

RECENSIES

Pieter Cornelis Emmer, *Engeland, Nederland, Afrika en de slavenhandel in de negentiende eeuw* (Academisch Proefschrift, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974, blz. vii, 146-215, 44-144).

The flood of books on the Atlantic slave-trade shows no sign of abating; but the part played by the Netherlanders has received less attention than that devoted to the English, the French, and the Portuguese (or Luso-Brazilians, if this term be preferred), so Dr. Emmer's book is doubly welcome. Quoting the first three verses of Heinrich Heine's *Das Sklavenschiff* as a starting-point, the author poses the problems in his introduction as to how far, if at all, the Dutch participated in the illegal slave-trade of the nineteenth century; what international measures were taken to stop the Atlantic slave-trade; and to what extent the Dutch economy was affected by these measures. The first section of the first part gives a survey of the English efforts to stop the slave-trade, including the motives therefore, the diplomatic and naval methods which were pursued, and the results of England's attitudes and actions. This section gives a good up-to-date survey of the problems and developments involved, but contains nothing new for readers familiar with the subject. The second and third sections are more interesting, dealing respectively with the rapidly declining share of the Dutch in the Atlantic slave-trade during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and the reactions in the Netherlands toward the slave-trade, both before, during, and after its abolition.

Dr. Emmer has no difficulty in showing that the Dutch slave-trade between West Africa and the West-Indies collapsed between 1773 and 1784, partly as a result of the great Amsterdam credit crisis of 1773, and the disastrous war with England in 1780-1783, as also because of the inability of the Surinam planters to compete with the spectacular growth of Saint-Domingue. Even the Haitian rebellion could not restore the declining economy of Surinam, and the Anglo-Dutch treaties of 1814 and 1818 which forbade Netherlanders to engage in the slave-trade merely confirmed the actual situation. A Dutch equivalent of the English 'West India Interest' did not exist; and very little opposition was voiced in the Netherlands to the implementation of the abolition measures. At the same time, as Dr. Emmer points out, there was no great wave of moral indignation against the West African slave-trade, such as occurred in England and in France.

In the second and more innovative part of this book, the author studies the reaction to the abolition of the slave-trade of the miniscule white population of Elmina, the Dutch slave-trading station on the Gold coast (present-day Ghana), and in the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam, where slavery had an important economic function. He also discusses the actual extent of the Dutch slave-trade after its legal abolition. This part contains much that is new, at least to this reviewer. Dr. Emmer's archival researches show little trace of an illegal Dutch slave-trade on the West African coast. By the end of the eighteenth century the Dutch forts in Guinea were dead spots and not even the dynamic Daendels could revive them. Economic projects were adumbrated on paper but came to nothing in practice, and no Dutch shipping firm showed any interest to utilize them as transit harbors for the export of African products. In 1872 they were sold to Great Britain in partial exchange for a freer hand for the Dutch in Atjeh.

The most productive part of Dr. Emmer's research relates to his investigation of the archives of the two mixed Anglo-Dutch courts for the suppression of the slave-trade established at Freetown (Sierra Leone) and at Paramaribo (Surinam) respectively, in accordance with the terms of the 1818 treaty (printed in full on pp. 199-203 of the first part). With one partial exception, the Dutch judges at Freetown cooperated whole-heartedly with their British colleagues, forming in this respect a contrast to the French, Span-

ish, Portuguese and Brazilian members of other Mixed Commissions, who often proved uncooperative or evasive. In a ten-year period (1819-1829) the mixed Court at Sierra Leone sentenced twenty-one slavers as legal prizes which were flying the Dutch flag when captured (listed in Appendix IV). None had a Dutch captain or a Dutch crew; and although some of the ships had acquired a Dutch registration at St. Eustatius, they could claim other nationalities as well, since they usually carried multiple sets of ships' papers (some of them forged) and flags of different nations which they hoisted as occasion offered. The Dutch governor of St. Eustatius, Van Spengler, was severely reprimanded by The Hague for his laxity (or venality?) and no more abuses occurred there after 1829.

In Surinam the situation was very different. Only one slaver (of Spanish-Cuban origin) was condemned by the Mixed Court at Paramaribo in the same decade as the Freetown Court condemned twenty-one. The English commissioners complained bitterly that they got no support from either the governor, the Netherlands navy, nor the officials and the white populace as a whole. Several thousand slaves were brought annually into Surinam by non-Dutch (mainly French) slavers. But this practice was drastically checked when The Hague ordered the compulsory registration of all slaves in 1826. This made the acquisition of illegally imported slaves by the planters very difficult, and it had ceased entirely by 1830.

In conclusion, the author convincingly shows that the effects of the abolition of the Dutch slave-trade on the economy of the Netherlands were minimal. Attention is also drawn to the fact that the Dutch slave-trade in the late eighteenth century did not produce a regional economic effect similar to the effect of the French slave-trade upon Nantes and its vicinity. The majority of the Dutch slavers left from Middelburg and Vlissingen; the colonial products from Surinam were mainly shipped to Amsterdam. Dr. Emmer also stresses that it was the unprofitable outcome of the Dutch investments in Surinam, which never recovered from the financial crash of 1773, not the abolition measures of 1814 and 1818, that induced the slavers to sail rather to Cuba or to Brazil than to the economically stagnant Dutch West Indies. Those two countries together with the French West-Indies sold more coffee and sugar on the free Dutch home market than did Surinam. Incidentally, Dr. Emmer (127) corrects Dr. Curtin's estimate (*The Atlantic Slave Trade. A Census*, 216) that during the period 1781-1810 some 80,000 African slaves were imported into the Netherlands West Indies. J. Postma has already shown that only some 12,000 slaves were imported into this region in Dutch ships during this period, although allowance must be made for a few thousand more imported by slavers of other nationalities. But in the same period English slavers were handling some 439,500 slaves, a further indication of how little the declining Dutch slave-trade was of importance to the economy of the Netherlands and its overseas possessions.

Needless to say, the author has made good use of his predecessors in this field, more particularly the recent works by W. S. Unger (1952-1960), J. Postma (1970), and J. P. Van der Voort (1973). More light on the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century Dutch slave-trade in West Africa can be expected from the ongoing researches of the Austrian scholar Franz Binder; but Dr. Emmer's work is likely to remain the Standard one on its topic. We may hope for a future edition with a less confusing pagination (this work being clobbered together out of two articles published in 1973 and 1974, respectively) and provided with a bibliography.

C. R. Boxer

G. C. J. J. Ottenheim, *De status van de PTT als staatsbedrijf in historisch perspectief* (Geschiedkundige uitgaven van het Staatsbedrijf der Posterijen, Telegrafie en Telefonie IV, Den Haag, 1974, 179 blz.).

Dit werk heeft de schrijver blijkens zijn 'Verantwoording' (xi) mede mogen dienen als proefschrift, maar het is in eerste instantie bedoeld geweest als een in ambtelijk verband opgezette terugblik op datgene, wat er in het verleden omtrent de rechtspositie van het tegenwoordige 'Staatsbedrijf der Posterijen, Telegrafie en Telefonie' also te doen is geweest en dat is niet weinig. Deze genesis heeft voor het geschrift zowel voordelen als nadelen opgeleverd. Als voordeel moet worden aangemerkt, dat de auteur gelegenheid heeft gehad zich ombekommerd te verdiepen in de, stellig zeer omvangrijke, archiefstukken, die op deze materie betrekking hebben en tevens, dat hem - hulde aan de generale directie van het bedrijf! - kennelijk vrijheid werd gegund om de resultaten van zijn onderzoek in ruime mate aan de openbaarheid prijs te geven. Het nadeel ligt hierin, dat hij, terwille van de volledigheid, de lezer wel moet overstelpen met een grote hoeveelheid van ambtelijke vertogen, waarin onder steeds zwaarwichtiger termen alsmaar dezelfde - naar de positie van de ondertekenaars uiteraard aan elkaar tegengestelde - standpunten verdedigd worden. Voor de algemeen-georiënteerde historicus is dit merendeels nauwelijks interessant: het meest belangwekkend zal voor hem - 'in historisch perspectief' - wel zijn de Inleiding, waaraan wij dan ook in het bijzonder aandacht zullen wijden, meer vermoedelijk dan gerechtvaardigd zal zijn in de ogen van hem, die zich speciaal wil verdiepen in de bewogen en verre van vlot verlopen geschiedenis van de rechtspositie van een onmiskenbaar hoogst belangrijk staatsbedrijf.

Het verhaal moet dan wel aanvangen met de nationaalverklaring van het postwezen in 1799, die echter niet het door sommigen beoogde effect (instelling van een in ruime mate zelfstandige dienst) opleverde. Met het herstel van onze onafhankelijkheid werden de posterijen echter een zelfstandige dienst onder leiding van de postmeester-generaal, die alleen voor het financiële verantwoordelijk was aan de minister van financiën, maar deze 'voor de ontwikkeling van het postwezen zo gunstige situatie' (1) mocht slechts kort duren. In 1819 worden de posterijen tezamen met de ontvangsten ondergebracht in één (overigens nog zelfstandig) directoraat-generaal en in 1832 schrompelt de postadministratie (1813) ineen tot een kleine afdeling van het department van financiën onder leiding van de referendaris Mr. Jacques Pols (1794-1864), die daarnaast sinds 1831 ook nog directeur van het Haagse postkantoor was (aldus *Ned. Patriciaat* (1916) 299).

Als hem in 1852 de titel van 'hoofddirecteur' wordt toegekend (3) is er intussen in Nederland wel iets veranderd: men is de posterijen gaan zien als niet alleen een bron van inkomsten voor het Rijk, doch (mede) als een instelling ten algemenen nutte met een dienstverlenende taak. Van Bosse's Postwet (1850) - in het parlement nog hevig aangevochten vanwege het daarin neergelegde staatsmonopolie - stootte de deur open voor een krachtige ontwikkeling en daarvan is door de dienstleiding dankbaar gebruik gemaakt. Men vergete ook niet de door een amendement-Godefroi mogelijk gemaakte invoering van de postzegel, die stellig tot de populariteit van de overheidspostdienst moet hebben bijgedragen, zie Van Welderen Rengers, *Schets eenerparlementaire geschiedenis van Nederland sedert 1849* (Den Haag, 1948). I, 34).

In datzelfde jaar 1852 kwam ook tot stand de wet 'tot regeling der gemeenschap door electromagnetische telegrafen', waarvan de toelichting onomwonden stelde, dat de invoering van de rijkstelegraafdienst (die niet onder Financiën, doch onder Binnenlandse Zaken zou ressorteren) geenszins fiscale doeleinden beoogde, doch uitsluitend dienst-