

To Gerald:

Dear mother of Gerald, dear Andre and the Kraak family!

Dear, dear Gerald, - dammit! It was not time for you to go! - I had cherished this idea that you and I would sit in old age, somewhere on a bench under a tree, and review the storms in our lives. And, we would talk about the passion with which we gave ourselves to the struggle, and the wisdom we both had to distance ourselves from those comrades who, once they assumed power, forgot about the egalité we believe in and we thought they believed in. Gerald, it was not time for you to go!

Your contributions to a better world and the common good have been recorded and the outpouring of grief is testimony to your rich life.

I first met Gerald in exile. He came to the Netherlands to escape being drafted into the SADF. He was part of a brave new wave of whites that said no to apartheid. I was already in exile, not to avoid the army but to avoid re-detention and a likely jail term. There in Amsterdam, you came and stayed with us in our Kraakpand – our squat. Other resisters had already come to The Netherlands but you were the one with a clear political and tactical understanding. This was important.

I had recently established a formal relationship with ANC structures in exile. You were one war resister who grasped that concerted and organised action to fight apartheid was the only way to end it. I therefore introduced you to the person I reported to in the ANC. Because of your grasp and your energy to build links with resisters in and outside of South Africa you soon worked directly with the ANC. In the parlance of John le Carré we both reported to a handler. He was Aziz Pahad, subsequently Deputy Foreign Minister. You must have written, le Carré-style, countless de-briefing reports – sussing out military information from those who went into the army, whilst at the same time opening up the climate for the resister movement to grow larger.

The purpose of our action was to re-build ANC and ANC-friendly structures inside South Africa. Gerald, you displayed the right temperament, the right approach to confidentiality and dependability. You also had the personality - you were a magnate to whom people came and with whom they were willing to develop underground communications.

Your type of work was instantly seen as a threat to the apartheid state and it is not surprising that Craig Williamson soon played his hand in the resister community. Was it the sixth or was it the seventh resister who came to Amsterdam between 1978 and 1979, who turned out to be a spy, albeit a reluctant spy? The poor man, I seem to recall his name was Phillips, son of a prosperous sugar plantation farmer, had joined us as a 'resister-refugee' in return for which the police would not reveal his being gay, to his homophobic father and SADF officer-brother. Phillips soon cracked and confessed to us that he was 'working for the other side'. For a while, he told us what his SB-handlers were up to but we could not trust him and when Williamson & Co realised this he was withdrawn and emerged in another terrain of struggle: Southern Rhodesia. Like others, he will have ended up in the dreadful no-mans-land of turncoats.

It was through Phillips that we gained insight how the SBs 'paid' their agents in Holland: A South African woman working in a hotel kitchen in Amsterdam would hand packages of dagga to them – all neatly parcelled up by the SA Embassy in the Hague. If you said the right pass word, her arm protruded from a basement window and the hapless agent was sent on his way.

Gerald, remember, you also helped piece together the activities of Dr Aubrey Levine. He was the man who specialised in 'treating' gay men in the army to become straight. Aversion therapy, including electric shocks was his stock in trade. He held a senior rank in the SADF. Much later, in 1992, now back in Johannesburg, it turned out to be the same Dr Levine who invited Christine and I to have tea with in his Houghton home. Christine had started work in the then white health ministry, soon to be integrated into the other segregated health systems. Levine, it turned out became her boss. He hoped to find his way to a senior ANC official. He asked if I could help and introduce him to the highest ANC person I knew? When asked why, he said he needed to clear up a 'little' matter. When pressed to say more he told us that he was present, in his role as a medical doctor, when people like Steve Biko, Mapetla Mohapi and others were being tortured to death. He was worried that his name would be revealed once the TRC got going. He assured us that he was not culpable; in fact, he said, he wanted to save their lives. He wanted to 'clear' his name. – We duly reported our conversation to the ANC. This aspect of his complicity with apartheid did sadly not feature in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – yet another case of unfinished business that burdens our country to this day. As many of you probably know, Aubrey Levine is currently serving a prison term in Canada for sexually assaulting his male patients.

I moved to London in 1979 and a few years later you joined me at the head office of the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF). Amongst Gerald's research duties was to cull from the SA media any information, no matter how small the snippet was, to build and constantly update our database of those involved in acts against the apartheid state, whether throwing stones or planting bombs or often by simply attending a gathering (and facing the charge of 'common purpose'). The database included anyone arrested, detained without charge, standing trial or sentenced to imprisonment. If possible, we wanted to establish the police station or prison they were held in. Equally important was where his or her hometown was. IDAF's objective was to assist with the overthrow of apartheid in three ways:

First was to secure a lawyer for the person incarcerated, whether charged or not. At its height IDAF had appointed and paid no less than 175 attorneys and advocates, acting 'on our behalf' without them knowing they got money from a banned organisation. A system of subterfuge and ruses ensured that no lawyer was ever charged for getting money or instructions from IDAF. IDAF, despite being banned (in SA) until 1990, 'spirited' millions of Rands into the country each year. In this way we ensured that all political opponents, irrespective of which liberation structure they were part of, were defended. A good defence was important in a court system where judges frequently imposed the death sentence. Although IDAF was not the only provider of legal aid, the task was vast: In the mid 1980's there were up to 30,000 people held on political charges. Huge numbers amongst those detained were children.

The second objective of IDAF was to provide modest financial support to the families of those languishing on Robben Island and other jails. Thousands of families received, on a regular basis, sometimes for as long as twenty years, money for school fees or for the cost of a train ticket to Robben Island once a year to visit a loved one.

The third objective was to research and publish, without ideological bias, everything about apartheid and what made it so abhorrent. Gerald you qualified as a good researcher and drafted many texts that were subsequently published. The IDAF books appeared in English, French, Spanish, Swedish, Russian, German and other languages. To build the pressure that would eventually break the apartheid state we believed, everyone should know objective and well researched basis the facts about racism and exploitation in South Africa, occupied Namibia and Southern Rhodesia.

It should be said that we kept our IDAF and our ANC work meticulously apart. Both organisations also wanted it that way.

Gerald, you fitted well into the IDAF staff team. Half of us were SA exiles; the other half people from London who wanted to show solidarity with us in our struggle. As a quirky bit of history I want to add that amongst the non South African staff, several female staff had originally come from Caribbean countries, from Ghana and Zimbabwe. Many of these young single women had the wish that Gerald might yield to their advances, even dreaming of marrying you, Gerald. Alas, for them, this was not to be.

Hamba kahle, Gerald! You fought a good fight!