



PROJEKT LILIE

Speech by Karola Redecker at the last Project Lily Gala Evening on Friday 20 September 2024 at the Möwenpick Hotel in Windhoek.

VOLUNTEERING IS NOT A MATTER OF COURSE!

Dear Tilmann

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening

Today I not only have the honour of giving a speech on the history of the lily and the Privatschule Karibib, but above all the pleasure of being able to award a special lily. Today we are honouring Mr Tilmann Friedrich with a Platinum Lily.

Before we move on to the award ceremony, I will give the traditional speech in honour of the award winner. I would like to give you an overview of how Project Lily came about and how the most important recognition of our teaching staff over the last 20 years came into being.

It all began in 1907 with the founding of the German School Karibib. At that time, 20 pupils attended classes.

After the First World War, however, the government withdrew financial support from the school and it was forced to operate as a public school. The Karibib School Association is founded in April 1919. The number of pupils has now grown to 60. In 1922, the school building is confiscated by the government and the primary school is moved to a private house; the upper classes are housed in a storeroom belonging to the Hälbich company. The following years are characterised by constant financial worries and a lack of suitable teachers. In 1937, the number of pupils at the PSK dropped to 20. On 2 July 1946, also known as the 'fateful hour' of the PSK, the parents' meeting decided to keep the school open. I will go into a little more detail about this extraordinary meeting: The majority of them are women. One year after the end of the war, they are still waiting for their husbands, who, after six years of captivity, are facing an uncertain and dark fate in the internment camps with hundreds of their comrades.

In addition to the chairman for over 20 years, Eduard Hälbich, two members of the government are present at the meeting. After 39 years of existence, endless endeavours, sacrifices and battles to preserve the school are to come to an end. The decision must be made to hand over the school to the government. Eduard Hälbich's words are decisive in this fateful hour: ***'No other language, no matter how perfectly he masters it, can replace the mother tongue. For this reason, I will never give my consent for this school, which serves to pass on our inherited cultural heritage to our children, to be closed down.'*** In 1949, Eduard Hälbich ended his voluntary work after 26 years as chairman of the PSK.

In 1951, the construction of the school began and in 1952, teaching started in 3 classrooms with 35 pupils; there was also a staff room. By 1967, the school had grown to 11 classrooms and had 291 pupils. An expansion phase begins. The old school buildings are remodelled and modern ones added. The school soon has a workshop for carpentry work, a home economics classroom with sewing and cooking equipment, a music room, a gym with gymnastics equipment and a cinema room, including projection equipment. The PSK also has reception rooms and a language laboratory.

The language laboratory is a gift from the Federal Republic of Germany. This facility supports foreign language teaching and improves pupils' reading skills. I admire with great respect the foresight of the then headmaster and the board of the PSK, who were already

addressing the issue of language promotion in 1970.

Also worth mentioning is the founding of the supervisor training in 1962, where over 80 hostel teachers were trained by 1982.

A chronicle entitled „100 Jahre Privatschule Karibib“, (100 Years of Karibib Private School) is available on your desks today. At that time, the editors were Mr. Klaus Becker, Mr. Hans Feddersen and Mr. Jochen Kutzner and it gives you a deep insight into the history of PSK. The school was run purely as a private school until its 75th anniversary in 1982. This represents 75 years of dedicated voluntary work by the board members.

Changes in the Namibian economy and strong competition from other German schools finally lead to the final closure of the school in 1986, with only 4 pupils left.

Tilman Friedrich's voluntary work began that year. He is a former PSK student himself, but does not voluntarily become a member of the PSK school association. He borrowed money from his father on the condition that he would not have to pay it back if he became and remained a member of the PSK association. Tilman became a member in 1976 and has faithfully honoured his father's condition to this day. In 1986, Tilman accepts the assignment to serve the board on a voluntary basis.

It is a huge task to manage and rent out the PSK buildings. A big thank you also tonight goes to the board members, consisting of former students of the Privatschule Karibib. They took on the voluntary tasks of managing the school association from 1986 until the decision was made to dissolve the association in 2008. A very difficult decision.

From the year 2000, Tilman and his brother Wulff serve as trustees at the newly founded school in Karibib. Both negotiate the sale of the PSK buildings, which is not easy. All the properties of the Karibib public school, the school and home buildings, as well as a number of residential houses in Karibib, are sold to the Karibib Parents Association in 2008.

In a donation agreement between AGDS and PSK, the proceeds are transferred to AGDS and it is agreed that a special fund will be set up under the name PSK Fund with earmarked conditions.

The board members are very concerned that school leavers are no longer interested in the teaching profession and that teachers are not receiving the recognition and appreciation they deserve.

So they sat down with the recently retired teacher Mr Dieter Esslinger to turn the idea of honouring teachers into a practical concept. The result is the Lily Project, which recognises and honours teachers at a formal annual gala evening.

It is an initiative that aims to support and promote the education system in Namibia, especially with regard to the preservation and promotion of the German language and culture. This project aims to recognise and honour outstanding achievements of teachers at AGDS member schools and other educational institutions such as UNAM.

It also aims to promote the reputation of teachers in the community in order to generate renewed interest in the profession among school leavers and to retain experienced and trained teachers in the profession. The annual highlight of Project Lily is the gala evening, at which valuable plaques are presented to the award winners in addition to considerable prize moneys from the PSK fund. For 20 years, the Board of Trustees, under the leadership of Tilman Friedrich, has organised this gala evening and accomplished the great task of selecting and honouring the Lily winners.

Many trustees have supported Tilman over the years on a voluntary basis. A big thank you to all of them!

This raises the question: Why do we volunteer? I'm sure some of you are asking yourself this very question: Why am I doing this?

Yet we all know from our own experience how stressful voluntary work can be:

- It takes up a lot of time.
- Family and friends have to accept compromises.
- Your own interests are neglected.
- It requires responsibility and courage. The sensitivities of others and your own ideas have to be harmonised.

Of course, we also know from our own experience that volunteering is an excellent opportunity for self-development and self-affirmation.

We know from our involvement in voluntary work that

- the circle of friends and acquaintances becomes larger,
- that working together with people who share the same interests is more fun and motivating than working alone,
- that a successful event or the design of a homepage increases your own satisfaction,
- that your own horizons are broadened and that there is recognition from those for whom you are working.

Volunteering, our commitment, is a crucial prerequisite for the preservation and promotion of the German language and culture in general and in Namibia in particular.

The Lilie project has been able to realise its goals for over 20 years. Unfortunately, the time has now come for us to set a new course. This includes this last gala evening. The decision was not an easy one for the Board of Trustees. For 18 months, we have discussed and wrestled with ourselves from meeting to meeting. Unfortunately, the initial goals of the Lily project can no longer be achieved.

The acute decline in the number of native German-speaking pupils and the shortage of teachers present us with new challenges. The promotion of the German language at an early age suddenly takes centre stage. New doors are opening. For example, a kindergarten network, which deals intensively with these issues, was created in close cooperation with the AGDS and UNAM.

The AGDS Board is already working on these new tasks and will continue to do so. The PSK Fund will therefore always fulfil its objectives and the PSK will always be part of new developments, all in the spirit of promoting the German language and culture.

To conclude, I would like to quote our current Lily Award winner Tilman Friedrich from a speech he gave on 1 March 2015 on the occasion of a PSK alumni reunion: 'The PSK has not only rendered outstanding services to the interests of the German-speaking community and its preservation in Namibia during its active time, but it has also left behind a legacy that will continue to promote these objectives for the foreseeable future. All Ex-Karibib scholars have every right to be proud of this. What our fathers have achieved with much effort, perseverance, tears and sweat has certainly been invested for the benefit of their children and grandchildren!'

Dear Tilman, the AGDS will always keep your goal in mind and appreciates your voluntary commitment immensely. I hereby invite Mr. Peter Schlenther (winner of the first Golden Lily), Mrs. Christine Redecker (winner of the first Silver Lily) and the curators Gladys Reussink, Kai Friedrich and Sylvia Schlettwein to the stage to present you, Tilman, with your more than deserved Platinum Lily.

