with Sharpeville” was an exaggeration, but not by much. After securing a commitment from Bailey to – as Nkrumah saw it – “improve the quality of the paper,” the Ghanaian prime minister recommended to his cabinet on April 28 that the boycott be lifted – though ultimately they delayed lifting the ban until June 28, apparently so that the government would not lose face.³⁶

In the meantime, pressure from non-governmental bodies in Africa for the independent African states to end all trade with South Africa continued to mount. In April calls for sanctions

³⁵ “Minutes of the [cabinet] meeting held at 4 o’clock...,” 1 April 1960, ADM 13/1/29, Ghana PRAAD.

³⁶ The Prime Minister, “Lifting of Ban on Importation of the Drum,” [cabinet memorandum for meeting on 28 April 1960], ADM 13/2/71; “Minutes of the [cabinet] meeting held at 4 o’clock...,” 28 June, 1960, ADM 13/1/29, Ghana PRAAD; Bailey, “Letting the Genie out of the Bottle,” 144-45. See also Tom Hopkinson, *Under the Tropic* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 133-35; Tom Hopkinson, “How to do Business in Ghana,” *Creative Camera* 235/236 (July-August 1986): 1450-51. On the history of *Drum*’s west African editions, see Tyler Fleming and Toyin Falola, “Africa’s Media Empire: *Drum*’s Expansion to Nigeria,” *History in Africa* 32 (2005): 133-64.

were issued by both the Positive Action Conference for Peace and Security in Africa, which was convened by Nkrumah in Accra to discuss French nuclear tests in the Sahara, and by the conference of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization in Conakry, Guinea.³⁷ But what finally appears to have changed Nkrumah's mind on sanctions was South African foreign minister Eric Louw's provocative and intransigent behavior during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London in May 1960. When Sir Abubakar Balewa – the premier of not-yet-independent Nigeria who happened to be in London at the time for constitutional talks – publicly raised the possibility of excluding South Africa from the Commonwealth, Louw called a press conference at which he pointed to Ghana's open invitation to him to visit as evidence that apartheid was not a cause of international tension. Embarrassed, the Ghanaian government promptly canceled the invitation. On Nkrumah's return home he effectively repudiated the policy of constructive engagement he had pursued for the previous three years: Ghana could not “sit down and wait indefinitely” for a change of heart in South Africa, Nkrumah now declared, and should consider the possibility of economic sanctions.³⁸

When Nkrumah had convened the first Conference of Independent African States in Accra in April, the Ghanaian premier had ignored Michael Scott's suggestion that the delegates should discuss economic sanctions against South Africa. Now, however, when the second Conference of Independent African States met in Addis Ababa in June 1960, Ghanaian foreign minister Ako Adjei was the first speaker to call explicitly for sanctions, announcing that Ghana was “prepared, in concert with the other African states, to take appropriate measures to organise an economic boycott of South Africa.” The proposal was supported by Tambo, Dadoo, Mahomo, and Molotsi, all of

³⁷ “Resolution on South Africa,” in “positive action conference for peace and security in africa,” pamphlet, ADM 16/1/24, Ghana PRAAD; Jean Allman, “Nuclear Imperialism and the Pan-African Struggle for Peace and Freedom: Ghana, 1959–1962,” *Souls* 10, no. 2 (2008): 94-95; *Opening Speeches, Closing Speeches, Resolutions, Declarations* (Cairo: Permanent Secretariat of the Organization for the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity, [1960]).

³⁸ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 96-97.

whom had traveled to Ethiopia for the conference. In a closed session of the conference, Mahomo presented a memorandum on behalf of the South African exiles calling on the African states to “act collectively on a boycott of South African goods” by the end of July, and to press for sanctions “on an international basis” at the UN.³⁹

In the changed circumstances since Sharpeville, the other independent African states now joined Ghana in abandoning their earlier skepticism and opposition to sanctions. The conference delegates not only adopted the South African exiles’ demand, but significantly elaborated upon it: Tambo later recalled that “our specific requests were not as detailed and as extensive as the measures adopted by the conference after discussion. Because the African states regarded the South African situation as their own problem, they did not hesitate, on their own, to explore methods other than those detailed by us, whereby South Africa could be forced to change its policies.”⁴⁰ Though press reports suggested that there had been a “prolonged struggle” in the closed session – the fact that Nasser’s United Arab Republic maintained diplomatic relations with South Africa was apparently a source of particular controversy – the conference ultimately adopted a resolution that called on member states “to sever diplomatic relations or refrain from establishing diplomatic relations as the case may be, to close African ports to all vessels flying the South African flag, to enact legislation preventing their ships from entering South African ports, to boycott all South African goods, to refuse landing and passage facilities to all aircraft belonging to the Government and companies registered under the laws of the Union of South Africa and to prohibit all South African aircraft from flying over the air space of the Independent African States.”

³⁹ “Speech of H.E. Mr Ako Adjei...” in *Second Conference of Independent African States: Addis Ababa, June 14 to 26, 1960* (Addis Ababa: [Ministry of Information of the Imperial Ethiopian Government], 1960), 39; “Boycott of South African Goods: Call at Addis Ababa Talks,” *Times of India*, 22 June 1960, 5.

⁴⁰ O.R. Tambo, “Comments and Observations on *United Front and After* by Judy Coburn,” n.d., Folder C4.46, Box 83, Oliver Tambo Papers, 1960-1992, NAHECS.

The resolution also suggested that the Arab states prevent oil companies from selling Arab oil to South Africa, invited African members of the Commonwealth to secure South Africa's expulsion, and recommended action by the United Nations under Article 41 of the UN Charter – the article authorizing the Security Council to call upon UN members to apply measures such as “complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.” Another resolution took up the suggestion Michael Scott had first made seven years earlier: Ethiopia and Liberia, the two African former members of the League of Nations, were authorized to initiate contentious proceedings at the International Court of Justice regarding South Africa's international obligations in the former League mandate of South West Africa.⁴¹ Ernest Gross, an American lawyer and former diplomat who was hired to manage the case after being flown out to Ethiopia during the conference, later explained that “the essential purpose at the outset when the matter was decided by the Addis conference... was to bring pressure on the United States and Britain. The African states knew that the U.S. and Britain were reluctant at the very least to act against the South African government, but that they would find it difficult to continue being inert in the face of an ICJ ruling against the South African Government.”⁴²

Having abandoned its earlier opposition, the Ghanaian government now became the most enthusiastic proponent of the sanctions campaign. Though the SAUF representatives in Addis Ababa had expressed the hope that all the African states would impose a collective boycott of South African goods by the end of July, Ghana was in fact the only African state to comply with the

⁴¹ “Policy of Apartheid and Racial Discrimination in Africa” and “Resolution of the Question of South-West Africa” in *Second Conference of Independent African States: Addis Ababa*, 104-5, 101-2. See also Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 48-49; Barros, *African States and the United Nations*, 50-51; Richard Bissell, *Apartheid and International Organizations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), 36-38.

⁴² “Discussion Meeting Report: South Africa,” 11 December 1964, Folder 1, Box 177, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Records, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

resolution by that date. With effect from August 1, Nkrumah's government revoked the existing general license to import goods from South Africa, and closed Ghana's air and seaports to South African craft. The Ghanaian government also added a further measure of its own: a requirement that all South African citizens entering or transiting through Ghana sign a declaration of opposition to apartheid.⁴³ On the same day as the new Ghanaian regulations took effect, Malaya – which had taken the lead in denouncing South Africa at the Commonwealth meeting in May – also announced an official embargo. Within Africa, other independent states were slower to implement the Addis resolution: over the subsequent two years official trade embargoes were announced by Ethiopia (November 1960), Nigeria (February 1961), Liberia (June 1961), Sierra Leone (July 1961), the United Arab Republic (September 1961), Somalia (March 1962), and Madagascar (September 1962).⁴⁴

The governments of the Soviet bloc, meanwhile, vigorously denounced apartheid, but were cautious about sanctions. On March 24, 1960, three days after Sharpeville, Heinrich Rau, the East German minister of trade, raised the issue of the ICFTU's boycott campaign in a memorandum to East German leader Walter Ulbricht. Characterizing the campaign as a “devious game of rightist trade union leaders,” Rau accurately diagnosed that the ICFTU was using the boycott to try to win support in Africa and Asia, but also – less plausibly – suggested that it was a plot being undertaken “in the hope that the socialist countries will follow the boycott, which would make room for [western governments and firms] to step in and expand their business accordingly.”

Notwithstanding this conspiratorial interpretation, Rau believed that the socialist world needed to take action in response. Ulbricht endorsed Rau's suggestion that the East German labor federation

⁴³ “Minutes of the [cabinet] meeting held at 10 o'clock...,” 22 July 1960, ADM 13/1/29, Ghana PRAAD.

⁴⁴ “Boycott of South African Products in Certain Foreign Markets,” n.d. [*ca.* late 1962/1963], vol. 1, File 34/18/2, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Records, Archive of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), Pretoria, South Africa.

propose that the WFTU declare its support for a boycott by affiliated transport unions.⁴⁵ The WFTU General Council, whose policies closely tracked those of the Soviet Union, ignored the East German proposal, however. WFTU leaders apparently feared that to call for a boycott by workers might increase pressure on the Eastern Bloc governments to impose sanctions themselves.⁴⁶

In principle, the Soviet Union and its supporters remained opposed to trade embargoes and were committed to expanding commerce with all states, regardless of their political orientation. In the case of South Africa, moreover, Soviet bloc states were not enthusiastic about ending their lucrative trade relations. In August 1960, Dadoo traveled to the Eastern bloc to lobby for governmental sanctions, and secured commitments from the ruling parties of both the Soviet Union and East Germany to review their trade with South Africa. But neither government took any further action. In October the SACP Central Committee circulated a lengthy memorandum to the ruling parties of the Soviet bloc, setting out the strategic rationale for sanctions and expressing anxiety that the bloc's lack of enthusiasm for the idea was damaging the reputation of socialism among opponents of apartheid. "It has become a matter of concern to the whole progressive and radical movement in South Africa that, thus far, the government and popular organisations... of the socialist countries have not openly identified themselves with the boycott movement," the memo stated. "Continued silence on this campaign can only create a bad impression which it will be difficult to correct."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Schleicher and Schleicher, *Special Flights to Southern Africa*, 11-13.

⁴⁶ [Central Committee of the South African Communist Party], "The Boycott of South African Trade," [October 1960], Folder 4, Box 3, Part II (ANC London), ANC Records: Lusaka and London [former Mayibuye Archives collection], NAHECS.

⁴⁷ [Central Committee of the South African Communist Party], "The Boycott of South African Trade," [October 1960], Folder 4, Box 3, Part II (ANC London), ANC Records: Lusaka and London [former Mayibuye Archives collection], NAHECS; Schleicher and Schleicher, *Special Flights to Southern Africa*, 13.

In response to these appeals, Soviet and East German officials informed the SACP that they were reducing or ending trade with South Africa. But trade in fact continued: Soviet diamonds, for example, continued to be sold to the South African De Beers group via a British front company.⁴⁸ In practice, the Soviet bloc states thus pursued a dual track policy in the early 1960s, providing rhetorical and material support and training to the SACP and its ANC allies, while covertly avoiding strict implementation of the trade sanctions that the SACP and the ANC insisted were a vital form of assistance to their struggle.

At the United Nations, consideration of sanctions was delayed by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's preoccupation with the crisis that erupted following the independence of the Congo from Belgium in June 1960. In its resolution passed immediately after Sharpeville, the Security Council had requested Hammarskjöld to hold consultations with the South African government, but his trip was repeatedly postponed, and in the event he did not visit South Africa until January 1961. When he arrived in Johannesburg, representatives of the Congress Alliance were able to smuggle a memorandum to him concealed in a bouquet of flowers delivered to his hotel. The memo called on Hammarskjöld to meet with recognized anti-apartheid leaders as well as with the government, and asked him to inform the Security Council that "the majority of the South Africa people are looking to that body for substantial assistance in their struggles for the realisation of true democracy in our country." Hammarskjöld met only with black South Africans who were those handpicked by the government, however. He held a series of six meetings with Verwoerd, but, as he reported to the Security Council, the two men could not find a "mutually acceptable arrangement." The Secretary-General expressed the hope that despite the "lack of agreement" he could continue the consultations in a follow-up visit. In the event, however, he remained preoccupied with the

⁴⁸ Shubin, *ANC: The View from Moscow*, 27-28. See also Pater Vale, "The Soviet Union, southern Africa, and Sanctions," in *Sanctions Against Apartheid*, ed. Orkin, 163; Schleicher and Schleicher, *Special Flights to Southern Africa*, 16.

Congo crisis until his death in a plane crash in September 1961. There were no further efforts to resolve the crisis in South Africa through the good offices of the UN Secretary-General: the next time a UN Secretary-General visited South Africa would not be until 1972.⁴⁹

Following Hammarskjöld's failure to alter the South African government's course, the UN General Assembly considered the issue of apartheid twice in 1961, first in April (as part of the Assembly's ongoing Fifteenth Session that had begun in September 1960), and then again in November during the Sixteenth Session. On both occasions, western opposition to sanctions was assisted by a split in the Afro-Asian Group at the UN. India maintained its own unilateral trade embargo, but now actively opposed to a UN resolution calling for multilateral sanctions. The Indian government had become much more cautious about raising issues in the UN in the years since 1946 and was especially concerned not to create precedents that might later be used against India itself in the context of its dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir.⁵⁰ In both April and November the resolutions drafted by the "African Group" of UN delegations, which asked all states to impose trade, transport, and diplomatic sanctions, failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority to pass. Instead, in both cases, a "moderate" resolution drafted by India passed almost unanimously. The Indian drafts avoided any mention of sanctions, instead suggesting that member states "take such collective and

⁴⁹ Chris Saunders, "Hammarskjöld's visit to South Africa," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 11, no. 1 (2011): 23-31; Tor Sellström, "Hammarskjöld and apartheid South Africa: Mission unaccomplished," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 11, no. 1 (2011): 43. The vagueness of the Congress Alliance's request for "substantial assistance" from the Security Council may have reflected the fact that in March 1960 the South African government had made advocacy of boycotts and sanctions illegal. A separate memorandum from the SAIC did, however, explicitly call for the UN "not to continue as it has done annually since 1946," and to "immediately apply economic sanctions."

⁵⁰ In contrast to the many detailed studies of the dispute between India and South Africa at the UN in the 1940s, there has been little in depth research on India's shifting policy towards the South African issue in the 1950s and 1960s. On what Gopal Krishna characterizes as the Indian government's growing "aversion to UN interference in India's or other nations' affairs" more generally, see Gopal Krishna, "India and the International Order – Retreat from Idealism," in *The Expansion of International Society*, eds. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 281-82; Swadesh Rana, "The Changing Indian Diplomacy at the United Nations," *International Organization* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1970): 51, 66-67.

separate action as is open to them in conformity with the Charter to bring about an abandonment’ of South Africa’s racial policies.⁵¹

The British and American governments continued in 1960 and 1961 to seek to minimize disruption to their relations with South Africa, and lobbied hard in support of the Indian-drafted resolutions. Despite the efforts of anti-apartheid activists, neither the U.S. nor the U.K. was under much pressure to impose sanctions. The primary form of grassroots anti-apartheid activity in both countries was the continuation of the consumer boycotts that had been launched or agreed upon before Sharpeville. The ACOA had been hesitant about launching a consumer boycott when the idea was spreading around the world in 1959-60, as we have seen. Bounced into action by the AFL-CIO’s decision in February 1960 to organize a boycott, the ACOA Executive Board approved the idea on March 14, but had taken no further action by the time of the massacre at Sharpeville a week later. Sharpeville, however, as Houser later recalled, “turned the [boycott] effort into a mighty propaganda vehicle.” In May 1960 the ACOA began circulating a petition that noted that those in South and South West Africa who opposed apartheid had “called for a universal boycott” and called on signatories to commit “not [to] purchase South African goods until such time as the South African government abandons her racist policies and conforms to United Nations resolutions on these issues.” The petition was published as an advert in the *New York Times* on May 31, together with the names of more than two hundred of the thousands who had already signed.⁵²

⁵¹ UNGA, Resolution 1598 (XV), “Question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of *apartheid* of the Government of the Union of South Africa,” 13 April 1961, <https://perma.cc/4QV4-N26Z>; UNGA, Resolution 1663 (XVI), “The question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of *apartheid* of the Government of the Republic of South Africa,” 28 November 1961, <https://perma.cc/64G2-5Q3P>. The wording of the November resolution was marginally stronger than that of the April resolution. The April resolution “request[ed]” all states to “consider” taking action; the November resolution “urge[d]” them to take action. On the 1961 General Assembly resolutions, see also Barros, *African States and the United Nations*, 54-60; Bissell, *Apartheid and International Organizations*, 48-50, 52-53.

⁵² Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 128; Adelaide Schulkind *et al.*, “We Protest Against the Policy of White Supremacy Called Apartheid [advertisement],” *New York Times*, 31 May 1960, 22.

An “Emergency Action Conference” convened by the ACOA, which met that day and the next, identified rock lobster tails as the South African import to the U.S. that lent themselves to a “convenient boycott.” The Committee conducted extensive research on the lobster trade in the subsequent months. “Lobster,” concluded the Coordinating Committee of ACOA’s emergency South African campaign in September, “is the most identifiable product of South Africa in America and... could become a symbol of protest.” The Committee resolved to send delegations to shops, restaurants, and the lobster trade association to request that they stop selling South African lobster.⁵³ The ACOA continued throughout the early 1960s to incorporate the boycott of lobster and other South African consumer products into its publicity materials on South Africa, though the lack of such products in the U.S. meant that campaign never gained significant traction. As Houser wrote ruefully in his memoirs, “It was hard to mount a serious campaign aimed only at South African rock lobster tails.”⁵⁴

In Britain, where a much wider range of identifiably South African consumer products were sold – including fruit, canned foods, wines, and cigarettes – the AAM adopted a similar signature-based method of promoting the boycott to that used by the ACOA in May. The consumer boycott was relaunched in September 1960 as a “Penny Pledge Campaign”: British consumers were asked to donate a penny to the AAM to “purchase” a pledge card stating that they would boycott South African goods until apartheid was ended.⁵⁵ The campaign was endorsed by both the Labour and Liberal Parties, but fell far short of the one million signatures Vella Pillay had suggested they aim for.

⁵³ “Minutes: Co-ordinating Committee of the South Africa Emergency Campaign,” 19 September 1960, File 103/21, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*; R.M. Miller to James Scott and Richard Rettig, “Report of Meeting on Committee on South Africa,” 27 September 1960, Folder: ‘1956-1967 American Committee on Africa (ACOA),’ Box 266, United States National Student Association (USNSA): International Commission Records, Hoover Institution.

⁵⁴ Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 128.

⁵⁵ Dennis Chapman to the South African United Front, 5 September 1960, File 973, AAM.

By the end of 1960 – the last time the number of signatures was recorded in the AAM Executive’s minutes – the total stood at seven thousand.⁵⁶

Anti-apartheid activists now emphasized that a consumer boycott would not in itself have a significant economic or political impact in South Africa. Or, as a February 1963 editorial in *Fighting Talk* put it, “the well-meaning British drinker’s decision to switch from South African to French sherry” was “not a matter which shakes the edifice of South African apartheid.”⁵⁷ Though the profits of some South African producers of fruit, canned foods, wines, and cigarettes were affected by the consumer boycott campaigns in the west, such identifiably South African consumer products represented only a small proportion of the country’s exports. The AAM’s July 1960 “Memorandum on Sanctions” concluded by acknowledging that despite the publicity and support that had been generated by the Boycott Movement’s campaign, South African exports to Britain in the first three months of 1960 had been higher than they had been in the same period in 1959.⁵⁸

Rather than a means of exerting economic pressure, all boycott advocates now agreed that the consumer boycott was essentially a “moral gesture” – the term that had been emphasized in the Labour Party’s publicity material for the original March 1960 boycott month. Noting the extensive coverage of the boycott in the South African press in early 1960, as well as Louw’s blustering response to it, the Anti-Apartheid Movement claimed that the original consumer boycott had had “a tremendous impact in the mind of white South Africa,” and had also given “hope and inspiration” to the Congress movement inside the country.⁵⁹ Neither of these ideas about the role of the boycott

⁵⁶ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Minutes of the Joint Executive & Pledge Committee,” 30 December 1960, File 66, AAM.

⁵⁷ “Sanctions: From Sherry to Oil,” *Fighting Talk*, February 1963, 2.

⁵⁸ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM.

⁵⁹ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM. See also “The Programme of the Anti-Apartheid Movement,” April 1960, File 2213, AAM; American Committee on Africa, “Action Against Apartheid: What YOU Can Do About Racial Discrimination in South Africa” (1960), 5, African Activist Archive, <https://perma.cc/D2BV-8N5E>.

was entirely abandoned after Sharpeville. But leading boycott advocates now agreed that, as the AAM hammered home in its “Memorandum on Sanctions,” such “moral gestures and protests” as the consumer boycott and the ongoing efforts to organize a sports boycott were “not enough” in the post-Sharpeville situation.⁶⁰

The main purpose of advocating continuing consumer and sports boycotts was neither their material nor their moral impact on either the supporters or opponents of apartheid, but rather the role that such boycotts could play, as Vella Pillay wrote in the draft AAM Programme of Action, as “an exercise in political education” in the west.⁶¹ A consumer boycott, the ACOA likewise argued “would educate many Americans for the first time about the mechanics and evils of *apartheid*.”⁶² The main impact of the Boycott Movement’s original month of action in March 1960, the AAM now suggested, had been to raise awareness in Britain of conditions in South Africa. The AAM argued with some plausibility that it was precisely because of this heightened awareness in the weeks before March 21 that when the massacre at Sharpeville occurred, the reaction in Britain was “so immediate and passionate.”⁶³ In the post-Sharpeville period, anti-apartheid strategists understood the consumer boycott primarily as a means of creating “a climate of opinion in which large scale action can take place.”⁶⁴ They had limited success in this regard. Refusing to buy South African products became an

⁶⁰ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM.

⁶¹ [Vella Pillay], “The Programme of the Anti-Apartheid Committee” [draft], April 1960, File 2213, AAM.

⁶² American Committee on Africa, “Action Against Apartheid: What YOU Can Do About Racial Discrimination in South Africa” (1960), 5, African Activist Archive.

⁶³ “The Programme of the Anti-Apartheid Movement,” April 1960, File 2213; Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM. See also “First Recording: Kader Asmal,” vol. 1; “First Recording: Vella Pillay,” vol. 13, Hilda Bernstein Interviews; Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid*, 127-41.

⁶⁴ South African United Front, “Boycott and Economic Sanctions,” n.d. [1961], Folder 1, Box 3, Part II (ANC London), ANC Records: Lusaka and London [former Mayibuye Archives collection], NAHECS. See also Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM.

ingrained habit for many on the British left. Simon Hoggart, a journalist for the liberal *Guardian* newspaper, later recalled that by the 1970s “a liberally minded person in Britain would no more have bought South African wine than served his guests strychnine. Anyone who bought it – and some wine merchants kept a small selection – was, in the view of most people one knew, little better than a Nazi.”⁶⁵ But the popularity of the consumer boycott among certain sections of the British population did not translate into significant pressure on the U.K. government to enforce sanctions. Indeed, while the Labour and Liberal Parties officially endorsed the ongoing consumer boycott, they stressed that boycotting South Africa was an issue that “must be left to the individual to decide” and made clear that they did not support governmental action.⁶⁶

In 1960, some opponents of apartheid had briefly entertained hopes that western governments’ opposition to sanctions could be circumvented by an industrial boycott by organized labor, especially dockworkers. Though the ANC Emergency Committee’s original April 1 statement had called only for governmental sanctions, the Congress movement’s external representatives quickly became just as interested in the possibility that the same impact could be achieved through the action by the international trade union movement. As soon as he arrived in Britain and met with members of the Anti-Apartheid Committee in mid-April, Dadoo, as we have seen, suggested not only campaigning for the UN to impose sanctions, but also asking the trade unions not to handle oil destined for South Africa. Meanwhile, Ronald Segal, who had flown to Europe with Dadoo, traveled immediately to the ICFTU headquarters in Brussels to press for coordinated industrial action. In July 1960 the AAM’s “Memorandum on Sanctions” stressed that international trade union action, such as dockworkers refusing to unload ships carrying South African goods, could “defeat the South

⁶⁵ Simon Hoggart, *A Long Lunch: My Stories and I’m Sticking to Them* (London: John Murray, 2010), 41-42.

⁶⁶ Liberal Party Executive Committee, Resolution on South Africa, 10 February 1961, Box 19, Collection: ‘SLD [Student Liberal Democrats] – Student Office Files,’ Archives and Special Collections, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK.

African government.”⁶⁷ As Tom Mboya had in 1959, the AAM envisaged a united, world-wide effort that would bring trade with South Africa to a standstill.

Anti-apartheid activists were optimistic that this was achievable, given the prominent role the ICFTU and many of its affiliates had played in launching consumer boycotts in the first months of 1960. Moreover, the ICFTU World Congress resolution had, as we saw in Chapter 2, raised the possibility of “reinforcing the consumers’ boycott by industrial boycotts.” As part of the ICFTU campaign, affiliates in Cyprus and several islands of the Caribbean announced that they would refuse to unload ships from South Africa – an action that the St Kitts and Nevis Trades and Labour Union had resolved upon as early as 1950.⁶⁸ In April 1960, in what the AAM called “the outstanding example of industrial action taken so far,” dockworkers in Trinidad refused to unload an American merchant ship, *African Lightning*, which was carrying canned fruit, grain, batteries, brassware, and other products from South Africa. Eventually the ship was forced to return to Durban with its cargo still on board.⁶⁹ Segal’s talks with ICFTU officials in Brussels at the end of April also gave grounds for optimism: he was told that the ICFTU was “seriously considering” organizing an industrial boycott, but that it would “depend largely on the response of the British trade union movement.” And in Britain in the weeks after Sharpeville numerous local trades councils and union branches all

⁶⁷ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM.

⁶⁸ “Situation in South Africa and the ICFTU Boycott,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 27 June – 2 July 1960], Folder 4, Box 440, Walter Reuther Collection.

⁶⁹ American Committee on Africa, “World Reaction against South African Apartheid,” n.d. [ca. late September 1960], File 103/21, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*; Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Memorandum on Sanctions on South Africa: For Circulation and Discussion,” [July 1960], File 1700, AAM; “Situation in South Africa and the ICFTU Boycott,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 27 June – 2 July 1960], Folder 4, Box 440, Walter Reuther Collection.

over the country passed resolutions condemning the massacre and calling on the TUC to organize industrial action.⁷⁰

Both the ACOA in the U.S. and the AAM in Britain actively pursued the possibility of an industrial boycott in the middle months of 1960. Frank Montero, chairman of the coordinating committee of ACOA's emergency South African campaign, organized meetings in New York with representatives of the International Longshoremen's Association and the Teamsters Union to push the idea.⁷¹ In Britain, Segal, Rosalynde Ainslie, and other members of the AAM committee spoke at union branch and trades council meetings and met privately with British labor leaders. Initially they found the response "very encouraging"; Ainslie reported in late July to Tennyson Makiwane of the ANC's External Mission that there was a "fairly good chance" that the TUC conference in September would approve a resolution mandating TUC officials to request the ICF TU to organize an industrial boycott.⁷²

Though there may have been some enthusiasm for the idea at the union grassroots, however, the leadership of the labor movement remained unalterably opposed. The executive of the International Transport Workers' Federation, which would bear primary responsibility for a worldwide industrial boycott, considered the issue in April 1960. It reported to the ICF TU that the dockers and seafarers unions had concluded that any attempt by their members to impose an industrial boycott would encounter "insuperable practical difficulties." The Transport Workers' executive suggested instead that it would be "better to adopt a strongly-worded resolution"

⁷⁰ Anti-Apartheid Movement, "Recall Conference," File 2213, AAM. Many of the resolutions by local trades councils and union branches are collected in Folder: 'MCF COU 121(a) South Africa 1960-2,' Box 57, Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) Collection, SOAS.

⁷¹ R.M. Miller to James Scott and Richard Rettig, "Report of Meeting on Committee on South Africa," 27 September 1960, Folder: '1956-1967 American Committee on Africa (ACOA),' Box 266, USNSA: International Commission Records.

⁷² [Rosalynde Ainslie(?)] to Tennyson Makiwane, 21 July 1960, File 973, AAM.

condemning the South African government – the kind of response now seen by anti-apartheid activists as wholly inadequate. The leadership of the British TUC also reiterated its own opposition to industrial action.⁷³

Given the opposition of the leaders of the International Transport Workers' Federation and the of the labor movement in Britain, the ICFTU secretariat concluded that an ICFTU call for an industrial boycott would meet with “no widespread response.” Despite a further plea from Tom Mboya for a “token” one month industrial boycott, the secretariat’s position was endorsed by the ICFTU executive in June 1960, at its first meeting since the World Congress six months earlier. While noting that it was “still necessary for the peoples of the free world to maintain pressure on the South African government to abandon its racial policies,” the ICFTU Board decided to leave it up to its affiliates to decide whether to make a further appeal for consumer boycotts beyond the fixed-period boycotts that had already taken place. The Board also carefully shifted primary responsibility for further action from its own shoulders to those of governments, stressing that “the imposition of economic sanctions” – that is, a boycott by governments, not by organized labor – “would be the most effective way of exerting pressure on the South African government.” By March 1961, Walter Reuther of the United Autoworkers – the primary American supporter of organized labor’s involvement in boycotting South Africa in the previous two years – was already referring in the past tense to “the period when the boycott of South Africa was an urgent topic.”⁷⁴

⁷³ “Situation in South Africa and the ICFTU Boycott,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 27 June – 2 July 1960], Folder 4, Box 440, Walter Reuther Collection. See also Major, “The Trades Union Congress and Apartheid,” 489-90.

⁷⁴ “Situation in South Africa and the ICFTU Boycott,” [report for the ICFTU Executive Board meeting, 27 June – 2 July 1960], Folder 4, Box 440, Walter Reuther Collection; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Executive Board, “Minutes of the 27th Meeting,” 27 June - 1 July 1960; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Executive Board, “Resolution on South Africa,” Folder 9, Box 48, Victor Reuther Collection; Walter P. Reuther to George Meany, 23 March 1961, Folder 13, Box 301, Walter Reuther Collection.

British and American anti-apartheid activists soon recognized that there was no likelihood of a worldwide picket of ships carrying South African exports. The issue disappeared from the discussions of the AAM Executive after the TUC annual conference in September 1960. By early November, the AAM leadership had apparently concluded that to call publicly for an industrial boycott would meet with no response and would simply harm its relationship with the labor movement: AAM representatives warned representatives of the South African liberation movements that if in future they made a public call for an industrial boycott, the AAM would not feel obliged to support them.⁷⁵ In the U.S., Montero reported to the ACOA's committee on South Africa in September that there could be no sustained industrial boycott by dockworkers in New York, though he stressed that more limited industrial action could be "important symbolic action" and would generate "great publicity."⁷⁶ This happened for the first time two years later, in San Francisco on December 17, 1962, when Mary Louise Hooper – now the ACOA's representative on the west coast – organized a community picket of the Dutch freighter *Raki* by local members of CORE and the NAACP. Though dockworkers did not join the twenty-one picketers themselves, more than one hundred members of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union agreed not to cross the line, leaving the ship's cargo of South African coffee, hemp, asbestos and lobster tails unloaded for the day. Whereas in 1960 the *African Lightning* had been forced by the Trinidad dockworkers to return to South Africa, however, the *Raki* was unloaded the following day. Hooper explained that the community picket had been planned for one day only, in order "to bring the

⁷⁵ Rosalynde Ainslie to the South African United Front, 21 November 1960, File 973, AAM.

⁷⁶ "Minutes: Co-ordinating Committee of the South Africa Emergency Campaign," 19 September 1960, File 103/21, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

problem to the attention of San Francisco.”⁷⁷ Like consumer boycotts, industrial boycotts had thus become not an end in themselves but another form of consciousness raising.

By 1963, the campaign for the economic isolation of South Africa launched three years earlier had had neither the economic nor the political effects that its advocates had hoped for. The economic crisis after Sharpeville that had made sanctions advocates so optimistic was quickly reversed, and the country entered a long period of sustained economic growth. Boycotts and sanctions had only a limited effect on this: an assessment by the South African Department of Foreign Affairs in mid-1964 concluded that there had been a “steady and substantial” increase in South African exports since 1960, but that this growth in exports was two per cent lower than it would have been without the boycott campaign.⁷⁸ Whatever the political impact might have been if the kind of total embargo envisaged by sanctions advocates been imposed, the proliferation of boycotts and international criticism after Sharpeville only served to reinforce the National Party’s support among whites. In 1960, Verwoerd achieved the long-standing ambition of Afrikaner nationalists when a narrow majority of whites voted in a referendum for South Africa to sever its links with the British monarchy and become a republic. Though this led to South Africa’s departure from the Commonwealth the following year – when Verwoerd withdrew South Africa’s application for readmission to the organization as a republic in the face of the anti-apartheid feeling of African and Asian members – Verwoerd successfully turned this into a triumph in the eyes of his white supporters at home. In the 1961 general election the National Party further strengthened its position, winning not only a majority of seats in parliament but also, for the first time, a majority of

⁷⁷ “Bias Issue Pickets Let Ship Unload,” *Oakland Tribune*, 18 December 1962, 15; “Longshoremen Told to Cross Picket Line,” *Baltimore Sun*, 19 December 1962, 33; Peter Cole, “No Justice, No Ships Get Loaded: Political Boycotts on the San Francisco Bay and Durban Waterfronts,” *International Review of Social History* 58, no. 2 (August 2013): 10-11.

⁷⁸ “Notes on the Boycott Movement,” n.d. [ca. June 1964], vol. 12, File 34/18, DFA Records, DIRCO Archive.

the (white) popular vote. The newly-formed Progressive Party, committed to a qualified franchise, was almost wiped out: all but one of its MPs lost their seats.

II. ‘A vital factor operating against the enemy’: Sanctions and the Turn to Violence

When the South African liberation movements and their overseas supporters began demanding sanctions in 1960, advocates both inside and outside the country had argued for a sanctions regime as a means of assisting a *peaceful* transition from apartheid. ANC President Albert Lutuli, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1961, continued to call for sanctions on this basis. In his autobiography, published that month, Lutuli argued that sanctions represented “our only chance of a relatively *peaceful* transition”: a nonracial democracy, he suggested, would never “come willingly from the whites. Even so, it could be made to come peacefully,” since it was economic ostracism that “jolts them the worst.”⁷⁹ Many African diplomats at the UN and anti-apartheid activists in the west made similar arguments throughout the first half of the decade. In a press statement released in May 1962, for instance, the AAM argued that “international pressure in the form of an immediate arms embargo and economic sanctions on South Africa” was “the only possible alternative to violence – on the scale perhaps of the Algerian war.”⁸⁰

By 1961, however, Nelson Mandela and other Congress and SACP leaders had come to the conclusion that there was no chance of peaceful transition, and decided to incorporate violent action into their strategy. Mandela and others had begun discussing the possibility of adopting violent methods in prison after Sharpeville. Subsequently, the first formal deliberation and decision on this issue was taken at the biennial congress of the SACP, held in Johannesburg in December 1960. Crucially, the twenty or so attendees included at least three members – Nelson Mandela, Walter

⁷⁹ Lutuli, *Let My People Go*, 185-86; emphasis in the original.

⁸⁰ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Press Statement,” 10 May 1962, File 1700, AAM.

Sisulu, and Moses Kotane – of the five-man National Working Committee that became the effective leadership of the ANC after the Congress re-organized to operate underground following the lifting of the State of Emergency.⁸¹ The conference adopted a resolution that “a violent people’s struggle” was probable in the future, and that the Party therefore had a duty to “prepare the people for the use of armed force against armed counter-revolution.” The resolution concluded: “We are not pacifists. We recognise that the use of armed force against the state, directed by the leading organizations of the people, is a necessary complement of mass political agitation in such situations as that now developing in South Africa.” The discussion of this resolution was brief, and it was passed without opposition, presumably because of its vagueness.⁸²

⁸¹ The other members of the Working Committee were J.B. Marks and Duma Nokwe, who were both also members of the SACP. The question of whether Mandela was a member of the South African Communist Party has been a matter of bitter controversy for decades. Several scholars have recently argued on the basis of newly-discovered evidence that he was, most notably Landau, “The ANC, MK, and ‘The Turn to Violence,’” 544-45, 547-48; Ellis, “Genesis of the ANC’s Armed Struggle,” 666-68.

This interpretation appeared to be confirmed when, following Mandela’s death in December 2013, both the ANC and the Communist Party announced that Mandela had been an SACP member (as Simpson had in fact predicted would occur). African National Congress, “The passing of Cde Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela,” 5 December 2013, <https://perma.cc/9RWU-WDT6>; South African Communist Party, “SACP statement on the passing away of Madiba,” 6 December 2013, <https://perma.cc/C3LU-SP8Y>.

Nevertheless, some experts, including the historian Hugh Macmillan and Verne Harris (director of research at the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory), have questioned the motivations of the December 2013 claims by the ANC and SACP, and have continued to argue that Mandela was never a member of the SACP. Macmillan and Harris’s primary argument is that Mandela repeatedly denied membership and that he would not have lied about this issue. Verne Harris, “‘I am not a Marxist,’ Mandela Said. Did he lie?,” *Mail & Guardian*, 17 January 2014, <https://perma.cc/Y3QW-2UCE>; Hugh Macmillan, “Was Madiba Co-opted into Communism?,” *Mail & Guardian*, 17 January 2014, <https://perma.cc/565N-E5J7>.

The plausibility of this interpretation is undermined, however, by the fact that – in addition to denying membership of the SACP – Mandela also vehemently denied having taken part “at all” in “the activities” of the SACP, such as attending its conferences. All sides in the debate now agree that that was untrue. Numerous participants have attested that Mandela attended the SACP congress in December 1960, as well as meetings of both the Party’s Central Committee and the Johannesburg District Committee in 1960-61. More interesting than the issue of party membership – but beyond the scope of the present work – is, as researcher and former SACP member Paul Trehwela puts it, “the nature of Mandela’s commitment to Marxism as a philosophical and political theory.” No evidence has been advanced, for example, that would cast doubt on Mandela’s assertion in his address during the Rivonia trial in 1964 that he admired “the parliamentary system of the West,” which, he noted, communists regarded as “undemocratic and reactionary.” Trehwela argues plausibly that “Mandela was a nationalist first and foremost who decided on pragmatic and strategic grounds in 1960 that it was correct for him to join the SACP at central committee level.” Paul Trehwela, “Mandela: A Nationalist and a Marxist,” *Mail & Guardian*, 24 January 2014, <https://perma.cc/8RVR-G5SM>.

⁸² [Rusty Bernstein], “Bulletin No. 2: Political Report,” n.d. [December 1960], unlabeled folder, Box 3, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives; Bob Hepple, *Young Man with a Red Tie: A Memoir of Mandela and the Failed Revolution, 1960-1963* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2013), 106-7.

While the SACP thus formally began to prepare for the possible future use of force in the first half of 1961, Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu took the lead in attempting to secure the support of the ANC and the Congress Alliance for their position that “the state had given us no alternative to violence.” They faced considerable opposition, but ultimately – at tumultuous back-to-back all-night sessions in June 1961 in Tongaat, Natal, first of the ANC National Executive and then of the Joint Executives of the Congress Alliance – a compromise was reached. The ANC and the Congress Alliance would themselves remain committed to non-violence but that Mandela would be permitted to form an independent military organization, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), and would not be disciplined or condemned by the Congresses for doing so. Mandela, representing the ANC, became the first commander-in-chief of the new organization. Joe Slovo, representing the Communist Party, became chief-of-staff.⁸³

The arguments of those leaders of the ANC, the SACP, and the Congress Alliance who pressed for a turn to violence were underpinned by two interlocking beliefs. First, they believed that the government’s violent repression of non-violent acts of resistance was successfully deterring grassroots supporters from participation in the Congress movement’s non-violent campaigns. After the government’s brutal breaking of strikes during the Sharpeville crisis, an attempt by the ANC Emergency Committee to organize a week-long stay-at-home beginning on April 19, 1960, had fallen completely flat. A year later, when Congress leaders attempted to organize a three-day stay-at-home to coincide with South Africa becoming a republic in May 1961, the government had sent the police and army into African townships. Disappointed by the popular response in these circumstances, the ANC leadership had called off the strike after the first day. The leading white communist Rusty Bernstein later recalled how in these circumstances he and his comrades came to

⁸³ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 320-24. See also Landau, “The ANC, MK, and ‘The Turn to Violence,’” 551-53; Ellis, “Genesis of the ANC’s Armed Struggle,” 669-70; Magubane *et al.*, “The Turn to Armed Struggle,” 88-90; Couper, *Albert Luthuli*, 116-20; Smith, *Young Mandela*, 206-18.

the conclusion that “any minute now people are not going to heed our call to come out on general strike because people are not bloody stupid, if they come out on strike every time we call them, and every time there is more dead bodies as a result of it, the time is coming when we are going to make the call and nobody is going to answer except us.”⁸⁴

Secondly, the advocates of using force believed that there was significant pressure from black South Africans for them to do so, and that if they refused the consequences might be disastrous for the future of both the Congress movement and the country. ANC leaders had received requests for weapons from grassroots supporters throughout the 1950s. These demands now became even more frequent. There was an upsurge of violence in rural areas, including the Pondoland region of the Transkei, where in 1960 opponents of the state’s attempt to impose new “Bantu Authorities” on the region launched violent attacks on government-appointed chiefs and headmen. Leaders of the Mpondo revolt repeatedly requested that Congress movement leaders provide them with firearms.⁸⁵ In urban areas the Sharpeville crisis prompted the formation of several groups of ANC youth members disillusioned with their leadership’s insistence on non-violence. In Durban, for instance, according to future South African president Jacob Zuma, he and others in the

⁸⁴ “Interview with Rusty Bernstein... by Barbara Harmel and Phil Bonner,” 29 March 1994, File B1.2, Harmel Interviews. See also, for example, Slovo, *Slovo*, 175. For a contemporary instance of this concern, see, for instance, Nelson Mandela’s comment that “The question is... *whether in future campaigns we can hope to muster support from the African people if we talk non-violence*” (emphasis added). “Interview [with Nelson Mandela] on eve of switch from ANC non-violence to Umkhonto sabotage,” n.d. [ca. May/June 1961], Folder 3, Box 1, Benson research material, UCLA.

⁸⁵ Katherine Grace Victoria Fidler, “Rural Cosmopolitanism and Peasant Insurgency: The Pondoland Revolt, South Africa (1958-1963)” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2010); Thembele Kepe and Lungisile Ntsebeza, eds., *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts After Fifty Years* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). At the December 1960 SACP conference, Bernstein’s political report characterized the actions of the Mpondo insurgents as “revolutionary acts of the greatest significance.” [Rusty Bernstein], “Bulletin No. 2: Political Report,” n.d. [December 1960], unlabeled folder, Box 3, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives. On the requests for firearms, see “Rowley Arenstein, friend of Mandela, supporter of Buthelezi, talks to R.W. Johnson,” *London Review of Books*, 21 February 1991, 22-23; “Interview with Denis Golberg, conducted by Howard Barrell,” 7 February 1990, Folder 2, Box 1; “Interview with Ben Turok, conducted by Howard Barrell,” 21 February 1990, Folder 2, Box 3, Barrell Papers; “Interview with Rusty Bernstein... by Barbara Harmel and Phil Bonner,” 29 March 1994, File B1.2, Harmel Interviews; Slovo, *Slovo*, 175.

ANC Youth League “started buying bush knives to slaughter whites to start [a] revolution.”⁸⁶

Moreover, the PAC, with its celebration of spontaneous mass action, had always had a much more ambiguous relationship to non-violence than the ANC. While most of the PAC leadership was incapacitated in prison in 1960-61, local supporters identifying themselves as *Poqo* (“alone” or “pure”) began reorganizing underground in some areas. *Poqo* members’ envisaged an insurrection based on the indiscriminate use of violence. One *Poqo* flyer distributed in the Langa township outside Cape Town in December 1961 declared, for instance, that “The white people shall suffer, the black people will rule. Freedom comes after bloodshed. *Poqo* has started.”⁸⁷

In these circumstances Mandela and his comrades concluded that violent resistance would break out whatever they themselves chose to do, and might take a form that would threaten both future race relations and the ANC’s leading role. The attacks envisaged by *Poqo* and by ANC supporters like Zuma’s group in Durban were exactly the kind of indiscriminate, racialized violence that leaders of the Congress movement had long feared. Mandela now came to the conclusion, as he explained at his trial in 1964, that “unless responsible leadership was given to canalize and control the feelings of our people, there would be outbreaks of terrorism which would produce an intensity of bitterness and hostility between the various races of this country which is not produced even by war.” Congress leaders feared, moreover, that if they did not lead the violent resistance they believed to be inevitable, the Congress Alliance would be sidelined by the PAC or another group prepared to

⁸⁶ Carien du Plessis (@carienduplessis), twitter posts, 11 July 2013, 8:06pm, 8:07pm, <https://twitter.com/carienduplessis>. See also Carien du Plessis, “Zuma: ANC members wanted to ‘slaughter’ whites with bush knives, leaders intervened,” *City Press*, 12 July 2013, <https://perma.cc/26ZK-CX3B>. Zuma made these remarks extemporaneously, before going on to read his prepared speech, so they do not appear in the official speech transcript. “Address by ANC President Jacob Zuma on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the raid on Liliesleaf Farm Rivonia, Johannesburg,” 11 July 2013, <https://perma.cc/VXZ3-XJFX>. On the formation of similar groups elsewhere in the country, see “Interview with Mac Maharaj, conducted by Howard Barrell,” Folder 3, Box 1, Barrell Papers; Andrew Masondo, “Sawing Electric Pylons,” *Dawn*, January 1986, 21; Magubane *et al.*, “The Turn to Armed Struggle,” 87; Ellis, “Genesis of the ANC’s Armed Struggle,” 660.

⁸⁷ Lodge, “Insurrectionism in South Africa,” 189-258, 350-87; Murphy, “Race, Violence, and Nation,” 236-310; Brown Maaba, “The PAC’s War against the State, 1960-63” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 1960-1970.

embrace violence enthusiastically. Looking back at this period in 1969, the ANC's official account of its "Strategy and Tactics" commented that "without activity of this [violent] nature our whole political leadership may have been at stake both inside and outside the country."⁸⁸

Mandela and his allies thus concluded that some kind of violent action was necessary. But there were still many different forms that such action could have taken. The SACP Conference in December 1960 had described armed force as a "necessary complement of mass political agitation." According to the chair of the Party's Johannesburg District Committee, Bob Hepple, for instance, he and some of the other conference delegates envisaged the continued prioritization of "organising the urban working class," accompanied by the "secondary activity" of setting up armed "armed units in townships and rural areas to protect people from police attacks and to harass the authorities."⁸⁹ But although the argument that violent action was a way of enabling the continued prosecution of mass political struggle was an influential one in the formal discussions of violence within the SACP and the ANC, the men who came to form the leadership of MK quickly embraced much more expansive plans, in which violence was not "secondary" or a "complement" but the primary means by which apartheid would be ended.

From an early stage, Mandela, Slovo, and their comrades on MK's founding "High Command" envisaged an unfolding struggle that would culminate in full-scale guerrilla warfare. This has often been obscured by the fact that MK's first armed actions, starting on December 16, 1961, took the form of sabotage of non-human targets, primarily bombings of unoccupied government buildings and electricity pylons. The MK manifesto distributed as a leaflet that night declared that the purpose of sabotage was to "bring the government and its supporters to their senses before it is

⁸⁸ "Nelson Mandela's statement from the dock at the opening of the defence case in the Rivonia Trial," 20 April 1964, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart; African National Congress. *Forward to Freedom: Strategy, Tactics and Programme of the African National Congress of South Africa* (Morogoro, Tanzania: African National Congress, n.d. [1969]), 8.

⁸⁹ Hepple, *Young Man with a Red Tie*, 107-8.

too late, so that both the government and its policies can be changed before matters reach the desperate state of civil war.”

The claim that this was the strategic objective of MK’s initial attacks was repeated by Mandela in his famous address at his trial in 1964, and has generally been accepted in subsequent studies.⁹⁰ According to Slovo, however, “No one believed that the tactic of sabotage could, on its own, lead to the collapse of the racist state.” Rather, “sabotage was to form only the opening phase in the unfolding of armed struggle.”⁹¹ During the six-month tour of Africa Mandela made in the first half of 1962 to canvass external support for MK, Mandela, Tambo, and Robert Resha submitted what Mandela later called a “comprehensive and serious memorandum” to the Ghanaian government. Umkhonto we Sizwe, the memo explained, “constitutes the first phase of a comprehensive plan for the waging of guerilla operations. Extensive preparations in this direction have already been made...”⁹² Those preparations included sending six leading MK cadres to China for training in guerrilla warfare in October 1961, more than a month before MK launched its first sabotage attacks.⁹³

⁹⁰ Command of *Umkhonto We Sizwe*, “‘Umkhonto We Sizwe’ (Spear of the Nation),” flyer, 16 December 1961; Nelson R. Mandela, “Statement during the Rivonia Trial,” 20 April 1964, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 716-17, 771-96; [Thomas Karis and Gail M. Gerhart], “The Turn to Violence Since May 31, 1961,” in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 647-648, 659; Mary Benson, *Nelson Mandela*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1989), 106-11; Glen Frankel, *Rivonia’s Children: Three Families and the Price of Freedom in South Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999), 20, 82; Sampson, *Mandela*, 158-59.

⁹¹ Slovo, *Slovo*, 176, 178; Joe Slovo, “South Africa – No Middle Road,” in Basil Davidson, Joe Slovo, and Anthony R. Wilkinson, *Southern Africa: The New Politics of Revolution* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), 187. See also African National Congress, *Forward to Freedom*, 8, and the comments in Harold Strachan, *Make a Skyf, Man!* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2004), 47-48; Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2013), 31-32.

⁹² Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, and Robert Resha, “Memorandum Presented to the Government of the Republic of Ghana by the African National Congress of South Africa,” 10 May 1962, File BAA/RLAA/757, Bureau of African Affairs Collection, George Padmore Research Library on African Affairs, Accra. On this memorandum, see also Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ 481-83.

⁹³ Mhlaba, *Personal Memoirs*; Zhong Weiyun and Xu Sujiang, “China’s support for and solidarity with South Africa’s liberation struggle,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 3, pt. 2, *International Solidarity*. Slovo later cited this training in “the art of guerrilla struggle” as evidence “that sabotage was to form only the opening phase in the unfolding of armed struggle.” Slovo, “No Middle Road,” 187.

That Mandela, Slovo, and their comrades understood the sabotage campaign as the first stage of an unfolding and escalating armed struggle does not, however, explain *why* they adopted this approach. In his influential book on *Guerrilla Warfare*, Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara, for example, stressed that sabotage was an “arm of guerrilla warfare” – an argument that Mandela carefully noted down while he was preparing for the launch of MK.⁹⁴ But neither the guerrilla fighters in Cuba, nor those in China, Israel, the Philippines, and other violent struggles that Mandela studied in 1961 had adopted sabotage of property as a separate and distinct phase *preceding* other forms of violent action. In adopting this approach, MK was almost unprecedented.

The first reason for this was, as Slovo wrote later, that sabotage was “a politically useful bridge between the period of non-violent campaigning and the future people’s armed struggle.” By expressing in their manifesto the hope, “however forlorn,” that sabotage actions would bring the government and its supporters to their senses and avert a civil war, the MK High Command sought to ensure that observers understood that responsibility lay with the regime for the future civil war that MK was in fact already planning to launch.⁹⁵ Establishing this was important not only to avoid alienating sympathetic whites within South Africa, but also in order to maintain support in the west, where much of the support network that had developed for the Congress movement in the course of the 1950s had rested on the ANC’s commitment to non-violence. Given the strategic importance that MK’s commanders continued to assign to economic sanctions, they attempted to initiate the new armed struggle in a way they judged most likely to retain, rather than deter, the support of liberals in the west.

Moreover, advocates of the turn to violence judged, correctly it appears, that sabotage

⁹⁴ Landau, “The ANC, MK, and ‘The Turn to Violence,’” 555. See also on this point, “Report of Subcommittee on Our Perspectives, n.d. [ca. mid 1962?], Folder 6, Box 53, Part 2, ANC Lusaka Mission Records, 1923-1996, NAHECS.

⁹⁵ Slovo, “South Africa – No Middle Road,” 186.

against property that was carefully targeted to avoid loss of life was the most for which they would be able to secure the acquiescence of those on the liberal-nationalist wing of the Congress who advocated for the continued exclusive use of non-violent methods. During the debates at the tumultuous back-to-back all-night meetings in June 1961, several of the most senior participants, including Lutuli and Monty Naicker of the SAIC, argued passionately against the adoption of violent tactics. No records of the meetings survive, and it is unclear from participants' later accounts whether or not the possibility of a future escalation to guerrilla warfare was explicitly discussed.⁹⁶ But what is apparent is that the eventual compromise was reached only on the basis that MK would use sabotage exclusively against non-human targets. Indeed, a sabotage campaign with the stated objective of influencing the electoral preferences of white voters could be presented as having considerable continuity with previous ANC strategy.⁹⁷

The leading advocates of violence who had no faith in that model of change were divided amongst themselves over how they expected their guerrilla war to end. For Mandela himself, the purpose of guerrilla warfare was to force the National Party government to negotiate with the ANC. Previously, as we have seen, the idea that the party of apartheid could itself be brought to the

⁹⁶ According to Govan Mbeki, the advocates of violence deliberately obscured their intentions: "we had to go carefully... putting the idea across. I recall Moses [Kotane] saying that what we are asking for is that when a stay-away takes place, we should be allowed to put barriers so that buses can't cross taking people to work. Most of the people there didn't realise that he was in fact saying, we are going to take armed struggle..." On the other hand, SACP member Bob Hepple recalled being told later by Party chairman Bram Fischer that "it had been agreed when MK was set up that a shift from acts of sabotage to guerrilla warfare would take place only after full consultation with the leadership of the ANC and SACP." "Interview with Govan Mbeki... [by] Professor Phil Bonner and Ms Barbara Harmel," 28 October 1993, pp.10-11, File B7.2, Harmel Interviews; Mbeki, *Struggle for Liberation*, 87; Hepple, *Young Man with a Red Tie*, 114.

⁹⁷ This interpretation might help to resolve the long-running and bitter controversy over whether or not Lutuli supported the turn to "violence" or "armed struggle," both vague terms that can potentially refer to a vast array of possible forms of action. It is possible that Lutuli agreed to – or agreed not to condemn – the formation of MK as an independent body committed to the use of sabotage against property, but that he never made a similar agreement regarding MK's turn to guerrilla warfare. If this is correct, it would reconcile the many directly contradictory accounts of Lutuli's view of the "turn to violence" or the "turn to armed struggle" given in later years by those who had known him. On the recent iterations of the controversy regarding Lutuli's views see Couper, *Albert Lutuli*; Scott Couper, "Emasculating Agency: An Unambiguous Assessment of Albert Lutuli's Stance on Violence," *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3. (September 2012): 564-86; Raymond Suttner, "The Road to Freedom is via the Cross: 'Just Means' in Chief Albert Lutuli's Life," *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 4 (2010): 693-715; Jon Soske, review of *Albert Lutuli: Bound by Faith* by Scott Couper, *H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews* (January 2013), <https://perma.cc/9EXC-9VUN>.

negotiating table had been treated by almost all Congress leaders as totally implausible, but Mandela now believed that it could be achieved through the use of violence.⁹⁸ During an underground meeting in Cape Town in mid-1961, when he was preparing for the launch of MK, Mandela was pressed by Denis Goldberg, who would subsequently join MK's Regional Command in the Western Cape. "When is the armed struggle over?" Goldberg asked, "What is the demand? What are we fighting for?" "Until they negotiate," Mandela replied. "The point is to negotiate to put an end to Apartheid."⁹⁹

This perspective was reinforced during Mandela's visit in March 1962 to Morocco, where he spent three days in discussions with Dr. Chawki Mostefaï, a member of the Algerian negotiating team then in final talks with the French to end the war in Algeria and secure the country's independence. Mandela recorded in his diary at the time that Mostefaï had explained that "The original objective of the Alg[erian] revolution was the defeat of the French by Military action as in Indo China [at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954]. Settlement by negotiation was not visualised." But, Mostefaï stressed, "in the course of the war they realised that a pure military victory over the French would be well nigh impossible."¹⁰⁰ In prison in 1964, Mandela explained to fellow prisoner Neville Alexander that he had concluded from his discussion in Algeria that "there was no point in trying to overthrow the South African apartheid regime: we had to force them to the negotiation

⁹⁸ MK leaders' commitment to launching a guerrilla war has sometimes been interpreted by scholars as indicating that they necessarily rejected the possibility of a negotiated transition and were instead committed to the armed seizure of power. My alternative thesis – of continuity from the 1960s to the 1980s in Mandela's commitment to pressuring the government to negotiate – develops arguments made by Jonathan Hyslop, "Mandela on War," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela*, ed. Rita Barnard (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 167-68; Martin Legassick, *Armed Struggle and Democracy: The Case of South Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), 7n4; and more generally, by Lodge, who "find[s] less of a contrast than other writers between the young Mandela and the older veteran of imprisonment." Lodge, *Mandela*, viii.

⁹⁹ "Denis Goldberg" [interview by Anthony Sampson], 13 December 1996, File 168, Sampson Papers. Goldberg also discusses this meeting in "Interview with Denis Goldberg, conducted by Howard Barrell," 7 February 1990, Folder 2, Box 1, Barrell Papers.

¹⁰⁰ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2006), 511; "Exhibit R16," WLD, CC 578 [records of the 'Little Rivonia Trial'], National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria; Mandela, Unpublished 'Jail Memoir,' 476.

table.”¹⁰¹

Mandela’s belief that the purpose of launching guerrilla war was to compel the South African government to negotiate was shared by others, including Bram Fischer, the chairman of the SACP. Indeed, the SACP’s official program, adopted by its biennial underground conference in 1962, declared that “The illusion that the White minority can rule forever over a disarmed majority will crumble before the reality of an armed and determined people,” and suggested that in these circumstances “the possibility would be opened of a peaceful and negotiated transfer of power.”¹⁰² Other leading figures never shared this view, however, and instead believed that the ultimate objective of MK’s war was the armed “seizure of power.” For men including Joe Slovo and Govan Mbeki (who joined the High Command in 1962), the model was not the negotiated independence of Algeria, but the victory of Fidel Castro in Cuba in 1959, or of Mao in China in 1949. This perspective became increasingly dominant in MK after Mandela was arrested and imprisoned in August 1962.

Two months after Mandela’s arrest, the ANC’s underground leadership organized a national conference of around fifty delegates across the border in Lobatse, Bechuanaland. Chaired by Mbeki, and attended by Tambo and other members of the External Mission, as well as delegates from

¹⁰¹ “Neville Alexander” [interview by Anthony Sampson], 14 October 1996, p.12, File 168, Sampson Papers. See also “Neville Alexander: Interviewed by John Carlin,” n.d., PBS Frontline: The Long Walk of Nelson Mandela, <https://perma.cc/T65X-Z752>; Neville Alexander, *An Ordinary Country: Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press 2002), 179-80; Benneyworth, “Armed and Trained,” 87; Sampson, *Mandela*, 166.

Mandela maintained this position in heated debates with fellow ANC detainees in his subsequent years of imprisonment. At two junctures in particular, Mandela’s vision of apartheid’s endgame became a topic of bitter dispute – in 1968 with Govan Mbeki and in 1979-80 with Harry Gwala, a hardline member of the ANC, the SACP, and MK, who had developed a significant following among younger prisoners on Robben Island. Mandela consistently maintained – as Naledi Tsiki, one of the younger participants in the 1979-80 discussions recalled – that “from the outset, there was no actual intention of overthrowing the government by military means... when we launched armed struggle, it was actually to pressurise the government to get into negotiations with us.” “Second Interview with Naledi Tsiki, conducted by Howard Barrell,” 5 December 1990, Folder 2, Box 3, Barrell Papers; “Ahmed Kathrada” [interview by Anthony Sampson], 27 November 1995; “Walter Sisulu” [interview by Anthony Sampson], 25 January 1996, File 168, Sampson Papers; Sampson, *Mandela*, 289-90; Lodge, *Mandela*, 134-35.

¹⁰² South African Communist Party, *The Road to South African Freedom: The Programme of the South African Communist Party* (London: Ellis Bowles, n.d. [1962]), 54.

around the country, this was the ANC's first conference since it had been banned and forced underground. It was an emotional gathering. The External Mission's subsequent report recorded how "Men who had last met each other in the treason trial or in the various jails during the state of emergency, embraced each other, shook hands. Many delegates described the whole thing as a dream."¹⁰³ The conference overturned the awkward compromise reached in Tongaat in June 1961 and formally recognized MK as "the military wing of our struggle." It acknowledged the sabotage campaign as only MK's "elementary phase" and looked ahead to "the advanced stage of guerrilla warfare." And it declared that the ANC's objective was "the seizure of political power."¹⁰⁴ The "seizure of power," never previously articulated as the Congress movement's strategic objective, quickly became a favorite phrase in ANC, SACP, and MK circles. "The concept of some form of 'seizure of power' by an armed force," Rusty Bernstein later wrote, "gradually became the main political current of thinking in the ANC and the SACP." What seizing power meant, Bernstein acknowledged, was "never precisely defined." But leading participants recall a widespread belief in this period that victory would mean MK troops marching victoriously into Pretoria.¹⁰⁵

Whether they believed that the ultimate objective was negotiation or the armed seizure of power, all members of the MK High Command came to agree that armed struggle should be prioritized as the primary form of resistance to apartheid.¹⁰⁶ But MK's leaders nevertheless continued to place as much emphasis on the need for sanctions against South Africa as those who remained committed to ending apartheid non-violently. MK's commanders certainly did not believe,

¹⁰³ "Report on the Lobatsi [sic] Conference," Folder 2, Box 52, Part 2, ANC Lusaka Records, NAHECS.

¹⁰⁴ National Executive of the A.N.C., "The People Accept the Challenge of the Nationalists," 6 April 1963, in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 747.

¹⁰⁵ Rusty Bernstein to J.S. Saul, 8 June 2001, File: C9, Bernstein Papers; "Denis Goldberg" [interview by Anthony Sampson], 13 December 1996, File 168, Sampson Papers. See also, for example, "Joe Matthews, 120 Plein Street" [interview by Philip Bonner], 18 August 1994, Harmel Interviews.

¹⁰⁶ See, for instance, Mandela's comments to the journalist Colin Legum in 1962, quoted in Sampson, *Mandela*, 168.

as Lutuli did, that sanctions offered the chance of a peaceful transition. Indeed, Mandela may have been reacting to the recent publication of Lutuli's autobiography when he warned in a speech in February 1962 in Addis Ababa, during his tour of Africa, that "it would be fatal to create the illusion that external pressures render it unnecessary for us to tackle the enemy within." But in developing the armed struggle to the point that it could drive the government to the negotiating table, Mandela believed that sanctions could play a crucial role.¹⁰⁷

In Mandela's public statements throughout the period he was forming and leading MK, he repeatedly called on the nations of the world "to sever economic and diplomatic relations" with South Africa. In his speech in Ethiopia he discussed in detail the "movement for the boycott of South African goods and for the imposition of economic and diplomatic sanctions against South Africa" over the previous three years. "This increasing world pressure on South Africa," Mandela declared, "has greatly weakened her international position and given a tremendous impetus to the freedom struggle inside the country."¹⁰⁸ Mandela's belief in the importance of international pressure was reinforced in his discussions with the FLN's Chawki Mostefai in Morocco in March 1962. Mostefai explained that initially, when their objective had been military victory, the FLN had "concentrated all their energies on armed warfare and neglected the task of mobilising international opinion on their side." It was only when they came to the conclusion that outright military was impossible that they had established offices in New York, London, and elsewhere, and began to mobilize international support. Mostefai advised the ANC not to make the same initial mistake, Mandela recalled: "Dr [Mostefai] advised us not to neglect the political side of war while planning

¹⁰⁷ Nelson Mandela, "A Land Ruled by the Gun," January 1962, in *No Easy Walk to Freedom: Speeches, Letters and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2002), 91-102.

¹⁰⁸ Nelson Mandela, "General Strike," June 1961; "Letter from Underground," 26 June 1961; "A Land Ruled by the Gun," January 1962, in Mandela, *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, 87, 89, 92, 97-98; "Appeal on Sanctions by Nelson Mandela, written November 7 [1962], the day he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, and the morning after the sanctions vote at the United Nations," File 1700, AAM.

the military effort. International public opinion, he said, is sometimes worth more than a fleet of jet fighters.”¹⁰⁹

Those in the MK leadership who were committed to the seizure of power attached, if anything, even greater importance, to sanctions. This was articulated clearly in “Operation Mayibuye,” a plan for an immediate move to guerrilla warfare drafted by Slovo and Mbeki in early 1963. Operation Mayibuye held out no prospect of a negotiated transition: “the white state has thrown overboard every pretence of rule by democratic process. Armed to the teeth it has presented the people with only one choice and that is its overthrow by force and violence. It can now truly be said that very little, if any, scope exists for the smashing of white supremacy other than by means of mass revolutionary action, the main content of which is armed resistance leading to victory by military means.” Drawing inspiration from Che Guevara’s account of the success of the Cuban revolution, the plan envisaged the landing by air or sea of four groups of thirty guerrillas in four different areas of South Africa. The guerrilla operations of these groups would draw in further recruits and ultimately spark a “general uprising.”¹¹⁰

Though the authors of Operation Mayibuye acknowledged the difficulties for a successful guerrilla struggle posed by geography, the power and resources of the South African state, and the African population’s lack of arms and military training, they argued that these difficulties were counterbalanced by the prospect of sanctions and external support for the guerrillas. “In no other territory where guerrilla operations have been undertaken,” Slovo and Mbeki wrote, has the international situation been such a vital factor operating against the enemy.” Specifically:

Although we must prepare for a protracted war we must not lose sight of the fact that the political isolation of South Africa from the world community of nations and particularly the

¹⁰⁹ Mandela, Unpublished ‘Jail Memoir,’ 476; Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 355; Benneyworth, “Armed and Trained,” 87.

¹¹⁰ “Operation Mayibuye: document found by the police at Rivonia, July 11, 1963,” in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 760-68.

active hostility towards it from almost the whole of the African continent and the Socialist world may result in such massive assistance in various forms that the state structure will collapse far sooner than we can at the moment envisage. Direct military intervention in South West Africa, an effective economic and military boycott, even armed international action at some more advanced stage of the struggle are real possibilities which will play an important role.

If the South African state could be effectively isolated from the rest of the world, it would have “to rely in the main on its own resources” to resist the onslaught of the guerrillas. To ensure this, the plan provided for the establishment of a Political Authority in a “friendly territory” whose role would be not only to raise financial support and organize internal and external propaganda, but also to agitate for UN military intervention in South West Africa, to ensure “a complete enforcement of boycott,” and to enlist “the support of the international trade union movement to refuse handling war materials and other goods intended for the South African Government.”¹¹¹

In their optimism that “a complete enforcement of boycott” was possible, the authors of Operation Mayibuye were greatly encouraged by fact that on November 6, 1962, the Seventeenth Session of the UN General Assembly passed the first UN resolution calling for sanctions. India’s role in sabotaging the African draft resolutions in 1961 had been unpopular with African governments. The Indian government decided against playing such a role again in 1962, perhaps influenced by its need for African support in international fora after the outbreak of the Sino-Indian War in October 1962. Without a competing “moderate” resolution to siphon away support, the African Group’s sanctions resolution secured the two-thirds majority it needed to pass. The operative paragraph requested member states to take the following measures to bring about the abandonment of South Africa’s racial policies:

- (a) Breaking off diplomatic relations with the Government of the Republic of South Africa or refraining from establishing such relations;
- (b) Closing their ports to all vessels flying the South African flag;
- (c) Enacting legislation prohibiting their ships from entering South African ports;

¹¹¹ “Operation Mayibuye,” in *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence*, eds. Karis and Gerhart, 760-68.

- (d) Boycotting all South African goods and refraining from exporting goods, including all arms and ammunition, to South Africa;
- (e) Refusing landing and passage facilities to all aircraft belonging to the Government of South Africa and companies registered under the laws of South Africa.¹¹²

The resolution was greeted with jubilation by Congress activists in South Africa. MK units in Port Elizabeth and Durban carried out bombings that night in celebration.¹¹³ So important did the ANC and SACP leadership inside the country believe the resolution to be that ANC Secretary General (and SACP Central Committee member) Duma Nokwe wrote to Tambo to inform him that the movement was establishing an “Information and International Relations Division” inside South Africa. Its role was to “expand and buttress the movement for sanctions”: its initial focus would be on coordinating campaigns to “stop nations dragging their feet, or defying” the UN resolution. The energy that went into this effort in early 1963 – in exactly the same period that Operation Mayibuye was being drafted and MK was making logistical preparations for the move to guerrilla war – reflected the strategic significance that the internal leadership of the ANC and the SACP attached to the imposition of sanctions.¹¹⁴

The leadership of the PAC did not share this view. As Pan Africanist leaders were released from prison in 1961-62 they reassembled under the leadership of Acting President Potlake Leballo in Basutoland (now Lesotho), the landlocked British protectorate in the middle of South Africa. Nana Mahomo and Peter Molotsi continued to lobby for sanctions abroad after the dissolution of their “United Front” with the ANC in 1962, and they were now joined by Patrick Duncan, the fervently anti-communist former member of the Liberal Party who became the PAC’s first and only white member. But the PAC headquarters was focused on preparing for immediate popular

¹¹² UNGA, Resolution 1761 (XVII), “The policies of *apartheid* of the Government of the Republic of South Africa,” 13 April 1961, 6 November 1962, <https://perma.cc/G7SD-WB53>.

¹¹³ Hepple, *Young Man with a Red Tie*, 52.

¹¹⁴ ‘Thunder’ [Duma Nokwe] to O.R. [Tambo], 5 December 1962, Folder: ‘1963T,’ Box 13, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives. Considerable further correspondence continued on this project throughout the first half of 1963.

insurrection inside the country, in which they did not expect international economic action to play a significant role. The attitude of most Pan Africanist leaders was summed up in the comment of Zeph Mothopeng, a member of the PAC executive, to a visiting journalist in 1962: “Essentially the struggle’s here; the world won’t help. The world backs the winning horse.”¹¹⁵ Some Poqo branches had already begun carrying out attacks: in November 1962 two hundred and fifty men armed with home-made weapons had attacked the police station in Paarl, outside Cape Town. In 1963 Leballo began instructing PAC and Poqo members underground in South Africa to prepare for a nationwide uprising: on a given day – later fixed as April 7 – each branch would launch simultaneous attacks on police stations, power installations, and other strategic points, and begin killing whites indiscriminately for four hours.¹¹⁶

Neither the guerrilla landings envisaged by the authors of Operation Mayibuye, nor the mass insurrection envisaged by Leballo ever took place. In response to the liberation movements’ turn to violence, the South African government drastically increased its repressive capabilities in 1962-63. Freedom of speech was increasingly restricted and detention without trial was introduced. Police torture became routine. In March 1963, the police arrested one of the couriers carrying Leballo’s instructions to branches inside South Africa and used the address list to detain more than three thousand Poqo suspects. In July, police raided MK’s de facto headquarters at Liliesleaf Farm, Rivonia while a meeting to discuss Operation Mayibuye was taking place, and arrested everybody present.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Sampson, *The Anatomist*, 98.

¹¹⁶ Lodge, “Insurrectionism in South Africa,” 220-21, 259-96; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 244-55.

¹¹⁷ Operation Mayibuye had been adopted by the MK High Command and circulated to MK’s two parent bodies, the ANC and the SACP (Though formally distinct, there was, of course, significant overlap between the three organizations: both Mbeki and Sisulu, for instance, were members of the MK High Command, the ANC Working Committee, and the SACP Central Committee). The plan was accepted by the four-person Working Committee of the ANC, but had not been considered by the full ANC National Executive, a body that was difficult to convene after the ANC’s banning and Lutuli’s restriction to his home village in Natal. Though there was significant opposition to the plan in the SACP Central

III. 'A policy of total economic sanctions against South Africa is feasible and practical and can be effective': the climax of the campaign for UN sanctions

The mass arrests of Poqo supporters and the effective decapitation of the leadership of MK marked the beginning of the end of attempts to initiate armed resistance from within South Africa. As the South African government's ruthless police operations continued over the next eighteen months, both the ANC and the PAC had effectively ceased to exist inside the country by the end of 1964. But the MK and Poqo arrests also occurred at the exact moment that international attention to the apartheid issue was entering what U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams characterized as a "new and decisive phase."¹¹⁸

The main impetus for this new phase was the formation of the Organization of African Unity in May 1963 by the heads of state and government of the thirty-two African countries that were now independent. The OAU's founding meeting in Addis Ababa, which came after three years of acrimonious division of African states into rival groupings, was the first full Conference of Independent African States since the meeting in the same city three years earlier that had given the sanctions campaign its first major boost at state-level. Now the 1963 conference, which called for an "effective boycott" of South Africa and appealed to all states to apply the General Assembly's 1962

Committee – SACP chairman Bram Fischer, using his favorite Afrikaans insult, described its advocates as "*n klomp pampoene*" (a bunch of pumpkin heads) – Joe Slovo was nevertheless given permission to leave South Africa and present the plan to the External Mission. It was a further meeting of the secretariat of the SACP Central Committee to discuss the plan that was interrupted by the Rivonia raid on July 11. Mandela, Unpublished 'Jail Memoir,' 569-71; "Joe Matthews, 120 Plein Street" [interview by Philip Bonner], 18 August 1994, Harmel Interviews.

There has been considerable confusion regarding the status of the July 11 meeting. David Smith, for instance, claims that the presence at the meeting of several people who were not members of the MK High Command demonstrates that "The underground was well and truly muddled." Smith, *Young Mandela*, 288. The gathering is identified as a meeting of the secretariat of the SACP Central Committee by Hepple, *Young Man with a Red Tie*, 54, 66. This explains the presence at the meeting of Bernstein, Hepple, and Kathrada, non-Africans who were not members of either the ANC or the MK High Command, but all of whom were members of the SACP Central Committee.

¹¹⁸ G. Mennen Williams to the Secretary of State, "U.S. Policy Towards South Africa," 12 June 1963, Folder: 'POLITICAL AFFAIRS & REL.: POL 3 Cairo Conf. OAU, 1964,' Box 51, Records of the Bureau of African Affairs (Entry 5235), RG59, USNA.

sanctions resolution, had an even greater impact.¹¹⁹ Those African states that had not previously made formal announcements of cessation of trade with South Africa now did so. Concerned not to damage their relations with the newly-coordinated African bloc, many governments in Asia and the Eastern bloc followed suit. The OAU also resolved to raise the issue in the Security Council, the only international body that could make sanctions mandatory for all states. On July 11, the same day that the South African police were arresting the MK leadership at Rivonia, all thirty-two African delegations at the UN submitted a letter to the Security Council formally requesting a meeting on apartheid.

The prospect of renewed consideration of South Africa by the Security Council, for the first time since the Sharpeville crisis, created serious dilemmas for the U.S. and U.K. governments. At least some British and American policymakers had in fact come to conclusions about the most likely means by which the National Party government could be removed that were very similar to those of the authors of Operation Mayibuye. They viewed this prospect with alarm, not optimism, however. Edward Heath, the British Lord Privy Seal, wrote in June 1963 that in his view “the Nationalists will deal ruthlessly and successfully for many years to come with internal risings and indeed guerrilla warfare. Only the combination of these with external sanctions could topple them. And finally what happens when they are toppled?” The MK High Command and the ANC’s External Mission were, of course, working to topple Verwoerd by exactly this combination of guerrilla warfare and sanctions. But as Heath’s final question indicated, the prospect of civil war in South Africa and the eventual victory of forces in which the SACP played a leading role was one the British and American governments were desperately concerned to avoid.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ First Conference of Independent African Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Agenda Item II, “Apartheid And Racial Discrimination,” 22 to 25 May 1963, <https://perma.cc/87MA-VH6V>.

¹²⁰ E[dward] H[earth], untitled minute, 3 June 1963, FO 371/167512, UKNA.

In the view of the British government, then, sanctions would produce an undesirable outcome at great cost to the British economy. Internal government papers were explicit that “Our main reason for opposing sanctions is the damage which would be caused to our own interests”: most importantly, British policymakers feared that a cut-off or decline in British exports to South Africa would cause unemployment in Britain and a deterioration in the U.K.’s already precarious balance of payments. Britain’s economic and defense stake in South Africa was so extensive that British policy continued to be based on the need to “maintain a reasonable working relationship with the South African Government because of our special interests” while seeking to avoid “giving any impression that Her Majesty’s Government has any sympathy with the policy of apartheid.”¹²¹ In practice, this focus on maintaining a “working relationship” with the existing government meant that Britain remained unwilling to take any action that might antagonize South Africa’s National Party rulers.

U.S. policymakers were frustrated by the British position. American economic interests in South Africa were much more limited than those of Britain, and, in the context of the Cold War, the U.S. was much more concerned than Britain to maintain good political relations with the other independent African states. American policymakers were equally concerned to avoid the racial polarization, violent conflict, and opportunities for communist influence that, like the British, they believed would be the likely result of the kind of total sanctions regime sought by the African states, the liberation movements, and their allies. But they also feared that their opposition to sanctions would be a damaging irritant in U.S.-African relations so long as apartheid continued, and so were prepared to be much more active than the British in seeking alternatives to sanctions that would contribute to ending apartheid. Under President John F. Kennedy, American government policy in

¹²¹ Carter, “Economic Sanctions against South Africa: Re-draft of Paragraph 2(a)...,” CAB 21/5070; Burke Trend to the Prime Minister, “South Africa,” 10 July 1963, PREM 11/4486, UKNA.

fact aimed at achieving a scenario similar to the one that had already become popular among many advocates of sanctions: the “creation of a coalition of moderate Nationalists and [white] opposition moderates on a basis of agreement on a program for the gradual incorporation of the non-white population into the political, social and economic fabric of the country.” But U.S. policymakers believed that total trade sanctions would impede rather than enhance the likelihood of such a scenario. Instead, they sought to “encourage the [white] moderates and split the right” through a combination of diplomatic pressure on the government and quiet encouragement of the white opposition.¹²²

At the same time, American policymakers were concerned to minimize the damage to relations with African states that this opposition to sanctions would cause and, in particular, to avoid vetoing an economic sanctions resolution in the UN Security Council. As the African governments were well aware – and hoped to exploit – the U.S. government prided itself on never having exercised its Security Council veto and had in the past castigated the Soviet Union for frequently doing so.¹²³ Acutely aware of the worldwide attention and criticism of ongoing segregation in the United States, American policymakers were especially anxious not to be placed in the position of having to veto a resolution on an issue concerned with race. Discussing the issue with Macmillan in June 1963, weeks after he had announced his intention to submit a new civil rights bill to Congress, Kennedy commented that “it would look odd if he was preaching desegregation at home and voting in favour of apartheid abroad.”¹²⁴

¹²² United States Information Service, Country Plan: South Africa, October 1963, Folder: ‘INF - INFO ACTIVITIES (INTERNATL) 1965: INF 1 Gen Policy. Reports. USIA,’ Box 4029, Central Foreign Policy File (CFPF) 1963, RG59, USNA.

¹²³ “Note on African Unity, the United Nations, and the Role of Ghana,” 17 July 1963, SC/BAA/385, Ghana PRAAD; Mazower, *Governing the World*, 270.

¹²⁴ “Record of Meeting,” 30 June 1963, PREM 11/5113, UKNA, Kew. See also Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 152-202.

These dilemmas came to a head when the African states requested a Security Council meeting in July. Within the U.S. government, Assistant Secretary Williams advocated strenuously that the U.S. should support an arms embargo against South Africa in the deliberations at the UN: it was, he argued, “the least the United States can do to maintain our position of influence with the Africans and our ability to prevent more and violent action on their part.” A modified version of Williams’ position was initially accepted within the U.S. government. Warning that the South African problem was a “heavy burden” that threatened America’s global strategic interests and that “a rough time was ahead” in the Security Council, Secretary of State Dean Rusk informed the South African ambassador on July 17 that the U.S. might support a non-mandatory Security Council embargo on arms that could be used to enforce apartheid. Rusk also warned the ambassador that the U.S. was considering ending *all* arms sales to South Africa after the end of 1963, but that this would not be part of the UN resolution.¹²⁵

The U.S. delegation in fact proved unable to maintain this position in what one official called “the fast moving events in the Security Council” in early August. The initial draft resolution submitted by the African states had included a boycott of South African goods, and in negotiating to get all economic and diplomatic sanctions removed from the draft, the United States conceded a non-mandatory embargo on all arms, which the U.S. itself would observe. Suspecting that the Americans would “waver” on this point, British policymakers had already decided not to exercise their own veto. A survey of the British High Commissioners to the African members of the Commonwealth had concluded that a British veto of an arms embargo resolution that was not also vetoed by the U.S. would provoke serious retaliation against Britain. Britain would therefore allow

¹²⁵ G. Mennen Williams to the Secretary of State, memorandum, 12 July 1963, Folder: ‘FT - FOREIGN TRADE, S AFR, 2/1/63,’ Box 3485, Alpha Numeric Files (1963), RG 59; Memorandum of Conversation: Dean Rusk, W.C. Naude, 17 July 1963, Folder: ‘POL-1 Gen. Policy Background S AFR,’ Box 4029, CFPF 1963, RG59, USNA. Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 87-89.

the passage of a non-mandatory arms embargo resolution in the Security Council, by abstaining, if it was “the price of avoiding economic sanctions.” Since the resolution was non-mandatory, Britain was not required to end all arms sales to South Africa. The British government announced that it would cease selling weapons that could be used domestically to enforce apartheid, but would not halt arms sales for South Africa’s external defense.¹²⁶

Though Britain and the U.S. were thus able to use the concession of the voluntary arms embargo resolution to avoid a veto in August, the African Group at the UN immediately renewed its pressure for further Security Council action that this time would be both mandatory and cause much more substantial damage to the South African economy. Rather than calling for a total cessation of all trade, the African governments focused their attention on an embargo on oil sales: since South Africa had no domestic oil sources, oil embargo advocates believed this measure could quickly cause massive economic dislocation. The British and American governments apparently expected that the African states would force an oil embargo resolution to a vote in the Security Council, and that despite Anglo-American lobbying efforts, they would be unable to secure the five abstentions necessary to kill the resolution without a veto. Still acutely aware of the “high political cost of casting our first veto on a racial issue,” the Americans in fact planned to abstain, safe in the knowledge that British would veto alone: Kennedy had somewhat disingenuously tried to reassure U.K. Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home in October that “the UK should not be too disturbed at the idea of a veto.” British officials were of course disturbed by the prospect that a veto would do “irreparable damage to our relations with African and other Commonwealth countries,” but still saw this as preferable to a Security Council mandatory oil embargo, given Britain’s economic interest in South

¹²⁶ Burke Trend to the Prime Minister, “Policy towards South Africa,” 31 July 1963, CAB 21/5070, UKNA, Kew; Andrew Holt, *The Foreign Policy of the Douglas-Home Government: Britain, the United States, and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 67-68.

Africa.¹²⁷

Ultimately, however, Britain was saved from vetoing by the African states' unexpected acceptance of a Norwegian counter-proposal. Under domestic pressure to take more forceful action against apartheid, but fearful that the issue of sanctions against South Africa could undermine the UN in the way that sanctions against Italy had undermined the League of Nations, the Scandinavian governments sought to find a middle-ground between the Anglo-American and African positions. On December 4, 1963, the Security Council therefore unanimously adopted a Norwegian-drafted resolution requesting the UN Secretary General to establish "a small group of recognized experts to examine methods of resolving the present situation in South Africa through full, peaceful and orderly application of human rights and fundamental freedoms to all inhabitants of the territory as a whole, regardless of race, colour or creed, and to consider what part the United Nations might play in the achievement of that end." Secretary General U Thant appointed Alva Myrdal of Sweden to chair the Group of Experts, whose other members were Sir Hugh Foot of Britain, Edward Asafu-Adjaye of Ghana, Josip Djerdja of Yugoslavia, and Dey Ould Sidi Baba of Morocco. E.S. Reddy, a UN civil servant from India who also served as Principal Secretary of the "Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa" that had been created by the General Assembly's November 1962 resolution, was appointed to serve as the Group's secretary.¹²⁸

The ANC leadership was initially deeply skeptical of the Group. Oliver Tambo accurately

¹²⁷ Record of Meeting: The President, Prime Minister Alec Douglas Home, 4 October 1963, Folder: 'POL-1 Gen. Policy Background S AFR,' Box 4029, CFPF 1963, RG59, USNA; Burke Trend to the Prime Minister, "South Africa," 11 November 1963, CAB 21/5070, UKNA.

¹²⁸ UNSC, Resolution 182, "Question relating to the policies of apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa" 4 December 1963, <https://perma.cc/ZP2F-U4RE>; Tore Linné Eriksen, "The Origins of a Special Relationship: Norway and Southern Africa 1960–1975," in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000), 31; Christopher Munthe Morgenstjerne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003), 22-23, 26-27; Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation*, vol. 1, *Formation*, 197-201.

perceived British and American support for its establishment as a delaying tactic to avoid sanctions, and was concerned by its apparent focus on allaying white South African fears of political change.¹²⁹ But the five-month period of the Group's deliberations in fact marked the apogee of the anti-apartheid campaign for a UN sanctions regime. Myrdal herself was sympathetic to the idea of sanctions. Her "personal idea," she wrote in February 1964, was that sanctions should not be thought of as a "punishment" or a "squeeze" but were comparable to a credible nuclear threat: if the Security Council demonstrated such a "determined preparedness to introduce swift, massive measures" to cripple the South African economy, she believed that the South African government would quickly concede the Council's demands even before sanctions were actually imposed.¹³⁰ Reddy, meanwhile, was able to use the connections he had built up through the Special Committee to ensure that the Group of Experts heard directly from representatives of the liberation movements and other non-governmental opponents of apartheid. At Reddy's instigation Myrdal reached out to Tambo to reassure him about the Group's intentions, and the "Experts" subsequently held consultations with Tambo, Nana Mahomo, Yusuf Dadoo, and others. Mary Benson, the former secretary of the Africa Bureau, who had published a sympathetic history of the ANC the previous year, was recruited to do research and drafting for the Group.¹³¹

The investigations by the Group of Experts also coincided with the "International Conference on Economic Sanctions Against South Africa" convened in London from April 14 to 17

¹²⁹ Oliver Tambo, "Comments and observations on proposals for a United Nations Security Council resolution on apartheid," January 1964, File Ed1, Enuga S. Reddy Papers (A2094), Wits Historical Papers. See also Reddy, "United Nations and the African National Congress," 22n.40.

¹³⁰ Alva Myrdal to E.S. Reddy, 6 February 1964, E. S. Reddy Papers (MS 1499), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University. On Myrdal and "the extent to which [she] became a forgotten cog in the UN's history," see also Glenda Sluga, "The Human Story of Development: Alva Myrdal at the UN, 1949-1955," in *International Organizations and Development, 1945-1990*, eds. Marc Frey, Sönke Kunkel, and Corinna R. Unger (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 46-66.

¹³¹ E.S. Reddy, "Note on Representative South Africans," 22 January 1964, Folder 13, Box 1, Accession 1996-M-002, Reddy Papers, Yale; Reddy, "United Nations and the African National Congress," 23; Mary [Benson] to Ruth [First], 25 March 1964, File 117/2/1/2 (A), First papers.

by Ronald Segal, the former magazine editor who had been one of the earliest South African advocates of external economic boycotts, and who had settled in Britain after his escape with Tambo after Sharpeville. With the assistance of the AAM and the ANC, and sponsorship from several African governments, Segal succeeded in bringing together more than two hundred and fifty delegates and observers – including official delegations from thirty countries and “unofficial delegations” from another fourteen – to discuss the papers he had commissioned from academic experts on various aspects of sanctions.

Unsurprisingly given their diverse backgrounds, the various experts and delegates envisioned sanctions working in different ways. Two of the expert papers made explicit that there were at least two quite distinct possible objectives: “to bring pressure to bear on the current regime so drastically to modify its policies that world public opinion is satisfied” or “to produce, by economic means, such a situation in South Africa that anti-Government elements are able to acquire power and so bring about a revolution in the social order.”¹³² The conference as a whole did not settle on a single model of change: one of the “commissions” into which conference delegates divided for discussions concluded that sanctions were “the sole hope of ending the apartheid system in South Africa without the use of force” while another concluded that “it would be unrealistic to suppose that violence can be avoided” and that the purpose of sanctions was to enable violent resistance to apartheid to triumph more quickly.¹³³ But though they differed on *how* sanctions would work, the conference delegates agreed that “a policy of total economic sanctions against South Africa is feasible and practical and can be effective.”¹³⁴

¹³² William F. Gutteridge, “The strategic implications of sanctions against South Africa,” in *Sanctions Against South Africa*, ed. Segal, 107. See also G.D.N. Worswick, “The impact of sanctions on the British economy,” in *Sanctions Against South Africa*, ed. Segal, 170.

¹³³ “Reports of Commissions IV and V,” in *Sanctions Against South Africa*, ed. Segal, 265; “Report of Commission III,” in *Sanctions Against South Africa*, ed. Segal, 253-55.

¹³⁴ “Findings and Recommendations of the Commissions,” in *Sanctions Against South Africa*, ed. Segal, 270.

The report submitted by the Group of Experts to the Secretary General on 20 April 1964 proved to be a “happy surprise” for Tambo and other advocates of sanctions. Its primary recommendation was that the South African government should call a National Convention, “fully representative of the whole population of South Africa,” to negotiate the country’s future. The report advised, moreover, that the Security Council should initiate a study of the logistics of imposing effective and universally-implemented economic sanctions. Quoting extensively from the papers delivered at Segal’s conference in London the previous week (to which the UN experts had been given advance access), the Group’s report argued that sanctions should be imposed by the Security Council if the South African government refused to cooperate in calling a National Convention.¹³⁵

The combination of the report of the Group of Experts and the papers delivered at Segal’s conference, meant, wrote Tambo in May 1964, that “a powerful case for action by the Security Council” could now be made out.¹³⁶ Hopes that such international action was imminent were further reinforced by the outcome in June 1964 of the Rivonia Trial of Nelson Mandela and the MK leadership captured at Liliesleaf Farm. When Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki, and the other convicted defendants received life sentences, many anti-apartheid activists were convinced that it was the international mobilization around the trial that had saved them from the gallows. The defendants themselves, Govan Mbeki wrote during the trial, had been “tremendously encouraged by the world-wide support which our cause is receiving” and had been “reading with great interest the demonstrations of solidarity shown.” In a letter to Ruth First, who was now in exile in Britain, one white radical still in South Africa captured the mood of optimism the international response to the

¹³⁵ Oliver Tambo to E.S. Reddy, 6 May 1964, Folder 388, Box 7, Reddy Papers, Yale; *A New Course in South Africa: Report of the Group of Experts...* (New York: United Nations, 1964).

¹³⁶ Oliver Tambo to E.S. Reddy, 6 May 1964, Reddy Papers, Yale.

trial engendered: Now we have entered the post-Rivonia era, and I feel it's a point where the tide is turning in our favour... I have been thinking about it a lot, and have never felt as optimistic as now. The reaction to the trial internationally, was historic, and I think the reason for our blokes not getting the death penalty... I've always been one of those who felt the outcome of the struggle at home will decide things etc, and felt too much reliance on overseas pressure was a danger. But now I'm beginning to think that this is a unique situation, that the part played abroad is as vital as the part played here. The trial has shown it...¹³⁷

What one ANC activist called the “tremendous effectiveness” of the international campaign to save the lives of the Rivonia accused thus further raised expectations in mid-1964 that the combination of pressure from the African states at the UN with public mobilization in the West could bring about the imposition of a UN sanctions regime with the support the Western powers. Even the Rivonia trialists sentenced to life imprisonment remained optimistic. The defense lawyers believed that out of the eight defendants convicted Ahmed Kathrada had the best chance of overturning his conviction on appeal, but Kathrada decided against, preferring, he explained, “to take his chance on liberation five or ten years hence when the liberation movement changed the government.”¹³⁸

In fact, however, April 1964 turned out to have been the high water mark of the campaign for UN sanctions against South Africa. Hilda Bernstein, whose husband Rusty was at the time one of the accused in the Rivonia trial and who herself was on the Central Committee of the SACP, had

¹³⁷ Gov[an Mbeki] to Ru[th First], 20 May 1964; “Mrs M.R. van Tonder” [pseud.] to “Mrs T. Hoyd” [Ruth First], 25 June 1964, File 117/2/1/2 (A), First Papers. It remains unclear what role – if any – the international mobilization around the trial had in the judge’s decision not to sentence any of the defendants to death. The most comprehensive analysis concludes that in the end the surviving evidence means that “one can only speculate as to whether any pressure – either within South Africa or from abroad – had any effect on Judge Quartus de Wet.” Kenneth S. Broun, *Saving Nelson Mandela: The Rivonia Trial and the Fate of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 100-115.

¹³⁸ “Points for the ANC memo to the Heads of State Conference,” n.d. [ca. July 1964], File 117/1/17/2/5, First Papers; Joel Joffe, *The State vs. Nelson Mandela: The Trial that Changed South Africa* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 261.

predicted in January 1964 that for the western powers “a choice between South Africa and the rest of Africa will have to be made. They may yet choose to abandon their evil partner [to UN sanctions], or may find themselves knocking at the doors of all of Africa [in vain].” ANC policy focused on seeking to force the western powers to make exactly this choice: writing later in the year, another ANC writer argued that there was a “need for intensified activities at the United Nations and outside to win changes in the policies of the Western countries,” above all by making “western support of apartheid... completely incompatible with other western aims and activities in Africa.” Specifically, the ANC called on the African leaders who met for the OAU’s second summit in Cairo in July 1964 to increase the pressure on the western powers by imposing a secondary boycott of western firms that traded with South Africa, modeled on the secondary boycott operated by the Arab League against Israel.¹³⁹

African leaders were extremely wary, however, that such action would cause greater damage to their own economies than to those of Britain and the U.S. The Cairo Summit established a “Bureau of Sanctions” modeled on the Arab League’s “Central Boycott Office,” and assigned it “to collect and disseminate information about governmental and private financial, economic and commercial institutions, which trade with South Africa.” But there was no agreement on what should be done with this information. Indeed, some African governments, including the government of Nigeria, refused even to circulate a questionnaire to American firms in Lagos about their relations with South Africa, fearing that this would damage Nigeria’s ability to attract foreign investment. Other African governments did approach western firms that operated in their countries and ask them to minimize trade with South Africa. But none were prepared to implement a secondary

¹³⁹ Hilda Bernstein, “United [Nations] Action Against South Africa: Boycotts reveal who has big stakes in the maintenance of apartheid,” 20 January 1964, File B6.2, Bernstein Papers; “Points for the ANC memo to the Heads of State Conference,” n.d. [ca. July 1964], File 117/1/17/2/5, First Papers; African National Congress, “Memorandum to the Second Summit of the Organization of African Unity,” 17-20 July 1964, Item 12.7, Bunting Collection.

boycott to compel such action. The Central Intelligence Agency reported reassuringly to the U.S. government immediately after the summit, that “the great majority of the frail new African states can probably be expected to move only slowly and with close regard for the effects on their own interests” of a secondary boycott.¹⁴⁰

Confident that the African states lacked the economic leverage to impose a secondary boycott, the British and American governments continued their efforts to avoid being placed in the position of having to veto a sanctions resolution. After the unanticipated and unwelcome endorsement of sanctions by the Security Council’s own Group of Experts, the U.S. and the U.K. settled next on a delaying measure over which they had much tighter control. The U.S. therefore proposed to accept the Group’s recommendation of a study of the logistics of imposing effective and universally-implemented economic sanctions, and to agree that the Security Council should establish an “Expert Committee on Measures” in order to do this. This time, however, the “Expert Committee” was to be composed not of independent – and uncontrollable – “experts” but of representatives of each of the member states of the Security Council at the time. In this way, as one State Department official argued, the western powers would be able to “avoid losing control of this issue,” while also buying further time.¹⁴¹ The Committee on Measures met thirty-eight times between July 1964 and February 1965, when it adopted – by a narrow 6-4 vote – a majority report that satisfied the U.S. desire for “a report which did not foreclose the possibility of sanctions but which

¹⁴⁰ First Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Cairo, Resolution 6 (I), “Apartheid and Racial Discrimination,” 17-21 July 1964, <https://perma.cc/R83K-J7GR>; “Discussion Meeting Report: South Africa,” 11 December 1964, Folder 1, Box 177, CFR Records; Central Intelligence Agency, “OAU Boycott Action Against South Africa,” 7 August 1964, Folder: “Africa, Union of South, Volume 1: 11/63 – 10/64 [2 of 3],” Box 78, National Security Files (NSF): Country File, Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) Presidential Library, Austin, TX.

¹⁴¹ UNSC, Resolution 191, “Question relating to the policies of *apartheid* of the Government of the Republic of South Africa,” 18 June 1964, <https://perma.cc/P39G-A4AK>; Curtis C. Strong to Mr. MacKnight, “Apartheid Issue in Security Council,” 12 May 1964, Folder “SOC - SOCIAL CONDITIONS. SOC 14-1 SC Meeting on APARTHEID, 1964,” Box 51, Bureau of African Affairs Records, RG59, USNA.

set forth plainly the enormous problems attendant” on such a policy.¹⁴²

Even before the Committee on Measures had reported in March 1965, the high hopes entertained by sanctions advocates in April-June 1964 had been begun to ebb. As early as October that year E.S. Reddy wrote from the UN to warn Tambo that “the situation is going to get worse, and there will not be very ‘effective’ international action for quite some time to come.”¹⁴³ The idea that effective international action against apartheid meant a UN-backed regime of governmental economic sanctions had rapidly come to the forefront of external anti-apartheid campaigning after Sharpeville. More gradually, between 1960 and 1963 most African and Eastern Bloc states had formally imposed unilateral trade sanctions themselves. But despite securing a General Assembly appeal for multilateral sanctions in November 1962, the advocates of sanctions were unable to find a way to secure the acquiescence of South Africa’s major western trading partners in such a regime.

Writing in February 1965, Maindy Msimang, the ANC’s Administrative Officer, who had just been placed in charge of the Congress’s sanctions campaign, dismissed the General Assembly’s November 1962 sanctions resolution as “nothing more than an emotional expression of anger.” “I become convinced,” Msimang concluded, “each time I have to plough through the history of sanctions that the mistake, for which the apparent ineffectiveness of sanctions can be accounted, is that sanctions have hitherto been conceived and directed at State level.”¹⁴⁴ Having failed to secure state-level sanctions through the UN, in the second half of the 1960s the Congress movement would come to accord much less strategic significance to external economic pressures. Western anti-apartheid activists, meanwhile, would redirect their focus from states to non-state actors.

¹⁴² Dean Rusk to Seymour J. Rubin, 8 March 1965, Folder: “FT FOREIGN TRADE S.AFR: FT 11-2 SANCTIONS-Limited Measures,” Box 56, Bureau of African Affairs Records, RG59, USNA. See also “Report of the Expert Committee established in pursuance of Security Council Resolution 191 (1964),” 2 March 1965, in *The United Nations and Apartheid, 1948-1994* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1994), 285-90.

¹⁴³ E.S. Reddy to Oliver Tambo, 9 October 1964, Folder 388, Box 7, Reddy Papers, Yale MSSA, New Haven.

¹⁴⁴ Maindy [Msimang] to Joe [Slovo] and Ruth [First], 27 February 1965, File 117/2/1/2, First Papers.

CHAPTER 4

New Targets, New Tactics, 1965-1970

At noon on March 19, 1965, several hundred protesters picketed the gleaming skyscraper that housed the world headquarters of Chase Manhattan Bank, in the heart of New York's financial district. Many of the picketers wore buttons or carried signs reading "CHASE MANHATTAN – PARTNER IN APARTHEID." Holding hands, with their arms crossed in front of their bodies, they sang freedom songs from the American civil rights movement and handed out flyers to passers-by requesting depositors to withdraw their accounts from Chase. The demonstration had been planned by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), an organization then just establishing itself as one of the leading groups of the American "new left." The protest was co-sponsored by groups including the National Student Christian Federation (NSCF) and three organizations prominent in the domestic civil rights struggle in the United States: the Congress of Racial Equality, the Northern Students' Movement, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). While the picketers marched and sang outside, a delegation from the sponsoring groups met inside with the vice chairman of the bank, to present their demand that Chase "cease all loans to the racist South African government." When the bank official rejected their ultimatum, forty-nine protesters staged a sit-in, blocking the sidewalk in front of the entrance to the building. Ignoring police instructions to move on, they locked arms and continued singing "We Shall Overcome." As they were arrested they went limp, forcing police to carry them to the waiting paddy wagons.¹

¹ Theodore Jones, "49 Arrested at Chase Building in Protest on South Africa Loans," *New York Times*, 20 March 1965, 11; "South Africa Loans Bring Bank Sit-Ins," *Baltimore Sun*, 20 March 1965, 23; Arthur Waskow, "Notes on a Trial Near Wall Street," *Liberation*, February 1966, 38-40; Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 182-83; Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 40-45.

The sit-in at Chase Manhattan that March afternoon may not have been “one of the truly most exciting political events of the decade,” as one of the SDS organizers had predicted the previous month.² In the United States it was overshadowed by the civil rights protests that preceded it and the protests against the Vietnam War that followed. Even histories of the external struggle against apartheid either do not mention it, or reference it only in passing.³ But the sit-in nevertheless represented the beginning of a significant shift in both the targets and the tactics of anti-apartheid activism in the west. Over the previous four years opponents of apartheid in the U.S. and Britain had been focused on securing the participation of their governments in a UN regime of sanctions on trade with South Africa. Grassroots anti-apartheid activities intended to generate public support for this demand had focused on trade too: consumer boycotts targeted imported South African goods and symbolic industrial boycotts targeted ships carrying cargo from South Africa.

Campaigns targeting western firms that had direct or indirect investments in South Africa had not been a significant element of the struggle against apartheid before 1965. In late 1963 and early 1964 the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London and the American Committee in Africa in New York had both published exposés of the extent to which British and American firms with investments in South Africa were “partners” or “collaborators” in apartheid. But these exposés were intended to generate outrage that would put pressure on the U.S. and U.K. governments to impose comprehensive trade sanctions. Neither called for a general policy of disinvestment.⁴ Indeed, far from calling for the withdrawal of investment, AAM publicity materials in 1964 presented trade

² Todd Gitlin, “Apartheid Action Planned,” *Students for a Democratic Society Bulletin*, February 1965, 10, <https://perma.cc/E8P2-LG2J>.

³ The protest is briefly mentioned in Donald R. Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999), 44-45; Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 30-31; Minter and Hill, “Anti-apartheid solidarity in United States–South Africa Relations,” 767-68.

⁴ Rosalynde Ainslie and Dorothy Robinson, *The Collaborators* (London: Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1963); *Partners in Apartheid: A Study of U.S. investments in South Africa* (New York: American Committee on Africa, 1964).

sanctions as the “the last weapon short of violent revolution which can bring an end to apartheid” and therefore as the best means of *preventing* the loss of British investments in South Africa.

“Incomes from investment in South Africa would obviously cease during the limited period of sanctions,” the AAM argued. But that investment itself would not be endangered, as it might be if trade sanctions were not imposed and civil war consequently broke out.⁵

From 1965, opponents of apartheid in the west began to shift away from their previous focus on pressuring western governments to participate in a regime of comprehensive trade sanctions that would quickly devastate the South African economy. SDS’s protest at Chase took place less than three weeks after the publication of the inconclusive report on sanctions by the UN Security Council’s “Expert Committee on Measures.” As the sanctions campaign at the United Nations stalled, both the independent African states and the South African liberation movements became rapidly disillusioned with the UN as an institution and with trade embargoes imposed by western governments as an effective weapon in the struggle against apartheid.

The liberation movements now came to focus increasingly exclusively on armed struggle as the only means by which apartheid could be ended. This was the beginning of the period when the attitude of the ANC and the PAC was characterized – as former *Drum* magazine writer Lewis Nkosi put it – by “indifference or hidden hostility... to any form of struggle which is not directly concerned with the gun.”⁶ Anti-apartheid activists in the west grappled with how to respond to the challenges posed by their inability to influence their own governments and by this new attitude on the part of the liberation movements. In the U.K., for instance, the AAM’s annual report observed in September 1967 that “many of the [Movement’s] assumptions about the possibilities of winning advances in Britain’s policies, about the adequacy and effectiveness of economic sanctions as an

⁵ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Answering Your Questions on Economic Sanctions,” July 1964, File 1701, AAM.

⁶ Nkosi, “Literature and Liberation,” 163.

instrument of international policy, [and] about the role of the United Nations in this respect” had now come “under heavy scrutiny and questioning.”⁷ The campaign for the boycott of South Africa might have ceased to be such a prominent feature of external anti-apartheid activity at this point. That it did not was due in large part to the initiatives of new left groups like SDS in the United States, and the Haslemere Group and the Young Liberals in Britain. These groups shared the established anti-apartheid organizations’ disillusionment with efforts to exert direct influence on western governments. Their concern about the domestic and global power of multinational corporations, and their commitment to challenging that power through “direct action” reshaped and reinvigorated the campaign to boycott South Africa by shifting its immediate target from governments to non-governmental bodies.

I. ‘The UN has been revealed as a weak, indecisive body’: The Collapse of the Campaign for a UN Sanctions Regime

In 1964 opponents of apartheid had been optimistic that the Security Council would soon accede to the demands of the African Group at the UN and impose a mandatory regime of comprehensive trade sanctions against South Africa. These high hopes dissipated rapidly after the Security Council’s Committee on Measures published its inconclusive report in March 1965. In September 1967, a report from the Organization of African Unity’s “Liberation Committee” remarked that when the OAU had had been formed four years before, there had been a general belief among African nationalists that colonialism and imperialism were “on the retreat.” “To-day, however,” the report went on, “the movement for the extension of freedom and independence and the whole process of decolonisation has met with serious set-backs.” Others shared this assessment. An August 1966 secret report by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was titled “South Africa on the Crest of the

⁷ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Annual Report,” September 1967, File 13, AAM.

Wave.” South Africa had made “a phenomenal recovery in almost every respect from the nadir” after Sharpeville, the report concluded. The threat of further pressure was receding rapidly. And the National Party had further consolidated its grip on power, winning more seats than ever (126 out of 166).⁸

Despite their disappointment with the report of the Committee on Measures, the African states had planned to call a Security Council meeting to discuss the imposition of sanctions in the second half of 1965. But this never happened: the Council – and the African delegations at the UN – were preoccupied first with the war in August-September between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, and then with the “Unilateral Declaration of Independence” (UDI) by white settlers in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia.⁹ The foreign ministers of Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia, whom the OAU heads of government had deputed to handle the South African issue at the UN, then decided to wait for what they expected to be a favorable decision in the ongoing South West Africa case at the International Court of Justice. As we have seen, the African leaders who had decided to launch the case in 1960 had always viewed it as an additional way of securing western governments’ participation in a sanctions regime against South Africa, since Article 94 of the United Nations Charter empowered the Security Council to enforce compliance with ICJ judgments. No one had expected the case to drag on for six years, however, and for much of that period, African

⁸ Organization of African Unity Co-ordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, “Report... to the 9th Session of the Council of Ministers,” n.d. [September 1967], Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Records, National Archives of Zambia (NAZ), Lusaka, Zambia; Central Intelligence Agency, “South Africa on the Crest of the Wave,” 30 August 1966, Folder: “Africa, Union of South: Codeword – South Africa,” Box 79, NSF: Country File, LBJ Library.

⁹ Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Pretoria to S.A. Embassy, Buenos Aires, telegram, 18 August 1965; S.A. Permanent Delegation to U.N.O. to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, telegram, 27 October 1965, vol. 2, File 136/3/12, DFA Records, DIRCO Archive; “Report of the Foreign Ministers of Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia on Apartheid and Racial Discrimination in the Republic of South Africa,” November 1966, File FA 1/1/129, MFA Records, NAZ.

leaders had taken little interest in the drawn-out proceedings.¹⁰ But the four foreign ministers now hoped that – given the U.S. government’s commitment in this period to upholding the Court’s authority – a favorable decision by the ICJ would enable them “to tie the problem of South Africa and South West Africa in asking the Security Council to impose sanctions against South Africa.”¹¹

This was precisely the situation that both the British and American governments were determined to avoid. The British government, less invested in the authority of the Court and with much larger economic interests in South Africa, remained prepared to veto any Security Council resolution imposing sanctions. The U.S. government meanwhile hoped it would be possible to avoid undermining the ICJ so blatantly. Expecting that the Court would rule that South Africa’s administration of South West Africa was not being conducted in accordance with the original League of Nations mandate, American policymakers planned to deflect calls for immediate Security Council action by pressuring the South African government sufficiently to alter its policies in South West Africa as to render the question of enforcement measures irrelevant.¹²

In any event, the expected showdown over the ICJ ruling never occurred. To the surprise of policymakers in both Washington and in African capitals, when the Court finally announced its judgment in July 1966, the justices reversed one of their earlier decisions and ruled 8–7 that Ethiopia and Liberia did not, after all, have legal standing to challenge South Africa’s administration of South West Africa. Though wrangling over the status of South West Africa continued in the General Assembly, the ruling effectively marked the end of the African states’ effort to secure a Security

¹⁰ “The South West Africa Issue after the 1965 Court Decision – Problems and Options,” 18 September 1964, Folder: “POLITICAL AFFAIRS- POL 3 Organizations & Alignments SA and SWA- ICJ-SA, 1964,” Box 51, of the Bureau of African Affairs Records, RG 59, USNA.

¹¹ “Report of the Foreign Ministers of Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia on Apartheid and Racial Discrimination in the Republic of South Africa,” November 1966, File FA 1/1/129, MFA Records, NAZ.

¹² Meeting of the National Security Council, 14 July 1966, Folder: “NSC Meetings, Vol. 3 Tab 43, 7/14/66 Southwest Africa,” NSF: National Security Council Meetings File, LBJ Library. Compare Irwin’s argument that the Johnson administration was “poised” to impose sanctions if the court ruled against South Africa. Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 123.

Council-mandated sanctions regime. In November 1966 the four foreign ministers reported to the annual summit of OAU heads of state and government that they had concluded after the ICJ's judgment that calling a meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss South Africa should be "deferred to a more propitious time." In the event, the Security Council did not formally meet to discuss the issue of South Africa's domestic racial policies again until 1970.¹³

In part this decision reflected mounting disillusion with the United Nations as an institution. The high hopes entertained in the early 1960s that the emergence of a postcolonial majority in the General Assembly would be sufficient to transform the UN into a vehicle for promoting African states' interests and agendas were dashed on the rock of the vetoes held by the permanent members of the Security Council. A February 1967 joint report by the Algerian and Zambian foreign ministers on the ongoing Rhodesian crisis concluded that efforts to secure majority rule through the Security Council were "fruitless": "by its very structure," the report concluded, the Security Council was "a hopeless forum." By that time, both the ANC and the PAC had likewise abandoned any hope that the UN could be a significant factor in their strategies for liberating South Africa.¹⁴ Indeed, this disillusionment had set in among the leaders of the liberation movements even before the ICJ ruling, in which the four OAU foreign ministers had continued to place some hope. "The UN, from which much was expected, has been revealed as a weak, indecisive body," observed exiled Congress leaders Yusuf Dadoo, Joe Matthews, and Joe Slovo in an analysis of the "Problems of the Congress Movement" in mid 1966. Not only had the campaign for sanctions against South Africa stalled, but

¹³ "Report of the Foreign Ministers of Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia on Apartheid and Racial Discrimination in the Republic of South Africa," November 1966, File FA 1/1/129, MFA Records, NAZ; [E.S. Reddy], "Convening of the Security Council," 13 August 1969, Folder 388, Box 7, Reddy Papers, Yale.

¹⁴ Foreign Ministers of Algeria and Zambia, "Question of Southern Rhodesia: Report to the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of African Unity," February 1967, File FA 1/1/52, MFA Records, NAZ. On the importance of 1965-66 as a "watershed" in anti-apartheid strategy, characterized by disillusionment with state-based international institutions, see also Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 105, 107. Most other studies ignore this disillusionment and the strategic shift that followed it. See, for instance, Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, "The ANC and the World, 1960-1970," in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 1960-1970, esp. 542-43; Reddy, "United Nations and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa," 62-67.

the UN's failure to restrain the massive escalation of American involvement in the Vietnam War during 1965, to end Rhodesia's UDI, and to "protect the territory of member states against aggression by Israel" during the Six Day War of June 1967 all highlighted to Congress observers "the weaknesses of the world organization" and the unlikelihood of a Security Council-mandated sanctions regime.¹⁵

Within the PAC there had always been much greater ambivalence about the significance of the UN and about the campaign for international sanctions. But in the course of 1964-65, the individuals within the organization who had taken the greatest interest in securing international action were removed from leadership positions. As the PAC was forced by the authorities in Basutoland to move its headquarters from the British-ruled protectorate to independent Tanzania in 1964-65, members of the leadership group around Acting President Potlake Leballo came into conflict with those who had been staffing the Party's diplomatic apparatus. Nana Mahomo and Peter Molotsi, who had represented the PAC abroad almost singlehandedly in the two years after Sharpeville, were among the early victims of the factionalism that would ultimately cripple the PAC as a political force. Both men were suspended after disputes with Leballo over the administration of the Party's finances. Patrick Duncan, who had later joined Mahomo in lobbying for sanctions in the west, was removed from his position as PAC representative in Algiers for allegedly carrying out "a one man crusade against the People's Republic of China." (Duncan had apparently pointed out that China – on which the PAC was becoming increasingly dependent for external support – was

¹⁵ [Yusuf Dadoo, J. Slovo, and J. Matthews], "Problems of the Congress Movement," n.d. [ca. June 1966], Folder 2, Box 3, Part II (ANC London), ANC Records: Lusaka and London [former Mayibuye Archives collection], NAHECS; "...freedom and independence..." [document fragment], n.d., Folder: "Party," Box 3, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives. See also, for instance, [Central Committee of the South African Communist Party], "Problems and Perspectives – Discussion Statement," n.d. [1965], Folder: "ANC Affairs," Box 2, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives.

purchasing maize from South Africa despite publicly claiming to adhere to sanctions).¹⁶

The tensions in the PAC over the role of the UN were resolved in late 1966, after two members of the PAC executive, A.B. Ngcobo and Peter Raboroko, presented papers at a UN seminar in Brazil that called for the UN to intervene militarily in South Africa to end apartheid. The PAC leadership suspended Ngcobo and Raboroko, and released a statement repudiating their call for military intervention. It was a “contradiction in terms,” the PAC statement declared, “to enlist the aid of imperialist dominated body like the UNO for the purpose of waging an anti-imperialist struggle.” The history of the UN’s military interventions in Korea in the early fifties and in the Congo in the early sixties – as well as the UN’s record of “abstentionism” when called upon to act in southern Africa, Dominica, Vietnam, and elsewhere – showed that the organization’s “control machinery” was “dominated by the imperialist nations.” Indeed, the PAC now argued that paying too much attention to the “impotent” UN was harmful to the liberation struggle, since “all the talks [sic] of the imperialists in this body is designed to divert the oppressed masses from the revolutionary road, so that they may place their destinies in the hands of their enemies, and merely use the UNO as a safety valve of their grievances.”¹⁷

Of course both African diplomats and the leaders of the liberation movements had always been aware of the UN Charter’s institutionalization of great-power privilege. What had changed was their estimation of the African states’ ability to generate sufficient leverage to compel the veto-wielding great powers to accede to their demands. The four OAU foreign ministers implicitly recognized this weakness when they reported to the OAU summit in November 1966 that they had

¹⁶ Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 206-7, 373n128; Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements in Exile,” 94-100, 198-211; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 308-9.

¹⁷ “Repudiation of the Call for United Nations Military Intervention in Azania,” and “PAC’s Revolutionary Message to the Nation,” both in Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (S.A.), “Report of National Executive Committee Meeting, Moshi, Tanzania,” 19-22 September 1967, Folder: “PAC Non-Serial Publications M-N (1986-1990 and undated),” Box 11, Pan Africanist Congress Publications Collection, NAHECS.

concluded from informal soundings that the Security Council's permanent members were "not yet prepared to go any further than they have gone so far against South Africa."¹⁸ As we have seen, African governments had already shown by the end of 1964 that they were unwilling to countenance the economic losses that would be incurred in a secondary economic boycott of the U.S. and Britain. The Rhodesian crisis the following year revealed that even outside the economic sphere the OAU was unable to co-ordinate secondary boycott action against the western powers. Immediately after the Rhodesian UDI, the OAU Council of Ministers resolved that all member states would break their diplomatic relations with Britain if the British government had not suppressed the rebellion by December 15, 1965. But of the OAU's thirty-six members, only nine (Algeria, Congo-Brazzaville, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Sudan, and Tanzania) subsequently broke relations when the deadline passed.¹⁹

The amount of leverage the African states could wield was even further reduced by the string of military coups, in Algeria in June 1965, Congo-Kinshasa in November 1965, Dahomey in December 1965, and the Central African Republic, Upper Volta, and Nigeria in January 1966. Most notably of all, in February 1966 army officers in Ghana overthrew Kwame Nkrumah, once the figurehead of African independence. In Washington, senior National Security Council official Robert Komer welcomed the coups as signaling "the beginning of the second phase of modern African history." For Komer, this new phase was "a healthy one, because the dreams and myths which accompanied independence are being replaced by the realization that austerity and hard work

¹⁸ "Report of the Foreign Ministers of Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia on Apartheid and Racial Discrimination in the Republic of South Africa," November 1966, File FA 1/1/129, MFA Records, NAZ.

¹⁹ A.M. Simbule to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "O.A.U. Summit," 24 December 1965, File FA 1/1/70; "Report of the Administrative Secretary General of the OAU Concerning the Implementation of Resolution ECM/Res.13 VI Concerning Rhodesia...", File FA 1/1/151, MFA Records, NAZ.

are required for survival.”²⁰ Certainly the coups shattered anti-apartheid activists’ hopes that the OAU would play a significant role in liberating South Africa, further undermining the ability of the African states to act collectively against apartheid. From the UN, E.S. Reddy reported that the coups had a “disastrous effect” on all the African delegations, and that the African Group “ceased to be a dynamic force.” Even convening meetings of the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid became difficult.²¹

In Africa itself, the coups further exacerbated conflicts among the postcolonial states. In October 1966 Ghana’s new military government detained the entire Guinean delegation while it was en route to the OAU Council of Ministers, in retaliation for Guinea granting asylum to Nkrumah and some of his supporters. In a similar incident a year later, both the Guinean foreign minister and Achkar Marof, Guinea’s ambassador to the UN and the chairman of the UN Special Committee on Apartheid, were arrested when their plane landed in Cote d’Ivoire on their way back from the General Assembly. Unsurprisingly, the OAU’s influence in international politics declined amidst such tensions. Already in March 1966, one member of Zambia’s delegation to the OAU was dismissing the organization as “a toothless bulldog” that was “unwittingly snarling at its own reflection in the water, whilst the carrion crows of imperialism and neo-colonialism dig their beaks and claws into its wounds.”²²

The South African liberation movements were if anything even more damning in their assessment of the postcolonial African states. In the early sixties South African activists’ optimism had been inspired in large part by the decolonization of much of Africa and the support

²⁰ R.W. Komer, “Memorandum for the President: Outlook in Africa,” 10 March 1966, Folder: “CHRONO (Haynes) 3/1/65 – 6/15/66 [1 of 3],” Box 1, NSF: Files of Ulric Haynes, LBJ Library.

²¹ [E.S.] Reddy to Mr. Oliver Tambo, memorandum, 3 June 1968, Folder 388, Box 7, Reddy Papers, Yale.

²² Berhanykun Andemicael, *The OAU and the UN: Relations Between the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations* (New York: United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 1976), 89; H.S. Meebelo, “Report on the Sixth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers...,” 23 March 1966, File FA 1/1/52, MFA Records, NAZ.

independent Africa was expected to give to the liberation struggle. But in 1966 opponents of apartheid faced “a fundamentally new situation,” as Dadoo, Matthews and Slovo observed in their analysis of the “Problems of the Congress Movement.” This new situation included the fact that “Compared to the position in 1961-62 Africa has been shown to be an unstable factor as an aid and assistance to our struggle”: the OAU was divided, “progressive governments” like Nkrumah’s had been overthrown, and large-scale material assistance had not been forthcoming.²³ The PAC, which had benefitted from Nkrumah’s support but was promptly expelled from Ghana after his overthrow, was even more strident in its denunciation of the “deterioration” of the OAU, a body “in which such high hopes had been placed at the time of its inception.”²⁴

Both the ANC and the PAC attributed this deterioration to “imperialism,” a concept that they now came to invoke routinely to characterize the international role of the western powers, and above all the United States and Britain. The flurry of African coups in 1965-66 – characterized by *Azania News*, the PAC’s official journal, as “tele-guided and stage-managed by imperialism” – were seen by members of both liberation movements as part of “a world-wide wave of reaction and counter-revolution.” In such circumstances, little could be expected from the OAU in the struggle against apartheid. Reporting on the “all-time low ebb” of the annual OAU summit of heads of state and government in November 1966, the editor of *Azania News* commented that several African leaders attending the conference were “the marionettes of the imperial powers” – while General Joseph Ankrah, Nkrumah’s successor as president of Ghana – was “a music hall general lashed to

²³ [Yusuf Dadoo, J. Slovo, and J. Matthews], “Problems of the Congress Movement,” n.d. [ca. June 1966], Folder 2, Box 3, Part II (ANC London), ANC Records: Lusaka and London [former Mayibuye Archives collection], NAHECS.

²⁴ “The OAU Conference: What Next?,” *Azania News*, 17 November/1 December 1966, Folder: “PAC Serial – Azania News – 1974 (Vol 9)”, Box 2, PAC Publications Collection, NAHECS.

the chariot of imperialism.”²⁵ The ANC and the PAC continued to rely heavily on the goodwill of certain African states, especially Tanzania and Zambia, which hosted the headquarters and much of the diplomatic and military apparatuses of both movements. But they believed the material assistance they received from the OAU’s Liberation Committee was totally inadequate.²⁶ And they no longer expected that the OAU’s members would be capable of acting collectively to bring about serious economic damage to South Africa.

Both the ANC and the PAC continued to view the various bodies of the United Nations as useful forums in which they could try to shape international public opinion, and, above all, to publicize their need for material assistance. But – as the official PAC statement repudiating Ngcobo and Raboroko put it – “Until the balance of world forces in the UNO is corrected to correspond to the realities of the world outside, we do not assign a greater role than this to the world body.”²⁷ The leaders of both liberation movements shifted their attention elsewhere. As early as February 1965 E.S. Reddy complained to ANC deputy president Oliver Tambo that “you are not pushing your own issue [at the UN] but leaving it to others.” Over the remainder of the decade Reddy repeatedly expressed his frustration that the UN had “not been used enough” by the southern African liberation movements. Neither the ANC nor the PAC maintained a permanent office in New York, and in several years in the second half of the sixties neither movement bothered to send representatives to attend the annual sessions of the General Assembly. Reddy complained to Tambo that for more than two years after the Security Council’s last meeting on South Africa in June 1964,

²⁵ “The OAU Conference: What Next?,” *Azania News*, 17 November/1 December 1966, Folder: “PAC Serial – Azania News – 1974 (Vol 9)”, Box 2, PAC Publications Collection, NAHECS; [SACP?] London Committee, “Solidarity Work in Britain,” Folder: “National Council of Women,” Box 14, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives.

²⁶ See, for example, the comments in [ANC] Preparatory Committee, “Discussion Guide,” March 1969, File 117/1/17/2/6, First Papers.

²⁷ “Repudiation of the Call for United Nations Military Intervention in Azania,” in Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (S.A.), “Report of National Executive Committee Meeting, Moshi, Tanzania,” 19-22 September 1967, Folder: “PAC Non-Serial Publications M-N (1986-1990 and undated), Box 11, PAC Publications Collection, NAHECS.

he had received “very little advice from your people on what can usefully be done by the UN.”²⁸

By 1966-67 many elements of the anti-apartheid coalition that had united around the demand for sanctions were coming not only to recognize that they were unable to mobilize the leverage necessary to achieve a sanctions regime, but also to question whether a sanctions regime would – even if imposed – be effective in helping end apartheid. This was primarily a consequence of the Rhodesian crisis. For many opponents of apartheid, the attractiveness of sanctions as an instrument was tarnished almost immediately by the British government’s decision to impose sanctions against the rebel colony *instead* of using military force to suppress UDI, as the OAU demanded. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson’s refusal to suppress the settlers’ rebellion with force led many African leaders to accuse Britain of colluding with the rebel regime. Wilson’s advocacy of sanctions instead of military intervention came to be seen as an element of that collusion and thus helped to discredit the very idea of sanctions as a response to the white minority regimes in southern Africa.

Moreover, sanctions – imposed first by Britain and later made mandatory by the Security Council – failed to bring about a quick end to Rhodesia’s UDI. Just as many advocates of sanctions against South Africa had expected that they would contribute to a rapid collapse of apartheid, Wilson had characterized the imposition of sanctions as a “quick kill” operation that would end the rebellion “within a matter of weeks rather than months.” When this did not happen, many opponents of apartheid began to doubt whether sanctions would be any more effective in undermining the South African regime. In March 1967, for instance, the AAM circulated a paper by R.B. Sutcliffe, a radical economist at the University of Oxford who had studied the Rhodesian economy. Sutcliffe argued that not only was it unlikely that the western powers would impose

²⁸ E.S. Reddy to Mr. Oliver Tambo, 10 February 1965; E.S. Reddy to Mr. Oliver Tambo, 12 August 1969; [E.S.] Reddy to Mr. Oliver Tambo, memorandum, 3 June 1968, Folder 388, Box 7, Reddy Papers, Yale.

sanctions against South Africa, but also that – even if they did – South Africa was likely to be able to “survive” a sanctions regime. Sanctions, Sutcliffe suggested, might be able to compel the South African government to make changes to specific policies, such as to stop supplying oil to Rhodesia. But the rebel Rhodesian regime’s ability to withstand the sanctions imposed after UDI suggested that “When a whole political system, the existence of a privileged racial oligarchy, in short a whole social and political order is at stake, as it has been in Rhodesia, then the damage to the order that can be inflicted will probably not diminish resistance to the imposers of sanctions.”²⁹

Observing the apparent failure of sanctions against Rhodesia, ANC and PAC leaders came to assign much less strategic significance to sanctions than they had previously. “Imperialism will not overthrow itself,” argued one writer in *Azania News* in May 1967. The failure of the oil embargo to bring about the collapse of the Smith regime showed that the PAC “must cast away illusions that economic sanctions are the answer to liberation even if they include oil. Revolutionary force and violence is the only answer.”³⁰ After ANC fighters joined guerrillas from the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) in launching an incursion into the Wankie (now Hwange) game park on Rhodesia’s western border in August 1967, the Central Committee of the SACP expressed an almost identical conclusion in an internal Party circular: “The first few months of guerrilla struggle, though restricted in scale, have already done more to shake the Smith regime than two years of United Nations ‘sanctions’ which have been flaunted with impunity by the Republic of South Africa and other imperialist powers, including Britain herself.” For the Central Committee there was a clear “lesson”: “African and world support and solidarity is a valuable and essential element in the campaign against apartheid. But South African fascism can only be defeated and overthrown on

²⁹ R.B. Sutcliffe, “Sanctions, Force, and Imperialism,” 17 March 1967, Sub-folder: “1967-8,” File 2213, AAM.

³⁰ Nimrod Sejake, “Force and Violence: Economic Sanctions and the Essence of Effectiveness,” *Azania News*, 18 May - 1 June 1967, Box 2, PAC Publications Collection, NAHECS.

South African soil by the oppressed people of our country, united in mass revolutionary action and armed struggle.”³¹

As the ANC and the PAC regrouped in east Africa in 1965-67, the strategies of both movements thus became increasingly exclusively focused on launching a guerrilla war in South Africa that would culminate in the armed “seizure of power.” In the case of the PAC, the Pan Africanists’ longstanding emphasis on spontaneous mass violence was now expressed in Maoist terms, as they became reliant on China for material support. When the PAC held a “reorganization conference” in Moshi, Tanzania in September 1967, in an effort to resolve its factional infighting, Potlake Leballo and PAC military commander T.T. Letlaka peppered their speeches with references to Mao, “the outstanding expert on People’s War.” Letlaka, for instance, approvingly quoted Mao’s dictums that “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun” and that “the seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution.” At the conclusion of the conference, the PAC National Executive reiterated its conviction that “only an armed struggle, anchored firmly in the masses, can achieve liberation.”³² In *Azania News*, PAC members derided “negotiation as a means of solving political disputes” and the idea of a “peaceful transition,” while rhapsodizing about revolutionary violence. One typical article from late 1966 concluded with the declaration that “Our politics must be analytical, correct, developable [sic], revolutionary and violent. It must speak the language of the gun, it must create the gun, it must be inseparable from the gun, it must be the gun itself, the gun must emit fire, and the fury of the flames of that fire must devour the enemy; for the essence of war is precisely in the

³¹ [South African Communist Party] Central Committee, “Internal Circular: Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee,” n.d. [ca. late 1967/early 1968], File 117/1/17/3, First Papers.

³² “PAC’s Revolutionary Message to the Nation”; “Address delivered by T.T. Letlaka...”; “Resolutions,” in Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (S.A.), “Report of National Executive Committee Meeting, Moshi, Tanzania,” 19-22 September 1967, Folder: “PAC Non-Serial Publications M-N (1986-1990 and undated), Box 11, PAC Publications Collection, NAHECS.

extinction of life. The PAC is no novice in the line of revolutionary violence.”³³

Within the Congress movement, any remaining ambiguity over whether MK’s armed struggle was envisaged to culminate in an eventual negotiated settlement or an outright military victory was now decisively resolved in favor of the latter. The arrest of South African Communist Party chairman Bram Fischer in November 1965 after 290 days underground not only marked the end of the last desperate efforts by Congress and SACP leaders to organize resistance from inside South Africa (Fischer had refused to go into exile and had exhorted others – often in vain – to do likewise). The arrest and imprisonment of Fischer also represented the removal from active politics of perhaps the last influential Congress movement leader outside prison who remained wedded to Mandela’s conception of armed struggle as a means of driving the government to the negotiating table. Congress and SACP leaders now routinely referred to their strategic objective with phrases such as “seizing power by armed revolution” or “the armed overthrow of the white supremacy state.”³⁴ Indeed, Ronnie Kasrils – a founder-member of Umkhonto we Sizwe and subsequently a leading member of the SACP in exile – later commented that in the period between the adoption of the SACP’s program in 1962 and the mid-1980s, he could not recall “any serious discussion I ever took part in about the question of negotiations.” In a letter to supporters in late 1967, Oliver Tambo explained that what could have been settled in the past by “calm and peaceful discussion,” now had to be “resolved by the oppressed masses in wide-spread armed conflict.”³⁵

³³ Nimrod N. Sejake, “No Longer with the Ranks of the Liberation Movement,” *Azania News*, 27 January 1966; N. Sejake, “Force and Violence: On Winning the First Battle: The Enemy’s Power is Temporary,” *Azania News*, 17 November/1 December 1966, Folder: “PAC Serial – Azania News – 1974 (Vol 9)”; “Afrika Day 1967: Safeguarding the Independence of African States,” *Azania News*, 18 May/1 June 1967, Folder: “PAC – Serial – Azania News – 1967 (Vol 2),” Box 2, PAC Publications Collection, NAHECS.

³⁴ “Discussion Paper on the Publicity, Information and Research work of the London office of the African National Congress,” 14 March [1967], File 117/1/17/2/6, First Papers; [Central Committee of the South African Communist Party], “Problems and Perspectives – Discussion Statement,” n.d. [1965], Folder: “ANC Affairs,” Box 2, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives.

³⁵ “First Interview with Ronnie Kasrils: Conducted by Howard Barrell,” 19 August 1989, Folder 2, Box 1, Barrell Papers; O.R. Tambo to Dear Friend, n.d. [ca. October/November 1967], File FA 1/1/175, MFA Records, NAZ. Compare

It was, moreover, in this period that – as the political scientist Howard Barrell put it in his study of ANC operational strategy – “armed activity came to be viewed not only as the primary means by which eventually to overthrow the South African state but also as the major means by which to advance in each phase of escalation towards that goal.” Ronnie Kasrils termed this the ANC’s “militarist deviation,” when Congress strategists became “too carried away” in their search for “that magic formula of the guerrilla in the bush.” These were, recalled Kasrils, “the heady days of the successes of guerrilla war.” ANC strategists were impressed by the successes of struggles elsewhere, and believed that they would be able to replicate them in South Africa. The struggles that inspired them included that in Vietnam – where South Vietnamese and American troops were unable to defeat the guerrillas of the National Liberation Front – but also those in the Portuguese colonies neighboring South Africa, where liberation movements were already engaged in guerrilla warfare (and, in the case of Mozambique, where FRELIMO had been able to establish control over a significant “liberated zone”).³⁶

ANC and PAC leaders continued to be strongly influenced by the *foco* theory of Che Guevara that had been an important inspiration for the authors of Operation Mayibuye in 1963, and according to which a small number of guerrillas could create the conditions necessary for a revolution. This influence was explicitly acknowledged by the PAC: in his speech to the PAC conference in Moshi in 1967, Leballo declared that Fidel Castro’s victory in Cuba showed that “bold and audacious action by a very few revolutionary patriots, making an armed intervention at the right

Irwin’s claim that in this period ANC came to believe that it would overcome apartheid, “not because [it] possessed conventional military and economic strength, but because it possessed people power, or the ability to shape how individuals outside the corridors of government discussed and debated the apartheid issue. If the organization embraced these information tactics and took the long view in its fight against Pretoria, victory would emerge organically from the imperatives of globalization.” That this was their strategy would have come as surprising news to the ANC’s leading strategists. Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 179-80.

³⁶ Barrell, “Conscripts to Their Age,” 53-54; “Third Interview with Ronnie Kasrils: Conducted by Howard Barrell,” 28 October 1990, Folder 2, Box 1, Barrell Papers.

times, were able to change adverse subjective conditions into favourable ones.”³⁷

In contrast, ANC and SACP strategists affirmed in their writings their belief that – as the SACP Central Committee put it in 1965 – achieving the “armed overthrow” of the state would require more than “activities of a purely military character.”³⁸ But in practice, with Congress structures inside South Africa completely smashed, the only activities the ANC attempted were indeed purely military. In retrospect, for instance, Kasrils believed that the ANC should have tried to infiltrate political organizers back into the country to try to reorganize the ANC underground. But at the time both the ANC and the PAC were focused on trying to send in armed fighters back into South Africa in order to spark an immediate guerrilla struggle. Though the ANC-ZAPU incursion into Wankie in 1967 was defeated by the Rhodesian army, the ANC continued its efforts in 1967-68 to send guerrillas through Rhodesia. In 1968 a small PAC detachment attempted to reach South Africa through Mozambique, but was intercepted by Portuguese colonial forces.³⁹

II. ‘Making African revolt somewhat easier’: The First Anti-Corporate Campaigns

The widespread disillusion about both the likelihood and the effectiveness of an intergovernmental sanctions regime against South Africa, and the liberation movements’ increasingly exclusive strategic focus on guerrilla warfare, posed fundamental questions about the future activities of anti-apartheid solidarity groups in the west. In Britain, the PAC’s representative in Europe, Matthew Nkoana,

³⁷ “PAC’s Revolutionary Message to the Nation” in Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (S.A.), “Report of National Executive Committee Meeting, Moshi, Tanzania,” 19-22 September 1967, Folder: “PAC Non-Serial Publications M-N (1986-1990 and undated), Box 11, PAC Publications Collection, NAHECS.

³⁸ [Central Committee of the South African Communist Party], “Problems and Perspectives – Discussion Statement,” n.d. (1965), Folder: “ANC Affairs,” Box 2, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives.

³⁹ Stephen Ellis, *External Mission: The ANC in Exile, 1960-1990* (London: Hurst, 2012), 60-67; Hugh Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2013), 39-56; Rendani Moses Ralinala *et al.*, “The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns,” in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 1960-1970, 479-540; Kwandiwe Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution: the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa), 1959-1994* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2009), 244-46.

raised many of these issues explicitly as early as June 1965, in a memorandum to the AAM. Nkoana charged that far from coordinating its international anti-apartheid activities with the “internal action for the liberation of the country,” the AAM’s activities were conflicting with that internal action. Despite the liberation movements’ turn to violence in the early 1960s, AAM publicity materials in the middle of the decade continued to portray sanctions as the last best hope of a “peaceful solution.”⁴⁰ From Nkoana’s perspective this was a “fallacious notion”: the AAM needed to start from the premise that the resolution of the problem by force was both necessary and inevitable, and to see its own role as preparing the British public for this and encouraging the public “to support it in every way possible.”⁴¹

Nkoana charged, moreover, that British solidarity with the struggle against apartheid needed to “find more effective expression in practical ways” than the AAM’s existing activities. In particular, Nkoana argued, the AAM must accept that consumer boycotts of South African goods, “however desirable they may be, are well-nigh impracticable. If such boycotts are intended to be effective, the only possible way of putting them into effect would be to concentrate our efforts on organising dockers to refuse to unload South African ships.” This would require “long patient work” in the trade unions. For Nkoana, such work also represented the only hope of compelling the British government to take action against South Africa. Without a “properly educated working class,” Nkoana suggested, there was no chance of the government defying British capital and taking effective action against apartheid.⁴²

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Answering Your Questions on Economic Sanctions,” July 1964, File 1701, AAM.

⁴¹ Matthew Nkoana and Barney Desai, “Joint Memorandum of the PAC and the CPC to the Anti-Apartheid Movement,” June 1965, File 45, AAM. The memorandum was co-signed by Barney Desai, exiled leader of the Coloured People’s Congress, who would shortly defect from the Congress Alliance to the PAC.

⁴² Matthew Nkoana and Barney Desai, “Joint Memorandum of the PAC and the CPC to the Anti-Apartheid Movement,” June 1965, File 45, AAM.

In their reply to Nkoana, AAM president David Ennals and secretary S. Abdul neatly summarized the approach the AAM had taken since 1960. They were categorical in rejecting Nkoana's demand that they refocus their activities on winning support from the British public for the armed struggle. The AAM would respect whatever strategic decisions were made by the South African liberation movements, but "what we cannot do is make the question of armed revolution in South Africa the basis of all our actions in this country." Rather, "the pursuit of the armed struggle and the complicated international tasks that arise from it must remain wholly within the province of the South African organizations and their representative offices abroad." Regarding Nkoana's revival of the suggestion of an effective industrial boycott, Ennals and Abdul drew attention to the factors that had led the AAM to shelve this idea in the months after Sharpeville: the "complexities of British trade union politics" meant, they wrote, that industrial action against apartheid was a difficult issue requiring "the most painstaking care, patience, and understanding." And on the AAM's consumer, sporting and cultural boycott campaigns, they explained that the AAM did not claim that these boycotts were "effective," or even, in the case of the consumer boycott, "practicable." But they were "the best and most effective opportunities for educating public opinion," and thus for creating the necessary conditions for securing changes in UK government policy.⁴³

Indeed, in the course of 1965 the AAM tried to develop these various non-governmental boycott campaigns further. The consumer boycott campaign was expanded to include picketing of Co-operatives and chain-stores like Marks and Spencer that stocked South African goods. The cultural boycott was extended to include an academic boycott for the first time. Prompted by the South African government's banning of two well-known anti-apartheid academics, in November 1965 the AAM organized a declaration signed by more than five hundred professors and lecturers

⁴³ D. Ennals and S. Abdul, "Draft Reply to PAC/CPC memorandum," File: "AFRICAN PAC COLOURED AFFAIRS," Box 1, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Archives.

from thirty-four British universities, protesting both the banning orders specifically and racial discrimination in South African higher education in general, and committing the signatories not to “apply for or accept academic posts in South African universities which practise racial discrimination.”⁴⁴ On the sports front, in June 1965 the AAM organized pickets and protests outside games played by the touring South African cricket team. The protests attracted considerable media attention and succeeded in generating sufficient controversy that neither the Queen nor the Prime Minister attended any of the team’s games against England.⁴⁵

Whereas Nkoana believed that there was no point lobbying the British government to take action against apartheid, at the start of 1965 the AAM remained optimistic that the approach it had pursued over the previous five years might finally bear fruit in the form of British participation in a UN sanctions regime. The victory of Harold Wilson’s Labour Party in the October 1964 general election ended thirteen years of Conservative Party rule, and raised the prospect that the AAM might be able to exert greater influence on government policy than at any previous time in its existence. Labour had, of course, played a central role in the boycott campaign in 1960 that led to the formation of the AAM, and as Leader of the Opposition in 1963 Wilson had given outspoken support to the AAM’s campaign for a British arms embargo. A number of individual Labour MPs had been closely associated with the AAM, and two of them, Barbara Castle and Tony Benn, now joined the government as ministers. In the “Long Term Programme” it drafted at the end of 1964, the AAM Executive declared that “the broad sympathy with the anti-apartheid struggle of the new Labour Government offers us the opportunity of real advance for our policy in 1965.” The AAM recognized that Wilson’s cabinet did not support economic sanctions against South Africa, but

⁴⁴ “Academic Declaration Against Apartheid Education,” Anti-Apartheid Movement Student Newsletter, November 1965, File 373, AAM.

⁴⁵ “Minutes of the South Africa Committee of the M.C.F.,” 2 August 1965, Folder: ‘MCF COM 8: SA Ctte (b), 1965-70,’ Box 6, MCF Collection; Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, 96.

believed that it would be “more sensitive to the demands of public opinion” than its Conservative predecessor. The Movement therefore adopted a two-pronged approach, focusing simultaneously on influencing public opinion through the sports, cultural, and consumer boycotts and on developing “an effective lobbying relationship with the new government.”⁴⁶

In contrast to the AAM’s optimism in 1965 that it could secure changes in the new Labour government’s policy, the American Committee on Africa had by then come to the conclusion that there was no chance that the administration of President Lyndon Johnson was going to participate in either a multilateral or a unilateral program of governmental sanctions. In early 1964, the ACOA had established a “Consultative Council on South Africa” to serve as a coordinating body for American churches, civil rights groups, student organizations, and labor unions opposed to apartheid: in its founding statement the Council that “all nations and their citizens have a responsibility to take action against apartheid. The United Nations is the main instrument through which such action should take place.” American organizations could help by “urging appropriate policies on the U.S. Government.”⁴⁷ Over the first year of its existence, however, the Consultative Council began to abandon this exclusive focus on governmental action. Significantly, for instance, when the Consultative Council began in late 1964 to plan a major conference early the next year, ACOA Executive Secretary George Houser was persuaded by other groups to change the proposed conference theme from his original idea – “The South African Crisis and U.S. Policy” – to “The South African Crisis and American Action.” The change, Houser explained, would expand the focus

⁴⁶ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Long Term Programme for 1965,” n.d. [December 1964], File 70, AAM.

⁴⁷ “Statement on the Consultative Council on South Africa,” n.d. [ca. early 1964], Folder 102/4, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

beyond government policy to the question of “what various individuals or segments of the population might do to meet the critical issues in South Africa.”⁴⁸

This was a question in which a number of American groups were taking an interest in late 1964, including Students for a Democratic society, which had been established by radical student activists two years earlier. SDS’s manifesto, the Port Huron Statement, had expressed concern that American foreign policy was being “decisively affect[ed]” by economic investment, and had mentioned South Africa as one of the parts of the world where this was the case. In 1962, the group established a Peace Research and Education Project (PREP) to investigate American foreign and military policy. SDS’s initiative on South Africa was the brainchild of Paul Booth and Todd Gitlin – “the Bobbsey twins of peacenikdom,” as one fellow activist called them – who took over as the coordinators of PREP in the fall of 1964. Booth and Gitlin felt that the project was lacking “an action program in the Third World area” and decided to launch a program of action against apartheid. The SDS program would be different from the activities of other groups, such as ACOA’s Consultative Council, Booth explained, in its “clear focus on U.S. Big Business interests in the Union of South Africa.”⁴⁹

Booth and Gitlin’s anti-apartheid program represented the internationalization of strategies and tactics developed by activists in the domestic civil rights struggle in the U.S. Pickets, boycotts, and sit-ins against firms perceived to be upholding segregation in the American south had been a feature of civil rights activism in the northern United States since the first sit-ins by black activists at segregated lunch counters in North Carolina in February 1960. In researching American business interests in South Africa, Gitlin was especially influenced by the work of Jack Minnis, the research

⁴⁸ George Houser to The Planning Committee for the Washington Conference on South Africa, memorandum, 12 October 1964, File 102/6, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

⁴⁹ Paul Booth, letter, *Students for a Democratic Society Bulletin*, November-December 1964, 33, <https://perma.cc/QD8W-PNUQ>.

director of SNCC, whose pamphlet on *The Care and Feeding of Power Structures* had been published by SDS in 1963. Starting from the assumption was that “those who control the economy of the nation are the only ones who have the power to change things for the benefit of black people,” Minnis’s pamphlet provided advice on how to do research on corporate interests in order to identify the “power structure” in a given community – and how to use that information to achieve political change. Even the specific target chosen for SDS’s anti-apartheid campaign was borrowed from Minnis: *The Care and Feeding of Power Structures* opened with a case-study of a July 1963 picket of the Chase Manhattan Bank headquarters in New York by a dozen civil rights activists protesting Chase’s floating of bond issues for the building of segregated facilities by the municipal authorities of Savannah, Georgia.⁵⁰ In the course of his research, Gitlin discovered that Chase Manhattan was one of a consortium of ten prominent American banks that offered a revolving line of credit to the South African government.

SDS’s objectives in organizing the March 1965 picket and sit-in at Chase were threefold. First, the protest was intended to generate publicity for SDS itself, then still a relatively small and little-known organization, and to galvanize new supporters into action. Gitlin wrote in February that it was “clear that this issue is one that strikes responsive chords in the guts of many otherwise passive people.” Second, the protest would publicize SDS’s analysis of the corporate interests that it believed to be dominating American society: the anti-apartheid campaign would, Booth explained, “make just the point that we are trying to make about where in the U.S. the crucial decisions are made.” Thirdly, while the protest itself could not be expected to cause Chase or other American firms to end their loans or disinvest, it would contribute to the necessary first step of focusing public

⁵⁰ Jack Minnis, *The Care and Feeding of Power Structures* (n.p.: Students for a Democratic Society, 1963). On the influence of Minnis on Gitlin, see Mike Davis, “Elizabeth Occupies Wall Street,” *Social Justice*, 1 April 2013, <https://perma.cc/4K4Q-X3WF>.

awareness on the issue of American investment in South Africa.⁵¹

Crucially, the publicity materials SDS distributed at the Chase protest distinguished between two different forms of external economic action that could help end apartheid. One was a governmental “attempt actively to injure the economy by denying it essential materials” – in other words the trade sanctions that had been the primary objective of western anti-apartheid activists in the preceding years. But the other, to which anti-apartheid activists had previously devoted little attention, was “a withdrawal of support from the South African economy through cessation of loans and investment,” something that could be achieved either by governmental action or “by voluntary action on the part of individual corporations and banks.” SDS argued that both forms of economic action could contribute to the struggle against apartheid. Given that the National Party would probably “hold bitterly both to its policies and to power,” SDS argued that there was little chance of peaceful change in South Africa. External economic action was desirable because it would “make African revolt somewhat easier” by “seriously weaken[ing] the government’s ability to meet a widespread resistance.”⁵² This was, of course, the conception of how economic sanctions could contribute to the struggle that had been adopted by leading ANC strategists after their turn to violence earlier in the decade. But SDS was one of the first western groups to embrace this position explicitly and publicly.

Though Gitlin and Booth had intended the sit-in at Chase in March 1965 to be the first salvo in an ongoing campaign, the SDS leadership’s focus on South Africa turned out to be short-lived. Before the sit-in at Chase the PREP executive had argued that an expanded campaign against American corporations involved in South Africa had “more long-range potential than the crisis

⁵¹ Todd Gitlin, “Apartheid Action Planned,” *Students for a Democratic Society Bulletin*, February 1965, 10; Paul Booth, letter, *Students for a Democratic Society Bulletin*, November-December 1964, 33.

⁵² Students for a Democratic Society, “Action Against American Economic Support of Apartheid,” 19 March 1965, Folder 116/41, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

response program on Vietnam.” But this calculation changed after the massive escalation of American involvement in war in Vietnam began in February 1965. A month after the sit-in, SDS organized the first mass national protest against the Vietnam War in Washington. The march succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of its organizers, attracting between fifteen and twenty-five thousand protesters and dramatically raising SDS’s national profile. SDS’s national leadership dropped South Africa as a campaigning issue and turned its attention to Vietnam.⁵³

SDS’s protest at Chase nevertheless helped to initiate a transformation of anti-apartheid activism in the United States. The influence of the protest was clear at the Consultative Council’s conference on “The South African Crisis and American Action,” which began in Washington on the same day as the sit-in at Chase in New York. The final resolution of the conference called on firms to make no further investments in South Africa, and to “seize every opportunity to disengage themselves from South Africa.” To encourage such disengagement the resolution urged American individuals and organizations to “refrain from investing or depositing in those financial and business institutions actively involved in the South African economy.” And in a further reflection of the influence of the sit-in at Chase, conference delegates also committed themselves to use not only “the time-honored tools of the democratic process” but also “the new-found weapons of the civil rights struggle, including direct non-violent action.”⁵⁴

To the frustration of some of the more radical members of the Consultative Council, George Houser himself was hesitant about organizing a campaign to implement these new commitments.⁵⁵ Though they had now abandoned any hope that the U.S. government would impose

⁵³ Sale, *SDS*, 182-83, 185-93; James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 226-34.

⁵⁴ “Recommendations for Action Against Apartheid – Adopted by the Conference,” 23 March 1965, File 102/6, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

⁵⁵ ‘Liz-the-Thin!’ to ‘Ruth [First], and Joe-the-fat [Slovo],’ 26 April 1965, Folder 117/2/1/2 (B), First Papers.

trade sanctions, ACOA leaders remained more comfortable continuing with the kind of governmental lobbying they had long engaged in. In a meeting at the State Department in March 1965, for instance, Houser tried to persuade Secretary of State Dean Rusk that a step like discouraging or prohibiting investment in South Africa would be in the U.S. government's own interest: it would improve the United States' standing in the world and would "not hurt the U.S. much economically."⁵⁶ In subsequent years, ACOA representatives continued to meet with senior U.S. government officials to press these kinds of proposals. But the Committee lacked the leverage to secure the acceptance even of these much scaled back demands. After Houser and a delegation from the Consultative Council met with National Security Adviser Walt Rostow and Counsel to the President Milton Semer in March 1966, Semer described the meeting as "friendly and routine."⁵⁷

But while the ACOA itself did not immediately organize a follow-up campaign to the protest at Chase, SDS's brief anti-apartheid campaign had significant aftereffects elsewhere. After the sit-in had directed the attention of students in New York towards the revolving credit line offered by the consortium of American banks, Charles Powers and David Hornbeck, two divinity students at New York's Union Theological Seminary spent the fall 1965 semester studying the role of business in American foreign policy toward southern Africa. They discovered that First National City Bank (now Citibank), the bank at which they – like most other students and institutions in the Morningside Heights area of New York – had accounts, was also a participant in the consortium that offered a revolving line of credit to the South African government. In early 1966, they launched

⁵⁶ Secretary of State's meeting with delegation from the 'National Conference on the South African Crisis and American Action,' 23 March 1965, FOLDER: 'FT 11-2 Boycotts S AFR, 1/1/64,' Box 1030, Subject-Numeric File 1964-1966, RG59, USNA.

⁵⁷ Milton P. Semer to Jack Valenti, memorandum, 22 March 1966, Folder: "CO 302 Republic of South Africa," Box 71, White House Central File, LBJ Library.

a campaign to compel the bank to disengage from South Africa.⁵⁸

During the SDS protest the year before, picketers had handed out flyers requesting depositors to withdraw their accounts from Chase, but the immediate focus had been on the direct action of the sit-in and the idea of a boycott had not been pursued further. Now the newly-formed Morningside Heights Committee on South Africa focused on persuading individuals and institutions in the area to boycott First National City Bank. In 1964, as we have seen, the ANC and its supporters had called without success for the governments of independent African states to launch a secondary boycott of western firms that traded with South Africa. Though it was geographically limited to a particular part of New York City, the campaign against First National City Bank in Morningside Heights was the first sustained effort to organize a secondary boycott of a western firm connected to South Africa, not by foreign governments, but by non-governmental actors in the firm's home country. The Morningside Heights Committee succeeded in persuading a number of local student organizations to participate in the boycott, including the student council of Barnard College, which closed its \$20,000 account. The campaign culminated on April 20, 1966, when around seventy students crowded into the local First National City Bank branch in Morningside Heights to close their accounts, while another three hundred protesters marched outside.⁵⁹

Powers and Hornbeck had always conceived of their Morningside Heights campaign as “a catalyst for more effective protests.” Their short campaign attracted coverage in the *New York Times* and other news media, and their suggestion that the campaign be continued by others with greater resources and geographic reach now prompted ACOA to launch its first big campaign for American firms to disengage from the American economy. After establishing its own “Southern Africa

⁵⁸ Charles W. Powers and David W. Hornbeck, “Seminary Social Action: A Report and Some Reflections,” *Theological Education* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1965): 611-18; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 215-26.

⁵⁹ Powers and Hornbeck, “Seminary Social Action: A Report and Some Reflections,” 611-18; William Minter, “Action Against Apartheid,” in *Reflections on Protest: Student Presence in Political Conflict*, ed. Bruce Douglas (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), 179-188; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 216-17.

Committee” in 1964, the National Student Christian Federation had joined ACOA’s Consultative Council and had agreed to co-sponsor the SDS protest at Chase. Following a suggestion from the Morningside Heights Committee, ACOA and the NSCF now jointly formed a new “Committee of Conscience Against Apartheid” in July 1966 to expand the bank campaign beyond Morningside Heights. Chaired by the prominent labor leader and civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph, the Committee of Conscience too framed its campaign as a “pilot project” and a “only a beginning,” that would serve the purpose of “pointing to at least one form of practical action that can be taken” by Americans opposed to apartheid. The Committee established December 9, 1966 – the day before Human Rights Day – as a target date by which it hoped individuals and organizations would withdraw their accounts from Chase Manhattan and First National City Bank.⁶⁰ To help establish its legitimacy, the Committee of Conscience recruited more than one hundred high-profile sponsors from diverse walks of life, including civil rights activists, entertainers, members of congress, religious leaders, and academics. Armed with an impressive letterhead listing these sponsors, the Committee then contacted institutional depositors, especially churches and labor unions, asking them to pledge to withdraw their accounts. To generate publicity and secure pledges from individuals, the Committee organized press conferences, meetings and rallies at churches and colleges, and demonstrations and leafleting in front of local bank branches and at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

The Committee of Conscience’s campaign climaxed on December 9, 1966, with a picket and rally by around three hundred protesters at Chase Manhattan’s headquarters. By that date, the organizers had received more than two hundred pledges from organizations and individuals to withdraw more than \$22.2m from checking, savings, and custody accounts with the two banks

⁶⁰ A. Philip Randolph, “Draft of Letter to Potential Sponsors of Committee of Conscience Against Apartheid,” n.d. [ca. July 1965], File 106/43, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

(more than \$20m of this total was accounted for by the closure of two accounts by anonymous supporters of the campaign). Among the organizations that withdrew their accounts were a number of church and religious bodies, including the liberal Christian journal *Christianity and Crisis*, the Methodist Office to the United Nations, and the Mother A.M.E. Zion Church of New York. The Morningside Heights Committee and then the Committee of Conscience had held meetings with a representatives of a number of the church boards and agencies that had their national headquarters at the “Inter-Church Center” in Morningside Heights. But the slow-moving bureaucratic procedures of the major church boards, which controlled accounts worth many millions of dollars, meant that none of them withdrew their funds before the bank campaign reached its climax on December 9.⁶¹

In campaigning against Chase Manhattan and First National City Bank in 1966, the ACOA embraced the distinction SDS had made the year before between actively seeking to damage the South African economy by governmental trade sanctions and withdrawing support from it. Houser had already come to the conclusion that the ACOA could not “realistically call for an overall program of economic sanctions with any hope of success.”⁶² To continue to do so, he believed, would be to condemn the American Committee to impotent irrelevance. Instead, in 1966 the ACOA began to frame its objective as American “disengagement” from South Africa. Houser stressed that disengagement was “not synonymous with sanctions”: sanctions needed to be multilateral to be effective, he argued, whereas disengagement was a process that could be undertaken unilaterally. And disengagement would not cause the massive and immediate economic dislocation that sanctions advocates had envisaged earlier in the decade. Houser cautioned that he was not claiming that disengagement would “magically change things in South Africa.” During the bank campaign he

⁶¹ George Houser, “A Summary Report on the Bank Campaign Against the Consortium Loan to South Africa,” n.d. [ca. 1970], File 101/25, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*; Wayne H. Cowan, “South Africa and the Banks: A Progress Report,” *Christianity and Crisis*, 23 January 1967, 321-22.

⁶² George Houser, “A Report on a trip to Africa,” 11 May - 10 June 1967, Folder 11, Box 36, Scheinman Papers.

argued that even in the unlikely event that the campaign was successful and both Chase Manhattan and First National City Bank withdrew from South Africa, it would “probably have very little effect” on apartheid. Indeed, Houser explained, the campaign was “not based on the thesis that even if all of the economic power of the United States was brought to bear in support of the policies of disengagement the architects of apartheid would feel that they had to accept new policies.”⁶³

Rather, the new focus on “disengagement” by the organizers of the bank campaign reflected their increasing acceptance of the inevitability of violent conflict in the struggle against apartheid. In 1964-65 representatives of the ACOA and of the NSCF’s Southern Africa Committee had – like the AAM in Britain – presented their anti-apartheid activities as efforts to bring about peaceful change in South Africa. But over the next two years leaders of both bodies came to the conclusion – as SDS had in 1965 – that there was minimal likelihood of this. William Minter, the Southern Africa Committee’s chair, explained that as the Committee’s members became increasingly pessimistic about “the existing powers in both Southern Africa and the Western world,” the Committee “moved to an expectation and an acceptance of violent revolution as the probable end result of the existing conditions.”⁶⁴ Even Houser, a pacifist who had gone to jail as a conscientious objector during the Second World War, was now arriving at this conclusion. After visiting Africa in May and June 1967 to consult with leaders of the ANC, PAC, and other southern African liberation movements, Houser reported to his colleagues that there was an “increased emphasis on the necessity of violence in the liberation movements.” There would be, he now predicted, a “long and violent struggle” in southern Africa, and the ACOA must adjust its activities accordingly.⁶⁵

⁶³ George Houser, “A Rationale for the Protest Against Banks Doing Business with South Africa,” Folder 1, Box 4, International Council for Equality of Opportunity Principles Manuscript Collection, Special Collections Department, Temple University, Philadelphia.

⁶⁴ Minter, “Action Against Apartheid,” 179-88.

⁶⁵ George Houser, “A Report on a trip to Africa,” 11 May - 10 June 1967, Folder 11, Box 36, Scheinman Papers.

Above all, Houser, Minter, and their colleagues were concerned about the role that the U.S. government might play during a future conflict in southern Africa. This concern came to the forefront of American anti-apartheid activism in the context of the ongoing escalation of the American war in Vietnam, which many opponents of the war believed was being fought in order to secure American economic interests. American anti-apartheid activists became concerned that as violent conflict escalated in southern Africa between the white minority regimes and the liberation movements, the United States might intervene there too in order to protect the interests of American corporations. Campaigning for disengagement was a way to try to reduce the vested interests of the United States in the maintenance of the status quo in South Africa, and thus to reduce the likelihood of American intervention. Organizers of the bank campaign, for instance, presented it as a form of action that would help to “prevent involvement in a crisis such as Vietnam.”⁶⁶

The immediate objective for opponents of apartheid, as Minter argued during the bank campaign in a working paper on anti-apartheid strategy, was to “prepare both the climate and organization” for the time in the future when events in southern Africa would force the U.S. to respond in one way or another. For Minter, this meant maintaining “a primary focus on the policy of the U.S. Government, as the body which will have to respond at that time.” The problem, however, was that the government was a “distant” target: “The chances for direct confrontation are few and tangible results usually nil.” What activists needed were “more immediate targets, and the possibility of getting some minimal results, or a response, positive or negative.” Campaigns for disengagement by specific bodies, like Chase Manhattan and First National City Bank, offered exactly these kinds of opportunities to generate interest and attention by focusing on “immediate

⁶⁶ Ford T. Johnson, untitled report on meeting organized by the Committee of Conscience Against Apartheid, 14 July 1966, File 100/47, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

targets.”⁶⁷

In Britain, the leaders of the AAM were coming to similar conclusions as they became disillusioned with the chances of achieving significant changes in U.K. government policy. Far from seeing its influence increased under a Labour government, as the AAM had expected, the Movement quickly found that Labour MPs were much less willing to take up anti-apartheid protests in parliament now that this involved attacking their own party leadership.⁶⁸ Harold Wilson’s government was just as concerned as its Conservative predecessor not to take any action against South Africa that could harm the fragile British economy. In February 1965 Lord Rhodes, a new Labour minister in the Board of Trade, went as far as to declare that the government was “proud” to trade with South Africa.⁶⁹ The British government’s response to the Rhodesian UDI in November 1965 compounded AAM leaders’ anger and disappointment, especially as it revealed the extent of Wilson’s desire to avoid antagonizing the South African government. Wilson’s government strenuously resisted the argument that economic sanctions against Rhodesia could only be made effective if they were expanded to encompass South Africa as well. Well aware that the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of sanctions against Rhodesia would influence the debate over sanctions against South Africa itself, the South African government was continuing to supply Rhodesia with oil and other products in defiance of the UN. But the scale of Britain’s economic stake in South Africa meant that Wilson refused to challenge this. In a private meeting with South African foreign minister Hilgard Muller, Wilson reassured Muller that while British policymakers “heartily disliked

⁶⁷ William Minter, “Draft of Working Paper on strategy re Southern Africa of U.S. student groups,” n.d. [September 1966], Folder: “South Africa 1965-1967,” Box 252, USNSA International Commission Records. See also Minter, “Action Against Apartheid,” 179-88.

⁶⁸ “Minutes of the South Africa Committee of the MCF,” 30 November [1965], Folder: ‘MCF COM 8: SA Ctte (b), 1965-70,’ Box 6, MCF Collection.

⁶⁹ Anne Darnborough, *Labour’s Record on Southern Africa: An Examination of Attitudes Before October 1964 and Actions Since* (London: Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1967), 5.

apartheid policy and would say so publicly from time to time,” they were also “realists” and “had no desire to see international action taken against South Africa that might precipitate a major upheaval in southern Africa or lead to a major crisis in [British] relations with South Africa.”⁷⁰

In the short-term – the time-scale in which anti-apartheid activists had expected to achieve results – the AAM’s approach of combining governmental lobbying with non-governmental boycotts to mobilize public opinion had evidently failed to achieve its objectives. The consumer, sports, and cultural boycotts helped to increase the profile of apartheid as a public issue, but they had fallen far short of generating sufficient public pressure to produce significant shifts in government policy, even when Labour was in power. Instead, as a discussion paper drafted for the AAM Executive put it in November 1966, the Movement now faced “a Britain in which disenchantment with African affairs is widespread”: by the middle of the decade the optimistic interest in Africa that had led the Labour Party to designate 1960 “Africa Year” had dissipated amidst the political and economic turmoil of many of the postcolonial states on the continent.⁷¹ An AAM fundraising letter sent to South African exiles living in Britain in 1966 gives a sense of the air of despondency that hung over anti-apartheid activism in Britain at this time: “You are not the only person who has felt a sense of impatience and futility at the limited range of anti-apartheid activities. Too often they seem ineffectual, boring, repetitious. The same placards on sticks outside South Africa House (and it’s always raining); or [a] march around Trafalgar Square; a letter signed by a handful of notables that some clerk, in any case, refuses to accept; depriving your family of the best fruit while everyone around you buys Outspan... It doesn’t seem to make any great impact, and in spite of ourselves we become aware of our own diminishing enthusiasm.”⁷²

⁷⁰ Michael Palliser to C.M. MacLehose, memorandum, 27 April 1967, PREM 13/2954, UKNA.

⁷¹ “Memo to EC on information from Ros and Anne,” 23 November 1966, File 70, AAM.

⁷² “Dear [blank],” circular letter, 24 May 1966, Sub-folder: “1960-6,” File 2213, AAM.

The letter stressed that there was, however, “no alternative.” Intensifying the consumer, cultural, and sports boycotts would not “topple Verwoerd – but all the small, constant, deadly dull and vitally necessary anti-apartheid activities gradually work away at the public conscience both inside South Africa and here and everywhere; so that when the time comes we have laid the basis for those massive campaigns about which we dream.” But the AAM’s disillusionment with the Labour government was complete. In July 1967, leading members of the Movement’s executive noted despondently that “the accession to power of the Labour Government has instead of reducing our problems, as we optimistically forecast, only magnified them.”⁷³ The AAM now also published a thirty-page pamphlet examining *Labour’s Record on Southern Africa* which concluded that in government Labour had shown itself “no different” than the Conservatives.⁷⁴

Some of the AAM leaders’ despondency was relieved by the news that the ANC had launched its incursion into Rhodesia that August. The reports of ANC guerrillas fighting in the Wankie campaign now led to a complete reassessment of the AAM’s attitude towards the armed struggle in South Africa. The 1967 Annual Report, published just one month after the first clashes in the ANC and ZAPU’s Wankie campaign, declared that armed struggle had now been “revealed for all the world to see as the most important instrument for change in the sub-continent.” Just two years earlier, Minty and Ennals had told the Nkoana of the PAC that international tasks relating to the armed struggle were the exclusive responsibility of the liberation movements. But after the excitement generated by the Wankie campaign, the AAM now identified building “an atmosphere of sympathy and support for the courageous resistance fighters” as one of its central tasks.⁷⁵

In this new context, AAM leaders began to reframe their objectives in a way that paralleled

⁷³ “Dear [blank],” circular letter, 24 May 1966, Sub-folder: “1960-6,” File 2213; “Report of Sub-Committee to Executive Committee,” 15 July 1967, File 70, AAM.

⁷⁴ Darnborough, *Labour’s Record*, 24.

⁷⁵ Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Annual Report,” September 1967, File 13, AAM

ACOA's shift to focusing on "disengagement": the AAM now framed their objective as "ending British collaboration with the forces of apartheid economically, militarily, politically and culturally." In part this entailed a continuation, or renewed emphasis, on the AAM's longstanding non-governmental boycott campaigns – of South African consumer goods, sport, and culture. But it also led the AAM to begin tentatively to explore new forms of action: the 1967 annual report suggested exposing British firms that collaborated with apartheid, both by producing publicity materials on this topic, and by "picketing and other means which are locally appropriate."⁷⁶ In December 1967 the AAM made its first attempt to organize this kind of activity, targeted at Cyril Lord and Garfield Weston, two British firms with large investments in South Africa. The effort was short-lived, however: a report by the AAM Executive some years later commented that the campaign "fizzled out almost before it was off the ground."⁷⁷

As in the United States, it was groups associated with the New Left that subsequently re-energized and re-directed anti-apartheid activity in Britain. Though very different in background, the two groups that played central roles, the Young Liberals and the Haslemere Group, were both pessimistic about Britain's system of parliamentary democracy and the traditional forms of protest associated with it, and were committed to finding other ways of achieving political change. The Young Liberals were formally the youth wing of the Liberal Party, Britain's third largest political party (in the 1966 general election, the Liberals won nine seats in parliament, behind the Conservative Party's 304 and Labour's 317). After a small group of leading Young Liberals decided in 1966 to convert the largely quiescent organization into a radical youth movement, the group became a prominent focus for student radicalism. By the end of the decade the Young Liberal

⁷⁶ Anti-Apartheid Movement, "Annual Report," September 1967, File 13, AAM.

⁷⁷ "Suggestion for a Campaign against the Products of a British Firm with interests in South Africa" n.d., [ca. December 1971], File 67, AAM.

leadership had concluded there was no chance of achieving their objective of “libertarian socialism” through the “sterile farce of existing parliamentary democracy.” Instead, they embraced non-violent direct action as “as the only way of mobilising people and achieving change.”⁷⁸

This commitment to direct action was shared by the Haslemere Group, formed in January 1968 at a conference of forty “young and disillusioned” members of a variety of British organizations, mostly in the international aid and development sector. Those attending the Haslemere conference included, for instance, members of Oxfam, the Overseas Development Institute, and Christian Aid, as well as religious and political groups (including the Young Liberals). The conference published a *Haslemere Declaration* whose thesis was best summed up by the quotation from Tolstoy that was used as an epigraph: “I sit on a man’s back choking him and making me carry me and yet assure myself and others that I am sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all possible means – except by getting off his back.” Haslemere Group members believed that poverty in the third world was caused by exploitation by rich countries, and that overseas aid from the west was at best an inadequate form of conscience-salving and at worst another form of exploitation. They instead committed themselves to explicitly political action. Such political action would not be “polite, respectable and ineffective” lobbying, the signatories of the Declaration declared, since they had “lost all faith in the ability of our governments to respond realistically to the desperate human need of the poor world.” Instead, the Group adopted a program based on research, political education, and direct action against specific targets “at points where the practice of exploitation touches the experience of ordinary men and women.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ [Malcolm MacCallum?], “Direct Action,” n.d. [ca. late 1968], Bundle 9, George Kiloh Collection, LSE Archives.

⁷⁹ “The Haslemere Declaration,” January 1968; [Haslemere Group], “Poverty is Violence,” 13 April 1969, File 885, AAM. See also Kevin O’Sullivan, “The Search for Justice: NGOs in Britain and Ireland and the New International Economic Order, 1968–82,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6, no. 1 (2015): 173-87.

The Young Liberals and the Haslemere Group brought their commitment to direct action tactics to the campaigns for the liberation of southern Africa from minority rule. In the case of the Haslemere Group, the southern African liberation movements were among the third world movements for economic and political independence with whom signatories of the Haslemere Declaration aligned themselves. Indeed, the Declaration explicitly mentioned the AAM's consumer boycott as an inadequate form of support for the struggle being waged by the liberation movements, declaring that "one cannot balance the life of a young black freedom-fighter against a vow not to eat Cape grapefruit."⁸⁰ The Young Liberals had become involved in campaigning against the Labour Government's "sell-out" on Rhodesia in 1966, and in 1968 they established their own "Southern Africa Commission." Leading Young Liberals, including international vice-chairman Peter Hellyer and international secretary Douglas Marchant, also joined the AAM. They soon became vociferous critics of the AAM's "tactics and political approach": in October 1968 they provoked a heated debate at the AAM's annual general meeting when they proposed a resolution that "there is nothing to be gained by attempting to bring direct pressure on HMG [Her Majesty's Government]" and that "the AAM should bring direct pressure to disrupt southern African business and institutions in this country."⁸¹

The Young Liberal resolution thus encapsulated what Marchant called the group's "bypass tactic" of bypassing "traditional structures and methods of protest." Marchant argued that "Any party in power in this country with the present system must succumb to the pressures inherent within a capitalist society." The AAM should therefore stop lobbying parliament and the government, and instead make "a direct attack on the attitudes of the British people as a whole,"

⁸⁰ "The Haslemere Declaration," January 1968, File 885, AAM.

⁸¹ Anti-Apartheid Movement, "The following resolutions have been received..." n.d. [ca. October 1968, File 2213, AAM.

through education and direct action. The consumer boycott, the AAM's traditional means of grassroots political education, was dismissed by Hellyer as uninspiring: "an appeal not to buy Outspan oranges is perhaps not a cry which will inspire most of the left in this country." Rather, radical students could be mobilized by appeals "based upon extreme militancy."⁸²

Though a revised version of the Young Liberals' resolution was, after extended discussion, eventually adopted by the AAM in March 1969, the Movement was reluctant to organize disruptive direct action (Marchant and Hellyer's suggestions had included hoax bomb threats to South African Airways, disruption of South African immigration offices, and "industrial sabotage" against British firms with South African connections).⁸³ Members of the Young Liberals' Southern Africa Commission therefore began taking matters into their own hands. Initially this was on a relatively small scale: in December 1968 Marchant and fourteen Young Liberals staged an hour-long sit-in at the offices of the liberal *Guardian* newspaper to protest its acceptance of advertisements from the South African government and South African firms.⁸⁴

Soon afterwards, local committees of the Haslemere Group – whose decentralized structure left much scope for initiative by local activists – began to take an interest in British firms operating in southern Africa as targets for protest and direct action. In mid-1969, the South London Haslemere Group launched a campaign to expose the role of Barclays Bank in the third world, and quickly came to focus on the bank's role in southern Africa. The group began leafleting around high street branches of Barclays in London, pointing out that the bank had 895 branches in South Africa

⁸² Douglas Marchant, "Discussion Paper for Nottingham 'Think Weekend': A Few thoughts on Organisation of YLM" [sic], 8 May 1969, Folder 2, Bundle 10, Kiloh Collection; Douglas Marchant, "Proposer's Speech of the National League of Young Liberals' Southern African Commission's Resolution," 20 October 1968; Douglas Marchant, "Memorandum," n.d. [ca. late 1968]; Peter Hellyer, "Memorandum... to the Antiapartheid National Executive," n.d. [ca. early 1969], File 70, AAM.

⁸³ Douglas Marchant, "Memorandum," n.d. [ca. late 1968]; Peter Hellyer, "Memorandum... to the Antiapartheid National Executive," n.d. [ca. early 1969], File 70, AAM.

⁸⁴ "'Guardian' sat in," London *Guardian*, 16 December 1969, 1.

itself, and was involved in financing the construction of the Cabora Bassa Dam, a massive hydro-electric project in Mozambique intended by the Portuguese colonial authorities to help secure their rule in the colony. The Haslemere Group in north-west London, meanwhile, launched a campaign against Sena Sugar Estates, a British-owned firm that was the largest sugar producer in Mozambique. Haslemere members picketed the firm's annual general meeting, and one demonstrator was able to get inside and state his views before being asked to leave. For the Haslemere activists, both these campaigns were forms of political education about the nature of British capitalism that would serve to "publicise and polarise, confront and commit." Like the Committee of Conscience in New York, the Haslemere Group did not expect to be able to force their corporate targets to disinvest from southern Africa: "The Group do not seriously expect to be able to change the iniquitous courses of Barclay's profiteers," explained Haslemere newsletter. But they did hope "to get people to understand just what it is that their 'friendly bank manager' is part of."⁸⁵

In their campaigns on southern Africa, both the Haslemere Group and the Young Liberals initially focused on corporate targets. But in 1969, the Young Liberals succeeded in launching a massive campaign of direct action against South African sports teams visiting Britain. Since its formation in 1960, the AAM had taken a limited interest in the sports boycott that had been initiated by Trevor Huddleston, Dennis Brutus, and others in the 1950s. AAM leaders had seen protests against South African sports tours to Britain, such as the cricket tour in 1965, as means of directing public attention to racism in South Africa and building a constituency for governmental economic sanctions. The new emphasis on sport in 1969 was initiated by Peter Hain, a young South African exile whose parents, prominent members of the Liberal Party, had taken their family into exile in Britain in 1966. Hain was, as he later put it, in "a unique position, an unusual position of both being interested in sport, as a lot of white South African males are, and being interested in anti-apartheid

⁸⁵ "action: friendly," and "notes from an ex running dog," *Paper Tiger: The Haslemere Newsletter*, September 1969, 1-2.

politics.” After joining the Young Liberals when he arrived in Britain, Hain came to realize that sports events were particularly vulnerable to the kind of non-violent direct action to which the Young Liberals were committed: activists could stage spectacular disruptions to interrupt or prevent play.⁸⁶ Through the Southern Africa Commission, Hain organized a series of “Young Liberal direct-action demonstrations” at the games of the Wilf Isaacs XI, an all-white invitational South African cricket team then touring Britain, and at a Davis Cup tennis fixture between Britain and South Africa. In the most successful of these efforts, more than seventy protesters invaded the cricket pitch in the midst of the Wilf Isaacs XI’s game at Oxford, forcing play to be abandoned for the day.⁸⁷

Working with Dennis Brutus, the president of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), who was now in exile in Britain, Hain announced in September that he was forming a new body, Stop the Seventy Tour (STST) that would campaign for the cancellation of the planned 1970 tour of Britain by the South African cricket team. Hain threatened “mass demonstrations and disruptions throughout the tour” if it was not cancelled, and warned that all future South African sports tours to Britain – including that of the South African rugby team that was due to arrive in November – would be “severely disrupted.” Subsequently, in what one scholar has characterized as “arguably the most successful mass action in post-World War II British history,” STST was able to mobilize up to fifty thousand demonstrators during the twenty five-fixture rugby tour, over four hundred of whom were arrested as they demonstrated at and attempted to disrupt games. One fixture was abandoned and two were forced to change their venues.⁸⁸ Subsequently, under heavy pressure from the government, which was concerned to avoid further

⁸⁶ “First recording: Peter Hain,” vol. 4, Hilda Bernstein Interviews.

⁸⁷ Peter Hain, *Don't Play with Apartheid: The Background to the Stop the Seventy Tour Campaign* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 117-20.

⁸⁸ Hain, *Don't Play with Apartheid*, 121-22, 148; Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem, and Hollywood*, 132.

disruptions to law and order in the midst of the 1970 general election campaign, the English Cricket Council announced in May 1970 that it was cancelling the South African cricket tour.⁸⁹

The Stop the Seventy Tour campaign highlighted ongoing tensions regarding the purpose of sports and cultural boycotts and their relationship to other forms of resistance to apartheid. Hain and STST made clear that their immediate objective was the desegregation of South African sport, even while apartheid remained in place in other spheres of life. Perhaps reflecting the Hain family's close association with the South African Liberal Party, Hain argued that this was possible and that achieving it would be a "lever against apartheid" more broadly.⁹⁰ STST thus presented its campaign as one of opposition to "apartheid in sport" and support for "non-racial sport"; its objection to South African sports teams was not simply that they came from the land of apartheid, but that the teams themselves were all-white, and had been selected on an exclusive racial basis. When the South African Cricket Association responded to the campaign to stop the tour by suggesting that it might include one or more black players in the touring party, STST secretary Hugh Geach explained that the campaign's objective was "the complete removal of racialism from S.A. sport – we will not be placated by attempts to consider one or two non-whites for selection." STST would only call off its planned demonstrations when it had "cast-iron assurances and evidence that from now on sport and cricket in particular will be played non-racially."⁹¹

This was, as we have seen, the perspective that had animated the initiators of the sports and cultural boycotts in the mid-fifties. But a decade and a half later, in a very different strategic context, it was controversial among anti-apartheid activists, even within the STST and Young Liberal

⁸⁹ Bruce Murray, "The Sports Boycott and Cricket: The Cancellation of the 1970 South African Tour of England." *South African Historical Journal* 46, no. 1 (May 2002): 219-49.

⁹⁰ Hain, *Don't Play with Apartheid*, 88-89.

⁹¹ Hugh Geach to "Dear Friend," circular letter, n.d. [early 1970], Folder 4, Box 1, Peter Hain Papers (MCH25), Mayibuye Archives.

leadership. In October 1969, Peter Hellyer and another member of the STST committee were among the sponsors of a resolution presented to the AAM's annual meeting that began by declaring that "the continuation of sporting ties between Britain and South Africa bolsters the morale of the apartheid regimes and their supporters." The AAM's compositing committee revised this statement to read that "the continuation of *racially segregated* sporting ties between Britain and South Africa bolsters the morale of supporters of apartheid *and delays the development of non-racial sport in South Africa.*"⁹²

This framing of the sports boycott as a campaign against racially segregated sporting ties won out at the 1969 AAM annual meeting: when one of the most common charges against supporters of the sports boycott was that they were "bringing politics into sport" it made tactical sense to frame the boycott as a sporting rather than a political issue. But some opponents of apartheid were beginning to question the assumption of Hain and Brutus that it would be possible to achieve non-racial sport in the context of ongoing apartheid, and that this should be the immediate objective of the sports boycott. In a long memorandum submitted to the UN Special Committee on Apartheid in 1971, AAM Honorary Secretary Abdul Minty maintained that the sports boycott should be continued "until sport inside South Africa is conducted on the basis of merit alone and not of colour." Minty argued, however, that "This may not be possible until white domination itself is ended in South Africa. Until there is a non-racial society which will permit open sport, we may have to exclude South Africa from all international competitions."⁹³ Certainly ANC leaders did not share Brutus and Hain's optimism about the evolutionary role that sport could play in South African society. During the STST campaign, ANC exiles in London expressed their

⁹² "The following resolutions have been received for submission to the Annual General Meeting of the Anti-Apartheid Movement to be held on Sunday 26 October 1969..."; Anti-Apartheid Movement, "Annual General Meeting: 26 October 1969," File 2214, AAM; emphasis added.

⁹³ S. Abdul Minty, "International Boycott of Apartheid Sport (with Special Reference to the campaigns in Britain by the AAM), April 1971, File 1431, AAM.

concern about “dangerous statements” SANROC leaders had made, such as that SANROC would disband if the white sports authorities in South Africa agreed to call a non-racial national sports convention.⁹⁴ In the 1960s the ANC had not taken any greater interest in the efforts of Brutus and other sports activists to promote the sports boycott than it had in the 1950s, despite important successes such as the barring of South Africa from the Olympics. But in 1969-70 the ANC leadership was nonetheless impressed by STST’s success in mobilizing widespread public support in Britain. ANC Secretary-General Alfred Nzo commented the following year that the “tremendous response to campaigns against all-white South African teams has demonstrated the importance of this sphere of activity in our over-all strategy to isolate the South African regime of terror internationally.”⁹⁵

III. ‘Part of the standard equipment of the movement’: Disengagement and Ending Collaboration

It had not been inevitable that the ANC would continue see the isolation of South Africa as a significant element of the struggle against apartheid. In April 1969, leading members of the exiled ANC gathered in Morogoro, Tanzania for a “consultative conference,” convened in an effort to overcome the malaise and infighting that had characterized the Congress since the defeat of its incursions into Rhodesia in 1967-68. The Morogoro Conference represented the apogee of the skepticism within the ANC that international action – including boycotts and sanctions – could play a significant role in the struggle against apartheid.⁹⁶ After soliciting comments and contributions

⁹⁴ African National Congress of South Africa, London Branch, “Meeting of the Executive Committee,” 28 April 1970, Reel 1, Benjamin Turok Papers (ICS 143), Senate House.

⁹⁵ ANC Secretary General, Report to the National Executive Committee, [1971], Folder 7, Box 52, Series 2, ANC Lusaka Records, NAHECS.

⁹⁶ Compare the argument of Colin Bundy that the Morogoro conference was a moment when the ANC “acknowledged the importance of international solidarity” and established the international isolation of South Africa as one of the “four

from ANC members all over the world, the Conference Preparatory Committee commented somewhat obliquely that “the question of the correctness of insisting on sanctions has sometimes been raised.” But more generally, the Preparatory Committee noted, there was “now a feeling that a disproportionate amount of time and resources [are] being expended on external work. Now, more and more of the best brains and talent of the movement must be utilised for the armed struggle and the internal political developments in the country. The whole movement has to swing decisively back to work at home.”⁹⁷

This “reorientation” – as ANC president Oliver Tambo later characterized it – was endorsed by the conference.⁹⁸ In order to achieve this, the conference established a new body, the Revolutionary Council, which answered directly to the ANC Executive, and whose task was “to concentrate exclusively on the internal situation, the furtherance of the armed struggle, and the mobilisation of the masses.”⁹⁹ The statement of the “Strategy and Tactics of the ANC,” which had been drafted by Joe Slovo and was adopted by the conference, made no reference at all to the international boycott of South Africa. The main focus was on guerrilla warfare as “the special, and in our case the only form in which the armed liberation struggle can be launched”: once guerrilla operations had been initiated inside the country they would “steadily develop conditions for the future all-out war which will eventually lead to the conquest of power.”¹⁰⁰

The prospect of an “all-out war” was not an attractive one for the leaders of the independent

pillars” of its struggle. The metaphor of “four pillars” was in fact not used by the ANC until the mid-1980s. Bundy, “National Liberation and International Solidarity,” 213, 216-17.

⁹⁷ [ANC] Preparatory Committee, “Discussion Guide,” March 1969, 117/1/17/2/6, First Papers.

⁹⁸ “Political Report of the National Executive Committee to the National Consultative Conference, June 1985, Presented by the President,” in African National Congress, *Documents of the Second National Consultative Conference of the African National Congress, Zambia 16-23 June 1985* (Lusaka: African National Congress, 1985).

⁹⁹ [South African Communist Party] Central Committee, “Report on Organisation,” August 1972, 117/1/17/3, First Papers.

¹⁰⁰ African National Congress, *Forward to Freedom*, 9, 6.

African states that bordered white-ruled southern Africa and that would bear the brunt of the fallout of such a conflict. Zambia in particular maintained an ambivalent attitude towards the armed struggle in South Africa: Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda refused to condemn the use of force against apartheid, given the lack of other options for resistance, but remained deeply concerned about the possibility that South African forces might retaliate against Zambia for assisting the liberation movements. The Zambian government allowed ANC and PAC guerrillas to transit through its territory, but refused to permit them to establish military camps. In an effort to further relieve pressure on South Africa, B.J. Vorster, who succeeded Verwoerd as Prime Minister in 1966, had adopted an “outward” policy of seeking to build up relations with African states, and in 1967 he and Kaunda secretly began a tentative correspondence regarding the resolution of the conflict in Rhodesia. In April 1969, just before the ANC’s Morogoro Conference, Kaunda’s preference for negotiation was endorsed by a summit of East and Central African States in Lusaka. The “Lusaka Manifesto” adopted at the summit reaffirmed African leaders’ commitment to the liberation of southern Africa from white minority rule, but emphasized their preference that this be achieved by “without physical violence”: “We would prefer to negotiate rather than destroy, to talk rather than kill.” Most famously, the Manifesto declared that “If peaceful progress to emancipation were possible, or if changed circumstances were to make it possible in the future, we would urge our brothers in the resistance movements to use peaceful methods of struggle even at the cost of some compromise on the time of change.”¹⁰¹

ANC leaders were horrified by the Lusaka Manifesto, which had been adopted without consulting them and was endorsed by the two states, Zambia and Tanzania, on which the ANC was most reliant for support. To the ANC, the Manifesto was based on a flawed understanding of white

¹⁰¹ Fifth Summit Conference of East and Central African States, *The Lusaka Manifesto on Southern Africa* (Dar es Salaam: Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1969), 4.

minority rule and how it could be defeated. Unknown to his comrades in exile, Nelson Mandela made his own proposal to South African government for a negotiated transition the same month: on April 22 Mandela wrote to the Minister of Justice from his prison cell on Robben Island, urging that “the obvious solution is to release us and to hold a round table conference to consider an amicable solution.”¹⁰² But as far as the leadership of the ANC in exile was concerned, dialogue with the South African government was an “impossibility”: it was “in the nature of the apartheid system,” argued a Congress committee established to analyze the Lusaka Manifesto, that it could not “stretch through dialogue or any other ‘voluntary’ change to accommodate the rights of the people.”¹⁰³ As Joe Slovo later explained, leaders of the ANC and the SACP now viewed as “highly questionable” the “old thinking” of Mandela and others that violent resistance could lead to a negotiated transfer of power. In 1970 the SACP Central Committee explicitly rejected the section of the Party’s 1962 program, which had held out this possibility, declaring instead that “The revolutionary overthrow of the white state can only be achieved by violent means.”¹⁰⁴ The ANC’s official stance was identical: in 1973 the ANC executive referred to its “strategic objective” as “the seizure of power and not reforms o[r] a negotiated transfer of power.”¹⁰⁵

In accordance with the decisions at the Morogoro Conference the ANC’s top leaders now focused even more exclusively on how to launch guerrilla action inside South Africa. Tambo wrote to E.S. Reddy at the UN in January 1970 that he had been “not much involved in international work

¹⁰² “Text of a letter addressed to the Ministry of Justice, Cape Town, from Nelson Mandela, Robben Island Prison,” 22 April 1969, File 119, Sampson Papers.

¹⁰³ “Some points arising from the Lusaka Manifesto,” n.d. [1969]; “Memo. (Confidential) to Head Office on the Lusaka Manifesto,” n.d. [ca. December 1969]; “Additional Remarks,” 12 December 1969, File 117/1/17/2/5, First Papers.

¹⁰⁴ “First Interview with Joe Slovo, conducted by Howard Barrell,” 12-16 August 1989, Folder 3, Box 2, Barrell Papers; [South African Communist Party] Central Committee, “Report on Organisation,” August 1972, 117/1/17/3, First Papers.

¹⁰⁵ A. Nzo, “Advance the struggle to even higher levels,” circular letter, 1 March 1973, Reel 1, Turok Papers. See also Legassick, *Armed Struggle and Democracy*, 7-8.

recently,” for his primary focus was now to “confront apartheid at base.”¹⁰⁶ Tambo’s main focus that year was on “Operation J” (the “J” was for Joe Slovo), an elaborate plan to land a group of fifty guerrillas on South Africa’s Indian Ocean coast. The plan was eventually abandoned in 1971, after the ship that had been purchased broke down off the Kenyan coast, but until then the preparations preoccupied Tambo and the ANC’s other leading strategists. Indeed, Tambo had initially insisted that he would lead the landing party himself, though this was vetoed by his comrades.¹⁰⁷

The ANC did not, of course, completely abandon international solidarity activity. Indeed, the Preparatory Committee for the Morogoro Conference had insisted somewhat defensively that participation in relevant international bodies was not “useless and wasteful” – as some internal critics charged – but was necessary in order to ensure that the ANC did not suffer the fate of the Mau Mau fighters in Kenya in the 1950s who had been “not understood and not effectively supported by the international progressive world.”¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, those exiled members of the ANC who were based in “hostile countries” such as Britain and the U.S., now framed their activities as the AAM and the ACOA had begun to do. “We have no illusions that sanctions and similar pressure methods can provoke any kind of change in South Africa,” ANC representatives in London wrote shortly after the Morogoro Conference. But campaigns for the boycott of South Africa were still useful as a way of “inhibiting collaboration with apartheid and where possible neutralising government and big business support for Southern Africa.” They thus contributed to what the ANC now defined as its main objective in these countries: “to prevent intervention on the side of apartheid” once the ANC had succeeded in launching a guerrilla struggle inside the country.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Oliver Tambo to E.S. Reddy, 25 January 1970, Folder 388, Box 7, Reddy Papers, Yale.

¹⁰⁷ Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 112-3; Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 368; Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 239.

¹⁰⁸ [ANC] Preparatory Committee, “Discussion Guide,” March 1969, 117/1/17/2/6, First Papers.

¹⁰⁹ [African National Congress], “Our Foreign Policy Objectives,” n.d. [1969]; “Draft Comments from A.N.C., London, on document ‘Our Foreign Policy Objectives,’” n.d. [1969], File 117/1/17/2/5, First Papers.

Ruth First, an influential figure in the community of Congress exiles in Britain, was increasingly skeptical that the Anti-Apartheid Movement was the best instrument for achieving these objectives. The AAM remained too closely tied to “consensus methods and established lobbies,” First argued, and its focus on building links with institutions like organized labor and political parties had produced no results. It was, for instance, “demonstrable nonsense” to talk of mobilizing “international worker solidarity” through the labor unions that were primarily concerned with their own members’ standards of consumption. First was impressed by the upsurge of New Left youth militancy in the late 1960s. If the ANC wanted to inspire mass militancy, rather than “the traditional expressions of displeasure by liberal elites,” she argued, it needed to reorient its outreach towards the young radicals who were themselves attacking traditional institutions. It could do this by projecting the struggle against apartheid “as central to the struggle against human exploitation everywhere,” through, for instance, launching a campaign against the role of American firms like Chase Manhattan and General Motors in South Africa.¹¹⁰

Four months after the Morogoro conference, the “Congress Committee,” a small group of U.K.-based South African exiles who functioned as a kind of “foreign policy commission” for the ANC, adopted a modified version of First’s proposal. In September 1969 they decided on a campaign against western firms involved in the Cabora Bassa dam project in Mozambique, which they saw as deliberate effort by the Portuguese to commit the “imperialist powers” even more deeply to the defense of the white regimes in southern Africa. To the Congress Committee, the dam was thus “a convenient means of isolating small group of companies round a hot issue” that could be used to mobilize the kind of direct “action-in-the-streets” that the AAM had failed to generate.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ruth First, “Memorandum on a campaign against economic collaboration,” n.d. [ca. early 1969], File 117/1/17/2/5, First Papers.

¹¹¹ “Congress Group Meeting,” 29 September 1969, File 117/1/17/2/8, First Papers.

Many AAM leaders, meanwhile, continued to fear that the adoption of direct action tactics would discredit and marginalize the movement. After STST started its campaign of disruption of rugby games, the AAM maintained a public position of carefully-crafted ambiguity, declaring that the Movement sympathized with the objectives of those who engaged in direct action (and noting that many of them were AAM members), but stressing that “as an organization” the AAM itself had not organized disruptive protests.¹¹²

In November 1969, members of the Congress Committee convened a meeting of “key militant British personnel” from new left groups including the Young Liberals, the Haslemere Group, and STST, to form a “Dambusters Mobilising Committee” to campaign against the dam.¹¹³ Because of the role of Barclays Bank in financing the dam’s construction, the Dambusters campaign soon adopted the existing Haslemere campaign against Barclays as its primary focus. The campaign sought to capitalize on the interest in both apartheid and in direct action protest that had been generated by the Stop the Seventy Tour campaign. Publicity materials explained that “the economic boycott is even more important than the sports boycott.”¹¹⁴

Like the campaign against the rugby tour, with its twenty-five games all over the country, the campaign against Barclays had the advantage of offering multiple sites for direct action protests. As Haslemere activist and Dambusters secretary Christabel Gurney put it, “Barclays has thousands of branches all over Britain. We couldn’t hope for a better target!” In addition to leafleting and picketing branches, Haslemere and Dambusters campaigners suggested a number of forms of direct action that could be taken against Barclays branches, including sit-ins, “queue-ins,” and attempts to “bugger up Barclays internal workings” by deliberately bouncing checks, jamming telephone

¹¹² Anti-Apartheid Movement, “Minutes of National Committee Meeting,” 28 February 1970, File 43, AAM.

¹¹³ “Congress Group Meeting,” 29 September 1969, File 117/1/17/2/8, First Papers.

¹¹⁴ S.W. London Haslemere to ‘local groups of socialist and radical organisations,’ memorandum, 5 January 1970, File 885, AAM.

switchboards, and placing fake “out of order” signs over night safes.¹¹⁵ Building on the earlier attempt to break into the Sena Sugar Estates annual meeting, Haslemere campaigners also started purchasing shares in Barclays so that they would be able to enter shareholders’ meetings legitimately. Barclays was initially able to block many of these share transfers, so that only three activists were admitted to the bank’s annual meeting in April 1970, while others picketed outside. Inside the meeting the three raised repeated questions about both Cabora Bassa and Barclays’ branches in South Africa, until they were eventually ruled out of order by the bank’s chairman.¹¹⁶

In addition to various forms of direct action protest, Dambusters and Haslemere activists also called for a boycott of Barclays and for both individuals and institutions to close their accounts with the bank. “Boycott Barclays” campaigns were launched on many university campuses, and in April 1970 the campaign received the official backing of the National Union of Students (NUS). May 1, 1970 was established by the Dambusters Mobilising Committee as the day on which large numbers of students would close their accounts, a date carefully chosen to coincide with the payment of government maintenance grants to students and when student accounts were therefore less likely to be overdrawn. The NUS encouraged its affiliates to include “Boycott Barclays” campaigns in their freshers’ week programming at the start of the academic year. This initiative had a significant effect on Barclays’ share of the student banking market: the bank’s share of new student accounts in Britain dropped from forty-eight percent in October 1969 to thirty-three per cent a year later.¹¹⁷

Despite these losses, Barclays was resolute in refusing to disinvest from South Africa, as the

¹¹⁵ Dambusters Mobilising Committee, “Minutes of Meeting,” 7 April 1970, File 1083, AAM.

¹¹⁶ Barclays Bank Limited, “Proceedings at the Annual General Meeting,” 1 April 1970, Verbatim Transcripts of Proceedings at Barclays Group AGMs, Barclays Group Archives, Manchester, UK.

¹¹⁷ Nerys John, “The Campaign Against British Bank Involvement in Apartheid South Africa.” *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (July 2000): 419.

campaign's initiators had expected. But at the same moment that Dambusters Mobilising Committee took up the campaign Barclays in Britain, the objective of the earlier bank campaign in the U.S. was unexpectedly achieved. ACOA had declared the campaign "over" after its climactic demonstration in December 1966 and had moved on to other projects. But the campaign's appeal to the major churches to cease doing business with the ten American banks that offered a revolving credit line to the South African government had unexpected aftereffects, as the request galvanized the slow-moving church bureaucracies to make concrete decisions on the issue. In February 1968 the United Methodist Church Board of Missions withdrew a \$10m investment portfolio from First National City Bank after the bank refused the Board's request that it withdraw from the consortium. Other major church bodies, including the Department of International Affairs of the National Council of Churches and boards of the United Church of Christ and United Presbyterian Church began corresponding with the banks and arranging meetings with bank officials to make the same demand. In May 1969, the Episcopal Church resolved to withdraw \$2 million from Chase Manhattan, First National City Bank, and Morgan Guaranty Trust, if the banks renewed the loan.¹¹⁸

These actions by the churches caused the banks significant concern. In January 1969 a senior Chase Manhattan executive flew to Cape Town to meet with Nico Diederichs, the South African Minister of Finance: though Chase had been under pressure for several years, the representative explained, previously this had been from "groups of no particular standing in the community." But now pressure was coming from "persons of greater standing as well." The chairman of Morgan Guaranty told the South African consul-general in New York that Morgan Guaranty were especially concerned about the ultimatum from the Episcopal Church: the Church's account with them was larger than their share of the consortium loan, so they would be "out of pocket" if they continued to participate. All of the banks expressed their willingness to continue offering the revolving credit if

¹¹⁸ George Houser, "A Summary Report on the Bank Campaign Against the Consortium Loan to South Africa," n.d. [ca. 1970], File 101/25, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

requested to do so, but to South African officials it was obvious that they “would welcome a decision by South Africa” not to seek its renewal. Reluctantly, the South African government agreed to this face-saving maneuver. In November the South African Secretary of Finance announced that his government would not be asking the banks to renew the loan when it expired in January 1970 because it was no longer needed. This decision did not impact the South African government’s access to international credit. Though the consortium agreement lapsed, several of the participating banks secretly agreed to offer new individual credit lines equal to the amount of their previous share of the revolving credit.¹¹⁹

Anti-apartheid activists claimed a major victory. “The significance of our victory in the bank campaign,” Houser declared, “is that an informed and aroused American public opinion can end U.S. financial and economic support for apartheid.” The ACOA would continue to campaign for “total disengagement.”¹²⁰ In Britain, the AAM now likewise embraced the campaign against corporations with investments in South Africa. Though the ANC’s Congress Committee had initiated the Dambusters campaign against Barclays in part because of its frustrations with the AAM, the popularity of the campaign galvanized the AAM into action. The Movement now adopted the boycott of Barclays as its own. The AAM should “move in quickly behind the efforts of the Haslemere Group and the Dambusters Mobilising Committee” wrote a member of the AAM Executive in early 1970. Ultimately, the boycott of Barclays should “become part of the standard

¹¹⁹ Secretary for Finance to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, “Attitude of American Banks to South Africa,” 27 January 1969, vol. 1, File 28/2/3

[C.F. de V. Booysen], “Secret Memorandum: Attitude of American Banks to South Africa,” 3 October 1969; [C.F. de V. Booysen], “Secret Memorandum: Attitude of American Banks to South Africa,” 15 Oct 1969; Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, to S.A. Consul-General, New York, telegram, 24 November 1969; C.F. de V. Booysen to Mr. Gerald Browne, “Discussions with New York Banks,” 6 February 1970, vol. 5, File 28/8/4, DFA Records, DIRCO Archive.

¹²⁰ American Committee on Africa, “Anti-Apartheid Victory as South Africa Drops Loan Request to U.S. Banks,” 25 November 1969, File 105/10, ACOA Records, *Proquest History Vault*.

equipment of the movement, like the boycott of South African products.”¹²¹ This was a marked shift from the focus on mandatory and multilateral governmental sanctions in the first half of the decade. Convinced that their role was to facilitate the guerrilla war and armed seizure of power to which the liberation movements were now committed, South African exiles and anti-apartheid activists in the west would enter the 1970s focused on campaigns for corporate disengagement.

¹²¹ Anti-Apartheid Movement Executive Committee, “Notes Towards a Campaign against Barclays Bank,” n.d. [*ca.* February 1970], File 1030, AAM.

CONCLUSION

Anti-apartheid activists had not adhered to a single, consistent grand strategy in the period between 1946 and 1970. They would not do so in the period afterwards. There was no straight line from where we have left the global anti-apartheid movement in 1970 to the triumphant moment twenty-four years later, when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's first president elected in non-racial democratic elections. As both the domestic and the international contexts in which they operated continued to change, as they continued to attempt to draw lessons from past efforts and from struggles elsewhere, and as new actors continued to emerge and contribute new ideas to the struggle, anti-apartheid activists continued to experiment and to adapt their tactics and their strategies.

One thing would remain constant after 1970, however. By that point, the boycott of South Africa was no longer simply a tactical weapon. It had become established as the defining principle of the self-identified anti-apartheid movement. The particular forms of boycott on which activists focused, and the nature of the contribution they were expected to make to the objective of overthrowing apartheid continued to change. But for the South African liberation movements and those who supported them, the principle of boycott remained constant until the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the opening of negotiations between the ANC and the government. That this principle was now beyond question was made clear by Mzwai Piliso, a leading member of the ANC who represented the Congress at a seminar on the campaign against investment in South Africa that was convened by the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London in 1975. After a day of debate, the anti-apartheid academics and activists had been unable to agree on exactly what they meant by "disinvestment" or on what impact they expected disinvestment to have on the South African economy. At the end of the seminar, Piliso exploded in frustration. Stating erroneously that "the

disinvestment policy had originally been adopted at the request of the South African liberation movement,” he declared that to the ANC the campaign for firms to boycott South Africa by withdrawing or liquidating their investments “represented an important act of solidarity, the value of which did not depend on the details of the economic effect which it might produce.”¹ The principle that solidarity with the South African opponents of apartheid should be expressed through boycott was now inviolable.

This had not always been the case. Indeed, there was a high degree of contingency in the emergence of boycott campaigns as such a prominent element of the global struggle against apartheid. *International* boycotts were not a prominent element of many of the other anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles that were going on contemporaneously between the 1940s and the 1960s. And for nearly a decade and a half after India imposed trade sanctions in 1946, most leaders of the Congress movement showed little interest in promoting campaigns for boycotts or sanctions against South Africa. Even Yusuf Dadoo, who in 1947 called for worldwide sanctions against South Africa, subsequently dropped the idea. Outspoken opponents of apartheid outside South Africa, including Kwame Nkrumah and representatives of the Indian government, made clear that they opposed a campaign for India’s action to be replicated by other states. Inside South Africa, Congress leaders focused throughout the 1950s on their domestic campaigns against apartheid, to which external boycotts were largely irrelevant and potentially even detrimental.

When boycotts of South African goods began to break out around the world in 1959-60 this was due not to an initiative from anti-apartheid leaders inside South Africa but to the conjuncture of the persistent advocacy of two individuals – the British priest Michael Scott and the Kenyan labor leader Tom Mboya – with the ANC’s efforts to relaunch its own domestic consumer boycott against “Nationalist products.” In a further crucial conjuncture, the external boycott campaigns of 1959-60

¹ “Investment Seminar: A Summary,” [June 1975], File 1599, AAM.

were just getting into full swing at the precise moment in 1960 when the crisis and State of Emergency after the Sharpeville massacre both shut down almost all opportunities for effective resistance to apartheid from within the country *and* suggested that South Africa might be economically vulnerable to external action. It was in this specific set of circumstances that the few ANC and PAC leaders not in jail embraced the idea of economic boycott as the most important way that those outside the country could contribute to ending apartheid.

The specific targets – and the specific forms of boycott – on which boycott advocates focused as being most significant to the struggle against apartheid shifted over time. In the 1950s the most notable boycott campaigns to emerge were boycotts of all-white South African sports teams and entertainment venues. Although the resolution of the All-African People’s Conference that had “set the ball rolling” in December 1958 had called for trade sanctions by African states, the boycott campaigns that developed in response in 1959-60 primarily took the form of consumer boycotts of South African goods. Tom Mboya also envisaged a world-wide industrial boycott, coordinated by the ICFTU, which would paralyze all shipping bound to or from South Africa. But although this idea was sporadically revived by opponents of apartheid, the steadfast opposition of many western labor leaders ensured that it was never attempted.

After Sharpeville, opponents of apartheid focused on the campaign for multilateral trade sanctions, imposed by governments and coordinated by the United Nations, which would totally isolate South Africa from world trade. Other kinds of boycotts, including consumer, sports, cultural, and diplomatic boycotts were perceived by their advocates primarily as means of building support and momentum for the campaign for trade sanctions. Boycott advocates paid little attention to foreign investment in South Africa in the early 1960s. But after the failure to persuade the African states to impose a secondary boycott, the collapse of efforts to secure trade sanctions at the UN, and the apparent inability of sanctions to end UDI in Rhodesia, anti-apartheid activists in the west were

prompted by new left groups to begin to shift their focus to boycotts and direct action against firms with investments in South Africa.

Very few of the advocates of these various forms of action intended or expected them to achieve the end of apartheid by bringing about the kind transition to democracy negotiated between the National Party government and the ANC that ultimately took place in 1990-94. In 1946, the Indian advocates of sanctions had expected that their unilateral action would be sufficient to compel the Smuts government to comply with their demand for a roundtable conference, not on the topic of segregation as a whole, but on the specific issue of its application to South African Indians. In the early 1960s, Nelson Mandela and some of his comrades had believed – before their capture and imprisonment – that the guerrilla war they planned to launch, facilitated by sanctions, would force the government to the negotiating table.

But few others believed that the racist hardliners responsible for implementing apartheid could ever be compelled to negotiate it away. The initiators of sports and cultural boycotts in the 1950s had believed that if sport and the arts could be turned into pockets of non-racialism within a racist society, this would bring about a broader shift in white attitudes. Supporters of consumer boycotts in 1959-60 had made a diverse array of suggestions of how they might contribute to ending apartheid. After the turn to sanctions in 1960, these ideas coalesced into the belief held by anti-apartheid activists across the political spectrum that sanctions could bring about a realignment of white politics by causing white business and white voters to defect from the National Party.

By the second half of the decade, however, the liberation movements and their western supporters had become skeptical of this model of change, especially after sanctions failed to bring about an analogous scenario in neighboring Rhodesia. Both the ANC and the PAC became focused on the armed seizure of power through guerrilla warfare. Anti-apartheid activists in the west who began to campaign for disengagement by western firms did not expect to be able to compel their

targets actually to disinvest, and so initially gave little thought to the question of the economic or political impact of disinvestment – a question that would become an issue of major controversy in the 1970s and 1980s. Rather, campaigns against corporations were understood as ways to build up a constituency that would oppose western intervention on the side of government in the future guerrilla war that anti-apartheid activists assumed would ultimately bring about the downfall of apartheid.

The liberation movements never did seize power by armed force, of course. But the international boycott campaigns launched to facilitate that objective nevertheless helped to shape the eventual negotiated transition in crucial ways. At its climax, as in the period studied here, the story of the external struggle against apartheid was one of experimentation and unintended consequences. Such a story may be less morally satisfying than one of the successful unfolding of a comprehensive master plan for overcoming injustice. And it does not provide a simple template that can be easily replicated in other settings. But it is no less important – and no less inspirational – for that.

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¹ The archival repositories and collections listed here are those whose contents I have drawn upon directly in writing this dissertation. Additional archival collections that I consulted in the course of my research but that are exclusively relevant to the period after 1970 (and that I may draw upon in a future, expanded version of this work) are not listed.

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