THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
Revolution in the Caribbean

‘IM SHOCKED,’ said Sepp Blatter when he heard allegations that some of his most trusted colleagues had bought armsful of World Cup tickets direct from FIFA and sold them to touts. ‘This is something that shocks us,’ repeated the President. ‘Our disciplinary commission has the power to intervene and even to sanction them.’

Blatter was talking in Paris in July 1998. Six months earlier the office of the FIFA General Secretary had been sent a fax from Chet Greene. ‘Please send attached the final and complete order for tickets for World Cup France from the Antigua Football Association.’ Attached were three sheets, the official FIFA order form. It seemed that a substantial proportion of the 70,000 people of the twin Caribbean islands of Antigua and Barbuda, average wage £93 a week, wanted to buy tickets and travel to France. Antigua’s general secretary ordered a total of 2,964 tickets, including 147 for the Final. The request was passed swiftly to FIFA’s ticket office. So swiftly that they acknowledged Chet’s order by fax the same day.

At the end of February 1998 Chet got bad news. Demand for tickets was so heavy that his order had to be cut back. He could have only 613 tickets. He got an invoice for 57,526.70 francs (US$39,763.33).

Chet attempted to get hold of more World Cup tickets from Lennart Johansson. The UEFA president waited two weeks before replying, ‘Mr. Johansson has asked us to inform you that he unfortunately is not in a position to assist you with regard to purchasing tickets for the World Cup Final in Paris.’ Chet was close to the Bird dynasty — who’d led the fight for independence in Antigua — and he arranged for Prime Minister Lester Bird and the sports minister and his wife to attend tournament. While in France, he got his hands on some more tickets from FIFA, including another four for the final. He or rather the Antigua association — still owed FIFA 57,526.70 fr for his 613 tickets. Who was going to pay this as of May 2002, this bill had not been settled.

‘DEAR MR CHET GREENE,’ faxed the American business-man from the Pacific North West, an exporter of sports kit to national associations around the world. ‘You told me about FIFA’s Financial Assistance Programme and how you were excited about it. I took advantage myself of this programme and have benefited from it personally. I would like to Work with you on the US$250,000 a year programme. I am sure you understand how much profit awaits the hungry businessman such as you and myself. Call me and I’ll tell you about my experience with the Liberia Football Assn and how much money I made with them. You won’t believe it.’

Wrong, Mr Hungry Businessman. Chet did believe it and was writing cheques against FIFA’s US$1 million grant over four years. The money started arriving in 1998. He bought a new air conditioning unit for the office, changed his mind and installed it in his home. He was so busy spending the grant that he
mislaid all the paperwork for the first year, so it’s been impossible to audit the grant for that period. In the years to come he didn’t keep much more.

The following year it was decided that Chet would be paid from the grant a salary of US$1,000 a week — one fifth of the FIFA grant and five times the local average wage — for the part-time job of running the island’s amateur leagues. The salary was paid by banker’s order direct from FIFA in Zurich to Chet’s account at the Antigua 86 Barbuda Investment Bank where it jostled for space with the salary from his government job as Commissioner for Sport.

As well as his two salaries Chet ran his own business importing and distributing sports kit. Umbro thought they had bought exclusive rights to sell kit at international matches on the island. They complained to Chet in July 1997 when they discovered rival kit manufacturer Admiral’s goods were on sale at Antigua’s ground as well.

Admiral weren’t too happy either. In March 1998 they said Chet the hungry businessman wasn’t paying his bills and refused to supply any more product on credit. ANOTHER YEAR, another high-profile international tournament, another opportunity for Chet to use his clout with FIFA. It was the finals of Euro 2000 and one of Chet’s associates, an Antiguan and his wife with an office in Tilbury, Essex had assembled a list of fans looking for tickets. They wanted 480, including 40 for each for the quarter-finals, semis and the final, and they faxed the list to Chet. Writing on the headed notepaper of the Antigua association, Chet approached UEFA’s office in Nyorn Switzerland with the order. UEFA offered only 40 tickets for early round games, demanding cash with the order.

By the Spring of 2000, under Chet’s direction, the Antiguan association had not only spent all the money FIFA had given it since the autumn of 1998, it had overspent by US$108,000.00 where all the money had gone to was a complete mystery. There was only one answer: ask for more. FIFA agreed, but with a few conditions. Chet must set up a new bank account for FIFA's money. And he must submit it to the scrutiny of a firm of Antiguan accountants. The money must be spent only according to a budget it submitted by Chet and approved by finance chief Linsi.

That's fine,’ said Chet. FIFA appointed the auditing company, CAS Hewlett & Co, and agreed to meet their fees. FIFA also agreed to send the association grants of US$612,000 over the next two years.

Raymond Doorgen, a slim—built East Indian from Guyana, was in his mid-forties and an employee of Hewlett’s. He was made SOLE signatory on the FIFA grant account, and he celebrated his new job by flexing his fingers, unsheathing his pen and writing some serious cheques. He knew the best place for FIFA’s money and over the next couple of years he moved around £200,000 to his personal accounts. Some of the money was eventually returned but the association’s accounts were such a mess that no-one can say how much. Doorgen’s hand never tired and he signed more than 60 cheques for his own personal benefit. The Premier Beverage company, the Epicurean, Southern Fry and the Food Court were always pleased to see Raymond Doorgen drop by with his FIFA cheque book.
The budget submitted to F IFA was fast forgotten. Chet Wrote to Doorgen asking him to set up a £10,000 loan to the association. Then Chet and Ralph Potter wanted bundles of money to take on a trip to Brazil. ‘Here it is,’ said Doorgen, and he went along too, all paid for by FIFA. Doorgen took his responsibilities so seriously that he insisted on a trip to Miami, using FIFA funds, to examine some grass that might be used for a football pitch.

Doorgen was brilliant with the money. He approved a US$15,000 cheque to Jack Warner’s Simpaul travel company in Trinidad for air tickets. He approved £400 for a gift to an Antigua cricketer who’d been selected for . . . the West Indies cricket team. According to the budget agreed with FIFA he should have been paying the fees outstanding to local football coaches. Budget What budget He’d torn it up long ago.

The money poured in from Switzerland and poured out to Doorgen’s private accounts. Before long the association was in the red again and loyal workers at the office whose salaries, a fraction of Chet’s, were part of the FIFA-agreed budget, were laid off for three months. Chet paid himself £10,000 in ‘allowances’ that definitely weren’t allowed by the FIFA budget.

Now that all the money was gone, Chet temporarily closed the national football programme. He told the men’s and youth teams to hang up their boots and some coaches were sent home without pay. This was ‘to alleviate current financial difficulties’.

The coaches weren’t surprised to learn that times were lean, but then again, most of them had no idea so much money had flowed in. ‘We never knew there was a FIFA grant,’ one coach told me. ‘We were never told about it.’ Then Chet was off to Korea and Japan for the World Cup.

Chet had applied to the Goal project for another big grant to create a pitch, changing rooms and offices, promising to name it the ‘Jack Austin Warner Football Development Centre’. In the middle of 2002, the first installment arrived, US$161,439 from FIFA. A year later I visited the site where the pitch was planned and saw horses grazing in rough scrub alongside a Wrecked beer lorry. I went to Chet’s offices in a government building in Cassada Gardens to ask him about all those FIFA grants. He offered to throw me down a concrete staircase.

The association failed to pay a hotel bill for the national team in England, and football was falling apart in Antigua. In November 2002 a determined local reporter, Ian ‘Magic’ Hughes, began digging into Chet’s ticket orders and asking what had happened to FIFA’s one million dollars.

Just before Christmas 2002, Chet went off to Nassau in the Bahamas to get married and returned in time for the meeting of the association called once every four years for elections. He assumed Ralph Potter would be re-elected president and himself automatically re-appointed general secretary.

No such luck. Many of Chet’s individual supporters could not produce proof they’d paid their subscriptions, their right to vote was challenged by his opponents and the meeting was adjourned.
Reporter Ian Hughes ran another well-researched story about the manipulation of the FIFA money. It was crisis time. Something must be done, quickly, to roll back the attackers. Ralph had a brilliant idea. He told a local radio station that the associations money and the FIFA million dollars were safe because they had been managed by accountant Raymond Doorgen in his capacity as a ‘partner’ of the reliable local firm of CAS Hewlett.

‘That’s news to us,’ said the managing director of CAS Hewlett & Co in a furious letter to Potter. ‘We were never appointed, orally or in writing, to manage the fund provided by FIFA. Raymond Doorgen did this on his own account without informing his employer.’ Surely the game was up.

Not quite. Five days later FIFA deputy general secretary Jerome Champagne came to Chet’s rescue with a letter assuring everyone there was nothing to worry about. He recalled how two years earlier Chet, Jack and FIFA had agreed measures to protect FIFA’s funds and he soothed, ‘We are happy that the procedures have helped meet our joint objective of stabilising the financial situation of the ABFA.’ He confirmed that ‘Mr Raymond L Doorgen, a partner at CAS Hewlett & Co, has submitted regularly quarterly statements.’ He copied his letter to Hewlett’s.

The phone and fax lines between Antigua and Zurich throbbed for the next 24 hours. Jerome learned the truth. Raymond Doorgen was not and never had been ‘a partner at CAS Hewlett & Co’. The man was no more than a book-keeper.

So Linsi and FIFA had been lied to. What would Jerome do now? Jump on the next flight to Antigua, knock Chet’s and Ralph’s and Raymond’s heads together, and salvage what was left of FIFA’s money.

Jerome called up the letter he’d sent 24 hours earlier, the one in which he’d described Doorgen as a ‘partner’ at Hewlett’s. He deleted the word ‘partner’, inserted ‘senior employee’, and sent it off to Chet, for the record. No complaint, not a whimper. Everything remained tickety-boo.

It wasn’t tickety-boo in Antigua. Reporter Ian Hughes published more damaging investigations in the Antigua Sun, revealing among other things Chet’s gigantic salary. Chet and Ralph were in deepening trouble. Who else might save them?

Jack Warner dictated a letter. ‘Dear Mr Greene, Your Association has followed the FIFA guidelines and, in many ways, represents a model for the rest of the region.’ Tickety-boo! ‘On the question of your salary which was recommended and paid by the FIFA, it is clear that there are persons operating out of malice and envy, and as such, I have no intention of dignifying the nonsense I have been reading with a comment of any kind.

‘Suffice it to say that more goodwill emerges from the many administrative decisions that your association has taken over the last four years than your detractors will ever imagine,’ insisted the FIFA vice-president, referring in passing to ‘my friend’ Prime Minister Lester Bird.
‘In conclusion,’ said Warner, ‘I wish to state that, in every case, President Ralph Potter and you have represented your association, country and region with pride and, further, that your performance and representation at the regional and international levels have been nothing short of exemplary. Be consoled by the fact that people only throw stones at trees which bear fruit.’

The association’s general meeting restarted at the multi-purpose centre at Perry Bay on Sunday 18 February and broke up after five hours’ wrangling and no votes. They met again on 6 March and, with still no consensus on who was eligible to vote could agree on only one thing; somebody had to keep the association ticking over. The meeting appointed a three-man Interim Committee, led by the respected trades unionist Clarence Crump.

This new team Wrote to Chuck Blazer in New York and Urs Linsi in Zurich asking politely for money to keep football happening in the island. Blazer and Linsi didn’t write back. The general secretary of CONCACAF and the finance chief of FIFA would deal only with Chet.

They were happy to deal with Raymond Doorgen too, but all that changed when Raymond got a letter in March 2003 from his boss. ‘The recent revelations in the news media and other sources, as made it clear beyond doubt that you have engaged in unlawful activity by allowing yourself to be appointed as an Accountant and Funds Manager, by one of our clients, in direct competition with us, while still working for us as a Semi-Senior Accounts Clerk.’

Hewlett’s were not happy. ‘We are informed that you represented yourself as a senior partner and as a result obtained an engagement which was intended for a qualified Chartered Accountant, which of course you are not. You are also aware that your engagement with the client is fraudulent, and that possible legal action is pending.’ Raymond was on the road with a month’s pay in lieu of notice.

Meanwhile the interim committee was getting desperate. ‘We are obliged to make Contact once again,’ they wrote to Linsi, ‘to humbly request information on the status of our request for funding under the Financial Assistance Programme.’

At last FIFA responded. Not with help, but with a devastating blow for honest Antiguan footballers, fans and officials. Zurich, 20 May 2003. ‘The FIFA Emergency Committee has decided to suspend the Antigua & Barbuda Football Association,’ announced Markus Siegler, Blatter’s mouthpiece claimed ‘the current chaotic situation in the administration of football in this country was preventing the national association from assuming its duties correctly.’ He didn’t explain what this meant.

As word of the suspension spread around the island, young men wept in sorrow and disbelief. Antigua’s Under-23 squad were due to compete in the regional qualifying tournament for the Athens Olympic games. Now their Olympic dreams were dashed. Football supporters on the island petitioned IOC president Jacques Rogge. Didn’t the IOC claim to stand up for the right of athletes to perform their sports

The petition said, ‘The athletes of Antigua 85 Barbuda Under-23 squad who through no fault of their own have been removed arbitrarily from the Olympic qualifying matches are now in deep despair as most of
them will be too old to ever again compete in future Olympics. The team manager Mr Thadeus Price puts it into the proper perspective when he says, “The squad is hurting and Antigua and Barbuda is hurting.”

Antigua is small but it produces world-beaters. The petition was signed by former West Indies Cricket captain Sir Viv Richards, one of the greatest batsmen the game has ever seen, and fellow Windies team members Curtly Ambrose, Kenny Benjamin and Andy Roberts. Former World middleweight boxing champ Maurice Hope signed up and so did Maritza Marten Garcia, the Cuban discus Gold medalist in Barcelona Who coached in the island. Most of Antigua’s religious leaders and members of all political parties added their signatures along with representatives of most of the soccer clubs.

IOC President Jacques Rogge sent Blatter the mildest of letters asking him to explain why these athletes were being excluded, and left it at that. Blatter, who is also an IOC member sworn to uphold athletes’ rights, replied that FIFA was sending a delegation to Antigua ‘to look at the situation’. He didn’t say when. So a generation of Antigua’s finest were denied their one chance to compete at the Olympics. Sepp was there in Athens, beaming as usual from the VIP box. ‘SERIOUS LEVELS of mismanagement, conflict of interest, abuse of power, negligence, financial irregularities and possible criminal activity that must be reported to the relevant authority,’ was the summary of an investigation by the three-man Interim Committee.

Chairman Clarence Crump and his two colleagues published their report in June 2003, and it didn’t look good for Chet Greene. Crump SC Co accused Chet of ‘unacceptable and abusive conduct that passed for effective leadership’. They asked him to produce receipts for the purchases he’d made and records of payments to sponsors. Chet was struck by a flash of memory. His office had been burgled. His records stolen. Was this crime reported to the police why, no, Chet was far too traumatized for that. It was gone, all gone, the receipts, the sponsor records, everything.

In January 2001 Chet had asked to be reimbursed for £5,000 he’d spent on ‘equipment’. He didn’t produce a receipt. Why should he Doorgen was always happy to pay up without one. Asked later what the ‘equipment’ was, Doorgen couldn’t remember. Years later a receipt miraculously turned up. A receipt from a company owned by Chet.

Crump SC Co discovered that Antigua football had no up-to-date constitution, just a ten-year-old pile of scribbled updates that hadn’t been put to members. Indeed, Chet hadn’t called an annual general meeting in the past four years.

They signed off with a subtle but unmistakable rebuke: ‘We Wonder,’ they Wrote, ‘how this situation could have existed over such a long period of time given the oversight that FIFA is presumed to have on national associations.’ That did it. Chet’s friends in CONCACAF and Zurich were furious.

Clarence Crump and his interim committee, their task completed, wanted to step down. They announced that elections for new officials would be held the following week.
Next morning they got another letter from Deputy General Secretary Jerome Champagne: ‘Dear Sirs, We have been informed that an elective General Assembly of your national association is scheduled on 29 June 2003. Due to the current situation of football in Antigua and Barbuda we wish to inform you that we will not recognise any elections before a FIFA/CONCACAF delegation visits your country and makes a global assessment of the litigation with the parties involved.’

‘Consequently,’ added Jerome, ‘We urge the latter not to take any steps that might lead to an even more difficult situation. Thank you for your attention to the foregoing.’

And What became of Blatter’s pledge to the IOC’s Jacques Rogge that FIFA would send a delegation to Antigua, Antigua was suspended in May and it was September before the delegation turned up. Stepping off the plane first was Jerome Champagne. Next came Harold Taylor, general secretary of the Caribbean Football Union and Jack Warner’s enforcer. Taylor had already tried to intimidate Crump SC Co, telling them that if they wanted any money from FIFA they must stamp ‘General Secretary Chet Greene’ on their requests, even though he no longer held the office. Lastly came Turkish executive committee member Senes Erzik, a nice man and no trouble-maker.

After three days the delegation left and Jerome promised that Within 48 hours FIFA would send a list of proposed members of a ‘normalisation committee’ to steer Antiguan football back into grace. Privately Jerome Whispered to the Antiguans that Chet wouldn’t be one of them.

Before Jerome could get back to his desk in Switzerland Varner’s man Harold Taylor intervened and sent out invitations to join the committee. Top of the list, Chet and Ralph along with their buddies, enough of them to outvote the dissenters. Days passed, then weeks as Warner arm-wrestled Jerome.

In the meantime some football officials reported Chet to Antigua’s Director of Public Prosecutions, alleging theft of FIFA funds, but no prosecution has followed.

The normalisation committee was announced. Clarence Crump was to be chairman. And the secretary Bitter laughter broke out all over Antigua. The secretary was to be Chet Greene himself. The face-saver for Jerome Was that Chet Was denied a vote. Chet and Ralph went off on an all-expenses paid jaunt to Doha in Qatar ‘representing Antigua’ at FIFA’s congress for 2003. The suspension was lifted but too late for the young men who’d hoped to play in the Olympic qualifying games.

After a year of trying to make things work, Clarence Crump had had enough. He was invited to speak at the association’s annual prize-giving at the beginning of March 2004, just as Antiguan football readied itself for elections that were a full fifteen months overdue. Crump delivered a blistering attack on Chet Greene and his cronies.

‘Hiding and delaying information, deliberately incorrectly writing minutes, unilaterally taking decisions, selective leaking of information, ongoing press attacks through surrogate journalists were some of the many attempts to undermine and destabilize the normalisation committee and the game of football,’ he said, angrily.
‘Before the committee was officially formed the viruses were trying hard to fester themselves by forming a bogus committee and this prevented the announcement of the real committee, which was to be formed by FIFA,’ said Crump.

Chet Greene’s response was to call the accusations against him ‘baseless and desperate’.

Come election day Chet stood for president of the association and was defeated 23 votes to 14 by Merv Richards, 21 former national player and coach and brother of Viv Richards.

Everybody assumed Chet was out of football. So how come he was wearing a FIFA blazer and attended FIFA’s centennial congress in Paris in May 2004 and FIFA’s player of the year gala in Zurich in December. Warner created a new post at the Caribbean Football Union that kept Chet in the game. Chet, the man who had been instrumental in his country’s young footballers being robbed of their Olympic dream, now had ‘responsibility for all youth football in the region’, well-funded and well-placed to wait and see if he could trip up Merv Richards and his new clean team and, in time, take back control of the Association.

FURTHER west across the Caribbean was Jamaica, the football kingdom of Captain Horace Burrell. He never missed a chance to announce his belief that football should demonstrate the highest ethical standards. So when Jamie Lawrence, 21 new member of Jamaica's national squad, disclosed in a press interview that a decade earlier he’d been to prison for robbery, Jamie was out on his ear.

‘it is the policy of the Jamaica Football Federation that if anyone connected to the sport is convicted of a criminal offence, he or she can no longer represent Jamaica,’ Burrell dictated when he heard the news in June 2000.

Jamie Lawrence, aged 30 and born in South London, had made a success of his football career and was playing for Bradford City in the First Division when he was selected for Jamaica’s national team. He’d also made a name for himself counseling kids against getting involved in crime. ‘The fact he has since lived an exemplary life has no say,’ added Burrell.

Four weeks later Captain Burrell was in Zurich receiving FIFA’s highest honour, the Order of Merit, from President Blatter in the same hall where four years earlier his girlfriend had cast the vote of the absent Haitian delegate, Jean-Marie Kyss.

Captain Burrell sacked one Jamaican national coach because ‘there has been a deterioration in the standard of discipline amongst the team members’. Blatter was so impressed he appointed Burrell to the special disciplinary committee for the 2002 World Cup.

A year later Burrell noted that elections were due and Jamaican football seemed to be getting tired of him. ‘Burrell doesn’t respect us,’ said one official. ‘He doesn’t listen to us.’ Other officials found him distant and arrogant.
Burrell appealed for help. Blatter dropped everything and flew to Kingston with Jack Warner to be photographed with Burrell celebrating the sixth anniversary of Jamaica’s qualifying for the 1998 World Cup. Blatter handed out special awards and broke the ground for new facilities to be funded by the Goal project. ‘What we are doing today is for the future of the country,’ said Blatter. ‘Football can use it as the school of life. The philosophy of football is to offer hope to the population of the world.’ Burrell was described in the press as ‘gleeful’.

Blatter and Warner might as well have stayed home, because eight days later Jamaica’s football family disposed of Burrell’s services. Veteran administrator Crenston Boxhill Won 54-49 and promised a new World of transparency. Burrell, cast out after nine years, was defiant in defeat. ‘I have other football appointments,’ he sneered. ‘I’m a member of the disciplinary committee of FIFA, I’m also the first Vice-president of the Caribbean Football Union and also a member of the disciplinary committee of the CONCACAF. So I still have a lot to do and maybe even more.’ Then he quickly added, ‘First of all, I love country over self and Whatever I can do for my country, I will.’

IT TOOK three months to put in place the campaign to undermine the Crenston Boxhill clean team. Warner turned up in Kingston again in March 2004 to launch the Caribbean Football Union’s new marketing division. ‘Under the astute leadership of Captain Horace Burrell and his dedicated staff,’ said Warner, ‘we in the Caribbean now have to harness the commercial energies of the region for the benefit of football.’

Regional football officials suspected this was a device to lure sponsors away from the Jamaican federation that Burrell had left with debts of more than £300,000. Burrell’s deputy was Horace Reid who had previously been his general secretary. The voters didn’t want them but Warner had to be seen to back his chosen official - and send the message that anybody who opposed him or his placemen would get whacked. While they waited to return from exile jack would stand by Burrell and Reid just as he had stood by Chet Greene and Ralph Potter in Antigua.

As Boxhill and his team worked to reduce their inherited debts Burrell and Reid were jaunting to New York and then Zurich on vital FIFA business. In Switzerland they caroused with the discredited Chet Greene at one of Sepp’s parties.

Next came the bogus stories. In early 2005, echoing the complaint of Antigua’s Clarence Crump the previous year about ‘press attacks through surrogate journalists’, claims were planted in the Jamaican media that Crenston Boxhill was about to be ousted by a ‘no-confidence’ resolution. No such resolution Surfaced it was tosh.

Then came a letter from FIFA in February 2005 that simultaneously found its way to the Jamaican media. FIFA sought to block Boxhill’s plan to sell and lease-back the Jamaican federation’s offices in Kingston, in an attempt to reduce the debts Burrell had left behind him. Burrell had spent half of FIFA’s US$1 million grant on the building.
‘If it is confirmed that your federation in fact sells this building as part of the response to its current financial situation, please be advised that FIFA will consider this action to be a misuse of FIFA funds, and FIFA will . . . take this matter up with all necessary bodies to take most severe measures against the JFF, including expulsion.’

The next day, on the eve of the federation’s general meeting, Horace Reid and another Burrell ally announced dramatically that they had been threatened with death if they turned up. Heroically, Reid said, ‘I would much rather die for my principles and those things that I strongly believe in but I am deeply disappointed with that kind of skullduggery tactics. We have lost, it seems, all sense of decency and decorum in the football arena.’

In March 2005 the Jamaican federation lost patience with Burrell’s sniping from the sidelines and issued a press statement accusing him of ‘constantly undermining the organisation’. It went on, ‘Captain Horace Burrell continues his sustained effort to seek to cast doubt on the current leadership of the JFF,’ and reminded the country that Burrell’s legacy was ‘a heavily debt ridden organisation and negotiated deals that limit the immediate possibilities for building a financially viable federation’.

By late 2005 Burrell’s Captain’s Bakery was sponsoring almost half of the island’s parish football associations. On Christmas Eve he announced, ‘I have been approached by people all around football . . . If I am called on by my colleagues in the football fraternity for my leadership, I would not hesitate to offer myself.’

In early January 2006, as the annual meeting approached, Burrell continued in the same vein. ‘If I am asked to assume the leadership of the JFF I would truly be honoured and would have no reservation about taking up the offer. Based on my past experiences and my successes as Well as my contacts on the World stage, I know I am ready to make a success of the job.’ President Boxhill riposted, ‘The small group of detractors are trying hard but they are in it for personal reasons. They don’t care about the development of the game in the country.’

Two days before the meeting, in an echo of the intervention 12 months earlier, FIFA wrote again to the JFF. This time, in a letter described by the local press as ‘scathing’ and ‘stinging’, FIFA instructed the JFF to provide ‘detailed, legally relevant and complete information within five Working days or the FIFA-funded Jamaica Goal Project will be cancelled’.

Boxhill’s administration wanted to move the Goal project location from the site where Burrell and Blatter had broken the ground three years previously. According to FIFA’s letter, ‘the FIFA president was misled - and through that FIFA as a body’. Boxhill commented, ‘All along We have been meeting the deadlines according to plans and we have been told that we are on track, so when I get a letter like this from the top, I was surprised and disappointed.’

The morning of the meeting the Jamaica Observer headline asked, ‘Is this a stench from FIFA and answered, ‘We are beginning to smell a rat - one that stinks to the heavens . . . the administration ought not to be undermined by international guerrilla tactics, which appears to be the case.’
That afternoon, when the no-confidence motion was tabled, Boxhill’s opponents failed by 53-51 to win two-thirds of the vote and the motion fell. He commented, ‘The election was between Burrell and football, and football has Won.’

But Boxhill had only just started cleaning up the mess he inherited. He was unhappy with Jamaica’s share of Caribbean Football television rights arranged by Jack Warner. Boxhill wanted out of the deal, reckoning Jamaica would do better on the open market. Other Caribbean associations took courage from Jamaica’s lead and said they might follow.

The first cracks were appearing in Warner’s total grip on his empire and the assumption that he and Blatter would never be challenged.

The Caribbean’s honest football enthusiasts had had enough of Jack and his big backers in Zurich. The empire was beginning to fight back.