

INTRODUCTION

This book is the first in which the relations between inhabitants of what is now Namibia and people from The Netherlands are described and also the relations between the governments and other institutions of both countries. Most of the material was never published and some chapters are based on new research. But also material that was already published is now summarized in single chapters and gets a new readership with this publication. The many illustrations are from a large variety of sources and many are published for the first time. The fact that the book contains so much new material also means that it has not yet benefited from review and criticism.

FIRST CONTACTS

The first recorded contacts between inhabitants of what is now Namibia and people from The Netherlands were related to the presence of the Dutch East India Company or Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC) in the region, in particular the establishment of a VOC post at what is now the great city of Cape Town. The first chapter by Wolfram Hartmann is about a number of expeditions that were carried out at the orders of the VOC in the 17th and 18th century. The first official expedition by ship to explore the Atlantic coast of what is presently Namibia took place in 1670. From evidence available, it seems that the first of the land expeditions crossed into present day Namibia in 1760. Although the chapter is mainly based on available journals of these expeditions, it has to be quite speculative sometimes when these journals are incomplete or unclear to present day readers.

SHIPWRECKED

The second chapter is by Bruno Werz who researched in the archives and in the field the identity and other information about a ship that was wrecked along Namibia's infamous Skeleton coast. The reason for the investigation was the discovery of copper VOC coins on the coast between Sandwich Harbour and Lüderitz, that is mentioned in several publications. An expedition to Meob Bay was carried out with the help of the author, who is a marine archaeologist and the foremost authority on VOC shipwrecks in the region. A few hundred more coins and some other artefacts were found. It is nearly certain that the coins were carried by the vessel "*Vlissingen*" that perished near Meob Bay on its voyage to the Cape of Good Hope that started in January 1747. Both chapters will hopefully lead to continued research and more detailed knowledge about what went on between two hundred and three hundred and fifty years ago.

AFRIKAANS

The third chapter by Ernst Stals is about the origins of the Afrikaans language in Namibia. It appears that the use of Afrikaans, as a *lingua franca* in Namibia is much older and was already much more widespread in Namibia than people often realise. Afrikaans got a bad reputation as the language of the apartheid but seems to have overcome most of this stigma. It will be interesting to see if and how fast English will replace Afrikaans as the language spoken between people with different mother tongues.

CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES

Brother Hermenegildus Beris describes the activities of Dutch Catholic missionaries and Catholic brothers in chapter 4. They started to arrive in considerable numbers some years after the Second World War, when there was a shortage of German priests. Two main groups are identified: the priests of the order of the Oblates of Mary, who ran mission stations or worked as parish priests all over the country. The second group arrived from 1963 onwards. They are the Brothers of the Congregation of Mary of Mercy or the Broeders van Tilburg as they are better known in The Netherlands. They specialize in education and worked particularly in secondary schools. They also helped to establish some new secondary schools that are still among the better known in the country.

DUTCH IMMIGRANTS

Chapter 5 is the translation of an article in Afrikaans that appeared in 2002 in the Newsletter of the Namibia Scientific Society. It was written by Cor Leijenaar, who lived in Windhoek as a child. His father was one of quite a large group of Dutch masons, carpenters and other artisans who were recruited by the Dutch building contractor Steens. Steens was one of the first who helped build the modern Windhoek that we know today. Some of the workers later started their own companies although none of these exist anymore. Leijenaar, who now lives in South Africa, describes his experiences as a child in the "Steenskamp", in Windhoek.

SUPPORT TO SWAPO

In chapter 6 we move to the Dutch support to the independence struggle.

This is the most extensive article in the book and is written by one of the icons of the Dutch anti-apartheid movement, Sietse Bosgra. Mr Bosgra's article begins at the time when the Dutch government was reluctant to support claims for self government by the oppressed people in southern Africa. It describes the pressure by civil society, especially the churches and the anti-apartheid movement to change these policies. Very interesting also are the frequent contacts between important members of the current Namibian leadership, who were at the time thirty years younger they are now, and these activists. Together they plotted to convince the authorities to get their way and were often quite successful in that. This chapter should also be an eye-opener for readers who are interested in the effectiveness of civil society to push for change. It will certainly add to most readers' knowledge about the extent of this movement in The Netherlands. Other actors of this period may have different perceptions than Mr Bosgra.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The last four chapters analyse the diplomatic relations from their beginnings in 1913 and the co-operation between the governments and other institutions in both countries after independence. The diplomatic relations until independence in Chapter 7 were researched and described by Michelle Gimbrère, who works in the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs. She made extensive use of the archives of the consulate general in Cape Town and the embassy in Pretoria. The author of the period after independence is Huub Hendrix, the current Head of Mission in Windhoek. Interesting in the pre-independence period is the widely different estimation

by Dutch diplomats and honorary consuls of the potential for trade, investment and settlement for Dutch companies or individuals in South West Africa. The description of the post-independence period shows that the presence of an embassy stimulated and attracted new activities and exchanges in many sectors. It was also instrumental in a good number of high level visits in both directions.

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

Hans Poley who is head of development co-operation at the embassy, wrote chapter 8 about the bilateral development co-operation. His article is restricted to description and begs for a thorough and independent evaluation to establish effectiveness and efficiency of 15 years development aid in various sectors. The article suggests that it may have advantageous for the quality of the programme that it was designed and the established by professionals, before an embassy with its more general responsibilities was opened. But it is also clear from the article that major policy changes in the content and volume of the co-operation were not the result of analysis and need, but resulted purely from changes in Dutch policy, mostly related to different priorities by subsequent Dutch governments.

UNIVERSITIES AND TOWNS

The last two chapters are written by Marianne Ros, who is a historian and worked in Namibia for a number of years as a teacher. On the basis of interviews and material available in The Netherlands, she describes two examples of the many contacts between the two countries after independence. Chapter 9 is about the cooperation between universities and

other institutions of learning. It shows that both the University of Namibia and the Namibia Polytechnic made good use of a long-term and varied support by a number of Dutch institutions. Thousands of Namibian students in Windhoek and other places and hundreds of Namibians who went to The Netherlands benefited from this co-operation that also fostered intensive personal relations that continue in the present time. Another form of co-operation, which involves personal involvement of Dutch and Namibian participants are the partnerships between Namibian and Dutch municipalities which is the subject of chapter 10. Apart from official co-operation between the administrations of the towns, many ordinary inhabitants in the Netherland and Namibia have become involved in these exchanges.

AND FURTHER ...

The book does not have a conclusion but this overview suggests that the relations between the two countries and their inhabitants have been surprisingly varied. There is also good reasons to believe that the relations will continue to flourish, because most are not dependent on formal co-operation between the two governments. An important contribution to these contacts is made by Dutch citizens who worked in Namibia and Namibians who lived in The Netherlands for a while, mainly for studies. Even among the growing stream of Dutch tourists, several come back and establish more intensive links with Namibia and its people.