

Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre part of our struggle to freedom

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'If Robben Island was the University of the Struggle, then Wilgespruit was the technikon'¹.

During 1960-1979 South Africa was a deeply divided society, in which few liberal Christian institutions were prepared to fight for: liberalism, multiracialism and ecumenicalism. Many unconsciously and consciously became indoctrinated by apartheid ideology and few were willing to question the system. However, Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre (WFC) tended to differ. It was prepared to sacrifice itself to do so.

In order to promote ecumenicalism, liberalism and multiracialism: it played a part in the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement, labour unions and civic organisations; it attempted to live out and operate its programmes on a multiracial and ecumenical basis and in so doing offer an alternative way of life to that being promoted by government; it played a significant role on the wider course of opposition politics - especially with the student left, in the late 1960s and early 1970s; it influenced and shaped the lives of several prominent South Africans, who were involved in the liberation struggle, such as Drake Koka, Steve Bantu Biko, Lindy Myeza, Beyers Naudé, Zephania Mothopeng, Moronthisi Dan Matsobane, Horst Kleinschmidt, Markus and Ilse Braun, Dale and Tish White; and it greatly impacted society. Despite this, few if any articles have been written on WFC. In an attempt to mend this, I shall in this paper bring WFC alive by examining the importance it played in South African liberation history.

¹ Ahrends, C. of the Desmond Tutu Foundation.