

Commemorating Rev. Karl Schmidt (*7.10.1928 † 13.3.2018), pastor of the Lutheran Church in Germany and from 1966 to 1971 pastor on the Shiloh mission station in the Eastern Cape, South Africa



Speech of Karl Schmidt at the World Social Forum on Migration in Johannesburg, 5-8.12.2014

Ansprache von Karl Schmidt auf dem Weltsozialforum in Johannesburg, 5.-8. Dezember 2014

My name is Karl Schmidt, living as Native in Stuttgart, South Germany. I am a Lutheran pastor and member of the Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum).

1. Working in Germany and South Africa

I practiced as pastor in Germany in the congregations in Ellwangen/Jagst and Unterheimbach/Bretzfeld before leaving together with my wife Ilse and our four children to South Africa where we lived and served the Moravian Mission in Shiloh, Goshen, Engotini, Sada and the region near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape. I was district Minister of Moravian “Missions Stations” of Xhosa- and Afrikaans-speaking congregations in the then “Border area” declared by the Apartheid government as “Ciskei” as opposed to the nearby declared white prosperous farm areas.

In this remote rural area we experienced a very strong sense of community besides all the poverty and tragedy experienced during the forced removals as part of the inhumane “Resettlement Policy” of the Apartheid regime. Thousands of black people from towns and white areas were declared “superfluous people”, were moved, transported on trucks and dumped in “Resettlement Townships” and Bantustans in rural areas such as Dimbaza, Sada, Ilings and other parts of the Ciskei and Transkei.

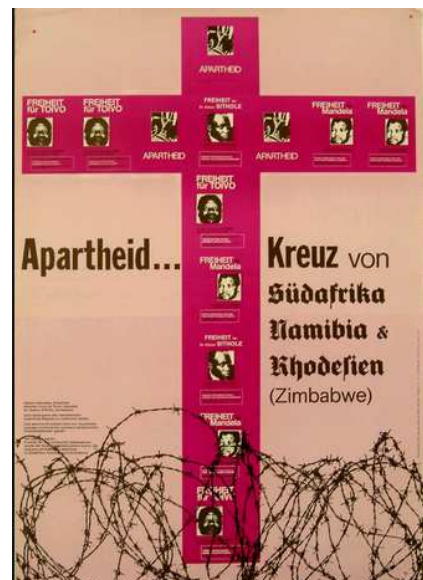
A Franciscan Father, Cosmos Desmond, visited many “Resettlement Areas” and wrote an eye-witness report titled “The Discarded People”. For these ten thousands “Discarded People” Sada township was created. We established under the leadership of my wife Ilse and financial support from “Brot für die Welt / Bread for the World” a small textile factory supporting about 100 women: the “Sada Sewing Centre”.

In the name of the “South African Council of Churches” (SACC) and its regional body the “Border Council of Churches” (BCC), I became responsible for the “Dependence Conference” (DC) – for dependents of political prisoners (some also on Robben Island). It meant providing support for more than 100 families as well as for former political prisoners after being released with a banning order.

This task gave me an insight into the Apartheid tragedy, a world kept out of sight of the privileged white population. During the work for the DC, I discovered that the most respected prisoner was NELSON MANDELA, the leader of the “African National Congress” (ANC). It convinced me: Nelson Mandela is the leader for a future democratic South Africa.

The local police officer Sergeant Du Plessis did not like my activities. Therefore, in 1971 I was expelled by the “Special Branch”, the Secret Police.

Our passports were withdrawn and together with my wife Ilse and the 5 children Christiane, Bettina, Ernst-Ulrich, Dorothea and Angelika Nomasundu we returned to Germany.



1. Action “Free Nelson Mandela!” / Aktionsgruppe Freiheit für Nelson Mandela



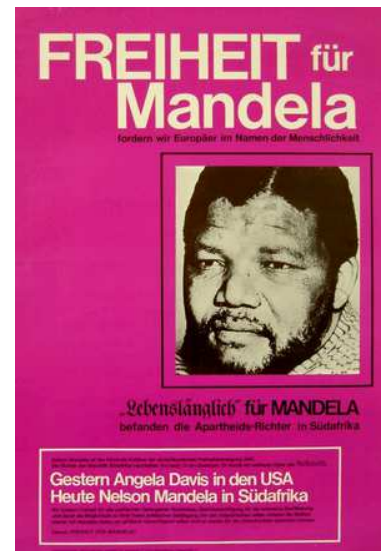
After leaving South Africa and settling as pastor in the congregation in Bönningheim (near Stuttgart), I initiated with committed friends, South Africans in exile and visitors such as Bayers Naudé, the non-profit organisation “Action Freedom for Nelson Mandela”. For 17 years I was chairperson of the action group.



In 1974, together with my daughter Bettina, I was in Otfresen at the founding meeting of the Anti-Apartheid-Movement (AAB) in West-Germany.

Together the Anti-Apartheid organisations were engaging in public protesting against Apartheid during church festivities like the “Kirchentage”, in pedestrian malls, in front of banks, travel agencies and the South African embassy and consulates. In front of shops the “fruit boycott campaign” of the “Evangelische Frauenarbeit” raised public awareness about our economic ties with the suppressive Apartheid regime and how each individual can make a difference by boycotting South African products.

Since 1989 I was invited, partly also with my wife Ilse, to undertake “Violence/Peace Monitor”-work in Namibia (1989) and later in KwaZulu/Natal (1992) in cooperation with “Practical Ministries”, an NGO headed by my dear friend and colleague Danny Chetty. There, the Zulu-ethnic party IFP of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi was violently fighting ANC followers. For our German government Buthelezi was the “moderate Christian black leader” supported by conservative politicians in various ways, rejecting Nelson Mandela the “militant, communist agitator”.



On Christmas Day 1995 about 1.000 Inkatha fighters attacked the rural village Shobashobane killing 18 ANC followers, creating massive destruction and fear. But the new Mandela Government recognised the danger and stopped a most likely civil war.

In 2004 I received an award from the City of Durban/eThekweni “For the Contribution to South Africa’s Freedom & Democracy”.

After my retirement in 1990, I changed my active engagement in 2002 from post-Apartheid South Africa to the Apartheid-like human disaster in Israel-Palestine and the Near East conflicts.

Both regions had/have in common Germany’s strong economic trade and political support with white South Africa, but not the Blacks - with powerful Israel, excluding the Palestinian population. The latter receive small sums of development aid.

In 2007 I visited the Israeli-Palestinian NGO “Zochrot” (Remembering) based in Tel Aviv www.zochrot.org. Its focus is on the on-going expulsion of Palestinians and on the return of Palestinian refugees. Since then I am a close friend of Zochrot and its founder Eitan Bronstein, who moved on to found the NGO www.de-colonizer.org.

The aim of Zochrot was and still is: the liberation of the Palestinians and the Jews alike – to liberate the occupied and the occupier as foundation for one democratic state.

In 2008 I joined the “Palästina-Komitee Stuttgart” called PaKo and I am one of its delegates at the World Social Forum who experienced Apartheid in South Africa and was active in overcoming white colonial settler states in Africa.

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Ein Leben für mehr Miteinander

Ehrung für Stuttgarter Pfarrer

Hautnah haben Karl und Ilse Schmidt das Apartheidsregime in Südafrika miterlebt. In Deutschland setzte sich das Pfarrerehepaar daraufhin jahrelang für Nelson Mandela ein. Nun ist der Stuttgarter von der Hafenstadt Durban mit einem Preis geehrt worden.



Let me highlight some international reactions and comparisons experienced during my protest against Apartheid. They also allow us to relate the tragedy of Apartheid with Zionism.

2. International actions and reactions

Sharpeville – 21.2.1960. A massacre at the Anti-Pass-Demonstration with 69 black persons being killed, made the world aware of the conflict-ridden situation in the Apartheid state established in 1948. At the same time, the West-German government aimed at strengthening ties with the Apartheid government by entering into negotiations for an “German-South African Cultural Agreement” which came in force on Christmas Day, 25.12.1963.

4.4.1968, the assassination of Martin Luther King jr. shocked the world. The “World Council of Churches” (WCC) decided on an “Ecumenical Programme to Combat Racism” (PCR). As part of the PCR-Programme it was decided on 2nd September 1970, to give financial support to the Liberations Movements in Southern Africa as well as providing assistance for educational work and for peace activities.

Crime against Humanity 10.11.1975: On 11th June 1964 Nelson Mandela and 7 Rivonia co-prisoners were sentenced to life imprisonment.

The General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) finally decided on the resolution for the “Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination”, including “the unholy alliance between South African racism and Zionism”. Hence it defined “Zionism as a form of racism and racial discrimination”. On 16th December 1991, after the intervention of the president of Israel, Herzog, this resolution was revoked – on the in South Africa commemorated “Umkonto WeZizwe Day” (Spear of the Nation), the military wing of the ANC.

Arms Embargo 4.11.1977: After long discussions amongst arms producing countries the UN decided on 4.11 an arms embargo against South Africa. But during these ongoing discussions the South African Government took precautions and established armament factories – for example “Atlantis Diesel Engines” (ADE), producing big engines for tanks, aeroplanes, ships etc. Concerning Israel, the World Social Forum demands an arms embargo against Israel by the UN.

Political Prisoners: Amongst hundreds of Palestinian prisoners are some very able Palestinian leaders. They have to be freed, too. Various attempts were launched, but they were turned down by the Israeli Government, for example in connection with the release of Gilat Shalit in 2011.

Boycott Movement: Chief Albert Luthuli, Peace-Noble-Award Winner of 1960, urged already in 1964 in his declaration to the life imprisonment judgement against Mandela and the Rivonia trialists:

The world should “*exert comprehensive sanctions to end the hated system of Apartheid ... and to prevent what could become the greatest African tragedy of our times*”. This appeal took some time until it was world-wide accepted. **Boycott and sanctions** were peaceful means to exert pressure on the Apartheid regime to change its policy and to weaken its economic and financial power.

In Germany this appeal was taken up since 9th November 1978 by the “Evangelische Frauenarbeit in Deutschland” (EFD). These protestant women stood up for “**Kauft keine Früchte aus Südafrika**” (Don’t buy fruits from South Africa), boycott “Krueger-Rands” and banks “Kein Geld für Gold aus Südafrika!”. They did a lot of streetwork, were courageous when facing insults in our Boer-friendly country. They produced a well edited “Boycott-Letter”, held vigils, public demonstrations – and won the support of many “Third-World” groups. These boycott people appreciated the support of the then South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu: “*Blacks may suffer under boycotts. But they know: because of your engagement their suffering will come to an end.*”



For the liberation of Palestinians and Israelis, we need in a similar manner to call for **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions** against the Apartheid-State Israel – strengthening the worldwide BDS-Movement.

On 11th February 1990 Nelson Mandela was released and on 10th May 1994 was the birthday festival of the New South Africa with ANC-leader and former top-terrorist Nelson Mandela as President. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika – God bless Africa*

My hope and conviction

It is my lifetime conviction to support people and organisations in the world working for peace, respect, justice and human rights. A Lutta continua – Vittoria / is certain

.... *his speech was a bit longer let me end here. God Bless Karl!*

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