

How To Generate Job Growth: Robert Pollin On Alternatives To Trump's Smoke-And-Mirrors Economic Plan



Prof.dr. Robert Pollin

Trump made specific promises to many of the voters who were instrumental in getting him elected — some of whom are people living in poverty, thanks in part to the impacts of globalization. Yet, his economic plan will do nothing for most Americans, argues *Robert Pollin*, distinguished professor of economics and codirector of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, in an exclusive interview for Truthout. Instead, Pollin says, Trump's plans will make the rich richer. What should we be doing instead? Pollin lays out the reality, explaining that an economic plan that will increase employment, provide higher wages and protect the environment requires, among other things, an industrial policy, increasing the minimum wage, strengthening unions and implementing a Green New Deal agenda.

C.J. Polychroniou: Trump's economic plan is supposedly about "making America great again." We know that his tax cuts and deregulation proposals will be an extra bonus for the big corporations and the super-rich, but what's in it for the average American worker who has been experiencing stagnant wages for the past 40 years, economic insecurity, and a declining standard of living?

Robert Pollin: Trump won the election in large part because he spoke to the

visceral anger within the US [white] working class over the conditions you describe — two generations in which average working-class incomes have stagnated while inequality has soared, millions of good manufacturing jobs have been lost and strong communities have been brought down. But it wasn't just that Trump recognized this anger. It was equally that, for a generation, the Clinton Democrats have been the party of Wall Street and free trade, while their support for the US working class has been tepid and back-handed.

Of course, the fact that Trump spoke to this [white] working class anger doesn't mean that he actually cares about the US working class, or, more importantly, that he has a program that will deliver rising well-being for them. Some of Trump's key proposals are to: 1) bring back manufacturing jobs by eliminating burdensome regulations on business and fight against unfair foreign competition, especially from China; 2) stimulate jobs, especially in construction, through a huge infrastructure investment program; and 3) deport undocumented workers, who Trump says are stealing US-born workers' jobs.

There are glimmers of logic in some of these Trump positions, but overall, they add up to very little for workers, and mostly they are a means of creating a smokescreen through which Trump and his super-rich friends can further enrich themselves. Just to take some examples:

US manufacturing has been declining for 40 years, and over that period, regulations on US businesses have also been declining. Business regulations are therefore very weak overall. But declining regulations have not brought back manufacturing jobs. Let's compare the US with Germany. The German economy is far from ideal, including in its treatment of working people. But in Germany, average manufacturing wages are about 30 percent higher than the US, businesses are much more heavily regulated, and unions are much stronger. Yet Germany is a manufacturing export powerhouse. How could that be? It's primarily because the German government aggressively practices industrial policies to support their manufacturing firms, promotes innovation and export competitiveness, along with decent wages, strong training and job ladders for workers. Until the US commits to a positive industrial policy agenda, we will not succeed in regaining our manufacturing strength.

On infrastructure investments, Trump has been talking for nearly two years now about his \$1 trillion plan. But he has yet to explain exactly what it amounts to or

how he intends to pay for it. He has sometimes said his program will be modeled on the Interstate Highway System that was initiated in the 1950s under the Republican President Eisenhower. But what Trump fails to mention here is that, under Eisenhower, rich people in the US did pay serious taxes. The top marginal income tax rate under Eisenhower was 91 percent. Right now, the top rate is 39.5 percent, and Trump wants to cut it sharply from there. To date, it appears that Trump's idea is to privatize the US infrastructure, just like he wants to privatize public schools. So our roads, bridges and airports will be owned by the rich, and they will extract profits from everyone else every time we drive or get on a plane.

On immigration, the facts are the opposite of what Trump claims. We know, for example, that when we compare conditions for low-wage US-born workers in cities with heavy immigrant populations, such as Miami, LA or New York, with cities having a much smaller share of immigrants, such as Atlanta or Philadelphia, that US-born workers are no better off in the cities with proportionally fewer immigrants. That is because immigrants create businesses of their own and buy things in their communities — they aren't just competing in the job market but are expanding overall economic activity in their communities. Of course, conditions are bad for US-born workers in the low end of the labor market. But what they need to support them is a \$15 minimum wage, decent labor rights and union support. Trump vehemently opposes all of these things — we need only look at his cabinet appointments to see this clearly. It is so much easier to just blame immigrants and distract people from where the real problems lie.

In February 2017, the real unemployment rate was 9.2 percent, including people who have accepted part-time jobs but want full-time work and people who have been discouraged from looking by their lack of success in getting a job. Have we reached an era of growth without jobs?

The 9.2 percent of the labor force that you mention amounts to nearly 15 million people. That's roughly equal to the entire population of New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago combined. Imagine all the people in our three largest cities all experiencing the hardships of unemployment. Now on top of that, relative to 2007, right before the Wall Street Crash and Great Recession, we have seen another roughly 9 million people drop out of the labor force. That adds up to nearly 24 million people, including the unemployed, underemployed and labor market dropouts. This is despite the fact that, since the official end of the Great Recession in 2009, the official unemployment rate has fallen by more than half.

Putting all this together, we can conclude, first, that the US economy is certainly capable of creating millions of jobs in a relatively short period of time — such as between 2010 and 2016. But it is also clear that mass unemployment is a persistent feature of neoliberal capitalism, in the US and elsewhere. We cannot forget the insight, first advanced by Karl Marx, that capitalists like mass unemployment because it gives them much greater bargaining power relative to workers, in the setting of both wages and working conditions. We have the technical knowledge and policy tools to operate the US economy at full employment. Whether we can advance full employment under capitalism becomes a matter of politics and struggle for a decent society.

What are the benefits of full employment, and how can we accomplish this in an age of automation and great capital mobility?

The benefits are fundamental, at both the levels of individuals and families, and for a society at large. For individuals, obviously, earning money from jobs, so that they and their families can go about their lives, is the first consideration.... At the economy-wide level, when employed people have more money in their pockets, this means they can spend more on the things they need and want. This in turn produces more buoyant markets and, therefore, strong incentives for private businesses to invest more and create more jobs. An economy with an abundance of decent jobs will promote individual opportunity and equality, because this kind of economy offers everyone the chance to provide for themselves and their families. A full-employment economy is therefore also the best single tool for fighting poverty.

Despite these massive benefits of full employment, a capitalist economy, operating on its own, will never get to full employment with decent jobs because, as I mentioned before, full employment will weaken the bargaining power of capitalists. This is why it is critical for an engaged citizenry to fight for full employment. Policymakers will never fight for it on their own. In fact, most Western capitalist economies did operate at something close to full employment over the initial post World War II era — from roughly 1950 to 1973 (up until the first oil price spike). Of course, the historical setting in the immediate post World War II era was dramatically different than what we face today. But that doesn't mean that full employment is now an impossibility. Mobilizing public investment to promote decent education, health care and housing for everyone, to revive manufacturing, and to transform our energy infrastructure to operate with zero

greenhouse gas emissions, will generate tens of millions of jobs for decades. Strong labor laws and unions can ensure that these millions of jobs provide living wages, as well as decent benefits and working conditions.

Given the deteriorating condition of the environment, the creation of green jobs has long been seen as a vital and necessary goal. What would a US program for controlling climate change and creating job opportunities look like?

A Green New Deal agenda, which is capable of delivering both a viable path to near-zero emissions and climate stabilization, as well as expanding good job opportunities, is actually a pretty straightforward proposition, both for the US economy and the global economy. My own research finds that we need to commit to investing about 1.5 percent of GDP — in the US, China, India, Europe, Africa, everywhere — in order to dramatically improve energy efficiency standards in the operations of buildings, industrial machinery and transportation systems; and to expand the supply of clean renewable energy, including solar, wind, geothermal, small-scale hydro power and low-emissions bioenergy. According to the US Energy Department, the average costs of generating one kilowatt of electricity from solar, onshore wind or geothermal energy are now at approximate parity or lower than those for fossil fuel energy and nuclear power. Combine this with the cost reductions that people will enjoy through raising energy efficiency — it then becomes a reality that energy consumers will not need to spend more money to rely on clean renewable energy as opposed to fossil fuels and nuclear power. In addition, building the green economy in all regions of the world is a powerful engine of new job creation. For example, my coworkers and I find that investing in green energy in the US today generates approximately three times more jobs per dollar of spending than maintaining our existing fossil fuel energy system.

It is obviously true that some jobs will inevitably be lost in the transition to a green economy — coal mining jobs being one critical case in point. That is why it is fundamental to the Green New Deal agenda that we incorporate a generous Just Transition program for all workers and communities that are presently dependent on fossil fuels. The Just Transition program would include guaranteed reemployment with no sacrifice of wages for people whose jobs would be displaced through the necessary contraction of the fossil fuel industry. It would also include, critically, guaranteed protections for the pensions of fossil fuel industry workers once they move into retirement. In addition, regions and communities that will be hard hit by the decline in, say, the coal industry, should

be provided with re-investment projects, starting with land reclamation, and moving from there into energy efficiency and green energy manufacturing. All of this can be done at reasonable cost levels. My own research finds that a generous Just Transition program for the affected US economy workers and communities would cost in the range of \$600 million per year. This is less than one one-hundredth of 1 percent of current US GDP.

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Neoliberalism In The Driver's Seat: Trump And Ryan's Ruling-Class Schemes



Donald Trump ran a campaign to “make America great again,” promising the creation of high-paid manufacturing jobs and the restoration of the middle class. Yet, his economic policies will most likely make things worse for average American workers and deal a further blow to the environment, says economist Michael Meeropol, an NPR commentator and author of *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*. Michael Meeropol is the oldest

son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

C.J. Polychroniou: Donald Trump's economic policies are not simply controversial; they constitute a neoliberal nightmare. His policies revolve mostly around corporate tax cuts, tax cuts for people with high incomes and investments, deregulation and selective protectionism. Assuming the Trump administration can

succeed with these objectives, what, in your view, would be the most likely effects of these policies on the US economy?

Michael Meeropol: It is essential to separate Trump (the man) from the policies proposed by the Trump administration. Trump, the man, displays “bright shiny objects” that unfortunately divert us from the substance of the actual policies.... The national media and too many of the opposition are diverted by his outrageous lies, his grandiose promises, his bombast and his dangerous authoritarianism. These are the “bright shiny objects” but they have almost nothing to do with the substance of [his] proposed policies.

Your question brings focus where it should be — the neoliberal content of his administration’s proposals. With the possible exception of the selective protectionism he promised during the campaign, [his] economic policy proposals are extensions of traditional neoliberal policies that date back to Ronald Reagan. These policies were enabled by Bill Clinton (see my book *Surrender* and Bob Pollin’s book *Contours of Descent*), expanded by George W. Bush and not forcefully countered by Barack Obama. The failure to include a public option in the Affordable Care Act is one glaring example.

The neoliberal content of the Trump administration’s policies comes from Paul Ryan, the Club for Growth, the Heritage Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce ... this is the policy-planning apparatus of the American ruling class.

(Anyone who doubts what I just said, check out the [Who Rules America?](#) website. G. William Domhoff has been documenting who rules America since the late 1960s. [Here is a recent piece with relevance today.](#))

In a [recent Washington Post article](#), the first round of proposed budget shifting by the Trump administration is detailed — a massive transfer of discretionary budget spending to defense and away from everything else. This is more extreme than the 1981 Reagan budget proposals. The failed “repeal and replace” for the Affordable Care Act was similar to efforts proposed in the past — partial privatization of Social Security — replacing the guarantees of Medicare with vouchers (called “premium support” in one of the “Ryan budgets” proposed during the Obama Administration). “Welfare reform” signed into law by Bill Clinton turned the old AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] program into a set of fixed block grants to the states. Changing Medicaid from a guarantee

to a state-administered stingy block grant as in the failed Ryan “Trumpcare” proposal would have a similar impact — reducing enrollment in one more means-tested entitlement program. All of these changes were efforts to dismantle the set of policies associated with the New Deal and Great Society.

Should this new set of neoliberal proposals be adopted, there is no way they will have a positive macroeconomic impact. Forty years of neoliberal policies since 1980 show that. But in terms of income and wealth for the top 1 percent, neoliberalism was a dramatic success. The well-known Saez-Piketty diagrams plotting shares of the top 10 percent and 1 percent of the income distribution show that reduced inequality (the top 1 percent [of people in the US] had 20 percent of income in 1929 and 8 percent in 1979) was successfully reversed in the neoliberal heyday: The [top] 1 percent’s share climbed to 18 percent by 2007. In other words, it didn’t matter that the economy as a whole did worse — the “most important” people did better.

Concerning today’s economy, so long as the political structures that support neoliberal policies are able to withstand the assaults of an outraged population — here I am including both the Sanders campaign and many of Trump’s (duped) supporters — the policies will continue because they do keep large flows of income going to the top 1 percent and power firmly in the hands of corporate decision makers and their political enablers.

If there is a neoliberal tax cut masquerading as tax reform, if there is a giant boondoggle to construction companies masquerading as an infrastructure program, if there is wholesale deregulation of financial markets masquerading as removing stifling government regulations — in short, if the neoliberal dreams of Paul Ryan become law ... there will be *no* macroeconomic improvement, no return to the period right after World War II. But the top dogs in the economy will retain the advantages they achieved during the ascendancy [of] neoliberalism, [from] 1980-2008.

In short, no improvement for the economy and the vast majority of the people, but contentment and increasing riches for the 1%.

What Trump adds to this with his promise of protectionism — through massive deportation and bringing back (some) jobs — is a way to gain the support of enough members of the working class to keep the neoliberal political coalition in

control. By the way, there are three other major elements to the erection of a strong political defense of the new round of neoliberal policies: One, the assault on public sector unions that began in Wisconsin in 2011, and that might succeed decisively if Trump and the Republicans successfully replace Scalia with a similar justice, given the cases that are pending. Two, the suppression of voting rights. And three, the unleashing of police forces to enforce “law and order” on Black people and other people of color. The last two are related because the disenfranchisement of felons in many states falls disproportionately on Blacks and Latinos caught up in the prison industrial complex — also known as (from Michelle Alexander’s work) *The New Jim Crow*. These three [elements] help bring a group of native-born, mostly white workers into a self-destructive coalition with the top dogs of our society to “keep those people down.” We should never underestimate the power of racism to keep the elite laughing all the way to the bank....

David Kotz in his book *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberal Capitalism* (Harvard University Press, 2015) actually predicted a possible “tweak” to the neoliberal model that had dominated the US economy until the financial crisis of 2008. He calls this “business-regulated capitalism.” A key element would be the total marginalization of organized labor. There would also be more public-private partnerships (the as-yet-unreleased infrastructure program would be along these lines) and increased military spending. Kotz wrote, “The dominant ideas that could hold together such a social structure of accumulation are those of nationalism and individual responsibility. Such ideas justify a stronger role for the state.” Trump himself probably has no idea what his administration is doing but those pulling strings may be groping toward some form of Kotz’s “business-regulated capitalism.” In 1920s Italy, this was called fascism. To summarize: no macroeconomic improvement, but continued prosperity for the top of the income and wealth pyramids. Political changes sufficient to keep these policies in place and beat back challenges from people who supported Bernie Sanders and (erroneously) Trump.

In pledging to reduce or eliminate trade deficits, Trump has attacked Germany by saying it uses the European Union as a vehicle for accumulating trade surpluses, and China, as a currency manipulator. Is this attack on two of the world’s major economies the prelude for upcoming trade wars and/or the state of a new world economic order?

The period of the Great Depression saw the final breakdown of the trade regime that was dominated by the British Empire (including the “informal empire” in Latin America) and the Pound Sterling. The Bretton Woods system inaugurated a US-centered world economic order with the dollar as the world currency. It lasted from 1945 till 1973. The end of the Bretton Woods system did not end that role for the dollar nor the central US role. But one could argue that the financial crisis of 2008 has called the future of that system into question. Yes, Trump policies could spark trade wars; neither China nor Germany wants that. [National Trade Council Director] Peter Navarro has Trump’s ear, though my guess is his ideas are anathema to most of the intellectuals in charge of the Fed, the IMF and the European Central Bank. Obviously, the major multinational corporations and banks want there to be an international order — predictability is important for these folks. Can they force the Germans, the Chinese and the Americans to “get together” and “work things out”? It’s much too early to tell. In 1944 at Bretton Woods, the British were too damaged by World War II to successfully resist American policy proposals (despite the presence of Keynes himself in the British delegation). The US is nowhere near as weak as Britain was then; China and Germany [are] nowhere near as strong as was the US.

Trump’s proposed budget cuts for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and his selection of Pruitt as the head have caused a major concern among environmentalists and active citizens. What does Trump’s war on the EPA mean for health and the environment?

Trump’s war on the EPA and climate science is terribly dangerous. Hopefully, his and Pruitt’s positions are so outrageous that scientists and thoughtful politicians will respond vigorously. Here is where the “ruling class” is actually split. There are many, even among the top 1 percent, who believe that climate change presents an existential threat to the continuation of human life as we know it on the planet. The rest of us need to demand action to curb carbon emissions while, in my opinion, pointing out that only a true transformation of the economic system will create the structure necessary for a carbon-neutral future. Capitalism as we know it demands economic growth and the political power currently lies with those who profit from the current carbon-centered system. Maybe a “green” version of capitalism would work — I am not opposed to fighting for structural reforms to get us there — but we must constantly remind people who is benefiting and who is dying as a result of our economic commitment to a carbon-based

economy.

Trump has proposed to restore America's middle class by bringing back manufacturing jobs. How realistic is this goal in the age of deep globalization?

The Trump promise to bring back manufacturing jobs and the promise that holds for high-wage workers is based on a false equivalence. It is not manufacturing jobs per se that pay well — it's the success of unionized workers raising wages that leads to "good" jobs — and these could be anywhere in the economy. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, manufacturing jobs paid very poorly in the United States. Unionization created the great manufacturing-based American middle class of workers. If nursing homes, hospitals, cleaning services, hotels, day care centers, restaurants were all unionized, as well as autoworkers and steelworkers in the 1950s, these work sites, too, could be the basis for middle-class workers' wages. Trump's allies in government, particularly governors like Scott Walker of Wisconsin, want to destroy unions, not promote them.

Trump's effort to undo the Affordable Care Act was dealt a crushing blow as the House cancelled a vote on the health care legislation. What do you expect to be the next move by the Trump administration on health care?

That's easy. They have already promised to do their best to sabotage the actual workings of the Affordable Care Act and publicize rises in premiums, deductibles and anecdotes (often false) about individuals who could not get the care they needed in a timely fashion. It is essential that people remain vigilant and publicize and counter every effort at sabotage, while, at the same time, pushing for a rational universal policy: Medicare for all.

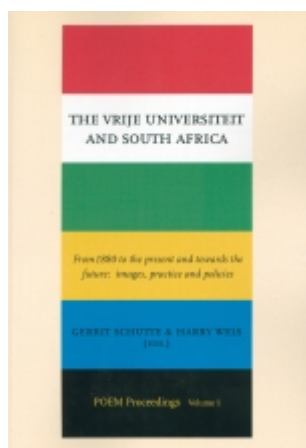
Given the overall effects of Trump's economic policies, what do you see as the future direction of neoliberalism in the US?

Neoliberalism "dodged a bullet" when the Obama administration ignored the pleas of many of us to bring forth a "New" New Deal. Instead, they hit the reset button — bailed out the financial sector (including GM and Chrysler) and settled for an anemic "recovery" bill rather than a more robust one. (I've already noted the surrender on the public option in the Affordable Care Act). After 2010, they accepted budget sequestration and the economy limped through eight years of recovery, which mostly benefited the top 10 percent and [the] 1%.

Neoliberalism remains in the driver's seat, and it is essential that we continue to expose it and demand real change while resisting the worst proposals of the Trump administration. I do not see acceleration of growth in the macro-economy. The employment-to-population ratio — the best measure of labor market slack — has struggled to reach 60 percent just last month, well below the 2007 peak of 63 percent. If the Trump administration rattles world markets sufficiently, there will be another recession.

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The Vrije Universiteit And South Africa, From 1880 To The Present And Towards The Future: Images, Practice And Policies ~ Contents



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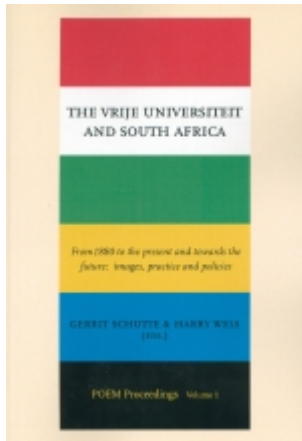
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The History Of The Relationship Between The Vrije Universiteit

And South Africa: Introduction



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Introduction

In 2005 the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) celebrates its 125th anniversary. It is a celebration in style: a yearlong programme which contains both scholarly elements - every faculty for instance has been asked to organise an international conference in a particular month of the lustrum year around a specific and fitting theme - and festive elements, like for instance an alumni-day ending with a concert of the world famous Portuguese singer Christina Branco. The celebrations are accompanied by the publication of a number of commissioned books about various historical aspects of 125 years of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. One of them is a study of the relations between the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and South Africa. This relationship dates back to the very beginning of the VU in 1880 - the year in which the First Anglo-Boer War started! The University History Committee asked historian Prof. G.J. Schutte to write this book, entitled *De VU en Zuid-Afrika, 1880-2005*.**[i]** The book has been published in December 2005.

In the book Prof. Schutte tells in detail the history of the relationship between the VU and South Africa. This relationship started 125 years ago, in 1880, as a result of the rediscovery by the Dutch of their *Afrikaner broedervolk*, and a kindred feeling of *stamverwantschap* (kinship) with the young nation of the Dutch Afrikaners, that was cherished for many decades. The Dutch ardently supported the Boer Republic's struggle against British imperialism during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, and also the resulting movement for cultural, social and political emancipation of the Afrikaner people. For the VU academics, this affinity

contained an extra value, that of sharing a common religion with the Afrikaners, a common Calvinist tradition and conviction. From 1900 onwards, the VU played an important role as *alma mater* for generations of Afrikaners, especially for theologians of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* and the *Gereformeerde Kerk*. The academic knowledge that was acquired at the VU, was used to develop the South African universities (Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom, and many more) and Afrikaner society and culture.

In about 1960, a new period in VU history was set in motion. A gradual movement away from Kuyperian tradition and the closed group of 'Calvinists' could be observed. Critical remarks were made with regard to Kuyper's *Encyclopedia*, his philosophy of science, his political and social principles and practice ('pillarisation'). A new stance was taken on the role of the Christian in society, also in matters of colonialism, racism and the relationship between the First and the Third World. The general western urge for democratisation in those years triggered a change in the ideas on academic education, research and academic policy. The VU, though known for its classical and sometimes patriarchal education system, had since its founding been conscious of its being indebted to the emancipation of the *kleine luyden* ('common people') and considered social awareness as a principle.

In the turbulent debate on renewal and change that dominated most of the 1960s and 1970s, the traditional relationship between the VU and South Africa soon became subject of heated discussions. The apartheid policy, that had initially been accepted as the outcome of the specific South African historical context, called for a radical redefinition of viewpoints after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. For some, this was a reason to immediately sever the ties with white South Africa, while others combined a critical debate with the Afrikaner counterparts on the true character of the Christian faith with the establishment of new connections with the 'other' South Africa. The honorary degree awarded to Rev. Beyers Naudé in 1972 and the rupture in the special relationship with the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHE) (1974-1976) marked the end of an era and of a tradition.

At the same time, the VU started cooperating with a number of 'black' universities in Southern Africa. These newly established contacts were not alternatives in a normal sense; they were rather unorthodox, seen through the lens of traditional Humboldtian academic criteria. Projects were adapted to

Africa's social reality, and, in line with VU traditions, had an emancipatory purpose in the form of supporting academic development, embodied in the DOS (*Dienst voor Ontwikkelings-samenwerking, later renamed as CIS: Centrum voor Internationale Samenwerking, Centre for International Cooperation*).

South Africa's change in 1990, leading to the democratic election of Nelson Mandela as the first black president in 1994, again marked the beginning of a new period in the relationship between the VU and South Africa. The restricted contacts of the previous decade have been replaced by the establishment of many new cooperative academic projects. In 2003 the Board of the VU decided that following the many contacts with South African colleagues on a faculty level, South Africa would be considered a target country in the internationalisation policy at the institutional level of the VU, with a strict academic mandate. Again, not primarily because of historical ties but mainly because almost all faculties at the VU are currently actively co-operating with South African colleagues. SAVUSA (South Africa-Vrije Universiteit-Strategic Alliances[**ii**]) is the outcome of that decision of the VU Board. But what type of 'new' academic knowledge and cooperation is the 'new' South Africa actually waiting for?

In an attempt to at least partially answer this question, Prof. Gerrit Schutte, supported by the Faculty of Arts, together with SAVUSA organised a mini-conference on 28 and 29 October 2004 (called a Publication Oriented Expert Meeting or 'POEM' in SAVUSA jargon). The purpose of the POEM was to look at the future of the relationship between the VU and South Africa, to investigate whether further continuation would be in the interest of the South African academics and to hear from the South African colleagues that were present, both academics and policymakers, what they expect of the VU if it will continue and maybe even expand the academic cooperation. This POEM certainly was a unique event in the cooperation between the VU and South Africa and also one of the very rare occasions on which a Dutch institution took up a primarily listening position. In order to cater for the broad spectrum of tertiary education in South Africa, South African academics and policymakers were invited, not only from the traditional partner institutions of the VU, (previously) Afrikaner institutions like Stellenbosch, Pretoria or Potchefstroom, but also from a (historically) English-speaking university (University of the Witwatersrand), a newly formed institution (Durban Institute of Technology) and South African policymakers in tertiary education from varying backgrounds (National Research Foundation (NRF) and

National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI)). An important policy maker from the Netherlands in this regard, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), was also invited to share its ideas concerning academic cooperation with South Africa. It was a historic meeting at the VU, in the sense that for many, if not most participants, it was the first time that they saw so many different stakeholders in South African and Dutch tertiary education and academic cooperation gathering together to discuss the direction of an individual institution's policy with regard to cooperation with South African counterparts. The history of the relations between the VU and South Africa was of course an important ingredient in the various discussions: It is always crucial to know about traditions if you want to plan for and reflect on the future.

Policy processes are an ongoing thing, and policy formulation needs ongoing reflection. The proceedings of the POEM, published in this volume, are meant to offer just that: they hope to provide the reader with a sort of data-base to reflect academic policy formulation with regard to South Africa, both from South African and from Dutch viewpoints. Therefore the full texts of the various speakers are presented, in order to give every reader the opportunity to make up his or her own mind. This first volume in the SAVUSA POEM Proceedings aims to set the tone by providing readers with an interest in academic cooperation with South Africa with a type of 'raw output', which can be a source of inspiration when reflecting on the various issues regarding academic cooperation with South Africa.

Structure of the proceedings

The publication basically follows the programme of the POEM. The POEM consisted of three clusters that all touched the subject of 'academic policy', placed in the multiple social contexts of the relationship between the VU and South Africa. The programme offered a retrospective as well as an overview of current academic projects developed in South Africa by VU academics from the fields of arts and social sciences. Finally, possible academic policy recommendations and the role of the VU in a 'new' South Africa were anticipated on. In view of a further reflection on the relationship between the VU and South Africa, this part of the programme received most attention.

The first part, therefore, offers an analysis of the history of the relationship between the VU and South Africa. The first period in this history runs from 1880 to about 1960, 1970, when an empathic feeling of (religious and cultural)

connection characterised the relationship between the VU and several South African institutions. The turning point that ended these 80 years of family-like relationship was in October 1972, when Beyers Naudé received an honorary degree at the VU.

The second period describes the political separation between the VU and its traditional South African partners, the establishment of a relationship with diverse Southern African institutions, such as the Universities of Potswood, Lesotho and Swaziland, as well as the then-called 'black' universities in South Africa, and the restoration of the relationship after 1990. A special paper highlights the founding of the DOS (Centre for Developmental Cooperation) in 1976 and the attempts from within the VU to form ties with tertiary institutions for black Africans, not merely in South Africa, but within the whole region of southern Africa.

The second part of the proceedings contains short introductions of four current academic cooperation projects at the VU, as an illustration, and explains how these projects could meet South Africa's claim that academics need to help solving social problems in the country.

In other words: a 'new' South Africa requires a 'new' science. A number of South African participants have given their views on the significance (or absence, for that matter) of VU-traditions for this 'new' science.

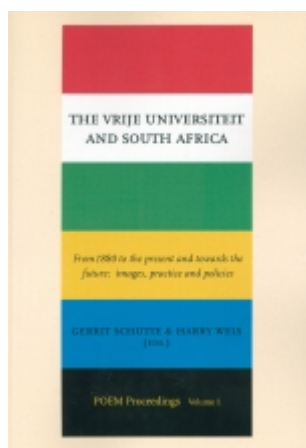
The third and final part of the proceedings looks at the future of academic policy in South Africa, and more specifically, at the (potential) role of the VU, and the Netherlands in general, in this respect, as highlighted by NWO's chairman Peter Nijkamp. Again, participants were sought from both South Africa and the Netherlands. They represent primary academic 'policy' organisations.

The SAVUSA POEM Series would like to inspire and even generate discussion amongst academics and policymakers about issues relating to academic cooperation with South African colleagues and institutions.

NOTES

- i.** For the other commissioned books, see <http://www.125jaarvu.nl/publicaties>.
- ii.** See for more information www.savusa.nl.

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 reformatata*, 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 an-

nexation 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 *scheppingsordianties*, 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 fundamentalism 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 Potchefstroom *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 Kuijpers (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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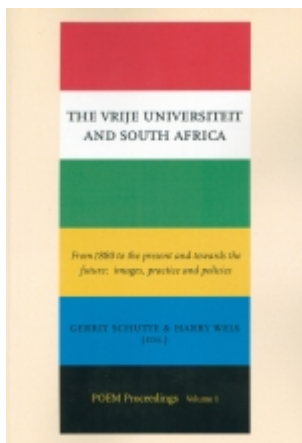
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The Vrije Universiteit And South Africa ~ Political And Organisational Developments



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.

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