

(Est. June , 1979)

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22 November 1994

The Honourable Mr S Tshwete
Minister of Sport and Recreation
Private Bag X869
PRETORIA
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Ref. No : SP(710)

Honourable Sir

In our letter dated 18 October 1994 I briefly sketched some of the events leading up to our inauguration on 23 June 1979, the philosophy we have developed during the past years, some of our activities, and the events that forced us to abort the 'unity talks'.

I need to reiterate that, despite the sobering experience this process turned out to be, we are still committed to unification and the creation of a tennis controlling body of national unity ; that our withdrawal from that process was solely due to both the other parties reneging on agreements unanimously reached, and to the process not having been finalised.

This being the case, SATU co-opted TFSA with a dowry of R500 000 (scaled down from the R6m for redressing imbalances which TFSA wanted in Hamburg in 1991), and a few perks.

We make no apologies for withdrawing. In fact, we are owed one.

What we envisaged to be a worthy and noble exercise, was debased and denigrated by the dishonesty and deceit we experienced. But, more important, it opened our eyes to the extent to which the establishment would resort to entrench itself and the utter lack of morality that infested it. Naturally, therefore, while our objectives have not changed in any way, our modus operandi in achieving those goals had to be reviewed and amended.

To have become party to such Machiavellian manipulation, to have capitulated in the face of typical tribal domination and arrogance, would not have served conciliation nor non-racialism in any way. In fact, it would only have strengthened the apartheid belief that the oppressed ought to be no more than appendages to the ruling white tribe.

We, very naively, considered that the unity talks would lay the foundation for an institution of national unity in and for the New South Africa. As it is, TFSA's capitulation to expediency and bribery turned it into an exercise in futility.

We were of the opinion that Mr Krish Naidoo's intervention, at your behest according to the Press, would prepare the way for some positive developments. Regrettably, the unrealistic and simplistic conditions that derived therefrom are far removed from the basic expectations and the long-term objectives of a New South African society. In fact, it reinforces perceptions that white tribal sport, and tennis in particular, considers us 'to be up for grabs'.

We do not believe that your brief to Mr Naidoo was restricted to a cosmetic exercise. We are firmly convinced that the long-term interests of the New society were of paramount importance in your decision to become involved. And it is because of this conviction that we approach you and your Ministry.

Despite the problems we experience, the very same that have afflicted us during our whole existence, we still are more national than SATU ever was, or TFSA will ever be. During that period, and before, no other so-called national body served the needs of the deprived and dispossessed, as we did ; even in the much-derided homelands and townships. **THUS, NO OTHER TENNIS BODY HAS THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE** we have in the areas of conciliation and promoting the game in and for a non-racial society.

We rightfully claim that we still are the major and only true representative of tennis players, nation-wide, who subscribe to non-racialism. And as such, we are adamant that the legacies of Apartheid sport can and shall not be part of the New South Africa.

It is our firm conviction that the TSA dispensation perpetuates the chasm between People's sport and Apartheid sport ; between our culture of poverty and denial, and their culture of affluence, opulence and entitlement ; that, in the final analysis, that dispensation does not promote conciliation and national unity which, as of now, are and ought to be the dominant themes in SA politics.

Furthermore, the fabrication of 'unity' at boardroom-level, as in some codes, has led to the plaint : sport in the townships is dead ; a situation which we are adamant shall not arise in tennis.

Our constituency is concerned with grassroots unity and development ; with making the game as accessible and affordable to as many as possible. This ,unfortunately, is not a TSA priority ; and for as long as international participation takes precedence over local participation, our aims and objectives are radically different.

We cannot and will not promote hierarchical unity. Nor will we sacrifice or destroy the ONLY tennis infra-structure that has served the needs of our people in a democratically-structured way and on the bases of non-racialism and non-elitism.


If we do have to choose between unification and serving the needs of our people, then obviously we choose the latter for as long as we need to.

Very regrettably Mr Naidoo's attempt at mediation is tantamount to creating hierarchical unity. This we have to reject .

What is imperative, as of now, is an intermediary to ensure that the parties involved themselves mediate a common future in an organised and structured manner.

It is our sincere hope that your consideration of the foregoing will result in a positive contribution to the resolution of the impasse.

Yours


AE FORTUIN

THE T A S A VISION

In our very first submission to the Steering Committee discussing unification, in January 1991, we set out certain basic principles we considered should form the basis for unification ; amongst others : non-racialism and merit selection.

After in-depth discussions, which included a private lunch hosted by Mr Johan Barnard (SATU President at the time) and attended by 3 TASA members where only merit-selection was discussed, these principles were unanimously accepted. Mr Barnard even piously referred to it as his bible. Very naively we accepted his bona fides ; but, as events unfolded later, we were forced to admit being victims of chicanery and deceit.

The full extent of this sleight of hand forcibly struck us in Hamburg at the conference of the International Tennis Federation. There, a letter dated 16 April 1991 and signed by the selfsame Mr Barnard was tabled pleading for the lifting of the SATU suspension. We had agreed to go to the conference because of a very simple mandate : to inform the ITF that we were engaged in unity talks and explain the progress that had already been made. Though this was deceit of the highest order, it was exacerbated by the admission of the then Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ian Laxton, that he had no knowledge of the letter or its contents.

I was at the point of withdrawing our delegation, but was prevailed upon to stay and see what could be salvaged.

Even before our departure for Hamburg, we were confronted by, but did not fully appreciate, the extent of the intrigue surrounding us.

In a premeditated leak to the Press the leaders of the cabal had decided unilaterally who should form the TASA delegation. It did not take long after our return for us to confirm our worst suspicions. But even that did not deter us in our efforts to attain unity.

In our January submission to the Steering Committee we raised an issue vitally important to unification : that ethnic residential areas, ethnic organisations and even institutions would be with us for a very long time to come ; that Atteridgeville, Laudium and Eersterus will not disappear overnight, and so, too, the various organisations, societies that serve those communities.

This is a reality which we in TASA have lived with our whole existence. And it is on the basis of this reality that we believe that, while we are committed to the non-racial principle as a philosophy that should pervade the total infrastructure at all levels, its practical implementation at grassroots-level needs to take cognisance of this indisputable fact.

During the decades of enforced statutory tribalisation by previous regimes, we had to create and develop our own social infrastructure to serve our various communities. And that infrastructure we created had to operate within the constraints and restraints that were forcibly imposed upon us as a deprived community. Thus we developed a sports culture of our own ; a culture of poverty, denial and deprivation, radically differing from that of the privileged and entitled minority section of society.

The stark alternative was to have denied ourselves the benefits that accrue therefrom.

And it is that infrastructure, tribal in origin, but definitely not in intent, that we have carried with us into the New South Africa.

We do realise that the legacy of the past cannot and must not be sustained for any longer than is necessary ; that all tribal structures will, as a matter of course, have to be demolished in order to build the New Society. But, until such time as a viable alternative is created and ensured, it is suicidal to renounce or demolish that which have served the oppressed faithfully and well during the past decades.

Another reality, and one that makes this imperative, is that white tribal sport in nearly all codes has been dominant, thanks to the white tribe's domination of society .

Our approach to unification never was for petty, opportunistic or mercenary reasons. We entered into the discussions solely in order to promote our ultimate objective of a single tennis controlling body of national unity.

The forces on the other side, however, were motivated by totally different reasons. On the one hand there were those who only thought in terms of the resuscitation of the tennis Springbok and its return to international respectability. And, on the other hand, those whose prime motive was : money is available.

Our prognosis of the 'unity' that was fabricated in 1991, has now been confirmed.

The new body exists in name only : to all intents and purposes the SATU which became the world's foremost outcast, has been resuscitated by the simplistic ruse of having a convenient black presence on its gravy train. It still is, as it was previously, primarily a vehicle for the promotion of white tribal sport and the advancement of elitism in tennis.

It has not shown any acceptance of the reality that in the New South Africa its constituency should transcend ethnic borders. Even its president has recently admitted : there is no unity except in the Western Province and Natal.

And it has shown no appreciation of the further reality : that the make-up of that constituency differs vastly from that of SATU's ; and that two vastly divergent cultures need to be married in and for the New South Africa.

After having discussed this issue at countless meetings, formally and informally, TASA are convinced that the S.A. tennis scene, to become and to be a true reflection of the Spirit of the New South Africa, needs to be restructured . Our suggestion is :

that TSA be a federation comprising Tennis Federation, SATU and TASA ;

that TSA be entrusted with

- a. international affairs ;
- b. planning and organising joint activities at provincial and local level with a view to promoting unity from grassroots level up ; and
- c. promote the cause of unity at all levels.

that the three components retain their various identities, until the interim period is ended by consensus.