

**“An Irritating Pebble in Kruger’s Shoe” –  
Eugène Marais and *Land en Volk* in the ZAR, 1891 - 1896**

*Sandra Swart*<sup>\*</sup>

Bravo *Land en Volk*! Bravo editor of that newspaper!

Letter-writer, *Land en Volk*, 28 March 1895.

For the publication of a newspaper, more is required than a little bit of school learning and a lot of shamelessness.

Dr F.V. Engelenburg, editor of *De Volksstem*.<sup>1</sup>

Celebrated as an investigative journalist exposing a corrupt government, dismissed as a political hack or damned as a litigious self-promoter in charge of a vulgar gossip sheet, Eugène Marais (1871-1936) played a controversial role in the pre-war South African Republic (ZAR).<sup>2</sup> This paper explores his role in shaping public opinion on the ZAR’s political situation, through the medium of *Land en Volk*, the newspaper he edited. It discusses his participation in the faction that opposed Paul Kruger, which came to be labelled the ‘Progressive’ camp, and examines his motives and techniques in swaying opinion towards the opposition faction, with particular emphasis on the pivotal election of 1893, which saw a transformation in national politics.

Before discussing Marais’s role, it is necessary to outline what is meant by Progressivism and the role *Land en Volk* played in the newspaper landscape, because, like Marais himself, the nature of Transvaal ‘Progressivism’ has itself received insufficient historiographical analysis, and is mostly mentioned merely as a foil to Kruger’s politics. Despite evidence to the contrary, the Progressive Movement is still written of today as a unified movement and its own appellation as the ‘Progressive’

---

\* Sandra Swart is a socio-environmental historian of southern Africa, lecturing at the University of Stellenbosch. She received her Doctorate in History and a Master’s Degree in Environmental Change and Management, both from Oxford University. She has published on Afrikaner social identity, and on the socio-environmental history of the dog and horse in southern Africa.

1. “Vir die publikasie van ‘n koerant is meer nodig as ‘n klein bietjie oppervlakkige skoolkennis en een heel groote lot onbeschaamdheid.” C.J. Mieny, *Leipoldt en Marais – Onwaarskynlike Vriende* (J. Lötter Publikasies, Pretoria, 1988), p 29.

2. For the first opinion, see J. Cope, *The Adversary Within – Dissident Writers in Afrikaans* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1982), p 99. This understanding of Marais as hero is further discussed in S. Swart, “A ‘Ware Afrikaner’ – an Examination of the Role of Eugène Marais (1871-1936) in the Making of Afrikaner Identity.” DPhil thesis, Oxford, 2001. The editor of *De Volksstem*, called him a “litigation fanatic”, 11 November 1896.

innovative sector of ZAR society is often taken at face value.<sup>3</sup> This is a methodological error that obscures the real nature of the movement, and which will be discussed in this paper.<sup>4</sup> A contemporary, J.A. Hobson, observed the pivotal political role of South African newspapers, calling them ‘the great factory of public opinion’.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Schoeman observed, South African newspapers have still not secured sufficient attention, either as historical resources or as creators of public opinion.<sup>6</sup> In general pre-1895 newspapers have received inadequate attention. Specifically, a discussion of the Progressive Movement’s mouthpiece is particularly overdue. Where *Land en Volk* has been used by historians, it has been simply as a source for political events in the ZAR, not as an agent, shaping the Progressive Movement. Nor has the role of Marais as its editor been analysed.

*Land en Volk*’s founding is thus discussed in the light of existing ZAR newspapers. There is a chronological assessment of the development and influence of the ‘Progressive’ newspaper under the editorship of Marais from 1891 to the election of 1893, and until Marais ended his editorship in 1896.<sup>7</sup> These years encompass the flash-points of Marais’s litigation, his flirtation with the use of Afrikaans as a medium in 1891, the election of 1893 and the Jameson Raid of 1895. This is intended to contribute to the understanding of both the ontology of ‘Transvaal Progressivism’ and Marais’s role in its creation and promotion.

\* \* \*

Marais began work on the *Transvaal Advertiser* at a time when the ZAR was undergoing a period of rapid change, precipitated by the discovery of gold in 1886. Despite this upheaval, politics in the ZAR remained organised along traditionally individual lines, with no formally organised political parties. Although republican ideology was much alluded to in the political realm, it is hard to know to what extent burghers insisted on or were even cognisant of their republican prerogatives. Literate men kept abreast of Volksraad action through the press. Although there was an emphasis on participatory *volkswil* (people’s will) and regular elections, the practical working of this republican democracy was circumscribed by inherent contradictions, like the devotion to strong leaders and a tendency towards nepotism and familial connections.<sup>8</sup> Yet up until the election of 1893, the rhetoric of populism allowed Kruger to maintain that he held the *volkswil* to be sovereign, which meant petitions and armed demonstrations received his Volksraad’s attention, but his government was not prepared to accept personalised attacks by a free press. Marais produced a political commentary column ‘Glimpses from the Hoekie’ in the *Transvaal Advertiser*.<sup>9</sup> In 1889, Marais had his first interaction with Kruger when he reported on a conversation

3. C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895* (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1970).
4. It is discussed under the sub-heading “The build up to the election of 1893 and the vocabulary of power”.
5. J.A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa: its Causes and Effects* (J. Nisbet, London, 1900), p 206.
6. J.M. Schoeman, “Koerantberiggewing oor die Krisisdæ, 25 September tot 20 Oktober 1899: ‘n Kritiese Metodoliese Analise.” MA dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1973, p vii.
7. There have been discussions of the press in the immediate preamble to war. See, for example, S. Strauss, “Beriggewing in *De Volksstem* en *The Star* gedurende die tydperk 1896-1899 oor Gebeurtenisse wat gelei het tot die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902.” MA dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1964; Schoeman, “Koerantberiggewing oor die Krisisdæ” and D. Prinsloo, “Die Beoordeling in die Britse Pers van Sake in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1896-1899.” MA dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, 1970. Few, however, have discussed events pre-1895 and no-one has focused on *Land en Volk*.
8. For example, Commandant-General Andries Hendrik Potgieter (1792-1852) was replaced upon his death by his son, Pieter Johannes (1822-1854) and Commandant-General Andries Pretorius (1798-1853) was succeeded by his son, Marthinus Wessel (1819-1901).
9. The ‘Hoekie’ was the press-corner.

he had overheard during a Volksraad recess: two members of the committee namely conspired to silence Jan Celliers, a Volksraad member who had been vocal in his opposition to a particular concession granted by Kruger. The following day, Kruger himself moved to disallow Marais right of entry to the press table. Marais wrote in response:

I had never thought the Chairman, that religious man... whose every word is oiled with the grace of God... that this man could utter anything he would blush to see published.<sup>10</sup>

Thereafter relegated to the public benches, Marais continued to report on the Volksraad - the only change was that his column's title was simply altered to 'Glimpses from the benches'.

### **Land en Volk – and the Progressive faction**

The term 'progressive' has been adopted by various movements within South Africa. The Progressive Party in the Cape formed in the late 1890s, becoming the Union Party in 1908.<sup>11</sup> Just prior to Unification in 1910, the Progressive Association of the Transvaal represented wealthier English-speakers.<sup>12</sup> In 1891, however, what was becoming known as the 'Progressive Movement' was an association of individuals, who shared a common antipathy towards Kruger's government rather than a cohesive policy to oppose him or an organised party structure. These men, an amalgam of Volksraad members and prominent citizens, began to consolidate as a political entity, seeking platforms of opposition to bridge the fissures created by their differing objectives.<sup>13</sup>

This shifting alliance of men needed a mouthpiece, preferably a Dutch-language paper, to counter the pro-Kruger *De Pers* and the *Weekly Press*. The latter two papers were both published from 1889. Another Dutch-language paper, *De Volksstem*, under Frans Vredenburg Engelenburg, although ostensibly unaligned, was also pro-government.<sup>14</sup> The only independent Dutch-language paper was the insignificant, Pretoria-based *Land en Volk*.<sup>15</sup> The owners, after suffering both a lawsuit and a challenge to a duel by rival editors, tended to favour toothless editorials.<sup>16</sup>

10. *Transvaal Advertiser*, 5 June 1889.

11. In the election of 1898 there were two well-defined political parties for the first time; after the election the Cape Progressives formed the opposition, lead by Sir Gordon Sprigg.

12. Two generations later, in 1959, a group of United Party members of parliament broke away to form what they also called the Progressive Party.

13. For example, R.K. Loveday, a very vocal member of the Volksraad, strongly opposed all concessions and monopolies. Ewald Esselen, who entered political life in 1890, after serving as a High Court judge, was opposed to the high proportion of Hollanders in power and the financial policy of the government. Lukas Meyer felt that personal liberties were being infringed upon, and he was hostile to monopolies, particularly the Railway Concession. Schalk Burger was a critic of the government's financial policy. J.F. Celliers was against concessions and monopolies. Some issues were shared points of concern. Kruger's dynamite policy, for example, united Loveday, Meyer, and Burger in opposition to Kruger. Similarly, Loveday, Esselen and Celliers were all interested in the reform of the franchise policy. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, p 194.

14. *De Volksstem* was founded on 8 August 1873.

15. *Land en Volk* belonged to T.J. Meyer. O.T. de Villiers had founded this Pretoria paper in October 1886. G.R. von Wielligh, "Die Tydperk tussen die Eerste en Tweede Taalbeweging", *Die Huisgenoot*, January 1922.

16. Meyer was sued by Gluckstein of *De Pers* and challenged to a duel by Engelenburg of *De Volksstem* and was subsequently unenthusiastic about controversy. Leon Rousseau, *The Dark Stream - the Story of Eugene Marais* (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1982), p 49. This remains the best source on Marais and has been painstakingly researched.

By 1889, Marais had already begun to demonstrate his anti-Kruger credentials and was consequently approached by a Progressive consortium and offered the editorship of *Land en Volk*.<sup>17</sup> Under Marais's control, *Land en Volk* introduced a new kind of journalism, a break from the staid Anglo-Dutch journalistic tradition, and a shift towards the muckraking of the American yellow press and the radical English penny-press.<sup>18</sup> *Land en Volk* became the vehicle for the polemics and diatribes of the young Turks of the Progressive faction. Matters of the day were discussed in regular columns, like "Sonder Reserf" (Without holding back) and "Hans se Brief" (Hans's letter). Marais also created a column devoted entirely to political abuse called "Swart Piletjies" (Little Black Pills). As a contemporary observed, he started making a name for himself as the *enfant terrible* of South African journalism.<sup>19</sup>

Marais entered into partnership with Jacob 'Jimmy' Roos (1869-1940) of the Johannesburg *Star*.<sup>20</sup> In July 1891, Marais went from editor to owner when he and Roos bought *Land en Volk* for £500. They promised to be "on the side of all Afrikaners, and especially on the side of the ZAR, and thus expected the support of every burgher in the ZAR".<sup>21</sup> Although there were repeated affirmations of political neutrality, the paper was increasingly pro-Joubert.<sup>22</sup> There were even public accusations that *Land en Volk* was owned by Joubert, which Marais and Roos vehemently denied upon his request, insisting that their aim was "support for the Afrikaner cause".<sup>23</sup>

At first this 'cause' took the form of abusing the President. Kruger was attacked for his "autocracy", his tolerance of corruption, "his servitude to Dr Leyds", his "love of Catholics, Jews and Hollanders" and his "loyal help and support for Rhodes".<sup>24</sup> This began to awaken public interest. As the Afrikaans fiction writer and Marais's contemporary, G.R. von Wielligh noted, *Land en Volk* only started to attract attention once under Marais.<sup>25</sup> Roos and Marais promised to "change the whole tone of the newspaper ... to bring wrongdoing ... under the judgement of the volk ..."<sup>26</sup> There was an appeal to all readers to let neighbours know of *Land en Volk* and offers of a free first copy to boost readership. By April 1892, Marais and Roos celebrated the fact that circulation had doubled.<sup>27</sup> Marais had adopted a strategy of using sensational stories, like the attacks on Kruger and exposés of state corruption, to win a larger circulation, and once having won an audience, propagating politics through the editorial columns.<sup>28</sup>

- 
17. Marais filled a complex role as editor of *Land en Volk*, assistant editor of the daily *The Press* and the weekly *De Pers*, and assistant editor of the daily *The Observer*.
  18. Interestingly both *Land en Volk* and *De Volksstem* used American equipment for typing and printing. E. de Waal, "The Part Played by Americans on the Witwatersrand during the Period 1886-1899." MA dissertation, University of South Africa, 1971, p 169.
  19. For evidence of Marais's growing reputation see, for example, the contemporary observations of J.H. Viljoen, *'n Joernalis Vertel* (Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1953) p 44.
  20. Roos had worked for the Argus Company's director Francis Dormer on *The Cape Argus* and on the Johannesburg *Star* from 1889. In August 1890 he relocated to Pretoria, writing the *Star*'s column "Pretoria Day by Day". See W.J. de Kock, *Jacob de Villiers Roos, 1869-1940, Lewenskets van 'n Veelsydige Afrikaner* (A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1958), p 16.
  21. *Land en Volk*, 7 July 1891.
  22. *Land en Volk*, 26 April 1892.
  23. *Land en Volk*, 23 June 1892; *Land en Volk*, 7 July 1891.
  24. *Land en Volk*, 12 April 1891; 19 January 1892; 22 March 1892; 12 May 1892 and 26 December 1892.
  25. Von Wielligh, "Die Tydperk tussen die Eerste en Tweede Taalbeweging".
  26. *Land en Volk*, 7 July 1891.
  27. *Land en Volk*, 26 April 1892.
  28. M. Emery et. al., *The Press and America – an Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1954, 2000), p 175. For example, Marais began by investigating corruption in the Selati railroad

Early in 1892, *Land en Volk* published an account of the dismissal of a civil servant, Gert Ribbink, for theft. Ribbink sued the paper and Marais lost.<sup>29</sup> (See Figure 1.) In defence, Marais maintained that the policy of *Land en Volk* was to protect Afrikaner interests and that one of its principles was that Afrikaners could run the country as well as the Hollanders monopolising the positions of power. It was thus necessary to draw comparisons between Afrikaans and Dutch officials and Marais was careful to couch the Ribbink case in terms of the Afrikaner-Hollander dichotomy that became a recurrent refrain in *Land en Volk*. The prosecution noted disparagingly that “it was no compliment for Afrikaners to be protected by such a rag”.<sup>30</sup>



**Figure 1:** W.A. Schröder’s cartoon of Chief Justice J.G. Kotzé giving *Land en Volk* a thrashing with twigs labelled “£10 with costs”, had the caption “Welverdiend” (Well deserved) in *De Pers* and “The Joys of Journalism (The Libel Case of the Week)” in *The Press*, 25 June 1892.

**From:** National Archives of South Africa, SAB: A. 787 184, Preller Collection, p 79, incorrectly dated 1895.

concession – members of parliament were purportedly bribed with spider-carts. Rousseau, *The Dark Stream*, p 52. He noted that the incident had resulted in such government embarrassment that “...if anyone mentions the word ‘Spider’, he is the Republic’s enemy”. *Land en Volk*, 12 May 1891.

29. *Land en Volk*, 23 June 1892.

30. *Land en Volk*, 23 June 1892.

### Conservative versus Progressive press

As Piet Joubert remarked: ‘the [papers] tell you all the news, sometimes a bit confused or twisted but still ultimately the news’.<sup>31</sup> Both the pro-government press and the opposition press purported to be independent. Certainly, some evidence of pro-government papers challenging particular policies of the state indeed exist.<sup>32</sup> F. V. Engelenburg, a Hollander appointed as the editor of *De Volksstem* by the Krugerites who had bought the paper in 1889, insisted on press freedom, at least in principle.<sup>33</sup> Particular papers, however, won the bulk of state subsidies and preferential placement of government advertisements, for which a sum of £6 000 was allocated annually.<sup>34</sup> Kruger noted candidly that it would be simply suicidal to support the opposition press too.<sup>35</sup> The private backing of newspapers played an important role in lobbying popular opinion in an arena where it was very open to being capitalized upon.<sup>36</sup>

Inter-paper rivalry occupied much editorial space. Marais made enemies of the editors of *De Volksstem*, or ‘Volkssmet’ (blemish of the people) as Marais nicknamed it, early in 1892, and of *De Pers* (dubbed the ‘Pest’ by Marais<sup>37</sup>) – calling them respectively “the newly arrived Hollander, Engelenburg” and the “lying Jew, Weinthal”.<sup>38</sup> *Land en Volk* kept up the chorus that all the pro-Kruger papers were edited by Hollanders<sup>39</sup> and dismissed Engelenburg as just a “government hireling”.<sup>40</sup> Much copy was made and sold out of the accusations of *Land en Volk* and the dyspeptic mutterings of *De Volksstem*.

The ‘Progressive’ nature of *Land en Volk* has to be understood in terms of a tussle over nomenclature against the changing background of the state. The difference between ‘Conservative’ and ‘Progressive’ press cannot be understood as a simple continuum, with the latter holding ‘more enlightened’ views in contemporary terms. Instead a gamut of opinion existed, reflected in idiosyncratic and vacillating editorial comment on issues as varied as racism and xenophobia.

- 
31. Translated from Afrikaans. National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA), Transvaal Archives (hereafter TAB): Joubert Papers, Uitgaande Stukke, II, A/1-A/3, (Archives vol.17), P. Joubert - his son, J.S. Joubert, 18 April 1893.
32. See, for example *The Press*, 4 May 1891.
33. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, p. x. For histories of other newspapers see P.G. Badenhorst, “Die Geskiedenis van die *De Volksstem* 1873-1900.” MA dissertation, University of South Africa, 1944; M.E. van Zyl, “Die Geskiedenis van *Het Westen* en *Die Volksblad*, 1904-1925.” MA dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1978. For a broad overview see J.H.O. du Plessis, “Die Afrikaanse Pers.” PhD thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1943.
34. This was increased to £7 000 in 1895.
35. *Land en Volk*, 21 July 1892; Notulen, Eerste Volksraad, 1892, art. 855; *Land en Volk*, 12 January 1893. Kruger was quoted in the *Weekly Press*, 5 October 1895.
36. Letter from Lionel Philips – A. Beit, 26 November 1892, in M. Fraser and A. Jeeves (eds), *All that Glittered - Selected Correspondence of Lionel Philips, 1890-1924* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977), p. 64. Mining magnate Cecil John Rhodes, for example, achieved a hold on the *Star*’s editorial comment with his financial support, and the *Standard and Diggers’ News* joined forces with Kruger in anti-capitalist rhetoric against the mining houses. For criticism of the National Union and support of the Kruger order see, for example, *Standard and Diggers News*, 3 November 1893. *The Critic* actually called it “Mr Kruger’s organ”, 22 February 1896. Jeeves has also shown how this trend continued up until the late 1890s, A. Jeeves, “The Rand Capitalists and the Coming of the South African War, 1896-1899”, *Canadian Historical Papers*, 1973, p. 61.
37. *Land en Volk*, 12 April 1892.
38. *Land en Volk*, 12 April 1892 and 6 July 1893.
39. *Land en Volk*, 23 February 1892.
40. *Land en Volk*, 11 June 1896.

The subtlety of Marais's private understanding of race was not manifest in the stark racism of *Land en Volk*.<sup>41</sup> Editorial comment was, for example, violently anti-Indian.<sup>42</sup> The 'Native Question' was discussed in the same tones which the conservative press adopted, with discussions of how to maintain the black labour reserves.<sup>43</sup> The Progressive faction was not *less* racist than the conservative.<sup>44</sup> Although highly prejudiced against Hollanders, *Land en Volk* was more supportive than the government press of the rights of Uitlanders. No simple model may be constructed to demonstrate more 'enlightened' views held by Progressives on xenophobia.

### The build up to the election of 1893 and the vocabulary of power

The history of the pre-war ZAR under Kruger has until recently been analysed in terms of the situation promoted by the politicians *of the time*.<sup>45</sup> This compels the historian to analyse in terms of a left and a right continuum that did not exist. Political vocabulary is flexible and mutable.<sup>46</sup> Words like 'Progressive' and 'Conservative' serve as organising concepts and provide people with their basic categories of thought. Yet the words contain no fixed, diachronic meaning. The reification of labels (the infusion of abstractions with material existence) is never permanent, as politics is an ongoing power struggle and the competition over who defines the political terms is constantly renewed. For the historian to grant the politicians their self-adopted classification, is to allow them (even in a critical context) to transmit their own intellectual definitions and perpetuate their own definitions of the situation. The historian needs to transform the labels from analytical categories into political data and re-examine the political role such vocabulary played, moving as Green suggests, from the 'custodianship' to the 'critical analysis' of language.<sup>47</sup>

Through the process of reification, political vocabularies encapsulate definitions of political situations. The transmission to the voters is crucial and it is also important in transmitting to the opposition. The transmission is particularly important when those under attack hold positions of power. As Green observes, the critic may dissent from the goals and values of those in power, yet if his own vocabulary reinforces the information selectively dispensed by the powerful, the criticism is undermined. The definition of the situation espoused by those in power becomes concealed in the vocabulary of those in opposition and the perspective of the powerful is reinforced as the critic is inadvertently co-opted by linguistic means.<sup>48</sup>

41. See Chapter Six and Chapter Seven in S. Swart, "A 'Ware Afrikaner' – An Examination of the Role of Eugène Marais (1871-1936) in the Making of Afrikaner Identity." DPhil thesis, Oxford, 2001.

42. *Land en Volk*, 24 March 1891, 12 January 1893 and 27 September 1894.

43. *Weekly Press*, 12 October 1895; *De Volksstem*, 17 February 1894.

44. For example, the Progressive Schalk Burger opposed civil marriages between blacks – for which the President had argued. *The Press*, 5 June 1895. Also in the First Volksraad Debate, 11-12 August 1897, the conservative faction argued for a distinction between civilised and heathen natives, while the Progressive J. de Beer countered that a "kaffir was a kaffir, whether educated or not".

45. For the paradigm breaking work see, for example, C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914 I, New Babylon* (Longman, London, 1982).

46. The struggle for the progressive label has been chartered in other contexts. After 1895 the term 'progressive' would be the most popular self-designation of American politics. In America in the mid-1890s, people referred to themselves as conservatives and their opposition as radicals, within a decade the 'good' label was progressive, the 'bad' label was 'conservative'. See D. Green, *The Language of Politics in America* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1987), p 1.

47. Green, *The Language of Politics*, p 267.

48. See Green, *The Language of Politics*, p 16.

In *Land en Volk*, Marais used these linguistic encroachments to establish party lines. He promoted the Joubert faction's own vocabulary. The Progressive faction needed to focus attention on their opposition's record because they did not have one of their own to lean upon. Their strategy thus had to be negative rather than positive self-definition and they therefore defined themselves in terms of what they were *against*. For them the vocabulary of success was wrapped up in part in the power of rhetorical confusion.<sup>49</sup> They were able to establish a great discordance between language and political behaviour, and there was no necessary correlation between label and action.

The very assumption of a unifying label implied that the Joubert faction was a movement and disguised that they were in reality just a changing collection of anti-Krugerites. It indicated cohesion, a set of policies and a clear plan for the future. 'Progressive' was a metaphor built on the elements of movement and stability: movement forward without loss of stability.<sup>50</sup> It suggested modernity, a readiness to be an up-to-date industrialising power, without being radical or calling for revolution. It promoted the psychological and ideological distancing from the historical grip of foreign powers, particularly Holland. The antithetical 'conservative' label it forced (by linguistic implication) upon the rival faction insinuated a pejorative 'reactionary' outmoded identity, and served to camouflage Kruger's innovations and deny his improvements. There is no easy way to quantify the effect of words upon voters.<sup>51</sup> The electoral results that are to be discussed, however, are astonishing. In effect, Marais helped render the Joubert faction the custodians of a powerful and vote-attracting label.

### Caricaturing Kruger

The 'Oom Paul' of the popular imagination was a dour intransigent old man, against progress *qua* progress and intent on dragging his fiefdom back into the eighteenth century, as he feathered the nests of his friends and relations. He is imagined, even in recent historiography, as the leader of a kleptocratic, backward government resisting modernisation and unable to provide the economic infrastructure for the gold mines.<sup>52</sup> This bleak caricature of the real Kruger – routinely portrayed in the British press – was established, at least in part, and vigorously promoted by Marais.<sup>53</sup>

49. A recent parallel may be found in Ronald Reagan's enthusiastic adoption of F.D. Roosevelt's 'progressive' rhetoric in the 1980 election, which was designed not to clarify but to confuse. Green, *The Language of Politics*, p 55.

50. Green, *The Language of Politics*, p 55. Interestingly, the 'progressive' label was hotly contested and fought over in America in 1912, as newspaper editor Walter Hines Page noted: "[We] now have Progressives, Halting-Progressives, Ultra-Progressives, Progressive Conservatives, Conservative Progressives and [Teddy Roosevelt]." See Green, *The Language of Politics*, p 64.

51. This issue is explored in a wider study of how significant language and rhetoric is in electoral campaigns. See Green, *The Language of Politics*.

52. J.S. Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1961) and Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, are two significant examples of this trend, as Harries has argued. P. Harries, "Capital, State and Labour on the Nineteenth Century Witwatersrand: A Reassessment", *South African Historical Journal*, 18, 1986.

53. D. Prinsloo, "Die Beoordeling in die Britse Pers van Sake in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1896-1899." MA dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, 1970, p 44. *Punch* caricatured him routinely as a hippopotamus, a warthog, and other animals. The *Times*, which carried no cartoons at that time, achieved a similar effect through word portraits. But this stereotype was extended to the Boer population at large. On the day the first news of the Jameson Raid broke, for example, the *Times* carried an article on the Transvaal Boer: the illiterate Boer hiding his money under his bed and separating the wheat from the chaff by throwing it into the wind. *Times*, 1 January 1896. The *Times* did not, however, portray the Afrikaner in a consistently negative light, carrying articles from the *Standard and Diggers News*, for example. *Times*, 7 March 1899.



Charles van Onselen has demonstrated that what was argued by critics to be conservative often made sound political sense.<sup>54</sup> Prior to 1892, Kruger was perceived by contemporaries as a modernising force. The *Press* called him a moderate, converting the burghers from old-fashioned prejudices.<sup>55</sup> *De Volksstem* noted that pre-1891, Kruger was “the enlightened leader, the father of various new and liberal laws, the mediator between the Progressive public and the conservative Chamber of Representatives”.<sup>56</sup> He started industrialising as early as 1881.<sup>57</sup> He was tolerant of Jews and Catholics and was comparatively liberal in his relations with black people.<sup>58</sup> Even Francis Dormer of the anti-Kruger *Star*, conceded that Kruger “does not want the Republic to lag behind the rest of South Africa in any matter that relates either to material progress or individual liberty”.<sup>59</sup> In the political realm, Kruger could be flexible, as is demonstrated by his decision to create a Second Volksraad.<sup>60</sup> The historiography is divided on the Marais-Kruger relationship. The nationalist W.E.G. Louw said in 1940 that, although it has been said that Marais was “an irritating pebble in Kruger’s shoe”, he maintained he was far more: “a manly opponent of corruption” who “played a valuable part in maintaining the integrity of the Republic. The open letters he sent reveal admiration for Kruger despite their polemical tone.”<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Marais had a deep-rooted antipathy to Kruger. In fact, he enjoyed telling the story that when Kruger – then Commandant-General of the Republic – once dropped by, his mother, having no idea who the uncouth visitor was, asked him to wait on the *stoep* until her husband returned.<sup>62</sup>

From 1892, Marais initiated his campaign against Kruger through *Land en Volk*. Earlier he had attempted to reform the President with constructive criticism, even conceding that Kruger was the best statesman that the people of the ZAR could ever have chosen.<sup>63</sup> But from 1892 he abandoned reform for replacement. *Land en Volk* had helped to attach the label ‘Progressive’ to the nebulous notions of the members opposed to Kruger and he therefore had to define Kruger as a conservative. Criticism was thus consistently couched in anti-conservatism terms, from legislative to personal acts.<sup>64</sup> *Land en Volk* indulged in more absurd suggestions: that Kruger and Cecil John Rhodes, mining magnate and imperialist Cape politician were in league.<sup>65</sup> *De Volksstem* criticised the ‘Americanized methods’ of the Joubert supporters, particularly the “foul personal attacks” on individuals, which was an innovation in

54. Kruger was, for example, dubbed reactionary for refusing to replace the animal-powered tramway with an electric one – but the former system won him much electoral support from those supplied thereby with a market for draught animals and fodder. C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914 I, New Babylon* (Longman, London, 1982), p 115.

55. *The Press*, 15 February 1892.

56. *De Volksstem*, 12 February 1891.

57. Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History I*, p 6.

58. *De Volksstem*, 31 July 1890. Many Progressive members were far more racist, particularly R.K. Loveday. Kruger, on the other hand, called for social but not legal distinction between black and white and, attempting to distinguish between educated and uneducated blacks, wished to exempt the former from stringent pass laws.

59. F.J. Dormer, *Vengeance as a Policy in Afrikanerland: a Plea for a New Departure* (J. Nisbet, London, 1901), pp 193, 152.

60. There is also external evidence to suggest that the President was not the obdurate enemy of progress. Indeed, Cape politician John X. Merriman, 3 August 1898, declared that Rhodes had pushed the Raid because he feared just such a reforming Republic. *Weekly Press*, 6 August 1898.

61. *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 August 1940.

62. Rousseau, *The Dark Stream*, p 9 and Rousseau, personal information.

63. *Land en Volk*, 5 May 1891.

64. Marais even attacked Kruger for being a ‘Dopper’, of the *Gereformeerde Kerk*, instead of a member of the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* (as was Joubert). *Land en Volk*, 12 January 1892. This was perhaps the height of hypocrisy for a self-professed pantheist like Marais.

65. *Land en Volk*, 26 December 1892.

media technique.<sup>66</sup> A letter-writer, ‘Klein Joggum’, (almost certainly Marais himself) put forth in doggerel Afrikaans, as a parody of Kruger’s own speech:

I’m for Concessions, Monopolies etc...  
 I’m for appointing two financial ministers (they have to be Hollanders),  
 The Volksraad has to be satisfied with my will, and must not dare think  
 Or I’ll threaten to resign.<sup>67</sup>

The antipathy was not one-sided. In 1893, Marais as sole editor (Roos left for the Cape Legislative Assembly in October 1892, selling his half to Marais<sup>68</sup>) found himself arrested by ZARPs, the state police, on the grounds of criminal libel. A *Land en Volk* article had claimed that Kruger, in spite of his £7 000 annual salary, had submitted two different accounts for travelling expenses for a visit to Colesberg – when in fact he had been a guest of the Cape government. Rumours began to circulate that the government wanted to close down *Land en Volk*. Young Progressive supporters took up arms and defended the press offices against a further ZARP raid. Marais was also arrested in the Volksraad on the grounds of high treason, defended by Ewald Esselen, and found not guilty. *De Volksstem* called him a “litigation fanatic”<sup>69</sup>. Gustav Preller records that Marais and his newspaper were not totally pro-Joubert, but utterly anti-Kruger.<sup>70</sup> In 1894, Marais announced his ambition to sue Kruger himself – intending to claim £10 000 damages for defamatory statements made against *Land en Volk*. Marais, however, abandoned this claim.<sup>71</sup>

### The hagiography of ‘Pious Piet’

In addition to attacking its ‘enemies’, *Land en Volk* championed various individuals whose opinions were in line with editorial policy. R.K. Loveday, for example, was much quoted and lauded. Marais admired Lucas Meyer (who had been active in the New Republic) and Louis Botha (the famous Boer commander and South African Prime Minister of later years) for injecting life into the Progressive Movement – Meyer in particular was held to have had an amazing influence on young Afrikaners. The Progressives’ leader, Piet Joubert, received a great deal of commendatory editorial opinion. Research on the role of Joubert within the Progressive Movement has revealed his leadership as nominal. With his high piping voice and hesitant manner, he was not physically as imposing as Kruger. Joubert’s personal records reveal no input or role in controlling the Progressive press.<sup>72</sup> On public policy, he remained inarticulate – indeed, often incoherent. He refused to clarify his platform, announcing that he would never “ask for a single vote”.<sup>73</sup> Joubert was an old man

66. *De Volksstem*, 1 November 1892.

67. *Land en Volk*, 26 April 1892.

68. Roos entered the service of the Cape House of Assembly as committee clerk, and qualifying for the bar in 1896, relocated to Pretoria. He worked as a Reuters correspondent during the South African War. He was one of the earliest members of Gustav Preller’s *Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap* and provided financial support for the popular magazine *Die Brandwag* (The Sentry).

69. *De Volksstem*, 11 November 1896.

70. G.S. Preller, “Vroeë Herinneringe aan E.N. Marais”, *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936. Gustav Preller, prominent Afrikaner nationalist journalist and popular historian, was persuaded by Marais to take over the editorship of *Land en Volk* after the South African War. See I. Hofmeyr, “Popularizing History: the Case of Gustav Preller”, *Journal of African History*, 29, 1988.

71. Rousseau, *The Dark Stream*, p 92.

72. NASA, TAB: Joubert Papers.

73. NASA, TAB: Joubert Papers, Uitgaande Stukke, II A, vol. 17, 4 March 1892.

“made giddy with the idea of presidency”, as Polk said of Zachary Taylor.<sup>74</sup> The men behind his election were Ewald Esselen and Lukas Meyer, who – Marais noted – had heralded a ‘new dawn’ for the faction.<sup>75</sup>

Joubert was ambiguous on social policy and opaque on the Franchise Question. It is not clear whether he was able to maintain his persona of ‘Pious Piet’ at a time when it was frowned upon to canvass, by having *Land en Volk* to do his promoting or whether *Land en Volk* was co-opted and encouraged because of Joubert’s recalcitrance. Perhaps they were of equal significance and were certainly mutually reinforcing. At the time when a political party was considered slightly disreputable, Joubert could distance himself from the election committees and *Land en Volk*’s partisan electioneering, maintaining his air of pious respectability, while the younger men, Meyer and Esselen, worked behind him to promote his candidacy.<sup>76</sup>

### Afrikaans language in the press

Progressive opinion tended to oppose government education policy, because of the language issue.<sup>77</sup> From 1891, as Superintendent of Education, Dr N. Mansvelt began to implement the policy that had remained unenforced under his predecessor, S.J. du Toit, that Dutch be the sole medium of instruction.<sup>78</sup> This meant the withdrawal of state aid to schools at which this was not the case, which infuriated the English-speaking Uitlander parents. A proviso in the law, which allowed the use of English in English-speaking areas, provided Dutch was spoken for a set period each week (which varied) provoked the ire of conservative members. The Progressive faction voted to have more English taught<sup>79</sup>, because, although there was resentment at seeing *landzoonen* (compatriots/sons of the country/soil) debarred from civil service and replaced by Hollanders and Cape Afrikaners, there was an awareness of the commercial necessity of a proficiency in English.<sup>80</sup> *Land en Volk* assumed a slightly different position: pointing out that, while purporting to agree with Mansvelt, Kruger’s elite tended to send their children to the Cape for their education.<sup>81</sup> *Land en Volk* feared that in trying to avoid turning their children into little Englishmen, the parents that insisted on Dutch-medium might inadvertently turn them into Hollanders.<sup>82</sup>

At least in part, this concern over language use by his readership led to a brief flirtation with publishing in Afrikaans in 1891. It is hard to estimate the demographics of *Land en Volk*’s readership.<sup>83</sup> An analysis of readers’ letters is methodologically

- 
74. M.M. Quaife (ed), *The Diary of James K. Polk* (A.C. McClurg and Company, Chicago, 1910), 21 November 1846.
75. Marais to Preller, 11 May 1923, quoted in F.G.M. du Toit, *Eugène Marais – sy bydrae tot die Afrikaanse letterkunde* (N.V. Swets and Zeitlinger, Amsterdam, 1940), p 55.
76. For evidence that political parties were viewed as disreputable see Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, p 259.
77. *De Volksstem*, 10 August 1895 and see Notulen, Eerste Volksraad, 1895, art. 866.
78. Mansvelt, from Stellenbosch, was born in Holland and had taught for seventeen years at the Cape.
79. Notulen, Eerste Volksraad, 1893, art. 991.
80. See Notulen, Eerste Volksraad, 1892, art. 300.
81. *Land en Volk*, 6 December 1894.
82. *Land en Volk*, 2 May 1895.
83. By contrast, the *Standard and Diggers’ News* had a daily circulation of 6 000 by 1894. Similarly, the *De Volksstem*’s readership was approximately 5 000, based mainly the platteland (NASA, South African Archives (SAB): Preller Collection, 135, p 49). President T.F. Burgers started *De Volksstem*, manifesting an early awareness of a friendly newspaper’s importance in a political career (S.P. Engelbrecht, *Thomas Francois Burger* (De Bussy, Pretoria, 1933), p 131). Financial problems meant circulation was limited to Pretoria. In the early 1870s, Piet Joubert, however, gathered funds and subscribers and prevented the

flawed as so many were simply written by the editors as appears to have been common at that time. The English-speaking politician, Percy Fitzpatrick, referred to it as “the leading Dutch paper”, but it struggled for readership and tottered on the brink of bankruptcy at times.<sup>84</sup> However significant their role, newspapers in the ZAR often faced financial difficulty. *De Volksstem*, for example, had been compelled to warn their subscribers:

Our ideal is to lead a God-fearing life, and we foster the hope that thereby we may inherit the eternal Kingdom. We should like to meet all our subscribers there, which will not be possible unless ... they forward their subscriptions. He who fails to do this... may have the life-blood sucked out of him by thousands of fleas as he is now sapping us ...<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, in 1892, it would appear that Roos and Marais faced formidable financial problems. Marais drew on the precedent set by S.J. du Toit, the founder member of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (Society of Real Afrikaners), who had started writing his Paarl newspaper, *Di Patriot*, in Afrikaans. Du Toit’s paper began with fifty subscribers in 1875, and by 1881 there were three thousand.<sup>86</sup> Hoping to boost *Land en Volk*’s circulation, the decision was taken to start printing certain articles in Afrikaans. The introduction of the Afrikaans language into the ZAR press by Marais illustrates how ostensibly nationalist developments often had an economic imperative behind them.<sup>87</sup>

A new gambit was required when the Volksraad imposed a draconian censorship law, Law 11 of 1893, and faultfinding newspapers faced the loss of the government subsidy. One way to circumvent both the libel law and the government’s wrath was to couch criticism in the form of correspondents’ letters rather than editorials. One letter-writer, who called himself ‘Afrikanus Junior’, was particularly vituperative. He purported to be a *landzoon*, a war veteran of the older generation, who was increasingly alienated by Kruger’s administration. He began with an “Open Letter to the Honourable President Paul Kruger”, protesting the preponderance of Hollanders in government.<sup>88</sup> The Concessions Policy came under attack, as did the preponderance of Hollanders in the state bureaucracy. A particularly vitriolic letter was aimed at Dr Leyds, with the use of the offensively personal ‘gij’ instead of ‘u’ (you).<sup>89</sup> His last letter was advertised in *Land en Volk* the week before it appeared – the editors

---

newspaper’s bankruptcy. (J. Ploeger and H. Orban, *Besonderhede in verband met “De Volksstem” en Wallach’s Drukkers en Uitgewers Maatskappy Beperkt (1873-1960)*, p 10). From 1890, the ZAR government held 1 125 of the 15 000 shares. (Ploeger and Orban, *Besonderhede*, p 13).

84. P. Fitzpatrick, *The Transvaal from Within: a Private Record of Public Affairs* (Heinemann, London, 1900), p 72.

85. *De Volksstem*, 21 February 1874.

86. In 1875, S.J. du Toit established the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* and the *Afrikaner Bond* in 1880. In 1878 ‘Onze Jan’ Hofmeyr started the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Boeren Bescherms Vereniging* (BBV). Du Toit’s group was populist, with middling and small farmers composing its supporters, while Hofmeyr’s BBV and the *Afrikaner Bond* were composed of businessmen and large commercial farmers. The Bond presented a populist programme, which promoted economic support of Dutch-speakers, using the *Patriot* to promote Afrikaans. The BBV’s mouthpiece, the *Zuid-Afrikaan*, disdainfully noted that brandy and the *Patriot* were the “common enemies of civilisation”. The two groups merged, and Hofmeyr gained the ascendancy and the *Bond* turned its attention to the pragmatic advancement of Dutch-speakers’ interests within the British Empire, like securing property rights. See T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880 - 1911* (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1966).

87. This conforms to Anderson’s contention that capitalism had a “vernacularizing thrust”. He gives the example of the Bible saturating the market of those who could read Latin, by the mid-seventeenth century, and publishers turning to peddling cheap vernacular editions (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso, London, 1983, 1991), p 39).

88. *Land en Volk*, 5 May 1891.

89. *Land en Volk*, October 1894.

claimed they had received the letter too late and would have to publish it the following week, but did announce that it dealt with the latest governmental scandal. The letter duly appeared addressed to Kruger and was heavily critical.<sup>90</sup> J.P. Meyer, J.J. Burger, Piet Roos and J.J. Malan, candidates standing for the Volksraad, also had their personal failings enumerated.<sup>91</sup>

There was much speculation over the true identity of 'Afrikanus Junior' – particularly by those who had been his subject matter. J.P. Meyer, for example, demanded to know the letter-writer's identity.<sup>92</sup> 'Afrikanus Junior' became something of a household name – so that one advertiser even used it to draw attention to his tobacco and maize.<sup>93</sup> There was speculation that Jan Celliers or even Piet Joubert was the perpetrator – but the former died before the letters stopped and the second's usual rhetoric was entirely removed from the style of the writer.<sup>94</sup> It was neither Carl Jeppe<sup>95</sup> nor Loveday as Marais himself tantalizingly conceded, saying that he had known the letter-writer long before those two men and that his name was linked to "great services to his country".<sup>96</sup>

'Afrikanus Junior' was almost certainly Marais himself. He admitted that he was the author in an interview with F.G.M. du Toit shortly before his death.<sup>97</sup> Government attempts to find the damned elusive 'Afrikanus Junior' miscarried. Marais was warned by his typesetter that a civil servant had offered him £120 for the name and handwriting sample of the man behind the pseudonym, £50 for the name alone. Marais then set up a scheme to embarrass the government. He told his typesetter to deliver a false name, that of a "Mr J. de V. Smit of the Waterberg", which the civil servant duly paid for. In the next edition, Marais revealed the story – donating the money to a hospital and embarrassing the government.<sup>98</sup> Using 'Afrikanus Junior', Marais was free even under the censorship laws to utilise the 'Americanized' methods of personal attack.

### Kruger's Hollanders

There was growing resentment over the apparent Dutch infiltration of the machinery of society – in the railways, education and public service.<sup>99</sup> It was felt that once in office, they tended to appoint other Dutchmen.<sup>100</sup> The second most important position in the government went to a Hollander. Dr W.J. Leyds became state attorney of the ZAR in 1884 at the age of 25, after finishing his legal studies in Amsterdam. Four years later, the Volksraad elected him to the post of state secretary, essentially the primary political office after the presidency. The *Kapenaars*, or Cape-educated men,

90. *Land en Volk*, 3 October 1895.

91. *Land en Volk*, 7 February 1895.

92. *Land en Volk*, 14 February 1895.

93. *Land en Volk*, 2 May 1895.

94. Some believed it was Joubert, see Memorials to First Volksraad, 13 June 1895.

95. Legal practitioner, member of the Chamber of Mines and member of the First Volksraad for Johannesburg. See C. Jeppe, *The Kaleidoscopic Transvaal* (Chapman, London, 1906), pp vii-x.

96. *Land en Volk*, 21 February 1895.

97. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p 55.

98. In a tragicomic postscript, Marais told Du Toit that shortly afterwards a little-known civil servant from the Northern Transvaal named Smit arrived at the newspaper offices saying that his job was threatened by lingering governmental belief in his culpability. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p 55.

99. See P.J. van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg-Maatschappij I* (De Bussy, Amsterdam, 1937-1938), chapter two.

100. This sort of national nepotism was obviously not limited to the Dutch sector. For example, Germans were hired extensively in the Department of Mines, which was under the German J. Klimke in the 1890s.

like Chief Justice J.G. Kotzé, Ewald Esselen and Marais himself, provided vocal opposition to Leyds. *Land en Volk* commented repeatedly on Kruger's "servitude to Leyds".<sup>101</sup> In self-defence, Leyds conjectured about the political unreliability of the *Kapenaars*, noting indignantly:

I look upon them in general as enemies (though disguised enemies) of our independence.... They ... want English supremacy.... The *Kapenaars*, and our young Boers hate the Hollanders, hate them more than the English ....<sup>102</sup>

*De Volksstem* urged that Hollanders be appointed over Cape Afrikaners who would be more likely to be pro-English.<sup>103</sup> The Hollander issue was a constant concern within *Land en Volk*. It was raised in the major political crises, particularly during those over the Railway Concessions and Dynamite Concessions. Much emphasis was laid on the fact that Hollanders received 65 per cent of the votes in the newly established railway company and that a Hollander, S. Wierda had been appointed head of the Department of Public Works. Marais had a steady refrain: Kruger prefers Hollanders and Jews, "who encircle him like vultures", to "loyal sons of the soil".<sup>104</sup>

A statistical analysis of officials made by the *Weekly Press* in 1897, however, revealed that only 15 per cent of civil servants were Dutch<sup>105</sup>, the majority of whom had 15 to 20 years' experience and were enfranchised citizens.<sup>106</sup> As even the Progressive Carl Jeppe conceded: "With the exception of Dr Leyds, no Hollander had any important part in shaping Mr. Kruger's views."<sup>107</sup> It must be remembered, however, that Hollanders occupied the higher ranks of the civil service, with the Dutch elite controlling the Railway Concession and the Education Department, while Afrikaners found positions in the lower levels of the civil service, like the police force.<sup>108</sup>

The Hollander Question is significant on two grounds. Firstly, Marais, like many of his colleagues, defined himself as an Afrikaner, not only as opposed to the English, but also as opposed to the Dutch. Calling oneself an Afrikaner and creating a coterie of fellow Afrikaners, was a reaction, not only against the Anglofaction, but also against the Hollanders' power bloc. A sense of ethnic identity, or 'Afrikanerdom', required not only the existence of a community with a distinct set of institutions and a separate language, but also a community consciousness of these entities, an awareness of a set of needs and desires in conflict with those of other groups.<sup>109</sup> *Land en Volk* helped in the creation of this awareness through the articulation of an enemy, relying on xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and creating a composite figure from 'the Jew', the 'foreign capitalist' and the 'Uitlander'.

The popularisation of xenophobia was wrapped up in issues surrounding land and landlessness. It was during this period, the end of the nineteenth century, as Keegan

101. *Land en Volk*, 22 March 1892.

102. W.J. Leyds, *Onze Eerste Jaren in Zuid-Afrika*, 1939, quoted in Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic*, p 16.

103. *De Volksstem*, 20 February 1890.

104. *Land en Volk*, 29 December 1892. See also *Land en Volk*, 12 May 1892; 13 October 1892.

105. *Weekly Press*, 10 July 1897. According to the analysis, 40 per cent were from the ZAR, 27 per cent from the Cape Colony, 6 per cent from the Orange Free State, 6 per cent from England and 4 per cent from Germany.

106. *Weekly Press*, 4 July 1896.

107. C. Jeppe, *Kaleidoscopic Transvaal* (Chapman, London, 1906), p 177.

108. C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914 II, New Nineveh* (Longman, London, 1982), p 113.

109. J. Butler, "Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902-1950" in Leroy Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (James Currey, London, 1989), p 55.

has demonstrated, that landlessness was becoming a factor in the process of class differentiation in Boer society.<sup>110</sup> Prior to that, whether or not land was owned made less difference to one's status as adult Boer male.<sup>111</sup> With these material changes, an ideology of the land was created in the press. The names adopted by the community, 'Boer', and 'Afrikaner' were themselves loaded with imagery of the land and with farming. Although Cape-educated, Marais referred to himself as a '*landszoon*' and made much of the right of '*landszoonen*' to participate in the government of the ZAR, investing them with the rights of autochthony.<sup>112</sup> Marais, like others on the Progressive front, clad this land ideology in the rhetoric of anti-foreign capitalists.

The second significant point of the Hollander Question was the power of the Progressive press to distort the issue until it loomed alarmingly in the public perception, a method that was used to great political effect in the preamble to the election of 1893. *Land en Volk* was able to shape the Hollander Question in such a way as to make this essentially urban phenomenon important to the rural constituency. Then Marais staunchly maintained that once Joubert assumed office, the Hollanders' domination would cease.<sup>113</sup> *Land en Volk* even demanded the dismissal of W.E. Bok as minute keeper of the Executive Council, asking "Is the Afrikaans nation so poor and weak that we must always run to Uitlanders for assistance? The Volksraad must show the world that we can rule ourselves."<sup>114</sup> The Progressive members of the Volksraad joined the assault on Bok and a '*landszoon*' was appointed in his stead.

### The election of 1893

Prior to 1893, elections in the ZAR proceeded with little public interest. A dramatic change occurred in 1893, and one of the reasons for this change was the influence of Marais's *Land en Volk*. It was the first time that there were two main camps, 'Progressive' and 'Conservative', indeed the first time an election campaign had been organised, starting a year prior to the campaign itself, with a propaganda war.<sup>115</sup> Prior to 1893, the presidential elections in the ZAR were routine: as no distinct and separate political parties existed, the candidates simply appeared to answer questions addressed to them at small public meetings.<sup>116</sup> The candidates ran as *volksleiers* (popular local leaders) rather than political leaders, with personality rather than party platform being pivotal to their success. The election of 1893 was different. As *The Transvaal Advertiser* observed:

- 
110. See T. Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: the Southern Highveld to 1914* (Ravan Press, Braamfontein, 1986).
111. With approximately half of the white rural families being non-landowners in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, *bywoner* was not a pejorative term. With industrialisation and modernisation, the *bywoner* ceased being an asset and became an albatross around the neck of wealthier farmers.
112. It is interesting to compare this with the notion that Africans were "naturally part of the land" as Saul Dubow has noted, with the cities being regarded as an alien environment. The 1923 Urban Areas Act was couched in these rhetorical terms, as a protective measure to assist the African in an alien environment. (S. Dubow, "Race, Civilisation and Culture: the Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-War Years" in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in twentieth century South Africa* (Longman, Harlow, 1987).
113. *Land en Volk*, 29 September 1892.
114. *Land en Volk*, 10 May 1892.
115. The election of 1893 has received some attention in J.A. Mouton, "Generaal Piet Joubert in die Transvaalse Geskiedenis", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 20, 1 (The Government Printer, Parow, 1957) and intensively, in J.M. Vivier, "Die Presidentsverkieping van 1893 in die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek." MA dissertation, University of Potchefstroom, 1970.
116. J.S. Du Plessis, "Die Onstaan en Ontwikkeling van die Amp van die Staatspresident in die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek (1858-1902)", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 18, 1 (The Government Printer, Elsie's River, 1955), p 141.

...never in the history of this country has there been so powerful a stirring up of the people – except in the case of a war, or an impending outbreak of hostilities – as has taken place during the first two months of this year.<sup>117</sup>

By 1893, Kruger had already spent a decade serving two terms of office, with a broad ambition to maintain economic and political independence, but his annual *rondreis* (election tour of the outlying districts) of 1892 had apparently revealed much discontent.<sup>118</sup> In the preamble to the election, questions were raised by rural constituencies as to when an Afrikaner would replace Leyds as state secretary.<sup>119</sup> The *rondreis* brought many awkward questions for Kruger.<sup>120</sup>

Election committees were established and, although Marais contended that the one in opposition to Kruger was merely a “volk’s congress” to monitor Kruger’s committee, there is evidence to suggest that it was the Joubert faction who first initiated the committee.<sup>121</sup> Esselen, the chairperson of Joubert’s electoral committee, appointed Marais and Roos as members of the central committee for Pretoria. *Land en Volk* provided a series of questions for its readership to pose to Kruger:

Why was Dr Leyds re-appointed? Why not a competent Afrikaner?  
 Why is our country the only one in the world where a foreigner holds the reins?...  
 Why were we told that the Delagoa Bay Railway must be built by a Hollander company to free us from dependence on England, and now we find ourselves dangerously in debt to England?<sup>122</sup>

For the first time there was immense public interest in the election. This was a new phenomenon, as *De Volksstem* maintained disapprovingly: there had never been anything like this before.<sup>123</sup> It may be argued that this was at least in part the result of the appearance of the opposition press: *Land en Volk* helped to create the movement by consistently articulating the ideas and views of a group of disparate personalities. An inter-newspaper war erupted, with allegations of crass methods directed particularly towards *Land en Volk*, and accusations of simony and concealment aimed at the press supportive of the government.<sup>124</sup> Joubert had to deny connections with the National Union in an advertisement in *Land en Volk*.<sup>125</sup>

*Land en Volk* published letters, both serious and satiric (some from ‘Afrikanus Junior’)<sup>126</sup>, poems, manifestos and advertisements, like:

Citizens of the Transvaal! Don’t sleep, vote for PIET JOUBERT, the hero of Amajuba, the man of honour, the beloved of his volk. Don’t be fooled by clever talk.<sup>127</sup>

117. *The Transvaal Advertiser*, 20 February 1893.

118. According to Law 1858, art. 78, the President was expected to travel the towns and villages in the Republic wherever there was a government office, in order to give voice to individual concerns.

119. *Land en Volk*, 23 February 1892. Leyds had already been replaced by one as Railway Commissioner.

120. The campaigning saw little violence, aside from occasional reports of bad language and drunkenness. *Land en Volk*, 23 February 1893.

121. *Land en Volk*, 25 May 1893, yet the Joubert committee was already active by August 1892. See *De Volksstem*, 30 August 1892.

122. *Land en Volk*, 13 October 1892.

123. *De Volksstem*, 19 November 1892. *The Press* echoed this sentiment on 9 March 1893.

124. *Land en Volk*, 28 February 1893, 16 March 1893, 2 March 1893; *De Volksstem*, 26 January 1893, 25 January 1893; *The Press*, 16 January 1893.

125. *Land en Volk*, 12 January 1893. The *Transvaal Advertiser* also supported Joubert, but to a lesser extent. For example, H.C. Marais, the sub-editor and Marais’s brother, accused Kruger of using state coffers to promote his campaign. *Transvaal Advertiser*, 23 January 1893.

126. *Land en Volk*, 29 March 1892.

127. Translation into English, SS. “Burgers van Transvaal! Slaapt niet en stemt voor PIET JOUBERT, den held van Amajuba, den Behouder van zijn Eed, den lieveling van zijn Volk. Laat u niet verleiden door slimme praatjes.” *Land en Volk*, 2 February 1893.



The election of 1893 was shaped in the public's imagination as a struggle between Dutch and Afrikaner hegemony – between Kruger and Pious Piet's anti-Hollander campaign (as *The Press* dubbed it).<sup>128</sup> This was the natural extension of the rhetoric evident in *Land en Volk* from 1891, visible, for example in the Ribbink case and anti-Leyds campaign. A Marais editorial insisted: "The choice between these two gentlemen is plainly and only the choice between Afrikaner and Hollander"<sup>129</sup>. The third candidate, Chief Justice Kotzé, was largely ignored by the press. Kruger won the election, but Joubert managed to win a large number of votes. *Land en Volk* made no class-based appeals to vote for Joubert. Local, rather than regional differences in popularity played an important role in respectively winning Kruger 7881, Joubert 7009 and Kotzé 81 votes.<sup>130</sup> The manipulation by the Progressive faction of this Afrikaner-Hollander dichotomy was thus probably important in gaining Joubert his significant electoral support.<sup>131</sup>

*Land en Volk* offered its readers a post-election diet of sour grapes.<sup>132</sup> Editorial opinion maintained that the elections had not been honestly conducted and the Progressives were the victims of wholesale fraud.<sup>133</sup> This escalated to revolutionary talk, with bombastic threats of violence if a recount was refused.<sup>134</sup> There appear to have been electoral irregularities.<sup>135</sup> There was an official objection by Joubert's camp and an investigation.<sup>136</sup> Joubert appealed cautiously for patriotic calm in an open letter in *De Volksstem*.<sup>137</sup> *Land en Volk* passionately decried the election, noting that those who had protested had been treated "as if they were Hottentots or dogs"<sup>138</sup>. The new Volksraad, however, decided the election had been legal.

128. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, p 137.

129. *Land en Volk*, 23 February 1892.

130. *Buitengewone Staatscourant der Z.A.R.*, 14 April 1893.

131. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, p 138.

132. Gordon has discussed the slight regional differences that did occur, but he concedes these are minimal. *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, p 209.

133. *Land en Volk*, 28 February 1893. Certainly 14 971 votes out of an electoral list of 17 574, with only 2 603 voters abstaining appeared unlikely.

134. *Land en Volk*, 2 March 1893.

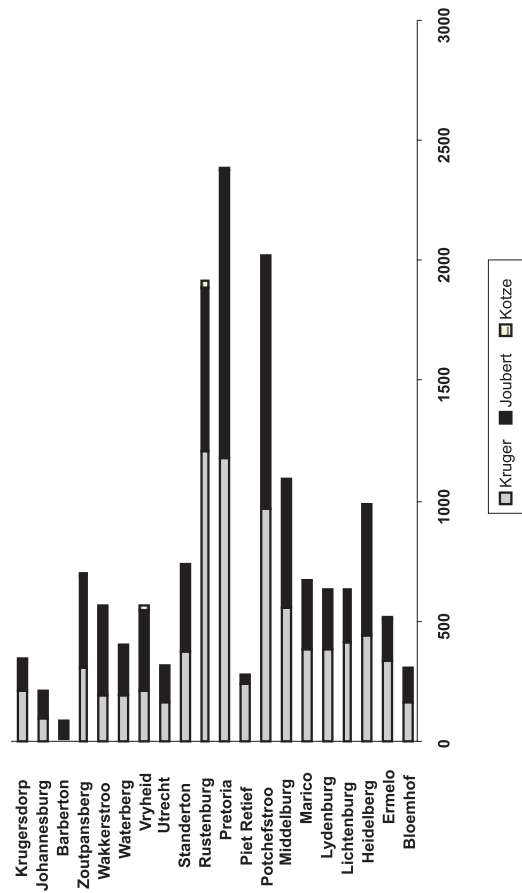
135. Detailed by Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, p 210.

136. *Land en Volk*, 20 April 1893.

137. *De Volksstem*, 22 April 1893.

138. *Land en Volk*, 20 April 1893. *Land en Volk* also published a copy of Joubert's letter, 20 April 1893.

The 1893 Election Results, from data from *De Volksstem*, 21 February 1893.



### **Land en Volk – and the Uitlanders**

Before 1893, there had been tacit co-operation but no formal alliance between the Progressives and the National Union.<sup>139</sup> Among the Progressives, only Esselen openly allied himself with the National Union.<sup>140</sup> Esselen introduced Marais to the Reform Committee.<sup>141</sup> Charles Leonard, a Johannesburg lawyer and president of the Transvaal National Union, noted that *Land en Volk* presented the views of men like Esselen and other “younger and more enlightened” burghers who pointed out the dangers arising from the autocratic government.<sup>142</sup> In August 1893, a representative from the National Union approached Marais, offering to buttress *Land en Volk* financially, in return for which its stance would become more pro-Uitlander. Marais sold *Land en Volk* for £2500 to a company founded by Uitlanders for this purpose, undertaking to remain editor for at least another two years, at a monthly salary of £50.

After the election of 1893, the Progressives still were not a party in the true sense of the word. Carl Jeppe was an ineffectual whip, while Lukas Meyer assumed a more dominant role than Joubert. The Progressives’ working committee, the *Volksmacht* (Power of the People), was devoted to lobbying to nationalise the *Nederlandsch Zuid Afrikaansche Spoorweg Maatschappij* (NZASM). With the formation of the *Volksvereniging van der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (People’s Organisation of the ZAR) towards the end of 1893, party-politics took new shape, coalescing over a “potpourri of liberal concerns”, like the concessions policy, monopolies, selection of *landdrosts* (magistrates) and the franchise question.<sup>143</sup> Kruger countered this step with the establishment of the *Burgermag* (Citizen Force) in April 1894. Rhodes’s intrigues increasingly drew the Progressives and Conservatives together in 1894. The evidence of a coming crisis, Gordon argues, caused Kruger to work towards national unity, and, as a conciliatory gesture, he appointed Esselen as state attorney.<sup>144</sup> J.S. Marais in *The Fall of Kruger’s Republic*, has shown how a growing flirtation between Progressives and Uitlanders led Kruger to try to woo back the Progressives.<sup>145</sup> A movement towards *toenadering* (rapprochement) was made between Esselen and the chairman of Kruger’s election committee, to forge a group in order to support the government in all measures they perceived as just and constitutional and to pass conciliatory laws with regard to the Uitlanders. Kruger’s *Burgermag* and Joubert’s *Volksvereniging* agreed to come together in the interests of Boer unity. Almost immediately, however, the joint political union fell apart over whether to admit Uitlanders or not.<sup>146</sup> The

- 
139. August 1892 saw the Uitlanders form the Transvaal National Union to agitate for reform. The pro-Kruger press circulated rumours trying to convey the impression that Joubert’s faction were allied with the National Union. See, for example, *De Volksstem*, 21 September 1892, 14 January 1893.
140. Esselen was in contact with Lionel Philips, see Letter from Philips - A. Beit, 12 August 1894, in M. Fraser and A. Jeeves (eds), *All that Glittered - Selected Correspondence of Lionel Philips, 1890-1924* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977), p 82.
141. Mieny, *Leipoldt en Marais – Onwaarskynlike Vriende*, p 34; C.L. Grimbeek, “Die Wederydse Beoordeling van Boer en Uitlander, 1886-1899.” MA dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, 1969.
142. C. Leonard, *Statement of Charles Leonard on the Position of the Uitlanders in the Transvaal with History of the Franchise* (London, 1896) and Ellis Bartlett and Charles Leonard, *The Transvaal Crisis: the Case for the British (Uitlander) Residents* (Westminster, 1896).
143. Preller, *Historiese Opstelle*, p 191.
144. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition*, p 180.
145. Marais, *The Fall of Kruger’s Republic*, p 58.
146. The members of the conservative *Burgermag* wanted to admit only burghers, while the Progressive *Volksvereniging* delegates wanted anyone who had lived in the ZAR for at least three years. *Land en Volk*, 15 November 1894.

fracture of this group into its component parts was a clear sign that political parties were becoming defined and entrenched.<sup>147</sup>

### The Jameson Raid (1895)

At the end of 1895 there was rumour of revolution on the streets of Johannesburg.<sup>148</sup> In a special edition of *Land en Volk*, which appeared on 30 December 1895, the facts of the Raid were given and the manifesto of the National Union was published. From testimony given by Marais at the trial of the Reform Committee, it appears that Joubert received a telegram from the *landdrost* of Marico and then sent Marais and his son-in-law, Abraham Malan, to Johannesburg to hold talks with the Uitlanders in order to gauge the gravity of the situation. Marais and Malan met Charles Leonard and Abe Bailey in the Rand Club, the latter both maintaining their peaceful intentions and their lack of involvement with Jameson. Marais suggested that they open channels of communication with the government to assert this position. After hearing Marais and Malan report back, the executive committee agreed to send the two emissaries back to hold a covert meeting – Marais was chosen for his command of English and rapport with the Uitlanders. From the Uitlander perspective, he was known as a “liberal-minded Dutchman who sympathised with the Uitlanders”.<sup>149</sup> Marais tried to convince the anxious members of the Reform Committee of the hopelessness of their ambition and that the government would be just if negotiations were opened.<sup>150</sup> Joubert was accused of acting without consultation in selecting and sending Malan and Marais, and his resignation was called for, to which Joubert responded by instituting action for libel.<sup>151</sup>

The Raid boosted Kruger’s popularity and served to halt the advances made by the Progressives.<sup>152</sup> Marais had to break off his links with Uitlanders and the Johannesburg subsidy for *Land en Volk* came to an end. He had to resort to commercial printing jobs and increase the advertising in each edition of *Land en Volk* to unhealthy proportions. Circulation dropped, especially after the 1893 Press Act number 11, was replaced by the new Press Act of 1896, Act 26 or the *Hou-Jou-Bek Wet* (shut-your-trap Act), as Marais called it, which imposed heavier censorship clauses on the press.<sup>153</sup> ‘Afrikanus Junior’ had to go into forced retirement as the Act banned the use of pseudonyms in letters to the press. The Act stated that “Liberty of the press is permitted, saving the liability of the printer and publisher for all articles amounting to libel, insult, or attack upon anyone’s character”. Every newspaper, periodical or magazine had to contain the name and address of its printer, publisher and editor. Articles of a political or personal nature had to be signed by the author who was obliged to provide his full name and address. It was also enacted that in the event of an indictable offence, the editor, whether the author or not, would be

147. *De Volksstem*, 14 November 1894.

148. There is a vast literature on the Jameson Raid. There are many contemporary works whose authors run the gamut of bias from the historiographical C. Saunders, “Historians and the Jameson Raid”, *South African Historical Journal*, 36, 1997, to the partisan Charles Thomas, whose *Johannesburg in Arms 1895-96* (Smith, Elder and Company, London, 1896) dedicated to Rhodes as a “slight token of admiration for his policy and genius”, recounts the daily events while Jameson made his “daring endeavour” to overthrow the “yoke of Boer dominion”.

149. I. Colvin, *The Life of Jameson II* (Edward Arnold, London, 1922), p 95.

150. NASA, TAB: State Attorney Archives, S.P.99, Marais’s testimony: Sworn Statement by Marais, 10 January 1896. See also *Land en Volk*, 6, 13 February 1896; *Transvaal Advertiser*, 5 February 1896.

151. *Land en Volk*, 6 February 1896.

152. The election outcome of 1898 was: Kruger 12 858, Schalk Burger 3 750, Joubert 2 001.

153. *Land en Volk*, 13 February 1896.

punished as the offender – the penalty being a fine not exceeding £50 or a prison sentence not exceeding six months. The State President was given the power of prohibiting the distribution of any printed matter which in his opinion was contrary to good morals or dangerous to the peace and order of the state. Violation incurred a fine not exceeding £250 or imprisonment not exceeding one year.

In 1896 with his freedom of speech curtailed, his newspaper circulation dropping, his subsidy lost and his political ambitions hard hit, Marais suffered a great personal loss when his wife died in labour.<sup>154</sup> In the state of shock and uncertainty that followed, he was urged by Esselen to study law in London. Aged twenty-five, the first part of his career behind him, Marais made arrangements to leave for Britain. On 3 December 1896, he transferred the editorship of *Land en Volk* to J.Y. O'Brien, former editor of *The Press*, with the understanding that Marais would continue to steer its political course.<sup>155</sup> Indeed *De Volksstem* suggested that he planned to avoid the press restrictions by writing from abroad.<sup>156</sup> Marais continued to write to the *Daily Mail* and also wrote a long letter "Onder de Rooinekken" (Among the Red Necks), advocating a pan-Afrikaner union with the Cape.<sup>157</sup> He remained in London for five years, studying law at the Inner Temple.

## Conclusion

The discussion of Marais's *Land en Volk* contributes to the understanding both of the Progressive Movement and of the role of the individual in its creation and promotion. From 1890 to 1895, there was increasing opposition to Kruger among the ZAR Boers for reasons varying from hostility towards his perceived corruption and inefficiency, to disagreement with his policies on concessions, education and the franchise. A small clique of critics gathered together and utilised the press as a mouthpiece. *Land en Volk* gave direction and focus to the Progressive Movement, contributing to the construction of the movement by consistently articulating the ideas and views of a group of disparate personalities. Marais used his newspaper as a powerful agency for Progressive advocacy in its own right, helping to entrench the public understanding of socio-political relations. Through his editorial polemic and diatribe, he helped to shape popular opinion in favour of the Progressive faction. In the labels 'Progressive' and 'Conservative' there was a disjunction between nomenclature and practice, but Marais helped to capture these labels, caricaturing Kruger as a regressive force. The spectre of Hollander domination was largely the creation of the Progressive press, a bogey that haunted Kruger in the preamble to the election of 1893 and refashioned the election in the public mind as a clash between Hollander and Boer, foreigner and *landszoon*.

Marais was able to bring official maladministration and government policy under scrutiny, stimulating the reorganisation of public life. He introduced sensationalised, muckraking methods of reportage, arousing both acrimony and public interest in formerly narrowly parochial concerns. As a critical and watchful eye on the

154. See *Transvaal Advertiser*, 18 June 1895 and *The Press*, 19 July 1895. This paragraph is drawn from oral evidence collected by Du Toit before Marais's death. While Marais's tendency to exaggerate is known, his biographer accepts much of it as true, although documentary evidence is scant. As this material is intended to round off the interval before the South African War and does not affect the main arguments presented, it is included. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, pp 16-18.

155. *De Volksstem*, 2 December 1896.

156. *De Volksstem*, 28 November 1896.

157. *Land en Volk*, 5 January 1898.

government's policies, *Land en Volk* contributed to the greater scrutiny of the public service. The unmentionable managed to be expressed through anonymous letters, particularly the vehicle of 'Afrikanus Junior'.

The 'party system' was introduced for the first time in the ZAR in 1893 – albeit still largely in terms of the cult of individual personalities. There was the dawning of a rudimentary public political consciousness based on the ideology of parties. Marais played a significant role in contributing to the process of building this political consciousness. As Lionel Philips observed, popular opinion in the ZAR was a "toss up" and was open to being captured and capitalized upon.<sup>158</sup> Marais helped call the toss and, in so doing, helped change the face of ZAR politics.

### Abstract

Celebrated as an investigative journalist exposing a corrupt regime, dismissed as a political hack or damned as a litigious self-promoter in charge of a vulgar gossip sheet, Eugène Marais played a controversial role in the pre-war South African Republic (ZAR) – especially in his interaction with President Kruger. This paper explores that interaction, discussing Marais's participation in the faction that opposed Kruger, and that came to be labelled the 'Progressive' camp. It examines his motives and techniques in swaying opinion towards the opposition faction, with particular emphasis on the pivotal election of 1893, which saw a transformation in national politics. This paper investigates the influence of the Progressive press, and particularly its role in 'inventing' or at least popularising a particular image of Kruger. The focus is also on the ironies and paradoxes of the relationship of the Progressive press (and Marais in particular) with Kruger as figurehead.

### Opsomming

#### "'n Lastige Klippie in Kruger se Skoen" – Eugène Marais en *Land en Volk* in die ZAR, 1891-1896

Geprys as 'n navorsende joernalis wat regeringskorrupsie aan die lig gebring het, verag as 'n politieke snerts krywer, of verdoem as 'n pleitsieke roemsoeker in beheer van 'n banale skinderblad, het Eugène Marais 'n omstrede rol in die vooroorlogse ZAR gespeel – veral deur sy interaksie met president Kruger. Hierdie artikel ondersoek daardie interaksie en bespreek Marais se deelname aan die faksie wat Kruger teengestaan het en waaraan die etiket 'Progressief' toegeken is. Dit ondersoek sy motiewe en die tegnieke waarmee hy die openbare mening in die rigting van die opposisiepartye gestuur het, met veral klem op die belangrike verkiesing van 1893. Die artikel bestudeer verder die invloed van die Progressiewe pers en, in die besonder, die rol daarvan in die 'skepping', of ten minste die popularisering, van 'n besondere beeld van Kruger. Klem val op die ironiese en paradoksale verhouding van die Progressiewe pers (en Marais in die besonder) met Kruger as leiersfiguur.

---

158. Letter from Lionel Philips – A. Beit, 26 November 1892, in M. Fraser and A. Jeeves (eds), *All that Glittered – Selected Correspondence of Lionel Philips, 1890-1924* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977), p 64.