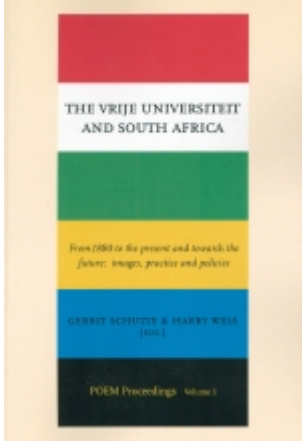


The Vrije Universiteit And South Africa ~ 125 Years Of Sentiments And Good Faith



This academic year (2005), the *Vrije Universiteit* enjoys its 125th anniversary.**[i]** In 1879, a handful of orthodox reformed Dutch gentlemen founded an Association for the advancement of Christian Higher Education, and on 20 October 1880, Abraham Kuyper inaugurated the *Vrije Universiteit*, *Academia libera reformata*, by delivering his famous lecture on Sphere Sovereignty, *Soevereiniteit in eigen kring*.

Kuyper was never a very modest man, and he certainly was not inclined to be modest at that moment. The credits of the university he opened, were three faculties, five professors and five students. As an accomplished rhetorician he described it as *onze kleine School, met den Universiteitsnaam zelve tot blozens toe verlegen* (our small school, blushing to be called a university). This was not meant as an apology, but rather to make a Hegelian turn: the real credits of the VU were written in the Synod of Dordt, its claim to nobility was the courage and moral dedication of its supporters, and its worldwide value and importance (Kuyper 1880). In the Kuyperian world panorama, his University would become the intellectual centre of the international Calvinist world – the academic powerhouse for all the reformed churches, nations and societies in Europe, America, and the Dutch colonies in the East. And for South Africa, of course.

October 1880: this is also the month in which Piet Cronjé, on behalf of 127 Transvaler *burghers*, declared to the Landdrost of Potchefstroom that they would no longer pay any taxes to the British government, as that government had illegally annexed and stolen their country (Van Oordt 1898). His language was quite akin to what Abraham Kuyper had written as a commentary on Shepstone's annexation of the Transvaal in 1877, when he stated in his daily *De Standaard*: robbery is a sin to the eyes of the Lord, even by a crowned robber.

As a journalist and politician, Kuyper followed the South African developments on

a daily basis. He was well-informed about the South African situation. He had met personally with the rising star of the Afrikaner Movement, editor of *Die Patriot*, chairman of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* and founder of the *Afrikaner Bond*, the Revd. S.J. du Toit. And he was regularly informed by the Revd. Frans Lion Cachet, back in the Netherlands after a stay in South Africa for more than thirty years. Kuyper welcomed Paardekraal and the declaration of independence of the Transvaal *Volk*. He was very active in the Amsterdam Transvaal Committee and, in May 1881, became one of the founders of a countrywide, lasting pro-Boer organisation, the *Nederlands-Zuid-Afrikaanse Vereniging* (NZAV). The members of the NZAV consisted mainly of liberals and conservatives and some radicals, such as social-democrats and antirevolutionaries. In close cooperation with S.J. du Toit, now Superintendent of Education in the Transvaal, Kuyper tried to dominate the cooperation with the Transvaal (material aid, advice on the development of the new Afrikaner Republic, emigration), to protect the good orthodoxy of the Transvaalers against the ungodly Dutch liberals – as had happened in the 1870s, when President Burgers – a defrocked liberal DRC (NGK) *dominee*! – with the help of his liberal Dutch friends had tried to modernise the education and had – made a mess of the Transvaal, only to prepare it for annexation by Shepstone!

Kuyper had a real interest in South Africa, both as a Dutch nationalist and as a Calvinist. According to him – and to every Dutchman at that time! – the Afrikaners were fellow descendants of the *Geuzen*, stock of the pious heroes from the Golden Age of the Netherlands, kinsmen (*stamverwanten*) and co-believers; brethren (*geestverwanten*). In early 1882 Kuyper seriously planned a trip to the Transvaal. Formally as a tourist and journalist, a member of the Board of the NZAV, a friend and admirer – but of course also as a consultant, giving advice on how to organise a Christian-national, antirevolutionary, reformed South African Republic. The Board of the VU would not permit its Rector Magnificus a leave for half a year – and thereby decidedly denied South Africa a chance to turn its history!

In 1883-84 Kuyper was active as an advisor and PR-man to the Deputation of S.J.P. Kruger, Genl. N.J. Smit and S.J. du Toit, negotiating the Convention of London. Kuyper also organised the welcome reception of the Deputation in the Netherlands afterwards, in 1884. And in 1900 he wrote *La crise sud-africaine*, the most influential pro-Boer pamphlet of the Anglo-Boer War next to Smuts' *A Century of Wrong*. The role of Kuyper, by then Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1901-1905), in ending the Anglo-Boer War is well-known, as well as his fine 1904

farewell tribute to the deceased President Kruger: 'This Moyse ... that fighter for his nation, united, in its language and its free fatherland ... in God's time to be we will see him succeeded by a Joshua'.

The Dutch view of South Africa was dominated for much more than half a century by these pro-Boer sympathies, the feelings of kinship and national pride, fostered by the British atrocities during the Anglo-Boer War. South African history and Afrikaans literature were part of the curriculum of the Dutch High Schools and the Government stimulated public attention for Afrikaner events, for example in 1925 (100th anniversary of Paul Kruger), 1938 and 1949 (Great Trek, *Voortrekker* monument), and 1952 (Van Riebeeck Festival).

At the Vrije Universiteit, the general Dutch pro-Boer sympathies were enlarged by a strong consciousness of the common religion between Afrikaner and Protestant Dutchmen. They shared the same religious and ecclesiastical tradition, read the same *Statenbijbel* and sang the same 18th century Dutch edition of the Psalms. Both were part of the international Calvinist movement, *burghers* of the worldwide Calvinist Empire. In this virtual Calvinist realm, the VU was considered as its intellectual capital, the first and only Calvinist university in the world. Its professors, therefore, taught in Germany, Hungary, Scotland, Huguenot France, the United States, and from 1924 onwards even in South Africa (H.H. Kuyper, C. van Gelderen, V. Hepp, A.A. van Schelven). And, of course, the 1935 publication *Koers in die Krisis* did contain not only chapters written by VU professors, but also a welcome by the leader of the Dutch Reformed movement, and the Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1925-1926, 1933-1939), Hendrikus Colijn.

The contacts of the VU with South Africa date from its earliest days. In his congratulatory letter from 1880, S.J. du Toit solemnly promised Kuyper to send Afrikaner students. Du Toit was impressed by Kuyper and was glad to cooperate. But in time, Du Toit estranged himself from the Kuyperian dominance and extended his Dutch contacts, supported by Paul Kruger. Their friendship broke down. Finding funds and cooperation at all Dutch universities, Du Toit opted in 1884 for a South African Academy in the Netherlands (proposed by the Leiden liberal historian Fruin), thereby denying the unique role of the VU as sole destination for Transvaal students in the Netherlands. By doing this, Du Toit chose to cooperate with liberals, heathens and Jews, according to Kuyper.

So in the first twenty years, 1880-1900, the Vrije Universiteit had much to do with South Africa, but not by means of educating young South Africans. As a fine example of the irony of history, the first South African student at the VU – except for a Van der Spuy who, in 1882, read theology there for only a couple of months – was, between 1900 and 1903, Japie du Toit, the Cape rebel and beloved son of the loyalist S.J. du Toit. Japie du Toit was sent to the VU by *Gereformeerde* admirers and followers of Kuyper in Pretoria, more or less against the wishes of his father. He was accompanied by two other Burgersdorp students, the law student Koos Pretorius and Japie's friend and lifelong colleague, Ferdinand Postma.

J.D. du Toit and F. Postma were *Doppers*; both got their doctorate from the VU, in 1903 and 1917 respectively, and both became well-known academics, leaders of their church and the Afrikaner nation. Within 50 years, they transformed the Burgersdorp Theological School into the *Potchefstroomse Universiteitskollege* and then the *Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys*: the South African 'Vrije Universiteit' and the second Calvinist university in the entire world.

The history of the long relationship between the VU and Potchefstroom is well-known. According to many people and even some historians – in our countries and elsewhere – this relation bore fruit in the ideology of Christian-national Apartheid. For them, Kuyper was the father of *Soevereiniteit in eigen kring* and therefore of Apartheid, and Herman Dooyeweerd, with his *Wetskringen* and *scheppingsordnantes*, was his prophet. All of this is more or less pitiable nonsense, the result of much misunderstanding or at best of poor scholarship (Schutte 1987).

After the Peace of Vereeniging, South Africa embarked into the Age of the Generals and, even more important, the Age of the Ethnic Mobilisation of the Afrikaner *volk*. It was sympathetically supported by the Netherlands, which lavishly funded the movement for CNO (*Christelijk-Nationaal Onderwijs*), the first Afrikaner resistance movement, and welcomed Afrikaner students at the Dutch universities.

In 1905 a young Stellenbosch theologian, W.A. (Willie) Joubert, arrived to study theology at Utrecht, as Stellenbosch alumni did for half a century. Within a couple of months he changed Utrecht for the VU. Kuyper and his *Gereformeerde kerken* had not been very popular in the DRC (NGK) in South Africa, to say the least. But by now, the NGK was tired of theological liberalism and was also turning away

from Scottish theology and English Methodism; it was looking for its continental roots and theological scholarship. It is obvious that awakening Afrikaner nationalism had much to do with this: a stay in the Netherlands could and would strengthen one's Afrikaner identity and culture. According to Joubert, the Utrecht *Hervormde* theology was outdated. The real answers to today's questions were given by Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. Their theology was orthodox as well as modern, radical even. And it was also very successful; it activated church and society, the emancipation of the orthodox protestants and even facilitated Kuyper's career up to Prime Minister. Moreover: the VU was a haven of Humboldtian scholarship – Japie du Toit and Ferdinand Postma unsuccessfully opposed the strict rules of the VU, that since 1880 requested a *propaedeuse*, whereas at the same time the Dutch government dismissed the *propaedeuse* for the state universities. A thorough knowledge of the Bible, Latin, Greek and Hebrew was required, which was an indication of the fundamentals of the VU-theology: the Bible and the 16th/17th century theology. At the same time, the VU was the university of the *kleine luyden*, the poor and the non-privileged people, for whose emancipation it had been founded. A *propaedeuse*, therefore, had to be strict, to be able to win the competition with the liberal theologians. But at the time, the VU accommodated for those without a high school classicist training, aspiring to real scholarship.

From 1906 to 1940, some 80 South Africans studied at the VU. Theologians, mostly: 64 out of 80. Over time they put their stamp on their church and their country, as *predikant*, professor, *kultuur-* and *volksleier*. Let me give you some examples.

Willie Joubert got a VU-doctorate in theology (1910), and afterwards worked at Stellenbosch University; at first as a professor in Dutch language and literature, later as a PR-officer and administrator. He was a fiery Nationalist and became a member of the *Ossewa Brandwag* in the 1940s.

B.B. (Bennie) Keet also got a VU doctorate (in 1913), to become a well-known professor in theology at Stellenbosch. There he introduced the teachings of his VU masters: the ethics of W. Geesink, and the ecclesiastical law of F.L. Rutgers and H.H. Kuyper; and over time he became a well-known opponent of apartheid.

Keet did not join in the attack by another VU alumnus and colleague, Prof. E.E. van Rooyen, against their Stellenbosch colleague J. du Plessis, in the late 1920s. Traditionally, this conflict is said to have been inspired by American fundamenta-

lism against the theological liberalism of Du Plessis, who tried to reconcile the Bible and modern science and taught evolution. According to me, the historiography certainly underrates the role of VU theology and theologians in this conflict. Opposition to the philosophy of evolution was one of the pillars of Kuyperian theology, with the Bible as its authority; the conflict, moreover, was as much about Dutch confessional piety as opposed to Scottish-British Methodism.

Even more underestimated is the influence of the Dutch Christian social movement on these South African students. The concept of a church that is not only spiritually but also socially relevant, tackling the daily socio-political problems, had a strong impact on them. Not less than three of the early Afrikaner theology students at the VU went into politics: N.J. van der Merwe, H.A. Lamprecht and W.P. Steenkamp, as well as L.J. (Wikus) du Plessis, classicist, philosopher, economist, and what more. All of them, appalled by the pitiable plight of the poor whites (in the first place: poor Afrikaners) rejected the *laissez faire* of Botha and Smuts and requested active action and Christian-social policies. N.J. van der Merwe, a son-in-law to the former Free State President M.T. Steyn, and H.A. Lamprecht were Nationalists, followers of Hertzog – but Van der Merwe was no *Smelter*: no fusion with the rand bosses and capitalists for him!

W.P. Steenkamp was an Afrikaner as good as one could want one. His 1910 VU-doctorate could be called a global scoop: his theological dissertation *Die agnosticisme van Herbert Spencer* was the first one worldwide that was written in Afrikaans! (By the way: much against the will of the majority of the VU Senate: 'Afrikaans is no language, VU dissertations have to be written in Standard Dutch, *Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands* – Afrikaans is at best a degenerated Dutch' – with the next VU-dissertation in Afrikaans being Van der Merwe's of 1921!) Steenkamp also entered the South African Parliament, as the representative of his Namaqualand parish and constituency; in later years he became a medical doctor, founder and representative of a Christian Farmers' and Workers' Party, and Senator for the United Party.

According to the international historiography, the VU also taught these South African students Kuyper's Christian national worldview. That is to say: apartheid. It is a pity to say, but reality was different. Race was not a real problem in that time. The European superiority and colonial domination were not questioned, neither in the Netherlands, nor in South Africa. A liberal and a professor in missiology such as J. du Plessis welcomed the segregation of the church, due to the vast

difference in evolution of the white and black races (Du Plessis 1921; 1926).

Dr. Wm. Nicol, later on an influential DRC *predikant* at the Witwatersrand, an Afrikaner nationalist and in 1948 appointed as Provincial Administrator of the Transvaal, tells an interesting story in his memoirs, *Met toga en troffel* (Nicol n.d.). Around 1912, he and his South African friends were impressed by Herman Bavinck, his personality, his theology and psychology. But they did not give a dime for his sociology, writes Nicol. Once they confronted Bavinck with a racially mixed couple (a Dutch woman married to a Javanese man), whom they had spotted walking in Amsterdam. If that Javanese man is an educated Christian, I would allow him to marry my own daughter, was Bavinck's answer, puzzling his South African audience. Bavinck's view of the brotherhood of all mankind – also the starting point of A.W.F. Idenburg, former Minister of the Colonies and Governor General of the Dutch East Indies, Member of the Board of the VU – did not really change their opinion. In 1939, one South African tried in his VU doctorate to base the Apartheid on the Creation and Common Grace, referring to Kuyper's beloved themes of pluriformity, diversity and hierarchy, saying that white supremacy is the gift and therefore the wish of the Creator (Badenhorst 1939). A very biased reading of Kuyper!

In the first half of the 20th century, therefore, the Dutch and Afrikaners shared the idea of *stamverwantschap*, as a common myth or dream. This dream was strong enough to survive World War II. The Dutch and the South Africans experienced that dark period in a rather different way. The Dutch were shocked by the stories about Pirow's New Order, the Greyshirts and the semi-fascist *Ossewa Brandwag*; they did not understand the anti-British, neutralist position of the National Party. Pro-Boer friends at the VU could not understand the participation of Calvinists such as H.G. Stoker, L.J. du Plessis and others in the *Ossewa Brandwag*. But in time, by correspondence and personal discussions, they learned these situations to interpret, not as pro-fascist but as anti-British; as examples of radical Calvinist nationalism, not as signs of nazi-sympathies, and the apartheid as a serious endeavour to stimulate the culture of both white and black, separate but equivalent.

Berkouwer, Waterink, Dooyeweerd, J.H. Bavinck: all of them made post-war visits to South Africa (1949-1952) and all of them gave the Afrikaners the benefit of the doubt. Notwithstanding serious questions about his past and views, the VU Senate in 1952 unanimously voted in favour of a honorary doctorate for the Pot-

chefstroom *Rektor* Prof. dr. Joon van Rooy, and for the Cape DRC moderator Dr. A.J. van der Merwe. And the same traditional pro-Boer sympathies led the Senate to vote in favour of the formal exchange programme between the VU and its sister university at Potchefstroom in 1958. In the meantime, increasing amounts of South African students had arrived at the VU: 69 in the years 1945-1960, and some 50 in the 1960s, many of them accompanied by their partners, staying and studying at the VU for a couple of years.

For many of them, it was an eye-opening experience. 'My years of studying in the Netherlands made me conscious of the moral problems of apartheid', wrote VU alumnus Willie Jonker (Jonker 1998). Discussions with South Africans in exile in the Netherlands taught me to reject apartheid, wrote another former VU student, Lina Spies.**[ii]** Regularly Potchefstroom professors and others, invited within the framework of the Cultural Agreement, came and lectured at the VU, as VU professors did in South Africa.

Gradually, however, more and more people got doubts about the academic connections with South Africa. Weren't these legitimising apartheid? Already in the late 1950s the VU-students had said good-bye to the 'Penning myth', as their magazine *Pharetra* had called the traditional pro-Boer sentiments.**[iii]** Many students and staff members were active members of anti-apartheid movements. The exchange with Potchefstroom was subject of debate at staff meetings from 1969 onwards. In April 1971, Rector Magnificus De Gaay Fortman signed a formal letter to his Potchefstroom colleague, expressing the 'serious problem we have with the race relationships in your country' and thereby starting a discussion about the position of Potchefstroom, which would dominate and in the end terminate their relationship.**[iv]** At the same time, the VU was clearly stating its own position: on 20 October 1972 the Revd. C.F. Beyers Naudé was given an honorary degree.

Joon van Rooy, A.J. van der Merwe and Beyers Naudé: three VU *doctores honoris causa*. Only twenty years had passed since 1952, but they had been revolutionary ones. The Netherlands had changed fundamentally, due to developments and processes such as industrialisation and urbanisation, the decolonisation of the Dutch Indies, the impact of the feminist movement and democratisation, the broad secularisation and the depillarisation, the breaking down of the traditional religious and socio-political barriers; an immensely popular a-historical trend, progressive and optimistic at the same time, of which people were convinced it could build a New Babylon (Kennedy 1995).

The VU had changed even more, whereas South Africa was in a paralysing state, rigidly trying to stifle the motion of history, deaf to the ever stronger winds of change. The Netherlands and South Africa were drifting away from each other at high speed. 1972 was a turning point in the relationship of the VU with South Africa, the end of an era and the beginning of a new one, connected by the continuation of its Kuyperian background and character.

Around 1950 the VU was a small, traditional, conservative, even narrow-minded institution; somewhat conceited and intensely Reformed. It denied Totius, poet and Bible translator, a former student, a fellow Calvinist and influential ecclesiastical figure in South Africa, an Honorary Doctorate, for rhyming the Psalms of David is no work of scholarship and therefore could not earn a degree of *doctor litterae* – not even *honoris causa*, as the VU professor in Dutch Linguistics and Literature wrote in 1951. The VU still functioned only as academy for the Reformed people. It protected the students against undesirable ideas: when in 1950 the liberal N.P. van Wyk Louw was nominated Professor in Afrikaans Language and Culture at the University of Amsterdam, the VU seriously considered establishing its own chair with a Reformed nominee (Schutte 2004). But by then the Dutch Reformed world was in the process of a revolutionary evolution. Internal cohesion diminished and boundaries were opened. In 1961, staff members of the VU were still seriously lectured by *Curatoren* about socialist leanings; but in 1964, the Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* accepted membership of the social-democrat party (PvdA) for its *predikants*. Kuyperian theology was declared outdated and the traditional *Gereformeerde* way of life disappeared. Not theological orthodoxy but solidarity with the poor and oppressed qualifies a church; today's Christianity has to be ecumenical and socially relevant, politically progressive and an ally of all those who fight for a better world – a *verantwoorde revolutie* ('a just revolution'), as two VU professors called it in 1968 (Verkuyl and Schulte Nordholt 1968). In 1972, the VU got a new, democratic administration and a new objective, replacing the Kuyperian Calvinist Principled Basis (*Gereformeerde Beginselen*). At the VU, as explained by a *Memorandum*, published by the *College van Bestuur* in 1975, there was a 'growing awareness of the relevance of Christian faith and action for situations of inequality and social injustice, especially in connection with the so called 'Third World' [and a new consciousness of] the responsibility of universities and members of academic communities with regard to the national and internationally society in which they function'. [v]

The sociologist of religion Gerard Dekker has labelled the period between 1960 and 1990 in the history of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* as a silent revolution. A contemporary critic and opponent called it 'a silent death' (Dekker 1992; Jongeling n.d.). Orthodox South African Calvinists, bewildered by the headlines of the news from the Netherlands and the stories of the revolutionary students, irritated by the constant '*parmantige*' and '*betweterige*' *Hollanders*, concluded: the VU is lost and no place for god-fearing, orthodox Afrikaner students (INEG 1964).

Indeed, the rapidly growing numbers of students at the VU were no longer god-fearing Calvinists (*Rector Magnificus* I.A. Diepenhorst once publicly warned for the Marxist undermining of the VU via the student population). And their professors denied the historicity of Adam and Eve, the whale of Jona and the donkey of Bileam. This deep gap between Amsterdam and South Africa also can be demonstrated by the honorary degree, conferred on Martin Luther King by the VU in 1965. King is a fighter for justice, walking in the steps of Jesus, according to his promotor Gijs Kuipers (who, only two years before, had warned the *Kongres teen Kommuniste* at Pretoria against the irresistible revolt against apartheid and had applauded Mandela for his speech at the Rivonia Trial)[vi]. But the South African reaction was rather sceptic: we have never heard that King is a Calvinist, by honouring him, the VU has sided for his Marxist revolutionary ideology.

That same year 1965, Prof. dr. W.F. de Gaay Fortman (1911-1997) became *Rector Magnificus* (1965-1972) of the Vrije Universiteit as well as chairman of the official Dutch Committee for the Cultural Agreement between the Netherlands and South Africa, as successor to VU *President-Curator* dr. J. Donner (1891-1981). De Gaay Fortman, a soft-spoken typical Dutch *regent* and influential anti-revolutionary politician, was born in a pro-Boer family, and he was not ashamed of these sympathies and sentiments (Bak 2004). At the same time, he detested the South African racial policy. For some years, he had – as the spokesman of a group of influential Dutch Members of Parliament – tried to organise a visit to South Africa, in order to start an official dialogue. But Verwoerd had not given permission for a meeting with Albert Luthulu (1963-1965).

De Gaay Fortman was aware of the fact that a cultural agreement, and academic and cultural relations in general, were no direct political instruments. Nevertheless, De Gaay Fortman used them as instruments to start a critical dialogue with South Africa. His South African counterparts and Potchefstroom colleagues soon discovered that De Gaay Fortman had indeed drawn the agenda for that critical

dialogue, in order to demonstrate to them the un-Christian, inhumane and dangerous character of apartheid. Doing so, De Gaay Fortman asked his South African counterparts to accept a broad, general concept of culture, in order to send, under the Cultural Agreement, more black, academically inexperienced South Africans to the Netherlands to enrol in the more general, technical, professional types of education in the Netherlands. And he gave them a pragmatic lesson: the VU solidarity with the chairman of the Christian Institute, the Revd. C.F. Beyers Naudé.

In the years 1973-1977, De Gaay Fortman functioned as Secretary of Home Affairs in the Cabinet of the social-democrat Joop den Uyl. He stipulated, that the Dutch Government continued a critical dialogue with the South African government, at the same giving priority to black South African students. But his policy of dialogue was made out of date by the Soweto uprisings (1976), and so the Government ended the Cultural Agreement.

In that same period, the VU strengthened its contacts with the Christian Institute and built up assistance programme's for academic institutions for black people in southern Africa. And the debate on the Exchange Programme between the VU and the Potchefstroom University was intensified. Anti-apartheid elements at the VU wanted a boycott. The Board and the University Council wanted to discuss with Potchefstroom the role of Christianity in modern society and the contribution of

Christian higher education: to strengthen the human rights, democracy, emancipation. There was too much politics and misunderstanding in their discussions, with participants clinging to unbridgeable paradigms, in spite of *stamverwantschap* and *geestverwantschap*. By the end of 1976, the VU formally ended the Potchefstroom cooperation. The old sentiments had faded away, a new good faith was required.

NOTES

- i.** This essay summarises the chapters 1-6 of my *De Vrije Universiteit en Zuid-Afrika, 1880-2005* (Schutte 2005). I have published on the history of Dutch-South African relationships earlier in Schutte 1986 and Schutte 1993.
- ii.** Lina Spies to the author, 2004.
- iii.** Pharetra 20.6.1957 en 27.1.1960. The Dutch pro-Boer Louwrens Penning (1854-1927) was the author of many novels on the Boer War.

- iv.** Archives VU: Senate VU to Registrateur Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO, Amsterdam 5.4.1971.
- v.** [College van Bestuur Vrije Universiteit] Memorandum [Amsterdam, August 1975], pp. i-ii. The Memorandum was written to inform the participants of the Internal Conference of Reformed Institutions for Higher Education, Potchefstroom, 1975.
- vi.** Prof.dr. G. Kuijpers to the author, 3.3.2003; see also Kuijpers n.d.: 141-66.

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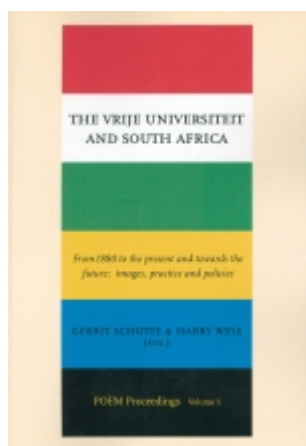
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The Vrije Universiteit And South Africa ~ Political And Organisational Developments



Introduction

In the long history of VU relations with South Africa the year 1992 provided a landmark: the VU came back to South Africa, as a partner of the University of the North (UNIN) in a big pre-entry science project funded by the European Union. UNIN is a so-called historically black university, founded under apartheid policy. In 1992 five VU specialists started working at UNIN, continuing till the end of 1998.

After 1992 the cooperation VU-UNIN was extended to other fields, and UNIN is still a main partner of the VU in South Africa.

1992 was two years after the *Wende* in South Africa, President de Klerk's transition speech in parliament and the release of his successor, Nelson Mandela,

from prison. At last a new South Africa came in sight. The VU was the first Dutch university to re-enter South Africa.

Traditionally relations of the VU with South Africa were based on theology and philosophy. The VU that came back to South Africa in 1992, was a very different university, with strong expertise, many years of experience and a good reputation in development cooperation, mainly built up in countries in southern Africa outside South Africa since 1976.

That change in the VU interface with South Africa is the main theme of my presentation about the period 1972 till the present.

Point of departure in 1972

At the beginning of 1972 the situation at the VU with regard to South Africa had nothing remarkable:

- * Contacts were maintained mainly by theologians and philosophers.
- * The exchange of professors with the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, agreed on in 1958, had come to a standstill at the end of the 1960s.
- * A general, strong uneasiness about apartheid policy in South Africa prevailed. VU theologian Professor J.H. Bavinck had been one of the first in the Netherlands (1953) to voice basic criticism. Traditional South African VU-partners in theology and philosophy had appeared to be pillars of apartheid ideology.
- * With regard to development cooperation frustration was prominent. In the years after the 1961 VU-Corps congress it had been decided that the VU in view of its identity as a Christian university in the modern world would go for development cooperation. Consequently since 1967 a big effort had been made to support the new Université Libre du Congo at Kisangani. This university however had been nationalized and the VU start in development cooperation had turned out to be a failure, though experience had been gained.
- * Apart from this, minds and time at the VU in the years before 1972 were fully taken up by tempestuous growth of the university, by building a big modern campus, by a new ecumenical codification of its identity as a Christian university, and by participation in the nationwide movement for democratisation of university governance.

Changes in 1972

In retrospect however, two developments at the VU in the year 1972 were relevant for a change in its relation with South Africa.

1. The formal structure of the Dutch universities, being weakly organised professors' universities according to German tradition, collapsed under the pressure of mass higher education and termination of budget growth. A new governance structure was introduced by law, inspired by the Dutch legislation on municipal governance. A professional university management body was introduced, counterbalanced by a university council, elected by academic staff, non-academic staff and students. Without this professionalisation of university management and its corollary, the professionalisation of the university administration, VU development cooperation would never have succeeded. On the other hand, inventing the new governance wheel along political models generated considerable belief in policy making, a.o. with regard to international relations. It was not easy to handle inevitable casuistry in that setting (e.g. shall we cooperate with universities in a country like Indonesia, under the control of the Suharto regime?).

2. An honorary doctorate in theology was awarded to C.F. Beyers Naudé, former minister in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, who had publicly broken with the support for apartheid by his church and founded the Christian Institute for Southern Africa. Professor Berkouwer, the grand old man of the VU Faculty of Theology, made it quite clear that the faculty stood with Beyers Naudé and no longer with the theological and ecclesiastical establishment of his church, with which VU theology had had a long standing relationship. The honorary doctorate was in fact a realignment of the South African VU-commitment, supporting Beyers Naudé in his opposition to apartheid.

It is important to keep in mind that part of the justification for the apartheid policy of the ruling South African National Party had been provided by Reformed theologians in South Africa (cf. Giliomee 2003: 462-3). Professor H.G. Stoker of Potchefstroom University, the most prominent Reformed philosopher in South Africa and well connected with the Reformed philosophers of the VU, also contributed to that justification (cf. *ibid.*: 416). The VU philosophers however, contrary to the VU theologians, kept quiet.

A new start in development cooperation

It was in 1975 that a new start was prepared concerning the VU commitment to development cooperation. The experience with the Université Libre du Congo had made clear that such commitment had to be practiced in cooperation with existing institutions, to support their development according to their priorities in

the context of their countries, on the basis of expertise available at the VU. A serious effort required that VU staff would be made available to universities in developing countries, both by posting at the partner university and by short missions. A great boost was that the necessary funding could be found under the new Dutch government program for university development cooperation, which started in 1977. From the very beginning the VU was a big shareholder in this program, because it could provide a strong in-house infrastructure, adapting its own organisation and also using its own budget for development cooperation.

To implement development cooperation according to this concept choices had to be made as to where in the world the VU would go and offer its services. The answer was given referring to VU tradition: Indonesia, particularly Java, and southern Africa. Opting for one of the new apartheid-created black universities in South Africa was impossible. In 1976 a VU delegation visited the small universities of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, countries most close to South Africa. This was the beginning of a long and successful partnership with these universities, accepted under the Dutch government program and later extended to other countries in the region, outside South Africa. I refer to the presentation by Kees van Dongen for further information on this subject.

Break with Potchefstroom

By coincidence it was also in 1976 that an unsuccessful dialogue took place between the VU and the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU). The final break was inevitable and dramatic, but in practice of rather marginal importance. The agreement between the two universities to exchange professors, dating back to 1958, had not been implemented for already many years, and the relationship between the two institutions (sisters by tradition) was very weak, also due to South African apartheid policy.

The previous history of the dialogue, the dialogue itself and its follow-up were all extensively documented, in view of the lively interest in the affair both within the VU, especially by the university council, and outside the VU. In the context of this presentation a schematic summary will suffice:

1. In 1971 and subsequently in 1973-1974 the VU sent letters to the PU expressing its problems with apartheid. The answers received from the PU confirmed the existence of fundamental differences of opinion, which made the VU university council in 1974 decide to formally terminate the exchange agreement. But from both sides the necessity and the willingness to dialogize

were expressed. This was also strongly recommended by Dr. Beyers Naudé.

2. In 1974 the PU decided to organise an International Conference of Reformed Scholars at Christian Universities to be held at Potchefstroom in 1975, and invited a.o. the VU to attend. The VU decided to accept the invitation. It wanted to account for its identity as a ecumenical Christian institution in a meeting with its traditional Reformed sister-institutions from North America and South Africa. The PU welcomed the participation by the VU. Soon after this exchange of letters in 1974 it became known that the South African government had restricted the freedom of Dr. Beyers Naudé's Christian Institute. The VU protested sharply to the South African government. The VU delegation to the Potchefstroom conference, mainly consisting of deans and former deans, felt that in attending the conference the VU could not ignore the government attack on Dr. Beyers Naudé and his Institute. Consequently he was invited to join the delegation, which he accepted. Though the VU stressed that it should be free to decide on its delegation, the PU then withdrew the invitation.

3. So the VU did not attend the 1975 conference in Potchefstroom, but it presented a report on the reasons of its absence to the participants. The conference, taking note of the absence of the VU, appealed to VU and PU for dialogue, which took place in Potchefstroom from 2 till 5 March 1976. Dr. Beyers Naudé joined the VU delegation on 4 March.

4. Though it appeared that the PU restricted itself much more than the VU in making official statements on non-university matters, its delegation was very critical with regard to e.g. the government decisions on the Christian Institute. It became also clear that the PU wanted to admit black students, though gradually. From both sides it was concluded that further dialogue would make good sense, especially at personal level. The written report on the dialogue, presented as a public document, however was rejected by the PU rector, who had attended the dialogue but did not act as a spokesman.

5. Consequently the VU concluded that PU was not a reliable partner for dialogue and decided to terminate all relations with PU. It must be kept in mind that between the date of the dialogue and the exchange of letters about the report the Soweto youth revolt and its repression had started. The final overall impression at VU side was that within the PU differences of opinion were much greater than expected, but that the PU could anyway not permit itself the risks of alienation from its apartheid supporting constituency. This explained the double-faced performance of the PU-rector, but it also made further efforts from VU-side meaningless, apart from the disgust about government repression in South Africa.

The Christian Institute was 'banned' by the South African government in 1977.

6. The VU decision to terminate relations with the PU was explicitly characterized as self binding for VU management and administration, but not binding on faculties and individual staff members, in view of the nature of the university organisation. A formal boycott decision with regard to South Africa in general was never taken by the VU.

7. But until after the *Wende* in 1990 relations between the VU and South Africa were very weak, at all levels.

The case of pre-entry science

1976 till 1992 was the period in which the VU was very active and successful in development cooperation with universities in southern Africa outside South Africa. The start was made with the universities in Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho. Other partners became the universities in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi, and the Ministry of Education in Namibia. The disciplines in which cooperation was started, were basic science (pre-entry and teachers training), earth sciences (incl. natural resources and environment), and applied socio-economic research.

For description and analysis I refer to the presentation by Kees van Dongen. In the context of my presentation I will discuss the organisational and managerial problems which had to be solved, especially in the field of the basic science pre-entry projects, which turned out to be a general priority in southern Africa.

The first VU-delegation to the University of Botswana in 1976 was confronted with a 'vicious circle': very weak teaching of science and mathematics in secondary schools, very few first year students sufficiently qualified to be admitted to the Faculty of Science, low output of that faculty for post-graduate training in engineering, medicine and science teaching. The VU was requested: assist us to break that circle, through fast-working, possibly unorthodox interventions. The answer was:

1. Identify talented, potential students for science independent of their scholastic achievement in secondary education.
2. Set up a tough pre-entry curriculum (sciences, mathematics, English and study skills) at the university to train them during at least half a year for admission to the first year in science.
3. Provide good teachers for that training.

Cross-cultural testing specialists at the VU Faculty of Psychology developed a fairly reliable combination of procedures for 1). Cooperation between VU staff members (Faculty of Science) and their Botswana colleagues provided 2), and 3) was done by recruiting a number of dedicated young Dutch science teachers, some with teaching experience in Africa or Indonesia, to work for a number of years at the University of Botswana as VU employees funded under the Dutch government program for university development cooperation. It was their job to implement the curriculum and do the so-called pre-entry training. They also contributed to the upgrading of under-qualified science teachers in rural secondary schools.

This pre-entry project, though relatively expensive, was highly successful from the very beginning: the Faculty of Science in Botswana got its students. Comparable projects were also implemented in Lesotho, Swaziland, and Mozambique, and after 1991 this practice was introduced in South Africa.

Was this what university development cooperation should do? The draft for the first review of the Botswana project for the Dutch funding agency was rather negative: this was no university business. But at the same time a regional review by the highly respected Swedish development cooperation agency SAREC identified the project as exemplary. So funding was continued, for many years.

Although the VU Faculty of Science was involved in the implementation of pre-entry by providing senior staff members who had responsibility as to the content of the project, the administrative side was fully handled by the new VU Office for International Relations (later: Development Cooperation Service; at present: Centre for International Cooperation). But also the science teachers seconded to the partner universities belonged to the staff of that Office, and not to the staff of the Faculty of Science.

Very soon the number of pre-entry projects grew, senior expertise concerning content quality became available within the Office, and the Faculty of Science could not provide enough staff members for project responsibility on the basis of personal experience in development cooperation. Consequently most projects were fully managed and quality-controlled by the Office, which in this way became a specialised extra-faculty structure for specific professional academic work outside the university and outside the country, but work for which the university was responsible concerning organisation, finance, and quality, in good cooperation with the African partner university.

Learning from practice made clear that large scale university development cooperation required an innovation in university work and organisation by setting up a satellite or parasite structure, fully devoted to this new university business and profession, and strongly supported and monitored by university management, a.o. by coordinating with the partner universities through regular visits. Knowing your partner and his situation is necessary for an adequate performance in development cooperation.

What I want to stress in looking at the case of pre-entry science is that a new interface of the university with its outside world in untraditional commitments may require adaptation of its organisation. In the present day understanding of the role of universities in so-called knowledge based societies this seems to me to be an interesting lesson. Since knowledge has also been recognized as vitally important for development (cf. World Bank Report 1998/99, 'Knowledge for Development'), and since developing countries usually are also poor in knowledge institutions, universities in these countries and their partners in countries with a longer knowledge tradition are in the ironical situation that their traditional organisation, which is closely identified with guaranteeing quality, may be in their way to deliver new quality.

Main partners since 1992

In 1992, the landmark year in the VU relations with South Africa, two years after the *Wende* in South Africa, the VU returned to South Africa by starting its cooperation with the University of the North, still one of the main partners of the VU in South Africa. UNIN is situated in the poorest, relatively densely populated, rural northern part of the country. It is a rather big, 'historically black' university, founded under apartheid, serving a large region, struggling and surviving.

Unfortunately the cooperation with UNIN was handicapped by lack of funding under the Dutch government scheme to support the 'new South Africa'.

The first project in the cooperation was, of course, pre-entry science: training each year 150 under-qualified students for admission to the three science-based faculties at UNIN (Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Health Sciences, Agriculture). This project was run from 1992 till 2000, funded by the European Union, and from 2000 onwards funded by UNIN itself. The VU was not allowed to tender for the third phase of the project, starting in 1998. A Finnish team replaced the VU-team, and served the last two years, 1998 till 2000.

The second field of cooperation was law. The VU Law Faculty joined a consortium

of South African law faculties (Potchefstroom, Pretoria, Cape Town) to support the UNIN Law Faculty. In South Africa such cooperation between strong and weak usually generates severe tensions between the partners. It will take a long time before differences in quality will no longer be associated with the history of apartheid. A foreign partner, provided that it has localized its commitment, can assist in balancing this type of national cooperation.

Health sciences was a third field, to build up research capacity through training in the methods of epidemiological research. Health problems were abundantly available in the region of the university, and not much was known about them. University management and organisation became the fourth field of cooperation. The relevance of good governance and institution building has been recognized also in university development cooperation. The VU has included this element in its pattern of expertise for cooperation with its partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

When funding of the VU pre-entry team at UNIN ended in 1998, cooperation in a similar project was started with the University of Pretoria (UP). The VU has a cooperation agreement with UP since 1998 and is still involved in the UP foundation year, training under-qualified black students for studying in the sciences.

The Potchefstroom University became another main partner of the VU in South Africa, transformed as it had been in the context of the 'new South Africa'. Gradually the cooperation was built up with a great variety of activities, e.g. postgraduate training in law, research in economic sciences, consultancy to assist the PU in setting up a new degree program in business mathematics.

The leadership of the PU and the VU communicated closely, and cooperated also in the field of modernization of university organisation and management. Quality improvement in this dimension of university performance has been recognized as a priority across the world. Though national university traditions, systems and contexts differ, professionalisation of organisation and management is a fruitful domain for international cooperation. The Potchefstroom University embarked on an ambitious program of research development, supported by a sophisticated combination of internal and external assessments. In the South African context this was an innovation, for which use was made of experiences at Twente University and the VU.

The VU also started to prepare cooperation with the predominantly black University of the North-West in Mafikeng, as a corollary of the cooperation with Potchefstroom. In 2003 a government decision merged the universities in Potchefstroom and Mafikeng to the multi-campus North-West University (NWU). The VU has offered to assist this university in its capacity building program. NWU will now be the obvious partner of the VU, continuing the tradition of cooperation with the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.

A fourth partner to be mentioned is Stellenbosch University, with which the VU has a cooperation agreement. The projects presented in our conference by Professors Schutte, Martin, and Van der Beek are examples of cooperation between Stellenbosch University and the VU.

Pattern of VU relations with South Africa

I will not try to take stock of the present-day contacts, projects and partnerships of the VU in South Africa. As can be expected in a strong Dutch university with an old South African connection, they are many and varied, most of them maintained by academic colleagues in the context of research as an international enterprise, but very often also connected with specific South African topics. South Africa is a country with a strong academic tradition and an abundance of opportunities for interesting research. It is also a country that attracts Dutch students for their semesters of internationalisation.

But, additional to the present-day customary academic relations between the Netherlands and South Africa, the VU pattern of relations with South Africa has some specific characteristics, reflecting old (e.g. the relation with Potchefstroom) and new (development cooperation) VU tradition. The VU cooperates with 'historically black' and still rather weak universities. The VU experience in modernization of organisation, management and quality assessment has provided an important field for cooperation with South Africa, since South African universities are under heavy pressure: less budget and more students, more equity in the composition of staff and student body, quality improvement, research relevant for the problems of the country, etc. When this analysis of the specific VU pattern is correct, there is no indication that it will become outdated in the coming years. South Africa's problems, also in the field of knowledge, are simply overwhelming.

Maintaining this specific VU pattern involves not only VU people at faculty level,

but also the Centre for International Cooperation and specialists from administration departments. It is supported at university executive level. South African universities are faced with a complex combination of modernisation demands, on the one hand in line with what universities have to go through all over the world, on the other hand the consequences of the 'new South Africa'. The VU cooperation pattern seems to be a good match for this situation. And so the well-known VU slogan applies: *Noblesse oblige!*

Epilogue

The VU commitment to development cooperation emerged in the sixties, at a time of no concern about strategy, mission and quality of universities in the sophisticated sense of the last twenty years. It was primarily a commitment in line with what people in our country, outside and inside the university, felt to be an urgent moral obligation. It was also supposed to make new sense for a university like the VU as a Christian institution. Development cooperation has become part of the professional identity of the VU and plays an important role in its present-day relations with South Africa.

The VU performance with regard to South Africa since 1972, including breaks and reorientations, is too specific to derive general university policy lines, but it does agree with what I consider to be good modern university practice:

- * quality of university performance requires taking into account a plurality of norms and values, according to university tradition and scientific knowledge paradigms, but also according to societal functions of knowledge;
- * this plurality must be integrated, which can be only be done in specific contexts, usually in a rather casuistic way;
- * innovation remains the main issue.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Dr. Jan Donner, Dr. Wim Noomen, Prof. Dr. Gerrit Schutte, and Dr. Gerard Thijs I could improve on earlier versions of this paper.

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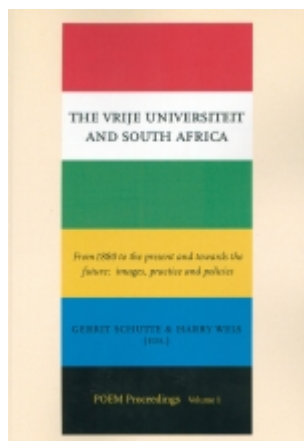
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The Vrije Universiteit And South Africa ~ Can 'New' Meet 'Old'? VU-South Africa, 1976-Present: Development Cooperation In Southern Africa



Introduction

In his paper, Brinkman provides an overview of the roots of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam's (VU) development cooperation activities in southern Africa in the second half of the 1970s. Upon cancelling the cooperation agreement with Potchefstroom University in 1976, the VU decided to develop links with other universities in the Southern African region. The idea was to aim at universities that were playing a clear role in the development of black leadership for the future of

the sub-continent. As 'black' universities inside South Africa were also heavily influenced by 'apartheid' policies, the choice was made to look towards universities in surrounding countries. The first cooperation links were established with the universities in Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho. As Brinkman also indicates, these new links fitted well into the new Dutch national policies for development cooperation, as they emerged during Jan Pronk's first period as Minister for Development Cooperation in the 1970s. Pronk established a new funding channel for cooperation links between Dutch universities and universities in developing countries.

Brinkman identifies some themes in the history of the relationship between the VU and South Africa:

- * The flourishing of development cooperation activities at the VU, particularly, but not exclusively, in southern Africa;
- * The emergence of particular focal areas for development cooperation at the VU based on the needs of partner institutions;
- * The return of the VU to South Africa after the Wende in the early 1990s;
- * 'New' meeting 'old' in South Africa (and vice versa), in terms both of themes and of partner institutions;
- * The challenges posed to universities because of the emergence of the 'knowledge society' and the consequences this may have for a traditional academic organisation.

The purpose of this paper is twofold:

1. To illustrate Brinkman's themes in one particular focal area of development cooperation at the VU, namely basic science education;
2. To raise some fundamental issues regarding development cooperation in Dutch universities, the position of such cooperation at the VU, and its role in South Africa.

In the Netherlands, both the position of universities and the development cooperation policies have undergone fundamental changes over the decades since the 1970s, and particularly in the 1990s. The question raised here is whether 'new' can really still meet 'old', and what would be needed for that to happen.

Basic science education is only one of the focal areas in development cooperation at the VU. Other prominent fields of cooperation are in natural resource management (soil and water conservation, land reform, community based natural resource management, water harvesting, and land husbandry), in university

management development, and in the use of ICT in higher education institutions. In natural resource management, strong links also exist in South Africa, particularly with the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape. In university management development, there are cooperation links in South Africa with the University of the North and with North West University, and with the University of Pretoria (1999-2001). Some work in this field has also been done at the University of the Free State.

The choice of this paper for basic science education is explained by the fact that it has been the largest individual area of work over the decades, and that it most clearly demonstrates a few of the fundamental tensions regarding the relationship between universities and development cooperation.

The problem of basic science education for developing universities

The output of developing universities is often skewed towards the humanities and social sciences, whilst the need for manpower and knowledge products in natural sciences, engineering, medicine, etc. is often much more acute. Apart from the expense and expertise required to develop these exact fields, an underlying reason for this phenomenon is often also the lack of qualified candidates to take up a study in these fields. As Brinkman indicates in his paper, there is often a 'vicious cycle' in educational systems of underperformance in the exact subjects: not enough students enter higher education institutions due to poor education in schools; this causes particularly that not enough well-qualified secondary school teachers are produced in higher education, which leads to further poor education in schools. Basic science education interventions stem from this problem. Although universities are not directly responsible for secondary education, and the original project plans were also critically received for funding under the university cooperation umbrella, it is clear that universities have a direct interest here, both in the number and in the quality of incoming students, as well as in the number and quality of teachers produced.

Different types of programmes addressing this 'vicious cycle' problem in various ways have been developed over the years in different countries and institutional contexts. The choice of programme has always been dependent on the particular circumstances, wishes and possibilities of partner institutions or governments. The following main types can be distinguished:

- * Foundation programmes for students entering higher education institutions to remedy their knowledge and skill deficiencies and to give them a solid

preparation for their further studies in the exact fields;

- * Reform of pre-service teacher qualification programmes, including the development of special programmes for already serving teachers who lack appropriate background and qualifications;
- * In-service support programmes for teachers in schools to assist them in improving their teaching.

In the following paragraph a brief overview of examples of different programmes in the southern African region will be provided.

Some basic science education projects in the southern African region

Programs and countries where the VU has rendered support to the design and implementation of basic science schemes are:

- * Foundation programmes for students entering higher education: Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Zambia;
- * Reform of pre-service teacher qualification programmes: Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe;
- * In-service support programmes for teachers: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland.

Within the framework of this brief paper we cannot discuss all these interventions in detail.

VU basic science education activities in South Africa since the early 1990s

Following the request from the European Union in 1990 to develop a basic science education programme in newly independent Namibia, a similar request was received for South Africa in 1992. This took the specific form of developing a foundation programme at a traditionally disadvantaged university, the University of the North, aimed at improving its intake in science programmes. The problem of the lack of properly qualified candidates from disadvantaged communities, particularly in the exact sciences, was and is widespread in South Africa as the quality of secondary education leaves much to be desired in a large majority of schools. The Foundation programme at the University of the North (UNIFY: University of the North Foundation Year) was meant to address this problem in this particular institution, but at the same time to form an exemplary programme that other institutions in South Africa might follow. In his paper, Brinkman describes the success of this programme, in which five VU staff members were involved for a number of years and which has now been fully institutionalised in

the University of the North.

Direct replication of the UNIFY programme was not easy to realise. Many South African institutions started to address the problem in their own ways during the 1990s. Also, the continuous uncertainties surrounding the higher education landscape in South Africa and the position of historically different types of institutions made a concerted national approach impossible.

In 2000, the University of Pretoria (UP) approached the VU for assistance in setting up a UNIFY-type programme, now called the UPFY programme (University of Pretoria Foundation Year). Although not a historically disadvantaged institution, the University of Pretoria decided to transform its student intake and admit a much larger percentage of students from disadvantaged communities, and also saw the need to address the specific problems in the sciences through a foundation programme. UP had its own financial resources and contracted the VU directly without an external funding agency being involved.

In 2004, a new national funding channel for foundation-type programmes was opened by the National Department of Education in South Africa, following the new funding arrangements for universities, which are outcome- and formula-based. In this new formula-based funding framework little room exists for extra activities to address historical inequalities; hence the need for separate subsidies. Universities can submit proposals for a maximum of two programmes per institution for special subsidy. North West University (the recent merger between Potchefstroom University and University of the North West in Mafikeng) submitted proposals and received funding for its Foundation Programme at the Mafikeng campus (both sciences and commerce). Presently [October 2004] discussions are ongoing about establishing a cooperative link with VU (see also below) for the development of this programme.

In science teacher education and in-service support to teachers the volume of VU activities in South Africa has been less pronounced, largely because of difficulties to attract external funding. The reasons for this can be found in the peculiarities of both the South African context and the funding channels, particularly the Dutch ones. The latter are more fully addressed in the next paragraph. With regard to the former, the following parameters are important to note:

* Until recently, teacher education in South Africa was largely the responsibility of special teacher education colleges, directly administered by the Provinces, and offering Certificate and Diploma level programmes. Although universities also

produced some degree-level teachers for the upper end of secondary schools, their contribution was relatively small, particularly in the sciences.

* The Teacher College sector was of generally poor quality and produced far too many teachers in the 1990s. This sparked the decision taken by the end of 1990s to close all Colleges and/or merge them with the University sector. However, the responsibility for schools and teachers rests with the Provincial Departments of Education, whilst the universities are relatively autonomous and directly governed through the National Department of Education. This created coordination problems between teacher education and the school system.

Even at present, few new teachers are absorbed in the schools, although it can be predicted on the basis of demographic projections that a large shortage of teachers will quickly emerge in the coming years. The situation is particularly serious in the sciences and mathematics field, with many teachers lacking an appropriate background. Labour regulations and cost containment, however, prevent large-scale hiring of new teachers. There is an urgent need for large-scale upgrading of teachers in the system, but an appropriate policy framework is still under development at national level. Universities do mount programmes for teacher upgrading, but coordination and funding mechanisms with the employer (that is, the Provincial Departments) are not properly developed as of yet.

Some VU cooperation activities in science teacher education in South Africa did take place after 1995, following a large international conference in Windhoek, Namibia in December of that year. That conference brought together for the first time science educators from southern and eastern Africa (all SADC countries) with those from South Africa, to discuss the problems of improving science education in secondary schools. Following the conference, the University of the North asked the VU for support in developing the domain of science teacher education in its Faculties of Science and Education, also on the basis of the good experiences with the UNIFY programme. This gave rise to the UNITE programme (University of the North Initiative in Teacher Education) that is still active with support of the VU Association (the owner and governing body of the university that provides support to some development cooperation activities in South Africa). However, external support to this initiative could not be acquired because funding channels either concentrated on working through government departments and not universities, prioritised primary education above secondary education, or worked with selected institutions only.

One project in science education that was initiated in 2002 is important to note here. It concerns assistance to the Department of Education in North West Province in order to develop an organisational unit and a strategy to strengthen mathematics, science and technology education in the Province. Links with North West University are also being established within this project. The project will be more fully described below when examining the case of North West Province, but before doing so, the changing Dutch policy and funding frameworks for development cooperation will be discussed, particularly where they affect cooperation in South Africa.

Changing policy frameworks for education development cooperation

- * Bilateral cooperation through the Dutch Embassy. No structural involvement of Dutch expertise, but particularly funding with contracted South African expertise. Emphasis is laid on basic education.
- * Joint Financing Programme for Cooperation in Higher Education (MHO). Succeeded earlier institutional cooperation programmes in 1993. Only one institution per country was selected to benefit from the programme. In South Africa this was the Technikon Northern Gauteng (on the border of North West Province, mostly drawing students from this province). Mainly supported by Dutch universities for professional education, which offer technikon-type programmes in the Netherlands.
- * The Programme for Cooperation between Dutch Universities of Professional Education and Educational Institutions in Developing Countries for the benefit of Primary Education (HOB). Since the mid-1990s; aimed at support from higher education to teacher education for basic education. Emphasis also on primary education; only Dutch universities for professional education are allowed to participate. In South Africa, cooperation in the COMETDS
- * (Cooperative Model for Educator Training Development and Support) programme in North West Province. The VU involvement in these programmes in South Africa has been minimal, but the VU's merger partner, Windesheim polytechnic, is participating in both. The Technikon Northern Gauteng project and the COMETDS programme have both been externally evaluated by a VU/CIS staff member.
- * CENESA programme for Cooperation in Education between the Netherlands and South Africa. Funding comes from two Dutch ministries: Education and Development Cooperation. CENESA was originally meant to be a more or less

symmetrical exchange programme for educational expertise between the two countries (system-to-system exchange, no particular role for universities). However, after initiation at the national level failed to produce results (national level: largely policy-making, provincial level: responsible for implementation), the programme shifted its focus to three provinces with large capacity problems, namely Limpopo, North West and Kwazulu Natal, thereby partly defeating the idea of more symmetrical exchange. The VU project in North West Province is part of this programme, but also other projects in the development of Curriculum 2005 and vocational education have been active in this province. As the CENESA framework is intended as a system-to-system exchange, VU/CIS is implementing this project together with a few Dutch partners that are active in education development both in the Netherlands and internationally, notably the Education Faculty at the University of Twente and the National Centre for School Improvement in Utrecht (APS).

The overall picture shows different channels and different projects without proper coherence and without cooperation between them. At present, all above funding frameworks are in the process of disappearing, except for the bilateral one.

The new NPT programme for support to post-secondary education and training that started operating early 2003, succeeds and merges the former separate programmes and has a wider sector focus. In South Africa this programme will also become active, although its focus is still unknown. In the Netherlands Programme for Institutional Strengthening of Post-secondary Education and Training Capacity (NPT), the Dutch universities can still be strongly involved, although largely in a consultancy-type role. Some new characteristics of the programme as compared to its predecessor are:

- * The NPT is not exclusively aimed at higher education in the strict sense, but at any type of post-secondary education.
- * The programme does not concentrate on a limited number of institutes in the South but projects are spread out over many institutes.
- * Any Dutch institute, organisation or firm that can offer the required knowledge may participate in projects.
- * Projects are awarded to Dutch participants by way of public tendering.

These new characteristics imply that in fact the idea of cooperative links between institutions has disappeared; tender procedures have replaced earlier modalities of joint project development. The type of projects that are currently being

formulated in the new NPT framework usually require the formation of alliances with different partners on the Dutch side in order to mobilise the diversity of expertise that is requested for individual projects.

This trend raises a number of critical questions for the future of development cooperation in higher education and the involvement of Dutch universities:

- * Can the link between development cooperation and academic cooperation be maintained?
- * Will the opportunities for southern universities to get connected to the worldwide academia be reduced?
- * Who 'owns' the project on the Dutch side, if multiple parties are involved?
- * Why would a Dutch university invest time and money to develop and maintain projects and cooperative links in a framework that stimulates rather loose consultancy arrangements and temporary consortia of partners?
- * Why would a Dutch university invest time and money in the expertise development that is required to work effectively in challenging development contexts?

In the 'knowledge society' it is said that working across traditional boundaries of disciplines and types of organisations is the norm. Innovation stems increasingly from problem-oriented research and development in the real world and applied contexts, rather than traditional discipline-oriented modes. Development problems in the developing world, such as problems of educational development in school systems, can be considered as such real world problem contexts, fit for research and development activities across traditional boundaries between disciplines and organisations. This requires, however, that funding for research and development work becomes part and parcel of development cooperation activities. In international circles, such as in the World Bank, this is being realised more and more. VU/CIS, for example, has been involved in recent years in major study assignments on problems and promising practices in Secondary Education in Africa, commissioned by the World Bank. In Dutch education development cooperation programmes, however, this is not yet visible. Rather, demand-driven consultancy in a competitive environment is the norm at this moment.

If the 'new' of problem-oriented development cooperation is to meet the 'old' of academic work and expertise development, new arrangements are necessary, not only at the institutional and inter-institutional level, but also at the national policy level.

The case of North West Province

In more than one way, North West Province in South Africa can be considered as a microcosm of 'new' meeting 'old', particularly for the VU:

- * Dutch bilateral development cooperation has selected North West Province to get special attention and, as explained above, different projects through different funding channels are operating in this province. VU/CIS is directly involved in one of them, namely in mathematics and science education with the provincial Department of Education.
- * The former University of Potchefstroom is located in this new province. As described by Brinkman, the VU re-established contacts with Potchefstroom after 1992.
- * Initial contacts with the University of the North West in Mmabatho (the former University of Bophutatswana, UNIWEST) have also been established in recent years, both with university management and in basic science education. The university initiated a Foundation Programme in 2000 and expressed interest in the VU's experience in this area.
- * From 1 January 2004, the University of Potchefstroom and UNIWES have merged to become the new multi-campus North West University (NWU). This merger is part of the national restructuring of the entire higher education sector. The VU, in the person of Brinkman, has been supporting the preparation of the merger. In 2004 the VU has started to support NWU in matters of organisational and management development with financial support by the VU Association.
- * Activities in the field of science education are being initiated at present, for the foundation programme as well as for science teacher education.

The situation with regard to basic science education in Potchefstroom and Mafikeng is quite different and provides a telling picture on 'new' and 'old' in the South African context.

- * The Foundation Programme in Mafikeng is large in student numbers, but poorly resourced with regard to staff, equipment and facilities. It is not well embedded in the institution and lacks a clear direction and institutional contacts with the main faculties and departments, which it should feed with incoming students. After completing the foundation programme many students leave the institution for other higher education institutions.
- * The Potchefstroom campus does not have very many formerly disadvantaged students as of yet. Most of its programmes are still taught in Afrikaans, which

means that it is not very attractive for a large majority of students from North West Province who are Tswana-speaking with English as a second language. Students from the Mafikeng foundation programme could study science-based programmes in Potchefstroom, but language forms the main barrier.

* In Potchefstroom a strong group of science educators exists in the Faculty of Science who have offered in-service teacher upgrading programmes over the last ten years, mainly for teachers from North West Province. These programmes are part-time and are offered in English.

* In Mafikeng, the Faculty of Education also offers teacher-upgrading programmes in the sciences and is even involved in an ambitious special project for the delivery of such programmes at a distance, with assistance of ICT-technology. However, in Mafikeng only one science and mathematics educator is present in the Faculty of Education, who is hardly involved in the upgrading programmes and has only some temporary part-time staff to complement his own work.

The case of North West Province and North West University provides a picture of 'new' meeting 'old' in the new South Africa. It is clear that the transformation of systems and institutions is not an overnight affair. The implementation of 'rational' decisions like merging the two universities in the province requires a lengthy process of development before a viable institution emerges for the long term.

The question may be raised which role a foreign partner, in this case the VU, could play in such a process, particularly in terms of development cooperation. Development cooperation is dealing with external assistance in capacity building, in terms of both expertise and funding. However, neither finance nor expertise are particularly lacking in South Africa. And in terms of the criteria for official development assistance (ODA), South Africa does not qualify for development cooperation. In this context, development cooperation with South Africa is to a large degree a political choice, justified by South Africa's position in the sub-region and the continent and by the need for transition to a new social and economic situation in the country. And in the Dutch case, also propelled by the idea of traditional ties between the two countries.

The need for transformation and transition is still all too apparent in South Africa, but the nature of the problems is quickly changing. The historical divisions along racial lines are changing towards deep divisions between a small, middle-class,

well-off, and employed minority and a large under-employed and poor majority. Lack of educational opportunities definitely plays a crucial part in the development problems of South Africa, but this does not refer that much to problems in higher education. The participation rate in higher education in South Africa is relatively high (around 20 per cent of age groups) for its development level. Non-absorption of graduates in labour markets is already occurring or will occur soon, even in sciences and engineering. South Africa faces difficult choices in its development strategy, for example between stimulating labour-intensive low-technology markets versus service-oriented high-technology markets. These choices, however, are largely political and it is questionable whether development cooperation has a role to play in them, in other words whether in development cooperation 'old' can still meet 'new'.

By way of conclusion

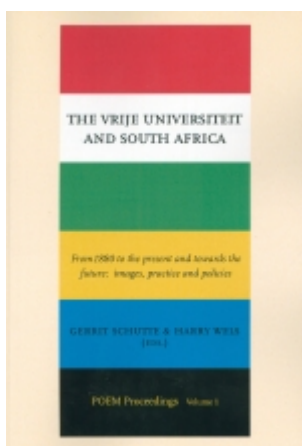
At this point in time no definitive answer can be given to the question raised here. We have pointed at a number of developments that are ongoing:

- * The role of universities within South African development is changing. The higher education system as a whole is now being geared much more towards the needs of the entire student population, black and white, and also more to the development needs of the large poor sections of the society.
- * The role of Dutch development cooperation, and more specifically cooperation in higher education, is changing in South Africa. This is due to the fact that the country does not meet the formal criteria for development assistance and the fact that human and financial resources for the further development of higher education are not really lacking in the country itself.
- * The new Dutch NPT programme, the main funding source for Dutch universities active in development cooperation in higher education, is changing the role of the Dutch institutes in that kind of cooperation.
- * As a consequence of this last point, the character of the relation between VU/CIS and its partners in South Africa is also changing.

Each one of these developments shows intrinsic tensions. (For instance, two years after the start of its implementation, objections against the set-up of the NPT programme are growing in number, and the need for new adjustments is becoming clearer.) These tensions make the outcome of the developments unpredictable at this moment. One conclusion, however, seems to be obvious: the 'new' Dutch university development cooperation, set in a problem-oriented

framework aimed primarily at local capacity building, does not seem to have much of a real reason for being in South Africa. Although barely starting at this moment in time, it may not last very long as the conditions in the country do no longer clearly justify externally financed development support to the higher education sector. (The same in fact holds true for official development aid at large.) And as explained above, this new type of development cooperation in higher education does, unfortunately, not offer clear possibilities for the 'old' twinning of academic with development cooperation. At the same time academic cooperation between staff from different VU faculties and their colleagues from a range of South African universities is flourishing more than even before. It seems rather obvious that this is where the future for the VU cooperation with South Africa lies in the longer term.

The Vrije Universiteit And South Africa ~ A 'New' History For A 'New' South Africa



Historians need not worry about a lack of work in the future. There is always a past in the future. And their duty is to study that past, *sine ira et studio*, as Tacitus put it nearly 2000 years ago. The study of history, as my colleague and eminent historian Van Deursen likes to say, is to do justice to the dead, our fellow men, and at the same time to always be aware of the Biblical warning: you will be judged by the same measure. Historiography is not about blaming the past for our contemporary problems, nor about finding arguments there to bolster our political or religious policies and philosophies. Nevertheless, everybody agrees that the knowledge of history is useful. A society without history is like an individual with loss of memory, walking like a blind person on unknown territory, doomed to fall step after step. Everybody also accepts that historical knowledge changes; history is a never ending debate, as Pieter Geyl has

taught. So we do understand and accept that a 'new' South Africa needs a 'new' history. Is there a place in that new history for the Netherlands, for Dutch historiography, for the historians of the Vrije Universiteit (VU)?

In the old South Africa, there was a place for the Dutch historians, a modest but constructive place. Cape history cannot be studied without the Dutch archives, nor without knowledge and understanding of Dutch history, society and culture; the same holds for important aspects of the history of the Boer Republics and the history of Afrikaner religion and culture (literature etc.). Three generations of Afrikaner academic historians either originated from the Netherlands or had studied there - to start with the first generation: Godee Molsbergen and the Flemish Blommaert, and later Dirk Bax; next, the generation of J.P. van der Merwe, F.J. du Toit and F.A. van Jaarsveld, and then the third generation: Hermann Giliomee, Ben Liebenberg, Piet van der Schyff and Fransjohan Pretorius, to name but a few. All this means, additionally, that in the old South Africa there was a modest place for a small number of Dutch historians, as a promotor, colleague, or critic. And sometimes as a supplier of commemorative articles, such as VU historians A.A. van Schelven and H. Smitskamp in 1952 - and myself too, recently, publishing an article on the relations between Abraham Kuyper and president Paul Kruger in *Die Kerkblad*.

To be honest, the department of history at the VU, founded in 1917, never made an important contribution to the Dutch-South African cooperation. Van Schelven, professor at the VU between 1917 and 1945, was actively pro-Boer, representing the VU at the board of the Chair for Afrikaans language, literature, history and culture at the University of Amsterdam from 1933 onwards; he even paid a five weeks' visit to South Africa in 1933. His successor H. Smitskamp was also interested in South Africa. He was a member of the NZAV - later on succeeded by the economic historian W.J. Wieringa. One of Smitskamp's books was published in Afrikaans, and he even gave courses on South African history. M.C. Smit, who taught medieval history and above all philosophy of history and *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, made a lecturing tour through South Africa in the 1960s. All of them had contacts with some South African colleagues - I know a story about Smitskamp, walking through Amsterdam with the Stellenbosch historian P.J. ('Piet Vark') van der Merwe in 1952 - and there was a small number of South African historians in their classes, but most went to Leiden or to the University of Amsterdam.

My own initial contacts with South African history date back 40 years, when I was

preparing myself for a stay as a student in Pretoria to do a research year for my MA thesis. An Utrecht-trained historian in colonial history, I was and still am fascinated by South African society and its developments. Since then, I have discovered and also tried to apply the following three contributions to South African historiography:

- * Writing contributions on South African history, to place it under a wider horizon. South African historiography tends to be parochial, placing the Cape in the centre of the world. My perhaps most influential study (at least: my most widely *read* study, for it was for a while included in the curriculum of many universities!) is a chapter on social stratification in the 17th and 18th century Dutch Cape, published in Elphick and Giliomee, *The shaping of South African society* (1979). More recent contributions on the same subject include articles 'Between Amsterdam and Batavia' (*Kronos* 1998), 'Ad fontes. Over Samuel Elsevier, zijn vrouwen en zijn slaven' (*Historia* 2000) and 'Neerlands India. De wereld van de VOC: calvinistisch en multicultureel' (*Historia* 2002).

- * Writing critical reviews of the Yearbook of South African History and many other studies on South African history. Some of these studies are impressive, many are solid but not very stimulating nor well written, some are evidently disappointing.

- * Training a new generation of historians, Dutch as well as South African. I was happy to be given the opportunity to be the promotor of Bart de Graaff; he studied the *Mythe van de stamverwantschap* (1993), and *De Kaap de Goede Hoop. Een Nederlandse Vestigingsnederzetting, [Stellenbosch] 1680-1730* (1999), by Ad Biewenga. Biewenga's research has to be compared with other products of mine out of predilection for the history of the Dutch East Indian Company such as Niemijer, *Calvinisme en koloniale stadscultuur, Batavia*

- * 1619-1725 (1996), *My Indisch Sion* (2002), and my two source publications on late 18th century Cape history, the *Swellengrebel Correspondence* (1982) and Hendrik Cloete, *Groot Constantia and the VOC* (2003).

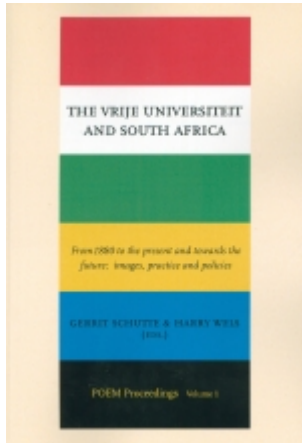
I have also stimulated and trained some representatives of the younger and newer generation of South Africa. In 1984, I was extramural promotor to Wayne Hendricks, the first doctor in history at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Since 1999 I have been a member of the TANAP committee, the Leiden

University/National Archives VOC project, funded by the Dutch government, UNESCO, etc. My specific task is to serve as a handy boy for the archival cooperation research and publication project, and - an even more specific part of the project- to find and train a new generation of South African scholars, specialists in the history of the VOC period. I will not bother you with the problems I have encountered within that framework. I am proud that out of the small group of South African participants, one, R.S. Viljoen, a former UWC student and a lecturer at UNISA, last year obtained his doctor's degree at Leiden University, with a thesis about the fascinating story of Jan Paerl, a Swellendam Khoi prophet and rebel who predicted the end of the world, on the 28th of October, 1788.

It is a privilege to be coaching and counselling these young South African historians, as it is a pleasure to organise bilateral congresses for historians from the Netherlands and South Africa, like in 1997, 2000, 2002 and - hopefully - in 2006 again.

Moreover, at the moment academic historians in South Africa are struggling to survive. University careers are scarce and insecure. The traditional contacts with the Netherlands have been seriously hampered due to the intellectual boycott imposed by the Netherlands up to 1990, the competition from the better South African universities and the attractive offers for stipendia etc. from many other countries. Also, some people harbour suspicions about the old colonial Dutch and especially Christian-National Kuyperian Vrije Universiteit. Is there really a place in this South African future for VU historians?

The Vrije Universiteit And South Africa ~ A 'New' Literature



Mister Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this important conference. I have been asked to tell you something about my own experience of teaching South African literature at Dutch universities, but also to give an indication of what South African literature departments might be expecting from the Vrije Universiteit (VU) and other Dutch universities at this point in time. This I do as someone who is South African born and bred and who taught at a South African

university for 16 years. Every year I go back to South Africa at least once and I have many friends who are also colleagues in Afrikaans and Nederlands departments in South Africa. For various reasons they are suffering severe cutbacks. In the Humanities Faculties at Dutch universities a similar pinch is being felt.

What strategies should be developed in beleaguered times? In searching for an answer I would like to draw our attention for a minute to the rich tradition of so-called *extra muros* departments of Dutch all over the world: Barcelona, Budapest, Goa, Helsinki, Jakarta, Johannesburg, Jerusalem, London, Los Angeles, Münster, Oldenburg, Olomouc, Oporto, Oslo, Paris, Stellenbosch, Semarang, Strasburg, St Petersburg, Vienna – to name but a few cities where Dutch literature is taught. The differentiating terms *intra muros* (which refers to the universities in the ‘centre’ – the Netherlands and Belgium) and *extra muros* (the term refers to the universities outside the walls of the centre; on the ‘margins’) are soundly entrenched in the workings of the Society of Netherlandic Studies. The same has recently become true for the teaching of South African literature. English literature by authors such as Coetzee and Fugard has of course been part of English colonial curricula for many years and I will mainly focus on the new post-apartheid status of Afrikaans literature. It is taught *intra muros* at South African universities of course and since 1990 *extra muros* in many different countries all over the world: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, the USA, Austria, Germany, Russia, Belgium and the Netherlands, to name but a few.

My reference to muros, to walls, has inspired my thinking along Trojan horse lines. I believe that we must be innovative in schemes to get inside the walls of learning but once we are there, to look out again, over the wall, to enable us to invite each other in, so that in the end there are no walls any more. Let me now

say something about the linguistic and academic relationship between Afrikaans and Dutch.

Afrikaans, as you know, is a maverick, a wayward daughter of 17th century Dutch. In South Africa the mother was held in high esteem during many years. When I was a student and lecturer at Stellenbosch and Wits, and even now still at many of the ten odd Afrikaans and Nederlands departments in South Africa, a fifty-fifty Dutch and Afrikaans literature course is offered. Afrikaans and Nederlands departments often advertise themselves as offering students a *venster op Europa*, a 'room with a view on Europe'. The reverse situation never existed, and was practically unthinkable especially during the 1970s and 1980s. In the Netherlands of those years very few lecturers and even fewer students were interested in Afrikaans literature, or should I say, very few *dared* to be interested because of the cultural boycott against South Africa. There were a few exceptions. In some institutes of Comparative Literature, for example in Nijmegen, Hans Ester did his utmost to include Afrikaans literature in his courses. In Amsterdam a special chair of Afrikaans literature existed at the University of Amsterdam where professor N.P van Wyk Louw and his successors taught Afrikaans literature. These *doctoraal* lectures were, however, mainly attended by South Africans who came to study at the feet of the guru Louw. During the early 1980s the Dutch cultural and economic boycott of South Africa finally forced the Afrikaans section to close down.

The close linguistic relationship between Dutch and Afrikaans is of course the major reason why in the past many Afrikaans postgraduates, especially scholars of Afrikaans literature, came to study here in the Netherlands. My position today is that of someone who studied and then continued to live in the Netherlands for ten years before I went to teach Afrikaans literature at Wits. I was especially interested in teaching students more about the world outside by way of Dutch literature. Now that I have been appointed to teach Modern Dutch Literature at the VU I realise that I use all opportunities possible to teach South African literature. I need not sneak it into the curricula but am invited by colleagues to do this. This inside-out position suits me.

So, let me tell you something about the life and times of a Trojan horse. My surname is one of the most common in the Netherlands. This means that no student searching the VU website for Dutch literature courses would for a minute suspect that a lecturer by the name of Jansen who teaches Modern Dutch poetry

or a Masters course on the role of Amsterdam in recent Dutch novels will not herself be Dutch. The moment I start lecturing, however, I always notice some bewilderment. Even though I came to Holland for the first time thirty years ago to study in Utrecht and stayed there and here in Amsterdam for ten years before going back to South Africa in 1984, my accent still is a dead giveaway. Students suddenly wonder whether they are or whether I am in the wrong classroom. Instead of having another Dutch lecturer with the most boring name possible, they realize that I am an exotic Jansen from a far and distant world. This has its benefits.

It will cost me too much fancy footwork to maintain the Trojan horse metaphor I started off with. The metaphor was inspired by a complex history of exclusion and inclusion, also by the operative period of ten years of democratic freedom which is celebrated this year [2004]. What I want to say, in short, is that I can nowadays move around freely in two Dutch universities without the necessity of entering in devious Trojan horse style. That means that I have access to the hearts and minds of Dutch students via Afrikaans literature without any problem. At the VU it means that I have the freedom of adding Afrikaans literary texts to Dutch courses. I can for example read poems by Antjie Krog based on Marlene Dumas' paintings in the course on *beeldgedichten* which we offer as a minor in the faculty. In the series of lectures called *Leestafel* each of the Dutch literature lecturers lecture on a favourite book. My colleagues ask me to choose a novel by an Afrikaans author, someone such as Etienne van Heerden, Jeanne Goossen, Marlene van Niekerk or John Miles – a novel which can be read in Afrikaans or in Dutch translation. In the course on post-colonial literature I present a South African case study.

The chair which Louw held during the 1950s has recently been re-instated in the form of an 'endowed' chair. I am honoured to be the first to hold this *bijzondere leerstoel Zuid-Afrikaanse literatuur* in post-apartheid times at the University of Amsterdam. I combine this part-time function with my full-time job at the VU and my main concern is to attract as many Dutch students as possible to my courses which focus on Afrikaans literature. I include some books by English authors as well, because to my mind the 'natural' language link between the Netherlands and South Africa should not be used in an exclusive *stamverwantschap* way, but as one of the stepping stones between the two countries.

I have taught three semester courses since I started at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). The interest has grown tremendously. During the first year,

that was 2002, I presented a short course on Boer War literature written both in Afrikaans and Dutch, seeing that it was the 100 years' anniversary of the ending of the War. This lecture series was attended by six students. The next year I did a course which I called *Buitebeentjies* ('mavericks') – famous South African novel characters'. Twelve students attended. This past year my course was called *O wye en droewe land. Die belang van landskap in Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde*. ('O wide and tragic country. The importance of landscape in South African literature'). Thirty students attended and I had to change the format from a tutorial to lectures. During this coming year the series is called *Totsiens Kaapstad* ('Goodbye Cape Town') – the title of a poem which Breyten Breytenbach wrote when he was an exile in Paris. I concentrate on migration stories: everything from the 'Jim comes to Jo'burg'-stories to work by political exiles, poems by Louw, Eybers and Breytenbach, novels written by modern-day expat South Africans living in cities such as New York, Glasgow, Melbourne.

The interest in my courses at the VU and the UvA as well as the interest in courses offered by Dutch colleagues in Nijmegen or Leiden show a clear pattern: the position of 'classical' Dutch literature can most definitely be enhanced by adding Afrikaans and also some English South African literature to the curriculum.

During the 1980s my presence in a classroom at the VU would have been cause for great alarm. The thought that a white Afrikaans-speaking South African from the barbarous margins of faraway apartheid land had entered the monolithic and politically correct safe centre of the faculty of arts of a Dutch university would have inspired legitimate protest. Nowadays Dutch students hardly know what apartheid was. Their parents during the 1970s and 1980s did not dare eat an Outspan orange or look at a protea. Nowadays South Africa has become a popular holiday destination. The students' grandparents might have said 'See Naples and die'. They now say: 'See Cape Town and boogie'. South Africa is cool. Dutch students are very much interested in going there. To travel but also to learn.

This travelling and learning can start in Dutch classrooms. And it can be even more interesting with not only the odd exotic Jansen teaching them, but also with some South African students in the class. In fact I want to make a request on behalf of South African universities: that as much financial opportunity as possible be created to enable South African students to do part of their Masters courses here.

During August I attended the Family Meeting of the International Office at the Stellenbosch University on behalf of the VU. It was a most hospitable and generous invitation. We met many Dutch students loving their time in Stellenbosch. But Stellenbosch urgently requested all representatives from Dutch universities to make it easier for South African students to also attend Dutch universities for a semester. They ask for more generosity with regards to the waiving of not only class fees but a part of accommodation costs. They ask for pressure on the authorities organising student visas. This is urgently needed to enable student exchange and learning processes between South Africa and the Netherlands to be mutual.

To sum up the present situation, here are a few bottom-lines:

1. During the pre-1994 period all literature written by any other white Afrikaans author besides political figures such as Breytenbach and Brink and the grand old lady Elisabeth Eybers (she has lived in Amsterdam since 1961) was a no-go area for Dutch readers and academics.
2. The reason for this was of course South Africa's atrocious apartheid system and the Dutch cultural and academic boycott of South Africa which led to the fear of being ostracised when seen even looking at books by Afrikaans authors besides Brink, Breytenbach and Eybers.
3. Just as abruptly as most white South Africans seem to have forgotten that they ever supported apartheid, Dutch academics have rushed to fraternise with their long lost cousins in South Africa. In the same way as we speak of a New South Africa, a New Holland with regards to South Africa is clearly discernible.
4. The tremendous academic interest in South African literature was made comfortably possible very soon after 1990 thanks to generous funding by the *Nederlandse Taalunie* ('Dutch Language Union'). Officially practitioners of Netherlandic Studies in South Africa are the beneficiaries of this generosity, but in fact everybody interested in both Afrikaans and Dutch literature benefits. Numerous conferences, language courses and workshops have been held during the past ten to twelve years - in South Africa, in the Netherlands and in Belgium. Not a single South African academic in Afrikaans and Nederlands departments can therefore claim not to have had ample opportunity to travel to the Low Countries and to participate in these events. The same applies to Dutch academics who have eagerly been visiting similar events in South Africa. These trips should and have in most cases been more than just *snoepreisjes*.
5. In spite of these conferences and perks Afrikaans and Dutch departments in

South Africa have suffered huge losses in student numbers, major cutbacks and staff retrenchments since 1990. I myself remember very well that for many years immediately before and after 1990 there were close to 500 students in our first year course at Wits University. When I left Wits at the end of 2000 there was only one first year student writing the exam. I was the last member of a once famous department to leave.

6. Until very recently Dutch language departments were flourishing. Recently, however, many faculties of arts are struggling to make ends meet. Inevitably this has to do with fewer students which results in cutbacks and retrenchments. If you've ever been a crew member on a sinking ship you detect and recognize treacherous waves long before they actually crash down on you. The situation in the Dutch language departments at Dutch universities is therefore starting to look awesomely familiar to me.

In conclusion

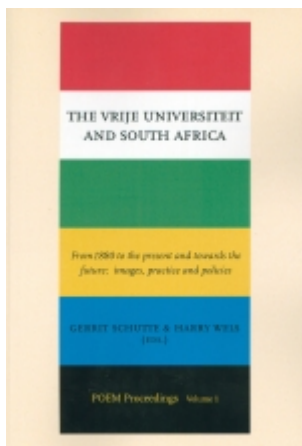
What's to be done? Can Dutch universities help South African universities whilst moving into dire financial straits themselves? I believe they can, that it is warranted for South African universities to ask the VU for strong and beneficial contracts of exchange which will enable South African students to come here. There should be no need for 'Trojan horses' - they must be able to enter coolly by the front door with enough money and affordable visas. The present mutual goodwill between the two countries should be 'exploited'. We should seriously take note of what the two countries and literatures can learn from each other. Multicultural Netherlands where religious intolerance is becoming a serious 'racial' problem might even learn from post-apartheid South Africa where the heritage of racism is however still a serious class and social-economic problem.

The 'natural' language link between the Netherlands and South Africa should be an important stepping stone between the two countries, but it is not the only one. I believe that one should always be careful of exploiting old *stamverwantschap* ties. The Dutch, realizing that their language is a small one in the context of the European Union, have displayed and created a bigger awareness of and eagerness to enable communication by way of English when they fear that Dutch won't suffice. The greater use of English in Dutch universities will therefore enable all South Africans to come here, not only those who speak Afrikaans and therefore have easy access to Dutch.

My take on what South African literature departments might be asking from the

VU is that we create and encourage interest amongst Dutch students for South African literature, that we keep up the funding and that we invite as many South African students here as possible. The mutual BA/MA system should make this even easier than in the past. It is important to make hay while the sun shines. We must remember that literature students become teachers, journalists, publishers, authors and artists. In short, they will become highly vocal people with much public influence. Take good care of them.

The Vrije Universiteit And South Africa ~ A New Size Of Theology For A New South Africa



In Africa, religion is far more influential than in Europe. Although secularisation is increasing in South Africa, most people are still religious, and religion has a great impact on their lives and decisions. Building a new South African society without taking religion into account would be a serious omission.

Theology is not the same as religion. Theology is a critical reflection on religious beliefs and attitudes and on the actions and decisions that result from these convictions. It is because of this critical function that theology has an extremely significant role to play in the new South Africa. Theology was an important part of the old South Africa as well, and because it did not fulfill its critical task then, it will have to play an even greater role now.

I see four main areas in which theology could be developed in South Africa. That does not mean (as will become clear below) that I support them all.

1. Theology of reassurance

A dominant aim of many theologians in present-day South Africa is to provide certainty for people that feel uneasy. This kind of theology is dominant within the Dutch Reformed Church (but not restricted to it). It is a theology that sustains people who have been feeling uncertain since the political changes. It is a modern form of the old-fashioned theology of providence: God will care for you. Amidst the tensions of society – crime, unemployment and worry for retirement funds – we find rest in the church. Theology can help to provide concepts of community building for those people who feel uneasy or to divert them from societal problems by focusing on traditional questions of individual faith. Religion can be helpful by keeping people calm – not only the labourers but also people who were usually dominant in the past and who are nowadays anxious. And theology, both in its modern shape of pastoral care and in its conservative form of focusing on a-contextual questions, can be supportive to shield people from shocking questions.

It is this type of theology that church leaders prefer if they want to keep things under control. And they are now in need for such a theology, because things run the risk of careening out of control as a result of differing views about the new South Africa.

This is an uncritical theology that will not contribute to the future. It has to be rejected, not only because it does not contribute to society building (it might seem to do so by keeping society stable in the short term), but also because it is insufficient. It hides the real problems. If a church leader attempts to conceal problems, at least a professional theologian should unmask this cloaking of the real questions. A striking example of this kind of theology can be found in the declaration about church unity that was accepted by the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church two weeks ago [October 2004]. They argue that the way is now open for a quick re-unification with the formerly black and brown churches. The first reason they give is: 'Because we have a common history'. Obviously, there was nobody critical enough to raise the question: 'What is this common history exactly? And should that history not be defined as a history of conflicts, of oppression and of suffering?' So 'in spite of a common history' would be more befitting in this case. Much theological work still needs to be done before unity can be attained – helped by, at any rate, a different type of theology.

2. Societal theology

A more promising type of theology is executed by those theologians who explicitly

want to contribute to society. The key word here is 'public theology'. It deals with societal questions and with the question how religious beliefs and religious communities can contribute in overcoming the oppositions that divide people, such as white versus brown and black; dominant versus dependent; poor versus rich. Its aim is to contribute to a just and peaceful society. It can have different faces, such as a focus on discriminatory attitudes in church and society, on the development of outreach programs by churches, and on the empowerment of people from previously (and still!) disadvantaged communities. Their commonality is that they explicitly want to contribute to the development of the new society. In this kind of theology, researchers from all backgrounds work together (although we have to take into account that doing theology on an academic level in itself implies a specific place in society).

This theology is future-directed and deals with concrete issues. It is a theology of hope that fits very well into the atmosphere of hope that many people in South Africa are looking for. It especially accommodates the present administration that is striving for a prosperous South Africa that can function as a guide for the whole of Africa. It can be compared with mainstream protestant theology in the Netherlands in the fifties and sixties of the last century: after the war a new society had to be developed; a democratic and just society. It is a theology that is very much aware of challenges and obstacles; however, the people implementing it are convinced of their calling and, therefore, of the importance of their work.

3. A theology of reconciliation

Societal theology is so future-focused that it must be complemented by another type of theology: that of reconciliation. Although reconciliation is reached with respect to the future, it is first of all directed towards the past. Reconciliation is an essential part of present South African consciousness, due to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee led by Bishop Desmond Tutu. It seems self-evident that in Christian theology (where reconciliation is also a core concept) this awareness in society would be fully exploited as a service to the nation and as a task for which it is specifically equipped. A tradition of thousands of years of reflection on reconciliation as a key concept might be a powerful contributor to a society that is so much in need of healing the past.

It is remarkable that theology's contribution has been rather limited so far. Reconciliation is part of the debate, but it usually does not go beyond the limits of what is general in South African society. I think this is due to two factors. The

first is that South African theology traditionally focused on God's providence and not on reconciliation – and as far as reconciliation was discussed it was about individual reconciliation with God, not about reconciliation of people and even less of communities. So there is a lack in the South African theological tradition.

The second factor is that most people do not want to dwell too long in the past. The past has been there long enough. The past is past and we have to look towards the future. In this perspective, reconciliation is taken for granted too much. Once the mistakes are uttered you should not come back to them. We have to enter the future hand in hand. Reconciliation now consists of old enemies working together, while actually reconciliation can only be possible if we have a shared story (and, thus, story-telling) of the past, in which all events that have shaped our identity are integrated. That is a much longer road to travel.

4. A theology of criticism

In my opinion South Africa is most in need of a critical theology that is, on the one hand, sensitive to developments in society and, on the other hand, keeps a critical distance towards them. That distance should be a basic one, since theology is about God. The religious subject of theology should make it clear that God and earthly affairs cannot be confused – or, as we call it in our research program: religion without ulterior motive. True religion can never be instrumental and the core task of theology is to keep religion free from instrumentalisation. The tendency to use religion for other means is always present. The history of South Africa is a sound example of what happens when the two get confused. Apartheid used religion to ground its ideology. The aims of the administration were supported by theologians and they were the strongest ideologists. Similar claims, but with a different focus, were made by those who contested apartheid within the framework of a liberation theology. It is general practice in world history to use religion for political ends to provide one's politics with an ideological base. And no ideology is indeed more powerful than religion.

South Africa is in need of a critical theology that unmask new alliances of politics and religion, because alliances of that kind have been so disastrous in the past (even if they find themselves in a new perspective now.) This new perspective might be a pitfall, not only in South Africa but also all over the world, because it contains common sense.

This critical theology should not be exclusive. It must be closely related to the

previous two types. In fact, they need each other. A public theology is in need of a critical, iconoclastic discourse, and a theology of the ultimate is always at risk to become abstract. It needs the concrete challenges of life in order to meet the standards. Both need a theology of reconciliation, because the past cannot be undone or neglected. How shall we deal with the past? This is the core question in any community in a time just after conflicts, suffering and guilt. Public theology is interested in the future as a reconciled reality. Critical theology is needed to avoid easy solutions that are in fact a source for new oppressions that confuse religion and ideology.

The cooperation between the faculty of Theology at the Vrije Universiteit and institutions in South Africa is focused on the interaction of the three latter theological perspectives, especially in the close relation between the Beyers Naudé Centre in Stellenbosch and the International Reformed Theological Institute in Amsterdam.