

Chapter 7

From honorary consul to honorary consul, nearly one century of Dutch representation in Namibia*

The archives of the Dutch embassies and consulates general in Pretoria, Harare and Cape Town are the main sources of information for the description of Dutch diplomatic representation in Namibia or South West Africa as it was known for a long time. The period after independence is described on the basis of the archives of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Windhoek. The Netherlands had honorary consuls in Swakopmund and later Windhoek from 1911 to 1970 and again from 1992 to 1994. The embassy was opened in July 1993 and will close on 30th June 2006, after which the Netherlands will again have a honorary consul in Windhoek.



Michelle Gimbrère

Michelle Gimbrère studied history at the University of Leiden. After a few years with a consultancy firm she joined the Directorate for Documentary Information of the ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003. She is currently a senior archivist there.

* The main part of this article is a translation from Dutch. Detailed source references were omitted in the translation to improve readability.



Walvis Bay in 1896

This picture, showing Walvis Bay in the background, was taken in 1896. There was no harbour yet; ships anchored off-shore. The Dutch Contracting Company dredged the harbour and built a quay in 1927. Postcard courtesy of Wolfram Hartmann.



View of the pier in Swakopmund in 1907

*This picture was taken a few years before Dutch representatives started to take an interest in the coast of South West Africa. Opinions about the use of a permanent representation differed widely. From *Deutsch Südwest Afrika, Kriegs- und Friedensbilder*, Windhoek, 1907*

The first contacts - a cautious beginning

Direct diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Namibia came into being at the beginning of the 20th century. Around that time the Dutch representation in South Africa started to investigate the possibilities for a presence in the German colony of Süd West Afrika. Opinions regarding the development of this colony during the first two decades differed widely. The Dutch consul of the Witwatersrand, sent a report to consul general Knobel of Pretoria, on 9 April 1908 in which he expressed the following positive point of view:

“Under such circumstances and with powerful government measures like these, it does look as if the country is capable of a fairly speedy development in a good direction. Admittedly the government especially encourages a country that can sustain itself regarding its first necessities of life, but with that, in my opinion, they provide an opportunity for the establishment of a strong agricultural, mining and trading population, and, consequently, a secure market for our country’s manufactured articles. The figures prove that German South West Africa is already well on its way.

This opinion was, however not shared by everybody. This becomes clear from a report that was compiled by a Dutchman who visited Swakopmund at the request of the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce in Pretoria. His report, dated 3 February 1907, mentioned among other things the following:

“Following your request regarding information about the situation in this country, I shall comply with it to the best of my abilities. When the ship arrived in Swakopmund nobody could disembark before a police officer questioned each person, and although I had no satisfactory permit to begin working, I just had to deposit 7 pounds not to be sent back to Cape Town. The passengers were taken ashore in a boat towed by a tug. On our arrival nobody could form a high opinion of the pier, which consisted of planks to walk on, lying crookedly alongside each other. Entry into the town to the customs office is definitely not a pretty sight due to the dirty, loose sand. The officers also take their tasks very lightly. We were 18 passengers and nobody had to

open anything. Officials asked whether anybody had alcohol or fire arms with them. When we all answered in the negative, this authority was quite happy and we could leave. The houses do not create a bad impression, and some of the hotels are outstanding buildings. Furthermore, the post office that is under construction is really splendid. There is sand everywhere, so that people very soon acquire the gait of a seaman. Here and there are strips in front of the houses, but they are crumbled and neglected. Transport by wagon, cab or car is non-existent. There are rails throughout the town on which transport takes place. The government track almost looks like an exhibition in a toyshop. How the Germans came to build such a line for more than 300 km of such materials, should amaze even an ignorant railway man. What will become of this place, is enshrouded in the dark. That business was good during the war is clear from the many hotels and pubs, now, however, everything is dead.”

Negative opinions

The writer was equally negative about the local Bantu population:

“If the natives in Transvaal, ‘after the war’ are insolent, here they are recklessly stupid. I have seen natives in the street opening bottles and emptying them. Regarding the prisoners, a very strange system is in practice. A prisoner must pay for his own food, and can then work for it, even for the public. I once saw a number of prisoners being transported to the Frank. They could enter the shops right and left to provide for their needs while the troop moved on. The native women smoke their pipes all day long, yet in general they are better dressed than those in Transvaal. A thick fog covers Swakopmund in the mornings and evenings and the water is totally unusable. Anyone who drinks it inevitably contracts diarrhoea, a disease that is so indigenous here that it has already acquired the popular name of ‘Swakopmunder’.”

The compiler of the report concluded his account by discouraging any other Dutch people to visit the area, not to mention settling here:



Dr Theodoor Lorentz, the first honorary consul of the Netherlands in Windhoek.

Theodoor Lorentz was a lawyer, educated in the Netherlands, who immigrated first to South Africa. From there he came to Windhoek, where he founded the law firm Lorentz & Bone in 1919. He was appointed first honorary consul of the Netherlands in Windhoek in 1927 on the recommendation of his brother, who was the Dutch consul general. The relationship between the Dutch government and Lorentz & Bone was re-established in 1993, when the current embassy building was rented from one of the senior partners of this firm, Mr Claus Jürgen Hinrichsen. Photo from The story of Lorentz & Bone 1919-2001, Windhoek 2001.

“It hardly ever rains in Swakopmund, up here much more. Kilometre lengths of railway lines are regularly washed away, water drainage is poorly looked after. There is an excellent market for canned food. Especially cans with cooked food would be popular at average prices. Good tobacco would also be a relief. I must definitely advise anybody against coming here ‘at present’, there is nothing to do. There is quite some talk about another war with the Ovambos, but it is not yet certain. One should not come here and speak English. It struck me with how much hatred the Germans regard the English. There is only one working here, and also they (Germans) have the habit of referring to us Dutch as ‘foreigners’. Regarding the postal services, it is a disgrace, worse than a disgrace. I could relate incidents about this which would sound unbelievable, but then I would have to become personal, and discretion has always been the better part of valour.”

A Consulate at the coast

But the Dutch government still found enough reason to open a consulate in Swakopmund in 1911. At the beginning of the previous century consular activities were also undertaken in Lüderitzbucht, the coastal town south of Swakopmund. The main argument for this was the strengthening of trade relations between the Netherlands and this region.

During the First World War South African troops occupied the German colony and after this war the League of Nations gave South Africa mandate over South West Africa. In this period the activities of the Dutch consulate in Swakopmund consisted mainly of assistance to the crews of Dutch ships that sporadically entered the harbour of Walvis Bay, and giving help, where possible, to the Dutch nationals who were mainly artisans involved in harbour activities round and in Walvis Bay. In 1898 a pier was erected. The Dutch Contracting Company dredged the harbour in 1927 and built a quay in comparable style to the quay that the company was to construct in Cape Town later.

The job opportunities provided by the dredging company attracted Dutch staff -mainly artisans – but they remained relatively few. This in spite of ardent at-

tempts by among others the Land and Agricultural Bank of South West Africa (situated in Windhoek) to attract Dutch immigrants. The director of this bank conducted a lively correspondence about this with the consul general of the Netherlands in Pretoria, as can be seen from an account by him dated 31 March 1924. Here he stated the following:

“It is possible that there are many young Dutch people in the Netherlands with limited capital who are eager to come and practise cattle farming in this country. Such persons would undoubtedly welcome the opportunity to acquire farm property in this country on easy terms and to settle here as colonists.

“.....I am therefore writing to you to inform you that the Land and Agricultural Bank can offer a fair number of development farms in the area to long-sighted settlers, at reasonable prices and in instalments extending over a long range of years.”

The then consul general, H.A. Lorentz, also realised that South West Africa at that time was not the promised land for Dutch immigrants. As early as 1923 he wrote that the region certainly was not the country of the future for anybody without money.

“For somebody who has money the matter is of course totally different; so to speak, every farm can be bought cash with little money. But this is only to be recommended if people come here to update themselves about the conditions here. It should not be forgotten that many farms are 100 to 150 kilometres and more from anywhere, with neighbours 20 to 25 kilometres away. These are living conditions that one has to consider seriously and should certainly investigate personally.”

The consul general also felt pessimistic about Dutch trade perspectives in the 1920s. In his opinion, especially the big trading houses for agricultural articles and provisions were in a difficult position. They were often obliged to take over farms in order to cover their claims. And farms at that stage had a low nominal value due to low cattle prices and taxes. The consul general advised Dutch trading houses that intended to expand their



The "Dutchman" in the guano industry

On this photo from the National Archives of Namibia, taken in 1934, was scribbled that it represented one of the guano platforms along the Atlantic coast of Namibia. Guano, the droppings of birds that roost together in very large numbers, was a valuable export product before artificial fertilizer replaced it. The gentleman on the left, according to the notes on the photo, was the "Dutchman". He was probably one of the former employees of the Dutch Contracting Company who had stayed on after the dredging work in Walvis Bay was finished. National Archives of Namibia

field of activity to this part of the world to obtain information first and not to make hasty decisions.

Windhoek as new location

In 1927 the Dutch Contracting Company completed its activities in the port of Walvis Bay. 30 years would pass before the same company would start operations in the area again when in 1957 the harbour of Walvis Bay would be dredged again. Walvis Bay, and together with it, Swakopmund, lost relevance for the Dutch in the 1920s. After completion of the harbour only a few Dutch nationals were still living in Walvis Bay. Once in a while a Dutch ship entered the harbour, but the port was not put on the regular sailing schedules for Dutch ships. Walvis Bay was also too far away from Swakopmund, so the consulate in Swakopmund would have no real use for the Dutch shipping industry.

On top of this the Dutch consulate in Swakopmund also experienced a personnel change in 1927. From 1924 Mr Van Kretschmar van Veen Esq. had acted satisfactorily as Dutch consul there. In April 1927 he announced that, because he was leaving Swakopmund, he was obliged to lay down his post. Consul general H.A. Lorentz conferred about succession. It had not passed his notice that Swakopmund had forfeited some of its importance. Besides, the situation that the administrator of the mandated territory South West Africa had his headquarters in Windhoek, played a part in his consideration. In the meantime Germany had also appointed a consul in that city.

This gave consul general Lorentz sufficient argument to propose to The Hague that the consulate be transferred from Swakopmund to Windhoek. Regarding the successor of Mr Van Kretschmar van Veen the consul general made a proposal. He said the following:

“My brother, Mr T. Lorentz, member of the firm Lorentz & Bone, lawyers and notaries in Windhoek, has declared himself willing to accept the possible nomination as consul of the Netherlands for South West Africa. Regarding the possible vice-consulate in Swakopmund yet to be formed, I permit myself, on the recommendation of Mr Van Kretschmar van Veen, to ask Your Excellency to consider Mr W. Riesle, lawyer in that town, who is

currently handling the interests of the consulate there, for the nomination of vice-consul of the Netherlands in Swakopmund.”

The proposal of H.A. Lorentz was accepted by the department and it thus happened that a consulate for the Netherlands was established in Windhoek under Royal Decree of 30 July 1927, while the consulate of the Netherlands in Swakopmund was demoted to a vice-consulate of the Netherlands. Under the same Royal Decree Mr Theodoor Lorentz was nominated as honorary consul of the Netherlands in Windhoek, and Mr W. Riesle as honorary vice-consul of the Netherlands in Swakopmund.

The war years and its after-effects in South West Africa

During the 1930s and early 1940s Southern Africa was experiencing growing national-socialistic influences. South West Africa, as former German protectorate and colony, was home to quite a number of Germans. South Africa as mandatory of South West Africa held the reins tightly and gave people with Nazi sympathies in the region no room at all. Nevertheless, according to temporary secretary of consulate general in Cape Town, Van Lennep, there were a number of inhabitants of German origin in South West Africa who were of the opinion that their homeland could still regain its colonial inheritance. He wrote this in a report, dated 8th November 1940, entitled “Nazi propaganda in the Union including South West Africa”:

“The situation in the mandated territory of South West Africa has always been very difficult and complicated. All unpleasant happenings in this territory were due to the inciting agitation of the Nazis and the unprecedented influence of the German Nazi institutions. In a revolutionary way and by unlawful means this Nazi incitement was carried on from year to year, until in the end a lot of very incriminating material for the Nazis was found during a search carried out by the South African Police in Windhoek. Even today there are many German inhabitants of this territory who, as far as their political conceptions are concerned, are quite confused as they are under the entirely wrong impression that the mandated territory can and will very soon be returned to the Reich.”

“Everything is lekker here”



“Change is the only constant in our existence,” a famous proverb goes. But not everything changes when one listens to the story of Ria Olivier-Bertens. Her story starts as an eleven-year-old girl living in the southern Dutch city of Tilburg. The Second World War ended five years ago and left The Netherlands in ruins; not a place to bring up children. Her parents Janus and Riet decided it was best to emigrate and leave the war torn country behind to find a better living overseas. “First they thought of emigrating to Argentina, but there we would have to learn Spanish,”

Ria Olivier Bertens looks back 55 years later in her house in the Namibian capital Windhoek. “My father then travelled ahead of us to Cape Town in South Africa. He was a construction overseer, but he couldn’t find work in South Africa and ended up in Windhoek where many Dutch immigrants worked in construction.” With backbreaking labour Janus saved enough money in a short space of time to pay for his family to come over to Namibia and change their lives forever.

The date of 20 June 1950 is set in stone in Ria’s memory. In the Amsterdam harbour the emigration ship the Johan van Oldenbarneveldt was docked to make an unique journey. Never before had the Indonesia bound vessel docked at the coastal towns of Swakopmund and Walvis Bay in Namibia. This would be the first and only time. “The voyage was very nice,” remembers Ria. “We swam, played tennis. On board were embroidery clubs for the girls and woodwork clubs for the boys. But I was seasick. According to my mother I was the most sick of all people on board.” After a three-week voyage the Van Oldenbarneveldt dropped anchor in front of the harbour town of Walvis Bay. The 11-year-old Ria stood on the deck looking at the small town and the desert surrounding it, she was looking at her new homeland. “It was also the first time I saw black people,” remembers Ria.

The adaptation to a new home, unknown African cultures and a different climate were easy, says Ria. The same day she and her family arrived in Namibia they went to their new home in Swakopmund some 30 kilometers north of Walvis Bay. And the young girl was enrolled in school. “I had to learn Afrikaans and English there. That was easy for me. I still can understand Dutch, every word. But if I have to speak it myself, I have to think hard.” Soon she went to school in Windhoek where eventually she ended up settling with her husband Rene, starting a family and working as a typist and de facto solicitor. Although

Vice-consulate Swakopmund dissolved, consulate Windhoek continues

During the years of Second World War the interests of the Netherlands were handled by acting consul Dr P. Jorissen. In this period there were hardly any Dutch initiatives in South West. A few years after the war some interest from the Dutch side surfaced again. In August 1949, the ambassador in Pretoria sent Mr J.D. van Karnebeek Esq. to Windhoek. The aims of the visit were two-fold. On the one hand he visited the authorities there, because for many years nobody from the embassy, not to mention the ambassador himself, had been there. It was said that the administrator of South West Africa, Colonel P.J. Hoogenhout, was sensitive about visits from foreign authorities to his area as well as to himself. Secondly Mr Van Karnebeek was instructed to look into the interests of the Dutch consulate, because the then acting consul, Dr P. Jorissen, was 78 years old, and had already indicated more than once that, because of his health, he would not be able to run the consulate for much longer.

Mr Van Karnebeek deliberately announced his visit in the local media in order to see if any Dutch people would request to see a representative of the embassy. Two Dutch citizens did so. Van Karnebeek mentioned in his report that "... there were dozens of Dutch people living in Windhoek, but they were mostly labourers in service of the ex-Dutch contractor Steens in Cape Town, who carried out big building activities in South West Africa and Windhoek".

He continued his report as follows:

"Migration of Dutch people to South West Africa is virtually non-existent (80 in 4 years, labourers of Steens included). I could not deduce any feeling of unity or attachment to the Netherlands from conversations. Neither is there anybody to take the initiative and one cannot expect this from Dr Jorissen. There are very few consular activities and these are limited to passport matters and now and then to the supplying of trade information. From a commercial point of view South West Africa is of little importance to the Netherlands; a total population of 30 000 whites over the vast area does not present any significant market for Dutch products. Moreover, the current import restrictions of the

Union (the Union of South Africa) also apply, which do not allow for the import of new articles.

Because of the above-mentioned reasons it would definitely not be justifiable to place a career consular official in Windhoek. An honorary consul would be more than enough, but the problem is to find a suitable person as Dr Jorissen is withdrawing. The only countries that have consular representatives in Windhoek are Denmark and France. By order of his government the Belgian consul in Cape Town is also going to Windhoek for a 'visite d'orientation' to see if it is important for Belgium to open a consular office there. The Belgian government, however, is not thinking of sending a career official. I asked the consul if he would notify me of the result of his visit. Perhaps Mr Van Lede does find somebody whom he would seem fit to act as honorary consul for Belgium, in which case this person may be willing to handle the Dutch interests at the same time. This would also answer to the Benelux idea."

At the same time the replacement of the outgoing vice-consul in Swakopmund, Mr W.J. Riesle, caused a second problem. The Dutch consul general from Cape Town, Dr H.J. Levelt, who was responsible for this matter of succession, realised that he was dealing with a difficult situation. To find people with consular skills, who had an amiable character and were at the same time willing to handle the Netherlands' affairs, had never in the past been an easy task. Besides, Dr Levelt wondered "...if there still was sufficient reason to keep a vice-consulate going in Swakopmund".

With this in mind he left for South West Africa in November 1951 to ascertain for himself what the situation was. His findings were "... that most Dutch people in Windhoek were building artisans who were recruited by the contractor L.A. Steens from the Netherlands for the building of a post office and a church. The construction of these two buildings had been completed in the meantime and since then most of the building artisans had left Windhoek. There is no active Dutch colony in Windhoek whatsoever", stated Dr Levelt.

Dr Levelt was somewhat disdainful in his remarks about Swakopmund:

"My visit to Swakopmund convinced me that the continued existence of the vice-consulate makes no sense

her older brother Martin, her two younger sisters Toos and Rianneke and father Janus settled in well, her mother Riet became homesick. She never left Namibia for good but decided to visit the Netherlands more regularly.

“I don’t know much about Holland anymore,” says Ria. “But a small piece always remains.” Looking around her house in the Windhoek suburb of Eros the evidence can clearly be seen. Plates and vases of Delft porcelain, hand made embroideries of a windmill and a fisherman clinging a pipe between his lips. Ria stands up and walks over to a cupboard to take out a cookie box; an orange cookie box with photographs of the royal family. “I was born on the same day as queen Beatrix,” explains 67-year-old Ria. Her mother brought her all these gifts after trips to the Netherlands. But Ria has never been back, never felt the need actually. Maybe now she would like to see her mother country. “But what reason is there for me to go back. I don’t know anyone there. I know the clients I used to work for better than my family in Holland.”

It is funny how things change, reflects Ria. Just after the Second World War people wanted to leave the war torn country to seek a better and possibly prosperous life overseas. “Now it’s the other way around. Children here are leaving to live in London and the rest of Europe.” Ria has decided to stay in Windhoek. She states this is her home now. She prefers living in the Namibian capital even above a luxurious house at the coast. “Everything is lekker here. People are nice to me and I’ve established a good reputation.” No, Namibia is her motherland now with a little space in her heart for the country where she was born. That never changes.

Interview and photo by Arjen de Boer.

whatsoever. *Swakopmund is a place of about one square mile, built in the sand of the coast. When one leaves the town, one stands in the middle of a desert. It is a typical German place, and the roundabout 1200 Europeans comprise 90% German speakers, who, according to Mr Riesle, have not yet discarded their Nazi sympathies. There are four Dutch families in Swakopmund. Except for a small tannery for sealskins, there are no industries in Swakopmund. Swakopmund is but a small bathing place with a few not too bad hotels, where the inhabitants of the hot central areas of South West Africa go during the summer months to cool down.*"

After this report of his negative findings the consul general could hardly do anything else than advise the ambassador in Pretoria to close down the vice-consulate in Swakopmund and place it under the jurisdiction of the consulate in Windhoek. The ambassador, in turn, gave the Minister of Foreign Affairs this advice for consideration, and under the Royal Decree of 22 January 1952 the vice-consulate in Swakopmund was closed.

New Dutch initiative at the end of the 1950s

Consul general, Mr N.A.C. Slotemaker de Bruïne, showed renewed interest regarding South West Africa. In May 1959 he visited the area and herewith followed in the footsteps of the honorary consul, Mr J.G. Beekman, who had already in 1956 investigated the possibilities for expansion of Dutch exports to the Windhoek area. Mr N.A.C. Slotemaker de Bruïne had not visited the region since 1953 and wanted to re-acquaint himself with the developments in especially Walvis Bay, seeing that the Dutch Contracting Company had signed a new contract to do dredging work in the harbour and to deepen the approach canal deeper. This meant that the company again sent labourers to Walvis Bay. Once again the question arose whether it was not time to establish a vice-consulate in Walvis Bay (at the same time including Swakopmund). Some Dutch people in Walvis Bay had suggested such a decision. Mr Slotemaker de Bruïne was of the opinion that the suggestion deserved support if a suitable person for the position of vice-consul could be found. In the report on his official journey to South West he raised the following arguments, pleading for the opening of a vice-consulate in Walvis Bay:

" Walvis Bay is expanding fast, it is estimated that the population will double every 6 to 8 years. In 1953 the population was about 3 000, currently it is 6000, a population of 12 000 inhabitants is expected in 1967; Three or four times a year a Dutch ship calls at the Walvis Bay harbour, apart from passing emigrant ships that call irregularly; Now and then there are incidents for which consular assistance is necessary. Up to now advice or assistance has been rendered by the firm Mann George, which has a young Dutchman, Mr Pracht in its service. But this is not sufficient; Whether the expansion of the harbour will bring more Dutch ships to Walvis Bay, is a question, but one should pay attention to the possibility; Norway, Finland and Belgium have an (honorary) vice-consul in Walvis Bay, and France has a consular agent. In a few months Sweden will also open a vice-consulate; Since October 1958 Walvis Bay has had its own magistrate. In the past it fell under the jurisdiction of Swakopmund."

In spite of this strong plea, the ministry decided not to re-open a vice-consulate on the coast.

Windhoek remained the only Dutch representation in South West Africa. Although the big wave of migration from the Netherlands to the area remained wanting, a few Dutch people set off for South West in the middle fifties, mainly for work in the mines at Tsumeb and Oranjemund. It seemed as if the Dutch community in South West felt at home and were happy with the opportunities offered by the country. This at least emerges from a report compiled by Cape Town consul general D. van Eysinga about his official journey to South West Africa in September 1964.

That the mutual contact between the Dutch people living in and near to Windhoek became closer appears from the fact that a local Dutch Club saw the light in 1959. The association undertook activities on social-cultural level, dance and film evenings were organised and members' meetings were arranged so that the committee could keep the members updated with all the matters of interest concerning the Dutch people in the region. 83 members were mentioned in 1962, the number referring only to family heads.

Consul's claim for immunity is turned down

Sometimes incidents with honorary consuls happened. These newspaper cuttings from South African newspapers report that Dutch honorary consul in Windhoek, Johan van Zyl claimed diplomatic immunity from prosecution for reckless and negligent driving. The claim by Mr van Zyl, who was a South African citizen, was not accepted and he was eventually sentenced. Cuttings from the archives of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs.

in The STAR *20-2-64*

Consul not immune from prosecution

AN EXCEPTION taken on behalf of the Netherlands Consul for South West Africa on the grounds that he had diplomatic immunity against criminal charges was dismissed by Mr. K. G. Steenkamp in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court today.

The court ruled that while consuls could be given certain privileges and immunities by means of international agreements the post as such did not confer immunity from the jurisdiction of local courts.

Johannes Hendrik van Zyl (42) of Flamingo Court Hillbrow, was appearing on a charge of driving under the influence of liquor or alternatively of reckless and negligent driving.

Today the State called Mr. A. F. Drake, a foreign service officer in the protocol section of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

He said the department kept a register of the names of persons entitled to diplomatic immunity. Van Zyl's name was not in the register and had never been in it.

Replying to Van Zyl's counsel, Mr. G. Fourie, he said consular officers were not listed.

Mr. Fourie argued that the fact that a name did not appear in the register was not conclusive proof that it was not entitled to be there.

In his judgment, the magistrate said the posts enjoying immunity under the Act were well defined and he could not accept that a consul fell under the post "diplomatic agent" as argued by the defence.

Mr. Steenkamp said that Van Zyl was a citizen of South Africa, and the authorities were clear that where a consul who is a national of a receiving country is appointed as consul of another country, he has virtually no privileges at all.

The case was adjourned till March 24.

20 Februarie 1964

Saak teen Nederlandse konsul uitgestel

'n twee-en-veertigtjarige Nederlandse konsul vir Suidwes-Afrika, Johannes Hendrik van Zyl, van Flamingohof, Hillbrow, het gister in die Johannesburgse landdroshof voor mnr. K. G. C. Steenkamp verskyn op 'n aanklag dat hy 'n motor onder die invloed van sterk drank bestuur het.

Beuk se prokureur, mnr. J. S. G. Coetzee, het aangevoer dat Van Zyl diplomatieke immunitet geniet en dus nie aan kriminele vervolging onderworpe is nie.

GOEDGEKEUR

Van Zyl is op 8 Junie 1958 reeds aangestel as die Nederlandse konsul vir Suidwes-Afrika. Suid-Afrika was destyds nog 'n lid van die Statebond en sy aanstelling is in 1959 deur die koningin goedgekeur.

Die goedkeuringstifikaat is, ook deur die destydse Minister van Buitelandse Sake, mnr. Eric Louw, onderteken. Ingevolge die Wet op Privilegie van 1951 mag hy dus nie in enige hof binne die grense van die Republiek vervolgt word nie, het mnr. Coetzee gesê.

Geen getuënis is voorgelê nie en die saak is uitgestel tot 20 Februarie. Mnr. F. Nel tree namens die Staat op.

The consulate in Windhoek had acquired a firmer foundation since the Dutch Bank of South Africa opened an office there. During the 1960s the bank would often make one of its employees available to fill the position of consul. The consuls in succeeded each other at short intervals in the 1950s and 1960s. On average a consul remained in his post for about three years after which he, mostly due to transfer, had to hand over to a successor. The quest for a suitable successor regularly caused problems for the consul general in Cape Town. Although the Dutch community consisted of approximately 500 people in the middle 1960s, it was, according to different file notes, a difficult task every time to come up with the right person for the position.

The choice was not always a good one. This happened in 1963. In September of that year Mr J.H. van Zijl laid down his position as consul. When he was arrested on 16 November 1963 for driving under the influence, he had the audacity to claim diplomatic immunity. This matter came to the attention of the media which naturally caused a blemish on Mr Van Zijl's character. Besides, Van Zijl brought shame to the Netherlands with his action, that, according to some people " ... meant a slur on the Dutch authority in South West Africa and of the Dutch people there". This incident ended with an official statement was issued from the Dutch side, which said:

"In accordance with the law on diplomatic privileges of 1951 career nor honorary consular officials do enjoy any diplomatic immunity, the same as officials attached to diplomatic missions who have South African nationality. Mr J. van Zijl, who moreover is a South African citizen, can therefore not claim diplomatic immunity."

Succession crisis in Windhoek

Finding a suitable person for the position of consul in Windhoek was therefore not always easy. Especially the succession of Mr E.J. Sparrius in 1970 was an arduous process. The consul general from Cape Town wrote to the ambassador in Pretoria that the Dutch colony could not provide any suitable candidate. The only suggestion was to appoint Mr Horst Oppel, owner of a prestigious travel agency in Windhoek. He was a German national and spoke Dutch fluently as he had been employed by KLM in Frankfurt for five years. The consul general was positive about Mr Horst Oppel, but there was too much resistance to allow a person of German descent to handle Dutch interests in Windhoek. The ambassador in Pretoria wrote that in view of possible economic espionage he objected to the appointment of Mr Horst Oppel. Although the consul general could smooth away most of the ambassador's misgivings, it did not end with the appointment of the only available candidate.

That this succession crisis would have serious consequences is clear from the fact that the Dutch consulate in Windhoek officially closed its doors on 1 January 1970. It would be twenty years before there was again mention of representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in South West Africa.

This did not mean that there was no Dutch involvement with South West Africa during this period. To the contrary. The growing criticism in Dutch society of colonialism and apartheid in Southern Africa and the changes this also brought to Dutch government policy are described elsewhere in this publication. But nearly all of this took place in the Netherlands.

Independence and an office for development cooperation

For a number of years the Dutch government hesitated to support United Nations resolutions for the independence of Namibia. In the 1960's this policy gradually changed and in 1966 the Dutch representative at the UN supported for the first time a resolution to end the South African control of Namibia. After a while the Dutch government also indicated that it was willing to



Cornélie van Waegeningh, Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands in December 1993 with three of the men in her life. From left Dutch ambassador Johan Leeffmans from Harare, Namibian minister of Foreign Affairs Theo-Ben Gurirab and Hans Gompelman, her partner. Photo reproduced from Tempo, 6th December 1993

Fifteen years ago she considered the political and economic development of Namibia to be her working field. Nowadays she feels as much responsible for the protection of the typical Dutch countryside around her provincial hometown of Woerden against the unlimited expansion of industrial sites. Cornélie van Waegeningh welcomes her visitor in a redecorated old country cottage, where Namibian music is playing. Offering a glass of Amarula liqueur she starts digging in her memories.

'During a United Nations conference, Dutch minister for Development Co-operation, Jan Pronk, had pledged Netherlands support including a development office in the newly independent Namibia. He wanted to support the newly independent country. At the time, I had worked in the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs and international aid organisations for a number of years. I happened to see the vacancy notice for the Development Office Co-ordinator in a magazine and I applied for the position. The Netherlands did have no intention to give diplomatic status to the representation. The ambassador in Harare was accredited to Namibia. It was also this embassy that was arranging for my coming to Namibia. Waiting in Holland, one day the Head of the Personnel Department asked me: "What are you waiting for? Do you have a diplomatic passport and do you want to go?" "Yes", I said and so I went, with a cheque of USD 10,000 in my pocket.'

'Namibia was vibrant when I arrived in 1992. The economy was expanding continuously. My position was peculiar and exceptional in diplomatic terms as I was going to run a 'development co-operation office', without an official status, though paid for by the Netherlands Government while I was holding a diplomatic passport. It was my main task to set up a regular development programme and since the office was not a diplomatic

representation of the Netherlands, I could work in relative calm and anonymity. I also did not always wait for The Hague. Whenever I needed formal agreement from the ministry, my lines of communication were very short: I rang somebody I knew, they advised me and I went ahead. I got a lot of room to manoeuvre and I took it all. Sometimes I felt the tension between the requirements of The Hague and the interests of Namibia. For example between the need for the Netherlands minister to spend his annual budget, as he wanted to 'score' you might say, and the time needed for the Namibians to allow their ideas to mature. I did everything possible to provide the Namibians the room they needed and so I did not spend my budget during that first period. I felt I had to do it that way. Ultimately The Netherlands has invested a lot of money in a very thoroughly prepared water programme with community involvement – pipelines, purification works etc. – in the north, followed later by a nation-wide and huge Adult Literacy Programme.'

'The Ministry had initially envisaged that I would rent a house and have my office at home, but after some time I had to look for a separate office and for staff. I did everything on my own: setting up a financial system and a filing system, buying furniture, organising computers, etc. etc. My husband and I recruited the staff: marvellous people, they are all still there, except one who has passed away. We deliberately looked for a secretary who spoke Afrikaans, for the communication with The Hague and in case the office would be upgraded into an Embassy office. However, the government did not have this intention; in this period the Dutch were much more interested in Eastern Europe.'

'So I had a lot of liberty. On the other hand I did not fit in the normal flow of communication and procedures of The Hague. I remember attending a Round Table pledging conference for donors organised by the Namibian National Planning Commission, when the whole of southern Africa was hit by a severe drought. It was shortly after my arrival and I was thanked for a large amount already donated by the Netherlands that I was not aware of. I was flabbergasted to learn this and remember apologising for my ignorance by saying that my fax was not yet working. The Hague had simply forgotten about me. Not on purpose: the director of the personnel department in the ministry of Foreign Affairs, whom I knew well, kept on sending me little postcards with the message: 'Keep it up, we are working on it'. This lasted for more than a year. I did everything using my personal network. This also meant that I had a better connection with the 'civil society' in Holland (the KZA, the churches, DOG, COV), than with the Dutch government.'

'The Namibians on the other hand were really very pleased with the Dutch representation and they supported me a lot. In the first week of my presence I spoke to a senior member of staff of the National Planning Commission who said: "For us you are the ambassador, since the head of the Swedish development cooperation office SIDA is also the ambassador of Sweden."'

'The first half year the workload grew by the day and so I unfortunately ended up in hospital, it was too much work. In December 1992 I got assistance from the Ministry. A temporary Head of Administration arrived, a very experienced and dedicated man, by far my senior in all respects. When we went to the airport to collect him my husband reminded me that I was supposed to be the boss, which was a new phase in my co-ordinatorship. I am afraid I had become a rather unconventional diplomat.'

'After one year and a half the office acquired the status of embassy. I became 'Chargé

d'affaires a.i.' (Tijdelijk Zaakgelastigde) and finally we were fully mainstreamed in the circuits of The Hague. This meant that we could benefit now from all support and other services applicable to all diplomatic missions. The Namibian staff got better contracts, official procedures were introduced, security got stricter and a few months later we started handling passports and visa. By now we also received all other information needed for the work, including Dutch newspapers. After the one-and-a-half years of 'non status' we all were very happy about this, despite the stricter rules that had come with the promotion. The pioneering period was over. In the co-operation efforts we continued to give the Namibians the opportunity to develop and implement their own plans, like the adult literacy programme, and the environmental profiling. The new University of Namibia also received a lot of support from the Netherlands.'

'Although Minister Pronk had wanted to invest in the bilateral co-operation with Namibia for 20-25 years, this viewpoint changed when Minister Herfkens took over. She considered Namibia "too rich" and restricted the programme to mainly support for good governance. Namibia never got the status of a "least developed country". Yes indeed, the overall figures for the average income per head are too high, but the distribution of wealth between the ethnic groups is still very much askew. Looking at macro-figures only has been detrimental for Namibia's relationships with donors, many of them are gradually withdrawing.'

'But Namibia is still vulnerable: in its infrastructure, in its transport, to drought and in terms of health.' At this point in time Cornélie van Waegeningh gets passionate about the donor oriented way of arguing: 'Just look at the region! Why not be honest and admit that historical ties between Namibia and the Netherlands are strong! Not only the linguistic ties, and the 'apartheid' legacy, but also the fact that Namibia's legal system is based upon the Roman Dutch law principles. Or take into account the personal relationships that have been forged during the liberation struggle, the contacts between churches, the NGOs, and volunteers who have been working in the country. Even the attitude of the "boers" of Namibia betrays their Dutch roots. Southern Africa is a huge and vulnerable region, particularly Namibia, which is over 22 times the size of the Netherlands. What representation will we have to provide political, socio-economic and environmental analyses?'

'After Namibia I went back to the Netherlands, first to the ministry and after three years I left the public service and started my own consultancy company. However, Namibia was not forgotten. Two years later, in 1997, at an exhibition of photographs from Namibia, I met some people from my time in Windhoek and we all appeared interested to do something about Namibia. We got together, and though it started like a reunion, with biltong and the like, we decided to establish an organisation called 'Namibia Contact'

Last but not least, two years ago Cornélie was asked to become one of two Honorary Consuls of Namibia in the Netherlands. She is consulted by the Namibian embassy in Brussels mainly on developmental and other relationships between the two countries. Namibia is part of her life.

Interview by Carla Schuddeboom

provide personnel to UN missions. The initial discussion was about medical staff. But it was not until 1989 that the UN approached the Dutch government with a request to supply police officers for the period of one year to be involved in the organisation and security of the pre-independence election. Because of a re-organisation of the Dutch police force at the time, the government decided to provide military police personnel. The main contingent of Dutch military police to be attached to the CIVPOL (civilian police) in Namibia arrived in the country on 15th April 1989. Between July 1989 and March 1990 there were permanently about 60 Dutch officers in the country. The last left nearly a month after the independence celebrations.

During the transition to the independence the Netherlands had to think about whether and in which way how it wanted to be officially represented during transition and after independence. In March 1989 the Netherlands sought advice from her partners in the European Political Cooperation group. It appeared that some European countries would establish an observation mission for the transitional period. These included Denmark, the German Federal Republic, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom). A number of countries, including the Netherlands, decided against it (Belgium, Greece, Ireland and Luxembourg). Most countries had not yet decided what to do after independence.

The decision taken by the Netherlands was laid down in a memo of the Directorate Africa and Middle-East, dated 1 February 1990:

“The conclusion is co-accreditation from Harare, with the possible opening an office locally if in the future a substantial development co-operation relationship with Namibia is entered into.”

On 21st March 1990 Namibia became independent. The Dutch government was represented by Mr M. van der Stoel (former Minister of Foreign Affairs), Mr J.G.W. Faber (Ambassador in Harare), Mr E. Roell Esq. (director for Africa and Middle East) and Dr R.H. Cohen (first embassy secretary in Pretoria).

In June 1992, the Dutch consulate in Windhoek was reopened and Mr P.K. Riddle, a British Shell manager, was appointed honorary consul. Some months earlier,

in February 1992, an office for development cooperation was opened in Windhoek, headed by Mrs C.M. van Waegeningh. After operating for a while from the home of Mrs Van Waegeningh, an office was rented on the corner of Crohnstreet and Bahnhof Street. It was officially opened on 2nd November 1992 by the minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Theo-Ben Gurirab. In the meantime, the ambassador in Harare remained co-accredited in Namibia. Nearly two years a situation existed where consular matters were handled by the honorary consul, development co-operation by the head of the new office and diplomatic matters directly by the embassy in Harare.

On 1st July 2003 the office for development co-operation was elevated to the status of embassy through a retroactive Royal Decree, dated 6th September 1993. Mrs Van Waegeningh was appointed Chargé d’Affaires a.i.. Initially the authority of the new embassy remained restricted to development co-operation and “limited authority for political matters”. The ambassador in Harare continued close supervision of the Windhoek office and consular matters remained the responsibility of the honorary consul. The relations between these three parties were not always smooth and co-operative. Namibians but also Dutch residents got sometimes confused when they wanted to deal with the Netherlands representation. Clarity increased when honorary consul Mr PK Riddle left the country and handed in his resignation. On 1st October 1994, the honorary consulate in Windhoek was closed down to open the way for a full-fledged embassy. The situation was finally resolved when on 23rd December 1994 the ministry authorised the new embassy to deal also with consular matters and trade promotion.

The Netherlands embassy in Windhoek 1994-2006

Over time the number of staff at the embassy increased to eight persons. Soon after her arrival in Namibia, Mrs Van Waegeningh recruited a driver, a secretary and a cleaning lady. All three continued to work for the embassy until the closure in 2006. They were joined in 1997 by a financial officer and in 2002 by a part-time consular and visa officer. With respect to Dutch staff, the minis-



From development co-operation office to embassy

The official Coat of Arms for the new embassy has arrived with the diplomatic pouch. The two persons on the left are Rina Isaacs and Michael Afrikaner, who both still work at the embassy. Photo courtesy of Cornélie van Waegeningh.



Tree planting to commemorate the opening of the embassy

Minister of Foreign Affairs Theo-Ben Gurirab (left) is seen planting an Ebony tree with ambassador Johan Leefmans from Harare (right) in the embassy compound. Second from left is Cornélie van Waegeningh. She was promoted from Head of the development co-operation office to Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands and Head of Mission at the establishment of a Netherlands embassy on 1st July 1993. Photo by Hans Gompelman.



Toos van Helvoort and the Queen of Kayengona

This picture shows Toos van Helvoort (right) on a courtesy visit in 1995 to Angeline Matumbo waNankali, Queen of Kayengona in Kavango (left) during a tour to the north of Namibia. Toos van Helvoort, who worked in Namibia from 1985 to 1996, received the decoration of Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau in 1995 for her courageous support to the health programme of the Catholic Church in Ombalantu, often confronting the South African authorities. Photo courtesy of Cornélie van Waegeningh.



Co-operation minister Jan Pronk visiting projects in Namibia

In May 1996 minister for Development Co-operation Jan Pronk visited Namibia. In this photo, taken in Oshakati, he is accompanied by Nangolo Mbumba, minister of Agriculture (and Water Affairs) and Desirée Bonis, the Head of Mission of the Royal Netherlands Embassy. The visit was during Mr Pronk's second term as minister for Development Co-operation. Pronk was also one of the key persons in the Dutch government from 1973 to 1977 to change the Dutch position towards South Africa. This opened the way for contacts with SWAPO and support for the liberation movement in Namibia. Photo courtesy of Desirée Bonis.



The Pelican, a Dutch tugboat for the port of Lüderitz

The tugboat Pelican was supplied in 1993 by shipyard Damen from the Netherlands to TransNamib to serve the port of Lüderitz. The transaction was financed by a soft loan through the ORET programme, in support of economic development. Photo by Hans Gompelman.



Heineken, brewed in Windhoek

In 2002 Heineken Brewers from the Netherlands bought 15% of the shares of Namibia Breweries which became the distributor of the Dutch brand in Southern Africa. After a special production line was installed, Heineken Export beer is now brewed in Windhoek. The photo was taken on 4th September 2004, when the first batch of the new brand was bottled. Photo by Henrick van Asch van Wijck.

try of Foreign Affairs posted an administrative officer in 1992 and in 1997 a first embassy secretary, who would also be deputy head of mission. While the Dutch ambassador in Harare remained co-accredited to Namibia and usually visited the country once or twice per year, Windhoek operated in practice as an independent embassy, also in contacts with The Hague and the government of Namibia.

Most of the work of the embassy was related to the programme for development co-operation, that is described in some detail in an other chapter in this book. After 1996, when the ministry delegated most responsibility for bilateral development co-operation to the Dutch embassies in partner countries, the embassy staff had the authority to manage the development activities from inception to closure. The Head of Mission could commit aid funds on the basis of approved annual plans without further referring to The Hague. The speed and flexibility with which Dutch aid could be made available was soon discovered and made the embassy a popular partner for many Namibian and international institutions. Apart from larger contributions to mainstream projects, the embassy supported hundreds of small activities of local NGO's and developed thus an extensive network in Namibian society.

Promotion of trade and investment between Namibia and the Netherlands has also been an aspect of the work of the embassy. It increased in importance when grant aid was reduced and the motto became "trade, not aid for development". Although modest successes can be claimed, this was never easy, due to the small market Namibia provides, its limited offer of export products and the competition of big neighbour South Africa. Total trade between the two countries presently does not amount to much more than about € 5 million of import goods from the Netherlands into Namibia and about € 15 million exports from Namibia to the Netherlands. Nearly all exports are food products from game meat to grapes. This excludes the income Namibia gets from the increasing number of Dutch tourists. In 2003 the Dutch were the third largest number of overseas visitors to Namibia, after those from Germany and the United Kingdom.

Trade promotion took many forms such as provision of

trade information by telephone, e-mail and publications to interested parties. Practical help and information was supplied to potential Dutch investors who approached the embassy. The embassy also financed expertise, studies and meetings to try to enlarge Namibia's exports to the European Union. Of a different nature is the PUM programme. Since a number of years PUM provides annually ten or more experienced advisers or managers year for short missions to advise Namibian SME's, normally in the private sector. The programme is represented in Windhoek by a Dutch entrepreneur.

Two meetings were organised where potential investors and trade partners could meet with Namibian business representatives. The first of these was in March 1998 parallel to the visit of President Sam Nujoma to the Netherlands. The second Namibia-Netherlands Business Forum was organised in Zoeterwoude in November 2005 through the Namibian embassy in Brussels and the Southern Africa Netherlands Economic Co-operation organisation (SANEC). The host was Heineken, the beer brewers. As part of its strategy to increase its share of the southern African beer market, Heineken bought about 15% of the Namibia Breweries shares in 2003. After a period when Dutch Heineken beer was only distributed from Windhoek, the famous brand is now brewed in Windhoek, alongside the local brands. Heineken is the largest Dutch investor in Namibia. Other Dutch investments are relatively small and are mainly related to tourism. An important instrument for Dutch investment in Namibia and Namibian investment in the Netherlands is the Agreement on Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investments that was signed on 26th November 2002 and later ratified by the parliaments of both countries.

The availability of consular and visa services at the embassy has been a useful facility for Dutch passport holders and Namibians and other residents wanting to travel to Europe. The embassy also handled visa for the European partners Belgium, Luxemburg and Greece, who have no embassy in the country. About 400 visa were issued annually.



President Nujoma received by Queen Beatrix

Mr Sam Nujoma had visited the Netherlands several times. Initially he came as a guest of the anti-apartheid movement, lobbying for support for the Namibian cause. From 1973 onwards he was received by the Dutch government and held discussions with cabinet ministers and prime minister Den Uyl. This photo was taken on 26th March 1998 during his official visit to the Netherlands as President of Namibia when he was received by Queen Beatrix. On the left is Prince Willem Alexander and on the right Prince Claus, the husband of Queen Beatrix. Photo by Tabby Moyo.

106



PRINCE WITH A CAUSE ... Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands (centre) paid a two-day visit to Namibia on Monday and Tuesday to assess the situation of arid countries and the limitations and opportunities this offers for the sustainable management of scarce water resources. He also had closed discussions with Agriculture Minister Helmut Angula before proceeding to South Africa. The Prince is scheduled to chair the second World Water Forum to be held in the Hague, The Netherlands, from March 17 to 22. Photo: Tabby Moyo

The water management Prince visits Namibia

This newspaper cutting is from the Namibian which reported on the visit by Prince Willem-Alexander to Namibia in March 2000. On the left is ambassador Beatrix Ambags from Harare, on the right Bert Diphoom from the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs. Reproduced from The Namibian.

Official visits

The presence of an Embassy as a symbol of enhanced relations and activities probably also contributed to an increasing number of official visits in both directions. The most important of these was the visit of president Dr Sam Nujoma to the Netherlands from 25th to 29th March 1998. As SWAPO president, Dr Nujoma had of course visited the Netherlands several times in the 1970's and 1980's. He already knew a number of Dutch politicians and the leadership of the anti-apartheid movement in the Netherlands.

This time he came as Head of State with a delegation of three cabinet ministers and other dignitaries. Parallel to the official visit an economic delegation of 14 persons visited the Netherlands. The newspapers reported successful talks and announced even direct flights between Amsterdam by Air Namibia. They were probably too optimistic because such flights never took place.

President Nujoma was received by Queen Beatrix. He and his delegation visited a modern dairy farm, he toured the harbour of Rotterdam, one of the large container terminals there and visited an off-shore oil drilling platform. There were also various meetings with the minister for Development Co-operation and the minister for International Trade, members of parliament and representatives of the financial sector. And of course the old friends of Namibia were not forgotten. A meeting and various other manifestations were held in the town of Nieuwegein, partner of Rundu in Namibia. During the meeting documents about the Dutch support to the liberation of Namibia and SWAPO in particular were handed over by the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa, which is a merger of the various anti-colonial and anti-apartheid organisations in the country.

Several other official visits are recorded in the files of the embassy. Mr Theo-Ben Gurirab visited the country twice, once as minister of Foreign Affairs, once as Prime Minister. Also Hidipo Hamutenya and Immanuel Ngatjizeko went to the Netherlands as ministers for Trade and Industry to promote economic co-operation. Mr Hamutenya even received the 2003 FDI Personality of the year award in Amsterdam. This prestigious award is bestowed by the London Financial Times

The independence of Namibia and the establishment of the embassy also opened the way for official Dutch visits to Namibia. In 1996 both the minister for Development Co-operation, Jan Pronk and the minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans van Mierlo visited Namibia. Mr Pronk came in May and spent three days in the country. He flew to the north and visited water projects in Ruacana and Oshakati, He was received by president Nujoma and met several ministers. In October Mr Hans van Mierlo participated in the SADC-EU ministerial conference that was held in Windhoek. He also used the opportunity to visit some projects that received Dutch support.

A royal visitor who came to Namibia twice was Willem Alexander, the Prince of Orange. Both visits were related to his special interest in water management. In preparation for the Second World Water Forum in 2000, that would be chaired by the Prince, he visited southern African countries. He arrived in Namibia from Victoria Falls on 6th March 2000 and spent two days travelling by car, helicopter and airplane to visit and observe water catchments and water projects and talk to stakeholders in the sector. The second visit was in November 2004, when the Prince participated in meetings of water management researchers and practitioners from Southern Africa. A last royal visitor was Princess Margriet who was in Namibia from 27th to 31st March 2006. She was the guest of the Red Cross Society of Namibia and visited Red Cross activities in Windhoek and the Caprivi Region.

Closure of the embassy and return to a honorary consulate

The council of ministers of the Dutch government in its meeting of 24th June 2005 decided to close the embassy in Windhoek. This followed on the reduction of the number of partner countries for development co-operation from more than 60 to 39. This decision had been taken in 2003 and communicated to the government of Namibia. On account of its relatively high income, Namibia was among the countries where bilateral aid was to be stopped. An exit programme was drafted and implemented in 2004 and 2005. The first half year of 2006 was used to wind up business and transfer visa services to the German embassy. It was decided to



Celebration of ten years Royal Netherlands Embassy in Windhoek.

On 26th November 2002 the ten-year anniversary of the opening of the office at Crohn Street was celebrated. Guest of Honour was Namibia's minister of Foreign Affairs, Hidipo Hamutenya, standing in the centre in this photo. To the right is Willem Aalmans, Head of Mission of the embassy from 2000 to 2004. On the same day Namibia and the Netherlands signed an agreement about reciprocal encouragement and protection of investments. Photo by Gerard Botha.



The embassy team in 2006

The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Windhoek had eight members of staff in 2006. From left to right; Anne-Eva Thiadens (head of consular and general affairs), Rosy Boois (household), Marlies van Velsen (consular officer) Miller Reinecke (financial and administrative officer), Hans Poley (deputy head of mission), Rina Isaacs (secretary), Huub Hendrix (head of mission) and Michael Afrikaner (driver). Photo by Steven van den Berg.

change the co-accreditation of the Netherlands ambassador to Namibia from Harare to Pretoria and re-open a honorary consulate in Windhoek. The official date of closure of the embassy is 30th June 2006. At the time of printing, the opening date of the honorary consulate was not yet known.

