

GEOLOGISCH INSTITUUT  
DER RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT TE UTRECHT

P. B. base Beekeneren

AFDELING ALGEMENE EN  
ECONOMISCHE GEOLOGIE  
Prof. Dr. M. G. Rutten  
Prof. Dr. Ir. R. W. van Bemmelen  
Dr. A. M. Oosterbaan  
Dr. E. ten Haaf  
Dr. H. Wensink

UTRECHT, 11 September 1968  
Oude Gracht 320  
Tel. (030) 1 42 41

No.

To Prof. V.V. Tikhomirov,  
Geol. Institute,  
Academy of Science of the USSR,  
Pyzhevsky per. 7,  
MOSKVA B-17,  
USSR

Dear Professor Tikhomirov,

I'am very sorry indeed for what happened in Czechoslovakia in the first place. In my life, which was rich in experiences, I developed a philosophy of behaviour, which applies to the individual as well as to collective groups and even to "world-powers". That philosophy for a way of life might be called "inclusive" thinking and behaviour. Its opposite is "antagonistic" thinking and its resulting behaviour. The "inclusive" way of life says that every act of the individual or the group should be aiming not only at the optimalization of the welfare (happiness) of the ego or the group concerned, but also at that of all others. This fundamental thesis can be accepted by men of all creeds, communists, christians, buddhists, etc alike. It is a fundamental starting point for the behaviour of mankind if the human race will have a chance to survive. In our century the living-space, the biological "Niche of existence", of every individual is becoming so restricted and so intimately interwoven with that of others - not only our direct neighbours, but also that of the whole world population - that we have to coöperate or perish as a biological race. We have to be "born again" in our mental concepts, as was told to Nicodemus according to the Gospel.

The difference between the world situation some two thousand years ago and the actual one of this century, is that Jesus foresaw the danger, but that it now stands at our threshold.



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It is no longer a matter of faith but of practical, applied science (See for instance the book of the zoölogist Desmond Morris, "the Naked Ape" , non-fiction best-seller all over the western world since ~~its~~ appearance in 1967).

I am of the opinion that we, scientists, are united across all frontiers of creed and nationalism, by the sober premisses and facts of knowledge. We are able to assess the desirable and non-desirable developments in the not-too-distant future. We, scientists, all over the world, have a task to warn and instruct short-sighted politicians, and to convince them of the simple truth, that in our close-knit world every antagonistic act will react as a boomerang. This boomerang-action took some time in the past, so that the thrower of the boomerang could have some temporarily profit in the mean-time. This is no longer true in our world of radio, television, communication satellites, and modern means of traffic. We live in a world community with accelerated changes in the conditions of living.

In this world we scientists, the realistic thinkers, have a huge task and a primal responsibility.

You are interested in the history of geology. This looking back to the negative part of our time-axis has sense insofar, as it gives us clues for extrapolations to the future, the positive part of our time. This positive approach has to become the pre-eminent way of living (as for instance Dennis Gabor showed in his book "Inventing the future", Secker & Warburg Ltd, London, 1963). Moreover, our time is characterized not only by changes of quantity, but also by changes of quality. We are crossing a barrier, a threshold, as I indicated already in my paper for the International Geol. Congress of London, 1948.



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No.

Under the present circumstances I thought it necessary first to formulate my opinion as a citizen of the world, as a scientist, and as a member of the race of naked apes, who call themselves "homo sapiens".

Now I will answer your letter of August 29. I am also very sorry that I missed you again in Prague, ~~as~~ last year in Freiberg. After our correspondence of about ten years, I certainly would have liked to talk to you as a colleague and a "pen-friend".

In answer to your request for biographical informations, list of papers and a photograph, I can help you; a photograph will be taken before long, because I need one also in relation to my retirement at the end of this academic year. I'll ask our secretary to make a copy of my list of publications. This will be sent to you in due time.

X Some biographical notes are following here:

I have been born at Djakarta (at that time the capital "Batavia" of the then <sup>N</sup>etherlands East Indies) April 14, 1904.

My father, Willem van Bemmelen, was at that time director of the meteorological and seismological Observatory at <sup>B</sup>Batavia.

As a young boy I climbed several <sup>J</sup>Javanese volcanoes with him, so that -whilst he was investigating the higher levels of the Earth's atmosphere- I became interested in the endogenic forces in the deeper levels of our planet. At the age of 8 I already decided to become a geologist.

My grandfather (<sup>J</sup>Jacob Maarten van Bemmelen) was professor of Chemistry at the University of Leyden (he was the founder of the colloid-chemistry) and from him I inherited my interest for Chemistry. (I met him during a european furlough of the family in 1909, and I still have a vivid memory of him.)

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There I met Alfred Wittmann, who since then became a lifelong  
My mother, Soetje Hermance de Jongh, is still living a retired  
but mentally lucid life at the age of 92. She was born on the island of  
Bangka, where my grandfather (Daniel de Jongh) was chief of the  
governmental tin-mining. From grandfather at mothers side I inherited  
my sense for practical, economic affairs, and from my mother a sense  
for the philosophy of life. (1940-1945).

So my childhood was rich in various influences and I consider  
myself as a blessed one. But this blessed personal situation also  
implies a responsibility to use the "talents" donated to me, in an  
inclusive, positive, constructive way of living.

I went to the elementary school and some classes of the high school  
at Djakarta. After worldwar I, my family repatriated to the Nether-  
lands. But I first followed my urge for adventure and seeing more  
of the world by enrolling as a light hand on a mail-boat to Australia,  
where I earned f. 25,-<sup>+board</sup> a month by sweeping decks and other odd jobs.  
In 1921, after obtaining my final high school examination at Haarlem,  
I became a student for Mining Engineer at the Technical University  
of Delft. H.A. Brouwer and G.A.F. Molengraaff became my principle  
teachers in geology with whom I was assistant respectively chief  
assistant.

In 1927 I ~~obtain~~<sup>obtain</sup>ed my diploma of Mining Engineer and some month's  
later my doctoral degree with Brouwer on a thesis "Contributions to  
the Geology of the Betic Cordillera's in the Province of Granada,  
Spain" (both examinations "cum laude").

I then obtained a job as a geologist-mining engineer with the  
government of the Dutch East Indies. Because they had the intention  
to let me work with the Volcanological Survey, I was commissioned to  
make a volcanological study tour in Italy my way out to the tropics.



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There I met Alfred Rittmann, who since then became a lifelong friend (see the introduction to my paper in the Geol. Rundschau, 1968, 57, 3, written in honor to Alfred Rittmann at the occasion of his 75th birthday).

In Indonesia I preferred to start with making geological maps in Sumatra and Java, but I ended as a chief of the volcanological survey during worldwar I (1940-1946).

During my European leave (in 1934/35), I studied one semester at the University of Vienna with Karl von Terzaghi and J. Stiny on soil mechanics, which I thought might be of importance for my concepts in structural geology.

Before the war, I wrote a MS for Borntraeger (Berlin) on the Geology of Indonesia (in German), to be published in the Series "Geologie der Erde" edited by S. von Bubnoff. This book MS was ready and sent to Berlin, where it was destroyed during the war. The copy of it I gave to one of my employees, a Javanese, in order to keep it out of the hands of the Japanese Occupators. After the war was over this employee did not want to return the copy to me, but took it to the newly founded nationalistic university of Djokjakarta.

The Dutch Government then commissioned me to write in the English language a book on the general and economic Geology of Indonesia, compiling one century of geological research in that Archipelago.

I had to redraw all maps and sections and - still not yet recovered from the hardships and starvation in the Japanese P.O.W. camps - worked at The Hague almost day and night in 1947-1949 to get this book off my chest. It appeared in three volumes Dec. 1949 at the occasion of the centenary of the Dutch East Indian Geological and Mining Survey and at the same time at the moment of transfer of power to the Sukarno Regime in Indonesia.

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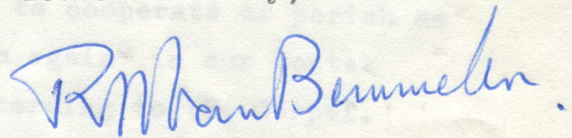
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Meanwhile I had been appointed at the Geological Institute of the University of Utrecht, where I am now full professor for Economic Geology. I will retire in 1969 at the age of 65, hoping to be able to use the last phase of my life for an attempt to attain with my wife maturity as individuals, and thus find fulfilment and felicity in peace of mind.

We married in 1930 and know each other forty years. Her maiden name is Lucy Clara van den Bos. We had a son Reinout Jacobus, born in 1932, who was a brilliant student (he studied national economy at the University of Amsterdam) and sportsman. He was starting a promising career at a national economic research institute, and he was engaged to be married, when he met with an Alpine accident in 1959.

This was perhaps the greatest challenge in our personal life, to which we had to find the right answer. We - my wife and I - are searching for and finding this answer in the philosophy of inclusiveness of positive, constructive thinking and living, without associating ourselves with any existing creed, in the way I exposed in the first part of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



R.W. van Bemmelen