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**The 1981 Springbok Tour and the Anti-Apartheid Movement in  
Palmerston North.**

A research exercise completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of  
Arts with Honours at Massey University.

Geoff Kaandorp  
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MASSEY UNIVERSITY



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Around mid-day on August the 1<sup>st</sup> 1981 people began assembling on the Railway Land in Palmerston North. Soon there were about 4000 people,<sup>1</sup> many of them wore helmets and were padded up with breast protectors made of bamboo, newspaper or cardboard, some even wore shin guards and groin protectors.<sup>2</sup> Marshals wearing red arm bands handed out notices: 'This march is to be peaceful and orderly.' Notices also instructed marchers to obey the marshals and advised that doctors and nurses were on stand-by in private homes along the march route.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the people gathered were from out of town. There was a large contingent from Wellington, as well as people from Auckland, Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa and New Plymouth. A loudspeaker cracked to life. Donna Awatere, a Maori activist began to speak. She had come down from Auckland with about 100 others. 'We didn't come all the way down here from Auckland not to do something serious,' she told the crowd, urging them to reject the march organisers policy and confront the police.<sup>4</sup> 'We've agreed not to breach the police lines, or make any effort to enter the ground,' replied march organiser and Citizens Opposed to the Springbok Tour (COST) leader Alick Shaw, over another loudspeaker. He continued:

There's a significant body of people who don't agree, and all power to their courage, but in Palmerston there are over 1000 cops. On Wednesday in Wellington a demonstration of 2000 people was stopped by one seventh of that number. It was stopped by a number of people taking raps with wood on the head. There are two issues: first stopping the tour, but secondly, Wednesday's events turned the law and order issue, which is cynical nonsense, into a civil rights issue. I am speaking of the right to a peaceful demonstration. We will exercise that right today.<sup>5</sup>

Arguments broke out and various people with loudspeakers tried to convince

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<sup>1</sup> Geoff Chapple, *1981: The Tour*, Wellington: AH & AW Reed, 1984, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Alan Millar. 15/8/00.

<sup>3</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard (MES)*, August 1, 1981.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Chapple, p. 156.

the crowd one way or the other. The air was tense with expectation and fear. Eventually Shaw ordered people to form up into a procession. Those wanting to 'do something serious' went to the back. The people formed up in rows, ten abreast and with arms linked. Those at the front all wore protective padding and helmets. For the Palmerston North people it was the first time they had even linked arms.<sup>6</sup>

As the march made its way slowly down Church Street towards the Square more and more people joined. A hailstorm blew in, hailstones crashed into helmets ominously. As it proceeded around the Square, under the arch of the City Council building Manawatu Against the Springbok Tour (MAST) people who had just finished their alternative rally, clapped it through or joined.<sup>7</sup> Eventually the march began to make its way up Cuba Street towards a line of police who blocked the road just past the corner of David Street. They sang as they marched:

Re-mem-ber! Re-mem-ber! Remember Soweto  
Remember Soweto!  
Remember Sharpeville! Remember Waitangi!  
Remember Bastion Point!  
Re-mem-ber! Re-mem-ber!  
Remember Biko! Remember Biko!  
Remember Gisborne! Remember Hamilton!  
Remember Molesworth Street!<sup>8</sup>

Yet there was the air of a funeral procession as they marched towards the police line at a snails pace, perhaps it was the deserted streets or the fear of what might happen. As they drew closer to the police the marchers began to sing 'We Shall Overcome.'<sup>9</sup>

When the front of the march approached 50 paces the Red Squad riot police,

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<sup>6</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North's Tour Activities,' n.d, HART Aotearoa Records, 86-136-13, Alexander Turnbull Library (WTU), p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Chapple, p. 157.

<sup>8</sup> Tom Newnham. *By Batons and Barbed Wire*, Auckland: Real Pictures, 1981, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Chapple, p. 158-9.

the front line of police defence received the command 'VISORS DOWN'. Momentarily the reflection of the sun on the perspex face guards was all that could be seen of them. As the front of the march continued towards the Red Squad the police megaphone gave the command 'LONG BATONS READY'. The three squads facing the protesters drew their batons in unison. Still the protesters marched on. Suddenly the command, 'ADVANCE FIVE MOVE', and the entire unit went forward five paces, jabbing their batons ahead of them with each step and chanting the word 'MOVE, MOVE, MOVE, MOVE, MOVE.' When the unit halted at the fifth advance the protesters had stopped in their tracks.<sup>10</sup>

The front of the march was just a couple of metres from the front row of police, so close they could see the whites of each others eyes.<sup>11</sup> 'WAIT FOR THE COMMAND 'RAPID ACTION' RED SQUAD,' blared the police loudspeaker.<sup>12</sup> The tension and expectation was intense. The police in the front line looked psyched up, their eyes had a glazed look and they seemed ready to lash out at anything.<sup>13</sup> Alick Shaw responded to the police loudspeaker with his own: 'Look at them. They look like they're holding machine guns. The way they acted on Wednesday, they probably wish they were.'<sup>14</sup> The front rows of marchers responded to the barked police commands with taunting yells of 'we are not afraid-ay-ayed,' and then broke into 'God Defend New Zealand.'<sup>15</sup> After standing eye to eye for nearly ten minutes Shaw told the marchers to move off in their ranks.

The march began to move off and slowly more than 5000 people wheeled past the front row of police in their disciplined ranks, with arms linked, and separated only by a line of marshals. Fury was the common reaction, amongst

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<sup>10</sup> Ross Meurant. *The Red Squad Story*, Auckland: Harlen Publications, 1982, p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> *MES*, August 1, 1981.

<sup>12</sup> Meurant, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Don Swan. 30/9/00.

<sup>14</sup> *Chapple*, p. 160.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

some an 'inarticulate angry sound just welled up of atavistic resentment, anger and emotion'<sup>16</sup> Others yelled 'SHAME! SHAME!' as they wheeled past the line of cold faced riot police, only the fact that they marched with linked arms kept people from lashing out. 'You'd never seen the Red Squad image in New Zealand before, because it reeked of that boot on the human face, and the kiwis were a race to ridicule any such arrogance in its police force or armed services. Except it was there, and you couldn't laugh it away. Not entirely.'<sup>17</sup>

Behind the police lines and the barricades the touring Springbok rugby team played Manawatu. After a close game the Springboks won the match 31-19.<sup>18</sup>

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This description is of the most significant protest that took place in Palmerston North during the 1981 tour, the march of August 1, the day that the Springboks played Manawatu. This research exercise examines the anti-apartheid<sup>19</sup> movement in Palmerston North in the build up to, and during the 1981 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand. This account seeks to illustrate the character of the movement in Palmerston North by focusing on the two main anti-apartheid organisations in the city, the local branch of the national movement Halt All Racist Tours (HART) and the local coalition Manawatu Against the Springbok Tour (MAST). The protests that they organised will be explored and the interactions between the two groups will be analysed. It is necessary to acknowledge that they did much more than organise protests, for example seeking to educate the public and lobby the government, but it is not

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Alan Millar.

<sup>17</sup> Chapple, p. 160.

<sup>18</sup> Don Cameron, *Barbed Wire Boks*, Auckland: Rugby Press, 1981, p. 155.

<sup>19</sup> I use the term 'anti-apartheid' rather than 'anti-tour' because I think it more faithfully reflects the nature of the movement, whereby people opposed the tour specifically due to their abhorrence of apartheid in South Africa, of which the Springbok rugby tour was a powerful symbol.

within the scope of this study to analyse in detail these aspects of the movement.

There is a small but expanding body of literature on the 1981 Springbok Tour. Geoff Chapple's *1981: The Tour* provides an excellent overview of the tour and traces the varying reactions to the presence of the Springboks from city to city. Other publications like Tom Newnham's *By Batons and Barbed Wire* and *The Red Squad Story* by Ross Meurant deal with the tour in a similar way, generally documenting the protests that occurred wherever the Springboks went, although from significantly different perspectives, one being sympathetic to the protesters, the other from a police perspective. Other histories like *Dancing On Our Bones* by Trevor Richards,<sup>20</sup> *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts* by Malcolm Templeton,<sup>21</sup> *The South African Game* by Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon<sup>22</sup> and *Winters of Revenge* by Spiro Zavos<sup>23</sup> provide valuable background into the issues of South Africa, apartheid and sporting contact and New Zealand's response to it, from the varied perspectives of a protest leader, a historian and diplomat, a couple of international commentators and a rugby journalist.

In contrast, the histories of the Wellington anti-apartheid movement, the COST history *56 Days*,<sup>24</sup> and the Victoria University History Department occasional papers, *Counting the Cost*<sup>25</sup> and *The Police and the Tour*<sup>26</sup> provide an in depth

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<sup>20</sup> Trevor Richards. *Dancing On Our Bones*, Wellington: Bridget Williams, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Malcolm Templeton, *Human Rights and Sporting Contacts*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon, *The South African Game*, London: Zed Press, 1982.

<sup>23</sup> Spiro Zavos, *Winters of Revenge*, Auckland: Viking, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> *56 Days*, Geoff Walker and Peter Beach (eds), Wellington: NZUSA, n.d.

<sup>25</sup> David Mackay, Malcolm McKinnon, Peter McPhee and Jock Phillips (eds), *Counting the Cost*, Victoria University History Department, Occasional Papers No. 1, Wellington, 1982.

<sup>26</sup> Malcolm McKinnon, Peter McPhee and Jock Phillips (eds), *The Police and the Tour*. Victoria University History Department, Occasional Papers No. 2, Wellington, 1985.

view of the nature of the movement in that city. As does Juliet Morris' account of the Christchurch movement in *With All Our Strength*.<sup>27</sup> These publications provide excellent accounts of the nature of the protest movements in those cities, but there are no similar histories of the other large cities like Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North and Dunedin. Most secondary sources allude to the variations in the character of the movement from city to city, but none have sought to specifically look at the differences. This study is a first step towards this kind of analysis.

In some respects it is written from a very different perspective than the accounts of the Wellington and Christchurch movements. Unlike the authors of those studies I was not a participant. However like those accounts this study comes from a point-of-view sympathetic to the aims of the anti-apartheid movement .

In terms of primary sources the local newspaper the *Manawatu Evening Standard* has been particularly useful. Documents from the 'Trevor Richards Papers' and the 'HART Papers' from the Alexander Turnbull Library have also been used extensively. From these sources one document has been particularly valuable. Entitled 'Report on Palmerston North's Tour Activities' it is an eight page document summarising the activities and character of the protest movement in Palmerston North in 1981. The author and date that it was written are unknown, but it seems to be written by someone active within HART in Palmerston North. It appears it was part of a contribution to the research for Geoff Chapple's book.

In addition to these sources five participants in the protests were interviewed, they were: Robert Burgess, a former All Black, lecturer at Massey University and spokesperson for HART in Palmerston North; Alan Millar, a trade unionist and anti-apartheid activist who had been an active protester in Palmerston

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<sup>27</sup> Juliet Morris, *With All Our Strength*, Christchurch: Black Cat, 1982.

North since the late 1960s; John Ross, a lecturer at Massey and a member of the MAST organising committee; Roger Middlemass, a trade unionist and HART organiser in 1981; and Don Swan, a HART activist in Palmerston North since 1970 and member of the HART national council, who was the central regions area coordinator, based in Wellington in 1981. These people provided valuable insight into the movement and their testimonies have been used extensively.

The text which follows is divided into six sections. Section one will provide a brief overview of the history of rugby relations between New Zealand and South Africa and the public opposition that has also characterised this relationship.

Section two examines the history of HART in Palmerston North up to 1981, and the preparation that took place in the months before the Springbok tour. The formation of MAST as part of a nationwide strategy, and how it became a distinctly different group from HART will also be discussed.

The third section will examine the May 1 Mobilisation, the first nationwide anti-tour protest in 1981. It will explore the drama that ensued in the lead up to May 1, before looking at the events of the day.

Section four will seek to put the events of the protest on August 1<sup>st</sup> into context. Firstly by placing them in the context of the tour as a whole by looking at the preceding events, specifically the Hamilton game and the Molesworth Street incident. Secondly by putting it into context in terms of the anti-apartheid movement in Palmerston North, and the tension and uncertainty that persisted in the build up to the day. I will argue that the Palmerston North game was a pivotal time in the tour, police were testing new tactics and attempting to reassert their authority after the embarrassment of the cancelled Hamilton game. I will also seek to provide a more in depth analysis of the day and try to show how the game in Palmerston North exemplifies the difference



between the protest movement in Palmerston North and in the main centres. Finally I will briefly discuss how the anti-apartheid movement in the other cities reacted to the new police tactics that had been tested in Palmerston North.

The 'Report on Palmerston North's Tour Activities' identifies a three way conflict within the anti-apartheid movement in the city. It's author suggests that 'while there was conflict between HART and MAST 'conservatives', there was also intense debate between HART and the radicals.'<sup>28</sup> Section five will explore this split, arguing that HART was very much caught in the middle, between the radicals and the conservatives. The protest in Palmerston North on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the day of the first test in Christchurch will be used to illustrate this point. It will then go on to look at the 'alternative' forms of protest that occurred and how these gave an opportunity for people from all levels of commitment to participate.<sup>29</sup>

Section six will attempt to draw some tentative conclusions about the composition of the anti-apartheid movement in Palmerston North, drawing on comments made in the 'Report on Palmerston North's Tour Activities' and where appropriate comparing it to the analysis of the Wellington movement provided by Jock Phillips and Peter King in *Counting the Cost*.

The conclusion will discuss the end of the tour and then attempt to make some assertions about the nature of the anti-apartheid movement in Palmerston North.

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<sup>28</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> I have used the expression 'alternative' forms of protest to mean any form of protesting or lobbying other than marching

### Section One.

## Background of New Zealand Opposition to Rugby contacts with South Africa.

There has been debate over rugby contacts between the All Blacks and the Springboks since the 1920s. Initially there was controversy because of the South African's attitudes to Maori All Blacks, when, for example, in 1921 a South African journalist made racist comments about Maori members of the All Blacks.<sup>30</sup> Later in the 1920s South Africa's apartheid policy became more obviously manifest in rugby, with their refusal to host Maori All Blacks, the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU) acquiesced and the All Blacks became all white for South African tours. There were periodic protests to this policy, initially from Maori, but in the post World War Two environment a broader movement slowly emerged. In 1960, the year of the Sharpeville massacre, opposition to the All Black tour of South Africa was raised by the Citizens' All Black Tour Association (CABTA) under the banner 'No Maoris, No Tour.' In 1965 the Citizens Association for Racial Equality (CARE) became the first national anti-apartheid movement.<sup>31</sup> In a context of decolonisation in Africa there was growing international abhorrence of apartheid. In New Zealand government intervention prevented rugby contact in 1966 when prime minister Keith Holyoake ordered the NZRFU to reject an invitation to South Africa, and again in 1973 when prime minister Norman Kirk refused to let the South African team come to New Zealand because of fears of widespread civil disruption.<sup>32</sup>

In 1969 HART was established to fight against the proposed 1970 All Black tour of South Africa. Lead by Trevor Richards, HART was established by the

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<sup>30</sup> Richards, p. 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Wainwright and Lindsay Wright (eds), *Fight Apartheid*, Published for the organising committee of 'Apartheid: A conference to consider New Zealand's relations with racism and colonialism in Southern Africa, Wellington, 18-19 March, 1972, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Chapple, p. 1.

New Zealand University Students Association (NZUSA) to provide an organisation representing not just students but all organisations and individuals opposed to the tour.<sup>33</sup> HART quickly became the most well known and influential anti-apartheid organisation in New Zealand. The media was their most powerful weapon and press releases were an effective way to educate the public and bring anti-apartheid issues into the public domain. Trevor Richards became a well known, if not always liked, public face. HART sought to gain legitimacy and influence through an association with the United Nations, many Commonwealth governments, black African liberation movements like the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) as well as lobbying 'public opinion leaders' to make a stand against apartheid.<sup>34</sup>

HART came to be widely perceived as a radical group of professional agitators. This was in part due to the persistent presence of HART in the media, and also because of the policy of non-violent disruption of apartheid sporting events which had been a much publicised aspect of HART's protest strategy. Yet before 1981, this had never been put into practice on a large scale. Chapple states that, 'The policy of disruption, on the books since 1971, had never been tested. Despite its hard edged reputation HART had always used conventional political techniques.'<sup>35</sup>

In the lead up to the 1975 general election the Labour Party had advocated international responsibility on the issue of sporting contacts while Muldoon and the National Party had campaigned on the policy of non-interference in sport, and specifically non-interference in sporting contacts between the All Blacks and the Springboks. National won a landslide victory.<sup>36</sup> On June 18, 1976 the Soweto killings occurred, in the uprising that followed hundreds of Black South Africans were killed by police. On June 22, just days after the Soweto

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<sup>33</sup> Richards, p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. pp. 41-50.

<sup>35</sup> Chapple, p. 33.

<sup>36</sup> Richards, p. 133.

killings and amidst widespread protest in New Zealand, an All Black team left for a tour of South Africa. As a result around 30 nations boycotted the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games.<sup>37</sup>

In 1977, in the wake of the Olympic boycott, Commonwealth leaders from Africa tried to force the New Zealand government to accede to international opinion and make a specific commitment to oppose sporting contacts with South Africa by instigating the Gleneagles Agreement at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).<sup>38</sup> In signing the agreement Prime Minister Robert Muldoon

accepted it as the urgent responsibility of the Governments vigorously to combat the evil of apartheid by withholding any form of support for, and by taking every practical step to discourage contact or competition by their nationals with, sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa or from any other country where sports are organised on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin.<sup>39</sup>

Thus it would seem that the Gleneagles Agreement would prevent Muldoon from allowing a South African tour to New Zealand. But he had insisted on the inclusion of one significant clause which read: 'They [Commonwealth governments] fully acknowledged that it was for each Government to determine in accordance with its laws the methods by which it might best discharge these commitments.'<sup>40</sup> Muldoon's interpretation of this clause would, in future, allow him to effectively disregard the agreement.

In September 1980 the NZRFU formally invited the Springboks to tour New Zealand. From late in 1980 anti-apartheid groups nationwide began to mobilise to oppose the tour. The initial focus was to remind the government of their international responsibilities and to try and convince them to order the NZRFU to withdraw the invitation. The HART newsletter *Amalanda* stated:

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 134-135.

<sup>38</sup> Archer and Bouillon, p. 296.

<sup>39</sup> 'The Gleneagles Agreement,' cited in Appendix, Templeton, p. 298.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

‘Responsibility for ensuring the tour does not take place rests firmly with Government. It is on Government that maximum pressure must be put. Large demonstrations of opposition will indicate to Government that stopping the tour will not cause electoral disasters.’<sup>41</sup> HART sought to promote awareness of apartheid issues and mobilise opposition to the tour. City based anti-tour coalitions which were separate from, but associated with HART were set up to attempt to attract a broader range of people. The first national mobilisation to stop the tour took place on May 1, 1981. It was very successful, attracting about 75000 participants throughout the country.<sup>42</sup> Yet this and subsequent marches before the beginning of the tour had no effect on the government.

The government officially opposed the tour, calling on the NZRFU to cancel, but they maintained their election platform of non-interference in sport and refused to force the union to cancel.<sup>43</sup> The president of the NZRFU, Ces Blazey was summoned to Muldoon’s office and was officially told that the government did not want the tour to proceed. Some are sceptical of the process. Zavos suggests Muldoon believed that ‘this wink-wink, nudge-nudge disapproval of the tour fulfilled the New Zealand Government’s obligations under the Gleneagles Agreement.’<sup>44</sup> The clause that Muldoon had insisted upon at Gleneagles had been put into effect. ‘In accordance with its laws and methods’ the government had ‘taken every practical step’ to discourage the NZRFU from inviting a racist rugby team. Since the government’s policy was non-interference in sport, this amounted to no more than politely stating a disapproval of the tour to the Rugby Union.

Muldoon’s final appeal to the NZRFU to stop the tour came in a live television and radio broadcast in June 1981, two weeks before the Springboks were due to arrive. To many it was a confused and insincere plea. The *Auckland Star*

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<sup>41</sup> *Amalanda* Oct/Dec 1980, cited in Richards, p. 212.

<sup>42</sup> Richards, p. 212.

<sup>43</sup> Barry Gustafson, *His Way*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000, p. 311.

<sup>44</sup> Zavos, p. 193.

called it a rather ‘baffling message’<sup>45</sup> In *By Batons and Barbed Wire* Tom Newnham illustrates an example of the public reaction to the broadcast: ‘The next morning, thirty nine out of forty callers to an Auckland radio station felt that he had been urging the Rugby Union to persist with their invitation.’<sup>46</sup> The government had dishonoured the spirit of the Gleneagles Agreement and had flown in the face of widespread international and local opposition. Government cancellation of a rugby tour was not unprecedented, but Muldoon had refused to budge on the issue of non-interference, despite his professed opposition to the tour. Others, both within and outside of the National Party believed that he had calculated that allowing the tour to proceed, despite the knowledge that there would be civil disruption and violence, would win him marginal rural seats in the 1981 election, and take the focus away from issues of inflation, unemployment, balance of payments deficits and the ‘Think Big’ growth strategy.<sup>47</sup>

A HART press release dated July 11, 1981 announced their plans to disrupt the tour. ‘The [HART] national council recommends that simultaneous demonstrations be held in all centres on the day of each Springboks match. It is intended that these demonstrations will involve direct action and civil disobedience which will call for policing.’<sup>48</sup> By causing widespread civil disruption throughout the country it was hoped that police resources would be stretched to the limit and the tour would have to be called off. The decision to engage in mass, nationwide civil disruption was unprecedented. The consequences of choosing this path were unknown, but it was assumed that there was a point where the government would have to concede and cancel the tour. As events unfolded it became increasingly obvious that the government was never going to let the tour be stopped.

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<sup>45</sup> *Auckland Star*, July 7, 1981, cited in Gustafson, p. 312.

<sup>46</sup> Newnham, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Gustafson. 314-19.

<sup>48</sup> HART press release, 11 July, 1981. Trevor Richards Papers, 99-278-40/05, WTU.

## Section Two.

### **Background to the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Palmerston North.**

HART was established in Palmerston North in 1970, and was run very much through the work of Don Swan, an activist student at Massey University. Swan was a member of the HART national council and the coordinator of HART activities throughout the central region which spanned from Palmerston North to New Plymouth and across to Gisborne. Swan filled this role until he moved to Wellington in the late 1970s and worked as a trade union official. In 1981 he was responsible for maintaining communications between Wellington and the movements in the other centres in the lower North Island.<sup>49</sup> Former All Black Robert Burgess, a lecturer at Massey in 1981, was also an active HART member. He had been prominent since 1970 when he spoke out against apartheid after declining to participate in the All Black tour of South Africa that year.<sup>50</sup>

Before 1981 HART operated as a fairly informal group using the university as a base for activities and support.<sup>51</sup> There was a committee consisting of around a dozen people and activities were largely educational, focused on raising peoples awareness of issues of racism. Robert Burgess recalls, 'Right through the 1970s HART was an organisation who attempted to lift awareness of the population about issues of racism not only with regard to South Africa but increasingly about internal issues and the relationship between Pakeha and Maori.'<sup>52</sup> In 1980 HART successfully lobbied the Palmerston North City Council (PNCC) persuading them to adopt their own interpretation of the

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Don Swan.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess. 4/8/00.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Don Swan.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

Gleneagles Agreement. To the same end they also lobbied the Showgrounds Board of Control, which contained PNCC as well as Manawatu Rugby Union (MRU) representatives. This was not successful, which meant that the Springboks could still play at the Showgrounds if the 1981 tour eventuated.<sup>53</sup>

Several prominent South African activists spoke in Palmerston North in late 1980 and in the lead up to the tour. They were brought to New Zealand by HART on a national level as part of its education campaign. In October 1980 the chairman of the South African Non Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), Sam Ramsamy spoke to an audience of 500 and 'was accorded an official Maori welcome.'<sup>54</sup> In March 1981 Director of Foreign Affairs and United Nations representative for the PAC, Henry Isaacs, spoke to an audience of over 100 people.<sup>55</sup> And closer to the tour in June Canon John Osmer, an Anglican missionary working in Lesotho and black South African trade unionist, Andrew Molotsane both spoke to smaller audiences.<sup>56</sup>

In anticipation of the 1981 tour HART attempted to build support in the second half of 1980. The committee expanded to about 30. Robert Burgess acted, to a large extent as a spokesperson for HART, Bill Barton was the central regions coordinator, Leslie Kitchen was the secretary in 1981 and others such as Rosemary Baragwanath, Geoff Lane, Janet Muru, Roger Middlemass, Di and Red Parsons, Paul Gandar, Syd Easton, Lesley Rhodes, Linda Burgess, Penny Poutu and John Barnes were also involved with HART in an organisational capacity.<sup>57</sup> People who had supported the anti-apartheid movement in the past were contacted and encouraged to become involved

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<sup>53</sup> HART deputation to PNCC meeting, August 25, 1980. Council File, 83/21/11. Palmerston North City Archive.

<sup>54</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> 'HART may 1 Mobe Newsletter,' no. 2, April 1981, HART Papers, 86-135-12.

<sup>56</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p.1.

<sup>57</sup> The names of these people were those referred to in primary documents or identified as important by interview subjects.



again<sup>58</sup> and many people became actively involved with HART in the lead up to the tour.

HART in Palmerston North aimed to be inclusive and encourage participation. Organisers worked hard to build a broad based movement encompassing a range of people of different ages and social and political backgrounds. Planning meetings were widely advertised, giving a chance for all to contribute to general policy and it was left up to the marshals to then plan for the specific marches. However, despite this goal participation in planning meetings does not seem to have been particularly widespread and HART still relied on a small active core.<sup>59</sup>

Since the late 1960s protest in Palmerston North had always been peaceful and within the law and the general outlook of HART reflected this. Although efforts were made to accommodate more radical outlooks many HART people felt that 'the basic conservatism of the city precluded a lot of militancy.'<sup>60</sup> As part of the build-up to the tour HART, on a national level, decided that to encourage a greater participation in protests against the proposed Springbok tour, city based coalitions should be formed.<sup>61</sup> The coalitions would mean that anti-apartheid protests would not necessarily be synonymous with HART, who had come to be associated with radical forms of protest due to their policy of non-violent disruption. Don Swan suggests that, 'what the coalitions allowed to happen was that people who thought HART was a bit stropy could come into an organisation and still be active without having to be branded a HART

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<sup>58</sup> *Stop the '81 Tour Newsletter*, n.d, but probably sent out about October 1980. HART papers, 86-136-12. WTU.

<sup>59</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> *Minutes of a meeting of the HART: NZAAM National Council, held 10-11 October, 1981*. Verbal report from HART Palmerston North presented by Paul Gandar. HART papers, 86-136-12. WTU.

<sup>61</sup> Richards, p. 207.

activist. It allowed a broader base to be developed.<sup>62</sup>

Local HART members were responsible for organising the coalitions and Burgess recalls that church leaders were targeted. 'Because various churches had come out and expressed an opposition to the tour it was felt that maybe having an organisation that various representatives of different churches were seen to be leading, that would allow a greater participation.'<sup>63</sup> In Palmerston North the coalition group MAST was formed with the goal of organising the first major anti-tour protest for 1981, the May 1 Mobilisation. The acronym originally stood for 'Manawatu March Against the Springbok Tour,' but after May 1 the 'March' was dropped.

Peter Cullinane, Palmerston North's Catholic Bishop, was openly opposed to the tour from an early stage and saw the need for the Catholic church to take a leadership role in opposing the tour.<sup>64</sup> He was involved in the establishment of MAST and became the chairman. But he had to travel overseas soon after the commencement of the tour<sup>65</sup> so the chairmanship went to Alan Webster, a reader in Education at Massey University and an Anglican Reverend.<sup>66</sup> There was a strong presence of church leaders at the organisational level of MAST. This reflected the opposition of church groups throughout the country to the tour. George Bryant effectively describes the outlook of a majority of church leaders: 'A tour would be viewed as support for the apartheid regime, an iniquitous structure of injustice and oppression, and as an act of solidarity with the white minority. Opposing the tour was *the* only way to express Christian

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with Don Swan.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

<sup>64</sup> 'Memorandum to the Priests and Parish Councils of the Diocese of Palmerston North.' April 7, 1981. HART papers, 86-136-13, WTU.

<sup>65</sup> 'Bishop Cullinane.' A profile of Cullinane's involvement in anti-apartheid activities. author unknown, but it is probably written for Geoff Chapple as part of the research for 1981: *The Tour*. HART papers, 86-136-13, WTU.

<sup>66</sup> *MES*, April 27, 1981.

beliefs. There could be no compromise.<sup>67</sup>

MAST was one of the first coalitions to be formed in the country and it was different from some of the coalitions in other cities.<sup>68</sup> For example the Wellington coalition COST operated as an organising group planning the weekly marches through democratic participation in public plenary meetings, but did not really present itself as an alternative group to HART. In Palmerston North MAST established itself as a very different group from HART, although they had a common aim—to stop the tour—they had different ideas about how it should be achieved. The MAST style of protest was to be strictly within the law and very much civilised and dignified, with the purpose of allowing maximum participation. Alan Webster stated: ‘We choose to protest lawfully and peacefully because it is our purpose to get maximum numbers along.’<sup>69</sup> MAST was also strictly non-confrontational and was against the stopping of the tour by physical means. Bishop Cullinane believed ‘the use of harassment, obstruction, intimidation or physical disruption by either side would itself be a violation of human rights.’<sup>70</sup>

There was widespread public opposition to the presence of church leaders as spokes people for the anti-apartheid movement in Palmerston North, and in the *Evening Standard* letters to the editor throughout April and May a common complaint was of their presence in the anti-apartheid movement. Some questioned the motives of church leaders: ‘The whole attitude towards the visiting South Africans appears to me to be totally unchristian.’ Others questioned the churches involvement with HART: ‘What right has this cleric to lead a bunch of no-hoping, publicity seeking sycophants?’ While others felt that they did not have the support of their parishioners: ‘I am not in favour of the march and I don’t think that many of the other parishioners of this church

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<sup>67</sup> George Bryant, *The Church on Trial*, Whangarei: Whau Publications, 1986, p. 46.

<sup>68</sup> Chapple, p. 36.

<sup>69</sup> *MES*, July 15, 1981.

<sup>70</sup> *MES*, July 21, 1981.

are.<sup>71</sup>

MAST meetings were usually attended by between 12 and 20 people who organised the various marches and the events that went along with them.<sup>72</sup> There was a small core group who made up the MAST organising committee. An advertisement in the *Evening Standard* for the weekend fasts that took place throughout the tour stated that the MAST organising committee was made up of Rev Enid Bennett, Dr John Ross, Dr Peter Donovan, Rev Alan Newman and Dr Alan Webster.<sup>73</sup> Although John Ross states that this group 'wasn't terribly formal.'<sup>74</sup> This list of names and specifically their titles reveals the sense of respectability that MAST tried to convey, all were connected either to churches or the university, several to both.

MAST's portrayal of itself as non-radical and non-confrontational attracted people who probably would not have normally marched. John Ross believes that: 'a lot of people came in in the first place because it wasn't aggressive or fiercely radical.'<sup>75</sup> The presence of church leaders would have also encouraged more Christians to become actively involved. 'With Bishop Cullinane as chairman, for example, there is no doubt that many Catholics got the prod they needed to get them onto the streets.'<sup>76</sup> Many HART organisers felt that 'MAST had served a useful purpose in the early stages of drawing in many 'middle-of-the-roaders''<sup>77</sup> This was a very positive thing, contributing greatly to the numbers of people who participated in the early marches, as well as attracting a broader spectrum of the population, which some people saw as

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<sup>71</sup> Letters to the editor, Mary Brooks, April 28, *MES*, 'Hail Glorious St Patricks, April 30. Dan Higgins, April 30.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with John Ross. 18/8/00.

<sup>73</sup> *MES*, July 21, 1981.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with John Ross.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 7.

greatly increasing the political credibility of the movement.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> 'Bishop Cullinane,' HART papers, 86-136-13, WTU.

### Section Three.

#### The May 1 Mobilisation.

At a conference in early 1981 HART decided that in the lead up to the tour a nationwide mobilisation would be an effective way of showing the government the extent of opposition, and serve to further educate people about apartheid. Demonstrations were planned for May 1, and throughout the country groups organised in an attempt to make it the biggest demonstration New Zealand had ever seen. In Palmerston North the coalition group, Manawatu March Against the Springbok Tour was established to organise the local event. In a press statement spokesperson Alan Webster emphasised the non-confrontational nature of the march: 'It will be a positive and non-judgemental statement by those who care about the implications of the tour. We aren't saying that other people are wrong, but simply making a personal statement.'<sup>79</sup>

Information about the May 1 Mobilisation was disseminated in many ways, with the dual purpose of informing people about anti-apartheid issues and encouraging them to participate in the march. Another press statement issued by Alan Webster and organising committee chairman, Bishop Peter Cullinane, gave a large number of reasons why people should oppose the Springbok tour, including solidarity with black South Africans because of the injustices of the apartheid system, the moral evil of New Zealand's involvement with South Africa and the internal and international effects of the tour on New Zealand.<sup>80</sup> Nearly 600 people paid five dollars each to have their name printed in a full page advertisement in the Evening Standard which opposed the tour and promoted the May 1 march.<sup>81</sup> And a leaflet was delivered to every house in the city with information on South Africa and why people should oppose the

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<sup>79</sup> *MES*, April 27, 1981.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *MES*, April 30, 1981. 584 names are printed in the ad.

tour.<sup>82</sup> It also encouraged people to advertise the march through word of mouth,<sup>83</sup> and there was a core group of about 200 people who worked hard to rally others.<sup>84</sup>

Momentum was building for the anti-apartheid movement, but May 1 would not be just an anti-tour day. On April 28 it was announced that a pro-tour march was planned for the same day at the same time. The march was organised by a group who wished to remain unidentified, spokesman Don Haydock said, 'We're not political at all. We enjoy sport and sport should be sport and nothing else. We believe we should have the right to play sport with whomsoever we choose without interference from pressure groups.'<sup>85</sup> The group stated they expected a turn out of between 2000 and 3000 people. The march was to be led by former All Blacks Ken Granger and Perry Harris and Rugby Union representative Tom Johnson.<sup>86</sup>

The plans to stage a pro-tour march simultaneously with the anti-tour march aroused controversy. Alan Webster viewed the march as 'a deliberate attempt to intimidate the anti-tour marchers.'<sup>87</sup> The editor of the *Evening Standard* severely criticised the PNCC for issuing a permit to the pro-tour march.<sup>88</sup> And MUSA general vice president Malcolm MacLean called the City Council's decision 'provocative and irresponsible.'<sup>89</sup> The Council responded by saying that the pro-tour organisers had been told by the town clerk's department that it was preferable that they did not hold the march on the same day, but that the organisers had indicated that the group would march whether the council gave

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<sup>82</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North....' p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Palmerston North Leaflet. HART Papers, 86-136-12, WTU.

<sup>84</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> *MES*, April 28, 1981.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *MES*, April 29, 1981.

<sup>88</sup> *MES*, April 28, 1981.

<sup>89</sup> *MES*, April 29, 1981.

them permission or not. 'The officer concerned, in such circumstances, considered it his duty to organise the two marches in such a way that no conflict occurred.'<sup>90</sup>

On the evening of May 1 the two groups began to assemble at around 6.30 pm. The anti-tour marchers covering a wide range of ages, many of them in family groups, congregated around the back of St Patrick's Cathedral.<sup>91</sup> By the time they moved off at around 7 pm there were about 5000 marchers.

The pro-tour march congregated on the Railway Land, many wore sports gear or rugby jerseys and as they set off the group numbered between 200 and 300 people, well short of the organisers expectations.<sup>92</sup> Both groups were escorted by police and traffic officers and the pro-tour march was halted several times to ensure that the two groups did not end up in the same place at the same time.

While the antis marched silently to the beat of a drum the pros chanted loudly: 'ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, WE SURE WANT THE BOKS TO TOUR!'<sup>93</sup>

The anti-tour march was subject to some heckling, particularly as it passed the RSA, and further down Broadway one of the march leaders, Labour MP, Joe Walding, was hit in the side of the head with an egg.<sup>94</sup>

At the conclusion of their marches both groups congregated in The Square, the antis in the 'Lions Den' and the pros around the water fountain opposite the DIC building. By the time the pro-tour group, which by this time had swelled to around 800, had heard a speech made by Mr Haydock and dispersed, members of the anti-tour march were still flowing in to the 'Lions Den.'<sup>95</sup> The anti-tour people heard speeches by Bishop Cullinane, Robert Burgess and Rev Dr David Penman, who afterwards invited protesters to attend a 'quiet service

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> *MES*, May 2, 1981.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> *Chaff*, Vol. 48, No. 9, May 6, 1981.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



of prayer' at All Saints Church.<sup>96</sup>

In the build up to the Mobilisation tensions that would underlie the whole tour came to the surface for the first time. There was intense distrust and antagonism between the pros and the antis and some feared that this would lead to violence on the May 1 march, despite the assurances of Mr Haydock that the pro-tour people would 'deliberately be trying to avoid trouble.'<sup>97</sup>

Although May 1 would be the only time in the tour when a pro-tour march was held in Palmerston North, the tension that built up in the days before was a sign of things to come if the tour went ahead. Yet for the anti-apartheid movement the May 1 Mobilisation had been an outstanding success, about 75000 people had marched nationwide. Palmerston North's turnout of between 5000 and 7000<sup>98</sup> had been one of the best in the country, per head of population and they had certainly upstaged the pro-tour march.<sup>99</sup>

The organisers had achieved their goal of showing the government that there was a mass base of opposition to the tour, and many people believed that the tour would now be called off.<sup>100</sup> Many HART people believed that the establishment of MAST as a separate coalition group had been highly successful and had contributed to drawing a broad spectrum of people into the march who may not have otherwise participated, and had thus 'greatly increased its political credibility.'<sup>101</sup> HART and MAST had worked well

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<sup>96</sup> *MES*, May 2, 1981.

<sup>97</sup> *MES*, April 28, 1981.

<sup>98</sup> *The Evening Standard*, May 2, 1981, estimated 5000, and HART estimated 7000 'HART May 1 Mobe Newsletter,' No. 6, May 4, 1981. HART papers, 86-136-12, WTU.

<sup>99</sup> 'Palmerston North had pulled 5000 out of a city of 60000, one of the best percentages in the country.' Numbers from other cities of comparable population size: Hamilton: 1000, New Plymouth: 350, Napier: 1000, Dunedin: 2000, see Chapple. p 42.

<sup>100</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> 'Bishop Cullinane.' HART papers, 86-136-13, WTU. Robert Burgess also saw MAST as a positive factor in bringing people into the movement, interview with Robert Burgess.

together to organise the May 1 Mobilisation, but the solidarity that the movement had enjoyed would not last long. As the tour became a reality the Springboks' game in Palmerston North became the focus of the local movement. The changing circumstances in the lead up to the game and the differing opinions of protesters caused a split within the movement which would last until the end of the tour.

#### Section Four.

### August 1. The Game in Palmerston North.

The HART national council had decided that the Palmerston North protest was to come under the sphere of COST, the Wellington coalition. COST leader Alick Shaw, together with Roger Middlemass would be in charge of tactics.<sup>102</sup> Planning for the protest on August 1 began almost two weeks in advance. The original plan had been to march to the Showgrounds gates where protesters would 'line the footpath with banners and... those who wanted to would move into the grounds for some sort of special action.'<sup>103</sup> But as the game drew closer circumstances forced the alteration of these plans.

In Hamilton the actions of protesters would change significantly the atmosphere of the whole tour. Shortly before the start of the game between the Springboks and Waikato, protesters broke through wire mesh fences, plunged through the crowd and onto the field. For two hours four hundred protesters stood together, arms linked, in the centre of the field, while thirty thousand rugby fans foamed in indignation. Eventually the game was officially called off by the commissioner of Police.<sup>104</sup> That afternoon and into the night some of the worst violence of the whole tour ensued as mobs of rugby fans sought revenge for the cancellation of their game. Many protesters were attacked, some in their homes.<sup>105</sup>

In Palmerston North some people were 'fired up' after the events in Hamilton. 'There was a feeling of euphoria and a meeting was held... to discuss more

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<sup>102</sup> Chapple, p. 150.

<sup>103</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> *The Police and the Tour*, p. 28.

<sup>105</sup> Chapple provides an excellent account of the Hamilton game and subsequent violence, pp. 79-123.

seriously the possibility of large numbers crashing into the grounds.<sup>106</sup> This meeting, on the Tuesday before the game, was attended by protest leaders from Wellington and Auckland including John Minto, Dick Cuthbert and Alick Shaw. Some wanted an invasion of the ground to be directed at a target other than centre field, such as the number two field or the Springbok dressing room. There was concern about what would happen if protesters made it onto centre field. Chapple suggests, 'In Minto's opinion, the police were extraordinarily slow movers, so the march should allow time for police to contain it on number two field.'<sup>107</sup> It was the rugby supporters who were seen as the real threat to the safety of protesters, the police were more of an inconvenience, but ironically a necessary one to protect protesters from the wrath of rugby fans.

If the Hamilton game had been a victory for the protest movement it was most definitely a defeat for the police. After Hamilton police moral was at a low. In an interview after the tour one policeman stated: 'There was a feeling in the police that we'd been outmanoeuvred at Hamilton. I think nearly every policeman was ashamed at what happened there.'<sup>108</sup> But in the days that followed a resolve developed to not let the same thing happen again. The government announced that the tour would not be called off and the police would receive extra resources and logistical support from the armed forces. The government was determined 'to give the police all the support they require... people were warned that if they broke the law they could 'expect to be clobbered.'<sup>109</sup> As Ross Meurant puts it: 'police would get the opportunity to redeem themselves.'<sup>110</sup> After Hamilton it would be not only the rugby supporters but also the police who would be the focus of protesters concern and fear as the Palmerston North game drew closer.

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<sup>106</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Chapple, p. 150.

<sup>108</sup> *The Police and the Tour*, p. 29.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 31-32.

<sup>110</sup> Meurant, p. 49.

On the Wednesday evening before the Palmerston North game the Molesworth Street incident occurred. The game that day was in New Plymouth. Although there was only a low key demonstration of about 200 outside the match venue, that evening in Wellington a rally in Parliament grounds was attended by about 1200. Unknown to police, COST leaders planned to take the march to the South African consulate that night, but unknown to COST leaders the police were not going to let the march go anywhere.

As the march moved out from the rallying point and up Molesworth Street, police formed a line across the road, blocking the path of the front of the march. As the front row attempted to push through the line of police, in part propelled by the hundreds of marchers behind them, they were batted. A COST press statement called the incident 'a premeditated, brutal baton assault by police in Molesworth Street. Our front three rows were bludgeoned to the ground without warnings of any kind.'<sup>111</sup> For the first time protest organisers got an inclination of 'the lengths to which the police would now go, backed by the full blessing and resources of the state.'<sup>112</sup>

After Hamilton COST leaders had been 'reassured by senior police officials that batons would only be used in situations of real civil disorder, where there was danger to property or citizens.' But the police action in Molesworth Street was seen by COST leaders to be 'a premeditated show of strength.'<sup>113</sup> Protesters would not be given the latitude to get away with what they had in the past week. Molesworth Street was a warning of what protesters could expect to encounter in Palmerston North. Police plans indicated that they were preparing for a defence of the Showgrounds at any cost, and that protesters who tried to get onto the field could indeed 'expect to be clobbered,' this time not by rugby fans, but by the police.

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<sup>111</sup> COST press statement July 30, 1981. Cited in *The Police and the Tour*, p. 39.

<sup>112</sup> Newnham, p. 8.

<sup>113</sup> *56 Days*, pp. 16-18.

On the day of the Molesworth Street incident, COST leaders had received information from an informant within the police on the extent of police plans for the defence of the Showgrounds. The Red and Blue Squad 'team policing units' would be the first line of defence. Altogether over 1000 police would be assembled. Waste-taker bins would be used to provide easily defensible 'throats.' Dog patrols would be operating between the defensive perimeter and the ground.<sup>114</sup> And police had ordered in fire extinguishers filled with coloured dye 'to mark demonstrators for later identification.'<sup>115</sup> Palmerston North would be an opportunity for police to test their new tactics before the first test in Christchurch on August 15.

In the light of the Molesworth Street incident and the information from the police source the COST marshals' committee decided that no attempt would be made to invade the Showgrounds. The potential cost would be too high, and it would be playing into the hands of the government, which was attempting to turn the tour into a 'law and order' issue. Chapple suggests, 'The very image of a rugby ground set up as a fortress was a victory for the protest movement, but an attempt on that fortress would, if the attempt failed, provide a justification and a victory for the other side.'<sup>116</sup>

The potential actions of the police in Palmerston North were a concern of protest leaders, but many protesters weren't aware of the police's plans and their fears were focused on what tour supporters would do. In the week before the game tension was building up in Palmerston North and anti-tour people were increasingly tormented by rugby supporters. Robert Burgess received threatening phone calls and had eggs thrown at his house,<sup>117</sup> Rosemary Baragwanath had the windows of her car broken. Other accounts suggest that

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<sup>114</sup> Chapple, p. 152.

<sup>115</sup> *56 Days*, P. 22.

<sup>116</sup> Chapple, p. 152.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

‘known protesters were the victims of intimidation and harassment—several were followed home and received abusive phone-calls.’<sup>118</sup> Rumours abounded regarding what would happen and what the anti- and pro-tour groups were planning. For example it was rumoured that ‘on the day before the game, New Zealand Pharmaceuticals was to let its staff off early in order to organise gangs of thugs for the following day.’<sup>119</sup> At times the attitude of some rugby supporters did not always have the desired effect. A St John’s Ambulance volunteer on duty at the ‘day of shame’ march was abused: ‘You’re supposed to be working for the rugby players,’ demanded four or five youths, before following her with calls of ‘we’re going to get you bastards. We’re going to get you. You wait and see.’ As a result St John’s Ambulance threatened to withdraw their services from the game if they had to ‘take any more threatening treatment.’<sup>120</sup>

Many within the anti-apartheid movement felt that the creation of a martyr was a real possibility if an invasion of the field was attempted. This fear is captured effectively in Gary McCormick’s poem ‘Black Saturday.’

Some now will die in Palmerston.  
It is a certainty.  
One of our children dressed in red  
Will lead the way  
to eternity.  
A training college student  
Or a nun.  
Who will it be whose time has come?

But it was rugby supporters and not the police were not seen as the major threat to the physical safety of protesters.

On whose hands the broken life blood stain?  
That unlovely brute, the ‘irate rugby fan.’<sup>121</sup>

Those planning on more ‘heavy action’ were aware that the police were a

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<sup>118</sup> ‘Report on Palmerston North...’ p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Report on Palmerston North...’ p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> *The Tribune*, July 25, 1981.

<sup>121</sup> Gary McCormick, ‘Black Saturday.’ cited in Chapple, p. 148.

threat to their physical safety, but the media images and stories of 30000 angry and violent rugby fans in Hamilton presented a somewhat more overawing concern. Roger Middlemass recalls: 'I didn't take out a will for nothing, but I didn't think I'd be killed by police all the same, I thought if we got into the ground I'd be killed by the rugby crowd, and there were indications of that after Hamilton.'<sup>122</sup> Protest leaders were aware of how the police were going to defend the tour in Palmerston North and in Molesworth street the police had shown explicitly that they would use violence against protesters. But for many protesters images of violent rugby fans remained a focus of fear and resentment.

The final organising meeting before the big game was held on the Thursday. It was the biggest organising meeting that there had been in Palmerston North and was attended by quite a few people from Wellington. Robert Burgess recalls, 'There were three or four times the number of people who attended that meeting than had attended any other meeting and there were certainly hugely different opinions being put forward and a lot of accusations about the likelihood of there being people in the room who weren't sympathetic to the anti-tour movement, that there were plants from the police.'<sup>123</sup> The decision of the COST marshals committee not to invade the ground was communicated to the meeting by telephone. Debate raged, lasting nearly all night. Members of MAST were angry that plans to invade the ground had even been made, while radicals called for militant action. Finally a majority agreed upon a non-confrontational march, the route was to be decided in liaison with the police and the PNCC, and in addition MAST would stage an alternative rally and church service in the square for those seeking to avoid confrontation.<sup>124</sup>

The next day a permit for the march was sought from the PNCC. Earlier the

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<sup>122</sup> Interview with Roger Middlemass. 14/9/00.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

<sup>124</sup> Chapple. p. 154.



police had specified a march route which went nowhere near the Showgrounds. But after a further two and a half hour meeting the police agreed that the march could go as far as David Street, half a block from the Showgrounds, so long as the march did not get to David Street while rugby fans were still entering the grounds.<sup>125</sup> Mayor Brian Elwood agreed to issue a permit, so long as the protesters did not march past the main entrances to the Showgrounds. 'To sanction a march to the main gates would be 'the height of folly... I say that in view of the speculation about what might happen. The situation is potentially delicate,' he said.<sup>126</sup>

The Springboks and their police escorts were to stay at the Fitzherbert Motor Inn. A small number of protesters picketed the Hotel from Friday evening, although 'support was limited due to confusion and poor organisation... Protesters stood at the gate and tried to speak to the Boks as they moved to and fro between the dining-room and their sleeping quarters.' Some protesters stayed all night to try and keep the Springboks and the police awake.<sup>127</sup> Ross Meurant recalls: 'At Palmerston North we were... to come in for our first real taste of protest activity on a 24 hour basis.' He adds: 'Because the room Phil [Keber] and I shared was on the ground floor, next to the vehicular entrance where the protesters were congregating, and in view of information we had received about the existence of Molotov cocktails, we took the time to board our windows up in case someone threw us a present during the night.'<sup>128</sup>

Robert Burgess recalls that on the morning of the match day the atmosphere was 'extremely highly charged... the focus for the anti-tour movement was on Palmerston North for that day.'<sup>129</sup> Rosemary Baragwanath recalled: 'Things had changed and escalated every day in that final week, the pressures were

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<sup>125</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 4.

<sup>126</sup> *MES*, July 31, 1981.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Meurant*, p. 50.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

intense and we felt as though all eyes were focussed on Palmerston North—We had to perform to standard.<sup>130</sup>

In the morning the Linton Street entrance to the Fitz became a meeting place for the protesters coming up from Wellington for the day. By mid morning there was more than 300 people gathered. Most however missed the departure of the Springboks, who were moved to the Showgrounds at about 8 am. There they were forced to spend the morning playing pool and cards in the Marist club rooms.<sup>131</sup> At about 11 am many of the Wellington protesters from outside the Fitz moved off to inspect the fortifications of the Showgrounds. They marched through the city centre padded and helmeted in disciplined ranks. The impression was of a highly disciplined military team, Palmerston had never seen anything like this before, and it added another layer of uncertainty to the growing tension in the city.<sup>132</sup>

Overnight the army had moved in and laid barbed wire around vulnerable areas of the Showgrounds.<sup>133</sup> Two fences ran across the number two playing field from the Waldergrave Street entrance to the side of the Pascal Street Stadium, a distance of about 400 metres. 'The fences, about ten metres apart, were made up of three coils of barbed wire stacked in a triangle formation held by stakes.' Horse boxes were used to narrow the Waldergrave Street entrance to the Showgrounds, stock trucks blocked off the Oakley Street access to the number two playing field and were also used to narrow the other entrances. Within the Showgrounds rubbish containers were placed at the southern end of the grandstand to prevent access to the field.<sup>134</sup> In addition to this jumbo bins were used in the streets around the Showgrounds in order to 'narrow the width of streets at strategic points. Each of these points, or barricades, were manned by

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<sup>130</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p.4.

<sup>131</sup> *MES*, August 1, 1981.

<sup>132</sup> Chapple, p. 155-6.

<sup>133</sup> *MES*, August 1, 1981.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

police called into the city from other centres for the day.<sup>135</sup>

Barbed wire had been laid across both Showgrounds land and public reserve areas under the control of the PNCC. The sight of the Showgrounds as a 'barbed wire fortress' was abhorrent to many people. Robert Burgess recounted: 'I remember feeling absolutely appalled that the public ground... was being encircled with barbed wire and fortifications and people were being told that they simply weren't allowed to use that ground.'<sup>136</sup> Alan Millar recalls: 'They'd created a sort of wall or rampart of containers which were loaded to make them heavy, right around, like wagons in a circle, like they were afraid the Indians were going to come.'<sup>137</sup> The heavy fortification of the Showgrounds was backed up by the presence of 1000-1500 officers.<sup>138</sup> The *Evening Standard* announced that this was the largest police operation in New Zealand's history.<sup>139</sup>

From about mid-day people began to assemble on the Railway Land. Sports stores had done a steady trade in 'cricket and baseball protective gear' that morning<sup>140</sup> and more than half the people who assembled were wearing hard hats.<sup>141</sup> Undoubtedly a few people were carrying weapons and some people were expecting a confrontation with police or rugby supporters. In particular some of the contingent from Auckland were seen by both local HART and COST leaders as a possibly violent element. The SIS report 'Polarisation and Fragmentation of the Anti-Springbok Rugby Tour Movement,' released by Muldoon on August 25, 1981, stated that in the Palmerston North protest

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<sup>135</sup> Meurant, p. 53.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Alan Millar.

<sup>138</sup> *MES*. Aug 1, 1981, estimates over 1000 police while *Amalanda* No.3, Aug 4, 1981, estimates 1500.

<sup>139</sup> *MES*. Aug 1, 1981.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>141</sup> Chapple, p. 157.

members of Auckland urban Maori gangs had been present. 'A dozen-odd gang members wearing steel capped boots and some carrying weighted rubber hoses in their sleeves travelled south to protest.'<sup>142</sup> Chapple's account backs this up adding, 'some of the group carried *raku*-sticks.'<sup>143</sup> There were about 100 people down from Auckland in total, representing the Auckland anti-apartheid group Mobilisation to Stop the Tour (MOST). They had been in the protest at Hamilton and were ready to do the same again in Palmerston North. Auckland Maori activists Donna Awatere and Rebecca Evans tried to convince the crowd to reject the COST policy of a non-confrontational march.<sup>144</sup>

As well as the 100 from Auckland, there were probably around 1000 people up from Wellington. The people who were wearing the helmets, and other protective gear were, to a large extent, those from Auckland and Wellington, those who had experienced Hamilton and Molesworth Street. The wearing of such gear did not fit with the tone of the previous marches in Palmerston North. It was later noted that 'the arrival of hundreds of crash-helmeted Wellingtonians was met with disapproval by many of the local protesters.'<sup>145</sup> None of the people who joined the march after the end of the MAST rally in the square were wearing protective gear and some were dressed in suits and ties to emphasise the essentially middle class, respectable nature of the protest movement. Robert Burgess felt that 'the helmets and that sort of stuff was great for photography but certainly wasn't the majority of people.'<sup>146</sup> Some subsequently thought that the media over emphasised the padded and helmeted element. A letter to the editor of the *Evening Standard* noted with displeasure 'the wide media coverage of the protesters in Palmerston North, not the

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<sup>142</sup> Press Statement: Right Hon. R.D. Muldoon, 25 August, 1981, Report prepared by the SIS- 'Polarisation and Fragmentation of the Anti-Springbok Rugby Tour Movement,' Trevor Richards papers, 99-278-40/05, WTU.

<sup>143</sup> Chapple, p. 156.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 4.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

peaceful Palmerstonians who protested in normal gear but the out of town people with their helmets and heavy gear, all geared up for trouble.<sup>147</sup> But the presence of the out-of-towners wasn't entirely negative. Robert Burgess said: 'We felt that we were part of a much bigger movement. It wasn't just people from Palmerston North, I saw that as something very positive.'<sup>148</sup>

The large number of protesters from out of town created a very different atmosphere from what the local protesters were used to, the presence of the helmeted and padded Wellingtonians and Donna Awatere's call for violent confrontation exemplify the very different nature of the Palmerston North movement from those in the larger cities, which were, in general more militant.

The 'ritual staring down session'<sup>149</sup> between the Red Squad and protesters on the corner of Cuba and David Streets, was the culmination of the tension that had been building in Palmerston North in the week prior to August 1. For the first time protesters came face to face with the Red Squad. From now on not just the rugby fans, but also the police and particularly the riot squads would provoke anger, fear and hatred amongst protesters around the country. The reaction of protesters in Palmerston North was one of extreme disgust that they had been confronted by the Red Squad. They saw first hand the excessive fortification of the showgrounds and the violent aspect of the riot police and they perceived the lengths that the government was prepared to go to ensure that the tour went ahead. Roger Middlemass, a marshal on the day, recalls: 'I stood on top of one of the waste bins just to keep an eye on things in case there was a clash, so I saw just about the whole column pass... People were slugged! They screamed at the cops and most people would be middle class, they weren't working class people, they hadn't seen police like that.'<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Letter to the editor from P.N. White, *MES*, Aug 5. 1981.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with John Ross.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Roger Middlemass.

Nearly all those interviewed distinguished between the local Palmerston North police who had been present on all the other marches, and the riot squads. John Ross said: 'The Red Squad... were completely different from the police we were used to, the local guys weren't hardened at all.'<sup>151</sup> While Alan Millar said 'One got the impression that the local police were embarrassed by the 'Nazi police' and were careful not to be seen associating with them.'<sup>152</sup> A letter to the editor of the *Evening Standard* reveals what many middle class people may have seen as being the implication of the presence of the riot squads: 'We now have, defacto, two police forces- a quite normal thing in totalitarian countries... It was in this town of Palmerston North on August 1, 1981, that for the first time in New Zealand's history these armed and intimidatory regiments of the state blocked the public highway against its citizens.'<sup>153</sup>

The presence of the Red and Blue Squads showed many Palmerston North people, and protesters around the country, a side of the police force that they had never seen before. This aspect exemplifies the different nature of the relations between the protesters and the police in Palmerston North from that in the larger cities. With there being a greater willingness of the Palmerston North protesters to cooperate with the police.

For many the conclusion of the protest was a mixture of relief and anti-climax. This was especially true of the protest leaders. Roger Middlemass recalls: 'We knew we weren't going to break into the ground but after Hamilton it was a huge anti-climax. In a way I suppose we felt we'd let the side down, but in hindsight I have no doubt we did the right thing.'<sup>154</sup> In the aftermath of the demonstration protest leaders Alick Shaw and Trevor Richards claimed that the march had been a victory, even though it did not stop the game. But they

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<sup>151</sup> Interview with John Ross.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Alan Millar. Robert Burgess, and Roger Middlemass also distinguished between the Red Squad and the local police.

<sup>153</sup> Letter to the editor from B.J. Poff, *MES*, Sept 30, 1981.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Roger Middlemass.

warned that future protests would not be a repeat of what happened in Palmerston North.<sup>155</sup> Alan Millar believes that ‘it was a very successful demonstration, it didn’t stop the game but it subdued the spirits of the people who went there and continued to build the momentum to the big demonstrations in Auckland and Wellington. Because what we were showing the government and the Rugby Union was that this... was a major respectable place and there wasn’t just urban radicals, that this whole strategy was to show that the country was appalled. And Palmerston North on that day played a very significant part in building the momentum.’<sup>156</sup>

But others also saw the game day as a success. The police claimed a victory in being able to protect the ground effectively, yet they had staged the biggest police operation in New Zealand history to do so, in the process showing a side of the police that many people had never seen before. And the MRU claimed a victory in staging a successful and profitable rugby game, yet the image of rugby had been tarnished. In interviews Robert Burgess, Roger Middlemass and Don Swan all mentioned that they did not support rugby for many years after 1981.<sup>157</sup>

Palmerston North was a pivotal moment in the tour. It was a time for the police to test their new tactics for defending a rugby ground, and a time for the protest movement to assess these tactics. In the lead up to the Palmerston North march protesters were concerned about the threat of violence by rugby supporters, but after Molesworth Street and the heavy defence of the Palmerston North game the police, particularly the riot squads, became more and more the object of fear, resentment and rage.

Although the organisers of the march in Palmerston North had been aware in

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<sup>155</sup> *MES*, Aug 1, 1981.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Alan Millar.

<sup>157</sup> Editorial, *MES*, Aug 3, 1981, interviews with Robert Burgess, Roger Middlemass and Don Swan.

advance of the new police tactics and had decided against trying to invade the field, the new look police defences forced protest groups in all the main centres to reassess their tactics. At the three test matches in the wake of the Palmerston North game the protest marches broke into smaller groups, so as to stretch police resources further and increase the chances of stopping the game. At the first test in Christchurch the protest movement decided that there would be a main march which would try to get as close to the ground as possible, but from this march sections would breakaway to keep police occupied around other areas of the park. Morris suggests: 'The effectiveness of the breakaways lay in their mobility, they were able to move around the park enough to keep the police stretched.'<sup>158</sup>

In Wellington at a COST plenary meeting after the Palmerston North game new tactics were developed. 'The tactic was to move away from the large 'set piece' demonstrations and to form smaller, independent groups which would each engage police, simultaneously, in many different locations. The demonstrators, being more numerous than the police, would then be able to stretch police resources to the extent that they would be unable to 'maintain law and order' but would be unable to resort to violence.'<sup>159</sup> MOST, the Auckland coalition decided to resort to similar tactics, recruiting more marshals and dividing its big demonstrations into three groups, Patu, Biko and Tutu.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Morris. p. 78.

<sup>159</sup> *56 Days*, p. 26.

<sup>160</sup> Chapple, p. 166.



## Section Five.

### A Diverse and Divided Movement.

The protests on August 1 were undoubtedly the most important to take place in Palmerston North in 1981 and after this the initiative 'faded out a bit'.<sup>161</sup> But there were at least six other marches in Palmerston North throughout the tour as well as numerous other forms of protest action. Once HART's tactic of civil disobedience had come into play, most evidently in Hamilton with the invasion of the field, some people felt that MAST's style of protest, which had been very successful in the lead up to the tour, was not enough. The generational and ideological differences, which had always existed in the movement, increasingly came to the surface. While some, called for more direct action, MAST distanced itself from the perceived radicalism of HART and attempted to separate itself completely from all acts of civil-disobedience and disruption, seeking to continue to protest in the manner that it had done in the lead up to the tour.<sup>162</sup> HART, it seems, was caught in the middle, trying to reconcile the views of those who wanted more radical protest, while attempting to minimise the gap that emerged between HART and MAST. The events surrounding the protest on August 15, the day of the first test, illustrate this point effectively.

For the day of the first test march organisers (HART people) had decided that some civil disobedience would be attempted. When the lunchtime march reached the intersection at the corner of the Square and Broadway, half the 300 strong march linked arms and stood in the middle of the intersection. The other half continued to march around the Square and moved towards the Fitzherbert Motor Inn to attempt an occupation of the hotel where the Springboks had stayed. Police moved in on the intersection quickly and arrested the marshals. At the hotel the marshals and some others were arrested as the police moved to

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<sup>161</sup> Interview with John Ross.

<sup>162</sup> *MES*, July 27, 1981.

prevent them entering the hotel complex.<sup>163</sup> In all eight people were arrested, five were charged with obstructing police, the others were respectively charged with using insulting language, wilfully damaging a car and unlawfully interfering with a car.<sup>164</sup> This was the only time during the tour when protesters were arrested in Palmerston North.

The march revealed tensions that had been building since the tour had begun. It was a tension between those who wished to protest peacefully and within the law and a smaller number who wanted to do something stronger and engage in civil disobedience. John Ross recalls: 'Despite all the violent chanting there really wasn't the mood to take on what was going to be a fight... The marshals had planned to create a situation in which a large number of people would be arrested, and it would be so many that it would cause a serious embarrassment to the court system... for the people actually in the march that wasn't their idea at all.'<sup>165</sup> The events of the march prompted Alan Webster to write a letter to the *Evening Standard* distancing MAST from such activities. In his letter he said, 'It is now widely recognised that many who joined last Saturday's march did so in good faith, as I did myself, not having been informed that it was intended both to deviate from the route for which council permission had been given and to invade private property.'<sup>166</sup>

The plans to engage in civil disobedience had been an attempt by HART to reconcile the views of those who wanted stronger action. It had met with a harsh reaction by MAST, mainly because most people had not been made aware that they would be involved in a possible arrest situation. However, it is unclear whether the failure to inform the march of the plans for civil disobedience had been deliberate, or an oversight on the part of the marshals. But this protest shows the degree to which HART was caught in the middle,

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<sup>163</sup> *MES*, August 15, 1981.

<sup>164</sup> *MES*, August 17, 1981.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with John Ross.

<sup>166</sup> *MES*, August 19, 1981.

trying to meet the needs of those who wanted to protest more radically, whilst trying to ensure that HART was not completely separated from MAST.

The divisions between MAST and HART were present from the time of the arrival of the Springboks in New Zealand. At a HART/ MAST planning meeting in the wake of the Hamilton game, Methodist minister Alan Newman read out a statement 'disassociating his church from the pulling down of fences and similar actions.'<sup>167</sup> And on the day of the Palmerston North game MAST had organised an alternative rally for those who did not want to participate in the possibly confrontational march which was organised by HART and COST.<sup>168</sup> This was a continuation of the MAST policy of non-confrontation, but it was also a reflection of the pressure faced by church leaders from their parishioners to get out of the movement, especially once the tour had begun.<sup>169</sup> The atmosphere of the protests had changed once the Springboks had arrived, many people were angry, and wanted to express their abhorrence for the tour more directly, but the MAST style of protest did not cater for this. John Ross recalls: 'There was a kind of psyching up and it got more stressful as the whole proceeding went on... The [MAST organising] committee sort of faded out after the Palmerston North game and other people took over, because the whole thing moved onto a different plane.'<sup>170</sup> MAST did, in fact, continue to organise some protest activities, but it was HART that organised the marches. The conflict that had been present since the arrival of the Springboks, was revealed publicly with Alan Webster's letter to the editor in the wake of the events of August 15. By disassociating themselves from HART very publicly, some within HART felt that MAST undermined the solidarity that the movement had created in the build up to the tour, and that many of the key church people had simply opted out 'when the heat was really on.'<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 5.

<sup>168</sup> *MES*, May 1, 1981.

<sup>169</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 7.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with John Ross.

<sup>171</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 7.

For the most part HART in Palmerston North had been willing to go along with the non-disruptive approach as it was felt that activities which could lead to arrest situations were not really appropriate for the whole movement.<sup>172</sup> But as an inclusive organisation HART also tried to accommodate the needs of those calling for a more direct, radical approach.<sup>173</sup> There are indications that MAST's style of protest was what some HART organisers saw as appropriate for the Palmerston North movement and that the desire for mass direct action by more radical protesters coming into the movement in 1981 was a point of frustration for many of those who had worked hard to build the movement. This point is illustrated with a quote from the 'Report on Palmerston North's Tour Activities:' 'The so-called 'radicals' were a bunch of male machos just busting for a fight. These wind-bags were the ones who accused HART of being lily livered but who didn't do a stich of work themselves. This led to great frustration.'<sup>174</sup> That is not to say that many of the HART organisers were not extremely angry about the tour and willing to break the law to express their discontent, but they recognised that in Palmerston North it was not appropriate for the whole movement to do this.

The vast majority of people who contributed to the anti-apartheid movement did so individually, simply by participating in the marches and other protests that were organised. Many people were not particularly aware of the different political orientations of HART and MAST and simply wanted to publicly express their abhorrence at the tour by participating in the protests. John Ross states with reference to MAST: 'It was an organising group, you set something up to happen and then everybody who was interested just turned up and they weren't terribly aware of the designation of the organising group.'<sup>175</sup> The wide variety of 'alternative' forms of protest which were organised by HART and

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<sup>172</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 8.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. p. 8. The person giving the quote is not identified.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with John Ross.

MAST exemplify the broad spectrum of opinions which the anti-apartheid movement in Palmerston North sought to incorporate. They represent an attempt to overcome the divisions inherent in the movement by organising a range of activities which would be suitable for differing levels of commitment, from attending prayer services to blocking roads in Wellington.

One 'alternative' form of protest was lobbying. In the build up to the tour MAST lobbied the government on behalf of protesters, and continued to do so even after the tour was under way. In a letter to the editor of the *Evening Standard* Alan Webster outlined the actions MAST had taken: 'We have sent, on behalf of Manawatu Protesters. A telegram to the Prime Minister, two letters to the Governor-General, a petition to the South African government on behalf of malnourished black infants and a petition signed by 391 people on August 1 to be read in the House of Representatives requesting the government to stop the tour.'<sup>176</sup> MAST had considered this form of protest valid and effective even after the tour had commenced, whereas HART had used lobbying to try and stop the tour from coming, but once it was here they committed themselves to stopping it by rallying mass opposition. This exemplifies the different styles of the two anti-apartheid groups in Palmerston North. MAST was committed to protest which was dignified, civilised and within the law. The 'alternative' forms of protest that they organised were a form of 'bearing witness' to the injustices of the tour rather than an attempt to stop it directly.

Prayer services were organised by MAST for after some of the marches, and an alternative rally had been held in the Square on August 1 for those who didn't want to get involved in the potential confrontation of the main march.<sup>177</sup> A series of fasts were organised for every weekend for the duration of the tour, 'as an expression, firstly of sympathy with [starving South Africans] and

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<sup>176</sup> *MES*, August 19, 1981.

<sup>177</sup> *MES*, August 1, 1981.

secondly of outrage against the moral stupidity and political expediency of our own countrymen.’<sup>178</sup> John Ross said the fasts were ‘just a kind of gesture- a personal moral thing.’<sup>179</sup> And this was very much what MAST saw the role of protest to be, a form of gesture, a personal affirmation of opposition to apartheid and the tour. They shied away from most forms of direct action, especially if it involved a possible breach of the law. Some people believed that even gestures of protest which reflected a more radical or obscure ideology were frowned upon. In the ‘Report on Palmerston North’s Tour Activities’ one young protester is quoted as saying: ‘We found the approach to chanting very narrowminded, for example we were told that ‘Power to the people’ was too communist... and that ‘Remember Parihaka’ was too obscure.’<sup>180</sup>

But to a certain extent the needs of more radical protesters were also catered for by the ‘alternative’ forms of protest. Fight Against Institutionalised Racism (FAIR) a small Massey based anti-racism group organised one substantial activity for radical protesters. On August 8, 200 people staged a protest outside the New Zealand Rugby Football Museum in Grey Street. They surrounded it with barbed wire and picketed outside, chanting a parody of the Red Squad’s team call. (Give us an R, Give us and E, Give us a D... RED SQUID!)<sup>181</sup> HART also assisted people to get down to Wellington for the protests on the day of the second test, by organising two buses to transport people.<sup>182</sup> In Wellington hundreds of people from Palmerston North contributed to COST’s strategy of mass civil-disobedience by blocking the road at the top of Lampton Quay.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> *MES*, July 21, 1981.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with John Ross.

<sup>180</sup> ‘Report on Palmerston North...’ p. 8.

<sup>181</sup> *Amalanda Weekly Special*. No. 4, August 10, 1981. Trevor Richards Papers. 99-278-40/05. WTU.

<sup>182</sup> *MES*. August 29, 1981.

<sup>183</sup> Interviews with John Ross and Roger Middlemass. John Ross recalls about 3-400 PN people present, Roger Middlemass remembered that it was Lampton Quay that was blocked.

These activities provided some outlet for those who desired a more direct form of protest, but some people also carried out more spontaneous or illegal forms of protest alone or in small groups not explicitly affiliated to HART or MAST. Some Massey students responded when they learned of the secret visit to the university of Minister of Police and Maori Affairs, Ben Couch. Students picketed his car and asked him to answer some of their questions, and then attempted to prevent him from leaving, blocking his car by walking back and forth across the pedestrian crossing.<sup>184</sup> 'Remember Steve Biko' was painted along the sides of the bridge and other anti-tour graffiti appeared in various places in the city.<sup>185</sup> On the morning of August 1, J.P. MacFarlane attempted to remove the barbed wire that had been laid out to defend the Showgrounds, he said, 'I was angered by the sight of a public place littered with rusty wire in a manner not only dangerous to the public but offensive to the eye.'<sup>186</sup> And police revealed that in the lead up to August 1 they had received 'threats of major road closures; threats to the airport; to the electrical supply depot in Bunnythorpe, and the inevitable bomb threats.'<sup>187</sup>

The May 1 mobilisation and the formation of MAST had been very successful in attracting a broad spectrum of people into the anti-apartheid movement, but the 'united front' which was presented initially soon dissolved as the tour became a reality and some people wanted to protest more directly whilst others wanted to continue protesting peacefully and non-confrontationally. The division was best exemplified in the events surrounding the march on the day of

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John Ross, despite being a MAST organising committee member, participated in the Wellington protest. Although MAST organised a certain type of protest, the individual actions of the people involved did not necessarily reflect the MAST viewpoint.

<sup>184</sup> *Chaff*, July, 1981.

<sup>185</sup> 'Report on Palmerston North...' p. 7.

<sup>186</sup> Letter to the editor from J.P. MacFarlane. *MES*, August 4, 1981.

<sup>187</sup> *MES*, August 3, 1981.

the first test. But 'alternative' forms of protest were a way of overcoming this division as well as an exemplification of the diversity of the anti-apartheid movement in the city. MAST catered for more conservative people whilst HART attempted to meet the needs of radicals as well as moderates, and additionally people could always do things independently of these groups.



## Section Six.

### **The Composition of the movement in Palmerston North.**

HART and MAST in Palmerston North organised activities to cater for a broad range of protesters, but who were the majority of the people who contributed to the movement simply by participating in protest activities? What was the composition of the movement in Palmerston North? A common perception of people interviewed was that the movement in Palmerston North was socially diverse. Alan Millar for example suggested, 'It transcended all ethnic and social, age, class and gender groupings, more than any of the other [demonstrations] that had gone before.'<sup>188</sup> This is an important insight into the anti-apartheid movement because it is an indication that the movement was broad-based, encompassing a wide spectrum of people. A lack of evidence precludes anything but a tentative attempt to analyse the composition of the movement, there are no membership list or surveys of the movement done at the time, like there was in Wellington, but there are indications that some sections of society were better represented than others.

The 'Report on Palmerston North's Tour Activities' offers an indication of the composition of the Palmerston North movement:

A large proportion of the protest movement in Palmerston North were middle aged, middle class people. There was a large proportion of women, a few SUP members and other radicals. Student involvement from both the university or the Teachers College, was not high—fewer came out on the Tour protest as had been done on the Vietnam protests.<sup>189</sup>

A clearer picture may be found by reflecting on each of the points made in this quote. Peter King and Jock Phillips' Wellington based study 'A Social Analysis of the Springbok Tour Protestors' will provide a point of comparison.

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<sup>188</sup> Interview with Alan Millar. Don Swan and Robert Burgess also mentioned this aspect of the movement.

<sup>189</sup> 'The Report on Palmerston North...' p. 6.

The 'Report' suggests that a large proportion of protesters were middle aged. This implies that the Palmerston North movement differed from the capitals movement as the Wellington study found that the most well represented age group at protests was the 30 to 34 year olds.<sup>190</sup> Impressionistically this makes sense. The Palmerston North movement was far less militant than Wellington, and MAST had a lot of church support and organised non-confrontational activities which probably attracted an older element. The Wellington movement lacked a group similar to MAST and so probably incorporated proportionately less middle aged people than Palmerston North, although the Wellington study found that there were still significant numbers of over 45s.<sup>191</sup>

Roger Middlemass, as a trade union official with an awareness of class issues, believed that a large proportion of protesters were middle class.<sup>192</sup> King and Phillips found that, similar to Palmerston North, a large proportion of Wellington protesters were middle class. They further narrowed down the analysis and found that a large proportion of protesters comprised the 'liberal middle class,' especially people involved in the 'service educationally based professions.'<sup>193</sup> At face value this would seem relevant to Palmerston North also, with a significant number of educational and research institutions in the city. But there is an implication that locational variations may be less relevant with respect to this aspect of the protest movement and that the 'liberal middle class' may have been more likely than other groups to oppose

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<sup>190</sup> Peter King and Jock Phillips, 'A Social Analysis of Springbok Tour Protestors,' *Counting the Cost*, p.5. The survey was of 714 protesters, the authors warn of the tentative nature of their findings, but it is probably the most comprehensive picture available. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines 'middle aged' as between 45 and 60, although this may not be a particularly good definition it seems that 'middle aged' is certainly older than 30 to 34 years old.

<sup>191</sup> Between 30 and 30%. King and Phillips. p. 6.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Roger Middlemass, see his comment in Section four.

<sup>193</sup> Specifically, lecturers, teachers, students, researchers, scientists, librarians, artists, clergy and workers in the media. King and Phillips. p. 9.

the tour because of their outlook. King and Phillips state: 'They are professionally concerned with discussing or transmitting ideas, and they tend to be well informed about international affairs. They are likely to have travelled. It is understandable therefore that the rights of black Africans and the place of New Zealand in the international community should concern them.'<sup>194</sup>

The 'Report' notes the large proportion of women, and the presence of a few SUP members and other radicals. A large proportion of women seems to have been a characteristic of the anti-apartheid movement nationally and the Wellington analysis suggested 'a very even distribution between the sexes.'<sup>195</sup> Although it is difficult to know whether this was the case in Palmerston North, an analysis of photographs of the 'day of shame' march in Palmerston North suggests that there were relatively equal proportions of men and women.<sup>196</sup>

The radical element in the Palmerston North movement seems to have been relatively small. I have taken 'radical' to mean those advocating civil disobedience and direct action and those representing socialist political groups. There is little evidence of much independent action taken by radicals. FAIR was the only group of this nature which organised its own protests and socialist groups like the SUP and WCL do not seem to have been prominent in the broader movement. Although HART faced pressure to accommodate more radical forms of protest, the lack of direct action independent of HART suggests that radicals were perhaps more a vocal faction than anything else.

With regard to the assertion that Student involvement was not high, the Massey University Student Association (MUSA) held a referendum in the week before the game in Palmerston North. Of the 40% of students who voted (the biggest voter turn out on record) support for or against the Springbok tour was

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<sup>194</sup> King and Phillips, p. 9.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>196</sup> *MES*, July 22, 1981.

evenly divided.<sup>197</sup> There is no evidence of the proportion of Teachers College students for and against the tour. The presence of students on marches may also have been effected by there being a university holiday throughout much of the tour. Interestingly the Wellington analysis found that 'those under the age of 25, presumably a student dominated group, [were] not particularly well represented.'<sup>198</sup> The authors go on to say: 'The tour protesters were on the whole not a young group, far less so than the popular image of demonstrators.'<sup>199</sup> This is an observation that may equally apply to the Palmerston North movement.

In other cities trade unions were identified as being a significant group in the anti-apartheid movement. But there is not a lot of evidence of debate within trade unions in the Manawatu. West Coast North Island freezing workers voted to oppose the tour, this could be attributed, at least partly, to the views of their president, Roger Middlemass.<sup>200</sup> Conversely staff at the Fitzherbert Motor Inn, in the Hotel Workers Union whose official, Andrew Ninness, was also active in the anti-apartheid movement, voted to serve the Springboks when they stayed in Palmerston North.<sup>201</sup> Maori were also an active group in some cities but there is a lack of evidence to enable any assertions to be made regarding the extent of Maori participation in Palmerston North.

Overall it seems that the composition of the Palmerston North anti-apartheid movement was relatively similar to the Wellington movement. MAST may have attracted the support of a larger proportion of middle aged people, radicals may have been a vocal but less active element than in Wellington, and trade unions may not have been so prominent. The even proportion of women and men and the under representation of students seem to be a common thread, as

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<sup>197</sup> MUSA Minutes. SGM July 30, 1981. Massey University Archive.

<sup>198</sup> King and Phillips. p. 5.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>200</sup> *MES*, June 23, 1981.

<sup>201</sup> *MES*, July 13, 1981.

did the predominance of middle class people in the movement. However these are no more than tentative observations.



## Conclusion.

The last anti-tour march in Palmerston North in 1981 was held on September 12, the day of the third test in Auckland. It was attended by about 1000 people. At the conclusion of the march there was a rally in the Square and Alan Webster and Rosemary Baragwanath made speeches on behalf of MAST and HART. For the last protest of the tour the movement was united, the conflicting opinions over tactics which had divided the movement during the tour were no longer applicable. Alan Webster called it 'a gathering of different groups united against South Africa's racist policies.'<sup>202</sup> After the speeches three wreaths were laid at the cenotaph. One for Steve Biko, another for blacks suffering in South Africa, and a third to lay the tour to rest. This wreath 'was made of a crucifix ringed with barbed wire and adorned with a construction style hard hat, an imitation of a long police baton and a lily. The message on it read, 'Apartheid rugby brought these to New Zealand. May they depart with the Springboks and never return.'<sup>203</sup>

People felt a sense of relief at the conclusion of the tour, but there remained a sense that a division in society had been created by the tour which would take time and effort to heal. Robert Burgess felt 'extremely glad that the tour was over. But also a feeling of being rather daunted that there was a huge amount to do to make living more tolerable.'<sup>204</sup>

In some ways the tour had an adverse effect on the anti-apartheid movement in Palmerston North. In the wake of the tour many of the people who had played a leadership role were 'not interested in re-committing themselves to ongoing

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<sup>202</sup> *MES*, September 14, 1981.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.

HART work.<sup>205</sup> This included Rosemary Baragwanath, Red Parsons, Paul Gandar, Robert Burgess and Leslie Kitchen. Although most of these people were still interested in being involved, none wanted to be responsible for organisation and administration. In addition to this problem the movement still owed around \$900 to the *Evening Standard*.<sup>206</sup> But the movement would be revitalised again in 1985 when the threat of an All Black tour to South Africa loomed.

\* \* \* \* \*

This study has sought to explore the nature of the anti-apartheid movement in Palmerston North in 1981, and some assertions can be made about its characteristics.

The formation of the coalition group MAST with the presence of church leaders and intellectuals in an organising role was a very significant factor in building a unique movement in Palmerston North. This group organised protests that were law abiding and non-confrontational, which probably attracted older as well as Christian people to become more actively involved. The split that developed in the movement was a disagreement over tactics and was not a fundamental or terminal disagreement between HART and MAST. The split is perhaps a reflection of the broad spectrum of different people that were incorporated into the movement, from young radicals to elderly Christians.

Both HART and MAST attempted to be inclusive organisations. MAST sought to attract non-radical people and hoped to make the protests appropriate for families and for people of all ages. HART attempted to meet the needs of more

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<sup>205</sup> 'Trip to PN 26-27 June 1982,' a one page report on the state of HART in Palmerston North in 1982, written by someone outside the Palmerston North movement, possibly for the HART National Council, HART Papers, 86-136-13, WTU.

<sup>206</sup> 'Trip to PN 26-27 June 1982,' HART Papers, 86-136-12, WTU.

radical protesters. The wide variety of protest activities is testament to both groups attempting to incorporate many different people into the movement.

It could be said that the Palmerston North movement was very different from those in the main centres, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The radical nature of protests in the main centres was something which was not prominent in Palmerston North and the presence of protesters from Wellington and Auckland on the day of the game in Palmerston North illustrated the generally more conservative nature of the movement in the city. Mass civil disobedience was a characteristic of protest in the main centres, but it was felt that this was not an appropriate form of protest for Palmerston North. Perhaps because of this the Palmerston North movement usually cooperated with the police and had a non-antagonistic relationship with them, hence the low number of arrests in the city. Yet the local police were still very much defenders of the tour. Robert Burgess suggests that their attitude was 'reflected in the fact that they proudly put up a Springbok head in their foyer.'<sup>207</sup>

I believe that the anti-apartheid movement in Palmerston North protested the 1981 Springbok Tour uniquely and effectively. Although the protests in Palmerston North were less dramatic and confrontational than in the main centres they were perhaps more inclusive and showed effectively that the anti-apartheid movement was not a small group of coercive radicals as the government attempted to characterise it, but that it was indeed a broad based peoples movement.

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<sup>207</sup> Interview with Robert Burgess.



**Appendix I.****Chronology of Events.**

- August 1980. HART delegation to the PNCC, the Council agrees to adopt its own interpretation of the Gleneagles Agreement.
- October. SANROC Chairman Sam Ramsamy visits Palmerston North. Meeting attended by 500.
- September 12. NZRFU issues invitation for the Springboks to tour New Zealand.
- November. HART delegation to the Showgrounds Board of control, fails to convince them to adopt the Gleneagles Agreement.
- March 23, 1981. Director of Foreign Affairs and UN representative for the PAC, Henry Isaacs visits Palmerston North. Meeting attended by 100+.
- May 1. National Mobilisation. March in Palmerston North attended by 5000+. Pro-tour march attended by 800.
- June 26. Canon John Osmer, an Anglican missionary working in Lesotho visits Palmerston North.
- July 3. National Mobilisation. Anti-tour rally attended by 200. 600 letters posted to MP Michael Cox asking him to oppose the tour.
- June 6. Black South African Trade Unionist and activist Andrew Molostane visits Palmerston North.
- July 13. Fitzherbert Motor Inn staff vote to serve the Springboks. MUSA call for students to boycott the Fitz.
- July 15. Ben Couch visits Massey University secretly. Is met by a small protest.
- July 22. 'Day of Shame.' First Springbok game in Gisborne. March in Palmerston North attended by 1000.
- July 25. Game in Hamilton, cancelled by protest action.

- July 28. City Councillor Graham Hubbard attempts to use council by-laws to have the Palmerston North game cancelled. Fails to get the required majority but requests a high court ruling on whether to do so is within the council's power.
- July 29. Game in New Plymouth, Molesworth Street incident in Wellington. March in Palmerston North attended by 700.
- July 31. High court rules that the PNCC does not have the power to cancel the game.
- August 1. Game in Palmerston North. March attended by 5000+. Alternative MAST rally attended by 500.
- August 8. The New Zealand Rugby Football Museum is surrounded in barbed wire and picketed by 200 people.
- August 15. First test in Christchurch. March in Palmerston North attended by 300. Attempts at civil disobedience leads to eight arrests.
- August 29. Second test in Wellington. 200 protest in Palmerston North and hundreds more travel down to Wellington to protest.
- September 12. Third test in Auckland. March and wreath laying ceremony in Palmerston North attended by 1000.

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