Part III: The aftermath of pro-Boer propaganda (post-1902)

Chapter 7: ‘Whoever wants to create a future for himself, cannot lose sight of the past’.

The aftermath of pro-Boer propaganda

On 14 July 1904, Paul Kruger, the former president of the Transvaal, died in exile in the spa town of Clemens, Switzerland. His death can be seen as the symbolic end of the era of Boer independence after both the SAR and the OFS had been added to the British Empire. This was not the only way in which contemporaries interpreted the situation in South Africa, however. Despite the fact that they were officially citizens of the British Empire, there remained hope that the white Dutch-speaking inhabitants of South Africa would be able to unite and so become politically and culturally dominant. This optimism was also apparent in Kruger’s political will, a document that was edited by one of his closest assistants, Willem Leyds. The text was addressed to all Afrikaners calling upon them to take their future in their own hands and rebuild South Africa. In order to do so properly, it was argued, they should connect to their history, which was poured into the following famous words:

Because whoever wants to create a future for himself, cannot lose sight of the past. Therefore: look into the past for all good and beautiful things that can be found there, and thereafter shape your ideals and attempt to realise those ideals for the future.1

The fact that Leyds was closely involved in the publication of this document prompts questions about the ties between the pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands and the Afrikaners in South Africa after 1902. Several historians who have written about this topic emphasise that the Peace of Vereeniging resulted in a sharp fall in the popularity of the Afrikaners in the Netherlands. Some even see it as the inevitable ‘landing’ of the enthusiasm for overseas matters, after the ‘hop-skip-jump’ of the late nineteenth century.2 The most substantial study of the post-1902 ties between the Dutch and the Afrikaners is written by Bart de Graaff, who thinks that the ideas about stamverwantschap increasingly became marginalised because of domestic and international developments. In the Netherlands, he argues, the heroic image of the Boers suffered greatly after they stopped fighting. In addition, the loss of independence by the republics meant that the opportunities for trade and

emigration disappeared and that the public’s interest fizzled out.\(^3\) In South Africa, furthermore, the development of Afrikaner nationalism led to increased xenophobia and isolation, which lead to a hostile response to influences from the Netherlands and *vice versa*. The most prominent feature of the Afrikaner nationalist movement was the development of Afrikaans as an independent language. Many leading nationalists considered the complicated grammar of High Dutch to be an impediment to their own efforts to make Dutch the language of the *Volk*.\(^4\) Ingrid Glorie also signals this phenomenon and even describes it as a ‘double process of decolonisation of the Afrikaans language and culture with regard to the English as well as the Dutch cultural dominance that occurred during the first three decades of the twentieth century’.\(^5\)

Other historians notice less change after 1902. Gerrit Schutte writes how in the Netherlands the ‘factual interest’ for South Africa ‘quickly ebbed away’, but that there remained a ‘general feeling of sympathy’.\(^6\) It is doubtful whether there was only a growing dichotomy between Dutchmen and Afrikaners up until the Second World War and it seems that tensions climaxed over the language law in 1925, which declared Afrikaans to be independent from *Hoog-Hollandsch*. Afterwards, the relations improved, which resulted in an increase in emigration to South Africa in the 1930s and a plan for the establishment of a cultural treaty, which was endorsed by the government.\(^7\) Literary scholars also signal a lingering sympathy for the Afrikaner cause in the Netherlands after the end of the South African War. Siegfried Huigen argues that there was a lasting relationship between the literary establishment in the Netherlands and Afrikaner nationalism, at least up until 1925.\(^8\) In his survey of Dutch literature about South Africa, Willem Jonckheere even argues that the ‘praise for the Afrikaner’ in novels and poetry continued up until the 1960s.\(^9\)

Such facts indicate that the Dutch view on South Africa and its recent colonial history continued to exist. From the 1880s, this kind of imagery was connected to the transnational network between the Netherlands and South Africa, and this seems to have also been the case after 1902. Isabel Hofmeyr has argued that Afrikaner propagandists successfully used the heroic vision of the past to mobilise support, focussing on the Great Trek and the South African War.\(^10\) Significantly, ideas about folklore that originated in the Netherlands and

---

\(^3\) De Graaff, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap*, 299-303.
\(^4\) Ibidem, 304-308.
\(^5\) ‘dubbele dekoloniseringsproces van de Afrikaanse taal en cultuur ten opzichte van de Engelse zowel als de Nederlandse culturele dominantie dat zich in de eerste drie decennia van de twintigste eeuw’. Glorie, ‘“…Een reuze taak, die bijna ’t onmogelijke vordert…”’, 42.
\(^7\) Schutte, ‘De organisatie van de Stamverwantschap’; Hemstra, *De culturele betrekkingen tussen Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 21 and 59. I would like to thank Barbara Henkes for providing me with the latter text.
\(^8\) Huigen, *De weg naar Monomopata*, 18.
Germany were quite influential in this connection. Huigen points out that some works about South African history that were written and published in the Netherlands have been categorised as specimens of Afrikaner historiography. Some even argue that influences from the Netherlands contributed to the development of ideas about racial segregation that resulted in the apartheid system that was introduced by the Nasionale Party after it came to power in 1948. T.D. Moodie describes the apartheid-ideology as a Calvinist ‘civil religion’, which was inspired by the Dutch Protestant party of Abraham Kuyper. Schutte refutes this view and emphasises that Calvinism in South Africa and the Netherlands were very different from each other. He does acknowledge, however, that certain groups of Dutchmen (of various political persuasions) helped the Afrikaners to redefine their own history. These remarks show the importance to of considering the interaction between the Netherlands and South Africa in order to assess the aftermath of the pro-Boer propaganda campaign that has been described in previous chapters.

This issue will be discussed by examining the activities of some of the propagandists who were continued to be active after 1902. The most important priority for them remained the influencing of public opinion, in the hope that they would mobilise support for their efforts to counter British attempts to Anglicise South Africa. Although how one should assess the effects of these activities remains a difficult issue, the ongoing publicity meant that information from South Africa continued to reach the Netherlands. There was severe criticism of Afrikaner nationalists, but such ideas were based on an idealised vision of their past and folklore, which remained popular up until the 1960s. Finally, in order to investigate the transnational aspects of the lingering ties between the pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands and Afrikaner nationalism, the focus will be on the activities of Willem Leyds. After 1902, he propagated a heroic vision of South Africa’s past that was meant to mobilise the white Dutch-speaking population there. Although the results of his efforts were mixed and he often became entangled in controversies, Leyds was instrumental in transferring several collections of historical material from the Netherlands to South Africa in order to bolster Afrikaner identity. To a certain extent, the flow of information along the lines of communication that had fed the European pro-Boer propaganda campaign during the South African War were reversed after it ended.

**Pro-Boers and public opinion after 1902**

After the peace of Vereeniging was signed, pro-Boers in the Netherlands continued to try to

---

11 Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words’, 111.
12 Huigen, De weg naar Monomopata, 17.
13 Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdem, 52-72; Schutte, Nederland en de Afrikaners, 185-186.
14 Schutte, Nederland en de Afrikaners, 197-198.
15 Ibidem, 200-204.
sway public opinion in order to collect money for the ‘kinsmen’ in South Africa. The NZAV executive made it clear that the Dutch-speaking people in South Africa needed help from the Netherlands more than ever, because the British were trying to top off their territorial control of South Africa with political and cultural dominance, while the Afrikaner institutions had largely been destroyed during the war. At the same time, they noted with regret that many members did not see this necessity and argued that after the annexations of the Boer republics ‘England should take care of the new subjects itself now’.16 As a result, the society started losing members: from 6,632 in December 1901 to 5,364 in December 1903.17 The decline continued during the years that followed, and in 1920 the NZAV had just 1,523 members.18 Despite this downturn, the organisation survived and still exists today. One possible reason for this might have been the fact that in 1909 the remainder of the financial assets of the NZASM was turned into a fund (the Zuid-Afrikaansche Stichting Moederland) that structurally provided the NZAV with money.19 Other pro-Boer charities were less fortunate. The CNBC, which counted 4,000 members during the last phase of the war, suffered an exodus and, after years of marginal existence, the organisation finally ceased to exist in 1911.20 The ANV was the only organisation affiliated with the pro-Boer propaganda campaign that did not suffer such losses, but its membership never exceeded 6,000.21 De Graaff considers these dwindling numbers as evidence that the interest of the Dutch public in South Africa was in steady decline. This had a direct impact on the results of the activities that were organised to help the Afrikaners, he argues. In September 1902, the famous Boer Generals Louis Botha, Koos de la Rey and Christiaan de Wet visited the Netherlands. A deputation of the NZAV, headed by the prominent journalist Charles Boissevain, who had become a member of the executive committee, visited the generals and discussed a plan for a national collection to raise money for the reconstruction of South Africa. The generals decided to form their own charity, however, the Generale Boerenhulpfonds and independently issued an ‘address to the civilised world’ in which they announced the collection.22 In the Netherlands, the organisation was co-ordinated with the municipalities. The results were found to be disappointing by contemporaries: the total amount collected was fl. 1,200,000, a smaller sum than that had been anticipated.23

It remains the question, however, as to what extent this relatively meagre result should

16 ‘Engeland nu maar zelf voor de nieuwe onderdanen moet zorgen’. ZA, Jaarverslag NZAV 1902, 8.
17 De Graaff, De mythe van de stamvewantschap, 92.
18 Ibidem, 146.
20 De Graaff, De mythe van de stamvewantschap, 110, footnote 4.
21 Ibidem, 63.
22 ‘Beroep op de beschaafde wereld’.
23 Approximately £ 103,500. Van Niekerk, Kruger se regterhand, 317; De Graaff, De mythe van de stamverwantschap, 92.
be attributed to disinterest by the public. At least it was the question asked by contemporaries. In the Dutch cities they visited, the Boer generals were welcomed by large crowds, who cheered for them like true heroes.²⁴ It was therefore noted in the press that the failure of the collection could hardly have been caused by a lack of public interest. Several newspapers blamed the NZAV for not being able to capitalise on the enthusiasm of the people in the Netherlands. According to the editors, the organisation had waited too long, and so lost the opportunity to work together with the generals and encourage the people to give money during the collection. In their view, the NZAV was nothing more than ‘the tail of a little club’ and not a ‘living organism’ that reached out to the people.²⁵ One of the main targets was Boissevain, who had to be restrained from writing a furious reply. Eventually it was Botha himself who managed to calm down the famous journalist with a personal letter. Boissevain made it clear that this was sufficient for him to put the ‘hateful writing’ of his colleagues behind him.²⁶ Nevertheless, it seems that the dispute about the collection drained his enthusiasm for the NZAV and he resigned from the executive committee. In a private letter he

²⁴ Het Algemeen Handelsblad, 11 September 1902.
²⁵ ‘staart van een clubje’, ‘levend organism’. Cutting from De Amsterdammer, 9 November 1902. ZA, NZAV archive, VI/183.
²⁶ ‘hatelijk geschreven’. Several letters and cuttings in: ZA, NZAV archive, VI/183.
wrote that he was tired of the ‘waffling’ and the lack of effective action. The controversy over the *Generale Boerenhulpfonds* shows that there were ongoing concerns about how the NZAV operated, which resembled the criticism that was already expressed by several members in 1900. They argued that the elitist attitude of the executive prevented successful mobilisation of public opinion. Apparently, this continued to be the case after the South African War had ended and also in other ways propaganda remained an important issue to pro-Boer leaders. The reinstatement of the cultural infrastructure of the Afrikaners was considered important in order to provide a counterweight against British dominance. There was, for instance, financial support for a South African organisation called *Christelijk Nationaal Onderwijs* (Christian National Education) that promoted Dutch language at schools. Another priority was the press. Money was made available to resurrect the Dutch language newspapers that had been banned by the British during the war and it was also attempted to maintain the lines of communication with Europe so that British coverage of South African affairs could be countered. The actual effects of these activities are hard to measure and often led to disappointment for those involved. Still, it shows that there was an ongoing interaction between the Dutch pro-Boer movement and public opinion in South Africa and the Netherlands.

During the 1900s, the most substantial fund in the Netherlands that the Afrikaners could appeal to for their projects was kept by the former minister plenipotentiary of the SAR, Willem Leyds, who had been in full control over the republic’s assets in Europe since 1899. At the end of the war, there was an amount of around fl. 2,000,000 left in the fund. During negotiations between the Boer generals and the British government concerning the implementation of the Treaty of Vereeniging, which took place in the months after it was signed, Chamberlain demanded on several occasions that this money be handed over to the British authorities. Botha considered giving in to these demands, but Leyds maintained that the funds did not fall under the terms of the treaty as they had been transferred to him before the Boer surrender and refused to hand over the money. Meanwhile, he was prepared to act as a trustee for a committee of prominent Afrikaners who would decide on projects that should be funded using the money on the condition that the British authorities would not have any say in how it was spent.

It seems that the majority of this sum went to the press. Leyds, for instance, provided funds to help re-establish Dutch language newspapers in South Africa. In 1903, he was contacted by his old friend Engelenburg, who asked him for money to restart his newspaper...
‘Whoever wants to create a future’

De Volksstem.32 Together with Jan Smuts, who considered an independent Dutch language press ‘the foundation of a steady national policy in future’, they made a scheme in which £30,000 (approximately fl. 360,000) of the SAR assets in Europe were transferred to South Africa via middlemen to conceal the source of the money. With this sum, several periodicals were bought, amongst which De Volksstem in Pretoria, The Friend in Bloemfontein and De Afrikaner in Pietermaritzburg.33 As such, the Transvaal’s former treasure-chest was used to build up the political and intellectual infrastructure of the Afrikaners.

In addition, Leyds and other pro-Boers also continued to be interested in the depiction of South Africa in Europe, wanting to give a counterweight to British coverage. There was ongoing distrust of the news agency Reuters, which dominated the news supply to the European press, but was suspected of jingoistic tendencies. In 1902, the most important pro-Boer organisation that worked in this field was the press office of the ANV. After the war ended, H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge, the secretary of the ANV, and F. Rompel, who was the manager of the press office, decided to continue its activities. The idea was to make the press office the European representative of the Dutch language press in South Africa. On the one hand, it acted as a correspondent, providing news to those periodicals, while on the other hand it acted as an agent for distributing Afrikaner views in the European press.34 In this way, the ANV press office was an intermediary between South Africa and Europe up until the First World War. As is the case with the assessment of the previous period, the impact of these activities is hard to determine, as the press office asked newspapers not to mention it as a source. Rompel also complained that it was hard to compete with Reuters, which had a far more advanced network and much more money at its disposal, and that it was not always possible to counter their coverage of South African affairs.35 Still, the activities of the press office seemed to fit wider considerations about the representation of Dutch interests in the international press.

Besides the main office at Dordrecht, the ANV also employed correspondents in London. This bureau was founded in 1901, when the Dutch translator M. van Beek offered his services as a liaison between the ANV and the Stop the War Committee and the radical magazine New Age.36 After the war, Van Beek continued to send propaganda to members of the press and politicians.37 He was joined by E.B. Rose, a former journalist from Johannesburg and future MP for the Labour Party, and they both edited a pro-Boer news bulletin. However, the two

---

32 Several letters from F.V. Engelenburg to W.J. Leyds. NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 48. For Engelenburg, cf. chapters 1 and 3.
34 H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge to W.J. Leyds, 14 December 1902. NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 51.
35 F. Rompel to W.J. Leyds, 25 March 1903. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 208.
36 M. van Beek to H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge, 7 May 1901. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 821.
37 For a large number of letter from M. van Beek, cf. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 821 and 822.
men constantly argued about money, which led to several fall-outs and even deteriorated into physical violence. After a failed mediation attempt by Rompel in 1905, all contact with both brawlers was ended.  

Their work was continued by the London correspondent of the Dutch newspaper Nieuwe Courant, C. Thieme. He wrote to newspapers if they reported in a way that could harm Afrikaner interests. In 1908, Thieme was replaced by J.E.A. Reyneke van Stuwe, who had served as Botha’s secretary between 1900 and 1902. In London, Reyneke van Stuwe pretended that he was accredited as a correspondent by the Dutch newspaper Het Vaderland, but in reality he was acting as an agent for the ANV. In his extensive correspondence with Rompel, he explained that he kept the ties with the well-known pro-Boer organisation a secret, as he was afraid that his writings would be refused by editors otherwise. In addition to his work of ‘correcting’ newspapers with letters, Reyneke van Stuwe wrote circulars to the Afrikaner press about the British coverage of South African affairs.

Reyneke van Stuwe reported regularly on his activities for the ANV in London. He often relayed that his texts were published in various newspapers and in a letter to Botha he boasted that his influence was growing. Because he constantly sent corrections to the London press, he reasoned, it made journalists ‘more careful and fewer follies about South Africa appear in the newspapers’. The ANV executive committee also praised Reyneke van Stuwe as a talented writer with a valuable network. Although such remarks should be taken with a pinch of salt, there seems to have been interest for the London branch of the press office in wider circles, as there was growing concern about the way in which the foreign press wrote about the Netherlands. Kiewiet de Jonge jumped at this opportunity and asked Thieme and Reyneke van Stuwe to write letters to newspapers who wrote ‘nonsense about the Netherlands’. They mainly focussed on dispelling the negative coverage about colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies, an initiative which was applauded by journalists from leading Dutch newspapers.

There was also interest in the press office from the highest circles in policy making, and the Dutch Ministry of Colonial Affairs asked the ANV for several contributions between 1906 and 1911. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered supporting its activities more

---

38 F. Rompel to H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge, 14 November 1905. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 820.
39 After his return to the Netherlands in 1902, Reyneke van Stuwe secured a job at Het Vaderland thanks to his brother-in-law, the famous writer Willem Kloos. Langendorff, Brieven van J.E.A. Reyneke van Stuwe, 43.
40 J.E.A. Reyneke van Stuwe to F. Rompel, 29 January 1908. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 806.
42 H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge to Wallach Brothers, 28 November 1913. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 811.
43 In 1906, Thieme wrote an article with this title to protest against the coverage of Dutch affairs in Britain. C. Thieme to F. Rompel, 5 November 1906. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 816.
44 Newspaper cuttings 1906-1907. ZA, collection ANV I/1a; C. Boissevain to F. Rompel, 13 May 1909. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 816. For the NJK cf. chapter 1.
permanently, but eventually decided not to do so, which partly led to the downfall of the press office.\textsuperscript{46} After the First World War, the work was taken over by other organisations that tried to influence the perception that was created of the Netherlands in the foreign press. In his thesis about the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, Bob de Graaff mentions these initiatives, which also received little support from the government. It was only in 1934 that an official press office was founded, twenty years after the establishment of similar institutions in other countries.\textsuperscript{47} Although there was appreciation for the work of the ANV press office amongst decision-makers and journalists, it remained difficult to establish a strong institutional basis for such initiatives in the Netherlands and there was clear reluctance to invest in such matters.

The same seems to have been the case with Afrikaners, who recognised the importance of a European press office, but who were not prepared to bear the costs. As has been mentioned, Rompel sent weekly circulars to South Africa with news that he thought would stimulate patriotic sentiments amongst Afrikaners, but it remains difficult to grasp the meaning of these letters. Gustav Preller (who worked for \textit{De Volksstem} at the time) reported that they were published and were greatly appreciated by the public.\textsuperscript{48} Nevertheless, there was a reluctance to pay for such services. Engelenburg did pay a sum for Rompel’s letters, but this was far too little to cover the costs of all the activities of the ANV press office, leaving Leyds as the most important financier.\textsuperscript{49} When he ran out of funds in the 1910s, Kiewiet de Jonge unsuccessfully tried to acquire capital from Afrikaner publishers. In a letter, he mentioned that, besides the fact that no money had come from South Africa to reward the ANV for its loyal services, there had ‘not even [been] a small token of gratitude’.\textsuperscript{50} After Rompel emigrated to South Africa in 1912, the press office was severely weakened and when the First World War broke out, the ANV saw itself forced to largely suspend these activities because of a lack of money.\textsuperscript{51}

In 1917, some activities of the ANV press office were taken over by the NZAV. Already in 1904, the society had started the weekly \textit{De Zuid-Afrikaasche Post}, which aimed to provide the press in Europe with an alternative to the British coverage of the situation in South Africa. In 1909, it appeared that the weekly was not profitable enough and so it was replaced by a


\textsuperscript{47} Bob de Graaff, ‘Kalm temidden van woedende golven’, 271-602. Despite the fact that some of the agents were quite successful, Bob de Graaff argues that the lack of efficient organisation greatly reduced the efficacy of such organisations. Ibidem, 603-604 and 638.

\textsuperscript{48} G. Preller to H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge, 23 March 1903. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 825.

\textsuperscript{49} Engelenburg paid £ 7 for newsletters, while £ 25 was needed. F.V. Engelenburg to F. Rompel, 1 June 1903. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 825.

\textsuperscript{50} ‘zelfs niet een klein bedankje’. H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge to Wallach brothers, 28 November 1913. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 808.

\textsuperscript{51} Rompel became editor of \textit{De Volksstem} and later of \textit{De Burger}. Reyneke van Stuwe remained in London and continued to do freelance work for the ANV. During the First World War he was mainly involved in the distribution of aid to Flemish refugees. He was also involved in the endowment of the chair for Dutch history at the University of London.
'Whoever wants to create a future'

... monthly magazine, *Hollandsch Zuid-Afrika*, but also this periodical failed to reach a large audience. In 1915, J. Visscher, who had been a journalist in Bloemfontein, became the editor of the magazine and in addition was given the task to write circulars to the Afrikaner press. His work was supervised by a committee that included both Leyds and Kiewiet de Jonge, which points to their ongoing involvement. Like the ANV press office, Visscher was not able to acquire enough income to act independently and he relied on money from organisations in the Netherlands. The most tangible traces of Visscher’s activities in the Afrikaner press were the columns that appeared regularly in *De Burger*. After this newspaper stopped using this service in 1923, the press office ceased to exist.

There was undoubtedly a decline in the activities of Dutch pro-Boer organisations after 1902, certainly compared to the hectic period during the South African War. It would be too simplistic, however, to attribute this only to waning public interest as a result of disillusionment over the annexation of the Boer republics. Contemporaries continued to reflect on the best ways to mobilise support and money for initiatives to help and strengthen the Dutch element in South Africa in the light of British attempts to become culturally dominant. Such concerns show a great measure of continuity with previous periods. The dissatisfaction with the performance of the NZAV during the collections by the *Generale Boerenhulpfonds* echoed earlier complaints that the society was not able to reach out to a wider audience. Also with regard to the press, the limits of the pro-Boers’ information network were apparent. The ANV press office and its successor at the NZAV drew on funds provided by pro-Boer organisations and the remaining assets of the SAR, but were not able to generate enough money with their activities to act independently. Nevertheless, they existed in one form or another for decades after 1902, allowing information about South Africa to continue to reach the Netherlands. The next section will explore the contents of this material and the way in which the rise of Afrikaner nationalism was discussed.

**The Netherlands and Afrikaner nationalism**

Although there was a marked decline in interest by the Dutch public in South Africa after 1902, newspapers continued to cover important events taking place there. However, the relationship between pro-Boer supporters from the Netherlands and Afrikaner nationalists became more problematic: severe tensions arose over certain issues and there was more explicit criticism than during previous periods. One controversial issue was the political situation and the question as to the extent to which South Africa should accommodate British rule. Another one was the development of Afrikaans into an independent language. At times,

---

52 ZA, *Jaarverslag NZAV 1916*, 7-8; *Jaarverslag NZAV 1917*, 6-7. The name of this periodical has changed several times, but still exists today as *Zuid-Afrika*.

there was open hostility between certain groups in the Netherlands and South Africa over these two issues, but there are indications that the dichotomy was not as absolute as it might first appear. This indicates that a certain view of South Africa continued to exist in the Netherlands, which reveals the survival of ideas about racial kinship.

In general, Dutch opinion-makers were quite positive about the granting of self-government to South Africa in 1906 and the formation of the Union in 1910.\(^{54}\) The Afrikaners outnumbered white inhabitants of British descent and so became politically dominant. There were, however, increasing concerns about the strategy of the moderate South African Party (SAP) under the leadership of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, to co-operate with British administrators, the same people they had fought against less than a decade before. The founding of the Nasionale Party (1914), which was more outspokenly opposed to British influence, was therefore welcomed by the press in the Netherlands. These sentiments deepened after the start of the First World War.\(^{55}\) In South Africa, there was growing controversy surrounding the question as to whether the government should give military support to Great Britain. When it appeared that Botha was preparing an invasion of German South-West Africa in 1914, some radicals formed a commando and went to the desolate parts of the Northern Cape. Botha and Smuts sent in the army and crushed the rebellion. In the Netherlands there was widespread resentment of these measures and several petitions were sent to the South African government, including one from the NZAV, to plead for amnesty for the captured rebels.\(^{56}\) The pro-Boer society received unwanted media attention when the editor of its monthly magazine, M.P.C. Valter, wrote several articles and pamphlets in which he denounced Botha as a traitor who had already failed during the South African War. In addition to these embarrassing remarks, Valter also took an openly pro-German standpoint, which caused resentment, at a time when the Netherlands was desperately trying to remain neutral.\(^{57}\) The NZAV dismissed Valter, and the Amsterdam professor of law, H.D.J. Bodenstein, an Afrikaner by birth who opposed Botha’s policy during the First World War, wrote a pamphlet to defend the historical reputation of the prime minister.\(^{58}\)

Not all publications about the political situation in South Africa or its recent past caused such


\(^{55}\) There is increasing attention by historians for the position of the Netherlands during the Great War, when it remained neutral. Ismee Tames has shown that some Dutch authors referred to the South African War in the public debate about neutrality, arguing that Great Britain should not be trusted completely, because imperialistic its tendencies were strong. Tames, *Oorlog voor onze gedachten*, 95, 153 and 256.

\(^{56}\) De Graaff, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap*, 68.


controversy, however. On the contrary, the Afrikaners and their history were still admired by several well-known authors. At the time, the most popular writer to publish about South Africa was undoubtedly Louwrens Penning. It can be argued that he was very influential in the depiction of South Africa in the Netherlands, despite the fact that he only ever visited the country once, a few years before his death.\(^59\) The novels Penning wrote during the South African War and directly after remained popular with young readers until the 1950s, but after 1904, he turned to other topics and during the next two decades wrote just one book about South Africa, in 1915, describing the rebellion of the previous year. This novel was probably influenced by the general dissatisfaction in the Netherlands about the course of events and the negative characteristics of the Boers, such as partisanship, are more explicitly mentioned than in previous works. The story is about a father and son who grow apart because of their opposing political views and even fight each other on the battlefield. Despite this drama, Penning did not break with his usual style and the story has a happy ending when the two reconcile to end the suffering.\(^60\)

Penning’s interest in South Africa was renewed in 1923, when his publishers asked him to travel to the archives in Cape Town and Pretoria to gather material for new novels about the history of the Afrikaners. The writer, who was nearly 70 years old, stayed in the country for five months and, apart from doing archival research, travelled around to visit his brothers who had settled in the Transvaal during the 1880s. Looking back on the trip, Penning wrote that his ‘greatest wish’ had been fulfilled.\(^61\) He met the Afrikaners, visited their homes and travelled to some of the places where their ancestors had fought for their freedom during the Great Trek, which made a great impression on the writer. ‘My heart has danced during all this, and once again my great love for the “Boers” has been revived.’\(^62\) Despite these intense experiences, Penning asserted that meeting the Afrikaner people in the flesh had not altered his views on South Africa. ‘It was all exactly as I had expected. With the eye of love I had already seen Africa and had seen it correctly.’\(^63\)

The journey resulted in four novels about the history of South Africa, in particular about the Great Trek, which appeared before Penning’s death in 1927. The emphasis in these works was on race relations and the dangers that the black majority posed to the white minority. Moreover, the conservative and patriarchal lifestyle of the Afrikaners was explicitly celebrated.\(^64\) At the time, Penning was positive about their position in South Africa and

\(^{59}\) Jonckheere, Van Mafeking tot Robbeneiland, 96; cf. De Graaff, De mythe van de stamverwantschap, 55.

\(^{60}\) Jonckheere, Van Mafeking tot Robbeneiland, 90-91.

\(^{61}\) ‘lievelingswensch’. Penning, Uit mijn leven, 200.

\(^{62}\) ‘Mijn hart heeft getinteld bij dit alles, en opnieuw is de groote liefde voor het “Boerenvolk” aangewakkerd.’ Ibidem, 201.

\(^{63}\) ‘Het was alles precies zoo als ik dacht. Met het oog der liefde had ik Afrika reeds gezien en goed gezien…’ Interview with L. Penning in Het Arnhemsch Dagblad, 24 November 1924. HDC, Penning collection, 87/3.

\(^{64}\) For a complete bibliography cf. Jonckheere, Van Mafeking tot Robbeneiland, 92-96.
thought that they had become politically dominant in their country. Looking at the outcome of the turbulent periods of their history, he concluded that ‘the blood, spilled for freedom and peace, has not been shed in vain. The path led through the most sorrowful depths to the heights of victory.’

Another successful project Penning started after his journey to South Africa was a lecture tour, which lasted up until his death. The elderly writer spoke about his beloved Afrikaners to sold-out crowds, sometimes six times a week. Local newspapers praised Penning’s performance as an attractive mix of knowledge and entertainment. During the first half of the lecture he gave a general introduction to South Africa, illustrated with slides, during which he talked about famous people and places from the past and present. The second part was filled with anecdotes about his travels and the peculiarities of the people he encountered. Typically, these lectures were positive and lucid, emphasising the unity of the Afrikaners and their

---

66 Cutting with interview in *De Standaard*, 29 November 1924. HDC, Penning collection, 87/3.
ability to take the lead in South Africa, which, he told his audience, opened up opportunities for people in the Netherlands as well. Even when explaining the political situation and the tensions between the SAP and the Nasionale Party, Penning managed to steer away from controversy and declared that he admired the Afrikaner people as a whole. 67 This image clearly appealed to his audience, who on one occasion even welcomed him with a thunderous version of the national anthem of the Transvaal, a country that had ceased to exist two decades previously. 68 The writer himself explained this enthusiasm by the fact that the people in the Netherlands still felt a ‘warm love and strong sympathy’ for the Boers. ‘Their history is one continuous struggle for freedom and justice, a mighty fight of blood and tears. That struggle has found resonance in the hearts of our [Dutch] people.’ 69

Although such emotions were clearly based on a biased and idealised image of South Africa and its past, they cannot simply be dismissed as misplaced nostalgia. 70 It shows that there was significant continuity with the way in which such matters were depicted earlier. For people in the Netherlands, the key question remained whether the white Dutch-speaking population would be able to withstand the imperialists’ attempts to assimilate them to British rule. In that respect, there was disappointment at Botha’s support for the British Empire during the First World War, something that was even reflected in Penning’s novel from 1915. But the popular writer also extensively referred to the more heroic episodes from the Afrikaner past to mobilise support for his ideal: a South Africa ruled by the white Dutch-speaking population. Such discrepancies reveal the ambivalences that surrounded the concept of stamverwantschap at the end of the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century. This attitude was also apparent in the debate about the development of Afrikaans as a separate language. Like the depiction of the Afrikaner past, this was not confined to the cultural elites only, but reached a wider audience.

After the South African War, a group of educated Afrikaners started the so-called Tweede Taalbeweging (Second Language Movement). Just like its predecessor, this movement aimed to develop Afrikaans as a written language. 71 But the relationship with the literary establishment in the Netherlands was different than in the late nineteenth century. Whereas previous language nationalists, such as S.J. du Toit, were notorious for their aversion to High Dutch, the members of the Tweede Taalbeweging seemed to accept more influences from

67 Cutting from: De Zwolsche Courant, 29 November 1924. HDC, Penning collection, 87/19.
68 Penning, Uit mijn leven, 225.
69 ‘warme liefde en sterk meeleven […]. Hun geschiedenis is een doorlopende strijd voor vrijheid en recht, een machtige kamp van bloed en tranen. Die strijd heeft weerklink gevonden in de harten van ons volk.’ Ibidem, 218.
70 For this view cf. De Graaff, De mythe van de stamverwantschap, 55.
71 Cf. chapter 2.
outside, if only for the practical reason that they needed money from external sources. In 1905, a simplification of spelling was passed by all Dutch language organisations in South Africa, which had been judged by linguists in the Netherlands and Belgium as ‘not unscholarly’. A leading figure from the Tweede Taalbeweging, Gustav Preller, thought it necessary to keep the development of Afrikaans linked to High Dutch. He argued in several essays that this was the only way to keep the language ‘civilised’ and save it from English and ‘coloured’ influences. In correspondence with Leyds and Rompel, Preller reiterated that the Netherlands remained a source of inspiration. In several letters, he emphasised the difference between the Tweede Taalbeweging and the movement led by Du Toit, which was illustrated by the new motto, ‘so na molik aan Nederlands’; ‘as close as possible to Dutch’.

There were groups within the post-1902 Afrikaner movement who were more negative about High Dutch. The leaders of the Nasionale Party, D.F. Malan and J.B.M. Hertzog – who themselves had studied in the Netherlands – publicly declared that it could never become the language of the Volk in South Africa. Such opinions became stronger, particularly after the First World War. In the 1920s, there were several incidents during which fanatical Afrikaners expressed their dislike of High Dutch. The most notorious took place when a teacher in Rustenburg publicly burned all the books from the Netherlands that he could find in his school. Despite these events, it would be going too far to say that the Afrikaner nationalist movement was hostile to High Dutch by definition. Many of the tensions ebbed after Afrikaans was proclaimed as an official language of South Africa in 1925, which led to closer cultural ties in the 1930s. One reason was the revival of the idea amongst Afrikaners that they could make use of their ties with the Netherlands to counter the influence of English. Moreover, after initial hesitations about the 1925 language law, people in the Netherlands accepted it, which greatly helped to improve the relationship. This suggests that the intellectual gap between Afrikaner nationalists and the Dutch was not as wide as may seem at first sight.

In the Netherlands, the responses to the development of Afrikaans were also varied. The simplification of grammar and spelling that was proposed by intellectuals in South Africa was already a topic of discussion at the end of the nineteenth century. There had been criticism

---

72 Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words’, 102.
73 ‘niet onwetenschappelik [sic]’. Besselaar, Zuid-Afrika in de letterkunde, 225.
74 Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words’, 105.
75 For this correspondence, cf. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 218 and 806. By the 1930s the friendship between Preller and Leyds cooled as the former adhered to more radical political views and had outspoken fascist sympathies. W.J. Leyds to F.V. Engelenburg, 25 August 1930. NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 48.
76 G. Preller to F. Rompel, 1 July 1910. NASA Leyds collection, LEY 806.
78 Glorie, “…Een reuze taak, die bijna ’t onmogelijke vordert…””, 41.
79 Hemstra, De culturele betrekkingen tussen Nederland en de Afrikaners, 21 and 59.
80 Ibidem, 21-22.
81 Ibidem, 18.
from linguists in the Netherlands, such as Jan te Winkel, who thought such changes imperilled the very foundations of Dutch as a language. This scepticism remained at the beginning of the twentieth century and at times the tone of literary critics was quite condescending. In 1910, for example, C. Scharten wrote a cynical article about Afrikaans in the influential magazine *De Gids*. Reviewing the work of J.F.E. Celliers, one of the most famous Afrikaner writers of the time, he ridiculed it as a failed attempt to make something out of ‘this little deaf-and-dumb language [...]’. Will it ever be possible to make beautiful music on this broken violin? These vicious attacks seem to have been the exception rather than the rule, however. Other critics chose more conciliatory words to express their doubts about the rapid development of Afrikaans. The publisher L. Simons was against spelling reforms because he thought it affected the purity of Dutch and he was of the opinion that linguists in the Netherlands should not give in to the ‘urge’ from South Africa. ‘We can best maintain the mutual friendship, by each doing what we think is necessary for ourselves, and furthermore learning to appreciate each other’s point of view.’

Besides the critics, there were also intellectuals who supported the efforts of the Afrikaners to simplify the spelling and grammar of written Dutch. There had been an organisation that lobbied for such reforms in the Netherlands for decades, the *Vereniging tot vereenvoudiging van onze schrijftaal*, which included many prominent pro-Boers amongst its members. After the South African War, this association watched the development of the *Tweede Taalbeweging* in South Africa closely and showed great interest in the spelling reforms of 1905, which largely coincided with their own proposals. During an annual meeting in 1906, it was noted that ‘there [in South Africa] the movement proceeds with great power, so that they are much further than we are.’ In 1908, the society appealed to the Dutch government to promote a new system designed by R.A. Kollewijn. In their petition, they stated that linguistic developments in South Africa, and also Flanders, made it necessary to follow suit in order to preserve the unity of Dutch spelling around the world. In 1909, this petition was discussed in Parliament and an official committee was appointed to investigate

82 Cf. chapter 2.
85 Cf. chapters 1 and 2.
the possibilities of a new law, but significant language reforms were introduced only after the Second World War.\textsuperscript{88} Despite the lack of concrete results on the short term, this shows that the debate about the global position of the Dutch language resurfaced after 1902 and continued to attract attention.

Within the pro-Boer movement, some prominent individuals changed their ideas on the relationship between High Dutch and the language of the Afrikaneurs in the light of the new political situation after 1902. Nicolaas Mansvelt, the former superintendent for education in the SAR is probably the most prominent example.\textsuperscript{89} During his period in office (1892-1900), his policy was aimed at promoting High Dutch at schools in the Transvaal as much as possible, as he thought that this was the best way to protect Dutch cultural domination against English influences. After his deportation to the Netherlands, he started to propagate quite another view on the matter. In several lectures during the 1900s, he supported the development of Afrikaans as a written language, which would be accessible to a large part of the population in South Africa. He therefore called upon the people in the Netherlands not to consider the \textit{Tweede Taalbeweging} as hostile, because they had ‘the same goal’ as the protagonists of High Dutch, namely to strengthen Dutch influences.\textsuperscript{90}

After it became clear that he would not be allowed to return to South Africa, Mansvelt devoted his life to assisting in the development of the Afrikaneurs from the Netherlands. He fulfilled many tasks within the NZAV and affiliated organisations.\textsuperscript{91} One of his most famous projects was the compilation of a volume of popular Dutch songs, to counter the growing popularity of English music hall tunes. This plan had existed for a long time: already in the 1890s, Mansvelt and the NZAV discussed the possibilities for such a publication, but the South African War intervened. In 1904, Mansvelt restarted the project. He set out to gather rhymes – in Afrikaans vernacular and in High Dutch – and select those that suited the Afrikaner tastes, which proved to be a difficult task. Correspondents in South Africa were not co-operative and it took a long time to collect material of sufficient quality. Moreover, most of the texts in Afrikaans had not been put to music and so the director of the Dutch opera was called in to provide the arrangements.\textsuperscript{92} When the book finally appeared in 1908, Mansvelt emphasised the importance of patriotic songs for national identity in the introduction, which was written in simplified spelling. ‘The song that has become communal property of a

\textsuperscript{88} Press circular by F. Rompel, 25 June 1909. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 871. The Vereniging tot Vereenvoudiging van onze schrijftaal opposed the plan of an official committee as it feared (and rightfully so) that it would delay the reforms. Vereenvoudiging. Orgaan van de Vereniging tot vereenvoudiging van onze schrijftaal, vol. 12 (30 November 1908), 1-2.

\textsuperscript{89} Conradie, \textit{Hollandse skrywers} II, 152-154.

\textsuperscript{90} ‘hetzelfde doel’. Mansvelt, \textit{Taalverwantschap en het gemeen belang van Nederland en Zuid-Afrika}, 8; Press circulars by F. Rompel, 5 January 1906, 2 January 1908 and 3 September 1908. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 870 and 871.

\textsuperscript{91} De Graaff, \textit{De mythe van de stamverwantschap}, 96-97.

\textsuperscript{92} Mansvelt ed., \textit{Hollands-Afrikaanse Liederbundel}, introduction.
people’, he argued, ‘teaches the people to share their joy and sorrow, teaches them to feel one with their forefathers and with each other, it binds the hearts together and strengthens through unity’. He included a great variety of songs in order to make the book appealing for the largest audience possible.

Despite the tedious process of compiling the book, it was enthusiastically supported by Rompel. The managing director of the ANV press office was an outspoken adherent of the Tweede Taalbeweging and in many of his reports to the Afrikaner press he pointed out the need to promote the Dutch language. Rompel noted how many Afrikaners were embarrassed to sing their language, which he thought was a shame, as it was poetic and well-suited to putting to music. In one essay, he explained how French had been culturally dominant in the Low Countries in the middle of the nineteenth century, but that folksongs had quickly become popular amongst the Dutch-speaking audience after patriotic authors published volumes similar to that of Mansvelt. He expressed the hope that the same would happen in South Africa in order to replace English as the dominant language. The Afrikaner press shared these views. There were critical remarks about some of the choices Mansvelt had made, but the general consensus was that his volume was a valuable contribution to the development of Dutch cultural life in South Africa. This was reflected in sales: within a few months, the first two editions of the songbook had been sold out.

In the Netherlands, there was also much appreciation for Mansvelt’s collection of folksongs and journalists generally thought it could contribute to the development of Afrikaner identity. In addition, songs in Afrikaans became popular amongst the Dutch public as well. Already before Mansvelt published his volume, Rompel and his wife organised a few concerts during which these songs were performed. Their main goal was to demonstrate that the Tweede Taalbeweging was different from the movement headed by Du Toit. In the reports about these evenings, Rompel noted with satisfaction that they were a great success and that the audiences learned to appreciate the sweet sound of Afrikaans poetry. In this way, several rhymes and tunes in Afrikaans became part of popular culture in the Netherlands. One of the most tangible results was that they were widely sung at schools. Evergreens such as Sarie Marais remained part of the curriculum until the 1950s.
These examples show that there was an ongoing interaction along the old lines of communication between the Netherlands and South Africa. Although the relationship became more problematic after 1902, there was not an inevitable dichotomy between Afrikaner nationalism and the old feelings of *stamverwantschap*. The Dutch public was disappointed about political developments in South Africa, but the heroic image of the Afrikaner past remained in vogue until after the Second World War. Similarly, there was criticism of the development of Afrikaans into an independent language, but the majority of literary critics accepted it; indeed, some even welcomed it. Moreover, songs in Afrikaans became popular tunes that were believed to breed patriotism. In South Africa, on the other hand, the idea continued to exist amongst certain groups that the ties with the Netherlands would help to guide the popularisation of Afrikaans along the right lines. This indicates that there remained a form of interaction that can be seen as a continuation of the previous periods. Several individuals believed it to be important that Afrikaner nationalism be fed with material that was available in the Netherlands and so they attempted to reverse the lines of communication that were set up at the end of the nineteenth century. The next section will further explore this issue, looking at the efforts of Willem Leyds to make his enormous archive available to the white Dutch-speaking population of South Africa.

**Building blocks for Afrikaner nationalism: Willem Leyds and historiography**

After the SAR had officially ceased to exist, the legation in Europe was closed and Leyds, who had become stateless, successfully re-applied for Dutch citizenship. Although he was offered several prestigious jobs in the diplomatic service and academia, he refused these in order to focus on South Africa and help to (re-)build Afrikaner identity. Lynette van Niekerk provides the most extensive overview of these efforts in her biography about Leyds, quoting his words from 1929 with approval: ‘I had devoted my life to South Africa; I did not want to give up that task’.\(^\text{101}\)

Considering the results of his work, it remains to be seen whether this elevated view really is justified, but it cannot be denied that Leyds spent did expend much effort in fulfilling this task. In the remainder of this chapter, some of these activities will be described, particularly those concerning historiography. The main source for this section is the enormous archive of Leyds’s legation that is kept in the National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria. As will be explained, the transfer of these documents from the Netherlands to South Africa was meant to give a boost to Afrikaner identity, and, as such, can be considered to be and act of propaganda in itself. Historians therefore have to be careful not to take this material at face value. Still, it will be argued that this extensive collection can give a taste of how attempts were made to use pro-Boer propaganda for the development of Afrikaner

---

\(^{101}\) ‘ik had mijn leven aan Zuid-Afrika gewijd; ik wilde die taak niet opgeven’. *Van Niekerk, Kruger se regterhand*, 313-314.
nationalism after 1902. Such initiatives were not uncontroversial and more often than not ended in failure. Although Leyds did try to leave a record that depicted him in a positive light, such frustrations are clearly present in his papers.

The most tangible aid Leyds provided to the Afrikaners was in the form of money coming from the remnants of the Transvaal state assets. As has been discussed previously in this chapter, he mainly focussed on rebuilding the school system and the press, which should be seen in the light of ideas about the ongoing struggle for colonial dominance between the white Dutch-speaking and white English-speaking communities. These efforts were a clear continuation of the ideals Leyds propagated in the 1880s and 1890s. He did accept the political changes that took place in South Africa after 1902, however, and did not argue in favour of the restoration of the Boer republics. In his view, the Afrikaners would be able to wrestle power from the English-speaking population in the Union and eventually gain independence from the British Empire. For the time being, he accepted South Africa’s position within the imperial sphere of influence. This became clear during the First World War, when Leyds was asked by the German government to become the political leader of the rebellion in South Africa. Although he opposed Botha’s pledge to join the war, he immediately refused this offer. Nonetheless, Leyds was quite a radical supporter of Afrikaner nationalism and one could say that, in a reversal of the famous phrase by Carl von Clausewitz, he considered South African politics after 1902 as a continuation of the war by other means. For him, the way in which the colonial past was depicted was essential in this respect.

Leyds’s best-known activity after the South African War was history-writing. He published two ample works about the relations between the Boer republics (mainly the Transvaal) and the British Empire up until the outbreak of the South African War. As he himself had played a part in the last period of that history as state secretary of the SAR, the question is whether these works can be considered to be proper academic studies. Although it can be argued that they have some historical significance because of his close involvement and his in-depth knowledge of the subject, there is a general consensus amongst historians from the 1900s to the present day that they are too subjective to be serious historiography. Leyds himself claimed that his aim was to provide a factual account of events, but it is clear

102 Ibidem, 352. Leyds’s dislike of the German government of Wilhelm II was probably also the result of the emperor’s refusal to meet with Kruger in 1900. W.J. Leyds to M.P.C. Valter, 19 August 1914. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 214.
103 Bossenbroek, ‘Geschiedschrijving als hoger beroep’, 211.
104 Leyds, The First Annexation of the Transvaal; Leyds, The Transvaal surrounded. The Dutch and English versions of the former book appeared both in 1906. The second book appeared in 1914 in Dutch, but its publication in English was delayed until 1919 because Leyds did not think it was opportune to publish it during the First World War.
105 Colenbrander, Het boek van Dr. Leyds, 158; Van Winter, Dr. Leyds en Zuid-Afrika, 19; Van Jaarsveld, ‘n Methodologies-kritiese ondersoek’, 105; De Ru, ‘Het beeld van de Zuidafrikaanse geschiedenis’, 90-1; Bossenbroek, ‘Geschiedschrijving als hoger beroep’, 196-205.
that he also saw the political significance of his work.\textsuperscript{106} His main source was an almost complete collection of British blue books (official government publications) on South Africa, to which he lovingly referred as his ‘arsenal’. Extensive reference to this collection made it hard for English critics to dispel his views, Leyds argued.\textsuperscript{107} In a letter replying to a review of the proofs for his second publication he described it as follows:

[It] is a mine that others must draw from. I only wanted to provide material. I have silenced my own indignation. But they who announce the book, it is up to them to flog the British, in the light of the facts that I teach. I would also wish these facts to be acknowledged by our enemies, but the only chance of that happening is if I present it without passion, and without my own commentary.\textsuperscript{108}

It can be argued that some of Leyds’s motives for writing his historical works were personal, justifying his own decisions in the 1880s and 1890s. It certainly is likely that one of his goals was to exonerate the conduct of the Boer governments, and particularly that of Kruger, as is shown by the reaction of Leyds’s successor as state secretary, F.W. Reitz, who hailed the two books as ‘an irrefutable defense of the politics of the Transvaal from its beginning’.\textsuperscript{109} This quote also suggests that there was a deeper meaning to Leyds’s historical work, namely to rewrite the history of South Africa in order to dispel British views on the recent past. In this way, these activities were a continuation of the work by Dutch authors before 1899 and many propagandists during the South African War, who wanted to do much the same. It can therefore be argued that Leyds’s work was primarily intended for the Afrikaner people to help them develop their own identity. In a somewhat dated, but otherwise excellent critique, the South African historian F.A. van Jaarsveld shows that Leyds thus contributed significantly to the development of Afrikaner nationalism.\textsuperscript{110}

Remarkably, Leyds himself did not attempt to write a complete history of the South African War, which was considered to be the most important event in modern South Africa. Eventually, he did edit four volumes of material from the archives of the SAR legation

\textsuperscript{106} W.J. Leyds to dr J.W.G. Van Oordt (Cape Town), 9 July 1903 and W.J. Leyds to prof. P.J. Blok, 12 September 1903. NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 40.
\textsuperscript{107} ‘arsenaal’. W.J. Leyds to D. Reitz, 26 August 1930. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 221.
\textsuperscript{108} ‘het is een mijn waar anderen uit putten moeten. Ik heb slechts materiaal willen leveren. Mijn eigen verontwaardiging heb ik het stilzwijgen opgelegd. Maar zij die het boek aankondigen, aan hen is het de Britten te geeselen, naar aanleiding van de feiten die ik bijbreng. Ik wens die feiten ook door onze vijanden erkend te zien, maar alleen dan is daar kans op, als ik er zonder hartstocht mee aankom, en zonder mijn eigen commentaren.’ W.J. Leyds to H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge, 26 August 1913. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 213.
\textsuperscript{109} ‘een onweerlegbare verdediging van de politiek door de Transvaal vanaf zijn bestaan gevolgd’. F.W. Reitz to W.J. Leyds, 4 March 1920. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 259.
\textsuperscript{110} Jaarsveld, ‘n Methodologies-kritiese ondersoek’, 106-107; Ru, ‘Het beeld van de Zuid-Afrikaanse geschiedenis’, 90.
concerning his own activities. These books were more personal than his works about the rivalry between the Boer republics and the British Empire in the nineteenth century. To start with, they only published for private use, with Leyds sending them to individuals and institutions he thought would be interested. The first volume, which appeared in 1919, was intended as a refutation of the accusation in many British publications that he had advised the SAR government to initiate hostilities in 1899.111 When it appeared that the volume attracted a great deal of interest, Leyds decided to publish selected correspondence about his activities up until 1902, the last volume of which appeared in 1934. In contrast with the first book, the former minister plenipotentiary provided introductions in which he discussed some of the leading themes. In 1930, this resulted in a polemic with Hendrik Muller, the former consular-general of the OFS, who wrote his own account, containing a biting criticism of the activities of the SAR legation.112 This text stirred up the old animosity between the two Boer representatives. Leyds wrote to influential Dutch academics and diplomats about the document, arguing that it was full of ‘untruths, gibes and low insinuations’.113 In addition, he wrote a pamphlet to counter Muller’s views and in the third volume of his diplomatic correspondence published an appendix in which he accused the OFS representative of almost ruining the arrival of Kruger in Marseilles in 1900.114

Such personal vendettas must not obscure the fact that Leyds had more profound motives with his writings about the South African War. While he himself did not discuss the situation on the battlefields, he certainly was of the opinion that it was an important topic that merited publication. In the 1900s, he was involved in several publications of accounts of people who had experienced the South African War first hand, either in the field or in the camps. Because the inhabitants of the former Boer republics lacked the means to publish such works themselves, many were printed in the Netherlands and distributed in South Africa by bookshops like J.A. Wormser, J.H. de Bussy and HAUM. These firms had established branches in South Africa before the war and these were revived after 1902.115 The demand for their books was rather limited, however, and the publishers complained about the lack of support from the Boer leaders for their activities, which led to serious financial problems.116

111 He did so by referring to a telegram in which he warned the government that no intervention was to be expected from the European powers. W.J. Leyds, F.V. Engelenburg, 14 June 1907 NASA, Engelenburg collection, A (140), 24; W.J. Leyds to G. Preller, 20 December 1911. NASA Leyds collection, LEY 211; W.J. Leyds to J. de Louter, 11 March 1919. NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 12; Bossenboek, ‘Geschiedschrijving als hoger beroep’, 206-207.
112 NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 72.
113 ‘onwaarheden, schimpscheuten en lage insinuaties’. Transcript W.J. Leyds to N. Japikse, 1 October 1930. NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 72. In this letter, Leyds mentioned that Frans Beelaerts van Blokland, who was the foreign minister at the time, expressed his dismay at Muller’s pamphlet.
114 Leyds, Een geschrijf van Dr. H.P.N. Muller; Leyds ed., Derde Verzameling II, 150-1. Cf. chapter 3.
115 Cf. chapter 1.
Nevertheless, contemporaries considered the memoirs of veterans to be important source material for later historians, because they presented a Boer perspective on the South African War. Such views were often expressed by authors. None of them, however, claimed to give a complete account of the conflict and instead emphasised that their writings were strictly personal. Moreover, they often admitted that their personal diaries and notes had been lost during the fighting so that they wrote down their impressions from their own memories.  

Leyds was definitively aware of the fragmented nature of this corpus of literature and considered it to be a problem. Already during the South African War, he started thinking about how the Boer side could be presented in an effective way. This was an urgent matter because the first books supporting the British imperialists’ point of view started to appear before the end if the conflict, such as Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Great Boer War* (1900) and *The War in South Africa. Its Cause and Conduct* (February 1902). Pro-Boers in the Netherlands dismissed these works as blatant jingo propaganda that exposed a misplaced sense of superiority on the British side. Nevertheless, Leyds took them seriously and worried about the influence they could exert in future.

This was particularly the case with *The Times History of the War in South Africa*, a project started by Leo Amery, a young and ambitious reporter from *The Times*. In 1900, a volume about the causes of the conflict appeared, with the second part, covering the first few months of the fighting following in June 1902. The thorough approach by Amery and his co-authors meant that it took many years before the whole series (seven bulky volumes in all) was completed, in 1909. Because Amery had access to a wide range of sources from the British side through his remarkable network, which included many members of the imperial elites, his work was considered to be the most important historical publication about the war for many decades, despite the fact that it gave a biased and pro-British view. *The Times History* is a prime example of a so-called official history, an account mainly based on government and military sources. Contemporaries attributed great educational value to this genre and it can therefore be seen as an exercise in nation-building. This was certainly the case with Amery’s project, whose main objective was to point out the worrying state of the British military and agitate for army reform in order to ensure the survival of the empire into the twentieth century.

Although Leyds did not have such a concrete agenda, focussed on one particular lesson that could be learned from the war, he did have similar ideas about the value of such histories. His goal was to provide the Afrikaner people with building blocks for a new vision of their

---

118 *NRC*, 16 February 1902; Ten Siethoff, ‘*Een verdediging van Engeland?’*
120 Surridge, ‘*Official History*’, 29-31; Beckett, ‘*British Official History*’, 33-42.
121 Beckett, ‘*British Official History*, 35; V. Kuitenbrouwer, ‘*No End of a Lesson*’.
past that would make them proud of their heritage and strengthen their self-awareness. One of
the people Leyds discussed this issue with, quoted him as follows:

that [an] accurate record of the war, the refutation of misrepresentations, will be to the benefit of the Afrikaner people also at a later point in time, as this work will erect an everlasting monument for them as a nation, that people today and in posterity will look at with respect and admiration, through which the preservation and elevation of the Boers as an independent nation will be stimulated.122

On several occasions in the 1900s, Leyds tried to organise the publication of a work that could compete with *The Times History*, but never succeeded. Still, the failures show that the attempts to rewrite the history of the South African War were a direct extension of the propaganda campaign between 1899 and 1902.

The first plan to publish an integrated history of the war from a Boer perspective emerged just after the fighting had ended, when it became clear that Generals Botha, De la Rey and De Wet were going to visit Europe. They wrote to Frans Engelenburg that they wanted to publish a book simultaneously in different languages across the world. Besides the political significance, the generals also saw commercial opportunities and anticipated that a book with such a famous line-up of authors would generate much money. It was proposed that Kruger and Steyn would sign the introduction. Part one would be a ‘histoire politique’, with three chapters about the pre-war situation in the Transvaal (by Engelenburg himself), the OFS (by Abraham Fischer, a prominent politician from the republic) and the Cape (by F.S. Malan, an Afrikaner journalist). This would be followed by three chapters on the events during the war in South Africa, a ‘histoire-bataille’ written by the three Boer generals. Finally Leyds was asked to write a ‘histoire diplomatique’ about his activities as minister plenipotentiary.123

At first Leyds was positive about the plan, but soon saw how it crumbled. After three weeks he replied to Engelenburg that ‘this matter has completely been spoiled’, which he thought was the fault of Kruger and De Wet. Both men had decided to publish their own books, without consulting the others and this narrow-mindedness harmed the overall cause, he argued. Kruger had dictated his memoirs to his personal secretary, and because the memory of the former president was somewhat clouded, Leyds feared that the book would be nothing

122 ‘dat [een] nauwkeurige vastlegging van de geschiedenis van den oorlog, de weerlegging van valsche voorstellingen, ook nog in lateren tijd het Afrikaansche Volk ten goede zal komen, waar dit werk, voor hen als natie een overgankelijke eerezuil opricht, waartegen tijdgenoot en nageslacht met eerbied en bewondering zullen opzien, waardoor de handhaving en opbouwing der Boeren als zelfstandige natie wordt bevorderd’. P.A. Nierstrasz to W.J. Leyds, 11 January 1904. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 317.
123 F.V. Engelenburg to W.J. Leyds, 6 August 1902. NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 48.
‘Whoever wants to create a future’

more than ‘a collection of anecdotes, while it could have become a monument of history’. In addition, he accused Kruger’s family of exploiting the elderly man: in their lust for profit, they had sold the all the rights to a German publisher, who had gained complete control over the text. De Wet made similar mistakes, said Leyds, because the famous general had sold the rights to his memoirs before he left South Africa in order to compensate for the losses he had suffered during the war; ‘it is thus a private speculation’.124 Ironically, Leyds was asked to act as an agent for the war memoirs of De Wet, a truly international enterprise, appearing almost simultaneously in Dutch, French, German, Russian and English. Its popularity is illustrated by the fact that it even sold well in Britain; in the Netherlands no less than twenty-three editions appeared within a year.125 The failure of this plan for an integrated history of the South African War shows that it was no easy matter to publish such a work, requiring a lot of co-ordination and organisation.

During later attempts, the authors Leyds worked with were of a lesser stature than the Boer generals. One of them was P.A. Nierstrasz, a publisher from The Hague who was an active propagandist during the South African War. Amongst other things, he had set up a pro-Boer press office for German-speaking countries. With hindsight, it is unlikely that these activities were effective and it seems that Nierstrasz mainly used the pro-Boer movement as a means to generate income for his ailing company.126 Several contemporaries already thought that the publisher was ‘an untrustworthy person’ and warned Leyds against him.127 Nevertheless, the former SAR diplomat kept paying for his services after June 1902 and Nierstrasz initially wrote a huge number of reports on the South African press.128 After a while, the two men started discussing plans for a military history of the war. Nierstrasz, a former artillerist, had already been asked by the Russian army to write such a book in 1901. Nevertheless, Leyds was the main supporter of this project and it seems that the Russian assignment was used to cover up his involvement.129 As it turned out, in fact, Leyds provided all the funds, amounting to some fl. 40,000.130

124 ‘[d]eze zaak is totaal bedorven’; ‘eene verzameling van anecdoten, terwijl het had kunnen worden een monument van historie’; ‘[h]et is dus eene private speculatie’. W.J. Leyds to F.V. Engelenburg, 28 August 1902. NL-HaNA, Leyds, 2.21.105, inv.nr. 40.
125 Correspondence about publication of De Wet’s book. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 261. Despite the commercial success, however, the two never got along personally. Van Niekerk, Kruger se regterhand, 319.
126 Cf. chapter 4.
127 ‘een onbetrouwbaar mensch’. E.G.A. ten Siethoff to W.J. Leyds, 28 June 1904. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 210. Ten Siethoff was a medical doctor from The Hague who accumulated a large library during the South African War, mainly consisting of newspaper-cuttings and official publications. His attempt to write a history of the war also failed and his collection (or part of it at least) ended up in the NZAV library in Amsterdam. Cf. several letters in: NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 197, 209, 210 and 211.
128 This collection, including many thousands of pages in German can be found in: NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 198-205.
130 At that time approximately £ 3,333. Report by Major C.A. Jorissen, 18 September 1929, pp. 3-4. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 778.

263
In a letter explaining his plan for a standard book about the South African War, Nierstrasz recounted a discussion he and Leyds had had about the use of such a work for the Afrikaners. He argued that the authors of official British histories ignored many facts, provided a wrong impression of the Boer side and glorified their own deeds in order to create a vision of the past that suited their political purposes. None of the accounts that were written by Boers provided a coherent refutation of these views, however: ‘[they] are more like episodes, personal experiences, which are placed in the foreground by the author’. Other accounts, published by the French and German military, did not solve this problem either, as they focused on the first months of the war only and also used unreliable British sources. Nierstrasz therefore wanted to write a synthesis of all the Boer sources, which would ensure more ‘objectivity’, because it would be comparable to the British accounts. Apart from the political advantages to the Afrikaners, the publisher added, this work would also be of importance to European powers, as it would give a profound insight into the nature of colonial warfare.

Leyds wanted the book to be written as quickly as possible, but there were some delays caused by a conflict between Nierstrasz and one of his employees. Still, the printing proofs, amounting to ten volumes (more than 1,600 pages), were handed over to Leyds after a little over two years, in March 1906. The first part, which consisted of two volumes written in French, described the geography of South Africa and the structure of the British colonies and the Boer republics. This was followed by a detailed account of the political history of South Africa up until 1899, including short biographies of the most important generals and statesmen and an analysis of the ‘Boer character’ and the Boers’ attitudes to warfare. The second part, seven volumes in German, provided an overview of the military system of both parties after which followed a chronology of the course of the conflict from day to day between October 1899 and June 1902. The third part was one volume with an index of 3,000 geographical names and 51 maps depicting the general geographical features, the course of particular battles, troop movements and the blockhouse system. For further illustration, there were 706 photos scattered throughout the work, coming from Nierstrasz’s personal archive.

---

132 Ibidem; P.A. Nierstrasz to W.J. Leyds, 4 July 1903. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 209. In 1904 Nierstrasz accused the authors of a series about the South African War in the Dutch periodical De Militaire Spectator, of the same thing. P.A. Nierstrasz, ‘De oorlog in Zuid-Afrika’, in De Militaire spectator, vol. 73, no. 5 (May 1904), 380-409, 380-381.
135 P.A. Nierstrasz to W.J. Leyds, 1 March 1906. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 211. The proofs can be found in: NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 766-776. It does not contain all the maps.
136 Another fourteen maps were published in the text itself.
137 Brochure from 1905 with preface and table of contents of Nierstrasz’s history, in French. NASA, Leyds
There are no sources that reveal how Leyds judged these magnificent-looking proofs, printed on high-quality paper. But his archives contain two reviews by Dutch military officers. They both agreed with Nierstrasz that it was the most complete account of the South African War from the Boer perspective up to date, and as such considered it to be an important text that merited publication. In comparison with *The Times History*, they noted that Nierstrasz gave a better, although at times somewhat biased, description of the run-up to the war, in which the role of the republics was extensively discussed. His use of Boer sources for his chronology of the war was also seen as an important addition to existing literature. Although the account of the combat situation itself was not elaborate enough to serve as an academic military exposition, they considered it to be a good historical text that provided important ‘building material’ for a standard work that could be written by future historians.\(^{138}\)

Looking at both the contents and the reviews of Nierstrasz’s history, it looks as if the proofs lived up to Leyds’s expectations, of a ‘monument’ to honour the Boer combatants. Nonetheless, the book was never published.

The sources do not make it exactly clear why Leyds decided not to publish this history of the war. The most probable reason is that the costs would be too high to publish it in South Africa. To make the work, which was written in French and German, accessible to the Afrikaners it would have to be translated into Dutch, and also into English to provide an alternative to *The Times History*. Another problem would be the high printing costs of the elaborately illustrated book, because it was expensive to publish photos and maps at the time.\(^{139}\) From other correspondence it appears that Leyds thought it important that cheap editions of history books be available to reach the widest audience possible.\(^{140}\) It is unlikely that the proofs were suitable for such a popular publication. Another, and possibly decisive, reason could have been the increasing financial problems of Nierstrasz. Despite the substantial sums Leyds provided him with, his publishing house *Nederland* went bankrupt in 1905.\(^{141}\) Decades later, a former associate, L. Simons, remembered Nierstrasz as an unreliable person.

That Mr N. and his brother were – as it later became clearly apparent to me – not entirely trustworthy, and I am left with the impression, that they used the Boer cause to ensure a temporary position here in this country [the

\(^{138}\) ‘bouwmateriaal’. Transcript of report by General F. de Bas to Chief of Staff, 12 February 1908; report by Major C.A. Jorissen, 18 September 1929. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 778.

\(^{139}\) Both these problems are mentioned in the report by C.A. Jorissen. In fact, *The Times History* also appeared in an expensive version only, which for a large extent can explain its limited sale numbers and the enterprise ended with a severe loss. V. Kuitenbrouwer, *‘No End of a Lesson’*, 17 and 34.

\(^{140}\) In 1907 he tried to arrange a popular edition of his book about the annexation of Transvaal. It seems likely that this plan did not materialise. For a dossier with this correspondence cf. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 211.

\(^{141}\) Report Major C.A. Jorissen, 18 September 1929. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 778.
Netherlands] that they barely deserved and that has, I fear, not done all that much good to the cause of the Boers in our country.\textsuperscript{142}

Nierstrasz did not only offer the printing proofs to Leyds, however, contacting the Ministry of War in The Hague in November 1907. In a confidential report, the director of the military archive recommended it for publication.\textsuperscript{143} Nevertheless the minister declined the offer, deciding that the publication of such an elaborate text would cost too much.\textsuperscript{144} In the 1920s, the text was dusted off again when Engelenburg announced that he had plans to write a history of the South African War. Leyds offered him the printing proofs, and his old friend considered recommending it for publication by the \textit{Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns}.\textsuperscript{145} This initiative too failed and it looks as if Leyds once again consulted the Ministry of War. In 1929, a final report was written by a retired major who largely agreed with earlier reports about Nierstrasz’s history. In his conclusions, he reiterated the need for an ‘Afrikaans standard work about the 1899-1902 war’.\textsuperscript{146} Although these recommendations did not lead to an actual publication, it shows that there was continual interest by officials in the Netherlands in publishing an official history of the South African War. This also became apparent in another attempt to publish an account of the conflict in Dutch.

After their return in 1900, Captain J.H. Ram, Lieutenant L.W.J.K. Thomson and Lieutenant C.J. Asselbergs, three Dutch military attachés who had been assigned to the Boer forces, set out to write a report about their findings. On the same ship Ram that returned on, a large collection of war telegrams gathered by Botha was brought to the Netherlands under the supervision of the head of the Transvaal telegraph department, C.K. van Trotsenburg. On arrival in the Netherlands, Ram asked for permission to have access to this archive and to use it in the attachés’ report. Leyds, as the representative of the SAR government, was apprehensive because of an incident that had taken place in South Africa after letters had been intercepted in which Thomson expressed his personal dislike of the Boers.\textsuperscript{147} In addition, Van Trotsenburg reported how Ram had already been denied access to official archives, because the SAR authorities thought that several of the cables were unsuitable for publication. Still, he advised Leyds to allow the attachés to see the telegrams as it could mend the strained

\textsuperscript{142} ‘Die heer N. en zijn broeder waren – het is mij later duidelijk gebleken – nu niet zoo heel veel zaaks, en ik heb den indruk gekregen, dat zij zich van de Boerenzaak bediend hebben, om zich hier te lande een tijdelijke positie te verzekeren, die zij nauwelijks verdienden en die de zaak der Boeren in ons land, naar ik vrees, niet al te veel goed heeft gedaan’. L. Simons to W.J. Leyds, 6 November 1931. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 95.

\textsuperscript{143} Transcript of report by General F. de Bas to Chief of staff, 12 February 1908, pp. 19-20. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 778.

\textsuperscript{144} Transcript Minister of War to P.A. Nierstrasz, 21 April 1908. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 778.

\textsuperscript{145} F.V. Engelenburg to W.J. Leyds, 4 October 1927 and 4 September 1928. NASA, Engelenburg collection, A (140), 24. Nierstrasz died in 1916.


\textsuperscript{147} Cf. chapter 3.
relationship between them and the SAR officials. Moreover, he argued, a publication based on these sources could contribute to the Boer cause, as it would provide an alternative to the British historical accounts of the war. He also noted, however, that it would be important to keep an eye on the project, because there was a chance that the attachés might submit the documents to an ‘incorrect reading’. \(^{148}\) Subsequently, Leyds set several conditions: the attachés should ask for the approval of the SAR authorities to publish texts that used the telegram collection as a source. \(^{149}\)

In subsequent years, Van Trotsenburg kept Leyds informed about the progress of the report. He and three other former Transvaal administrators were given a room in the offices of the queen in The Hague, where they supervised the attachés. \(^{150}\) The Dutch government feared, however, that its involvement in the project would be exposed, which might have compromised the policy of neutrality. Leyds therefore paid fl. 400 a month for another office and for the salaries of the assistants. The first version of the report was completed in October 1901 and circulated amongst several members of the government, including Queen Wilhelmina. Despite the fact that the report contained some passages that might have damaged the image of the Boers, Van Trotsenburg was of the opinion that it should be published nonetheless. He thought that the attachés would remove these remarks, considering public opinion and the desires of the queen of whom they knew that ‘where there is a choice between various different depictions, the one that is good for us will be most welcome to her’. Moreover, Van Trotsenburg thought that it was a valuable addition to pro-Boer literature, because it served as an ‘encyclopaedia for future historians’. \(^{151}\) At first sight, the report by the Dutch attachés fitted Leyds’s ideas for an official history of the South African War based on Boer sources. Looking at the contents, however, it becomes clear that the perspective of the Dutch attachés made this impossible.

First of all, the manuscript only deals with the first few months of the South African War, up until the occupation of Pretoria, as the attachés left the war zone after that. \(^{152}\) The limited scope of the report seems not to have been the most important problem, however. Being strong advocates of the militia system in the Netherlands, the attachés’ main aim was to extract lessons from the war that could be of use to the Dutch army and in particular to examine the value of the ‘people’s army’. At times, they were quite positive about the performance of the Boer commandos, who they considered to be excellent shots and well-adapted to outdoor life. But they also noted fundamental deficiencies, which they expounded

\(^{148}\) ‘foutieve leezing’. C.K. van Trotsenburg to W.J. Leyds, 24 October 1900. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 322.  
\(^{149}\) W.J. Leyds to C.K. van Trotsenburg, 28 November 1900. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 322.  
\(^{150}\) C.K. van Trotsenburg to W.J. Leyds, 3 February 1902. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 322.  
\(^{151}\) ‘waar er een keuze bestaat tusschen voorstellingen van verschillende aard, de ons goede haar het meest welkome is’; ‘vraagbaak voor toekomstige geschiedschrijvers’. C.K. van Trotsenburg to W.J. Leyds, 23 February 1902. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 322.  
\(^{152}\) The manuscript can be found in: NL-HaNA, Asselbergs, 2.21.013.
in a whole chapter devoted to ‘the character of the Boers’. They thought that the public in the Netherlands was under the wrong impression about the inhabitants of the republics in thinking they were good patriots. They argued that, apart from a few exceptions, the majority of the Boers had a strong sense of individual freedom that had been developed during the Great Trek, which made it impossible for them to make sacrifices for their country. In the descriptions of the battles this bold assertion was supported by extracts from the war telegrams that showed that even during the famous battle of Colenso, for instance, many tactical errors were made due to the fact that the commanders had little authority. It seems likely that Leyds read the report (or at least part of it) and that he did not think it to be of value for his main goal, namely to strengthen Afrikaner identity in South Africa. Besides the assertion by the attachés that patriotism was virtually absent in the Boer republics, the excerpts from the telegrams did not contribute to the heroic image of the commandos and might have been embarrassing for the generals, some of whom had important political positions after the war.

It seems likely that this was the reason for Leyds to deny his approval in 1905, when Ram wrote to him saying that the Dutch government was wondering whether now, three years after the South African War had ended, it would be possible to publish the full report, including the parts that were based on the SAR telegrams. By that time, Van Trotsenburg had handed over the collection to Leyds, thereby giving him full control over the source material. The former minister plenipotentiary forwarded Ram’s letter to Botha, requesting a formal reply, but he added in a personal letter that he advised him not to comply with the request. ‘Many of the telegrams are completely unfit for use and in my opinion the attachés Ram and Thomson are not suitable people for making a selection from them.’ Botha followed this advice and wrote a formal letter in which he made it clear that he could not allow the report’s publication in the light of the political situation in South Africa and that permission should also be requested for publication in future. In a separate confidential letter he made it clear that he completely agreed with Leyds’s objections.

In the end, all of Leyds’s efforts to turn the material he gathered during the South African

---

155 The Leyds archive contains five of the nine volumes. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 779-781.
157 ‘Vele der telegrammen zijn voor gebruik-making geheel ongeschikt en de attaché’s Ram en Thomson zijn m.i. niet geschikte personen om daaruit een keuze te doen’. W.J. Leyds to L. Botha, 9 June 1905. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 317.
158 L. Botha to W.J. Leyds, 27 August 1906. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 317.
War into a historical work that would strengthen Afrikaner identity failed. Nevertheless, the sources show the importance contemporaries attached to the idea behind an official history, which was seen as an important exercise in nation-building. There were practicable problems, however, making it hard to organise such an endeavour. These problems exposed a fundamental weakness in the pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands, which lacked an effective structure. Although Leyds was in a relatively authoritative position because of his control over the sources from his extensive collection and his good contacts with the Boer generals, he could not exert influence over the individuals that were involved in the actual writing of the manuscripts. Some of them, like De Wet and Nierstrasz, seemed to have prioritised personal gain over the higher goal of nation-building. Others, like the attachés, had opinions that were considered to be harmful in light of the political situation in South Africa. Despite these setbacks, Leyds did not give up on finding a purpose for the archives that he considered himself to be a trustee of. Eventually, he succeeded in moving several collections to South Africa, where he thought they would have the greatest effect on the continual struggle between the British and Dutch races.

One of the most remarkable collections of pro-Boer propaganda came into being in the Dutch town of Dordrecht. On 1 July 1902, barely a month after the Peace of Vereeniging, the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum (South African Museum, hereafter ZAM) was opened there. The founder of this museum was Hidde Nijland, a wealthy merchant and well-known art collector who had accumulated a large number of objects of propagandistic value during the South African War, and who wanted to exhibit them. Although the conflict had already ended when the museum opened, Nijland explained in the opening speech, he still thought it of use to show this collection to the public in order to highlight the ongoing struggle of the Afrikaners against British dominance. Moreover, he added, he had become the ‘owner [of the objects] not to possess, but to save and, if desirable, send everything back [to South Africa] later on.’

The implication of these words was later a source of great controversy and became the subject of a legal battle between Nijland and Leyds that was to last for more than a decade. In order to place this conflict in perspective, something has to be said about the previous history of the collection, which was intertwined with the pro-Boer propaganda campaign.

In 1897, the Transvaal government decided to partake in the Paris World Exhibition of 1900. In the years that followed, a committee of prominent administrators co-operated with Johannes Pierson, a Dutch businessman who acted as consul-general of the SAR in Paris. Due to the war, only a limited number of objects could be sent from South Africa, early in 1900. The shipment contained stuffed animals, plant specimens, gold nuggets, a collection of

160 ‘[e]igenaar niet om het bezit, doch om te redden en zoo gewenscht, later weer alles terug te zenden.’ Speech by Hidde Nijland, 1 July 1902. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 912.
mineral specimens, a painting of the Kruger government, booty from an expedition against an African chief and large billboards with facts and figures about the growth of the education system of the SAR.\textsuperscript{161} Pierson managed to gather enough material to fill the Transvaal pavilion with the assistance of a special committee of the NZAV who confidentially asked collectors in the Netherlands whether they could spare objects relating to the (natural) history of the Transvaal and its inhabitants. Even the ‘original’ interior of a model Boer farm was made by a furniture maker in Dordrecht.\textsuperscript{162} Although strictly speaking this was against the rules of the exhibition, the jury turned a blind eye, taking the circumstances into consideration. Indeed, the Transvaal government was honoured with 15 certificates and 12 medals, including two \textit{Grand Prix} for the education exhibition.\textsuperscript{163} In addition, the public showed great interest, which was undoubtedly the result of the general dismay at the war in South Africa. The most tangible expression of these sentiments was the entrance hall, where two columns were covered with pro-Boer and anti-British slogans. A bust of Kruger was buried in flowers.

Despite the great propagandistic success of the pavilion, there were concerns about what would happen to the collection after the World Exhibition had ended. To avoid the British from getting their hands on the objects, a plan was made to secure them. A secret agent from the SAR legation, Bas Veth, established contact with Nijland, who was prepared to take the collection on loan. In order to avoid suspicion, this was arranged in a rather roundabout manner. In August 1900, Nijland and Pierson signed two contracts. One was concerning the gold nuggets for which the businessman from Dordrecht paid 10,000 francs, thus becoming their rightful owner. The second document stated that the rest of the objects from the pavilion would be sold for 30,000 francs. However, it was verbally agreed that Nijland would not pay this latter sum and so did not really become the owner of these objects, but rather a kind of temporary guardian with the purpose of the object being returned to South Africa when circumstance allowed it.\textsuperscript{164} At that point, there seemed to be no end in sight for the South African War, so the objects were transported to Dordrecht.\textsuperscript{165} The continuation of the war probably was the reason to permanently exhibit the objects in a special museum, the preparations for which started in 1901. Meanwhile, the collection grew considerably, not only because of purchases by and gifts to Nijland, but also with the help of

\textsuperscript{161} S. Aubert to J. Pierson, 5 April 1900. NASA, Pierson collection, KGP 37. The French Consul-General in Pretoria, S. Aubert, was a member of the world exhibition committee and after the war started, he arranged for the items to be shipped in March and April 1900. Another important figure in this respect was Consul-General G. Pott in Lourenço Marques.

\textsuperscript{162} For correspondence concerning the collection of SAR material from the Netherlands, cf. NASA, Pierson collection, KGP 33 and 31.

\textsuperscript{163} J. Pierson to W.J. Leyds, 14 August 1900. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 908.

\textsuperscript{164} Statement by B. Veth, 6 November 1911 and copies of the contracts sent by J. Pierson. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 907. The Consul-General even gave Nijland a fake receipt for the 30,000 francs.

\textsuperscript{165} List of objects sent from Paris to Dordrecht. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 907.
representatives of the Boer republics and pro-Boer organisations. One of the main sources was the household of Paul Kruger in Hilversum. The exiled president received an endless stream of tributes to the bravery of his people from all across the world. His family arranged with Nijland that these objects be given on loan so that he could exhibit them. In addition to the popular bust of Kruger from the Transvaal pavilion at the World Exhibition, which was displayed with the wilted garlands from Paris, one of the most eye-catching items was the so-called ‘Bratina’, a two meter-high silver ceremonial cup, covered with diamonds and mounted on a marble foot: a gift from 70,000 Russians to honour General Piet Cronje. Other special items in the collection were a number of portraits of Boer leaders made by famous Dutch artists from the time, such as Thérèse Schwartze and Jan Toorop. Besides the impressive homage to the embattled republics, which took up three galleries, there were seven other rooms. These contained: items made by Boer PoWs, material used by the Dutch ambulances, photos, ethnographical objects, education statistics, African crafts and a library with pro-Boer literature. In the courtyard there were models of a rondavel (African hut), a Voortrekker farm and an ox-wagon.

In 1903, a committee from Dordrecht, including Kiewiet de Jonge and Rompel, announced that it wanted to take over the management of the ZAM to ensure that the collection was available to the Afrikaners at all times. Their initiative was supported by the NZAV and by Leyds. The draft statutes explicitly stated that ‘the executive committee shall always consider itself as trustees and the Museum as property of the SA people.’ The next article designated the so-called ‘foremen’ as the representatives of the people’s will. These were the leaders of the Afrikaner political parties in South Africa at the time, including Botha. Initially, Nijland agreed to these proposals, which would mean that his personal authority over the museum would come to and end. But soon disputes arose between him and the committee concerning the poor conditions in the museum and the ownership of some of the objects that came from Kruger’s family. This conflict eventually led to Nijland’s refusal to sign the draft statutes and hand over control of the ZAM. Initially, Leyds acted as a mediator and he had several meetings with both parties, but the differences could not be

166 H.C. Bredell to F. Rompel, 14 September 1904. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 907.
167 The Bratina reached Nijland via the Boer representative in St. Petersburg ds H.A. Guillot and H.P.N. Muller who had at first tried to store it at the national gallery at the Rijksmuseum. H.P.N. Muller to H.A.Guillot, 28 May 1916. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 907.
168 Transcript letter F. Rompel to W.J. Leyds, [September 1904?]. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 907.
171 Minutes of meeting ZAM committee, 15, 20 and 27 September and 18 October 1904. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 907.
172 Minutes of meeting ZAM committee, 25 October 1904. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 907.
‘Whoever wants to create a future’

resolved and the provisional committee disbanded itself in March 1905. Leyds’s later attempts to persuade Nijland also failed and he started to look for other ways to solve the problem. After South Africa had been granted self-government in 1906, Leyds saw an opportunity to do just that. In letters to Boer leaders and the president of the NZAV he proposed that, considering the political developments, it was time for the Afrikaners to ask back the collection, as by then they were able to keep it out of British hands themselves. During a European tour, Botha wrote a letter to Nijland, asking for the objects from the ZAM in order to exhibit them in a new national museum that would be housed in Kruger’s former official residence in Pretoria. Nijland agreed to discuss this plan with Leyds, but due to severe illness the latter sent a former official of the SAR legation, G.J. Bolman, to represent him. During their meeting, Nijland mentioned several conditions for handing over the collection, the most important of which were that the museum in Pretoria should carry his name and that he would be paid fl. 24,000. Leyds, who barely had recovered from his illness, was not prepared to give in to these demands and started to prepare a court case. In 1908, the Afrikaner leaders in the Transvaal, who called themselves ‘Boeren voormannen’ formally accredited him to act on their behalf.

After lengthy preparations, during which Leyds was assisted by the lawyer H.J.F. Heijmans, the case started in December 1909. Almost eighteen months later, the court reached its verdict. In the meantime, some fundamental issues were covered. The plea of the ‘Boeren voormannen’, as formulated by Leyds, was that they were the rightful inheritors of the collection that had been the property of the former republic of the Transvaal and its late president. Nijland’s lawyer argued that the legal status of the ‘Boeren voormannen’ was flawed and that they could hardly be considered to be the sole representatives of the people in South Africa. Moreover, he continued, the inhabitants of the former republics had become subjects of the British Empire and had thus lost their rights to previous possessions. To counter the first point of the defense, Heijmans produced the document signed by the Transvaal leaders in which they claimed the ZAM collection, accompanied by a notarial statement from Pretoria that these men were recognised as the Boer ‘foremen’. These weighty-looking documents failed to persuade the court, which did not accept the status of the ‘voormannen’ as the representatives of the Boers. Still, the judges ruled that the inhabitants of

173 Minutes of meeting ZAM committee, 2 November 1904. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 907.
175 L. Botha to Hidde Nijland, 26 April 1907. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 909.
176 Transcript of G.J. Bolman to Hidde Nijland, 17 June 1907. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 909. In addition, Nijland demanded that Rompel would not be allowed to have anything to do with the museum and that Botha would ask the Dutch government for a high decoration for the Dordrecht businessman.
177 ‘Boer foremen’. Secretary Het Volk to W.J. Leyds, 5 February 1908. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 909.
178 W.J. Leyds to [illegible], 23 January 1911. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 908.
the former republics did not cease to be members of ‘a Boer people’, despite the fact that they had been conquered by the British, and so had a right to the remaining assets of the Transvaal. Leyds was recognised as their representative and so his claim was awarded.\(^\text{180}\) The practical effect of this interesting verdict was rather small, however. The court gave the two parties eight days to agree on the value of the collection, a sum that would have to be paid by Nijland in case he refused to hand it over. If that did not succeed, a committee of external mediators would have to be appointed. And so it happened.

After a failed attempt by Nijland to bring this matter to the High Court in 1913, mediation started in 1915. The first two attempts to settle the differences between the two parties failed. These were by E.C. Godée Molsbergen (lecturer in colonial history at the University of Amsterdam) and J.W. Pont (professor in Utrecht and president of the NZAV) respectively.\(^\text{181}\) Finally, a committee under the chairmanship of J.C. van Overvoorde, president of the Oudheidkundigen Bond (Archeology League), reached a compromise that was signed on 7 July 1917. The collection was to be given to a foundation that was to carry Nijland’s name in its official title, and he was to be awarded fl. 3,000 as compensation. Nevertheless, Leyds finally got his way when the members of the executive committee of the foundation, which included himself, Kiewiet de Jonge, Pont and the Afrikaner professor in South African Law, H.J.D. Bodenstein, decided that the collection of the museum in Dordrecht was to be transported to Pretoria.\(^\text{182}\) After all these years of legal battles, the matter had become a sort of personal vendetta against Nijland, which is underlined by Leyds’s actions after the transaction was made. In a letter to his old friend Engelenburg, he explained that the collection would not have to be associated with Nijland’s name anymore after it had arrived in South Africa. Moreover, he tried to erase all traces of his opponent’s association with the collection: a portrait of Nijland was removed from it and sold.\(^\text{183}\)

Due to the First World War, the ZAM collection could not be moved to South Africa immediately. In the meantime, Bodenstein, who was responsible for its transportation, catalogued the objects together with a group of Afrikaner students in the Netherlands. They made a selection of items based on what would be most valuable for the Afrikaner nation, which meant that some of the stuffed animals, ethnographic material and PoW crafts were sold.\(^\text{184}\) Botha supported these plans and immediately provided the necessary funds for

---

\(^{180}\) ‘een Boerenvolk’. Copy of verdict of the court at Dordrecht, dated 7 July 1911; ANV press circular 24 June 1911. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 908.

\(^{181}\) ‘rechtvaardige Boeren-zaak’. W.J. Leyds to H.J.D. Bodenstein, 29 November 1916. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 910. The main point of controversy seems to have been the fake contracts. J.W. Pont to W.J. Leyds, 30 October 1916. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 910.

\(^{182}\) W.J. Leyds to F.V. Engelenburg, 6 August 1917. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 911.

\(^{183}\) W.J. Leyds to F.V. Engelenburg, 6 and 7 August 1917. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 911. The painting was eventually sold in 1924. W.J. Leyds to F. Muller, 20 February 1924. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 912.

\(^{184}\) Apparently there was a great interest in these objects when they were auctioned. H.J. van Bijleveld to W.J. Leyds, 29 September 1920. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 912.
shipping the collection to South Africa.\textsuperscript{185} By the end of 1920, it had arrived in Pretoria, where it was exhibited in the Kruger Museum in Church Street. Despite the long and tedious process required to get it there, it would prove a lasting monument and most of the objects are on still display today.\textsuperscript{186}

By the time the ZAM objects were transported to South Africa, Leyds started to make plans for the future of his own archive. In 1920, he offered his extensive collection of pro-Boer publications to the University of Stellenbosch, an offer which was gratefully accepted.\textsuperscript{187} Leyds did not consider that to be the most important part of his archive, however. In his opinion that was the archive of the SAR legation, which had been stored at several addresses in The Hague and at the NZAV office since 1902. Leyds managed to solicit some money from the society to hire a larger office in which to organise the archive and prepare it for shipment to South Africa.\textsuperscript{188} He also contributed a considerable sum himself and put in a lot of his own time to select the most important documents, which proved to be a colossal task, as he had ordered that all incoming letters be preserved.\textsuperscript{189} The archive also contains material about his terms as state secretary of the Transvaal and correspondence from after he resigned as minister plenipotentiary. In addition, he gathered and catalogued the archives of the Transvaal consulates in The Netherlands (Amsterdam and The Hague), London, USA, Portugal, and Lourenço Marques.\textsuperscript{190} Finally, the papers of the ANV press office, running up until 1913, were added to the collection.

In 1930, the archive was ready for transport to South Africa, but despite all the preparatory work, it did not receive a very warm welcome. In letters to correspondents in Pretoria, Leyds complained about the lax attitude of the government regarding his offer to transfer the collection in the South African National Library in the Union Buildings. After a few months of silence, the Minister for the Interior, D.F. Malan, agreed to cover the costs of shipment, but refused to provide Leyds with a financial compensation, which he had asked for in recognition of the time and money he had invested.\textsuperscript{191} The former minister plenipotentiary was greatly grieved at the course of events and expressed his frustration in a letter to his old friend Engelenburg, who was an influential member of the \textit{Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns} at the time. In it, he complained that the inhabitants of South Africa barely showed an interest in their own country and past. ‘The Afrikaners know little of their

\textsuperscript{185} G. Brebner [secretary to Botha] to H.J.D. Bodenstein, 23 June 1919. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 912.
\textsuperscript{186} Some parts of the collection have been moved to other museums, such as the portraits of the Boer leaders that can be found at the African Window in Pretoria and the Anglo-Boer War Museum in Bloemfontein.
\textsuperscript{187} J.W. Pont to Willem Leyds, 31 July 1920. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 912. This collection can still be consulted at the University Library of Stellenbosch.
\textsuperscript{188} J.W. Pont to Willem Leyds, 17 June 1920. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 912.
\textsuperscript{189} W.J. Leyds to F.V. Engelenburg, 5 March 1930. NASA, Engelenburg collection, A (140), 24.
\textsuperscript{190} Leyds also asked the SAR Consul-General in Paris, J. Pierson for his archive, but for unknown reason this collection was not added. The Pierson papers did end up in Pretoria though where they are kept in the National Archive. For letters about the transfer cf. NASA, Pierson collection, KGP 44.
\textsuperscript{191} Copy of letter from D.F. Malan to W.J. Leyds, 17 July 1930. NASA, Engelenburg collection, A (140), 24.
Whoever wants to create a future

history nor do they care about it. Little stories that flatter their vanity, that is the only thing that goes down well with them’. Leyds also grumbled about party politics that prevented effective co-operation. Like in the Netherlands, he wrote, ‘public life [in South Africa] has been politicised. It is the curse of the Dutch race that people prefer to argue amongst each other instead of working together.’ Despite these complaints, the collection arrived in Pretoria, where it remains today. It is considered to be an important collection and several Afrikaner historians who have written about the South African War have used it as a source.

Despite all the difficulties that Leyds encountered during his efforts to transfer historical source material to South Africa, he did receive praise for these activities also. In the Netherlands he was awarded with the Ridderkruis in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw for the publication of the volumes with his correspondence between 1899 and 1902. Leyds himself was very happy with this knighthood, which can be considered to be a reward for his academic work. In South Africa this was also the case. In the late 1930s, Leyds received honorary doctorates, both in absentia, at the University of Pretoria and the University of Stellenbosch. Despite his own non-attendance, these were prestigious events that drew an audience of leading politicians and academics. In the speeches, delivered by Jan Smuts and Professor E.C. Pienaar, Leyds’s contribution to South Africa was mentioned, not only as an administrator, but also as a historian. In Pienaar’s words, his ‘monumental’ work after 1902 made him ‘one of the builders of the temple of Afrikaner nationalism’. Leyds was granted another honour when he was invited to address the South African people in a special radio broadcast for his 80th birthday in May 1939. During this speech he once again called upon the Afrikaner people to pay more attention to their past. Despite his self-confessed dislike of party politics, he also spoke about his concerns about the sympathies of certain sections of the Afrikaner movement for the Nazis. This publicity made Leyds nervous in the light of the impending invasion of the Netherlands by Germany, and he feared prosecution. He therefore made preparations to flee to Britain, the country of his former arch enemies. He was spared this ironic twist of fate when he died on 14 May 1940 in a hospital in The Hague, with the

---

193 ‘het publieke leven is geheel verpolitiekt. Het is de vloek van het Dietsche ras dat men liever onderling twist dan samen te werken.’ W.J. Leyds to D. Reitz, 26 August and 8 November 1930. NASA, Leyds collection, LEY 221.
196 ‘monumente’, ‘een van die bouers aan die temple van Afrikaanse nasionalisme was’. Quoted in: Van Niekerk, Kruger se regterhand, 357-358.
197 Ibidem, 358-359.
sound of Nazi bombers approaching the city of Rotterdam overhead.\textsuperscript{198}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Leyds’s dramatic end fitted his life’s work, which was dedicated to the advancement of Dutch influences in South Africa. As a well-educated and cultured man of the world, he had an ambivalent relationship with the Afrikaners from the start. This makes it hard to assess the actual effect of his activities after 1902. His outspoken views (partly a result of his own vanity) undoubtedly made him a controversial figure amongst several groups in South Africa. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that his books contributed significantly to the reinterpretation of the colonial history of South Africa, which was an important aspect of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. His attempts to make the records of the pro-Boer propaganda campaign in Europe available to the public in South Africa had the same purpose. Due to practical problems and personal controversies, he failed to publish an integrated history of the South African War that could serve as a monument for the Transvaal and the OFS. Nonetheless, he was instrumental in transferring important collections from the Netherlands to South Africa, which became lasting places of remembrance of the Afrikaner past.

Leyds’s activities should be seen in a wider context. He was clearly an exponent of the ideal of \textit{stamverwantschap} that took shape after the Transvaal War of 1880-1881; he was a leading administrator of the Kruger regime and played an essential role in the pro-Boer propaganda campaign in Europe during the South African War. His work – and that of several other Dutch pro-Boers – did not end in 1902. While most historians who have written about this topic rightly point out that the annexation of the republics was a great blow to contemporaries, they tend to overlook the fact that there was a fair amount of continuity too. Despite that they raised less money than before, during the first decade of the twentieth century pro-Boer organisations contributed to the survival of Dutch institutions that Milner tried to close down in a drive to Anglicise South Africa. Such activities show that propaganda remained the main priority of the pro-Boer movement, but the mobilisation of public opinion was a problematic issue. The institutions mainly drew from the funds that had been accumulated during the South African War and when these ran out, they were not able to generate their own capital, because they lacked professionalism. Looking at public opinion in the Netherlands, Botha’s policy of accommodating the British was rather unpopular and there were also doubts concerning the development of Afrikaans as an independent language. Still, the heroic image of the Afrikaners remained firmly embedded in popular culture, as is shown by the lasting success of the writer Louwrens Penning and the popularity of Afrikaans songs at schools. When confronted with the question as to which ‘white race’ should rule South Africa, many still favoured the Afrikaners over the British during the interwar years.

There were also ongoing attempts to help mobilise the Dutch-speaking population in South Africa. Looking at the work of Leyds, one could say that the lines of communication that existed between the Netherlands and South Africa were reversed. Before and during the South African War, the media in the Netherlands served as a cache for material that came from the war zone, which was used to provide an alternative to the British coverage of the situation. After 1902, it appeared to Leyds that such material was mostly needed in South Africa in order to counter the policy of Anglicisation. In addition to the money that was made available for the reconstruction of the Dutch language school system and the press, the support largely took the form of intellectual ammunition. Looking more closely at these activities, it appears that there were many problems in executing such projects, with many of them ending in failure. But this too was a continuation of the period before and during the South African War. From the start, the relationship of the pro-Boers in the Netherlands with the Afrikaners in South Africa was wrought with ambivalences and contradictions, which made it hard to mobilise the support of the public for initiatives to strengthen the ties between the ‘racial kinsmen’. These problems were characteristic of the feelings of *stamverwantschap*, which was not an uncontested or unchangeable concept that was embedded in a solid system of official institutions, but rather a set of views on Dutch identity that were communicated through an informal network.