



# The Crimes of German Imperialism in South Africa

Dokument of Freie Deutsche Jugend



„Since the end of Apartheid in 1994, bilateral political relations with South Africa have developed into close and trustful high-level cooperation. There is wide agreement on a whole range of fundamental issues. South Africa is one of the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) most important political partners in sub-Saharan Africa.“ (official homepage of The Federal Foreign Office)

This is what The Federal Foreign Office of the FRG writes in the year 2010. Fact is though that these „trustful“ relations between the FRG and South Africa have a certain origin, which for the South African population is little „trustful“ or not at all so.

The state FRG supported the Apartheid massively. The German automotive industry, as well as the chemical-, electrical- and armaments industry did all they could to help the Apartheid regime to stay in power and to gain more power. This is the reason why there is a close and important economic, and thus political relation with South Africa, which the FRG has maintained since the 1950s.

These relations have been far from bringing the workers and youth of South Africa possibilities for a better life. Not during the Apartheid, not since, nor in the future. On the contrary.

## **Excursus: Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) Investments in the Apartheid regime**

In a time when the UN had long since imposed an arms embargo (11.1977) on South Africa and its population intensified their resistance, Daimler continued doing business. Knowing of the growing isolation of the sanctioned South Africa, Daimler provided vehicles and machinery for their polices and military. They did not sell these vehicles to just anybody, they equipped army and police with them!



Vehicles that were used to drive into townships and suppress resistance. Daimler-products were involved, when people got shot and many got killed, when people got kidnapped and tortured. In this manner Daimler has supported the system of out of court killing, the murderers and the torturers. But primarily Daimler has been making a lot of money, while other companies had long left South Africa because of the Apartheid.

Daimlers subsidiary firm Mercedes Benz South Africa was one of the 300 FRG companies, which did business with the Apartheid regime into the 1990s: granted loans and let firms like Mercedes Benz South Africa produce in dependency. Profit: about 8.4 Billion DM. FRG's partners of Pretoria's rulers were Bayer, Hoechst, Siemens, Bosch and AEG, Mannesmann, Krupp, Rheinmetall, MAN and MBB, Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank, Commerzbank, BMW and VW. They continued cooperating with the Apartheid-state, even when in 1980 president Pieter Willem Botha proclaimed his „Total

Strategy of Hidden War“ against the ANC. A system came into being, risen from persecution mania, a system of thousands of informants in military, secret service, police and economy.

This National Security Management System and its 400 Joint Management Centers had their eyes everywhere. They were installed as an early warning system against the black opposition. Already in 1978, Daimler Benz had granted the license to produce diesel engines to the semi state-owned company Atlantis Diesel (ADE). A company, which Daimler owned 12 percent of, which had the monopoly on producing Daimler engines for heavy utility vehicles, which was protected from international competition through protective duty and for which the South Af-

rican Government paid half the wages and training costs. By 1984 Daimlers diesel engines had a market share of 80 percent. Pretoria intensively supported this monopoly, in order to be independent from imports.

Mercedes-boss Köpke does not deny that Daimler repaired, amongst other things, engines and axles of military vehicles and supplied the South African army with Universal Utility Vehicles (Unimog).

„Who took advantage from the Apartheid system – and who did not?“ he asked. „We exported Unimogs into the whole world and did not gain an exceptional advantage by selling vehicles to South Africa. Besides, Daimler was not the only one to do so.“

How true: Many FRG companies continued business unmoved, while others –from the USA or Canada – respected the sanctions. In the middle of 1987 more than 100 US based companies left South Africa, while AEG kept supplying hoists for the mining and the German Babcock supplied steam boilers for SASOL, a plant which produces oil from liquefied coal. Bosch sent injection pumps to the diesel engine producer ADE, Krupp worked with the steel company ISCOR, Feldmühle with a supplier of the armaments company ARMSCOR – mentioning a few only.

SASOL, ADE, ISCOR and ARMSCOR were all semi state-run trusts, which kept the regime alive with gold and coal, energy and steel, means of transport and armory.

The FRG did not hesitate to secure such engagement with Hermes export credit guaranties. Their extent growing from 2.3 billion DM in 1976 to 7 billion in 1994.

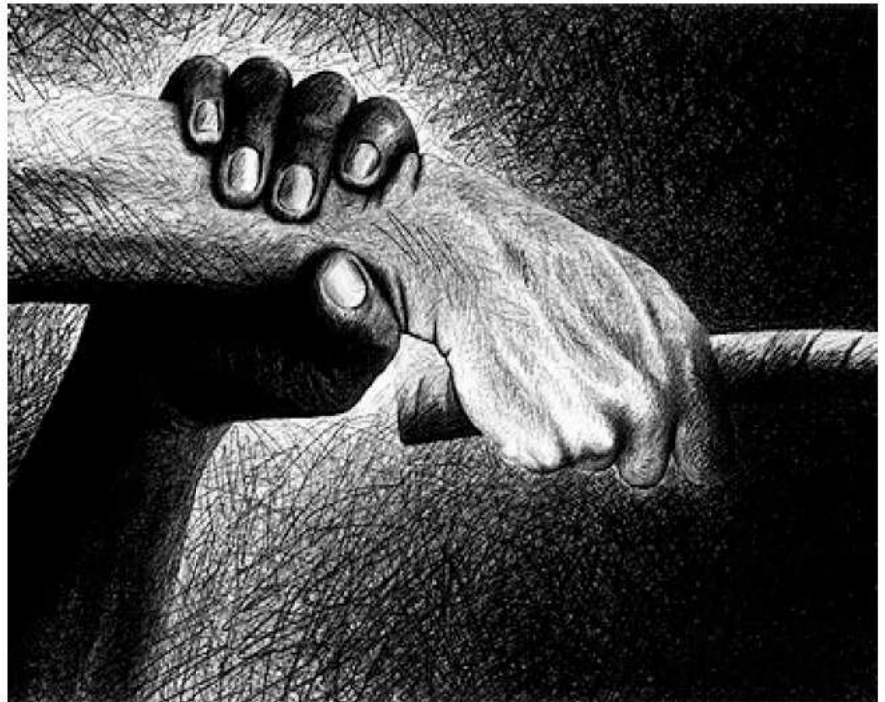
The FRG banks did not want to stand aside. When South Africa interrupted paying their foreign liabilities with a partial moratorium; Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank and Commerzbank sympathetically stepped into the breach and arranged for the necessary funding negotiations. In 1993, the year of the historical retreat of the Apartheid, South Africa owed

the FRG creditors a total debt of 7.4 billion DM. Consequently, the FRG banks clearly financed the Apartheid. But not only that.

It was customary for Daimler managers to take part in so called street-expeditions.

No „black people“ would be found in higher positions despite the fact that their share of Daimler workers was 57 percent, which is a relatively little proportion, but a high total number.

One of these police-led penalty-expeditions into the townships brought them to Mdantsane, where 2,000 Mercedes workers lived in tiny houses. When they



clashed, the Mercedes-Benz unionists met familiar faces.

These managers, who wore muted suits and ties during the day, wore battledress at night, when they went out shooting juveniles, old folk, even children. The next day these reservists could be heard celebrating „We shot a lot of Kaffern! That was a lot of fun!“

### **Excursus: The German Democratic Republic and the resistance against Apartheid**

While Apartheid ruled in South Africa and the FRG did everything in its power, to support this barbarian system of murder, there existed another part of Germany, the GDR, which supported and promoted the

South African people and its struggle for liberation. In July 1963 the GDR announced not to trade with or invest in the South African Republic any longer. Consequently the GDR was the first state to impose a trade embargo on South Africa, even before the UN. The UN itself did not impose an arms embargo until 1977 and an only voluntary trade embargo in 1985.

But not enough imposing a trade embargo, the GDR supported the ANC and other liberation organizations with donations. In the year 1978 the GDR paid 40 million Mark (GDR currency) to ANC, SWAPO and ZAPU.



Both the German auto-mobile industry and the electro-, chemical- and military industry did everything they could to support the Apartheid regime in South Africa. It's hardly possible to list all the crimes of German imperialism during Apartheid. Therefore our slogan: Fight German imperialism!

The FRG tried to accuse the GDR of breaking the embargo with these donations, spreading rumors, which would make it seem as if the GDR was acting for the same economic interests like in fact the FRG was. But this strategy was unsuccessful. On the contrary, their intrigue blew dew to a „big coup“, like The Federal Foreign Office of the FRG called it. This coup was launched 1975 against the South African Embassy in Bonn. The GDR, joined with other activists of the anti-Apartheid-

movement, took the right to uncover the crimes of the FRG, by stealing extensive amounts of files from the embassy and massively spreading the information publicly.

But not only that. The GDR support was practical as well: Ronnie Kasrils, the vice minister of defense in 1994, stated that the GDR was the most important partner for the military training of guerrilla troops. More than 1000 fighters were trained in the GDR, for example Siphwe Nyanda (later head of the new South African forces) and Chris Hani (since 1987 chief of staff of the Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC).

When these acts of solidarity with the South African liberation movement were to be cut in the 1980s, the

GDR government did not dare to bring these reductions to a conclusion against the will of the population, whose solidarity with the struggling people of South Africa was too strong.

Like that the GDR population and their government gained a great reputation in developing countries in the 1970s and 80s.

### **1994: The South African people frees itself from Apartheid – the German imperialism stays**

Concerning the German-South African cooperation while preparing the soccer world championship 2010, German government advisors analyzed South Africa's use for German foreign policy. Like can be read in the publication, South Africa has „the undoubted potential“, to be the hegemonic power of sub-Saharan Africa. And since the German imperialist influence in South Africa is great, this factor opens up the possibility to use Pretoria as regulator in Africa, in order to influence the local relations according to German interests.

For the FRG South Africa is one of the most important suppliers of raw materials, like platinum (88 percent of the world reserve), manganese (80 percent) and chrome (72 percent).

No surprise, the German imperialism has kept reaching out for South Africa!

For the FRG, the continental leading power South Africa is the most important country in sub-Saharan Africa, by far. It is its number one trading partner in Africa, with a trade volume of about 12.6 billion Euro in 2008. Moreover, it is the most attractive African country for German direct investments (stock, end of 2007: 4.7 billion Euro). On top of that, the German economy looks at „the Cape Republic as the Gate to other African markets“.

The FRG is said to have „some local advantages“ in this country, the strong presence of German companies – about 600 Firms employing more than 90,000 people – to be „perceived mainly positively by the population“, the development cooperation to have been „massively extended“ during the last years and there is said to be „a close cooperation in military- and armory political matters.“

Indeed, the FRG-South African cooperation had already been close in times of Apartheid. It is well anchored and strategically built.

## The Crimes of German Imperialism in Africa

The FRG's interest to win South Africa as a partner in global order policy is considerable, although the FRG detects South Africa's present tendency towards cooperating with other states of the southern hemisphere. The consequence is clear: „On a global level it takes counteracting the South African diplomacy's preference to break down the global imbalance between north and south through a solidification of south-south-alliances.“

To meet this intention, the FRG plans not only an „extension of a general economic and political exertion of influence“, but mainly their „closer cooperation in matters of military and security policy“, stating to intent the extension and the progress of their „control of violent conflicts, the stabilization of failed states and the combat against organized crime“.

Obvious, how close in fact the FRG and South Africa's military cooperation is already: In the years 2004 and 2005 Pretoria was the most important customer for armory outside the EU, except NATO and NATO-near states. In 2007 the FRG was the primary supplier of armory for Pretoria.

Joint FRG-South African wars in Africa could in fact damage Pretoria's „south-south alliances“ and align the country towards the north. If this does not succeed, the FRG warns, the gap between poor and rich could lead to a „radicalization“ of the ruling party and thus to serious „interference with market economy, especially with the right of private property“.

This is why the FRG wants to contribute considerably to solidify „democracy and market economy“. After all, German NGOs could reduce the „dominance of the ruling party“, and counteract the, from German point of view, counterproductive power-concentration on the ANC.

### Fight German Imperialism

Something that needs to be said: This list of crimes of German imperialism during and since Apartheid is far from complete. Still it draws a picture, which allows us solely one answer: Fight German imperialism!

There has not been any compensation by FRG companies for victims of Apartheid. But this might

change. Daimler and Rheinmetall, as well Ford, General Motors and IBM have been charged at a New York court with severe violation of human rights during the Apartheid in South Africa. The charge mainly refers to the support of the South African Army. Entered by 91 victims of Apartheid, representative for all, supported by the „Khulumani Support Group“, this charge aims for an appropriate compensation, admission and recognition of the committed crimes and money for social programs. The US American, as well as the South African Government approve of this charge, solely the FRG Government opposes.

This FRG's opposition cannot surprise someone who knows about its interests in South Africa.

The FRG does not want to pay any compensation for its past crimes. It wants to keep strengthening its influence and relations to and within South Africa, and like it has done since the 1950s, it will keep counteracting anything that could drive the ANC and the YCL South Africa towards Socialism.

The FRG's aim is not to help improve the South African peoples' life. But to extend and secure its influence, so the German imperialism is not faced again with a part of the world becoming red and therefore unreachable for the barbarism and exploitation, imposed by the German imperialism!

### To us this can solely mean:

Fight German imperialism!  
Socialism or barbarism!



## Freie Deutsche Jugend

Karl-Liebknecht-Haus, Weydingerstraße 14-16, 10178 Berlin  
www.FDJ.de · International-intern@FDJ.de

