Apartheid

Peter Hain (Lord Hain) recalls his experiences in the Young Liberals fighting apartheid in the 1960s and '70s.

Stop The Tour!

My parents, Adelaine and Walter Hain, were anti-apartheid leaders in Pretoria of the Liberal Party of South Africa. By 1960, this was the only one-person-one-vote party left after the banning of Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and other groups. Eventually, after being jailed and stripped of their civil rights, they and their four children were forced into exile in Britain in 1966.[1]

I was aged 16 and a year later followed my parents in joining the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM). The young Jeremy Thorpe often spoke at its rallies, joined by David Steel, its long-standing president. By early 1968, I gradually became more politically involved, via the Young Liberals – partly because of our connection to the South African Liberal Party and partly because the YLs were then a vibrant, irreverent force for radicalism. Miranda Timaeus, my age, Mike Wallace, an older trainee accountant (and years later Liberal councillor in Burgess Hill) set up the YL branch in Putney where we lived, and I ended up as chair, discovering a zest for organisation probably instilled by observing and helping my parents in Pretoria.

YL radical politics quickly took over my life, leading me into an exciting culture of left-wing ideas where I was in awe of the charismatic YL leaders – George Kiloh, Terry Lacey, Peter Hellyer, Hilary Wainwright, Phil Kelly and Louis Eaks. They were expert at attention-grabbing, attracting the Maoist label 'Red Guards' from the media. We YLs called for a 'cultural revolution' in the senior party and in Britain as a whole. We thought British politics could be transformed through our YL radicalism.

I was immersed in a ferment of new and radical ideas, shaped by the passionate debates in teach-ins, conferences, demonstrations, sit-ins and voracious reading of left-wing books and pamphlets. Politics was in my DNA from my Pretoria boyhood, but my socialist beliefs crystallised around 1968–69, the years of the Paris uprising, of student agitation throughout Europe and the US, of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and of anti-Vietnam War protests. A 'new left' had emerged, iconoclastic and just as opposed to capitalism as to Stalinism: 'Neither Washington nor Moscow' was our slogan. We favoured 'bottom-up' socialism rather than 'top-down', popular participation not state bureaucracy, workers' control not nationalisation: these were the watchwords, and the more radical YLs like me described ourselves as 'libertarian socialists', distinguishing ourselves from both Soviet-style state socialism and free-market classical liberalism.

The YLs' energy and flair for publicity, together with its continual pamphleteering and campaigning, offered me a wonderful crash course in political education. From YL manuals I learnt how to draft press releases, deal with the media and organise. We supported militant, though non-violent, direct action where necessary, emulating the wave

Peter Hain arrested in Downing Street, 1969

of protest and civil-rights demonstrations in America and university student sit-ins in which some YLs were involved, such as in 1968 at Hornsey College of Art.[2]

In October 1968 I joined a large group of Young Liberals at the big anti-Vietnam War demonstration in Grosvenor Square, witnessing violent clashes between police and protesters determined to storm the US embassy. Central London was eerily boarded up as we marched from Victoria Embankment to Mayfair. Our excitement resonated in our chants: 'London, Paris and Berlin – we shall fight, we shall win!' and, attacking US President Johnson, 'Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?'

Our YL banners were something of a curiosity to the many socialist and Marxist groups on the march, even though the YLs had been represented on its organising committee. Collectively we felt that Harold Wilson's government had not taken a tough enough stand against the war though, in retrospect, at least he did keep Britain out of it by refusing to send troops.

The campaign against apartheid

We YLs also felt that Wilson was not dealing firmly enough with the illegal rebellion by the white minority in Rhodesia. Their leader, Ian Smith, had made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 to maintain racist rule in that country. Jeremy Thorpe's rousing speech condemning UDI at the Liberal Assembly in 1966 had earned him the media label 'Bomber Thorpe'. At the following year's assembly, the party adopted a resolution on Southern Africa, proposed by YL International Officer Peter Hellyer and seconded by David Steel, firmly identifying both the party and the YLs with the anti-apartheid cause.

As apartheid moved up the political agenda, a number of leading YLs, headed by Douglas Marchant, early in 1968 formed the YL Southern Africa Commission (SAC), and I quickly came into contact through the SAC with national YL leaders. SAC affiliated directly to the AAM and subsequently, after a tense internal dispute, separated from the YLs, a decision I voted against, feeling emotionally distraught

at the clash with close colleagues, Marchant included.

As the only ex-South African involved, I gained some prominence, which brought me into close touch with AAM leaders such as Ethel de Keyser, Alan Brooks and Abdul Minty. By October, aged 18, I was elected to its national committee. One of my first activities was setting up SAC's 'Medical Aid for Southern Africa' appeal in 1968 to assist the ANC and other liberation movements. Many supporters of anti-apartheid organisations would not associate themselves with guerrilla activity but would back medical aid.

Miranda Timaeus and I hitchhiked over 200 miles to our first national YL conference, in Scarborough, April 1968. For me, the conference was exciting, as I met leadership figures I'd only heard or read about and was called to the rostrum to make a brief speech in favour of a resolution supporting the ANC's liberation struggle, the first time I had spoken to a large gathering. However, despite the radicalism of the YLs, the resolution was narrowly defeated after strong appeals by pacifists.

For me, violence was no academic matter: I had seen too much of it in South Africa, and my dad was vehement about it. But the predicament of those resisting apartheid convinced me that the ANC was justified in adopting guerrilla tactics. With all democratic and legal channels blocked to the ANC, I was persuaded by those such as Nelson Mandela who argued there was no alternative to an armed struggle, and I started advocating the cause of the ANC and its sister liberation groups fighting racist regimes in southern Africa.

However, there was a vital distinction between my support for the ANC's guerrilla struggle and support for 'terrorism'. The violence of guerrilla movements such as the ANC was directed against an oppressive state, whereas the violence of terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda or Islamic State, the IRA or ultra-right American bombers is directed indiscriminately against innocent bystanders. Although the distinction did sometimes become blurred, as on the few occasions when sabotage carried out by the ANC unintentionally caught bystanders, I believed that it nevertheless remained valid and an important foundation for building political solidarity.

A violent strategy by resistance movements can only be justified when, as with European countries invaded by Hitler during the Second World War or the more recent tyranny of apartheid, all other means have been exhausted with no viable alternative. In the debates that raged around the radical politics of that era, I argued that to deny people the right to resist such tyrannies violently was to deny them their humanity and to acquiesce in their oppression, adding that, when the crunch came, all the pacifist could do was to bear moral witness, dying bravely as the tanks rolled in.

Sports apartheid

Some activists saw anti-apartheid campaigning in sport as at best peripheral, at worst eccentric. However, I was of white South African stock, as sports mad as pretty well all were, with Afrikaners especially fanatical about rugby. I knew that international sport, whether the Springboks, the Olympics or a cricket tour, gripped the white nation like nothing else. Importantly, sport granted whites the international respectability and legitimacy they increasingly craved as the evil

I knew that international sport, whether the Springboks, the Olympics or a cricket tour, gripped the white nation like nothing else. Importantly, sport granted whites the international respectability and legitimacy they increasingly craved as the evil reality of apartheid began to be exposed by horrors such as the Sharpeville massacre.

reality of apartheid began to be exposed by horrors such as the Sharpeville massacre.

Moreover, it was easier to achieve success through practical protest against sports links than it was to secure sanctions by taking on the might of international capital or military alliances, although I also fervently advocated this course. Victories in sport were crucial during a period when internal resistance had been smashed and it was extremely hard to impose international economic and arms boycotts. Apartheid politics was in the very core of South African sport, beginning with schools, going up through clubs to provincial and ultimately national level. This racism had a long history. Krom Hendricks, a ferocious fast-bowler easily able to represent his country but of mixed blood, was excluded from doing so in 1894 by Cecil John Rhodes, then prime minister of the Cape Colony during Gladstone's Liberal government. Indeed racism, including in South African sport, was cemented under the British Empire, with apartheid after the Second World War being institutionally deepened rather than invented.[3]

The real game-changer came over Basil D'Oliveira, who unwittingly found himself at the centre of a major storm in 1968. Like Krom, a highly talented 'Coloured' (mixed-race) South African, he had been unable to play first-class cricket in his own country, let alone for it. So, in 1960, he had travelled from his native Cape Town to England with the assistance of legendary BBC cricket commentator John Arlott, a Liberal Party member.

D'Oliveira rose meteorically to become an automatic choice for England from 1966, and on merit should have been selected for the 1968 cricket tour to South Africa. But following weeks of seedy manoeuvring and high drama, D'Oliveira was omitted from the touring party. And, as it transpired decades later, Doug Insole, the chairman of the selectors, had spoken to the South Africans beforehand, to be told that D'Oliveira would not be welcome. However, after weeks of raging controversy, D'Oliveira was reluctantly included. This led Prime Minister John Vorster to thunder preposterously at a gathering of the ruling party, 'It's not the England team. It's the team of the anti-apartheid movement.' He cancelled the tour: so much for 'keeping politics out of sport', the line ritually levelled at anti-apartheid campaigners like me.

Yet, despite the unprecedented veto of their tour, a few months later, in January 1969, the English cricket establishment, hunkered down from the world at its Lord's headquarters, brazenly announced that they would proceed with the scheduled 1970 cricket tour by a white South African team, as if the D'Oliveira affair had never happened. I was outraged at this development, and immediately got backing for a motion from the South-East England Federation of the NLYL pledging ourselves 'to take direct action to prevent scheduled matches from taking place unless the 1970 tour is cancelled'.

I had meanwhile been introduced to the exiles in London running the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC). At their public meeting in London in May 1969, I proposed direct action to stop the cricket tour. The former Robben Island prisoner Dennis Brutus was in the chair and was very supportive, as was his colleague, Chris de Broglio. Since the 1950s, anti-apartheid sports protests in Britain had been largely symbolic: holding up banners outside stadiums, and these were patronisingly ignored. But direct action to physically stop sports tours could not be.

My inspiration came from student sit-ins such as that at Hornsey College of Art, worker occupations and the squatting of empty houses by the homeless. It was no longer enough simply to bear witness, and a new, more militant movement gathered momentum alongside the AAM, which maintained a discreet, sometimes uneasy, distance that I (and the rest of the YLs) respected as necessary to its more conventional role.

A tour by an all-white South African club side sponsored by a wealthy businessman, Wilf Isaacs, experienced the first-ever taste of direct

action against cricket anywhere, when, in the Essex town of Basildon in July 1969, I led a group of YLs onto the pitch. I had contacted a dozen or so beforehand and planned our intervention. Having tipped off journalists, we gathered as spectators at the small club ground. Play was interrupted for over ten minutes until police dragged us, limp, off the field, and this novel tactic certainly generated photographs and stories in the media.

Subsequent tour matches in Oxford and at the Oval saw even greater and more successful disruptions, organised by local AAM branches. That July, a Davis Cup tennis match was due to take place in Bristol between white South Africa and Britain. On the opening day I drove my parents' VW Beetle to Bristol with two fellow Putney YLs, Helen Tovey and Maree Pocklington. We planned our protest on the drive down, not knowing quite what to expect, tense and worried as we arrived and purchased tickets.

Taking our seats separately, we waited until I signalled and then ran onto the court, disrupting play for the first time in an international event with live television coverage and causing consternation, which was widely reported in the media. Later in the three-day tournament, play was further disrupted by an invasion, and flour bombs were thrown onto the court in protests organised by the Bristol Anti-Apartheid group.

Because sport was being targeted by direct action, the protests were highly newsworthy, with publicity for each encouraging others. Crucially, these events were taking place across the country and action could be initiated locally, instead of converging on London. This meant that the emerging movement was characterised by considerable local autonomy and spontaneity.

A network soon fell into place and, with active encouragement by Dennis Brutus and Chris de Broglio at SANROC, we decided to launch the Stop the Seventy Tour (STST) committee at a press conference in September 1969. It had broad support, from the AAM and United Nations Youth to the National Union of Students, Christian groups and young communists, Trotskyists and Young Liberals.

Davis Cup match, July 1969

Although I was only 19, I was pressed by Dennis Brutus, Chris de Broglio and others into a leadership role, and pledged 'mass demonstrations and disruptions throughout the 1970 cricket tour', confident that a national organisation would emerge, just as local activity had begun to gather pace in the previous few months. My very public threat was deliberately pitched to be newsworthy and therefore to capture the sense of interest needed to galvanise a big movement.

We needed to be quick, because I also promised demonstrations against the Springbok rugby tour, which, we had realised, rather belatedly, was due to start in six weeks' time. We aimed to use it as a dummy run to build a campaign capable of stopping the following summer's cricket tour. Looking back, I recall a fearless innocence, part exhilarating and part just getting on with what had to be done, determined to win a decisive battle against the evil of apartheid and convinced, perhaps more than anybody else, that we could achieve this through non-violent direct action.

That September, 1969, I spoke for the first time at the Liberal Party's annual conference in Brighton, urging support for direct action. I wasn't a natural or experienced orator, and it was rather nerve-racking. My photograph appeared in national newspapers, and I was now invited to do television interviews. Louis Eaks, by now Young Liberal national chair, helped me produce a folded YL broadsheet laying out the case against sports apartheid. London-based South African journalists had begun to take an increasing interest, rapidly elevating me to the status of a 'hate' figure in my old homeland, labelled 'Public Enemy Number One'.

On the back of growing excitement and publicity, the campaign took off and my parents' modest Putney flat, rented from an anti-apartheid friend, became the headquarters address and office. Volunteers turned up to help, sitting all over the living room, and my mother, chief activist before being jailed and banned in Pretoria, quickly assumed the crucial role of office secretary, fielding phone calls, coordinating information, helping with correspondence and banking donations. Dad came home from work to write leaflets and background briefs.

My public threats of direct action against the rugby tour and confident predictions that we could stop the cricket tour generated widespread attention. I found myself being regularly interviewed on national TV and radio, using the guidance and experience I had gained through the YLs to deal with the press on a daily basis, while also cycling daily to my lectures at London University, spending lunch breaks with homemade sandwiches in a call box taking phone calls from journalists and local organisers through messages relayed from my mother at home, where the phone rang incessantly.

A mass movement quickly grew, locally based, largely spontaneous, and usually focused around student unions, though involving local branches of the AAM, socialists, radicals, liberals, independents, trade unionists, vicars, priests and bishops. It was predominantly young, though by no means exclusively so, and took the Springbok rugby tour by storm. YLs were active throughout the growing movement, though by no means its mainstay, with senior party leaders sympathetic to the cause even if most were extremely uneasy-to-hostile about the direct-action tactics or 'lawbreaking', as our critics termed it.

The venue for the opening match, against Oxford University in October 1969, was switched after strong opposition from both the college authorities and the students, who sprayed weed killer on the ground and threatened to wreck the match. The new venue was kept secret to avoid demonstrations but Bob Trevor, a friendly Welsh sports journalist with the London *Evening News*, promised to phone us immediately the press were informed. At 9.30 p.m. the night before,

our phone rang and his familiar voice said: 'Twickenham, 3 p.m.'

I immediately phoned the Oxford Committee Against Apartheid and scores of organisers around the country. Coaches full of demonstrators were waiting; more than 1,000 rushed to the ground and we all purchased tickets, gathering together in the main stand. The match took place under siege, with pitch invasions and constant hostile chanting. Midway through the match, I spotted an opening in the police cordon and tried to jump over the spectator fence, but was immediately grabbed, carted out and unceremoniously dumped on the pavement. Sensationally, the mighty Springboks lost, clearly unnerved by the atmosphere.

Switching the first fixture from Oxford at the last minute had attracted front-page stories on the morning of the match and set the scene for the remaining games of the twenty-five-match tour. Local organisers realised that they were part of a mass national movement, and each of the matches saw demonstrations of varying sizes. Several of the biggest set-piece confrontations took place at the home of the Rugby Football Union, Twickenham, within easy reach of central London.

We were able to get 2,000 inside for the first scheduled match in late November, some 'disguised' by cutting their hair or wearing Springbok rosettes. There was a similar number outside. I was one of over a hundred demonstrators who managed to climb over the fence surrounding the pitch and outwit the police, though I was grabbed immediately. Play was stopped for over ten minutes while we were carried off and summarily ejected.

The week before, in Swansea, the most brutal confrontation of the entire tour had taken place, amid ugly scenes as police threw a hundred peacefully invading demonstrators back from the pitch and deliberately into the hands of 'stewards', who promptly handed out beatings. One demonstrator's jaw was broken, and he nearly lost an eye. Others, including women, were badly assaulted. Journalists from papers such as *The Times*, while not supportive of the demonstrations, condemned the 'viciousness' of the police and stewards.

In Northern Ireland (itself in turmoil following civil-rights protests, and sliding into barbaric violence), the Springbok match was cancelled for security reasons. Elsewhere, matches were made all-ticket and security inside was massively increased, with police standing shoulder to shoulder around the pitch, facing the spectators. In Cardiff all pretence at a normal rugby match was abandoned as barbed wire was put up around the field. In blue-rinse-conservative Bournemouth, the match had to be abandoned because the open ground there could not be defended.

Looking back half over a century later, we were possessed of a fearless idealism, undeterred by threats of violence, prosecution or in my case the very personal fury and threats I increasingly attracted. Morality was on our side, our cause was just, our militancy necessary, we were determined to win.

However, our tactics now changed. We knew that the STST campaign had been infiltrated. My home telephone number was tapped, a familiar though uncomfortable experience we thought had been left behind in Pretoria. So we established an 'inner group' of some of my most trusted and experienced activists, several older than me, who had years before participated in direct-action demonstrations through the Committee of 100, the militant offshoot of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It was called the Special Action Group.

It booked Rosemary Chester, national secretary of the YLs, a vivacious young activist, into the Springbok team's London hotel in Park Lane (in 1972, she married the Liberal MP Archy Kirkwood, later Lord Kirkwood). Rosemary slipped through the hotel in the early hours, gumming up the players' door locks with solidifying agent, forcing them to

Twickenham, December 1969

break down the doors to get out on the morning of the pre-Christmas international match at Twickenham. Michael Deeny, an STST activist who worked in the City of London, turned up most unprotestor-like in a smart suit, politely told the driver of the team's coach waiting outside their London hotel that he was wanted inside, slipped into his seat, chained himself to the steering wheel and drove the coach off to crash it nearby as he was grappled by some of the Springbok players who had already boarded.

At the match, protesters evaded the heavy police cordon. Two of my Putney YL friends, Mike Findlay and Peter Twyman, had rehearsed their plans in our back garden, running and quickly attaching themselves to a broomstick with handcuffs we had purchased. Unlike other protesters, they were also deliberately dressed in jacket and tie. My South-African-accented aunt Josephine Stocks, then also a member of Putney Liberals, had purchased special ringside seats in front of the security cordon and, at a pre-arranged moment, Mike and Peter suddenly burst out, dodging to evade furious pursuers, one just managing to chain himself to the goalposts. Play was interrupted until he was cut free. Orange smoke pellets were also thrown among the players, which, as well as disrupting play, produced dramatic television and newspaper pictures.

At the last Twickenham match in late January 1970, we distributed packets to selected protesters (including me), containing powdered dye which turned black on contact with dampness. This was thrown onto the pitch so that the Springboks, rolling on the wet grass, were smeared with black stains, to chants from protesters on the terraces of 'Paint them black and send them back.'

Wherever the team went – resting, training or playing – it was under siege. Over the Christmas break, an STST activist ingeniously managed to attach an ANC flag to fly from the team's hotel flagpole, and it was reported that the players had taken a step inconceivable in the annals of Springbok history, voting to abort their tour and go home. However, the management, under political pressure, ordered them to stay, and the tour finally staggered to

an end with the players bitter and unsettled. For Vice-Captain Tommy Bedford, it proved a cathartic experience; within a year, he publicly stated that I should be listened to, not vilified, and praised our objectives. Although his response was a relatively isolated one in South Africa, it signalled the huge and destabilising impact of our campaign.

For the first time, the Springboks, accustomed to being lionised as perhaps the leading national rugby team in the world, had been treated as pariahs. They were no longer faced merely with what they habitually dismissed as the spluttering of 'misguided liberals and leftists' while they retreated to the warm hospitality of their rugby hosts. This was something of quite a different order. Anti-apartheid opponents had now shown a physical capacity to disrupt or stop the Springboks' ability to tour in the old way.

The white minority was apoplectic. The Afrikaans pro-government paper *Die Beeld* stated in an editorial:

> We have become accustomed to Britain becoming a haven for all sorts of undesirables from other countries. Nevertheless, it is degrading to see how a nation can allow itself to be dictated to by this bunch of left-wing, workshy, refugee long-hairs who in a society of any other country would be rejects.

The reaction among the black majority in South Africa was, however, diametrically different. After their release from prison many years later, both Nelson Mandela and Govan Mbeki told me that on Robben Island, news of the demonstrations transmitted to them by infuriated warders had been an enormous

Peter Hain in May 1970 and June 1971

morale boost. Mbeki said it had also brought a smile to their faces when they learnt that 'the son of the Hains' was leading the campaign.

Former South African Liberal Hugh Lewin was then in the fifth of his seven years in Pretoria Central and, like the Robben Islanders, had a news blackout imposed. He described how reports leaked through his warders, Afrikaner rugby fanatics to a man. First, they started swearing to each other about the '*betogers*' (demonstrators). Initially confused, Hugh began to piece it together and realised that something big was riling them. Gradually, the truth seeped out. He and his fellow 'politicals' were thrilled. Hugh claimed to have detected in the quality of the soup served up on a Saturday evening how successful the demonstrators had been in disrupting that afternoon's game: the poorer the soup, the more successful the demonstration.

Jonathan Steele of *The Guardian* reported on 5 March 1970:

> It is not hard to find South Africans who are delighted by the demonstrations against the Springboks. Go into Soweto … or into any other African township … and if you are not accompanied by a white South African, the masks fall. Eagerly they want the news confirmed. 'Is it true that they are having to use a thousand police to hold back the demonstrators today?' … Their views on the Springbok tour were straightforward. They were against it. And so were their neighbours, and anyone else you talked to.

The saturation coverage given to the campaign in the South African media reached parts of South African life that no other boycott campaign could, because most white South African men cared about sport first and foremost. The huge psychological and political impact was well illustrated by banner newspaper headlines – 'No Demonstrations!' – welcoming home a Springbok canoeing team in February 1970. The members of the team had arrived in Britain, canoed and left in virtual secrecy; we certainly never got to hear of it. But the team's captain was very clear about the reasons for such 'success' at an ecstatic homecoming reception when he exclaimed: 'Most demonstrators are hippies and hippies don't like water; that's why we weren't worried by them.'

Stopping the cricket tour

The rugby tour had provided the movement with a perfect springboard from which to plan direct action to stop the cricket tour, due to start at the beginning of May 1970. But opposition, coordinated by the AAM, went much wider. The churches, led by the former England cricket captain and Bishop of Woolwich, David Sheppard, urged cancellation. The Commonwealth Games, due to take place in Edinburgh that summer, also became an important lever. SANROC's international expertise and contacts were put to good use as it was privately pointed out to African and Asian countries that they would be in an intolerable position if they participated in the games at the same time as an apartheid cricket tour was under siege elsewhere in Britain.

Late in the night on 19 January 1970, demonstrators simultaneously raided fourteen of the seventeen county cricket club grounds. All were daubed with paint slogans. In addition, a small patch in the outfield of Glamorgan's Cardiff ground was dug up, and weed killer was sprayed on Warwickshire's Birmingham ground. Pre-planned telephone reports from each small, tight group poured in throughout the night to the Press Association news agency and to my home. In the morning the coordinated protest dominated the radio bulletins and television programmes, and there were screaming headlines with photos in the evening papers and the following day's national newspapers.

It was a devastating shock to the cricket authorities. The widespread strength of the

movement had been starkly revealed in an operation seemingly carried out with military precision. More than this, the spectre of a cricket tour collapsing amid damaged pitches and weed killer was conjured up and began to crystallise.

Speculation was rife about who was responsible. The AAM denied all knowledge. People inevitably accused the STST, believing it alone had the organisational capacity necessary to mount the raids. But I said (entirely accurately) that the STST national committee had not authorised or approved the action, thereby distancing us from it.

The only national figure to give the raids full backing was the YL national chairman, Louis Eaks, who attracted headlines and dominated the airwaves when he said that 'some Young Liberals had been involved.' This was accurate as far as it went, though his intervention provoked irritation among those involved who considered it opportunistic. It was in fact a covert operation by key STST activists in the clandestine Special Action Group, executed with meticulous planning, efficiency and impact.

However, the pressure on the Liberal Party leadership was intense, with angry denunciations by Conservatives and their newspaper supporters. The YLs, already notorious from their 'Red Guard' phase were viewed by many of their seniors as a liability, Louis even more than me. A few weeks earlier David Steel had braved hostility from constituents in his Scottish borders constituency, a centre of Scottish rugby, by joining pickets outside the match against the Springboks. He feared his stance as president of the AAM might oust him as the local MP, but in fact he clung on with a majority of 550 in June 1970.

Within weeks, 300 reels of barbed wire arrived at Lord's, and most county grounds introduced guard dogs and security. Then pressure on the cricket authorities intensified. West Indies cricket leaders angrily denounced the tour, and African, Asian and Caribbean countries talked of withdrawing from the Commonwealth Games. Gradually, a range of public bodies came out against the tour and there was talk of trade unions taking industrial action. Some Labour MPs, including the AAM's vice-chair, Peter Jackson, said they would join sit-down pitch invasions; North Cornwall Liberal MP John Pardoe seemed to endorse them too.

The chairman of the government-sponsored Community Relations Commission, Frank Cousins, told the home secretary that the tour would do 'untold damage' to race relations. On 12 February the Cricket Council called a press conference at Lord's. I managed to infiltrate it until spotted by officials, who stiffly ushered me out but not before I glimpsed an extraordinary sight: the pitch eerily surrounded by barbed wire, silhouetted in the snowy night. Lord's, the magisterial home of international cricket, looked for all the world like a concentration camp, symbolising the torment that had torn asunder this most dignified and graceful of games.

The Cricket Council issued a sombre statement explaining that the tour had been cut drastically to just twelve matches from its original twenty-eight and it was to be played on just eight grounds instead of the original twenty-two, with artificial all-weather pitches to be installed as an additional security precaution. It was a striking decision, on the one hand indicative of bunker-like obstinacy, on the other testimony to the growing power of the campaign. I denounced the decision, quipping that we might rename ourselves 'The Stop the Seventy *Half*-Tour campaign'.

However, the Conservative shadow attorney general, Sir Peter Rawlinson, attacked the home secretary, James Callaghan, for remaining 'neutral' and 'acknowledging the licence to riot'. Rawlinson also called for an injunction to be taken out against me, insisting that my public statements threatening to stop the tour constituted a direct incitement to illegal action. After cabinet documents were made public thirty years later (and, ironically, when I was a serving Labour government minister), it was also

revealed that ministers had discussed whether or not to prosecute me, with James Callaghan in favour and Tony Benn against. However, Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson then publicly opposed the tour for the first time.

The West Indian Campaign Against Apartheid Cricket was launched by leading black activist Jeff Crawford, whom I actively encouraged, because linking the campaign to racism in Britain added an important extra dimension. SANROC, through the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, an agency of the Organisation of African Unity, consolidated the basis for a Commonwealth Games boycott. Trade unions came out against the tour. Television workers and journalists threatened a media blackout, and radio's 'voice of cricket', John Arlott, announced he would not do the ball-by-ball commentary for which he was internationally renowned. Mike Brearley (later to be one of England's most successful cricket captains) took the courageous step of speaking at STST's national conference on 7 March 1970.

Opposition was by now reaching right into the establishment. Leading public figures, including David Sheppard, formed the Fair Cricket Campaign (FCC), whose vice-chairman was the senior Conservative Sir Edward Boyle. Though explicitly committed to lawful, respectable methods and publicly opposed to the STST's tactics, the FCC was privately friendly. I was invited for a meeting with its leaders that I undertook not to disclose, arriving to an atmosphere that was courteous if edgy. We quickly found cordial common ground after I said I was relaxed if they felt it necessary to criticise our militancy, but that it would be best if we refrained from arguing publicly with each other since we had a common objective (to stop the tour) and a common enemy (apartheid). David Sheppard, especially, saw the sense of this immediately, and we agreed to stay in touch and keep our contacts confidential.

I saw the power in having a 'spectrum of protest': the STST's militancy; the AAM's conventional pressure-group role and its very effective links with the labour movement; SANROC's expert international diplomacy; and the FCC's impeccable respectability. There was now a very broadly based opposition to the tour, which I knew was essential for victory. It also reflected my antipathy to the debilitating sectarianism I had witnessed

over the previous couple of years of radical activism.

Although the STST's direct action powered the whole campaign, it could have been isolated without a great hinterland of broad public support, and I was at pains to stake out a non-sectarian position, refusing to criticise the more moderate groups and understanding their concerns about our militancy. This also enabled STST activists under my leadership to include Liberals as well as Trotskyists and communists, who normally wouldn't be seen under the same political umbrella. We could all sink our ideological differences under the banner of action to stop the tour.

By April, the campaign's momentum was still increasing. Prime Minister Harold Wilson went further, saying people 'should feel free to demonstrate against the tour', drawing fierce criticism from right-wing MPs and media, even though he was careful to criticise disruptive protests. The British Council of Churches also called for peaceful demonstrations. The Queen announced that neither she nor any member of the royal family would make the traditional visit to the Lord's test match and the South Africans would not receive the traditional invitation to Buckingham Palace.

Then, with the tour just six weeks away, all SANROC's patient lobbying paid off when the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa announced that thirteen African countries would definitely boycott the Commonwealth Games if the tour went ahead. Asian and Caribbean countries soon followed, raising the prospect of a whites-only games in Edinburgh running alongside a whites-only cricket tour. Sparked off by local direct action, the campaign had provoked an international diplomatic and political furore.

The AAM played a crucial organisational role, both as a participant in the STST and in its own right; an AAM poster caught the public's imagination and was widely published. Under the caption 'If you could see their national sport, you might be less keen to see their cricket', it showed a policeman beating defenceless black citizens in Cato Manor township outside Durban.

The STST went ahead with plans to blockade the team at Heathrow Airport. Thousands of tickets were being bought up by local groups (the matches had been made all-ticket). Secret plans were being executed by the Special Action Group, which consulted me privately throughout. Ingeniously, the group had discovered an old underground train tunnel running right underneath Lord's Cricket Ground, with a disused but still functional air shaft that could facilitate a dramatic entry onto the pitch, potentially by hundreds of activists.

Although much activity was coordinated nationally by the STST, local groups operated quite independently. Partly by design, to avoid acting like a conspiracy, this was mainly a product of the way the movement had evolved. There was also a considerable degree of individualistic autonomy in the campaign.

I opened our front door one day to be faced by two young, bright-eyed if somewhat zany model-aeroplane buffs, with excitable plans to buzz the pitch during play from their aunt's flat

which overlooked Lords. There were reports from all over the country of other novel protest methods. Some individuals were breeding armies of locusts, which they planned to let free on the turf. Others acquired small mirrors with which they intended to blind the batsmen. Newspapers had a field day reporting on such stories, and I was blamed for just about everything, regardless of whether or not I had any prior knowledge or involvement, and was increasingly the target of hate mail and threats to my safety or life.

The combination of sport, race and direct action had a toxic potency for many on the right in Middle England. For some, a cricket tour to England being stopped by 'radical agitators' seemed equivalent to the loss of empire, as revealed in letters sent by members to the MCC. One labelled me and the STST as a 'complete negation of all this country stands for'; another saw the MCC standing against us as 'the last bastion of what remains of the British way of life'.

But events were scrambling to a climax. Harold Wilson was about to call a general election, and there was a notable shift in opinion. For the first time, E. W. Swanton, cricket correspondent for the conservative *Daily Telegraph*, and Ted Dexter, former England captain and one-time Conservative Party parliamentary candidate, both urged cancellation. Finally, Home Secretary James Callaghan formally requested it. A hurried meeting was arranged at Lord's and, at long last, the tour was off, cricket's leaders bitterly complaining they had had no option but to accede to what they interpreted as a government instruction but was, in reality, a face-saving excuse for their humiliation.

From their sordid manoeuvrings over Basil D'Oliveira to their astonishing decision to proceed with the 1970 invitation to the white South Africans, even after their own tour there had been stopped by the apartheid government, they seemed to me impervious to the modern world or to any appeals for human rights and equal cricketing opportunities, a relic of Empire long gone.

'Hain stopped play' was the cricketing headline in a sympathetic feature in *The Guardian* … Yet would it have happened without the flamboyant, iconoclastic, radical leadership of the Young Liberals from the mid-1960s to early 1970s? I doubt it.

'Hain stopped play' was the cricketing headline in a sympathetic feature in *The Guardian*. But the right-wing press trumpeted darkly about 'anarchy', 'lawlessness' and the threat to England's civilisation. A campaign with a nine-month gestation in the minds of a few people had won with mass support, the STST being one of the very few British protest groups to have completely achieved its objectives, its success widely recognised as a decisive blow against apartheid.[4]

Yet would it have happened without the flamboyant, iconoclastic, radical leadership of the Young Liberals from the mid-1960s to early 1970s? I doubt it.

Labour peer since 2015, Young Liberal national chair 1971–73, Peter Hain joined the Labour Party in 1977, was Labour MP for Neath 1991–2015, and a Labour Minister for twelve years, seven in the cabinet. Also author of A Pretoria Boy: South Africa's 'Public Enemy Number One' *(Icon Books, 2021).*

1. See Peter Hain, *Ad & Wal: Values, duty, sacrifice in apartheid South Africa* (Biteback, 2014)
2. For an account by students and staff at the college, see *The Hornsey Affair* (Penguin. 1969)
3. See Peter Hain and André Odendaal, *Pitch Battles: Sport, racism and resistance* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020)
4. See Peter Hain, *Don't Play with Apartheid: The background to the Stop the Seventy Tour Campaign* (Allen & Unwin, 1971)