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A war of words : Dutch pro-Boer propaganda and the South African war (1899-1902)

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Part I Principles of propaganda (1880-1899)

Chapter 1: ‘New Holland’ in South Africa? Building a bridgehead between the Netherlands and the Boer republics

Historians agree that several groups in the Netherlands suddenly (re-)discovered the Boers after the Transvaal War (1880-1881). Drawing on ideas of racial kinship, called *stamverwantschap*, there was a lot of sympathy and enthusiasm for the so-called ‘cousins in South Africa’, which was expressed in many ways. The meaning of the pro-Boer movement, however, is subject to discussion, which is a reflection of its complex nature. On the one hand it can be argued that the Boers served as an example to people in the Netherlands, who took pride in their heroic struggle and saw it as a sign that the Dutch race had found new élan. As such the ideology of *stamverwantschap* played a marked role in society at the end of the nineteenth century, which can be characterised as the ‘climax of civil culture’ in the Netherlands.¹ But there were also overseas aspects to the pro-Boer movement. The main goal of the organisations that were established was to recruit emigrants for South Africa in order to assist in the development of the Boer republics and to strengthen their position against the British Empire. On the other hand, so many hoped, the existence of an independent state in South Africa where Dutch was spoken would mean that the influence of the Netherlands in that region would grow and lead to lucrative economic ties. Such sentiments were clearly reflected in a public letter written in 1886 by a number of intellectuals who asserted that the ties between the people in the Netherlands and the Boers were mutually beneficial.² Looking at the pro-Boer movement as a whole, its domestic and international aspects prompt the question as to in what ways it was related to ideas of imperialism and nationalism.

Some historians argue that the domestic dynamics of the sympathy for the Boer republics were detached from the international context. Henk te Velde holds that the idealised image of the Boers had nothing to do with the principles of Dutch foreign policy, but was a sign of the transformations taking place in domestic society and the changing political culture. In his study of Liberal nationalism, he shows that protagonists from this group were in search of unity and stabilisation at the dawn of the age of modern politics in the Netherlands, which was associated with increasing rivalry amongst the emerging parties.³ According to this view, the enthusiasm for the Transvaal was nothing more than a projection of ideals on South Africa that helped to strengthen the self-image of certain groups within the Dutch nation-state.

It cannot be denied that this domestic dynamism was present, and that the pro-Boer movement was linked to the formation of political parties. Certain groups of Liberals hoped

¹ Bank and Van Buuren, *1900 Hoogtij van burgerlijke cultuur*, 100-103.

² ‘De Nederlandsch Zuid-Afrikaansche Vereeniging’, in: *De Gids*, vol. 50, no. 4 (1886), 185-190, 185.

³ Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbeseft*, 82.

that the archaic Boers could inspire the Dutch people to return to seventeenth century values, which would result in a second Golden Age in the nation’s history. Driven by this desire, many conservatives embraced a modern form of nationalism that drew on ideas about national self-determination and international law.⁴ Other political groups also embraced the South African issue. The orthodox Protestants, under the leadership of jack of all trades Abraham Kuyper (who aside from being a political leader was also a professor and a journalist), saw the Boers with their fervent Calvinism as a shining example and hoped that he could forge an exclusive bond between his party and the Boer republics.⁵ The support for the Boers from these two political currents was the most unambiguous, but others also joined in, which indicates that these sympathies also contributed to a national sense of belonging. The Catholics, who at first sight had no religious ties with the ‘cousins’ in South Africa, supported their battle for independence wholeheartedly.⁶ And even a number of Socialists openly showed their sympathies for the Boers. Their support was the most ambivalent though, as they had to navigate between the Scylla of Boer conservatism and the Charibdys of British high finance. Moreover, domestic issues, such as the improvement of working conditions for labourers, were of greater priority to the Socialist movement at the time.⁷

Notwithstanding these facts, it can be argued that there was more to the pro-Boer movement than domestic politics only, which would suggest that Te Velde’s focus on nationalism is too narrow, because it leaves out the global context. Initially, the feelings of sympathy for the republics were seen by scholars in terms of the development of international law, which was associated with the tradition of neutrality.⁸ Several historians have considered the South African question to form part of the history of Dutch imperialism. Gerrit Schutte and Maarten Kuitenbrouwer both describe the pro-Boer movement as a structural attempt to expand Dutch influence in South Africa, something which can be considered to be an ‘informal’ and ‘cultural’ form of imperialism.⁹ It should be remembered that the Netherlands was a small nation, which had limiting effects on these ambitions in the context of international power relations. In addition, the measure of influence that Dutch emigrants could yield in South Africa – particularly in the Transvaal, which was the most popular destination – also needs to be critically assessed.

Such views resemble the way in which historians have been writing about the British

⁴ Ibidem, 76-82.

⁵ Van Koppen, *De geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, passim.

⁶ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 119; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 27; Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 187-189.

⁷ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 189-190; Pretorius, ‘The Dutch Social Democrats’. During the South African War some Socialists called for a general boycott of British goods, but there was little support from the leaders of the pro-Boer organisations and the representatives of the Boer republics.

⁸ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 18-19.

⁹ Ibidem, 129-130 and 190; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 41-42 and 205. The volume *Nederland en de Afrikaners* by Schutte that is used in this thesis appeared a year later than *Nederland en de opkomst van het moderne imperialisme* by M. Kuitenbrouwer, but contains articles that he published before. In fact, M. Kuitenbrouwer refers to these titles in his footnotes.

world. As has emerged from this literature, concepts of imperialism and nationalism did not always cancel each other out, but could co-exist and at times even overlapped. Kuitenbrouwer and Schutte have shown that both in the Netherlands and in South Africa, different groups emerged that considered it to be in their interest that there was a form of independence for the white, Dutch-speaking population in South Africa. Despite the tensions that surrounded these feelings, this shows that nationalism and imperialism were two sides of the same coin. It can be argued that a bridgehead emerged between the Netherlands and South Africa, consisting of people who had the ambition of strengthening the ties of *stamverwantschap* between these two parts of the world. This chapter aims to describe this interface and its nature. As Simon Potter has argued, it is important to examine in what way such a transnational space was organised and to place it in its historical context. Therefore, the following questions will be addressed: what institutions made up this network and how did they function? Which groups of people were connected to these institutions and what were their interests? In this respect it is not only important to look at the situation in the Netherlands, but to take into account the situation in South Africa too.

Another striking feature of the Dutch pro-Boer movement was that it did not only focus on the political and economic ties between the Netherlands and South Africa, but also the cultural ties, which was arguably the most important priority. In this way, the bridgehead acted as an information channel. Dutch publishers and journalists helped the Boers to propagate their views on the future of South Africa and to legitimise the existence of their republics. At the other end of the lines of communication, pro-Boer organisations tried to inform public opinion in the Netherlands in order to mobilise support for their efforts to strengthen the ties of *stamverwantschap*. As tensions mounted between the British and the Boers during the 1890s, such activities were increasingly considered to be of importance. The dominance of the British Empire was typified by the monopoly on undersea cables, which allowed the British coverage of colonial affairs to be dominant. Dutch-speaking institutions, whether in the Netherlands or South Africa, did not have the means to set up an alternative network of global telegraph lines. Still, people in these circles started to think about ways to counter British propaganda and to provide the European public with an alternative view on the situation in South Africa. This shows that the pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands should not only be seen in terms of domestic politics, but that it also had a strong connection with modern imperialism and the rising mass media.

Pro-Boers in the Netherlands

The bonds between the Netherlands and South Africa were established in 1652, when Jan van Riebeeck set foot on the coast of the Cape of Good Hope. He founded a permanent settlement with a refreshment station for Dutch ships on their way to the East Indies. With the British occupation of the Cape Colony in 1806 and the formal takeover in 1814, the ties were largely

broken off. In the 1830s and 1840s several thousands of descendants of the former Dutch East India Company employees – the Boers – migrated into the interior during the Great Trek, but this was virtually unknown in the Netherlands at the time. Similarly, the formal establishment of two republics, the South African Republic (SAR) – also known as the Transvaal – and the Orange Free State (OFS) in 1852 and 1854, did not arouse much public attention. South Africa was far away, communication was slow and in the Netherlands there was not enough willingness to invest in improvements. Although many travellers to the East Indies passed by the Cape along the way, almost no Dutchmen visited the Boer republics. Up to 1880 an average of four publications about South Africa appeared annually in the Netherlands, and no figures are known about emigration in this period. Some individual philanthropists, missionaries and businessmen took initiatives to persuade people to settle in South Africa, but because the journey was long and expensive, not many emigrants chose it as a destination. The few that did go sent back negative accounts of the laziness and backwardness of the Boers. Another common complaint was their harsh attitude towards the black population. Such criticism in print contributed to the perception that the Boers blocked the advent of Christianity and civilisation amongst the peoples of Africa.¹⁰

The annexation of the the Transvaal by Britain in 1877 did not initially rouse any interest outside the small groups of people who were interested in South Africa. There were some protests, but these were largely ignored.¹¹ During the two years that followed, the unease about the annexation grew slowly. The Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 raised doubts with regard to the British policy towards black Africans, especially amongst Protestants.¹² There was also a great deal of disappointment about the failure of the British Liberal government to come to an agreement about self-government.¹³ The big turnaround came, however, when the Boers in the Transvaal took up arms to regain their independence in 1880. This led to an enthusiastic response from many groups in Dutch society. The most successful initiative to mobilise the public was taken by a number of professors from Utrecht, headed by the biologist Pieter Harting. On the 23 December 1880, he published an open letter in a local newspaper that called upon the British people and their sense of justice to end the war and return independence to the Transvaal. Unlike previous protests, this address to the British nation received much attention, was reproduced in the national press and even published by some foreign papers. In the following weeks, 6,082 people, including many influential figures, signed the document. Subsequently, a committee was founded in Utrecht, chaired by Harting, which aimed to co-ordinate the campaign for the Transvaal in the whole country. In the meantime committees had been set up in other towns and cities, of which the one from Amsterdam was the most prominent. The most radical group came into being in Purmerend,

¹⁰ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 14-16; idem, *Nederlandse publicaties over Zuid-Afrika*, 9-10.

¹¹ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 118; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 22-23.

¹² Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 23.

¹³ Van Koppen, *De geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 67-68.

collecting 11,000 autographs for a petition to Queen Victoria. Some members even suggested that they establish contact with Irish nationalists and form a militia that could go and fight in South Africa. Although this extreme plan was not realised, it caused great anxiety amongst some of the more conservative groups that supported the Boers.¹⁴

In order to ensure more solid and lasting support for the Boer republics, the leaders of the Amsterdam and Utrecht committees decided to join forces in a central body, the *Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Vereeniging* (Dutch South African Society, hereafter NZAV). A broad alliance of prominent Liberals and Protestants took up positions in the executive committee of the new society that was founded on 12 May 1881, with Harting as honorary president.¹⁵ According to the statutes, its main purpose was to strengthen the ties between the Netherlands and the Boer republics in South Africa. This was envisaged in two ways: firstly to establish closer ties with the Boers and, with their consent, to create and develop institutions to stimulate agriculture, trade, industry and other material interests and secondly to inform the public in the Netherlands and in other European countries about the situation in South Africa – which shows that the NZAV considered propaganda a priority from the very beginning.¹⁶ The organisation started off with 300 members, a number which rapidly grew to 1,000 in 1886, a fact that can be accounted for by the NZAV’s appointment of correspondents for the first time in that year, who then became active recruiters. Until 1899, the membership steadily rose to about 1,600 members, with a temporary peak of 1,800 in 1896 as a result of the Jameson Raid.¹⁷

Despite the article in the constitution of the NZAV that stated that it was a non-political organisation, the harmony between the Liberals and the Protestants in the executive committee did not last for long. Harting and the Utrecht professor in international law, J. de Louter, two prominent Liberals, thought that the Protestant faction headed by Abraham Kuyper had too much influence. They tried to bypass their rivals by appointing a commissioner, who was to go to South Africa and take charge of affairs there. The candidate they had in mind, H.F. Jonkman, was a close ally of theirs. They staged their coup during a meeting when many Protestant members of the executive committee were absent. Afterwards, Kuyper protested vehemently and eventually cancelled his membership of the NZAV, together with other Calvinist members of the executive committee.¹⁸ Although the NZAV was generally seen as a Liberal bulwark after this incident, several Protestants remained active in the organisation.¹⁹ This raises the question as to whether the pro-Boer movement should be seen in the context of the so-called process of pillarisation, during which public life in the Netherlands was divided along ideological lines. Although domestic political tensions

¹⁴ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 118-119; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 24-28.

¹⁵ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 121; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 42-44.

¹⁶ ZA, *NZAV Jaarverslag 1881-1882*, appendix 1.

¹⁷ Houwers, *Nationalistische commotie in Nederland*, 28-29. The Jameson Raid will be treated later this chapter.

¹⁸ Van Koppen, *De geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 95-99.

¹⁹ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 78.

clearly did have an effect on the early NZAV, such considerations were certainly not the only interests at stake, something which will be further discussed in this section.

The broad sympathy for the Boers in the Netherlands was seen by many people within the NZAV as an opportunity to strengthen the ties with them and in its early years, many plans were formulated to achieve this. Some even dreamed of a ‘New Holland’ (*Nieuw Holland*), which could serve as a colonial refuge for the Dutch population in case of a German invasion of the motherland. Moreover, it was hoped that the new élan would push the Netherlands back up amongst the great powers of the world and restore the prominent place it once had held in the days of the seventeenth century republic.²⁰ Historians have rightfully questioned the realism behind these grand ideas. In fact, the NZAV was a heterogeneous organisation and it should rather be seen as a platform where different visions on Dutch-South African relations were discussed.²¹ Aside from the tensions between people of different political persuasions within the organisation, there were also other problems. Many members, for example, had different interests due to their professional background. The NZAV could boast that it drew members from several influential sectors of Dutch society, such as politics, business, academia and the press. At first sight it would seem that this variation was its strength, because it meant that the pro-Boer network was broadly spread. But there were also disadvantages to this. Although many people sympathised with the idea of a closer *stamverwantschap*, their responsibilities in daily life did not always allow them to promote it to the fullest. The effectiveness of the pro-Boer movement therefore was a central concern to its adherents, and the reason why the NZAV prioritised propaganda was to mobilise public opinion, which could lend more weight to its plans. But this was no easy task. The diversity of interests represented in the NZAV made it difficult to communicate a single agenda.

The biggest clash between the ideal of *stamverwantschap* and harsh reality was in the field of foreign policy. Many prominent politicians were closely involved in the founding of the NZAV. Several leading figures from the Liberal movement, such as future Foreign Minister W.H. de Beaufort and future President of the Upper House of Parliament (*Eerste Kamer*) A. van Naamen van Eemnes were active members in the early years (the latter even combined his high function in Parliament with a place in the executive committee of the society). Kuyper, who after his fallout with the NZAV in 1884 remained interested in the fate of the Boers, became first minister in 1901. These people, however, kept their personal sympathies strictly separate from their responsibilities as statesmen. The NZAV, for instance, did not receive any support from the government.²² Anglo-Boer rivalry was a delicate matter for Dutch statesmen. On the one hand, the sympathy for the Boers was a domestic force to be

²⁰ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 125-126; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 47-50; Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 349-351.

²¹ For the notion of imperial lobby groups as platforms or ‘arenas’, cf. Driver, *Geography Militant*, 46.

²² Schutte, ‘De organisatie van de stamverwantschap’.

reckoned with, especially because the issue was brought up in Parliament at several occasions and, as such, influenced the electorate. On the other hand, the international situation would not allow overt support for the Boer republics. In the light of the territorial safety of the colonial possessions in the Dutch East Indies, a confrontation with Great Britain could not be afforded. Especially during the Borneo crisis of the 1880s, Dutch statesmen became aware of their country’s relative vulnerability and feared that the British would annex parts of the Indonesian archipelago if they lost their temper over other issues. In this equation, Dutch interests in South Africa were far less important than those in the East Indies.²³

This reluctance on the part of the government became apparent as early as February 1881, when a proposal from G.J.T. Beelaerts van Blokland – the future consul-general of the SAR in the Netherlands – for mediation between Great Britain and the Boers was refused because it might have damaged diplomatic relations.²⁴ The NZAV too received aloof responses from state-officials on several occasions. In the 1880s, it campaigned for the establishment of Dutch consulates in both the SAR and the Cape Colony, which only succeeded after much lobbying.²⁵ At times, the reserved attitude of the government was criticised in the press and in Parliament. However, many figureheads of the pro-Boer movement, such as academics who were closely linked to the political elites, recognised the difficult diplomatic situation of the government and accepted its cautious policy of neutrality.²⁶

A sector which at first glance seemed to have more interests the Boer republics was the business community. Bossenbroek has shown that of the 1,300 directors of colonial companies, no less than 150 were members of the NZAV. This meant that the society drew more people from that sector than the two largest lobby groups promoting commercial interests in the Dutch East Indies together.²⁷ On paper, the prospects in South Africa looked very promising indeed. Trade with white settler communities was lucrative, and it was believed that the Boer population would prefer Dutch produce over British goods.²⁸ Moreover, the expanding economies of the Boer republics, particularly the SAR after the gold rush of 1886, were in dire need of investment. Demands for more infrastructure also opened up opportunities. Contemporary pro-Boers hoped that such considerations would provide an extra incentive for investors, but in practice this was not the case. By 1900 around fl. 25,000,000 had been invested in the whole of South Africa by the Dutch business community. This looks meagre compared to the capital raised for enterprise in the Dutch East Indies, which amounted to fl. 390,000,000.²⁹ And that sum is dwarfed by the £ 75,000,000 (at the time about fl. 900,000,000) that had been invested in the Transvaal goldmines up until 1899,

²³ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 204 and 207-209.

²⁴ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 30-31.

²⁵ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders II*, 13 and n. 14; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 86.

²⁶ Otterspeer, ‘Boeren en academici’.

²⁷ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 260.

²⁸ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders II*, 26.

²⁹ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 112.

mainly by British capitalists.³⁰

The Dutch business community’s reluctance to actually provide money for projects that would promote the cause of *stamverwantschap* is well illustrated by the tedious process to raise money for the only successful Dutch company in South Africa in that period, the *Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg Maatschappij* (Dutch South-African Railway Company, hereafter NZASM). In 1884, a Transvaal deputation visited the Netherlands after negotiations in London. In Amsterdam, they granted the directors of the NZASM a preliminary concession to build a railway line between Pretoria and Delagoa Bay. Apart from the business opportunities, this railway was also important to the strategic position of the SAR. Dutch financiers, however, reacted reluctantly. It would take three long years to raise the required fl. 14,000,000, the majority of which came from Germany.³¹ Other plans, such as the attempt to gain access to the port of Delagoa Bay and establish a shipping service between Amsterdam and South East Africa in 1889, were even more problematic. Although Boer supporters stressed the strategic advantages of a route to Southern Africa that did not depend on British ports, not enough money could be found for the initiative for the time being.³²

Another distinctive social group that was represented in the NZAV were members of Dutch academia. Of the 180 professors in the Netherlands, no less than 81 had signed Harting’s address to the British nation in the early weeks of 1881.³³ Many scholars remained active in the NZAV afterwards, such as R. Fruin, C.B. Spruyt, J. de Louter, J.P. Moltzer and J.W. Gunning, who became members of the executive committee. Because neither of the Boer republics had a university, these men wanted, amongst other things, to improve the opportunities for South Africans to go and study in the Netherlands. In 1885, the NZAV founded the *studiefonds* (study fund) that provided scholarships for this purpose.³⁴ Moreover, it successfully protested against several requirements that the education law set for exchange students, which were abolished in 1887. This did not immediately lead to a great number of South Africans coming to the Netherlands: until 1902 only 45 students participated in the program.³⁵ Furthermore, the matter led to further tensions between Liberals and Protestants. In general, the established universities were Liberal institutions, but in 1880 Abraham Kuyper had founded the Free University, which was explicitly Protestant. When plans were formulated for the exchange program, Kuyper tried to persuade the SAR government to allow its citizens to attend his university only, because it would be the place where they, as

³⁰ Saunders and Smith, ‘Southern Africa, 1795-1910’, 609.

³¹ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders* II, 122 and 131-148; Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 102.

³² Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders* II, 100-102. A shipping route between the Netherlands and South Africa was finally inaugurated in 1919, when whole region had become part of the British Empire. De Graaff, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap*, 134. For plans for a shipping line during the South African War cf. chapter 4.

³³ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 77.

³⁴ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 52.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 56-57. In the course of the twentieth century the student exchange program would become more substantial. De Graaff, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap*, 319-320.

Calvinists, would feel most at home. This plea was ignored by the Boers, however, much to the chagrin of the Protestant leader. Other universities in the Netherlands, especially the one in Utrecht, became more popular destinations for Afrikaner students than the Free University.³⁶

Higher education was not the only concern of the NZAV. To ensure a more intensive relation between the Netherlands and the Boer republics, language was seen as an absolute requirement. High-Dutch, or *Hoog-Hollandsch*, was the official language of the Boer republics and later of the Union of South Africa until 1925. It was also noted, however, that Afrikaans as a vernacular, which differed significantly from *Hoog-Hollandsch* on several points, was on the rise from the late nineteenth century. Moreover, it was argued that the complicated grammatical rules made Dutch far less popular at schools in the Cape than English, which students considered to be easier to learn. Many pro-Boers were therefore involved in an organisation that advocated the simplification of the Dutch language – the *Vereeniging tot vereenvoudiging van onze schrijftaal*. It was argued that a simpler form of High Dutch would benefit the ties with the ‘kinsmen’ in South Africa. The professor of law J.P. Moltzer, who was also a member of the *Raad van State* (Privy Council) and the executive committee of the NZAV, was one of the main protagonists of this organisation.³⁷

Apart from scholars, many teachers were interested in this issue as well. H.J. Emous (1848-1933), who was the headmaster of a Protestant school in Amsterdam, was one of the most diligent activists in this field. In the 1890s he was a member of the school fund (*schoolfonds*) and the language fund (*taalfonds*), two subcommittees of the NZAV. In this capacity, he was in close contact with Moltzer, although politically they were linked to opposing parties.³⁸ In addition, he was the editor of the periodical of the *Vereeniging tot vereenvoudiging van onze schrijftaal*, which shows that the schemes for language reform and the improvement of primary education in the Transvaal were related, although it should be noted that there were different views on the matter of spelling reforms.³⁹ From the early days onwards, these subcommittees of the NZAV organised shipments of Dutch books to schools and libraries throughout South Africa.⁴⁰ Another priority of these committees was the recruitment of capable teachers for Dutch-speaking schools in the republics.⁴¹ As a member of the *schoolfonds*, which was mainly devoted to this latter activity, and as the editor of the pedagogic periodical *Christelijk Schoolblad*, Emous kept in contact with many of these teachers, and from 1897 he published their letters from the Transvaal in this magazine.⁴²

A sector of Dutch society that has been largely overlooked by previous historians of the

³⁶ Van Koppen, *De geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 127-130.

³⁷ For the language question cf. chapter 2.

³⁸ Letters from J.P. Moltzer to H.J. Emous. ZA, collection Emous, EM 11.

³⁹ *Brinkman's Catalogus van boeken, 1891-1900 and 1901-1910*. Cf. chapter 2.

⁴⁰ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 51-52 and 87.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 86-87.

⁴² Lammers, *Kent gij dat volk vol heldenmoed?*, 55.

pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands is the press. Between 1880 and 1902 a vast amount of material was published on the South African question. It is difficult, however, to get a good overall picture of the available material because few papers or individual journalists in the Netherlands have left archives. Another complicating factor is that most authors at that time published anonymously or under a pseudonym. These combined factors make it difficult to say something about the organisation of the press coverage of South African affairs. Nonetheless, there are indications that journalists played an important role in the early NZAV. One of the founders of the Amsterdam Transvaal Committee in 1880 was A.G.C. van Duyl, editor-in-chief of *Het Algemeen Dagblad*, an influential newspaper. He has been described as one of the ‘hotheads’ of the movement, who actively tried to mobilise public opinion in order to put pressure on the government.⁴³ His successor at *Het Algemeen Handelsblad*, Charles Boissevain, also became deeply involved in the pro-Boer movement, and was a member of the executive committee of the NZAV in 1901 and 1902. Generally, Boissevain is considered to be one of the greatest propagandists of Dutch interests in South Africa, and many of his famous editorials contained passionate diatribes on this subject. In addition, during the South African War he wrote several important pamphlets that reached an international audience.⁴⁴ Abraham Kuyper, apart from being the political leader of the Protestants and a professor at the Free University, was also the editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *De Standaard* until he was elected as first minister in 1901. He wrote the majority of the editorials and had a personal column, in which the South African situation frequently featured. In addition, much attention was given to the fate of the Boer republics in the regular articles of *De Standaard*. Between February and April 1881, for instance, a special section was reserved for the events in the Transvaal, placed in between domestic and foreign news.⁴⁵

This last example shows that the attention of the Dutch press for South Africa grew exponentially after the battle of Majuba Hill (1881). In subsequent years, events like the 1884 visit by the SAR deputation to the Netherlands and the Jameson Raid continued to draw much coverage in newspapers. In the weeks before and after the outbreak of the South African War in October 1899, news from South Africa even dominated the press in the Netherlands.⁴⁶ In general, the NZAV was satisfied with the attitude of Dutch journalists, although there were some doubts about certain correspondents. In the annual report of 1888-1889 it was mentioned that an increasing number of newspapers had contacts in South Africa who provided them with news. ‘[N]ot everything that we get to see about this subject appears to us to have been based on correct observations. In many cases, however, we can be well satisfied about the light that is spread in this manner’.⁴⁷

⁴³ ‘heethoofden’. Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbesef*, 73.

⁴⁴ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 292-293.

⁴⁵ Van Koppen, *De geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 25.

⁴⁶ Geerts, *Verzuilde Boerenliefde*.

⁴⁷ ‘niet alles, wat wij dienaangaande te zien krijgen ons voorkomt op juiste beschouwingen te berusten. In vele gevallen echter kunnen wij zeer tevreden zijn, over het licht dat op deze wijze verspreid wordt’. ZA, NZAV

Although this remark shows that Dutch editors at the time were interested in letters from South Africa (and particularly from the Transvaal), it is hard to get an overview of the correspondents that contributed to their papers. It must be kept in mind that, certainly when compared to other countries, the Dutch press was rather unprofessional at the end of the nineteenth century. There were no independent national news agencies nor international telegraph lines, so that Dutch newspapers had to depend on foreign press offices, such as Reuters (British), Havas (French) and Wolff (German) for the latest reports about developments around the world.⁴⁸ The establishment of professional reporters in foreign countries was rare. In many cases the term ‘correspondent’ referred to nothing more than an expatriate who wrote letters about the developments in the country where he lived.⁴⁹ This also seems to have been the case in South Africa. Articles that appeared in the Netherlands about the NZASM were generally written by the Dutch staff of that company, such as M.E. de Wildt, who regularly contributed to the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (NRC)*. Usually these articles tried to persuade Dutchmen to join the railway company in the SAR.⁵⁰ The Dutch emigrant Frans Engelenburg, proprietor of the newspaper *De Volksstem*, was also active as a correspondent for European media. From 1896, he supplied the Havas news agency with cables from the Transvaal, which he sent to the office of the company in The Hague.⁵¹ This company was a major supplier of news, and it is therefore likely that Dutch journalists had access to these reports. Moreover, papers in the Netherlands received South African periodicals by mail and published reviews of these magazines.⁵²

To summarise the previous paragraphs, it can safely be said that the South African question did receive increasing attention after 1880, given the large variety of social groups that supported the Boers in the Netherlands. The tensions between the Liberals and the Protestants do show that domestic politics played a role in this debate, but it should not be forgotten that there were other considerations as well. In the realms of foreign policy and business, the ideal of *stamverwantschap* had limited leverage due to the neutrality of the Netherlands and the reluctance to invest in South African enterprises. There were, however, also small successes for the pro-Boers, such as the establishment of diplomatic representations in the Boer republics and the Delagoa railway line. An exchange program for Afrikaner students was started in higher education. These projects were co-ordinated by the NZAV, which acted as a platform from which protagonists of such plans could propagate them. In other words, propaganda was the core business of the society, and the relations with the press were considered to be of vital importance. In this respect there were severe problems too. The underdeveloped state of the press in the Netherlands made it hard to establish independent

Jaarverslag 1888-1889, 23.

⁴⁸ Hemels and Schneider, *De Nederlandse Krant 1618-1978*, 473-477.

⁴⁹ Wijffjes, *De Journalistiek in Nederland*, 45.

⁵⁰ De Jong, *Die Lewensomstandighede en Kulturele Bydrage*, 28.

⁵¹ NASA, Gustav Preller collection, A 787, 206-209; Wallach, *Die Volmaakte „Gentleman”*, 22-23.

⁵² Newspapers usually referred to this material as ‘*Afrikaansche mail*’, African mail.

lines of communication with South Africa, and much of the news was supplied by foreign agencies. Still, a growing amount of information reached the Netherlands during the last decades of the nineteenth century, which was not least the result of the growing number of Dutchmen in the Boer republics. These distinctive groups of emigrants will be dealt with in the next section.

Hollanders in South Africa

The most important goal of the NZAV propaganda campaign in the 1880s and 1890s was to recruit emigrants to go to South Africa and so help to develop the Boer republics. Aside from support to existing emigration organisations, the NZAV founded her own *informatie bureau voor emigranten* (information bureau for emigrants) in 1888.⁵³ This bureau tried to persuade potential migrants to choose South Africa above other destinations, of which the United States of America was the most popular. It was argued that Dutchmen could more easily retain their identity amongst the Boers, would feel more at home in a Calvinistic society and would support the ideal of *stamverwantschap*.⁵⁴ In addition, a *voorschotbank* (lending bank) was established that provided financial advances to people who wanted to settle in South Africa.⁵⁵ A central concern was to select suitable emigrants that could contribute to the Boer cause. One group the recruiters tried to target were farmers. But, although the Dutch agricultural sector was in dire straits and unemployment had recently risen, not many farmers were keen on leaving because of the limited prospects in Southern Africa for unskilled labour. This could explain why most Dutch emigrants to the region were educated people, with roots in the higher social classes and an urban environment.⁵⁶

Their main destination was the Transvaal, where the gold boom of the 1880s and the benevolent attitude of the Kruger government towards so-called *Hollanders* (the term used to describe people from the Netherlands) provided the most opportunities. It should be kept in mind, however, that they did not swamp the country. There is no official census material available from the SAR, but decades later one former administrator estimated that there were approximately 226,000 white inhabitants in the republic, of which 150,000 were born in South Africa.⁵⁷ Others have established that 5,000 to 6,500 people from the Netherlands settled in the Transvaal between 1884 and 1899, which, given the size of the white population – let alone the total population – was not an overwhelming number.⁵⁸ Nor is it when

⁵³ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 87.

⁵⁴ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders II*, 44.

⁵⁵ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 87.

⁵⁶ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders II*, 45-46; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 102-103.

⁵⁷ The figures provided here are derived from the memoirs of the former SAR administrator, C.G.S. Sandberg (a *Hollander*) who returned to the Netherlands during the South African War. During the Second World War he supported the Nazis and published his memoirs as anti-British propaganda. It seems, however, that Sandberg took the figures from SAR documents in his possession after he had smuggled them out of the British-occupied Transvaal. Sandberg, *Twintig jaren onder Krugers Boeren*, 185.

⁵⁸ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 102.

compared to the stream of other European immigrants to the mines of the Witwatersrand, drawn by the enormous quantities of gold that were extracted there – the so-called *Uitlanders*. It is probable that of the 75,000 *Uitlanders* in 1896, no less than 41,000 were British.⁵⁹

The small numbers of Dutch emigrants, however, should not obscure the relatively important position they had in the SAR between 1884 and 1899. Contrary to many *Uitlanders*, who worked mainly as unskilled labourers, *Hollanders* were often well educated and held high offices. Moreover, the Transvaal government actively tried to keep the *Uitlanders* marginalised so that the SAR would remain under Boer control. *Uitlanders* mainly lived in Johannesburg, near the mines. There they could only yield limited political power, because they were denied full citizen rights, including the right to vote, which led to dissatisfaction amongst some of their leaders. Judging by the lukewarm reactions of the majority of the *Uitlanders*, however, it does not seem likely that many of them were interested in anything other than making their fortune as quickly as possible.⁶⁰ In contrast, many *Hollanders* lived in the capital, Pretoria, and performed important government duties that, because of the limited opportunities for higher education in the SAR, could not be done by the Boers themselves. Even though President Kruger preferred administrators who were born in the Transvaal, he chose people from the Netherlands because he trusted them more than British immigrants or even Afrikaners from the Cape, who he considered to have been spoiled by English influences.⁶¹ This led to the establishment of so-called *Hollander bolwerken* (*Hollander* bulwarks).⁶²

The privileged position of Dutchmen was not uncontested. Many groups in Transvaal society carried a strong *Hollanderhaat* (hate directed against *Hollanders*). Much of this resentment was a result of the differing backgrounds of many emigrants from the Netherlands and the Boers. Most of the newcomers were born in an urban and cosmopolitan environment, while SAR society was predominantly rural, with conservative and patriarchal values. Moreover, many Dutchmen had adopted more moderate views on faith, if not having completely abandoned it, while Boers were unshaken in their Calvinism.⁶³ This explains why people from the Netherlands were at times appalled by the rudeness and xenophobic attitude of the Boers, a complaint that can be found in many letters home.⁶⁴ The distrust was mutual. Most inhabitants of the SAR did not like any foreign influences whatsoever, even if they came from a nation that claimed to be closely related to them. In their eyes, many Dutch were badly behaved, drinking too much and cursing in public. Finally, the Boers accused

⁵⁹ Sandberg, *Twintig jaren onder Krugers Boeren*, 185. Cf. Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 47. Smith does not mention any figures, but thinks it is possible that there were as many British *Uitlanders* as there were burghers who had the vote (male, white adults who were born in South Africa). Looking at Sandberg's figures, this does not seem likely.

⁶⁰ Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 90-91.

⁶¹ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders* I, 118; Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, 132-133.

⁶² Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 103.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 116-118.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, 121-122.

immigrants of arrogance and contempt for the simple life led in the republics.⁶⁵ As will appear from the following pages, *Hollanderhaat* manifested itself on specific issues that contemporaries associated with the presence of influential Dutch emigrants. Apparently, the idea of *stamverwantschap*, although it was embedded in certain institutions in the Transvaal, was not as popular in South Africa as many people in the Netherlands believed it to be. This is a reminder that this concept meant different things to different people.

The most noticeable bulwark of the *Hollanders* in the SAR was the bureaucracy. Already during the British occupation of the SAR (1877-1881), 21 of the 88 state officials came from the Netherlands. When national institutions expanded rapidly in 1886 as a result of the gold rush, the number of Dutch officials rose too, although their relative share declined. During the 1890s, on average approximately 18% of all SAR officials were born in the Netherlands. In 1897, their number was 306, compared to 682 of their colleagues who were born in the Transvaal and 478 who came from the Cape colony.⁶⁶ Many *Hollander* officials still had quite influential positions: in 1897, thirteen of the twenty-three highest functions in the executive and judiciary branches of government were occupied by people from the Netherlands. Some important departments even had an almost entirely Dutch staff, such as the state office (which combined the prime minister’s office and the foreign office), the department of education and the departments involved with infrastructure.⁶⁷

The most famous of the *Hollander* statesmen in the Transvaal was Willem Johannes Leyds (1859-1940). In 1884, just after he had obtained a doctoral degree at the University of Amsterdam, his tutors, one of whom was Moltzer, introduced him to the SAR deputation that visited the Netherlands. Leyds was persuaded by his professors and Kruger to accept the post of state attorney and left for the Transvaal with his young bride. In 1888 he was elected as state secretary, but only took up the position a year later because he had not yet reached the required age of 30. He was re-elected twice and resigned in 1898, when he became the most important diplomatic representative of the Transvaal in Europe. Although Leyds, who in his student days had been a well-known figure in cultural circles in Amsterdam, had a totally different background from the boorish Kruger, who had been born during the Great Trek, the two worked closely for more than a decade, and indication of how well their personalities complemented each other.⁶⁸ During his career in the Transvaal, Leyds lived through dynamic times due to the transformation that took place after the gold rush of 1886. Although he had both strengths (his intellect and charm) and weaknesses (his vanity and stubbornness), his biographer Lynette van Niekerk is of the opinion that his work made an important

⁶⁵ Ibidem, 124.

⁶⁶ Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, 132.

⁶⁷ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 103-105.

⁶⁸ In later life, Leyds himself mentioned this often. Although there are no sources that back this up, there are also no sources that dispel it. Van Niekerk, *Kruger se regterhand*, 384-385.

contribution to the development of modern South Africa.⁶⁹

Two particular groups in SAR society reacted against the political influence of *Hollanders*, and Leyds in particular. Firstly, the *Uitlanders*, who associated the Dutch immigrants with the Kruger regime that kept them marginalised and disenfranchised. Despite their demands for more political rights, the influence of this group remained limited, because they were effectively barred from the government and the most important assembly, the *Volksraad*.⁷⁰ A second group were the so-called 'progressives' who supported closer union with the Cape and the newly founded *Afrikaner Bond*, which argued for a South African federation. This idea stood in sharp contrast to Kruger's policy of keeping the SAR independent. Moreover, the president had an innate distrust of Cape politicians like Jan Hofmeyr, whom he thought to be too conciliatory towards British statesmen like Cecil Rhodes.⁷¹ The party of the 'progressives' in the Transvaal, under the leadership of General Piet Joubert, was politically active because it consisted of people who had been born in the SAR and thus had the vote. In the election campaign of 1893, they put the recruitment policy of Kruger high on the agenda, openly attacking Leyds, who was seen as the most important exponent of *Hollander* influence.⁷² This campaign stirred up a lot of controversy, and the election results were close. Kruger nevertheless managed to secure victory, and the impact of *Hollanderhaat* on the political landscape of the SAR should therefore not be overestimated.⁷³

Another (in)famous *Hollander* bulwark was the NZASM. Although Dutch investors did not provide much of the finances, most of the directors and over half the skilled employees were of Dutch origin. In total, 1,700 people from the Netherlands were employed by the company in the Transvaal.⁷⁴ The main project was the railway between Pretoria and Delagoa Bay, which was finished in 1895. Afterwards, the NZASM became responsible for running it. Up until the South African War, which marked the end of the Dutch company, the line was rather profitable under the management of Gerard Middelberg (1846-1916), who was its director in Pretoria from 1891 to the beginning of 1899. Moreover, the railway opened up a window to the rest of the world for the SAR. In this way, as Robert de Jong has argued, the NZASM contributed to the development of the Transvaal as a modern state.⁷⁵ In addition, the Delagoa Bay line was an important strategic asset, making the SAR less dependent on trade routes that went via the Cape. There was therefore much political controversy in 1888 when the concession (that had been granted in 1884 by the SAR deputation in Amsterdam) was put to the *Volksraad* for ratification. The opposition in the SAR preferred closer federation with the Cape and therefore proposed an alternative, a line to Kimberley, which would tap into the

⁶⁹ Ibidem, 41-185. Cf. Van Winter, *Dr Leyds en Zuid-Afrika*, 24.

⁷⁰ Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 48-51.

⁷¹ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders I*, 109.

⁷² Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, 127-130.

⁷³ Ibidem, 138.

⁷⁴ Jong, *Die Lewensomstandighede en Kulturele Bydrage*, 10.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, 236.

railway network of the colony. British companies were interested in this project too and tried to influence the decision. Nevertheless, Kruger stood his ground and eventually the NZASM concession was approved.⁷⁶ As a result, the company was seen by many critics as an important symbol of what in their eyes was the nefarious *Hollander* influence and nepotistic nature of the Kruger regime.⁷⁷

Another controversial aspect of Kruger’s policy was his habit of granting monopolies on certain products to befriended businessmen, which fed allegations of corruption. One of the most infamous examples was the dynamite monopoly, which was attacked by the Rand miners because they claimed it seriously impeded their work.⁷⁸ Here too *Hollanders* were associated with this practice, and Leyds, as a representative of the Kruger government, was often accused of taking bribes. Van Niekerk has argued that the state secretary, who personally believed in *laissez-faire* economics, was against the establishment of monopolies in principle, and certainly did not accept illicit money in the dynamite case. Nonetheless, he thought that this policy served a political purpose in order to keep the power of the *Uitlander* mining magnates at bay and so protect the national integrity of the SAR.⁷⁹ Leyds was also involved in the Selati affaire, which arose over a controversial concession for a railway line to goldmines in the north-eastern Transvaal. In this case too Van Niekerk exempts Leyds from wrong-doing, but thinks his personal interest was due to his vanity, because a town was named after him in the region. When it appeared that some of the people involved in this project had committed fraud, Leyds himself initiated a trial in Pretoria.⁸⁰

Other *Hollanders* seemed to have fewer qualms about the existence of monopolies. D.H. Schmüll, an entrepreneur from Amsterdam who was involved in the establishment of the NZAV, settled in the Transvaal in 1885. There, he tried to get hold of concessions for copper and iron mining, but ended up with the exclusive rights for the production of matches.⁸¹ Schmüll’s broad business interests were surpassed by his colleague G.R. Ockerse, who was not satisfied with applying for concessions, such as for pottery and mining, only, but came up with more creative ideas, such as a scheme to extract oil from groundnuts. Eventually he got his hands on a health spa on the Transvaal Highveldt.⁸² The work of the historian P.J. van Winter, from the 1930s, provides the best overview of these entrepreneurial adventures, which more often than not ended in bitter disappointment. Many businessmen were blinded by the pro-Boer atmosphere in the Netherlands during the 1880s and 1890s and thought that Dutch enterprise would be welcomed with open arms. On arrival in the Transvaal, however, these

⁷⁶ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders* I, 109-130.

⁷⁷ Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, 128.

⁷⁸ Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 51-56 and 212-218.

⁷⁹ Van Niekerk, *Kruger se regterhand*, 128.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 102-103. During the South African War the case came before a court in Brussels during which the financiers of the Selati railway were convicted for fraud.

⁸¹ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders* II, 39.

⁸² *Ibidem*, 36-37.

hopes appeared to be false because Dutchmen were relatively inexperienced in vital sectors, such as mining. Moreover, the commercial demands of the Boers were rather different from those of the public in the Netherlands.⁸³ In addition Van Winter argued that these initiatives failed to contribute to closer bonds between South Africa and the Netherlands, because the Dutch businessmen did not co-operate with each other. ‘[Concerning trade and industry] the Dutch *volksgeist* found its expression in personal development, rather than the creation of important national power centres’.⁸⁴

People with more spiritual inclinations went to the SAR as clergymen. Missionary work in the region had been a longstanding tradition and the majority of Dutch travellers that went to the Boer republics before 1880 had a religious background. Orthodox Protestants (*Gereformeerden*) in particular thought they could get a strong foothold in the Transvaal. Likewise their religious competitors, the reformed Protestants (*Hervormden*) developed plans to enlarge their influence amongst the Boers. The tensions between these denominations already surfaced in 1859 when the Dutch minister D. Postma forced a schism in the Transvaal religious community by leaving the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk*, which was the most common denomination amongst Afrikaners. His new *Vrije Gereformeerde Kerk* was the rallying-point for the so-called *Doppers*, people with ultra-orthodox persuasions.⁸⁵ This schism probably contributed to the growing mutual distrust between Kruger, who was a prominent *Dopper*, and the *Afrikaner Bond* in the Cape, which was dominated by people who remained loyal to the Reformed Church.⁸⁶

Although the impact of *Hollanders* on the religious landscape in South Africa was substantial, it remains to be seen if it had any wider consequences for the politics of the Transvaal. Not all *Hollanders* had an unfaltering faith and particularly Leyds’s religious beliefs were openly questioned by his critics, who at separate occasions accused him of being an atheist, a Jew and a Catholic.⁸⁷ Even though he repeatedly proclaimed that he believed in God and considered himself to be Protestant, these speculations indicate that religion did not receive his unconditional devotion. Leyds himself, however, claimed that this did not obstruct his good working relation with Kruger, who was famous for his deep religious conviction.⁸⁸ It seems that the president did not allow faith to interfere much with matters of state. As has been mentioned, Kuyper hoped that the shared tradition of Calvinism would mean that he and his followers could build up a special alliance with the Transvaal. But his hopes turned out to be false when it became apparent that the Boer leaders, even the most devout, chose to base

⁸³ Ibidem, 14-26.

⁸⁴ ‘In persoonlijke ontplooiing meer dan het scheppen van belangrijke nationale krachtcentra vond de Nederlandsche volksgeest zijn uiting’. Ibidem, 41-42.

⁸⁵ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 172-175.

⁸⁶ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders I*, 113-114.

⁸⁷ Leyds ed., *Vierde Vezameling I*, 152. Leyds refuted such rumours and considered them to be in the same category as the fantasy story that he was secretly married to Emily Hobhouse. For Hobhouse cf. chapter 6.

⁸⁸ E.W. de Jong, ‘Willem Leyds’, in: *Woord en beeld* vol. 2 (1900), 61-68, 65; Van Niekerk, *Kruger se regterhand*, 17.

the relations with the Netherlands on *raison d'état* rather than on religious sympathies.⁸⁹

Another important sector of society where *Hollanders* had a marked impact was education. The old system in the Transvaal, which mainly focused on spelling out the Bible and singing hymns, became redundant with the quick social transformations that took place after 1886. The *Hollander* Nicolaas Mansvelt (1852-1933), who had arrived in South Africa in 1874 to teach modern languages at Victoria College in Stellenbosch, was recruited to initiate the necessary reforms. In 1890, he was appointed as superintendent of education in the SAR. He professionalised the school-system by introducing inspection and improved secondary education. Mansvelt was shocked by the poor quality of the teachers, many of whom were barely literate themselves. Together with Leyds, he set out to raise the standards by recruiting capable people from the Netherlands. As a result, in 1898 more than 300 out of 836 teachers in the SAR were of Dutch origin.⁹⁰

In their personal lives several teachers experienced *Hollanderhaat* from the Boer population, who often treated them with hostile mistrust, and many letters home were filled with complaints about this behaviour.⁹¹ Nevertheless, most of these men and women clung to their ideals and did not abandon their work. As has been mentioned, many people who supported the ideal of *stamverwantschap* agreed with the SAR government, considering education to be of vital importance for the future independence of the republic. If the curriculum retained its Dutch character, it was argued, the schools could serve as a bulwark against the growing influence of English. In this context the teachers' influence on the youth was crucial, and as such they played an important role in strengthening national identity in the Transvaal.⁹² Kruger's opponents were also aware of this, and it became one of the grievances of the *Uitlanders*, who demanded that English also became an official language and part of the program at state schools.⁹³

Another institution that was vital to the Kruger government was the press. The *Uitlander* agitators had taken over several newspapers in the SAR, with the help of mining capitalists, particularly in the Johannesburg area. British journalists with jingoist inclinations were recruited to work for these papers and chastise the SAR government.⁹⁴ Although they denounced these practices, the Krugerites on their part also tried to influence newspapers. In 1897, a press law was passed that gave the SAR government the power to suppress any paper which was 'in conflict with public morals or dangerous to the order and peace of the

⁸⁹ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 178-180; Van Koppen, *De geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 69-161.

⁹⁰ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 105-107.

⁹¹ Hoogeveen, *Lieve vrouw en kinders*; Lammers, *Kent gij dat volk*, 66-69.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 124.

⁹³ Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 49 and 83.

⁹⁴ J.A. Hobson was the first one to analyse this phenomenon. Despite many flaws, modern historians have found that his observations are a good starting point for further research. Porter, 'Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897-1899'; Potter, "'The Dark Stream of Shameless Falsehood'"; Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 399-400.

Republic’.⁹⁵ In addition, it spent £ 6,000-7,000 a year on advertisements, which served as covert subsidy. The lion’s share of that sum went to pro-government newspapers, such as *The Standard & Diggers News* and *De Volksstem*.⁹⁶

The latter, a steadfastly loyal newspaper, was run by *Hollanders* from 1888. Its most famous editor was Frans Vrederijk Engelenburg (1863-1938), who came to the SAR in 1889 and started to work as a journalist in the same year. In the 1890s he acquired the majority of shares in *De Volksstem* and ran the paper until 1924, with a short break between 1900 and 1902. Despite some reservations against certain aspects of Krugerism, such as the practices surrounding the monopolies, *De Volksstem* often took a stance against critics from the ‘progressive’ party and the *Uitlanders* on issues like state bureaucracy, the NZASM and education. This led to several polemics, most notably with the periodical *Land en Volk*, in which the regular contributor ‘Afrikanus’ scolded *Hollander* influence in his articles.⁹⁷ In this way the *Hollander* press in the Transvaal was caught up in the political turmoil of the 1890s and Engelenburg became a prominent opinion-maker and a well-known public figure in Pretoria.

Publishers were another group in Dutch society with a keen interest in the South African market. In the late 1890s at least four different companies became active in the export of books and magazines to the region. The *Hollandsch-Afrikaansche Uitgevers-Maatschappij* (Dutch-African Publishing Company, hereafter HAUM) was established in 1897 and had offices in Cape Town and Amsterdam.⁹⁸ It focused mainly on the publication of Afrikaner authors. One of their most successful writers was J.F. van Oordt, whose historical novels sold well both in South Africa and the Netherlands.⁹⁹ P.A. Nierstrasz, a former artillery officer in the German army, who traveled around South Africa in 1896, set up a publishing house called „*Nederland*”, based in The Hague and Pretoria. This company focused on patriotic publications such as the weekly *Hollandia*, which was a magazine for Dutchmen overseas. The journalist L. Simons was the editor of this periodical until Nierstrasz put an end to its existence after an incident in January 1902.¹⁰⁰ During the South African War Nierstrasz became involved in the pro-Boer propaganda campaign in Europe and was in close contact with the diplomatic representatives of the SAR, even for years after the war. Despite the continuous praise for the Boers in his letters, the motivations of the publisher are questionable. In retrospect it seems that Nierstrasz acted mainly out of commercial self-interest rather than genuine patriotic enthusiasm.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Quoted in: Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 134.

⁹⁶ Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, 87.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, xv-xvi and 129-131; Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 125-141.

⁹⁸ Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam, HSS-mag.: KVB PPA 480:3. Bedrijfsdocumentatie Hollandsch-Afrikaansche Uitgevers-Maatschappij, voorheen Jaques Dusseau & Co. The company remained in existence up until the late twentieth century.

⁹⁹ Huigen, *De weg naar Monomopata*, 96-124.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. chapter 6.

¹⁰¹ L. Simons to W.J. Leyds, 6 November 1931. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 95. For later contacts between

Established publishing houses were also involved in the pro-Boer movement. J.H. de Bussy went to Pretoria at the end of 1896 and opened a Dutch bookshop there. Although the NZAV warned against a surplus of such enterprises, which could have led to a saturation of the market, the society approved this project, and a year later even provided financial means to help open Dutch kiosks at train stations so that travellers would not have to depend on English reading matter on their journeys.¹⁰² In addition, the firm got much work from the NZAV, printing their annual reports and most of the circulars. It also published many other pro-Boer publications of various kinds.

Another publisher with warm sympathies for the Boers was J.A. Wormser, a prominent member of Kuyper’s orthodox Protestant movement. He also travelled around South Africa in 1896 and opened two shops in the Transvaal: one in Pretoria – which was ran by his son – and one in Potchefstroom, the intellectual centre of the *Doppers*. Wormser expressed his sympathies for Afrikaners in a book about his trip and a series of lectures.¹⁰³ These activities made him a well-known figure amongst pro-Boers in the Netherlands. The fact that he was closely linked to Kuyper, both as a publisher and an important figure in the Anti-Revolutionary Party, did not prevent him from being an active member of the NZAV; he even served on the executive committee between 1900 and 1907.¹⁰⁴ His enthusiasm for the Boer cause might have obscured his assessment of the potential risks for his company as he made large sums of money available for his South African activities. In 1898 he invested substantially in the Pretoria branch in order to boost the Transvaal market for books. Less than a decade later he had to conclude, however, that the ‘fateful’ war of 1899-1902 had made an end to these plans because supply routes were disrupted and demand plummeted. According to him, the economic depression in post-war South Africa and the attitude of Afrikaner leaders, who were reluctant to spend money on Dutch education, effectively meant the end of his business there. Because he had invested so much money in South Africa, Wormser’s whole company went bankrupt in 1907, which led to a personal crisis later that year, after which he retreated from public life.¹⁰⁵

It cannot be denied that the *Hollanders* were a noticeable group in South Africa during the 1880s and 1890s. Especially in the SAR, which rapidly underwent enormous changes after the gold boom of 1886, they contributed significantly to the development of modern state institutions. Politically, the *Hollanders* were allied with the Kruger government, but this should be seen as a marriage of convenience, because there remained a great deal of mistrust of the Boers towards influences from the Netherlands. Several of the emigrants were aware of this *Hollanderhaat*, which influenced their actions. On the one hand they were convinced of

Nierstrasz and Leyds cf. chapters 4 and 7.

¹⁰² ZA, NZAV Jaarverslag 1896-1897, 22; NZAV Jaarverslag 1897-1898, 26; NZAV Jaarverslag 1898, 14.

¹⁰³ Cf. chapter 2.

¹⁰⁴ For biography Wormser, cf. Van Schelven, *Levensbericht van Johan Adam Wormser*.

¹⁰⁵ ‘noodlottige’. Jaarverslagen N.V. Boekhandel Wormser & Höveker. HDC, Collection Wormser, 258/36; Schelven, *Levensbericht van Johan Adam Wormser*, 11; Schutte, *De Vrije Universiteit I*, 131.

their task to help the rough Boers into the modern age, on the other hand they were aware of the limitations of the influence they could yield in the republic. Van Winter has argued that such realistic people, for example the NZASM director Middelberg, were most successful.¹⁰⁶ This shows that the interests of *Hollanders* and Boers at the time were perceived to be mutually beneficial by certain individuals and the relation between the two communities became increasingly intense after 1880.

The Dutch bridgehead in the Transvaal that came into being at the end of the nineteenth century was directly linked to the question of colonial rule in South Africa and which group of settlers was to become dominant in the region: the white Dutch-speaking population or the white English-speaking population. Despite the tensions that existed between certain groups within the Boer community, most *Hollanders* thought that the Dutch race should take the lead in the process of ‘civilisation’ in the region and that it was at least entitled to an independent state outside the British Empire where this dream could take shape. Such ideas corresponded with the views of Kruger, who wanted to ensure Transvaal independence as a guarantee against British interference. In this way, his narrow form of nationalism overlapped with the imperialist dreams of the proponents of *stamverwantschap* in the Netherlands, and they became allies. One result was that *Hollanders* ran certain institutions that had a marked effect on developments in the region. At the other end of the line, the public in the Netherlands was mainly informed about the situation in South Africa via the bodies that supported the Krugerite fraction, and as such saw the independence of the Transvaal as a key issue. Events taking place in the 1890s reinforced these views and the need to make them public, but at the same time posed questions about the reliability of these lines of communication in case of an emergency.

The Jameson Raid: a catalyst for pro-Boer propaganda

The mounting tensions between the Boer republics and the British Empire during the 1890s did not go unnoticed in the Netherlands. The Jameson Raid on New Year’s Day 1896 in particular led to much commotion amongst the Dutch public, which condemned the so-called ‘buccaneers’ of the mounted column of the British South Africa Company and celebrated the Boer commandos that stopped and captured them.¹⁰⁷ In many ways, the reactions to this incident foreshadowed what was to come during the war that started in 1899. In this respect, the situation in South Africa was connected to wider questions about the position of the Netherlands amongst the colonial powers. At the end of the nineteenth century, rapid territorial expansion – not only in Africa, but also in South-East Asia – aroused fears that (parts of) the Dutch colonial possessions in the Indonesian archipelago could be taken by rivals. In the 1880s, treaties were concluded with Britain and Germany on the demarcation of

¹⁰⁶ Van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders* I, 248-250.

¹⁰⁷ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst, 176-177*; Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 75.

the spheres of influence on Borneo (1884) and New Guinea (1885) respectively. Still, it remained a predicament, because the Netherlands lacked the military strength to defend these islands, should one of their powerful neighbours decide to take them.¹⁰⁸ There were even persistent fears that the Germans would try to annex the Netherlands themselves if given the chance.¹⁰⁹

The delicate balance in the East was the reason that the Dutch government could not afford to provoke the British, and so a strict policy of neutrality remained in force with regard to events taking place in South Africa around the New Year of 1896. In contrast with the emotional reaction of the German emperor, who immediately sent a controversial telegram to Kruger in which he pledged his support to the Boers, The Hague only sent a discreet message to Pretoria a week after the raid.¹¹⁰ This prudent attitude did not change over time, which became clear in 1899, during preparations for the Hague Peace Conference that took place between May and July of that year. After a British threat that it would boycott the meeting if the Boer republics were represented, both the OFS and the SAR did not receive an invitation. In Parliament, Abraham Kuyper attacked the Liberal Foreign Minister, W.H. de Beaufort, on this issue, whom he accused of having no sympathy for the Boers, a rather bold statement considering that both men had been closely involved in the founding of the NZAV. It therefore has been suggested that the motives of the Protestant leader for this remarkable performance was electoral gain. Although several Dutch diplomats condemned Kuyper’s rash action, it had no serious repercussions, and the invitation list of the Peace Conference was approved by Parliament.¹¹¹

It would be wrong, however, to see the Dutch response to the growing crisis between the British Empire and the Boer republics in terms of domestic politics only. There were wider considerations, which touched upon the role of public opinion in the context of international affairs. In this respect too, the South African question was linked to the debate about colonial possessions in the East. The fact that the British had far better access to the lines of communication with South Africa and thus controlled the coverage of events there, was a stark reminder that the Dutch did not possess independent undersea cables to the Dutch East Indies and that they depended on the British network.¹¹² As a result, the Dutch press was not in a position to influence the coverage of military expeditions in the archipelago in foreign media, something which was considered harmful to national prestige. In 1897, for example,

¹⁰⁸ Cf. M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 111-114 and 142-143; and Van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War*, 6-7. M. Kuitenbrouwer argues that the presence of Germany in the archipelago was seen as a good deterrent for the British, who were considered to be the biggest threat, while Van Dijk argues that there were also fears that Germany would use the colonial question as a prelude to annexation of the Netherlands themselves.

¹⁰⁹ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 130.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 177.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, 178-180; Van Koppen, *De geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 150-161.

¹¹² Historians mainly point out the restrictions that were imposed during the South African War. Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 201-202; Van Dijk, *The Netherlands and the Great War*, 12-14. Cf. chapter 3.

there was unease amongst members of the *Nederlandsche Journalisten Kring* (Dutch Journalists’ Union, hereafter NJK) about unfavourable reports in British newspapers of the military campaign on the island of Lombok that argued that a disproportionate amount of violence had been used by the colonial troops. A commission that advised the executive committee of the NJK on possible reforms, pointed out that action was needed so that journalists in the Netherlands could correct their colleagues in other countries. It was proposed that the NJK set up a committee that could ask Dutch foreign correspondents to act against unfavourable articles by sending letters to newspapers.¹¹³ After a heated debate, these plans were eventually withdrawn and for the time being the union remained what it was: a dining club for journalists.¹¹⁴ Still, this discussion shows that modern media and public opinion were included in the imperialism debate in the Netherlands.

Also groups that wanted to improve the relationship between the Netherlands and the Boers in South Africa paid attention to such issues. They did not consider the ties of *stamverwantschap* to be a question of politics or economics only, but also emphasised the importance of other issues such as the improvement of infrastructure, education and the press. The growing pressure on the Boer republics provoked discussion as to how these institutions could be improved in order to protect Boer independence and thus keep the dream of a Greater Netherlands alive. Public opinion was considered of vital importance in this respect, and the focus was placed on the existing institutions that were connected to the lines of communication between South Africa and the Netherlands and how they functioned. Just as the emergence of pro-Boer feelings in the Netherlands during the Transvaal War of 1880 had been a complex process, the public reactions to later crises in South Africa varied as well. The Jameson Raid caused great public outcry and at first sight the NZAV did seem to benefit from this greater attention. Although the society made it clear that it did not try to capitalise on the public dismay about the careful response of government to the events in South Africa, membership jumped from 1,300 to 1,800 within a short period after the Jameson Raid.¹¹⁵ This had a direct impact on the organisation, because for the first time the NZAV was in a position to rent an office where the increased amount of paperwork could be handled.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the raid led to several new initiatives within the society to once more strengthen the ties with South Africa. The most noticeable of these was the foundation of the *taalfonds* (language fund) by several prominent members, such as the famous professor of history from Leiden, Robert Fruin, as well as Moltzer and Emous. This fund collected fl. 60,000 in its first year, which was spent on prizes for schoolchildren in the SAR who excelled in the Dutch language and on subsidies to schools. There was also more money available for grants to emigrating

¹¹³ *Maandelijksche Mededeelingen van het bestuur den Nederlanschen Journalisten Kring*, nr 8. (May 1897).

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, nr.13 (October 1897). After 1900, the union became active as a body that sought to improve the working conditions of journalists. Wijfjes, *De journalistiek in Nederland*, 73-80.

¹¹⁵ ZA, *NZAV Jaarverslag 1895-1896*, 8. The following year, however, the number had fallen back to around 1,500. Houwers, *Nationalistische commotie in Nederland*, 28.

¹¹⁶ ZA, *NZAV Jaarverslag 1895-1896*, 6.

teachers and financial support for the publishing house De Bussy to open bookshops in the SAR.¹¹⁷

Despite these successes, the executive committee complained that only a small proportion of the public with an interest in South Africa were members of the NZAV. This was illustrated by the fact that the media were flooded with letters from people outside the society who had great plans for the development of bonds between the Dutch and Boers. Many of these ideas, concerning emigration, the establishment of a shipping line to Delagoa Bay or increasing the number of exchange students from South Africa, also circulated amongst members of the NZAV themselves. The executive committee thought it would be a good idea if these plans were discussed collectively and argued that the society could serve as a platform. This was considered necessary with an eye to the future of the Dutch presence in South Africa. ‘We Dutchmen can only do so little, even when we are united. What, then, can be expected of divided efforts?’¹¹⁸ Although the complaints about fragmentation continued to exist, the NZAV also found likeminded spirits in other organisations, which resulted in close co-operation.

One of the most substantial initiatives after the Jameson Raid was the foundation of the *Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond* (General Dutch Alliance, hereafter ANV). This organisation aimed to promote the idea of a Greater Netherlands with special focus on the Dutch language. This initiative can therefore be seen as a clear manifestation of the concept of *stamverwantschap*.¹¹⁹ Historians give several accounts of the exact origins of the ANV, which in the beginning had a Flemish branch under leadership of H. van Meert from Gent and a counterpart in the Netherlands, led by H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge (1847-1935), a headmaster from Dordrecht. After the two branches merged, the ANV in Dordrecht dominated and the headquarters were moved there.¹²⁰ This new organisation attracted wide attention from Dutch society, which is illustrated by the fact that it was actively supported by N.G. Pierson, Abraham Kuyper and H.J.A.M. Schaepman, political leaders from the Liberals, Protestants and Catholics respectively. Only the Socialists remained outsiders.¹²¹

The situation in South Africa was one of the most important driving forces behind the foundation of the ANV, which immediately established a Transvaal branch and successfully asked Kruger to become its honorary president.¹²² In 1898 and 1899 the ANV branches in South Africa had the largest increase of new members.¹²³ This international success is remarkable when compared to the NZAV, which mainly drew its members from the

¹¹⁷ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 88-89.

¹¹⁸ ‘Wij Nederlanders kunnen, zelfs als wij vereenigd zijn, betrekkelijk zoo weinig doen. Wat is er dan van verspreide pogingen te verwachten?’. ZA, *NZAV Jaarverslag 1895-1896*, 8-9.

¹¹⁹ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 177; Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 252-253.

¹²⁰ Van Berne, ‘Het Algemeen-Nederlands Verbond 1985-1995’, 40-41.

¹²¹ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 117.

¹²² Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 252.

¹²³ Houwers, *Nationalistische commotie in Nederland*, 33.

Netherlands. By the start of the South African War, both organisations had a similar number of members.¹²⁴ Bossenbroek has suggested that the ANV was much more radical than the established body of pro-Boerism in the Netherlands, the NZAV.¹²⁵ This is, however, not supported by historical evidence. Two important individuals in the early ANV – professor H. Kern from Leiden, who became the first president and Kiewiet de Jonge, the first secretary – were active members of the NZAV.¹²⁶ The latter even joined the executive committee of the association in 1900.¹²⁷ Moreover, despite some dissonant notes in the annual report of the NZAV that argued that two organisations propagating *stamverwantschap* would clash in such a small country as the Netherlands, the ANV was seen as a useful ally rather than a competitor. Soon it was announced that the executive committees of the two organisations were in correspondence with each other and that the ANV had announced that it fully supported the goals of the NZAV. In addition, NZAV members were encouraged to join the ANV.¹²⁸

As shall be shown in later chapters, the co-operation between the NZAV and the ANV increased during the South African War, especially in the field of propaganda. By then, as a result of overwhelming public enthusiasm, the organisations were dealing with several problems that made it hard to control the distribution of information.¹²⁹ In addition, another aspect of the propaganda campaign became more urgent, namely that of getting information from alternative sources to counter the British coverage of events in South Africa. Already before 1899, however, the influence of the jingo press was a concern for people associated with the network that extended between the Netherlands and the Boer republics. In this context too the Jameson Raid was a signal for them to take action and prepare for what was to come.

When visiting Europe in 1895-1896, Willem Leyds was shocked by the negative light in which the Boers were depicted in German and particularly French newspapers. In his view, this was due to the fact that the British press had a monopoly on the coverage of South African affairs and propagated views that were harmful to the Boer cause.¹³⁰ When he returned to the SAR, he offered to resign as state secretary and go to Europe as a minister plenipotentiary to try and change the public mood and to consolidate the diplomatic ties between the SAR and the continental powers. The plan was initially met with much scepticism, because of the high costs involved and because Leyds had been re-elected in

¹²⁴ Ibidem. Shortly after the war started, however, the NZAV grew exponentially and the ANV legged behind.

¹²⁵ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 253.

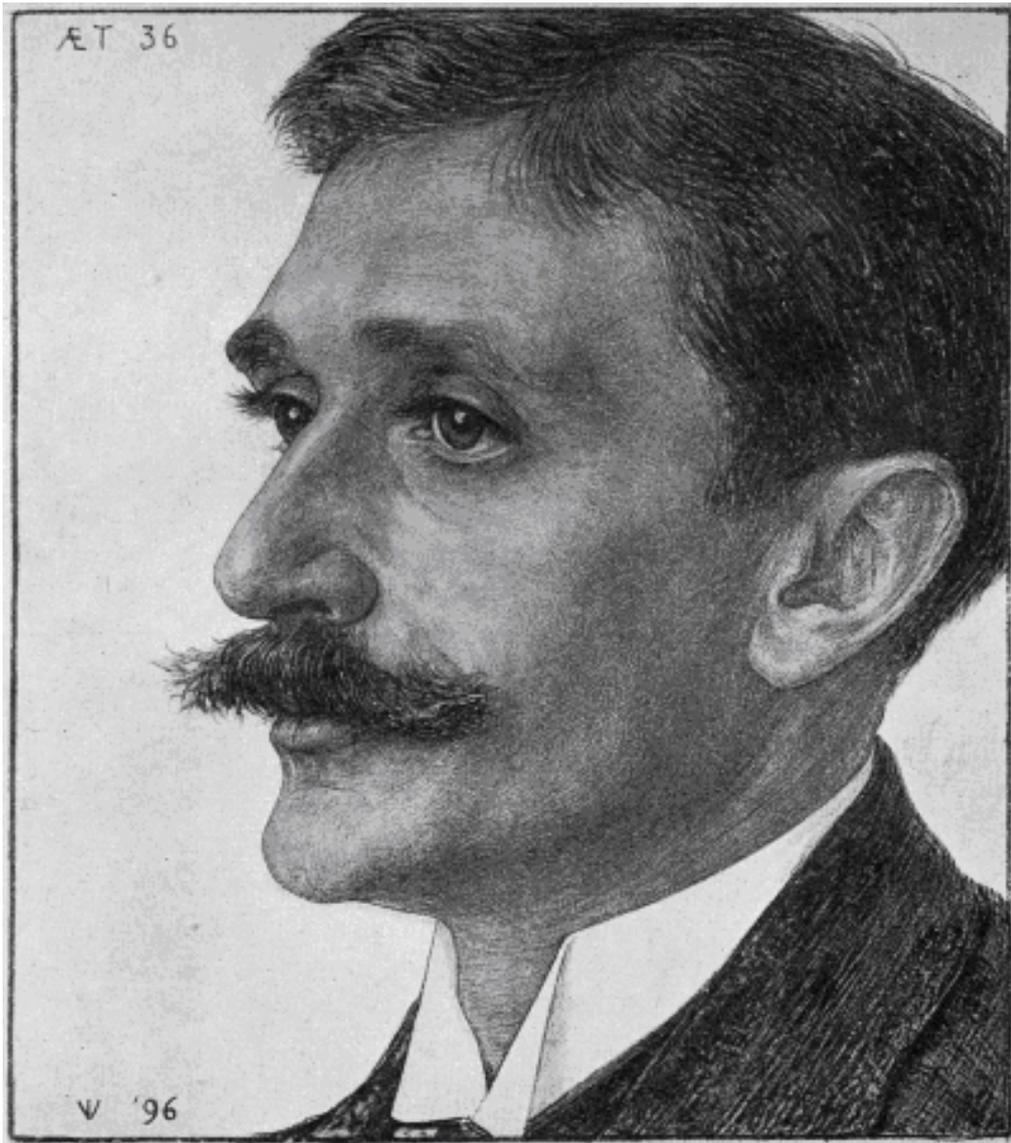
¹²⁶ ZA, *NZAV Jaarverslag 1896-1897*, membership list.

¹²⁷ Cf. chapter 4.

¹²⁸ ZA, *NZAV Jaarverslag 1896-1897*, 33-37. This intensive relationship would remain in tact and in 1907 and 1908 it was even proposed by some executive members that the NZAV be merged with the ANV, which by that time had outgrown its sister organisation. Eventually this did not happen. Circular of a meeting of executive committee and local representatives, December 1907. ZA, NZAV archive, VIII/16; De Graaff, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap*, 113.

¹²⁹ Cf. chapter 4.

¹³⁰ Van Niekerk, *Krugers se regterhand*, 205.



Portrait of Willem Leyds, by Jan Veth (1896).

1897. When the consul-general in the Netherlands and Belgium – G.J.Th. Beelaerts van Blokland – died, however, Leyds was allowed to go and set up a legation in Brussels, from where he would co-ordinate his activities in Europe.¹³¹ Most governments on the continent received him well and accepted his letters of credence. By contrast British diplomats received strict orders not to meet Leyds officially, because London viewed this as being a violation of the London convention of 1884, on the basis of which Britain claimed 'suzerainty' over the Transvaal.¹³²

Public opinion in France, where Rhodes' press-conglomerate owned several papers, was

¹³¹ Ibidem, 192 and 197.

¹³² Ibidem, 195-196 and 198. Cf. Leyds ed., *Tweede Verzameling* I, 45-46. Because it was unclear if the terms the London convention (1884) allowed the SAR to have ambassadors, Leyds was appointed as minister plenipotentiary in order to avoid controversy. In practice all European powers except Britain treated him with full diplomatic protocol.

one of Leyds’s primary concerns. Therefore, a press office was set up in Paris that, under leadership of the French journalist Edgar Roëls, offered material to newspapers which provided an alternative vision on the situation in South Africa. In the following year, the image of the Boers improved considerably and when war broke out in October 1899, most journalists supported the republics. It is, however, debateable to what extent Roëls’ press office was responsible for this.¹³³ Public opinion in the Netherlands was less of a problem for Leyds, as the Boer cause was already very popular there. When he visited Amsterdam in February 1896, he was enthusiastically welcomed at the train station by a delegation from the NZAV and during a reception that was attended by hundreds of people, he was warmly addressed by several well-know speakers, such as his former professor, Moltzer.¹³⁴ This clearly shows that Leyds was well acquainted with Dutch opinion-makers and, because of the growing interest of the press in the SAR, he even became a public figure. As will be discussed in later chapters, these Dutch contacts would prove to be essential in the pro-Boer propaganda campaign.

The OFS did not pursue such an active policy of public relations, but did have a diplomatic representative in the Netherlands. The Rotterdam merchant Hendrik Muller (1859-1941) had become acquainted with Africa as the director of the *Oost-Afrikaansche Compagnie* (East Africa Company), which focused on trade with Mozambique. In that capacity he traveled south-eastern Africa extensively in 1889. Muller published his travelogue and several ethnological articles about that region, which earned him a doctorate at the University of Leipzig in 1894.¹³⁵ Apart from his knowledge of the situation in Southern Africa, Muller was also an active Boer supporter and affiliated with the NZAV from the beginning.¹³⁶ These qualifications made him the most suitable candidate to succeed H.A.L. Hamelberg, who died in September 1896, as consul-general for the OFS.

The government of the OFS was careful not to provoke Great Britain by conducting an all-out diplomatic campaign on the European continent, because President Steyn feared that it could work like ‘the red flag to the British bull’.¹³⁷ In practice this meant that Muller did not get full diplomatic status, so that his authority was limited. Moreover, the annual budget for the post was just £ 50. Some contemporary commentators thought that the SAR was far more popular in Europe than the OFS, due to this careful policy.¹³⁸ This did not seem to temper Muller’s enthusiasm for the Boer cause, and he was more than prepared to supplement the meager stipend from the OFS with his own money. In addition, he was a prolific author

¹³³ Van Niekerk, *Kruger se regterhand*, 215-217. Van Niekerk argues that Roëls contributed to this shift, but does not mention the influence of the Fashoda crisis (1898). Ulrich Kröll points out that this event contributed greatly to the dislike of the British by the French public. Kröll, *Die internationale Buren-Agitation*, 198.

¹³⁴ ZA, NZAV *Jaarverslag 1895-1896*, 39-40.

¹³⁵ Schutte, ‘Muller, Hendrik Pieter Nicolaas (1859-1941)’.

¹³⁶ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst*, 121.

¹³⁷ ‘die rooi doekie voor die Britsche bull’. Quoted in: Rompel, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, 48.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, 47-50.

defending the Boer cause against the British, which resulted in several books and many articles in the domestic and foreign press.¹³⁹ His outspoken ideas and the confusion that existed around his precise diplomatic status was a source of controversy, however. In addition, Leyds greatly distrusted him and the two representatives of the Boer republics could not stand each other personally, which was already apparent the first time they met in 1898, when Muller visited South Africa.¹⁴⁰ Tensions continued to mount between the two, which led to open hostility in later years.¹⁴¹

The examples mentioned above show that the Jameson Raid and its aftermath were in many ways forebodings of the responses to events between 1899 and 1902. Both after the failed coup and during the South African War, fundamental questions were raised about the organisation of the pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands and how it could support the Boer republics in their efforts to defend their independence. The attempt by British imperialists to topple the Transvaal government caused an outcry in the Netherlands, because it was seen as a confirmation of the fears that these men would settle for nothing less than complete dominance over South Africa. This was perceived as a threat to Dutch national interests, because the bridgehead in the region would be lost, and also because it could serve as a dangerous precedent for great powers to bully small nations, which raised concerns about the territorial integrity of the Netherlands and its colonial possessions. But these concerns were not only about the political or economical situation: public opinion was also seen as an important issue in the context of modern imperialism. The British dominance of the lines of communication between Europe and South Africa bothered Dutch pro-Boer organisations and representatives of the republics, who tried to provide alternatives for the coverage of South African events. Their attempts, however, had limited success because of the fragmented nature of the pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands, which was a continual source of frustration.

Conclusion

The issues discussed in this chapter show that the pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands was not simply an expression of a narrow form of nationalism that was detached from international relations. Although contemporaries were aware of domestic restraints, their main focus was on ties with the Boer republics in South Africa (and particularly the Transvaal) in the light of the rivalry for colonial dominance with the British Empire. Several groups in the Netherlands thought they could benefit from closer ties with their ‘kinsmen’ in South Africa. In addition it can be said that despite the strained relations with different groups of Afrikaner nationalists, *Hollanders* were seen by the Kruger government, albeit reluctantly, as important allies, and at times their interests clearly overlapped. It has been argued that in this way a

¹³⁹ Schutte, ‘Muller, Hendrik Pieter Nicolaas’. Cf. chapter 2.

¹⁴⁰ Du Toit Spies, *’n Nederlander in Diens van die Oranje-Vrystaat*, 85.

¹⁴¹ Cf. chapters 3 and 7.

Dutch bridgehead was established in South Africa that was an informal form of imperialism, which contemporaries phrased in terms of *stamverwantschap*. These ideals, however, were heterogeneous and it should be remembered that this concept of Dutch racial kinship in an international sense meant different things to different people. Seen from this perspective, the network of *stamverwantschap* showed similarities to the webbed space of imperial Britishness. Both cases show that the assumption that concepts of nationalism and imperialism were separate by definition is fundamentally incorrect and that historians today need to reassess such terms in order to grasp their historical meaning.

Despite this important similarity there were also differences between the British and Dutch bridgeheads in South Africa. The main one seems to have been the size and strength of the institutions that bolstered these relations. Much to the disappointment of contemporaries, Dutch trade and emigration figures remained relatively low. To this should be added that the organisations that propagated the ideal of *stamverwantschap* had severe flaws compared to those of British imperialists, which again led to much frustration in the Netherlands. Bearing in mind Simon Potter's remarks about the structure of the global lines of communication, this says something about the nature of these institutions. He has characterised the infrastructure of the British Empire as a solid 'system' of information: a distinctive community of journalists and other authors travelling easily throughout the dominions and keeping in contact via a grid of intercontinental telegraph lines.¹⁴² By contrast, the Dutch counterpart in South Africa can probably best be characterised as a 'network', mainly because it lacked such hardware and thus depended on British communication lines for the latest news. The Dutch pro-Boers certainly did try to bolster their institutions, but this proved to be difficult because of the reluctance of the government and the business community to support such initiatives. Notwithstanding these severe limitations, it shows that for people in the Netherlands too, the phenomenon of modern imperialism was connected with both public opinion in the metropole and global lines of communication.

Importantly, many contemporary authors reflected on such issues and the difficulties that have been mentioned in this chapter are evident from the primary sources. Such remarks serve as a means of getting a deeper sense of the ambivalences that characterised the movement. But there was more to it than that. The next chapter will argue that the Krugerite views, which reached the Netherlands via the network that was set up at the end of the nineteenth century, greatly influenced the depiction of South Africa in Dutch literature. In these publications, both good and bad aspects of the Boers were mentioned, as were their tensions with *Hollanders*. Such nuances to a large extent seemed to fall away, however, when looking at the bigger picture and the question as to which group of white colonists should dominate South Africa: English-speaking or Dutch-speaking. Publications in the Netherlands about this issue provided a particular interpretation of the recent history of South Africa, which was intended

¹⁴² Potter, 'Webs, Networks, and Systems', 635. Cf. introduction.

to show that the Boer republics were equally, if not better, equipped to ‘civilise’ that part of the world, as contemporaries liked to call it. This clearly shows that pro-Boer propaganda was firmly connected to events taking place in South Africa in the context of the struggle for colonial dominance. As such, this corpus was the most significant result of the network between the Netherlands and the Boer republics that came into being during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.