

Chapter 6

The Netherlands and the struggle for the liberation of Namibia

The struggle for the independence of Namibia was not only fought by the Namibian population; in many countries there were people who stood by the Namibians. It was through pressure by the churches, the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial movement which gained ground in the 1960s and the formation of a coalition government led by the social democrat prime minister, Joop den Uyl, in 1973 that made the Netherlands a supporter of the independence movement in Namibia. The Dutch Committee on Southern Africa, KZA, was one of the kingpins of this movement. This chapter describes the development of support from political activism, fund-raising and lobbying to fully-fledged diplomatic relations between two independent countries. Several actors who played a role in this story recount their recollections of this period.



Sietse Bosgra

Sietse Bosgra was born 1935 in the Netherlands. He studied physics in Amsterdam and graduated in nuclear physics. As a student he became active in the anti-colonial movement. In April 1961 he was one of the founders of the Dutch “Angola Committee” in Amsterdam. This committee became the support organization in the Netherlands for the liberation movements of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau/Cape Verde: MPLA, Frelimo and PAIGC. After the liberation of the Portuguese colonies the name of the Angola Comite changed in Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika (Holland Committee on Southern Africa). He continues to be involved in Southern Africa carrying out assignments for the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA).

Peter Katjavivi



After having been kept waiting for a while in deep armchairs we suddenly see him at the top of the staircase. Tall, distinguished, elegant and greying. Peter Katjavivi, Namibia's Ambassador to the European Commission, Belgium and the Netherlands, with whom we shared our cheese sandwiches more than thirty years ago. Arms wide and beaming, ready to embrace some friends from the time of the liberation struggle.

At the start of the conversation the ambassador declares: *'Of course African students in Europe in the sixties played their role in making the European people aware about colonialism and apartheid. When I came for the first time to Holland, I also met Portuguese young men who did not want to fight in Africa, the conscientious objectors, and they were important as well. But I am convinced that the support to our struggle had its origins in a strong urge never again to repeat the racism and the terrible errors of World War II.'*

'In 1968 I was sent to London by the SWAPO president, after a massive process against SWAPO leaders in 1967, that had caused many to be sent to Robben Island. I had to establish an office in London that was to cover the whole of western Europe. Quite a challenge, you can imagine, as I was a student as well.

In 1969 I went to Holland for the first time and found the youth groups of the reformed churches very interested in our cause. We were also introduced to the AABN (Anti Apartheids Movement Netherlands) and the Angola Committee, who would become the vital links for us. In Holland I found the Angola Committee an important point of reference for people who wanted to commit themselves to our cause, even though at the time it was working for the peoples in the Portuguese colonies.

My main role was to link up with the labour movements: the TUC in Britain and the Industrial Labour Union NVV in the Netherlands. This was because at a SWAPO Congress in Tanzania in 1969 the decision had been taken that the labour movement in our country would have to be organized. We did not want sabotage, we wanted our industries and infrastructure to be intact in a free Namibia. So I worked with the Industrial Union, they were the main support. ...Ja..Arie Groeneveld...This is the biggest joy for me... it was 30 years ago and we always remained friends with them. The whole period I never slept in a hotel. I was always invited at home, sometimes I slept on the floor. You know, the old NUNW, the Namibian Labour Union, was born out of this experience. We got financial support, educational materials, leaflets, everything. The whole concept of having an umbrella union - like your NVV - came from that.

In those years the World Council of Churches was discussing the role of violence in the liberation struggle. The Special Programme to Combat Racism was borne from that discussion, with its director Sjollema. The churches became another important actor in the work of consciousness raising. South Africa had expelled important and outspoken church people from Namibia, including a young student, David de Beer. While I was working with the labour movement, his presence became essential in the churches.

The Dutch government seemed to be ambivalent. I recall one visit in 1973, organised by the Catholic Church, where our president Sam Nujoma met the minister for Development Co-operation, Berend Jan Udink, somewhere outside Utrecht. There was uneasiness. On the one hand he agreed with our point of view, with our struggle for justice and freedom. On the other hand he wanted to protect certain economic interests. The United Nations was taking a strong stance at that time. From that moment on the political situation intensified and the solidarity movements pushed hard. Later, Minister Jan Pronk wanted extended humanitarian aid for the Namibian refugees, channelled

The Netherlands and the United Nations

After the Second World War the United Nations (UN) constituted the first international battlefield in the struggle for the independence of Namibia. Ever since the first session of the UN General Assembly in 1946, Namibia was a recurrent point on the agenda. Year after year South Africa was condemned because it refused to accept the UN mandate over Namibia. In 1967 the UN General Assembly formally decided to end the South African mandate over Namibia and to transfer the mandate to the UN Council for Namibia.

After the Second World War, the Netherlands was itself still a colonial power with possessions in South America and fighting a colonial war in Indonesia. In those years the Netherlands was, like the other Western countries, a friend of the regime in South Africa. Moreover the Netherlands had a special relationship with South Africa, because an important part of the white population – the Afrikaners – were regarded to be of Dutch origin and many more Dutch families had emigrated to South Africa after the war and in the early 1950's.

So in the United Nations the Netherlands voted again and again against resolutions to end the South African occupation of Namibia. For example in 1954 there were 40 countries voting in support of the resolution, 11 abstentions and only 3 against. One of these three was the Netherlands.

But in the 1960's the Netherlands slowly changed its policy as there was growing indignation about the apartheid policy of South Africa. The Dutch government also feared to become internationally isolated as a friend of apartheid-South Africa. In 1966 the Dutch representative at the UN supported a resolution to deprive South Africa of the mandate over Namibia. And ten years later the Netherlands recognized the authority of the UN Council for Namibia to decide about the export of Namibia's natural resources. Amongst the member countries of what was then the European Community this was exceptional: only Denmark and Ireland took a similar position.

But the Netherlands has never given its support to UN resolutions on Namibia when paragraphs were included

in which SWAPO was recognized as the only authentic representative of the Namibian people and in which the armed liberation struggle was endorsed. Originally the Dutch government had not much sympathy for SWAPO because of its contacts with the communist world and its use of violence. This changed suddenly in 1973, when the Den Uyl-government led by the Social Democrats came into power. A few years later the Dutch government would start its financial assistance to SWAPO. There was now a broad acceptance of this policy in Dutch public opinion.

The Dutch Southern Africa solidarity organisations and Namibia

At the end of the 1960's and in the 1970's a sort of political-cultural revolution took place in the Netherlands and in other West-European countries. The hard and sober times of the reconstruction of the country after the destruction of the Second World War were over. There was optimism of building a better world with peace and justice. Those were also the years of the large demonstrations against the American war in Vietnam and some years later against stationing of nuclear missiles on Dutch soil. And the interest in the third world countries and the sympathy for their liberation movements increased. In this climate, solidarity organisations with the peoples of southern Africa were founded. They aimed to support the liberation struggle, convince public opinion of their views and change government policy.

In 1961 the "Angola Comité" was founded to support the liberation struggle in the Portuguese colonies. Particularly the liberation movement FRELIMO of Mozambique became very popular. In 1969 it became the first liberation movement to receive funds from the Dutch government. After the liberation of the Portuguese colonies the "Angola Comité" supported SWAPO and the other liberation movements in southern Africa under its new name "Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika" (KZA).

Two other anti-apartheid organisations were founded that would support SWAPO, the "Anti-Apartheids Beweging Nederland" (AABN) in 1971 and Kairos (Christians against Apartheid) in 1970. These three organisa-

through Novib. Yes, Herman van der Made...they did a fantastic job, also inside the country for legal defence of the political opponents of the South Africans.

After all, the Dutch government was not much different from other governments. When it came to solidarity support and humanitarian assistance we cannot complain. Every year in the SWAPO Annual Meeting Communiqué the appreciation for the assistance from The Netherlands is expressed. Great credit is given to the invisible people, who did so much to create this atmosphere of a common purpose to fight apartheid in which the credibility of the South African regime was weakened. The South Africans were opening up through the economy, through business, but they had no moral stand. In the end we prevailed because justice was on our side.

Eventually I went back to university in 1979. I did my masters in Birmingham and I went to Oxford to do my PhD. In 1989, I went back home, after 27 years, with my head held up, in dignity. That was what we had struggled for. You know, when I was still a student in Namibia, one night we were walking home from the place where we were working. It was after nine o'clock and we were arrested because we were not allowed to be in a white area after nine. We pleaded that we were just students, doing no harm to anybody and they asked us questions to make us prove that we were students. "When did Jan van Riebeeck land at the Cape?" they asked. "In 1652", we yelled and we could go.

I became Member of Parliament and I participated in drafting the constitution. Then I was assigned to set up the University of Namibia, which again has strong links with your country: with the ISS, the University of Utrecht, the Free University of Amsterdam and the University of Maastricht. Our university has now 9000 students.

For me there is something special about being here as the Namibian ambassador for the Benelux countries. Now that we have achieved what we have worked for, we have an obligation to keep the ties strong. What we got was achieved through hard work. Young people must know something about this support and solidarity and we should also be in the forefront of the struggle elsewhere. We share so much. I can even understand your language. What can we do to build on that? We, people from my generation, will always react with a certain warmth when we hear you come from the Netherlands. Young people don't understand that. Therefore this book is good for the record.'

Interview by Carla Schuddeboom

tions have considerably contributed to a shift in Dutch public opinion away from the old feelings of loyalty with the South African white population. Peter Katjavivi, the London representative of SWAPO, became a regular visitor to the Netherlands. As a guest of the anti-apartheid organisations he gave numerous interviews and lectures.

It was a Dutch trade union that started the first large public campaign for Namibia. SWAPO originated in the 1960's from the struggle of the contract workers in Namibia, and it was still closely connected with its affiliated trade union NUNW. In September 1972 the SWAPO Secretary of Labour, Solomon Mifima, visited the Netherlands and was brought into contact with the trade unions. The result of this visit was that the large Dutch Industrial Union NVV started a publicity and fundraising campaign for the political and organisational work of SWAPO amongst the black workers of Namibia in 1974. At its 1975 congress the union handed € 100.000 symbolically to Mifima. Also a four-week training course in the Netherlands was organized for three SWAPO trade union activists.

During the first years after its foundation in 1971 the "Anti-Apartheids Beweging Nederland" (AABN) was the support organisation for SWAPO in the Netherlands. It had introduced SWAPO with the trade union NVV, and was involved in the trade union training course. It organized several trips of SWAPO delegations to the Netherlands and collected funds from the public for SWAPO. But most of the AABN support went to ANC and SACTU and to the liberation movements of Zimbabwe.

When in 1975 Angola became independent, SWAPO moved there and used the long border between the two countries for attacks on the South African occupation army in Namibia. The "Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika" (KZA) started to send part of its material assistance for Angola to the SWAPO office in the Angolan capital Luanda. In 1974-75 the three Dutch anti-apartheid organisations started a common information campaign for SWAPO in which they published a first book on the liberation struggle in Namibia, "Namibië, Zuidwest Afrika bevrijd". From 1976 Kairos became the basis for a full-time Namibia worker, David de Beer.

Soon the support for the liberation struggle in Namibia would shift from the AABN to KZA and Kairos. After a meeting with a SWAPO delegation in May 1978 the AABN concluded: "The members of the delegation showed hardly any interest in the political solidarity we have organized in the Netherlands. They are more interested in material assistance, and there KZA means of course much more for them than we." The annual report of AABN over 1979 said: "The activities of the AABN concerning Namibia are for the greatest part limited to information about the developments in that country in our magazine."

"Namibia free, support SWAPO", 1976 to 1978

The first large public campaign in support of the liberation struggle in Namibia was started in 1976. In October 1976 it would be ten years since the mandate on Namibia was taken away from South Africa and transferred to the UN Council for Namibia. To commemorate that important event the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches asked their member churches to participate in an International Week of Solidarity with the People of Namibia, to be held in October 1976. The youth organisations of the two largest Protestant Churches and of the Catholic Church in the Netherlands contacted KZA and Kairos to discuss possible common activities.

The three church youth organisations, the organisation of Third World Shops, KZA and Kairos agreed to start a common campaign "Namibia Free, Support SWAPO", that would continue from the autumn of 1976 until spring 1978. Two other organisations would later join the campaign, the large development organisation Novib and the youth organisation of a Protestant political party, ARJOS. The AABN declined to work with the church organisations and with Novib.

KZA, which was the largest of the three Dutch solidarity organisations with the liberation struggle in southern Africa, became the central address of the Namibia campaign. From 1974 to the spring of 1976, all its activities had focused on supporting Angola in its war against the South African invasion that was aimed at install-



Dutch government starts talking to SWAPO

In September 1976 an official SWAPO delegation was received by Dutch cabinet ministers. This was one of several high level contacts with members of the Den Uyl government and the beginning of Dutch government support to the liberation of Namibia. From left to right: Dutch foreign minister Max van der Stoel, Peter Katjavivi, Dutch minister for Development Co-operation Jan Pronk, Peter Muesihange and Mishake Muyongo. Photo: KZA Collection at the National Archives of Namibia

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Den Uyl and Nujoma meet

Dutch prime minister Joop den Uyl (left) meets SWAPO president Sam Nujoma in the summer of 1977. To their right is Paul Staal, a leading activist of the Dutch anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movement of the time. In the background are posters and cartoons that were used to inform the Dutch public about the situation in southern Africa and appeal for their support. Photo courtesy of NiZA

ing a puppet government. KZA sent large quantities of goods to Angola in those years to support MPLA. But SWAPO in Angola needed the same goods, so from the start some of it was donated to SWAPO.

After the eviction of the South African army from Angola in 1976, KZA decided to focus on support for SWAPO. There was a special reason why KZA was eager to campaign for the liberation of Namibia: as long as Namibia was not free from South African occupation it would constitute a basis for new South African aggression against Angola. With this argument KZA hoped at the same time to convince the many people in the Netherlands that had in the past backed the freedom struggle in Angola and Mozambique to continue their support for the liberation of the other countries in southern Africa that were still under white rule.

The campaigning organisations adopted a clear political line concerning Namibia. Their first demand to the Dutch political parties and the Dutch government read: "The Dutch government must recognize SWAPO as the only authentic representative of Namibia and must give direct assistance to SWAPO without any conditions attached". The funds collected during their own campaign were for unconditional support to SWAPO too. The Dutch state intelligence agency BVD sounded the alarm about these activities, and classified them as "indirect terrorism support". "KZA refuses consistently to verify how the liberation movements spend the money they receive", the service complained. "Even the 'Dutch Interchurch Aid' and the youth organisations of the Protestant churches cooperate with KZA to raise unconditional support for these communist liberation movements."

That the Dutch church organisations had a different opinion of SWAPO was the result of the public support of the Namibian Council of Churches for the liberation struggle and for SWAPO. In the Dutch political situation the support of the church-related organisations for SWAPO was important. The Christian-Democratic Party was often a decisive factor in the formation of a Dutch government as it was always in the centre of political power. The aim of KZA and Kairos was to win this party –like the Social Democrat Party- over to a more critical attitude towards apartheid, to support sanctions

against South Africa and to continue the Dutch government assistance to SWAPO.

As part of the campaign "Liturgical suggestions for a Namibia Sunday" were sent to the local churches, complete with poetry, texts and prayers for both SWAPO and the Namibian churches. Moreover a special Namibia Newspaper with a circulation of 100,000 copies was distributed in the churches. More than 200 local groups and organisations were involved in collecting the funds. The total proceeds of the fundraising for SWAPO were € 130,000. David de Beer concluded; "The involvement of the religious youth councils gave the campaign a new political dimension, and the political input of the KZA contributed to a sharper campaign towards the church circles."

Contacts with external SWAPO

The campaign led to in further contacts between SWAPO and the Dutch government. In September 1976 Muyongo, Katjavivi and Mueshihange had discussions with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Development Co-operation, Van der Stoep and Pronk. In June 1977 a delegation under the leadership of SWAPO President Sam Nujoma was received by the same two ministers and by Prime Minister Den Uyl. They also met members of the Dutch parliament. One of the most important points of discussion at these meetings was assistance of the Dutch government to SWAPO. The Embassy of Nigeria promised to organise a diplomatic reception in honour of the SWAPO president, but that did not materialize.

The SWAPO delegations also had discussions with the Dutch church organisations and the development NGO's, mainly about humanitarian aid to the refugees under the responsibility of SWAPO. Few people in the Netherlands realized that SWAPO in Zambia and Angola was in fact responsible for the lives of large numbers of Namibians who had fled their country. During the first years there were about 10,000 refugees in SWAPO camps, but at the end of the liberation war the number had increased to 80,000. Much money was needed for education, health care, nutrition, agricultural projects etc. In retrospect it is amazing how much time and



Visit by the internal SWAPO

SWAPO was one of the few liberation organisations in southern Africa that was allowed to operate in the country for a while, although often obstructed by the South African government. A delegation of internal SWAPO, consisting of its chairman Daniel Tjongarero and education secretary Hendrik Witbooi joined SWAPO president Sam Nujoma on a visit to the Netherlands to discuss support in February 1978. In this photo they are addressing a press conference. Photo KZA collection in the National Archives of Namibia.

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Sam Nujoma in Utrecht

SWAPO president Sam Nujoma addressing a public meeting at Hoog Brabant hotel in the centre of Utrecht on 8th May 1977. Third from left is Kapuka Nanyala and on the right Paul Staal, one of the Dutch anti-apartheid activists, who would later spearhead Namibia's lobby for European support in Brussels. Photo courtesy of NiZA.

energy the leadership of SWAPO had to spend on the refugees, while these were also urgently needed for the political, diplomatic and military battle against South Africa.

In their discussions with KZA, the SWAPO delegations focused on their other needs. The headquarters of SWAPO outside Namibia were originally in the Zambian capital Lusaka, but after the independence of Angola in 1975 it had moved to the Angolan capital Luanda. SWAPO urgently needed support to organise its services and institutions in Angola. Moreover it had offices in Tanzania, Egypt, Algeria, Senegal, Sweden, England, Finland and the United States. It was impossible to get support from humanitarian relief organisations for the expenses of the organisational, political and diplomatic work and for the communication and travel expenses. For these expenses SWAPO and the other liberation movements in southern Africa hoped for support from the solidarity organisations.

The needs of the movements were enormous. So fundraising from the public for unconditional support to SWAPO was the leading activity during the campaign “Namibia free, support SWAPO”. Because Kairos had promised to the Dutch church organisations that it would not start raising funds for the liberation movements, this was a task for KZA.

Support for SWAPO inside Namibia

Of all the liberation movements of southern Africa, SWAPO was the only one that also existed inside the country as a legal political organisation with a board and regional branches. In February 1978 the chairman of the internal SWAPO, Daniel Tjongarero and its secretary for education Rev. Hendrik Witbooi were guests of the Namibia campaign in the Netherlands.

Tjongarero and Witbooi informed the Dutch organisations that a small SWAPO office had been opened in Windhoek, and that the aim was to open also offices in other parts of the country. They needed office equipment, cars, money for publications, salaries and the running costs of the organisation. Moreover SWAPO had some schools in Namibia, plans for medical assis-

tance to the population and for an agricultural project. But the work of SWAPO inside Namibia was constantly intimidated and hindered by police raids and imprisonment. In 1978 the SWAPO office was closed by the South African government and many SWAPO leaders were arrested. Funds were needed for the defense of these political prisoners. About 40 SWAPO leaders served long-term sentences on Robben Island, and finances were needed to make it possible for their families to visit them.

After the visit of the two SWAPO leaders, KZA not only supported SWAPO outside Namibia, but also SWAPO inside the country.

Fundraising by KZA for SWAPO

The “Namibia free, support SWAPO” campaign and the discussions with the SWAPO delegations started 15 years of material support of KZA to SWAPO. In 1977 a special department of KZA was set up for this task, the “Foundation Liberation Fund” with a separate financial administration.

As a result of its large-scale campaigns for Angola and Mozambique in the past, the KZA had a register of some 40,000 donors. Through annual mailings they were asked to contribute for “unconditional support” to the liberation movements. It was explained that the movements had a lot of costs which nobody was willing to pay, costs for the offices, but also costs for underground activities in their countries.

Donors who did not react were removed from the register after some years. In this way recurrent fund raising campaigns under the public were not only necessary to obtain their contributions but also to keep the list of donors up to date. The aim was to get them involved in local activities, make them subscribers to the magazine or make them regular contributors.

In addition to its regular donors and the yearly public fundraising campaigns, KZA had still a third source of money. Whenever a request for humanitarian aid was received from the liberation movements KZA tried to find a NGO, usually Dutch, that was willing to pay for



Four sources of funding

The material support of KZA for the liberation movements in southern Africa came about equally from four sources: the Dutch public, NGO's, the Dutch government and the European Community. After the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 the contributions for ZANU and ZAPU stopped. KZA continued its support for Zimbabwe by having 50 to 80 Dutch professionals in education and health care under a contract with the Zimbabwe government for a number of years.

During the years 1988 and 1989 there were signs of a changing climate in southern Africa as the Pretoria government spoke about a possible release of Mandela and accepted free elections in Namibia. These developments had influence on the assistance KZA could give to ANC, to external SWAPO and to the organisations inside South Africa and Namibia. For instance the assistance to SWAPO dropped from € 926,000 in 1988 to € 141,000 in 1989 as a consequence of the ending of the funding by the Dutch government. At the same time assistance to activities inside Namibia increased from € 186,000 in 1988 to € 2,347,000 in 1989.

the project or goods. There were many dozens of sources that could be tapped, organisations for children, for education, for medical aid, church or development organisations, the special campaigns to fight hunger in Africa etc. Trade unions were willing to support the Namibian trade union NUNW, the Evert Vermeer Foundation donated € 2,500 for the first of May celebrations, the Dutch broadcasting organisations VPRO and NOS supported the SWAPO radio station “Voice of Namibia”, the city of Dordrecht donated € 30,000 for the “working brigades” of SWAPO etc.

Support for SWAPO by the Dutch government

Another consequence of the political-cultural revolution in the Netherlands of the 1960's was that in the Dutch Social Democrat Party a “New Left” movement was founded. The young generation in the party revolted against the old guard whose main focus was the cold war with the Soviet Union. This “New Left” movement led in 1973 to the most progressive government the Netherlands has ever known. It was headed by Prime Minister Joop den Uyl. The new Minister for Development Co-operation Jan Pronk represented the New Left; the Minister of Foreign Affairs Van der Stoel was a typical representative of the old generation.

The KZA/Angola Comité had already in 1969 succeeded in convincing the Dutch parliament and government to give financial support to the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. In its declaration of policy the new Den Uyl government announced: “Liberation movements in the colonial territories in southern Africa will be supported. This assistance –preferably through multilateral and regional organisations- will be aimed at humanitarian development projects in the field of education and health care in the liberated areas.” The government was at that time only thinking of the liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique, which already controlled large liberated areas. While Dutch government aid to the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies had until then only been a few hundred thousand euro a year, Pronk reserved not less than € 6 million in the 1974 budget. In the 1975 budget the amount rose to € 9 million.

Two months after the declaration of policy of the new government, SWAPO knocked on the door. Sam Nujoma was received at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1975 the annual donations of € 700,000 to SWAPO started, to be sent in the form of goods from the Netherlands. Officially the government booked the money as “support to Namibian refugees through SWAPO”. But when the plans were announced, the South African government protested and accused the Dutch government of “supporting terrorists”

In addition, government funds went to international organisations like the UNHCR, the Red Cross, and the World Council of Churches. From 1973 on, also the UN Fund for Namibia and the UN Namibia Institute in Lusaka were supported. A considerable part of these funds would also go to SWAPO.

After the progressive cabinet Den Uyl (1973-1977) more conservative governments would rule the Netherlands. The policy towards Namibia and SWAPO became more reserved. While SWAPO president Nujoma was received by Prime-Minister Den Uyl and the ministers Pronk and Van der Stoel in the summer of 1977, a year later he met only the new Ministers of Foreign Affairs and his colleague for Development Co-operation but not the Prime Minister. And in 1980 only the Minister for Development Aid had time for Nujoma. The annual assistance to SWAPO decreased from € 700,000 to € 450,000 in 1978, to € 225,000 in 1979 and 1980, and stabilized on € 350,000 during the years 1981-1989. Apart from this, SWAPO continued to benefit from large Dutch contributions to the UN Trust Fund, the UN Educational and Training Fund for Southern Africa, the UN Nationhood Programme for Namibia and the Namibia Extension Unit. The solidarity organisations pleaded in vain to increase the annual assistance to SWAPO.

The Dutch Christian Democrat government also offered assistance to SWAPO-Democrats and the Namibian National Front for the repatriation of refugees. The Dutch solidarity movements and SWAPO protested and pointed out that these movements were supported by South Africa. But the repatriation did not take place in 1980 and only a few thousand euros were spent. The Dutch government had to conclude that there was no alternative for SWAPO, as it was the only organisation

South West Africa People's Organisation
Solidarity — Freedom — Justice



Bus Couronal Arthur de Paiva So.6
 P.O. Box 955
 Luanda
 People's Republic of Angola

Ref. N° _____

17th December, 1976

Angola Committee
 De Costestraat, 68
 Postbus 1615/6
 ROTTERDAM
 Holland

Dear Comrades,

Please see if you can find for us the following items:

- (a) 700 military belts
- (b) 2000 military magazine sacks
- (c) 700 military kit bags
- (d) 700 provision bags (military folder sack)
- (e) 4000 military boots (with high lense, but not sacking boots)
- (f) 7000 rain coats (cheaper ones)

These items are urgently needed, and if possible, send them by air mail.

Yours for the common cause,

Hamutsum Kaluwa
 Hamutsum Kaluwa



On the way to the camps in Angola

A container of goods destined for SWAPO in Angola is trucked to the port of Rotterdam to be shipped to the port of Luanda. The sender and the destination are unmistakable to the Dutch public who saw this transport. This container contained 25 tons of goods and left on 19th September 1977 from Rotterdam. Photo KZA collection at National Archives of Namibia.



Can Land Rovers also be used for military purposes?

The clear choice of the Namibia Council of Churches in support of SWAPO convinced most Dutch churches that SWAPO should decide on how they wanted to use the Dutch support funds. They lobbied the government to accept this policy. In true Dutch polder style it was agreed that government aid could not be used for military purposes and equipment but after a while the Angola Committee (later KZA) was given the responsibility to buy and ship the supplies that were requested "because they were more flexible to react quickly to requests than the government bureaucracy".

This meant at the least that KZA supplies freed money for other purposes and the empathy of the anti-apartheid movement with the freedom fighters was certainly greater than that of civil servants. Photo KZA collection at National Archives of Namibia

that was actively fighting for an independent Namibia and possessed an enormous prestige both in the country and internationally.

Dutch government assistance through KZA

The assistance to the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies in the early 1970's had created practical problems for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The government bureaucracy was not equipped to buy small quantities of different goods and then ship them to various places in Africa. The liberation movements were also unhappy with this system. For that reason the government accepted a proposal from SWAPO, and later also from ANC, ZAPU and ZANU, that the Dutch government money should be given to KZA, who would buy and ship the requested goods. This arrangement, accepted by Minister Pronk, was continued in the later years under more conservative Dutch governments.

This created an ideal situation. The bills for humanitarian goods were settled with the government grant, so that the money received from the public could be spent for the more difficult and controversial requests from the liberation movements. Initially trucks were excluded from the government money as they could be used for military transports, but in 1981 this restriction was lifted. KZA could normally send the requested goods within a few weeks, also if the list involved small quantities of the many different products. One of the first requests was to print birth certificates for the newly born Namibians and to produce a documentation files system for the SWAPO president. During the first years, the goods that were sent to Angola were transported free of charge by the Angolan shipping line Angonave, that regularly docked at the port of Rotterdam.

The Dutch government also supported projects inside Namibia through Dutch so-called co-financing organisations in these years. The Protestant organisation ICCO supported projects of the Council of Churches of Namibia, such as the Legal Aid Fund, with annually about € 100,000. ICCO also contributed € 1,400,000 from the government for CCN projects such as a drinking-water project, vegetable gardens and the Namibian Communication Centre. The Catholic co-financing institution

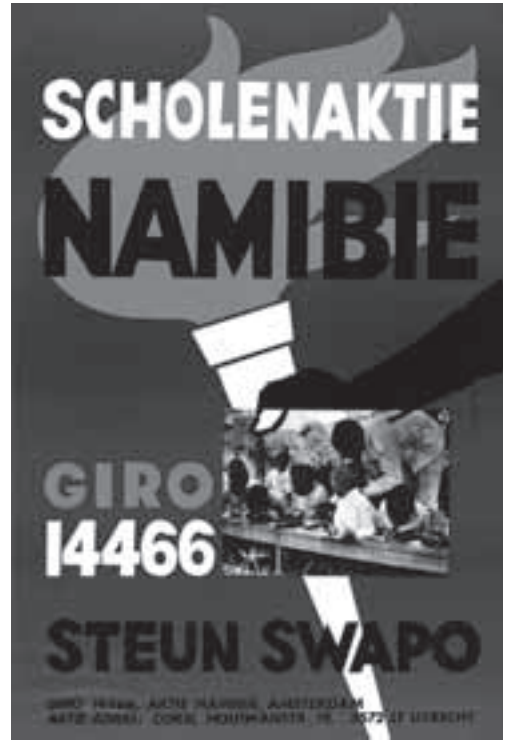
CEBEMO supported the Compassion Fund Windhoek for Legal Assistance, founded in 1981 by the vicariate Windhoek. The secular organisation Novib contributed considerable amounts, both for SWAPO, NUNW and emergency aid for the Namibian refugees.

The Dutch churches and Namibia

The first time that the word Namibia was mentioned in the minutes of the Dutch Council of Churches was in 1976. In those days most attention went to South Africa. Namibia was not seen as a separate case. The World Council of Churches had appealed to all churches to support the International Week of Solidarity with Namibia in October 1976 and to intensify the campaigns against military and economic cooperation with South Africa. The three church youth councils, who organized with KZA and Kairos the campaign "Free Namibia, support SWAPO" in 1976, appealed to the Council of Churches to come with a firm statement on Namibia. But the result was disappointing. No word about the Western military and economic cooperation with South Africa. SWAPO was not even mentioned. After this statement a long period of silence about Namibia followed again. In 1982 a delegation of the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN) visited the Dutch Council of Churches. When the following year the Dutch Council was asked to send an official church-delegation to Namibia, the Council decided to delegate a mixed Protestant and Catholic delegation. But when the South African government refused to give the required visa to the two Protestant members of the delegation only the Catholic member visited Namibia. The CCN sent a new invitation to the Dutch Council and once more it applied for visa. Then the South African Embassy came with a long list of conditions that were unacceptable for the Dutch Council of Churches. In order to make a discussion on Namibia possible the Dutch Council invited the CCN to send a delegation to the Netherlands. The delegation met with its Dutch hosts in Amersfoort in 1986. The recommendations from this meeting mentioned SWAPO as the leading force in the liberation struggle, the enrichment of Namibian uranium in the Netherlands was condemned, but again nothing was said about sanctions against South Africa.

Namibia Posters

Posters were a popular medium for communication in the 1960's and 1970's. On these pages a selection of the posters related to the liberation of Namibia are reproduced. The posters were distributed in thousands and displayed in universities, schools, churches and many other places. Especially in university towns, activists went out and pasted them on all sorts of surfaces. Each of the six posters below and on the facing page displays (in Dutch) one of the Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a picture showing the violation of this right and a citation from letters or books from southern Africa related to the Article. From the KZA collection in the National Archives of Namibia.



namibië

Artikel 6 Niemand zal onmenselijke of vernederende behandeling of bestraffing.



De overheden van Namibië, de provincies en de gemeenten zijn verantwoordelijk voor het voorkomen van de schending van artikel 6. Het is de verantwoordelijkheid van de overheden om te voorkomen dat de overheden of hun functionarissen de rechten van artikel 6 schenden.



NATIONALE MENSELIJKE RECHTEN COMMISSIE

www.namibië.nl

namibië

Artikel 8 Niemand zal onderworpen worden aan willekeurige arrestatie, detentie of verbanning.



De overheden van Namibië, de provincies en de gemeenten zijn verantwoordelijk voor het voorkomen van de schending van artikel 8. Het is de verantwoordelijkheid van de overheden om te voorkomen dat de overheden of hun functionarissen de rechten van artikel 8 schenden.



NATIONALE MENSELIJKE RECHTEN COMMISSIE

www.namibië.nl

namibië

Artikel 13 Een ieder heeft het recht zich vrijelijk te verplaatsen en te verblijven binnen de grenzen van elke Staat.



De overheden van Namibië, de provincies en de gemeenten zijn verantwoordelijk voor het voorkomen van de schending van artikel 13. Het is de verantwoordelijkheid van de overheden om te voorkomen dat de overheden of hun functionarissen de rechten van artikel 13 schenden.



NATIONALE MENSELIJKE RECHTEN COMMISSIE

www.namibië.nl

namibië

Artikel 22 Een ieder heeft het recht van de gemeenschap (19-19-20) rechtvaardig deel te nemen.



De overheden van Namibië, de provincies en de gemeenten zijn verantwoordelijk voor het voorkomen van de schending van artikel 22. Het is de verantwoordelijkheid van de overheden om te voorkomen dat de overheden of hun functionarissen de rechten van artikel 22 schenden.



NATIONALE MENSELIJKE RECHTEN COMMISSIE

www.namibië.nl

David de Beer, the Namibia man.



David de Beer has been the face of Namibia and of the independence struggle of SWAPO in the Dutch Protestant Churches for many years. To prepare this interview he had stacked his table with a full meter of files, archive boxes and pamphlets in which he still finds his way without hesitation. On a number of files the word URENCO is written in large letters. “*More than enough for an interesting thesis*”, he smiles. “*A very interesting case.*” How did he become so involved in these matters?

“As a young South African I wanted to work in one of the then “black areas” after my Management Science studies. I ended up in the north of Namibia, near the Angolan border, where I worked in 1969 as an administrator in a hospital of the Anglican Church. After a week I was expelled by the South African administration. I worked the next three years in Windhoek as

an assistant to the Anglican Bishop Colin Winter, who organised support to contract labourers from the north, who worked in Windhoek and elsewhere.

After the decision of the International Court of Justice in 1971 that the South African occupation of Namibia was illegal the Namibian churches started to support the struggle for independence. When the secretary-general of the UN Kurt Waldheim visited Namibia in early 1972, the South African authorities wanted to prevent him to meet people like Colin Winter. We were both expelled from Namibia. Colin Winter left for London and I started to work in South Africa at the Christian Institute of Beyers Naudé. But within a month I had a “banning order”, a kind of house arrest.

In 1974 I left for London to join Colin Winter who supported the Namibian liberation struggle from there. It was bishop Winter who had organized the visit of SWAPO president Sam Nujoma to the Netherlands in September 1973, two months after the new Den Uyl administration was installed. In January 1974 he once more travelled to the Netherlands to repeat his plea for Dutch government aid to SWAPO in a meeting with Minister Pronk. I also made several trips from London to the Netherlands until I was asked by Cor Groenendijk of Kairos to stay there to work for Namibia. After the two large Protestant churches and the NCO, at the suggestion of Jone Bos, were willing to pay me a salary I settled in the Netherlands in 1976.

I would continue that work for 16 years, until 1992. I was in a way the Kairos worker for Namibia. I was always welcome in the Dutch Protestant churches because SWAPO had good connections with the Namibian churches. In fact the support by the protestant churches in Namibia has been very important for the so-called “Internal SWAPO” movement. I estimate that I have addressed about 2000 public meetings on the liberation struggle in southern Africa. When I arrived in 1976 I was immediately involved in the campaign “Freedom for Namibia, support SWAPO”.

In 1977 the Dutch anti-nuclear movement started campaigning against the uranium enrichment plant URENCO in Almelo. URENCO was a joint British-German-Dutch project. When I raised the question if the uranium could come from Namibia, Ruurd Huisman, a researcher, offered to find out.

In 1977 Minister of Economic Affairs Lubbers stated in parliament that “imports of Namibian uranium for use in the Netherlands would be undesirable” and he denied that URENCO used uranium from Namibia. But Ruurd Huisman had found that Namibian uranium was exported to France where it was mixed with uranium from other sources and supplied to URENCO. A spokesman of URENCO admitted that this was probably correct. A majority in Dutch parliament reacted by asking the government to terminate all Dutch involvement in the processing of Namibian uranium.

This was the start of a prolonged lobby campaign to stop this trade. Relus ter Beek, Jacques Wallage and Ineke Lambers-Hacquebard regularly asked parliamentary questions. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs defended a strange position. He recognized

Of the different member churches of the Dutch Council the Dutch Reformed Church (Hervormde kerk) was the most outspoken. In 1982 it asked the Dutch government “to promote the taking of sanctions-measures internationally if South Africa is not co-operating before 31 March 1983” In 1983 the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde kerk) asked the government to take initiatives in order to come to a realization of UN resolution 435. Both large Protestant churches supported the Namibian Council of Churches with about € 70,000 a year. The Lutherans and Remonstrants both mentioned in 1984 the need for pressure on South Africa to implement UN resolution 435.

The Catholic Church and the liberation struggle

When the first black Roman Catholic bishop of Namibia, Haushiku, visited the Netherlands in 1988 as a guest of the Pax Christi organisation, he had a message for the Dutch Catholic Church: “The first duty of the Church in the Netherlands is to show that our struggle is also your struggle, that there is solidarity between the Dutch and the Namibian churches. And that solidarity must lead to action. You will have to work for the independence of Namibia. We are of the opinion that sanctions can force South Africa to peaceful changes and to give independence to Namibia.”

While the Catholic organisations Pax Christi and Justitia et Pax were active for Namibia, the Dutch bishops had shown little interest to put pressure on Pretoria until that moment. When the South African bishops asked for economic sanctions against the white regime in 1986, the Dutch bishops only declared their sympathy with the appeal. Only in 1988 they asked the Dutch government to boycott the import of coal from South Africa, a stop on flights and on loans. In their letter the bishops admitted that until that moment they had been “restrained”.

The Roman Catholic Church was the only Dutch church that was involved in missionary work in Namibia. “The Catholic black population in Namibia is not very radical. I blame this on the moderate attitude of the missionaries. The black members of the Lutheran and Anglican Church are much more active. They are nearly

all members or sympathizers of SWAPO.” Friar Kees Vugs was acquainted with the role of the Catholic mission in Namibia from experience inside Namibia. As a missionary of the Fraters van Tilburg (Brothers CMM) he worked from 1968 to 1975 in Namibia as the director of a school. He had to leave the country in order to be able to marry his Damara bride.

His view is supported in the report of the mission of the British Council of Churches to Namibia : “We saw the Roman Catholic Church as an example of a church that disseminates old conceptions. It is the only church that still works with a large number of white missionaries. They receive reactionary documentation from Germany and South Africa, and they see the communist element in SWAPO as a total contradiction with Christianity. But there are others who try to express the black opinions.”

Kees Vugs was one of the more enlightened missionaries. “We must warn the churches, and especially the Catholic Church that it must end its white image. There are only four black priests in Namibia. They must make unambiguous choices or the black population will reject them. The Catholic Church should give more support to SWAPO, especially abroad. Let them follow the example of the Anglican and Lutheran bishops and priests.”

The Dutch missionary Gerard Heimerikx was also one of the few Catholic missionaries that came to the conclusion during his stay in Namibia that he had to act. He worked for 31 years in the north of Namibia, near the border with Angola. When that country became independent in 1975 the border area became a war zone. “Only then I fully grasped what apartheid means. The South African government laid its crimes against the population at SWAPO’s door.” Again and again father Heimerikx made these pertinent lies publicly known. He secretly made photos of the massacres and distributed them internationally to the press, to SWAPO and to the offices of the United Nations. The South African authorities started to hate him. In 1983 bishop Haushiku informed him that his life was in danger and that he had to leave the country. “I asked the bishop’s opinion about crossing the Angolan border at night and join SWAPO. The bishop agreed. And SWAPO was happy with my arrival. So I arrived as a refugee with SWAPO,

that the Council for Namibia was entitled to issue the so-called Decree No 1, which made trade in Namibian uranium illegal, but he did not accept that the Dutch state had the obligation to comply with its enforcement. Another argument of the Dutch government was that the URENCO partners Germany and Britain refused to exclude Namibian uranium.

In 1980 Ruurd Huisman, Ineke Lambers-Hacquebard and I testified in New York at a hearing of the UN Council for Namibia about the illegal exploitation of Namibian uranium. Moreover we performed a self-written playlet for three persons: the minister, the member of parliament and a narrator. We pleaded for a court case against the State of the Netherlands. At a hearing of the International Court of Justice in 1981 two Dutch experts on international law, Verheul and Schermers, had the same message. In parliament the Dutch government had to admit that the Council for Namibia -as the legitimate administrator of Namibia- had, like any other government, the right to start at any time a court case against the Netherlands.

But the Council reacted very slowly. It took four years until it was decided that judicial action could be taken against the import of stolen commodities such as uranium through the national courts of the countries concerned. In fact the Council was only thinking of the Netherlands because that was the only country where a court case could be won. The UN Council for Namibia engaged a firm of Dutch lawyers to institute legal action against URENCO for contravening Decree No 1. At the same time KZA and Kairos started an information campaign in the Netherlands about Namibia. The UN Council for Namibia began legal proceedings against URENCO and the State of the Netherlands in 1987 at the District Court of The Hague. Summonses were handed over to URENCO and the Dutch State. In 1988 URENCO and the State of the Netherlands submitted their Statement of Defence claiming that there was no binding obligation in international law. Although the UN supervised plan for the independence of Namibia commenced on 1st April 1989 the lawyers acting for the UN Council of Namibia submitted their Statement of Reply to the District Court in The Hague in June 1989. But the next year the UN Council for Namibia was dissolved; its mandate was transferred to the lawful government of Namibia. The court case was never resolved.

I don't know why it took that long, why the Council of Namibia hesitated so long to follow the juridical course. Also SWAPO was not too keen about a lawsuit. Perhaps it was because it would cost a lot of money and some preferred to use it for other purposes. Maybe also the material assistance of the Netherlands for SWAPO played a role.

At the end of 1992 I stopped my work for Namibia. I had made my contribution. Especially on the URENCO case I look back with satisfaction as our doubts could end in a comprehensive court case. No, I did not return to Namibia. I did not want to live in limbo anymore. I also thought it better for SWAPO and the Namibians to take responsibility for the development of an independent Namibia. Some may have resented my continued involvement.

But we are proud of Namibia. There are problems, but which country is without? There is a stable political system, the Gross National Product grows and the welfare of the population measured for instance in the level of education and health care increases. Our confidence in SWAPO has certainly been justified."

Interview by Carla Schuddeboom

the first Catholic priest for the refugee community, a white Catholic because we had no black priest in Ovamboland.”

Father Heimerikx worked in SWAPO’s refugee camps in Angola and Zambia in a unique form of co-operation between the different denominations. With his black colleagues of the Anglican and Evangelical-Lutheran churches he worked for an ecumenical community. Religious services and tasks of the three churches were combined. They received a prefabricated church for the large refugee camp in Kwanza Sul. But when it arrived during November 1988 they decided to keep it in the containers. After the independence of Namibia it would be the first ecumenical church building of Namibia.

Father Heimerikx was glad that the Catholic church in Namibia joined the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN) in 1982 “*As a result of the war you started to feel closer together, I think that was the motive of the Catholic Church –which in general is rather conservative- to become a full member of CCN. To have a strong joint position towards the South African government. And the CCN supports SWAPO because we as churches have very clearly seen that SWAPO fights a war for a just cause.*”

Public opinion and Dutch government foreign policy

The anti-apartheid organisations in the Netherlands became the largest in the Western countries, partly because a big part of their salaries and activities were paid by the Dutch government and by the European Union. During the second half of the 1980’s about 20 full-time and low paid people worked at KZA, in addition to the many volunteers.

Fundraising for the liberation movements was a heavy task for the anti-apartheid organisations, but just as much energy went into activities to isolate South Africa. For both of these aims it was necessary to inform the Dutch public about the situation in Namibia and win their sympathy. Books and posters were published, and with financial support of the Council of Namibia KZA was involved in the production of three TV-films about

Namibia, that were broadcasted in the Netherlands and in some other countries.

Each year the Dutch parliament discussed the situation in Namibia, and, little by little, the Dutch government became more critical of South Africa. It recognized that the South African occupation was illegal. In 1978 it stated that Walvis Bay must for economic and political reasons be part of an independent Namibia. In 1979 it rejected the one-sided activities of South Africa to give Namibia independence under a puppet government. Moreover the Dutch government rejected the American linkage of the Namibian independence to the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola.

Slowly the Dutch public was won for sanctions against South Africa. Arguments for the economic boycott were in the first place the apartheid in South Africa but the illegal occupation of Namibia. From 1973 onwards the government and a large majority in parliament supported international sanctions against South Africa. But in the United Nations international boycott measures were blocked by Britain and the United States, and in the European Community (EC) by Britain and West Germany. Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands were the only active supporters of common sanctions in the EC. As international sanctions were blocked, the struggle in the Netherlands focused soon on unilateral Dutch sanctions. It was clear that unilateral sanctions would be less effective than international sanctions, and they might well do more harm to the Dutch economy than to South Africa. But opinion polls showed that amongst the Dutch public there was a majority willing to accept the negative consequences of a unilateral boycott.

In parliament there was a majority for a unilateral Dutch oil boycott of South Africa from 1979 to 1983. But the governments of the time were strongly opposed to unilateral sanctions. These confrontations between the parliament and the government led nearly to the fall of the government in 1982.

Only the Den Uyl government took a unilateral step against South Africa. In 1977 KZA sent a telex message to the government with the request not to agree to rent out a Fokker F-28 civil aircraft to South Africa for use in Namibia. The committee warned that the plane could



Father Gerard Heimerikx

Father Gerard Heimerikx was rector of the Catholic mission at Oshikuku in the north of Namibia. His support for the cause of his oppressed parishioners was unwavering. He had to flee the country when he smuggled photos of atrocities by the South Africans to the press. He later worked in the refugee camps in Zambia and returned with great honour to Namibia after independence. He received the decoration of the Order of Orange Nassau for exemplary courage in 1993.

Military recommendations from the former Director of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy

A large Namibia conference was organized in Paris in 1980. To contribute to the discussions at the conference KZA and Kairos asked the former director of the Dutch Royal Military Academy, Von Meyenfeldt, to use his experience in the NATO forces, to assess SWAPO's chances and strategy of the military struggle:

"I do not view the liberation through military action an impossible task. The military policy of the liberation movement of Namibia (SWAPO) shall, in a general sense have to aim at making the price for South Africa as high as possible by forcing South Africa to such a degree of mobilization as to pose a serious threat to its economy, by undermining the morale of the white population, by making the continued existence of South Africa dependent on the participation of the black population that changes become essential, by corrosion of the potential fighting force of its military."

Major General von Meyenfeldt also stated for Dutch radio *"I consider military violence in certain situations, such as in southern Africa, absolutely justified, also morally. In my opinion it is very hypocritical to judge about others and to say that they may not use violence"*. Arms deliveries by the Western countries to SWAPO were on the short term not likely, *"but I would support it, yes"*.

be used for military transports, and that it had informed the United Nations and African governments. The Dutch government finally decided to block the transaction.

Preparing for elections in Namibia

In 1988 the South African invasion forces in the south of Angola suffered a crushing defeat. The South African government was by then willing to accept a withdrawal from Namibia in exchange for the withdrawal of the Cuban troops from Angola. It was agreed that the South African government would hand over power in Namibia to a government elected by the Namibian people. The perseverance of the Namibian people and the international isolation of South Africa were finally successful. However it was to be expected that during the election period South Africa would give all support to the puppet government it had installed in Namibia. This meant for KZA and Kairos that in 1989 all energy had to go to strengthening SWAPO and the other organisations working towards an independent Namibia.

KZA organized a meeting for the West European solidarity organisations on 27-28 January 1989 in Amsterdam at the request of SWAPO. The aim was to discuss in what way they could support SWAPO in the election year. At the meeting it was decided that the Swedish organisation AGIS would coordinate the Scandinavian activities, and KZA would be the coordinator for the other West European countries. But with the exception of Scandinavian and British organisations, the support from the other solidarity organisations proved rather limited.

The KZA decided that it would start a fundraising and information campaign in April 1989 under the slogan "Namibia today, South Africa tomorrow". With advertisements, mailings and activities of local groups, money was collected to help SWAPO win the elections. All 260,000 readers of the daily "deVolkskrant" received a letter in their newspaper asking for a donation. All 150,000 members of the leftist political parties received a letter. Mailings went to all clients of the ASN Bank. All readers of Vice Versa, de Groene Amsterdammer, Vrij Nederland and Hervormd Nederland were asked to do-

nate, the Catholic monthly Bijeem came with a special annex about Namibia.

It soon became clear that the interest in Namibia of the public and of the news media was much less than for South Africa. Many people thought that the problem Namibia was solved when South Africa had accepted to leave the country. Moreover a planned visit of President Nujoma was cancelled at the last moment. Only 30 local groups were active for the Namibia campaign, while for South Africa campaigns there were on average 200. The financial result of the campaign during the spring of 1989 was only € 160,000.

In addition to the above mentioned campaign a youth campaign was organized in the spring of 1989. The year before an umbrella group "Youth against Apartheid" had been formed to support the South African youth movement SAYCO. In 1989 these organisations decided to support a KZA campaign for NANSO, the Namibian Student Organisation. As part of the programme a NANSO delegation visited the Netherlands. It was politically important that the youth organisations of all political parties, from the left to the right, participated in this campaign.

The Broad Namibia Forum

Early in 1989 the Dutch church-related development organisations discussed ways to support Namibia in the election year. They reacted to appeals from the Council of Churches of Namibia, from the Lutheran World Federation and from the World Council of Churches. They decided to form an umbrella organisation called the Broad Namibia Forum (BNF), just as they had done before the independence of Zimbabwe. The aim was not only to exchange information but also to coordinate their activities and form one contact point for the Namibian partner organisations. The common activities included spreading information among the Dutch public, enable Dutch journalists to visit Namibia, send monitors for the elections, collect funds and monitor the Dutch government policy.

There was one ugly duck for some members of the Forum, namely KZA. KZA had no religious ambitions.



A printing press for SWAPO in Zambia

The Dutch NGO Novib was another channel for support to SWAPO. Novib financed the purchase of a printing press to serve SWAPO in Zambia and other hospitable countries and to print for the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka. Photo KZA collection at National Archives of Namibia.



A quick and simple meal between negotiations

Lucas Hifkipunye Pohamba (right), one of his SWAPO colleagues and Corrie de Roeper of KZA (centre) eat their simple meal between the discussions about the needs in the SWAPO camps and the possibilities for KZA to provide the necessary inputs. Corrie de Roeper, who had joined KZA in 1985, visited the SWAPO camps in Kwanza Sul and Kwanza Nord every year until 1991. In those years Mr Pohamba also visited KZA in the Netherlands annually to discuss progress, reports etc. This photo was probably taken in Mr Pohamba's house in Luanda. Photo KZA collection at National Archives of Namibia.

Kairos was welcome, as it was a Christian anti-apartheid organisation, but some organisations refused to accept KZA. They thought KZA was a too outspoken political organisation and was too closely linked with liberation movements that used violence. But at that time KZA had framed good working relations with those church organisations that were involved in the EC “Programme for the Victims of Apartheid”. It even implemented a number of projects on their behalf. Thus KZA was finally accepted.

For KZA and Kairos it was a precondition that in common fundraising activities part of the money would go to SWAPO. Although all were agreed that it would be a disaster for Namibia if SWAPO would not get two thirds of the votes necessary to abolish the apartheid laws, the same organisations that wanted to exclude KZA were also opposed to collect money in their churches for SWAPO. The issue was resolved because the Namibian Council of Churches was so closely connected to the liberation struggle: the funds raised would go to the Council of Churches of Namibia, to the Namibia Development Trust and to SWAPO.

Most of the work concerning the journalists and election monitors was done by KZA with the support of David de Beer of Kairos. In total about 25 election observers went to Namibia, some for six months, others –mostly VIP’s- shorter. The number of journalists that visited Namibia during different periods was about the same. The government-funded organisation PSO agreed to pay the cost of the monitors, until the right-wing daily de Telegraaf started a smear campaign against the decision. Under the pressure of right-wing parliamentarians the Minister for Development Co-operation reversed the decision.

The main role of the Dutch church organisations was to activate the local church communities. It was decided that 19 November would be a “Namibia Sunday” in all Dutch churches. Liturgical suggestions were produced, together with 200,000 Namibia Newspapers. During the same period public fundraising would take place in the streets, through spots on radio and TV, through advertisements etc.

In August 1989, Novib joined the cooperating organisations. Novib was the largest of the so-called co-funding organisations in the Netherlands. These are Dutch NGOs that receive considerable government funding for development co-operation. Novib was not church related. Much of the money spent by KZA in Namibia came from Novib. It was finally decided that half of the collected funds would go to the Council of Churches of Namibia, one quarter through Novib to the Namibia Development Trust and the remaining quarter would go to KZA for SWAPO projects.

The Broad Namibia Forum was a useful umbrella to widen the support for the campaign. Its long-term aim was that the Dutch government would start a programme of development co-operation with Namibia after independence. But the Minister for Development Co-operation, Mr Bukman, refused to commit himself. His arguments were the relative prosperity of Namibia compared to other countries in the region, the expected assistance from other donor countries, especially Germany and lack of uncommitted cash. When the Broad Namibia Forum was dissolved in May 1990, this negative attitude of the government was deplored. But just in time Bukman was replaced by Minister Pronk, who was more positive to continue the development relations with Namibia.

The SWAPO prisoners

Suddenly, in the summer of 1989 information about the maltreatment, torture and killing of SWAPO prisoners emerged in the press. The friends of SWAPO in the Netherlands were grilled by the media. There was enormous confusion amongst the church organisation of the Broad Namibia Forum. It was clear that the November campaign was in great danger. Letters were written to SWAPO and to the Namibian churches to ask for information and for an explanation. David de Beer went to Africa and came back with the message that SWAPO would only fully react after independence.

After some weeks the storm in the Dutch press was dying down but it suddenly sprang up again when Novib announced that it withdrew from the Broad Namibia Forum and would stop all support to SWAPO. In the

Rosalinde Blondé-Nguluu, the effective ambassador of Namibian women



Rosalinde Nguluu, born in the north of Namibia in 1945, was a teacher in her home area, where she met and married Martin Blondé, a Dutch Catholic missionary. Her husband abandoned his ministry because of their marriage. They ended up in the Netherlands where Rosalinde became a very active and vocal advocate for the people in Namibia and the refugees in Angola and Zambia, especially women. She gave hundreds of talks and lectures to all sorts of groups in the Netherlands and explained the Namibian cause in the Dutch newspapers, on radio and television. In 1983 she returned to southern Africa to visit refugee camps in Angola, which inspired her

to become even more active. After she returned from her first visit to her home country in 1989, she wrote a moving letter to her family, printed below. Rosalinde Blondé-Nguluu died suddenly in 2003. The “Relief Fund Swapo Namibian Women” that she founded is continued by relatives and friends.

I'm now two weeks back in the Netherlands, but I have not yet unpacked my suitcase. I have a feeling that I will never unpack as it is full of things that belong to you. I would prefer to take the plane straightaway back. I want to be with you, with father, among all of you. I would again teach the children on the playground to dance and sing our songs about freedom and about our beautiful country.

I have many friends here in Holland that have through the many years supported us. I'm here already more than ten years and suddenly I feel that I have become a stranger to my own people. I think about our brother Theobold. First eight years in Angola and Zambia. And then our leaders arranged that he could study in Czechoslovakia. And then two more years in Angola. Father was so happy to see him back. But it was painful to see how difficult Daddy and Theobold understood each other.

I ask you, my dear brother, do everything to help them. If you remember what they did to us and how difficult it will be for our country. Daddy, during fifteen years he had to live outside his country, frightened, in combat, at a white school abroad where he was not respected. He had to work hard. But you too, you maybe even more. We all need each other, there should be no disharmony amongst us.

Please understand me well, my dear brother, I only think of our new future and I'm not blaming anyone. Only few people understand what it means after such a long, difficult and painful period to have to work together for a common future.”...

While I look at my locked suitcase I imagine how much will have to be done and how much support and friendship we will need. It will take years before all Namibians understand and trust each other after this long period of repression and humiliation. Our leader Sam Nujoma has promised to pardon everybody, also if he was fighting against us together with the South Africans. It will not be easy. I have discussed this with people here in the Netherlands. They have some understanding as they also lived five years under German occupation.

You know what is said about our camps in Angola. How there was distrust, how there were spies. And how people were suspected of spying who were maybe not at all involved. I visited the camps and I saw how they watched me. With the damned South African army you could not be too cautious. When I discuss this with my Dutch friends they understand it and say: just like here in Holland fifty years ago. But I doubt if they understand what living in the jungle meant, surrounded by the enemy and by spies. You could find them behind each tree and you suspected even your best friends.

Probably awful things have happened in the camps, also with people we know. How should we handle this? Some of our SWAPO people have misbehaved. For the good cause, but that is not an excuse. But if you pardon the Namibians who collaborated with the South Africans, who were the cause of all misery, how can you then prosecute and punish these people. What should we do, people here in Europe ask clarifications. But I hold the view that SWAPO should be sensible and not rush this case.”

South African and Namibian press the decision of Novib was also the topic of the day: “The Netherlands’ stop support to SWAPO”. Novib would very soon deplore this step.

When the 17 South African partners that received support from Novib learned about the news they decided to break off all relations with their Dutch partner. A few days later, at a meeting in Harare, all organisations in the whole of Southern Africa working with Novib decided to cut all ties with Novib. Rev. Beyers Naudé flew from South Africa to the Netherlands to explain to the Dutch church organisations and to Novib the position of the South African Council of Churches and the UDF. Novib moderated its tone in the publicity. It deplored that South Africa had exploited its decision to damage SWAPO before the elections. Novib also deplored that it had damaged the reputation of SWAPO in several Western countries, and especially in the Netherlands, and that it caused harm to the fundraising campaign. It accepted that it had made a serious mistake by not consulting its southern African partners before taking a decision. Novib also apologized for acting without discussing its intentions with its Dutch partners in the Namibia Forum. After months of discussions with its African partners the conflict ran out.

For KZA and Kairos, it was painful that they were in this context also attacked by the third anti-apartheid movement in the Netherlands, the AABN. In the AABN magazine, the news about the treatment of SWAPO prisoners was compared with the revelations about the millions that were killed by Stalin. The AABN was reprimanded by the leadership of the ANC.

The church organisations in the campaign were very unhappy with the decision of Novib and with all the negative publicity. One possibility was to stop the campaign for Namibia, another to exclude SWAPO from the fundraising. But that would give more negative publicity in the press, and it would give the impression that the decision of Novib was correct. It was decided to phone the secretary general of the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN), dr. Shejvali. His reaction was that support through all three chosen channels was support for the Namibian people, and that the aim of CCN in this stage was reconciliation. Finally as a way out it was

accepted to continue the fundraising for SWAPO projects as far as there were no objections of the CCN and the Namibia Development Trust (NDT). It was decided that the proceeds for NDT would

Paul Staal, an anti-apartheid activist, looked back on this period that was painful and difficult for all supporters of SWAPO:

“I later reproached myself that we were too much focused on the anti-colonial struggle and had too little attention for the awful side-effects of a liberation war. In later years I asked myself why I did not know what had happened in the SWAPO camps, as I was one of the few people that came there regularly. Maybe the victims did not trust me as I was on familiar terms with the leadership or they were too frightened. Maybe one explanation is that I was in contact with Peter Nanyemba, the military commander who unfortunately died in a car accident. I assume that under the command of this man it would not have happened”.

“I do not know if SWAPO President Nujoma knew about it. At a certain moment I have raised the human rights violations with him. He had just arrived from Angola in Katutura. He always trusted me, he had entrusted me with large amounts of money that I brought from Angola to Geneva to be changed in Rands, and then to Windhoek for SWAPO inside Namibia, just in my handbag. But in spite of all the support we had given to SWAPO, which was unparalleled, President Nujoma was furious: ‘that you of all people drag up that story. No, this should wait until after the elections.’ It was a big dilemma. Step out of the common campaign for a free Namibia, like Novib did, was a nasty trick.”

Buying SWAPO property in Namibia

In March 1988 Russell Hay was contracted by KZA for a full year to work in Namibia as the permanent KZA representative. One of his first tasks was to rent a house in Windhoek where also the election monitors and journalists could stay. Also a car was bought that could be used by the visitors. But his most important task was to buy properties for SWAPO.

Paul Staal and the Lobby for European Involvement



Paul Staal was involved in the attempts to get European Community support for the victims of apartheid in Namibia. On 10th September 1985, the foreign ministers of the European Community (EC) announced a large "Special Programme for the Victims of Apartheid". This move was clearly aimed at easing the public pressure on the Community to introduce economic sanctions against South Africa. Two days after the announcement of the "Special Programme", a conference was held in Amsterdam under the title "Apartheid and Southern Africa, the West European Response", organized by the KZA in cooperation with AWEPEAA and Novib. Present were about 60 European members of parliament, representatives of the European Commission, European NGO's, the ANC and President Nujoma of SWAPO. European Commissioner Claude Cheysson and officials explained the objectives and procedures of the new multi-million "Special Programme". Immediately the KZA decided to contract Paul Staal to investigate what the intentions behind this programme were and how it could be used for maximum benefit. Paul Staal had the time of his life.

"This was one of our biggest deals ever. We finally succeeded to bypass all those shrewd European diplomats. Our aim was that all those millions of the EC would only be channelled to the churches and to organisations that supported ANC and SWAPO and to exclude the puppets. At that time I had much contact with Beyers Naudé. A few days after the conference in Amsterdam I met him in Copenhagen and a week later I travelled together with David de Beer to southern Africa to consult with the leadership of ANC, SACTU and SWAPO, and once more with Beyers and Shejvali, the respective secretaries-general of the South African and the Namibian Council of Churches (SACC and CCN). After internal consultations in South Africa and Namibia a "code of conduct" for the Special Programme was drafted, which was supported by the CCN, the SACC and the South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC). The most important condition for accepting EC money was that no money would go to South African Government-related programmes, to homeland governments or tribal organisations. The EC was forced to accept these conditions as the churches were at that time the main channels to reach the victims of apartheid.

When Beyers Naudé and Shejvali came to Brussels to present to the European Commission a letter containing the "Conditions and Principles" we used their visit to organise a meeting with 16 European funding agencies that were in favour of these conditions. At this meeting a Standing Committee was formed to coordinate the European side of the operation and to keep a watchful eye on the EC implementation of the Special Programme. Moreover a consortium of NGO's was formed called SA/NAM. (South Africa/Namibia) for the non-church projects. SA/NAM and the Standing Committee got a common secretariat, based at our KZA office in Amsterdam and I became the secretary of both institutions. The Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika (KZA) was the only European anti-apartheid movement that was accepted as partner of the EC programme.

From the start the governments of Britain and Germany wanted to exclude Namibia from the EC programme. But the South African partners and the European NGOs considered it politically important that the people of Namibia were also recognized as victims of apartheid and that Namibia should be included in the programme. Finally the EC conceded to the pressure from southern Africa and a small amount (€ 200,000) was set aside for projects in Namibia.

In March 1986 KZA organized a first meeting for the Namibians to discuss the EC assistance, in Brussels. From inside Namibia Mr. Shejvali, bishop Kauluma and Mr. Esau from the Anglican diocese were present, from SWAPO Pohamba and Kaukungua. But when in July 1986 the South Africans submitted their first 22 projects the Council of Churches of Namibia had no projects. Then we organised a training course in Harare for CCN and SWAPO in November 1986 about theory and practice of the Special Programme. But by

SWAPO was confident that the movement would soon return to Namibia to fight an election campaign. That meant SWAPO needed houses and farms in and around Windhoek. It wanted to bring its own garage and printing press from Angola to Namibia, as it expected that many firms would boycott SWAPO. SWAPO had the funds, but it could not openly buy the property. Real estate agents would refuse to do business, prices would be raised. For that reason SWAPO asked KZA to help under a false name. The trade union related bank of KZA, HKB (Hollandsche Koopmans Bank) made a trust with an innocent name available for the operation, the Amsterdam Standard Trust Company (ASTC). As foreign investors could make use of the “financial rand” exchange rate, the value of their money doubled. In total 2.5 million dollars were spent by Russell Hay to buy eight properties, among them a home for the president, a garage and a farm outside the town. Paul Staal remembers: “I had to collect the money from SWAPO in London, cash, handbags full of notes of a hundred dollars. I was never really searched at the border, just pure luck,”

Another larger operation was the creation of an independent news agency in Namibia. Hundreds of journalists would come to Namibia in the transitional period. In the large Kalahari Sands Hotel there was a large 24-hours press centre, run by the South Africans, which could offer the journalists everything they needed: telephone and telex connections, information, cars, complete trips, arranged meetings etc. All dailies, with the exception of the Namibian, radio and TV were controlled by the South Africans. There was only a small press office of the churches but that was unable to counterbalance the South African operation. The trade union NUNW and the youth organisation NANSO had offices far away in Katutura, without telex.

To counter-balance the sophisticated South African press service, journalists of the Namibian, the trade union NUNW, the Legal Assistance Centre etc took the initiative to found a press centre, the Namibia News Service (NNS). Two Namibian journalists, Mark Verbaan and Chris Shipanga, moved from the Namibian to NNS. KZA arranged the financing of this initiative with money from Novib. And it contracted an old friend, the British journalist Michael Wolfers to work for a year in Namibia.

ia. In addition to writing articles for the international press, he helped the Department of Information and Publicity of SWAPO with the publication of the SWAPO newspaper Namibia Today, he supported the Council of Churches of Namibia, the Namibian and the Namibia News Service, by installing computers, with writing and the lay-out of articles, the training of inexperienced journalists, he was active in establishing contacts with visiting foreign journalists. And he helped SWAPO’s information bureau NAMPA to move from Angola to Windhoek. In 1990 the Namibia News Service was integrated with NAMPA, which became the Namibian Press Agency.

Preparing Namibia’s future relations with the European Community

Through its involvement in the EC “Programme for the Victims of Apartheid” KZA became interested in possible other EC funds for ANC and SWAPO to support the South African and Namibian refugees in the neighbouring states. But the use of the so-called Lomé funds had to wait until the independence of Namibia.

Together with the Belgian organisation FOS, KZA contracted a British researcher living in Brussels, Paul Goodison, to study and promote profitable arrangements with the EC for an independent Namibia. Goodison worked during 1989 and 1990 as a full-time lobbyist in close contact with SWAPO’s Economic Affairs Spokesman and later the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Namibia. At the request of SWAPO, Goodison wrote a 100 page study “Namibia and the EC, a lobby strategy”. The other work of Goodison for KZA and FOS was an assessment of the EC policy towards South Africa.

The aim of the work on Namibia was to ensure that next round of EC funds would accommodate the needs of a newly independent Namibia. Goodison managed to have two provisions inserted into the Fourth Lomé to avoid the kind of delays in the accession of an independent Namibia which had occurred after Zimbabwe’s independence. This was quite successful: it took Zimbabwe 21 months and Namibia only 9 months. Moreover it was decided that any beef quota allocated to Namibia would be additional to the quotas offered under nor-

February 1988 only three poorly formulated funding proposals had been received from Namibia.

We agreed with SWAPO in Luanda to organise another consultation in March 1988 in Lusaka. Russell Hay was sent to Namibia in the weeks before the consultation to brief the bishops, the trade unions, internal SWAPO and other interested organisations and invite them for the consultation. Beyers Naudé came to the consultation in Lusaka to explain how under the EC programme millions were already spent in South Africa. In order to overcome this stagnation in Namibia the possibility was discussed to set up a Trust to organise projects from that country.

With the support of Russell Hay the Namibia Development Trust (NDT) in Windhoek was founded at the end of 1988 as the only channel for the EC money to Namibia. In the board of the Trust participated representatives of the churches, the trade unions, human rights lawyers etc. The EC had agreed to make € 20 million available for projects in Namibia for 1989. But also NDT did not become a success story. Before it was well organised there were elections in Namibia and after independence Namibia was excluded from the EC Special Programme.”

KZA channelled € 15 million EC money to projects in South Africa. But in Namibia only the weekly “The Namibian” would benefit on a large scale from the EC millions. The Namibian was founded by Gwen Lister, a journalist who was fired by the Windhoek Observer as she was considered too critical. The Namibian was the only periodical that stood up against the South African occupation of Namibia; the other three dailies, the radio and TV were pro-South Africa. Its offices were several times the target of attacks and arson, whilst Gwen Lister, who received several international press awards, was imprisoned several times and members of the staff beaten up. KZA had in November 1987 submitted a first proposal for a two-year grant to the EC, co-sponsored by the Dutch Bishops’ Lenten Campaign (Vastenactie) and the Protestant organisation ICCO. In total the Namibian received € 700,000.

Other projects supported through KZA with EC money were Rape Crisis; the Tsumeb Community Centre/Vocational School, a centre for legal assistance and employment for former political prisoners and later for women; and training of former political prisoners.

Interview Carla Schuddeboom



The transfer of the KZA archives

During his official visit to the Netherlands in 1998, president Dr Sam Nujoma received the documents to transfer from the archives of the Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika (Holland Committee for Southern Africa) to the National Archives of Namibia from Mr Sietse Bosgra. The ceremony took place in Nieuwegein, the sister town of Rundu in Namibia. Photo courtesy of NiZa.

mal Protocol 7 and that any assistance during the transitional period would not strengthen the South African controlled internal settlement structures in Namibia.

After the core funding by KZA and FOS an EC contract for Goodison was secured for a study "Possible future utilisation of EC development assistance to Namibia". In a brochure "Namibia, the Challenge of Independence" a number of issues were identified which would need to be addressed in Namibia's Lomé Convention negotiations:

realistic beef quota under the Lomé beef protocol; extending STABEX coverage to the export of Karakul skins; according Namibia least development country status; arrangements for Namibian sheep meat export to the EC questions relating to the fisheries sector were included in the material on future EC-Namibian relations.

Before Namibia's independence several resolutions on these issues were submitted and passed in the European Parliament and the ACP-EC Joint Assembly, and several background briefings were produced for journalists.

At the end of 1989, Goodison went to Namibia at the invitation of the Constitutional Assembly. During July and August 1990 he organised workshops about the Lomé Convention for Namibian government officials, and background dossiers were prepared for the different government departments. In addition there were seven workshops for the private sector under the auspices of the Namibian National Chamber of Commerce. This activity was funded by KZA, FOS and the German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

KZA support after independence

KZA had supported Zimbabwe after its independence in 1980 by sending 40 teachers to that country. After

its independence Namibia would also need technical assistance, and in 1992 KZA sent a first water driller to train the development brigades of former SWAPO combatants. In 1993 a contract between KZA and the Ministry of Education and Culture was signed for the recruitment in the Netherlands of vocational training instructors and other operational personnel. After an advertisement in "de Volkskrant" a hundred applicants reacted. Two computer experts and five vocational trainers with impressive CV's were recruited to start in Namibia in January 1994. But the project failed: the Ministry declared it had not reserved the necessary funds for the local salaries.

KZA lobbied in Brussels to counter South Africa's claim on the European Commission concerning Namibia's fishing rights. In 1993 it organized in co-operation with the Amsterdam World Trade Center a seminar "South Africa and Namibia: a Challenge to Dutch Enterprise". Together with SANEC (South Africa-Netherlands Chamber of Commerce) a similar meeting in The Hague was organised in 1995 to promote investments in Namibia. Speakers were the Namibian Minister of Foreign Affairs Theo-Ben Gurirab and Mr. R. Kukuri of the Ministry of Finance. At that occasion a meeting took place for all persons and organisations interested in Namibia in the Town Hall of Nieuwegein. Discussions were started with the Fair Trade organisation of the Netherlands to increase its imports from Namibia. Also in 1995 a meeting was organized in The Hague for all local authorities from the Netherlands and Flanders which had a relationship with Namibian communities. In the Africa Museum in Berg en Dal, KZA helped organize the exposition "a View of Namibia" during four weeks of 1997 to promote tourism, in co-operation with Namibia Contact, Namibia Tourism Board and Air Namibia.

KZA, which had by then become part of the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa, NIZA, was also involved in the programme for the 1998 visit to the Netherlands of President Nujoma.

