

***Thirty Years in the Making***

*An examination of the history of the Dutch parliamentary discourse surrounding the Cultural  
Treaty between the Netherlands and South Africa: 1951-1981*

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*Abstract:*

On May 31st 1951 “Union Day” in South Africa a treaty of cultural exchange with the Netherlands was signed. It would endure for 30 years until its unilateral dissolution by the Dutch government in June of 1981. In the thirty years in between the Netherlands saw a number of sweeping societal changes and South Africa went through several political crises. Both drastically affected the Dutch position on South African relations, yet in the official documentation of parliamentary debate regarding the cultural treaty certain ambivalences can be discovered in the position of political parties for and against the treaty. This paper will examine the debate surrounding the treaty’s ratification in 1951 and its abolition in 1981 as well as what changed in Dutch-South African relations in the intermediary years to determine what underlying causes created these blurred lines in Dutch politics regarding their estranged cousins in Africa.

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## *Introduction*

There is an undeniable connection between the Netherlands and South Africa. From the foundation of Cape Town by Dutch colonists to the two Boer wars against Great Britain, their peoples have stood together on the international stage for decades. During what was arguably the final highlight of their relationship, the 1952 tri-centenary celebration of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape of Good Hope the Netherlands, under the Drees III cabinet and the social democratic Labour Party and South Africa, then led by the recently elected Afrikaner nationalist D.F. Malan of the first apartheid government, signed a treaty of friendship and cultural exchange.<sup>1</sup> It consisted of eight articles touching on various subjects such as exchange of scientific ideas, bilateral cultural visitations and the creation of mutual funding for projects in both countries. In the treaty's eighth article it was stipulated that every five years relations between the two countries should be re-examined and the treaty should be renewed. In the three decades that followed the international community became increasingly critical of South Africa. This was driven by events such as the Sharpeville massacre, the murder of Steve Biko, the banning of the African National Congress and the South African campaign of intervention in the Angolan civil war.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Staten-Generaal digitaal, "Cultureel Verdrag Tussen Het Koninkrijk Der Nederlanden En De Unie Van Zuid-Afrika" *Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*, (June 15, 1951), 1.

2 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1990), 205-206.

These events affected the Dutch position critically on a political level, with protests becoming more frequent and the parliamentary opposition pushing for the Netherlands to take an active stance against Apartheid. Despite this, the treaty between the two nations would continuously be renewed. It would not be until February 5<sup>th</sup> 1982 that the Netherlands caved to pressure from within and without, unilaterally abolishing their treaty with South Africa, an outcome of a process thirty years in the making.<sup>3</sup> During this transformation of public opinion in the Netherlands regarding South Africa the stances of existing political parties changed as much as views. The Labour Party, under which the treaty with South Africa was originally signed, would champion against apartheid during this time. Additionally, other small progressive and liberal parties that formed during the period would adopt their own stances on the South African question as it became a matter of national and public interest.

Conversely, conservative and Christian parties would defend South Africa in the Dutch parliament and the existence of the treaty against an increasingly united liberal-progressive and socialist opposition. The question is thus; *how did the changing political landscape in the Netherlands affect their stance on the cultural treaty with South Africa and what ambivalences can be discovered in the parliamentary discourse surrounding the treaty's ratification in 1952 and abolition in 1982?* To answer this question this paper will be divided into three sections. One to provide a historical context of Dutch politics around 1952 when the treaty was ratified, an intermediate section to explain the changing landscape surrounding South Africa with the birth of the global anti-apartheid movement and a third section with an analysis of the minutes of parliament during the session where it abolished the cultural treaty.

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3 Staten-Generaal digitaal, "Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag" (Den Haag, the Netherlands: Nationaal Archief. June 15th, 1981).

## *Historiography*

Existing literature often places an emphasis on the macro-scale events in Dutch and South African political history such as the global anti-apartheid movement, only mentioning the signing and abolishing of the treaty as if done with a pen-stroke. Broad overviews of the Dutch anti-apartheid movement such as *Nederland tegen apartheid* by Carry van Lakerveld, *Van Sharpeville tot Soweto* by Stefan de Boer and, R.W.A. Muskens' *Aan de goede kant: Een geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Anti-apartheidsbeweging 1960-1990* in Dutch and S.E. van der Watt's *Die opsegging van die Kultuurverdrag Nederland/Suid-Afrika: 'n kritiese ontleding* in Afrikaans do exist, but none of them focus specifically on the parliamentary debate surrounding the abolition of the treaty.<sup>4</sup> The treaty has historical merit on its own, as the two distinct periods within Dutch parliamentary politics in 1952 and 1982 illustrate both the changing dynamics in the parties and the ambivalences in their stances towards what could be considered to be the most important piece of legislation between the two countries. In other words, the treaty and the parliamentary debate in the Netherlands surrounding its creation and abolition provide an opportunity to research an under-explored avenue of Dutch foreign policy towards South Africa.

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4 Carry van Lakerveld, *Nederland Tegen Apartheid* (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Amsterdams Historisch Museum, 1994).  
Stefan de Boer, *Van Sharpeville Tot Soweto: Nederlands Regeringsbeleid Ten Aanzien Van Apartheid, 1960-1977* (Den Haag, The Netherlands: Sdu Uitgevers, 1999).  
S.E. van de Watt, "Die opsegging van die Kultuurverdrag Nederland/Suid-Afrika: 'n kritiese ontleding" (MA, Bloemfontein: University of Oranje Vrystaat, 1992).  
R.W.A. Muskens. *Aan de goede kant: Een geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Anti-apartheidsbeweging 1960-1990* (Soesterberg: Uitgeverij Aspekt, 2014).

*1947-1948: The historical context of the treaty*

Dutch relations with South Africa were chilly at best following their 1948 elections and the consolidation of Apartheid. During these elections Jan C. Smuts, who held great international acclaim for his work co-founding the United Nations, was ousted by an Afrikaner nationalist government under the *Nasionale Party* led by Daniel F. Malan. This government held pro-German, anti-British, anti-Semitic and occasionally openly national socialist views, which led the Dutch public to draw direct comparison with the soon to be implemented policies of Apartheid. Consequently, sympathy for Afrikaners diminished in the Netherlands. The newly appointed ambassador to the Netherlands Otto du Plessis was outright rejected by Queen Juliana in a diplomatic faux-pas in August of 1948, on account of his membership and leading role in the *Ossewabrandwag*, an Afrikaner nationalist organisation with deep rooted pro-German sympathies.<sup>5</sup> The general message to Afrikaners from the Netherlands seemed to be that as descendants of Cape Dutch settlers they were not living up to their Western liberal democratic heritage.<sup>6</sup> With the advent of the Cold War this message gradually began to reverse.

In the early 1950's Dutch politicians began to draw more parallels between the rigorously pillarised and socially conservative culture in the Netherlands during Reconstruction and its reflection within Afrikaans society. Worries about lingering ties with Germany also began to become less relevant with the rise of the Soviet Union as the primary antagonist to the western-aligned Netherlands. Anti-communist sentiment led to a view of South Africa as a valuable ally and a bulwark of Western civilisation in Africa. Even on a personal level within Dutch politics, politicians began to change their minds.

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5 Mark Sanders, *Complicities: the Intellectual and Apartheid* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). 58.

6 Ibid. 59.

PvdA member Jacques de Kadt, who in 1948 had denounced the nationalist victory in the South African elections, said in 1952 that the abolition of Apartheid now would only lead to chaos in the short term.<sup>7</sup> Chaos which would only serve to benefit the Soviet Union. During this time South Africa and the Netherlands developed an informal pact in the United Nations. The Apartheid regime was among the handful of countries in the UN general assembly who supported the Netherlands' point of view on the decolonisation of Indonesia and New Guinea that the international community had no jurisdiction in "internal" Dutch affairs. To reciprocate their tacit support, the Netherlands deemed the matter of Apartheid an "internal" South African affair as well. As such neither country would vote for UN resolutions to resolve the matters of Indonesia, New Guinea or apartheid, even as these were tabled with increasing frequency by African and Asian UN member states.<sup>8</sup>

Interpersonal relations between Dutch and South African dignitaries would again receive a significant boost when prime minister Malan would visit the Netherlands in 1949. Although Queen Juliana herself openly declared to Malan that she would never visit South Africa so long as Apartheid was still in place, minister-president Willem Drees and minister of foreign affairs Dirk Stikker would give him a warm welcome. Drees recounted at length about his experiences with the Boer war as a young reporter and how important the special relationship between the Dutch and Afrikaner peoples is. The controversy surrounding ambassador Du Plessis was also resolved; his appointment was simply withdrawn and a replacement was soon appointed.<sup>9</sup>

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7 "Handelingen van de Staten-Generaal, 1952-1953" Tweede Kamer, deel 4, (10 december 1952), 939.

8 "NA, Consulaat, Gezantschap en Ambassade in Pretoria (Zuid-Afrika), 2.05.122, inv. nr. 556, 'Basisdossier Indiërs'", *Minister aan Ambassade*, (9 december 1953).

9 Sanders, 58.



*1951-1952: The treaty is ratified*

This warming of Dutch – South African relations culminated in an official declaration; the status of the mutual diplomatic representation of both countries was elevated to a formal embassy and on May 31<sup>st</sup> 1951 (“Union Day” in South Africa) a cultural treaty was signed. It consisted of eight articles, touching upon various points of cooperation such as mutual intellectual exchange programs for students, teachers and academics as well as cultural and youth associations, mutual cultural outreach programs to promote books, cinema, radio and concerts.<sup>10</sup> There would be mutual availability of funds for the aforementioned programs and exchanges, two independent commissions would be set up to oversee the various processes described in the treaty and both countries would pledge to discuss renewing their agreement every five years.<sup>11</sup> The signing of the treaty took place in the Hague.

Although the treaty was ostensibly for cooperation between both “peoples of” the Netherlands and South Africa, in reality it was more an agreement between the Dutch and Afrikaners. No non-white South African would realistically be able to apply for any of the organisations or grants from the treaty. A small record of the official declarations regarding the approval by Queen Juliana of the treaty exists in the Dutch archives of the States-General.<sup>12</sup> In it Dirk Stikker, the minister of foreign affairs in 1952, gives a brief explanation of the motivation behind engaging in this endeavour of mutual cooperation in a memorandum attached to the document.<sup>13</sup>

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10 Staten-Generaal digitaal. “Cultureel Verdrag tussen het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden en de Unie van Zuid-Afrika, Nederlandse Ambassade in Zuid-Afrika [Pretoria] en de Consulaten-Generaal te Johannesburg en Kaapstad (2.05.268)” (Den Haag, the Netherlands: Nationaal Archief. May 31st, 1953).

11 Ibid.

12 Staten-Generaal digitaal. “Goedkeuring Cultureel Verdrag” Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, (Den Haag, the Netherlands: Nationaal Archief. June 15th, 1951.), 1-3.

13 Ibid. 4.

Stikker states that following the end of World War II the Netherlands entered into a number of cultural agreements with countries such as Belgium, France, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. South Africa, being home to a brother people to the Dutch and having deep roots in a shared experience of the creation of the country should therefore be no exception to such an agreement.<sup>14</sup> He also explains that the Netherlands had been in talks about a potential treaty with South Africa since 1947, a year before Apartheid was codified into law.

The treaty was also to be smaller than what the Dutch delegation present in South Africa intended, in compliance with other treaties signed by South Africa in the past. In an additional report provided by PvdA politician Anne Vondeling their fraction poses the question whether or not non-whites from the Netherlands would be able to participate in the exchanges provided by the treaty, considering that South Africa would view them as Coloureds.<sup>15</sup> Vondeling also remarks that Jews could potentially also be exempt from partaking in the benefits from the treaty as people of Jewish descent had been refused entry into South Africa before. When the treaty was presented for approval in the Dutch parliament, the only fraction not to vote in favour of implementing it was the CPN (Communist Party Netherlands).<sup>16</sup> In the minutes of the parliamentary debate the CPN's chairman Jan Haken raised his concerns by stating that through signing this treaty with South Africa the Netherlands gives way to implicit support of the suppression, execution and imprisonment of political dissidents in South Africa based on the colour of their skin.<sup>17</sup> Supporters of Apartheid would have an avenue of government support this way according to Haken.

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14 "Goedkeuring Cultureel Verdrag" Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, June 15, 1951.

15 Ibid.

16 Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2.02.28) 460-462.

17 Staten-Generaal digitaal. "Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1952-1953" 460.

These supporters argue that there is no other way for South Africa to go forward. Haken compares this directly with the rhetoric of the “race question” that came from supporters of Nazi Germany.<sup>18</sup> The government would be signing an agreement not with the population of South Africa as a whole but with a small racist minority that oppresses its demographic majority through violent and unconstitutional means, to the detriment of any efforts from the Netherlands to export culture to there.<sup>19</sup> Haken then cites the newspaper “De Tijd” from March 21<sup>st</sup> of 1952 which states that not only Coloureds feel threatened by the policies of the Apartheid government, but also English, Asian and Jewish people. With these reasons in mind and with the added fact that the original draft of the treaty from 1947 was created with the government of Jan Smuts (a moderate conservative who was against apartheid) in mind Haken and the CPN move to reject the treaty. The CPN, being communists, condones any support of those who would want to walk in the footsteps of Hitler.<sup>20</sup>

Following the CPN’s plea is foreign affairs spokesman for the PvdA, Jacques de Kadt. Being from the governing party whose main representative was a renowned expert on South African reporting that had visited the country numerous times, one would expect de Kadt’s defence of the treaty to be a complete rebuke of Haken’s argument. Yet even in 1952 there is already a certain ambivalence within the PvdA’s rhetoric that bears resemblance to what conservative and Christian parties will say in 1982. De Kadt begins by stating that the PvdA rejects any notion of racial discrimination propagated by the South African government. That government, de Kadt states, is bound to be voted out of office in due time.

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18 Jan Haken had been interned in Buchenwald from 1941 to 1945 for being a communist, see; Klaas Westrik, “Hitler in de Kamer” (MA, Leiden University, 2013), 17-19, <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/20752>

19 Staten-Generaal digitaal. “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1952-1953” 460.

20 Ibid.

De Kadt believes that the rule of law will persevere in South Africa and that there is no reason to cut cultural ties with the country because of its current government. He uses the term *stamverwant* when describing the nature of this culture. This term, which roughly translates to “kindred” is often used by supporters of South Africa when referring to the white Afrikaans speaking community living there. Historians such as Barbara Henkes and Vincent Kuitenbrouwer have used this term for the transnational community of Dutch-adjacent cultures.<sup>21</sup>

De Kadt emphasises the importance of this *stamverwantschap* or “kindred-ship” in maintaining close cultural ties with South Africa so as to eventually dissuade them from pursuing Apartheid further. It appears that this mentality was shared by all parties in the Dutch parliament in 1952. Only the CPN voted against ratifying the treaty and only their chairman voiced his concerns against it in the parliamentary minutes. There is however grounds to assume that the *stamverwantschap* principle was not the only reason other parties supported the treaty. Minister Joseph Luns from the Catholic People’s Party (KVP) attacks Haken’s analogy that calling the Apartheid government “Hitler’s stooges” is far too black and white, something Luns considers typical of a communist sympathiser.<sup>22</sup>

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21 Barbara Henkes, “Stamverwantschap and the Imagination of a White, Transnational Community The 1952 Celebrations of the Jan Van Riebeeck Tercentenary in the Netherlands and South Africa,” in *Imagining Communities*, ed. Gemma Blok et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 173–196.

Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, “From Stamverwantschap to Anti-apartheid: The Significance of the Pro-Boer Movement in the Netherlands.” in *War of Words: Dutch Pro-Boer Propaganda and the South African War (1899-1902)* ed. Vincent Kuitenbrouwer (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 201), 285-306.

22 Staten-Generaal digitaal. “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1952-1953” 460.

In Luns' words the CPN, Haken and his "friends in the Soviet Union and Cominform" seek to polarise any argument until there are only two extreme sides to the matter.<sup>23</sup> The KVP also condones racial discrimination in South Africa but sees no reason for that to impact cultural ties with them. Any action to be taken against Apartheid should be considered a United Nations matter and not one for the Dutch government alone. Again, there is a certain degree of reconciliation between the various parties in debate in 1952. While none of them go on record to state that they support apartheid or racial discrimination the treaty's supporters, the social democratic PvdA included, wish to create closer ties with South Africa for other reasons. *Stamverwantschap* or closer cultural ties chief among them.

*The intermediary years: global anti-apartheid consciousness*

Outright defence of Apartheid would come from South Africans themselves, such as from the Afrikaner poet and intellectual N.P. van Wyk Louw who during his tenure as a professor of Afrikaans in Amsterdam wrote "*ons saak*" - our cause; an advocacy of apartheid in direct response to the criticism coming from the Dutch government in 1952.<sup>24</sup> Elements outside of domestic Dutch politics would begin influencing public opinion regarding South Africa following the development of the global anti-apartheid movement in accordance with the United Nations charter and its Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10<sup>th</sup> of 1948.<sup>25</sup> As mentioned before this year coincided with the election of the Apartheid government that pursued a system of racial discrimination in violation of universal human rights.

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23 Staten-Generaal digitaal. "Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1952-1953" 460.

24 J.C. Steyn, *Van Wyk Louw: 'n Lewensverhaal* (Cape Town, South Africa: Tafelberg Uitgewers, 1998.), 514-515, 647. in; Mark Sanders, *Problems of Europe: N.P. Van Wyk Louw, the Intellectual and Apartheid* (Boston, USA: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. 1999), 611.

25 "G.A. Res. 217, 3 U.N. GAOR Part 1" 1948. in; Newell Maynard Stultz, "Evolution of the United Nations Anti-Apartheid Regime" *Human Rights Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1991), 3.

Whereas the UN had already been involved with racial issues regarding the discrimination of Indians in South Africa it officially created a Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa in late 1952.<sup>26</sup> It would continue to be operational despite stifling from the British delegate in the UN up until 1955, when it was not unanimously renewed by the General Assembly.<sup>27</sup> During this time global awareness towards the issue of South Africa had not quite picked up yet, with even the UN reports being conciliatory in nature. South Africa would not respond in kind however, as in 1955 with the foundation of domestic anti-apartheid organisation Congress of the People the United Nations suspended the South African delegation from the General Assembly.<sup>28</sup> Although their status in the UN would be restored in 1958 the Apartheid government would suffer its first true international political crisis with the massacre of 69 protesters at Sharpeville, which definitively turned the international community against South Africa.<sup>29</sup>

From this point on the country is kicked out of the Commonwealth and its white population narrowly decides via referendum to become a republic. During this time voices within Dutch politics calling to dismantle the informal pact begin to grow louder and louder with the situation in New Guinea resolved in favour of Indonesia in 1963 by decree of the UN, while Dutch society as a whole began developing more of a consciousness of the South African question following Sharpeville.

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26 "G.A. Res. 616A, 7 U.N. GAOR Supp. No. 20" 1952. in; Stultz, 8.

27 "1955 U.N.Y.B. 71, U.N. Doc. A/L.205 Official Records of the U.N., U.N., Ad Hoc Political Committee 21 December to 9 December 1955 42 (10th sess.)" in; *ibid.*

28 New York Times, 28 Nov. 1956, 1. 21.

29 Lodge, *Black Politics* 205-206.

The advent of Apartheid had not stirred the Dutch people as much as it had their politicians, but this new crisis allowed the PvdA led by Jaap Burger to organise numerous public protests against the South African government in the Netherlands.<sup>30</sup> Anonymous activists would smear the South African embassy with red paint.<sup>31</sup> The World Council of Protestant churches openly voiced their displeasure with the government.<sup>32</sup> They would receive tacit royal support when former queen, now princess Wilhelmina summoned influential preacher Hendrikus Berkhof to discuss the religious veracity of Apartheid at her estate, further strengthening the support for a critical approach to Dutch-South African foreign relations.<sup>33</sup> Many protestant churches in the Netherlands would send letters to their “brother churches” in South Africa to voice their concerns.<sup>34</sup> There was a particularly high amount of protest coming from the colonial parts of the Netherlands, such as the Federation of Surinamese Associations led by F. Moll, who at a protest rally on March 31<sup>st</sup> 1960 proclaimed that “every hour that the government remains silent about this matter (Sharpeville) is an insult to all Surinamers and Antillians.”<sup>35</sup> The Surinamer community called for a complete boycott on South African goods and the Federation of Surinamese Associations sent multiple telegrams to the South African government to demand an immediate cessation of their terror.

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30 De Boer, . 136.

31 Volkskrant, dd 24-03-1960. in; Muskens, 43.

32 Hendricks, 140-141.

33 Trouw, 18 februari 1971. in; Muskens. 43.

34 Hendricks, 223-224.

35 Leeuwarder Courant, 1 april 1960. in; Muskens. 43.

These events following the massacre at Sharpeville led to the previous Dutch position of non-intervention regarding South Africa becoming untenable. The call for a public condemnation of the apartheid regime had now become too strong and was coming from all layers of society. In spite of this however, as the Netherlands was being pushed to maintain their position as primary negotiator based on their *stamverwantschap* with Afrikaners and South Africa's stern refutation of any criticism the conservative centre-right government coalition of the Netherlands would continue engaging in private matters with the government of South Africa and thus the various aspects of the treaty would quietly stay in effect. Immigration to South Africa for instance would see a slight increase between 1950 and 1960 even with Sharpeville in the public's mind.<sup>36</sup> The main driving force behind this was minister Joseph Luns of the KVP (Catholic People's Party), who as a staunch believer in free trade wanted above all that Apartheid did not impede the Netherlands' ability to turn a profit in South Africa. Consequently arms sales and business ventures would go on unhindered until the NATO-led total weapons embargo closed this market entirely.<sup>37</sup>

In the years that followed as other countries began taking their own steps to weaken the South African economy in an effort to pressure them to end Apartheid the Netherlands would slowly give way to the appeals from the left to change their stance. By the end of the 1970's South Africa's international standing would take another blow during the events in "Soweto", when on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1976 hundreds of protesting black Africans were killed in a township near Johannesburg.<sup>38</sup> In August that following year, black African nationalist leader Steve Biko was murdered in his cell after his arrest.<sup>39</sup>

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36 Muskens, 55.

37 *Ibid.* 44.

38 BBC News. "Africa | The Birth and Death of Apartheid" BBC, June 17, 2002.

39 Woods, *Biko: Cry Freedom* (Houten, the Netherlands: Wereldvenster, 1987).



The situation in parliament had meanwhile deteriorated to such an extent that in 1977 the by now outgoing cabinet Den Uyl decided to take steps to terminate ties with South Africa through every means, which included ending the cultural treaty. It would remain suspended until the new cabinet Van Agt I was appointed in 1979.<sup>40</sup> Minister of foreign affairs C.A. van der Klaauw expressed his intention to maintain contacts with the white community in South Africa even after the abolition of the treaty, stating that “for the Netherlands there is the job to support those who wish to put an end to Apartheid.”<sup>41</sup> The Dutch government had laid out its standpoint regarding the treaty as follows. The South African government would not be written off as a diplomatic contact completely. Rather, a so called critical dialogue would have to be facilitated via means other than the treaty. Critical dialogue had so far achieved little because the “correct mindset” of the South African government was lacking.<sup>42</sup> This mindset would from now on have to be sought with individuals whom the Netherlands would personally invite from South Africa rather than through the treaty and as such the thirty year old document disappeared from public record in June of 1981.<sup>43</sup>

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40 Watt, 117-119.

41 Staten-Generaal digitaal. “Zuidelijk Afrika in de Eerste Kamer 1978:19; Einde cultuurverdrag 1978:101; Andere benadering 1978:121; NZAV richt zich tot Kabinet en Parlement 1978” 154.

42 Terblanche, Otto. “Die Nederlandse kulturele boikot teen Suid-Afrika:’n ontleding” *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* Volume 54, Number 1 (2014), 46.

43 Staten-Generaal digitaal. “(1992:520) Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1981:48424845; Handelingen Eerste Kamer 1981:10371054; Einde van het akkoord (1981:65); Einde Cultureel Verdrag (1981); “De opzegging van het Culturele Verdrag 1981:110”, 116.

*1979-1982: The end of the cultural treaty*

In a report issued by the notary of the States-General on January 18<sup>th</sup> 1979 on parliamentary debate in the Netherlands regarding the abolition of the cultural treaty with South Africa each political party issued a declaration of their position.<sup>44</sup> The main parties involved were the social democratic PvdA, the Christian democratic CDA, the liberal VVD, the centrist D'66 and the Orthodox Protestant SGP. In the report there are also statements by smaller political parties such as the Christian radical left-wing party PPR, the reformed Christian GPV and the democratic socialist DS'70. Each party made a statement regarding the treaty itself, which is followed by a number of additional statements regarding the “critical dialogue” the Netherlands wishes to participate in with South Africa and concerns raised about future contacts with the country.<sup>45</sup> As these parties vary greatly in ideology on many different subjects and some are in the governing coalition (Kabinet Van Agt I, VVD-CDA) while the others are in the opposition, each one has a unique approach to the matter of the abolishment of the treaty. Certain parties make statements that are diametrically opposed to what their opponents would claim, such as the Christian parties' approach based on the Bible.

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44 Staten-Generaal digitaal. “Goedkeuring van het voornemen tot opzegging van het op 31 mei 1951 te 's-Gravenhage tot stand gekomen Cultureel Verdrag tussen Nederland en de Unie van Zuid-Afrika (Trb. 1951, 76), Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1980-1981 kamerstuknummer 15084 ondernummer 5” (Den Haag, the Netherlands: Nationaal Archief. June 15th, 1980).

45 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

*The treaty's opponents: PvdA, CDA, D66, PPR, DS'70*

As the first party listed in the minutes to make a statement, the PvdA declares its enthusiastic support for the ending of the treaty. They refer back to their previous attempts to end cultural ties with South Africa when after the Soweto uprising in 1976 the PvdA-aligned minister of foreign affairs Max van der Stoep had written a letter to parliament to request what has now come to fruition. This letter, sent in October of 1974 along with another one by minister of economic affairs Ruud Lubbers urged Dutch companies trading with South Africa to do what they could to end the discriminating social policies of their trading partner in the Apartheid government.<sup>46</sup> They state that since then, the many reasons they had had for denouncing South Africa have only become more numerous now. As an example they name the escalation of conflict between Namibia and Angola (South Africa and her allied factions in Angola had just begun external operations in the former Portuguese colonial regions).<sup>47</sup> The white minority government in South Africa, according to the PvdA, has made no sign of intention to take international opinion into account when conducting their military operations.

With this and the developments surrounding South Africa since November of 1977 in mind the PvdA requests the government to consider taking further steps through the European Economic Community and the United Nations, seeing as South Africa is in violation of the UN charter on human rights and has blocked every attempt at a peaceful resolution to the apartheid question.<sup>48</sup> This statement of the PvdA, however brief, is a radical departure from their original defence of the treaty in 1952.

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46 Boer, 189.

47 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

48 Ibid.

Instead of arguing in favour of slow and steady change through dialogue and *stamverwantschap* the development of a human rights consciousness has changed their discourse entirely. This change can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the cabinet Van Agt I was the first centrist cabinet after a period of unquestionable leftist hegemony in Dutch politics. Political polarisation comparable to that in the United States after 1969 with conservatives and progressives diametrically opposed to one another materialised much later in the Netherlands.<sup>49</sup> The outgoing Den Uyl cabinet that had “frozen” the treaty before the 1977 had no conservatives to speak of. Even the Christian parties in the governing coalition were more likely to cooperate with progressives than to be confined to a conservative position.<sup>50</sup> With South Africa such a hot button issue in Dutch society following Sharpeville, Soweto and the murder of Steve Biko and the development of human rights as a concept within foreign relations the PvdA found that faced with so many socialist and progressive competitors that it could no longer afford to maintain its old viewpoint on critical dialogue with kindred Afrikaners.

The CDA, the party which made up one half of the governing coalition at the time, refers to the events of October 21<sup>st</sup> 1977 (when the South African government banned many Black consciousness organisations, an event that would be known as “Black Wednesday”) and how they submitted ten proposals for sanctions on South Africa as a response. The fraction also declares its support for the ending of the treaty and states that it has become clear to them that the Apartheid government has no intention of coming to a peaceful resolution, one with respect towards the UN charter and the universal declaration of the rights of man.

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49 Kennedy, James, and Kennedy-Doornbos, Simone. *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw - Nederland in de jaren zestig* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2017), 10.

50 Verbij, A. *Tien rode jaren - links radicalisme in Nederland, 1970-1980* (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Ambo, 2010), 18.

They emphasise this point by asking the government to clarify what other measures they wish to take with regards to the 21<sup>st</sup> of October, as they see it as a repressive action.<sup>51</sup> When addressing their own statement on these potential alternate measures, the CDA opens by reminding the government that the United Nations has been actively discussing ending Apartheid since 1952.

Many resolutions have since been issued by the security council following significant events in South Africa, such as the Sharpeville massacre in March of 1960. They state that it must be concluded that world opinion has turned against South Africa and that besides the mandatory arms embargo, a new economic boycott is the final measure left available to attempt to create a peaceful change in the country. The CDA considers the time for harsher measures from the government has long since arrived and that there must be special attention for the systematic violation of human rights which constitutes the Apartheid regime.<sup>52</sup> They do however pay special attention to what they call “cultural-Christian” ties, which the Netherlands and South Africa share. In doing so they appear to be distancing themselves from the harsher rhetoric of the PvdA before them.

A newcomer in Dutch politics, the CDA had been formed out of the old confessional parties ARP (Anti-Revolutionary Party) KVP (Catholic People’s Party) and CHU (Christian-Historic Union) in 1977.<sup>53</sup> This would immediately make them the governing party in a coalition with the VVD, marking a shift rightwards from the aforementioned leftist hegemony of Den Uyl. As the governing party of the cabinet at the time the CDA enjoyed a broad support base with 49 seats in parliament. Being a fusion of many different pre-existing Christian conservative parties and seeing as this was the first cabinet in Dutch history that they managed to secure a governing position in their fraction consisted of perhaps the most diverse voter base at the time. This is illustrated by the fact that a small but vocal minority within the CDA wanted to invite the PvdA and Den Uyl into a coalition.<sup>54</sup>

51 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

52 Ibid.

53 The CDA was officially founded on October 11th 1980 but had existed as a party since cabinet Van Agt I in 1977.

54 Muskens, 195.

When the rightists within the party eventually formed a coalition with the VVD, these ministers, who had all come from the ARP, reluctantly agreed not to protest. Leftists within the CDA would continue to seek other means to bridge the gap between them and the social democrats however, as such the party became a primary vehicle for anti-apartheid activists to influence Dutch politics.<sup>55</sup> In their party program for the 1977 elections the CDA maintains a single point on all of southern Africa which is the rejection of apartheid politics in Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa itself, to contribute to a peaceful solution to the matter.<sup>56</sup> Unlike other Christian parties such as the Protestant SGP and the Reformed GPV the CDA's stance on South Africa and the rhetoric with which they approached the matter of the treaty was less based on ideology as it was on where the most pressure on the party. This made them especially vulnerable to lobbying from interest groups on the political left such as the PvdA and DS'70 and rendered them indecisive on their own.

D'66 also agrees with the government's intention of abolishing the treaty. They state that when the previous cabinet had attempted to alter the treaty in order to make room for critical dialogue on Apartheid, they supported this motion as well.

Recent events in South Africa have however made such dialogue impossible, according to D'66. In fact, the treaty itself is now more a crutch for supporters of Apartheid within the Dutch parliament to keep the debate focused on the long rather than short term. D'66 therefore calls for an immediate rejection of this filibustering and urges the government to consider taking more drastic measures. In a further statement regarding future contacts with South Africa D'66 points out that they have not shied away from sustaining contact with South Africa, including on a cultural front.

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55 Muskens, 195.

56 "Niet Bij Brood Alleen" *Repositories Documentation Centre Dutch Political Parties*, (Groningen, The Netherlands: RUG Uitgeverij, January 1, 1977).

Strikingly they add here that they have particularly sought to contact “individual South Africans” without specifying whether they mean whites (who would be generally favourable towards the Apartheid government) or non-whites (who by and large maintain critical or opposing views).<sup>57</sup> Continuing this partaking in cultural activities would remain every bit as possible without a cultural treaty as it is with the treaty still in place, further suggesting that D’66 is not interested in the preferential benefits Afrikaners were given by the treaty. In fact, the D’66 fraction appears to be offended by the very notion that it had to be clarified with an addendum that cultural exchange could continue without the treaty, as they demonstrate with several questions such as; “must the members of the government really put so many words to something so obvious?”<sup>58</sup>

D’66 furthermore suggests that this notion must stem from the amendment of the Royal Decree from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1959 which stipulated that Dutchmen must attain Royal permission before entering the South Africa civil service if they decide to immigrate.<sup>59</sup> In their view the SGP, who originally requested the aforementioned addendum to be added, must surely be rid of their confusion now. D’66 closes off this statement by warning the SGP that they must realise that any consequences that may come from their approach towards South Africa will not be felt by them personally, and that they thus should consider their words more carefully.

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57 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

The PPR's brief and only comment is that although they support the abolition of the treaty, they are disappointed that their desired total shift in Dutch foreign policy regarding South Africa has not been materialised yet. Later on in the document the PPR briefly comments again, this time addressing the issues raised by minister van der Stoep in his letter in November of 1977. The PPR considers the South African stance on Namibia to be quite implacable, which in their view makes economic sanctions ever more necessary. They even recommend the government to begin a program of strategic withdrawal of investments in the South African economy. Their rhetoric is reflected in their party program for the 1977 election, in which they call for an increase in international pressure on South Africa spearheaded by the Netherlands to bring an end to Apartheid. They want the Dutch government to partake in a total boycott of South Africa, preferably through a decision by the UN security council, to not grant recognition to the "homelands" created for black Africans by the South African government and to give support to organisations within South Africa that advocate for rights for the black African population.<sup>60</sup>

DS'70 begins their statement by declaring that they unequivocally oppose the South African apartheid system, on account of it creating a formalised system of political, economic and racial inequality. Their two questions to the government are if they can clarify what circumstances they refer to when talking about the "second half of 1977" and how the government intends to continue with critical dialogue through unspecified other means when the dialogue provided by the treaty will be unilaterally abolished.

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60 "PPR: Verkiezingsprogramma 1977/1981" *Repositories Documentation Centre Dutch Political Parties*, (Groningen, The Netherlands: RUG Uitgeverij, January 1, 1977).  
The native homelands a.k.a. Bantustans were autonomous regions for black Africans to which they were deported en masse.



Like the other fractions DS'70 asks the question of how the Netherlands intends to continue a dialogue with South Africa now that their main avenue of interaction is about to be terminated. They furthermore ask if the government can clarify what their intention is with engaging in cultural treaties in general. If the government admits there is a political dimension to it then in what sense could it be seen as a distinctly Dutch initiative or as something with a broader platform within the international community. Isolation, whether it be self-imposed like with Albania or from international pressure like with South Africa, could in DS'70's view lead to a stronger conviction of the isolated country in its own beliefs. Their conclusion is thus that open dialogue and cultural relations such as the Netherlands' with China is a preferable alternative to isolation.<sup>61</sup>

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61 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

*The treaty's supporters: SGP, GPV, VVD*

With the SGP's statement there is the first sign of genuine opposition towards ending the treaty. The SGP opens by stating that they are less than enthusiastic about the prospect which the government is now facing. They ask to know what legal ground there is for abolishing the treaty and refer to the PvdA's statement about the letter from foreign minister van der Stoep of the previous cabinet. To the SGP it seems as though the PvdA is intent on pushing an old agenda, one that involves bending to sensationalist outrage in the international press. This international press sees the process of change in South Africa as too slow, but the SGP retorts that if one has a full understanding of the inner workings of the apartheid government that it becomes evident that within South Africa itself there have been tremendous changes.<sup>62</sup> The supposed deplorable actions of the apartheid government on "Black Wednesday" are in fact a response to agitation from the Black Consciousness movement in broader South African society as well as in Soweto, something which the press pays no mind to.

The SGP accuses the ministry of foreign affairs of "hazy and misty" policy towards their South African counterpart.<sup>63</sup> Economic sanctions are, in the government's own words, only meant to be implemented when they "serve their intended purpose". This intended purpose is deliberately obstructed by the foreign affairs ministry in order to reap double the benefits; first the self-serving benefit of obstructing commerce from South Africa and second to maintain an air of so called demonstrable progressiveness. Terminating the treaty would come at no cost to the Dutch government while it would humiliate the South African government, which in the SGP's opinion is going to seriously hamper critical dialogue.

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62 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

63 Ibid.

They back this up by requesting the government admit that if economic sanctions are an ineffective measure to engender a dialogue with South Africa, then surely abolishing a treaty intended for precisely that purpose would be no better.<sup>64</sup> The SGP espouses to be a committed proponent of principled politics, something which they deem the current government sorely lacks. The SGP calls the Black Consciousness movement a “racist” organisation for black supremacists.<sup>65</sup> They ask if the government recognises the so called white dilemma that South Africa is facing and furthermore claims that in order to totally combat income inequality within the country, white wealth should not be able to grow at all until the year 2000.

To support this claim they provide a cited source from the Financial Times of February 1975.<sup>66</sup> They also refer to the point raised by European parliamentarian Alfred Bertrand on the 13<sup>th</sup>- 17<sup>th</sup> November of 1978 that those who wish to guarantee the well-being of the South African population by abolishing apartheid would do well to continue to guarantee it in the event that it is abolished. As a closing statement they ask the government if they are willing to commit to the full responsibility of dealing with the matter of Apartheid with the consequences of an eventual abolition of it in mind, that they no longer use the South African government as a scapegoat to campaign for something they are only half willing to participate in.

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64 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

Their stance in parliament mirrors their party program from 1977 where they state that “under no circumstances may the western system be imposed upon the country [South Africa]”.<sup>67</sup> For them, understanding will achieve more in the Apartheid question than political and economic sanctions. Although they make no mention of *stamverwantschap* in their plea in parliament or in their election programme for 1977 the SGP argues from a position of understanding they wish the government had for South Africa. To call them openly pro-apartheid would be a bridge too far, however. Unlike their fellow confessionals in the CDA the SGP’s position is not influenced by outside factors, being a much smaller party than the monolithic centrist coalition that is the CDA.

They also represent a different group of confessionals. Dutch reformed communities formed the basis of the SGP’s electorate since its inception and around the 1970’s their opinion regarding the situation in South Africa had become rather precarious, with the “terrorist” Nelson Mandela gaining ever more international acclaim at the cost of their *stamverwanten* the Afrikaners.<sup>68</sup> The Dutch Reformed community was keen on promoting immigration to South Africa so long as it benefited the church and considering these people made up the support base their pressure on the SGP was much more homogeneous in nature than that on the CDA with its leftist and rightist wings constantly at odds.<sup>69</sup> As such key events that totally transformed the opinion of other parties such as Sharpeville and Soweto had little to no effect on the SGP, whose primary concern was keeping South Africa pious.

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67 “Signalen Voor Goede Politiek: Verkiezingsprogram Van De Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij Voor 1977 En Volgende Jaren” *Repositories Documentation Centre Dutch Political Parties*, (Groningen, The Netherlands: RUG Uitgeverij, January 1, 1977).

68 Erica Meijers, *Blanke broeders – zwarte vreemden: de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland en de apartheid in Zuid-Afrika 1948-1972* (Hilversum, the Netherlands: Verloren, 2008), 13.

69 Muskens, 27.

The fraction of the GPV states that they agree with the government that the events of the second half of 1977 and the death of Steve Biko are very severe indeed. They then continue with an anecdote about how the censorship of the press and the arrest of certain publishers is in fact of a different calibre than a political assassination like the one on Biko. According to them, the Netherlands did much the same in the East Indies in May of 1940. The press was censored and certain reporters were arrested in the name of national security, on the explicit orders of colonial government Starckenborgh Stachouwer and by decree of the government in exile in London. They state that if an onlooker had accused the Netherlands of infringing upon press freedom then, nobody would argue that they did not act in the best interests of the country. Nevertheless, the GPV does support ending the cultural treaty. When the issue of critical dialogue is brought up the GPV has an extensive statement. They begin by accusing the government, stating they or the previous cabinet should deem themselves responsible for the failure of this policy, on account of an unbalanced posture when engaging in diplomacy with South Africa. This has, according to them, led to a disconnect with the Afrikaner religious community. The apostle Paul and the parable of the Tower of Babel both teach us that every kind of people must live separate from one another so as to best serve God, the GPV states.

They then refer to the 1975 publication by “Credo van ‘n Afrikaner” by Andries Treurnicht, in which Treurnicht writes that neo-Calvinist doctrine in the style of Abraham Kuyper is essentially the basis of the concept of Apartheid.<sup>70</sup> This is a rather striking claim as historical consensus has since then leaned towards Apartheid being an original concept rather than something based on Kuyper’s “sphere sovereignty” principle.<sup>71</sup>

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70 Irving Hexham, “Dutch Calvinism and the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism” *African Affairs* 79, no. 315 (1980), 203.

Andries Petrus Treurnicht, *Credo van 'n Afrikaner* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1975).

71 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

The GPV furthermore predicts that based on these observations and the fact that the Netherlands has been too negative in their approach of understanding Apartheid, the government can expect a similar situation as during the Boer wars: one of *Bittereinders*, an embattled minority in a post-apartheid state. This state would, in fact, not be a unity state at all. The GPV recommends that in a post-apartheid situation South Africa would be better off as a confederation, with different legislation to secure the right to self-determination of all peoples of the country.<sup>72</sup> South Africa is in their opinion not ready yet for such a transformation, so the GPV urges the government to seek another way to continue a constructive dialogue.

The meaning of the cultural treaty between the Netherlands and South Africa does not simply entail engendering critical dialogue according to the GPV, rather it is in service of the state dialogue. It should fit in a framework of the general foreign policy of the nation, which in turn should not completely revolve around constantly attempting to liberalise the Apartheid regime. They refer back to a previous cabinet session in which the government declared its intention to maintain the Dutch language as an official working language in the European Community.<sup>73</sup> The fraction considers this evidence of a policy which, concerning foreign affairs, should translate to the propagation of the Dutch language abroad as well. As an example they mention Belgium, which in the official record of this previous session was denoted as having a special relationship with the Netherlands on account of the large number of Dutch speakers in the country.

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72 Goedkeuring opzegging cultureel verdrag. See also; Verbrugh, *Zuid-Afrika: Volksmacht of deling*. (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: OB 13, 1977) 158.

73 Ibid.

Next they argue that South Africa through Afrikaans (although with the caveat that it is not a pure Dutch language as can be observed through the many words from other languages it contains) should logically fit in this same category. Like the VVD they then mention the new cultural treaty with the Soviet Union, which although it provides a mutual cultural insight to the Russians and the Dutch should pale in comparison to what the Netherlands stands to gain by maintaining a treaty with a people they share unique cultural bonds with and what it means for the position of the Dutch language family as a whole in the world. This boon would in fact not just be extended to the white Afrikaners but also to the 2.5 million mixed race peoples of South Africa, the GPV remarks.<sup>74</sup> They suggest that rather than abolish the treaty entirely it would perhaps be better to amend it, so that Cape Coloureds and other non-white demographics within the country could receive the same benefits.

To the GPV the Netherlands could provide a unique opportunity for these people to experience a life away from Apartheid, one which would bind them to the Dutch international cultural zone and would benefit everyone involved. They even consider the option of adding the possibility of teaching Frisian in South Africa. In their closing statement they implore the government not to abolish the treaty but rather to take their suggestions into consideration and make an amendment. The GPV proves itself to be the most radically in favour of defending South African interests in the Netherlands and in doing so uses a completely different narrative than even the other confessional parties do. Soweto and the murder of Steve Biko had not only failed to influence the GPV's politics but had in fact led to the inverse; their electoral program in 1977 pleads for the recognition of the native homelands.<sup>75</sup> Their official stance regarding apartheid was that the National Party was not being extreme enough.<sup>76</sup>

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74 Goedkeuring opzegging cultureel verdrag.

75 "Toekomst Voor Nederland" *Repositories Documentation Centre Dutch Political Parties*, (Groningen, The Netherlands: RUG Uitgeverij, January 1, 1977).

76 Mulder, P.R. "Wij gaan op dezelfde weg Zuid-Afrika! Het apartheidstandpunt van het Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond (1960-1990)" (MA, Arnhem, the Netherlands, 2009) 56.

This and the general rhetoric by the GPV's leader Bart Verbrugh demonstrate a type of discourse that one would normally expect to be emanating from South Africa itself. There are four motives to explain this; the anti-revolutionary Kuyperist revivalism in the party's ideology, the homogeneity of the Dutch Reformed community (like the SGP), its close ties with Afrikaners and its vision of the National Party as a Christian brother party.<sup>77</sup> In this sense the party was an extension, or at least an emulation of, South Africa's apartheid politicians within the Netherlands.

The VVD, who secured 28 seats in parliament under the van Agt cabinet and was in the governing coalition with the CDA, begins its statement by asking the government a rhetorical question; according to the official declaration, the Netherlands is of the opinion that their policy towards South Africa is intended to have a moderating effect on apartheid. Their question is therefore "how?", as according to them no such moderation has materialised since the signing of the treaty on May 31<sup>st</sup> 1951.<sup>78</sup> They raise this issue again when the subject of critical dialogue with South Africa is addressed. Regarding future contacts with South Africa the VVD requests the government to consider measures such as requesting individuals who are critical of Apartheid to come to the Netherlands for a joint critical dialogue (interestingly enough an almost complete reversal of the original treaty) or to resort to other yet unspecified means.<sup>79</sup> Maintaining contacts with individual South Africans remains a possibility according to the government, however the VVD points out that it is currently not clear which individuals in particular are to be approached.

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77 Mulder, 67.

78 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

79 Ibid.



The fraction's main aim is to seek new contacts within the anti-apartheid camp and discuss creating opportunities to bring them to the table. To that end the VVD poses the question whether or not the abolishment of the treaty would affect the Netherlands' capabilities to approach the opponents of the current regime.

In their statement regarding the meaning of cultural treaties the VVD poses the question if the government is aware that it has ongoing treaties with other countries they would deem as "undemocratic", namely the Soviet Union.<sup>80</sup> They ask the government if these undemocratic nations receive the same kind of treatment and critical dialogue as they would now expect from South Africa. If they would consider their treaties with the USSR to be in the same vein as the one with South Africa how then has the dialogue led to liberalisation in communist doctrine, the VVD asks.

This anecdote leads the VVD to conclude that the government is maintaining two types of measures for dealing with undemocratic countries, which is unacceptable if a single principle is to be kept at all times. To illustrate their point the VVD mentions another treaty; one which was signed by the Dutch government to promote cultural exchange with the USSR. The same kind of cultural exchange that the government is now moving away from with South Africa. According to this treaty the Soviets are to be invited to the Netherlands to learn Dutch and Frisian.<sup>81</sup> This is, through the measure of comparison with Cape Coloureds in South Africa who all speak Afrikaans, quite a strange decision according to the VVD. They propose that these resources would be better spent on fellow Dutch sister language speakers rather than teaching Soviet communists Frisian.

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80 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

81 Ibid.

Their rhetoric, like the CDA before them, seems to be mostly focused on presenting South Africa as an undemocratic regime like the Soviet Union. This is a rather curious observation considering both the Soviet Union and South Africa had elections and democracy (albeit a democracy based on worker's councils rather than a parliament in the former's case), so it must be concluded that the VVD is pushing a narrative in their plea. As a liberal and business-minded party the VVD has no religious support base like the confessional parties do. What they did have however was the support of anti-communist and anti-socialist middle class voters who elected them to clean up the "messes" of the Den Uyl government that came before them.<sup>82</sup> Riding on the coat-tails of the most leftist cabinet in Dutch history and the PvdA in the opposition despite still having 53 seats in parliament the Van Agt cabinet had to hinge on a conservative-liberal reaction against it.<sup>83</sup> This helps to explain the ambivalence in the VVD's standpoint regarding South Africa and their link to the cultural treaty with the Soviet Union; their primary concern was countering the legacy of the Den Uyl cabinet which meant siding with conservatives and liberals on current issues, thus leaning heavily on their ulterior motives.

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82 Herman de Liagre Böhl, "Consensus en polarisatie; spanningen in de verzorgingsstaat, 1950-1990" in; R.A.M. Aerts, and Bas Broekhuizen. *Land Van Kleine Gebaren: Een Politieke Geschiedenis Van Nederland 1780-1990* (Nijmegen: SUN, 2001), 318.

83 Duco Hellema, *Nederland en de jaren zeventig* (The Netherlands: Boom Uitgevers, 2012) 230.

## *Conclusion*

The changing political landscape in the Netherlands affected their stance on the cultural treaty with South Africa, as in the years since its bilateral signing in 1951 and the treaty's ratification in 1952 the cultural treaty functioned as an important cornerstone for positive Dutch-South African relations. By then the notion of kinship with the Afrikaner community permeated in all layers of Dutch politics so profoundly that only the communist CPN was vocally against it.<sup>84</sup> When significant events that soured the international community's opinion of Apartheid such as the Sharpeville massacre and the murder of Steve Biko occurred, the global awakening to the matter of human rights created an international anti-apartheid movement and yet the treaty remained an important vehicle for engaging in critical dialogue with South Africa.<sup>85</sup> These events, combined with pressure from socialist parties within parliament and throughout Dutch society shifted public opinion against South Africa. In the thirty years that the treaty was in effect the need for this critical dialogue was increasingly fulfilled via other means, up until the point where maintaining the treaty was no longer needed in the eyes of both its critics and its reluctant supporters, placing pro-apartheid discourse on the political fringe. The cabinet Van Agt I dealt a final blow to the continuing deterioration of Dutch relations with the Apartheid government but did so much more reluctantly than its progressive predecessors. The formation of the CDA and their coalition with the VVD created an atmosphere in parliament where only the opposition was fervently in favour of, or sometimes against, action towards South Africa.<sup>86</sup>

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84 Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2.02.28) 1945-1989.(Den Haag:. Nationaal Archief, May 31st 1953), 460-462.

85 Stultz, 8.

86 Muskens, 195.

Within the minutes of January 18<sup>th</sup> certain ambivalences can be discovered in the parliamentary discourse surrounding the treaty's abolition in 1982. The tone of years past when the treaty was signed has gradually shifted away from the points of view of the conservative Christian parties to an inevitability of confrontation with a "regime" through an economic boycott.<sup>87</sup> Both the fringe and broad socialist parties as well as progressive dissidents within the CDA pushed for the termination of the cultural treaty because in their rhetoric it is a necessary step to combat evil, personified in actions taken by the South African government such as the murder of Steve Biko and the banning of the Black Consciousness Movement.<sup>88</sup>

Many of these parties were clamouring for something to definitively shut down all positive contact with South Africa for years, however they do offer an alternative strategy in the form of finding new individuals to approach within the country. Conversely, the Christian parties SGP and GPV provide the most extensive pleas for continuing relations with South Africa. Whereas some were an outright extension of the *stamverwantschap* principle that had originally inspired the creation of the treaty, others simply had support bases to please.<sup>89</sup>

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87 Goedkeuring opzegging Cultureel Verdrag.

88 "Niet Bij Brood Alleen"  
"PPR: Verkiezingsprogramma 1977/1981"  
Verbij, 18.

89 Verbrugh, 158.  
Meijers, 13.  
Mulder, 56.

As such the debate between them becomes dissonant. Centrist parties that intend to come to an agreement with either side are quicker to open up to a narrative that is not based on a partisanship they are not familiar with, so the mounting pressure from decades of filibustering by socialists combined with a number of incidents on both the South African side and on the Dutch side, namely Sharpeville and New Guinea, finally push them to take the last step.<sup>90</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the cooperation between the monolithic centrist confessional party CDA and the conservative-liberal party VVD.

The VVD's mission to undo the longest period of progressivism in the Netherlands and the CDA's make-up as a party made them both vulnerable to a changing society despite not being as against South Africa as their preceding cabinet was. This is where the ambivalence in the different political stances of the parties comes from; the rightward shift of the governing coalition in the years 1977-1981 had created a situation where parliamentary discourse surrounding the abolition of the cultural treaty with South Africa had become full of ambivalences and ulterior motives. Political mobilisation against apartheid the centre-right Van Agt I cabinet was a much more favourable option than ever before, and the government itself was looking to get rid of vestigial elements of its predecessor's policies.<sup>91</sup> While Dutch politics had certainly changed since 1951, it had more-so been changed.

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90 Böhl, Aerts and Broekhuizen, 318.

91 Muskens, 87.

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