

Introduction

On the morning of Sunday, 16 August 1964, Martin Luther King delivered a sermon in front of a large audience in a packed RAI conference centre in Amsterdam. This event was the pinnacle of his 24-hour visit to the Netherlands. King preached in front of an audience of mostly Dutch Baptists - an audience that, as later interviews make clear, was generally unconcerned with the situation of black people in the United States.¹ What made King decide to make room in his busy schedule for such a short stay? The Civil Rights struggle was taking place in the United States and it seemed that King would need all his energy to coordinate the struggle there.

The answer can be found in the nature of the tactics of King and his fellow activists. King had decided that he, in imitation of Mahatma Ghandi, would solely rely on non-violent tactics. King did not choose this tactic simply because he detested violence. There was a very thought-out strategy behind it, designed to create as much support for the Movement as possible. Professor Harvey Seifert has written a theory on non-violence in protest movements. This theory has been used in David J. Garrow's work on the Civil Rights Campaign in Selma.² According to Seifert there are always three groups involved: the protesters themselves, their opponents and the spectators (or third party). The latter is not directly engaged in the dispute, but they are sufficiently involved to be aware of the events. This third party may come to give their support to one side or the other.³ The best of all possible situations for a protest group comes when the protesters' opponents employ violence against them and the audience find this officially sponsored violence to be unjustifiable.⁴

For King and the Movement to receive support it was thus of utmost importance for them to create as much media attention as possible. The tactics and choices that were made by the leadership were made with the media in mind. It's safe to say that media attention was the lifeline of the Movement. A telling example is the Birmingham campaign of 1963. King and the SCLC decided to use the city as their next target because one of King's most important aides, Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth, had seen how easy it was to get segregationist forces in Birmingham to respond violently to peaceful but provocative demonstrations.⁵

It is clear that the Movement wanted media attention so that it could muster much needed support. But whose support did it specifically need? Who could pressure the local

¹<http://anderetijden.nl/aflivering/358/Martin-Luther-King>, July 2, 2017.

²David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*. (Yale, 1978).

³Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 215.

⁴*Ibidem*, 216.

⁵Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat. The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation*. (New York, 2006) 304.

Southern government and the federal government to do something about the plight of black southerners? Garrow states in his book that the protestor target will move towards meeting the protestors' demands only when the protestors succeed in activating support for themselves among the reference public of the targeted officials.⁶

Who was the reference public of the officials concerned? On a local level the reference public were mostly the potential voters of the specific official. For a local sheriff the emotions and reactions of the people in his local town or county were of utmost importance to him. If they lost their support they would lose their position. Local newspapers were therefore an excellent tool for activists to manipulate the sentiments of the community. For officials on a higher level, such as senators or even the President, the reference public was much broader than solely the electorate. National officials had to concern themselves in their policies with their international standing as well. Especially during the Cold War, when the United States and the USSR fought for international support and recognition, matters such as the poor treatment of African Americans could quickly turn into a point of political contention. International support was thus the main reason for King to visit the Netherlands. If he was able to get the international public and media behind his cause, he could use their influence to pressure the American government into acting on his behalf.

But how did the Dutch public actually think about the Civil Rights Movement? Did the tactics of King and his fellow leaders actually work? An effective way to gauge what Dutch society thought of the Civil Rights Movement at the time is to look at the Dutch press, especially Dutch newspapers. During the fifties and sixties the television was yet to be introduced in most Dutch living rooms. Besides radio, newspapers were people's primary news source. Dutch newspapers can give us insight into how the ideas of the public were shaped by the Dutch press. What did they write about the Civil Rights Movement, and how did they inform the public of their events? What facts did they leave out? Another argument for looking at newspapers is the interactive element of the medium. Readers were able to comment on the news by writing letters to the newspapers. These letters give further insight into how people were thinking about the news. The main question that will be answered in this research is therefore: How, and why in this particular way, did the Dutch press report on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States?

I will argue in this research that Martin Luther King and his colleagues, by using clever tactics, managed to attract not only a large amount of national, but also international

⁶Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 221.

media attention. This international coverage helped the Civil Rights leadership to force the Federal Government to introduce the much needed legislation.

Methodology

It is impossible to look at all Dutch newspapers from the fifties and sixties due to lack of availability and due to the scope of this research. This research will therefore focus on four daily national Dutch newspapers: *De Telegraaf*, *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, *De Waarheid* and *Het Vrije Volk*. All four newspapers have been accessed on the Internet through the website www.delpher.nl. This website, which is a project of the Dutch National Archives, consists of around 1200 (partially) digitised newspapers from the Netherlands, United States, Surinam, The Dutch Antilles and Dutch Indonesia.⁷

All four newspapers have been searched in two ways. They have been searched manually page by page and they have been searched using the Delpher search engine. In this second method, regular search terms such as ‘Martin Luther King’ and event-specific terms such as ‘Little Rock’ were searched., so as to make sure that no relevant articles were missed. A total of approximately 550 articles have been read and approximately 200 have been incorporated into this paper.⁸

The newspapers have very different backgrounds and are selected because they are a good representation of the various political sentiments in the Netherlands at the time of the Civil Rights Movement. *Het Vrije Volk* was a social democratic daily newspaper aimed at the middle and lower classes in the Netherlands’ major cities. The newspaper was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century and enjoyed a large readership. During the fifties, the newspaper had for a short time the highest number of subscribers of all Dutch newspapers. The popularity of *Het Vrije Volk* did not last. Other leftist newspapers such as *De Volkskrant* managed to attract more and more of its readers. The newspaper was turned into a local paper in 1971 and finally shut down in 1991.

De Telegraaf is known for its conservative, right-wing style of reporting. The newspaper was established in March 1892 by Henry Tindal and the founder of the Heineken brewery, Gerard Adriaan Heineken. The aim of the two was to make as much profit as possible by publicising news in a popular and visual way. They did so very successfully.. During the Interbellum the company behind *De Telegraaf* managed to buy and incorporate a

⁷https://www.kb.nl/sites/default/files/docs/Beschikbare_kranten_alfabetisch.pdf, October 25, 2016.

⁸It is hard to give an exact number. Delpher.nl records some sub heads as whole articles while the names of some actual headers are left out.

large number of other Dutch newspapers. The Second World War was a dark period for *De Telegraaf*. The newspaper was Nazified and published pro-German propaganda. Due to its past, the newspaper was banned between 1945 and 1949. After the ban had been lifted, *De Telegraaf* became very popular again. At the moment, *De Telegraaf* is the most popular Dutch daily newspaper, with a little under half a million subscribers.

Another newspaper that has been used in this research is *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*. This newspaper, currently called *Het Nederlands Dagblad*, was founded as a semi-illegal newspaper in the summer of 1944. Just as the name implies, the newspaper was aimed at a primarily Orthodox Protestant public. The message of the newspaper is conservative Christian, pro-government and sometimes even racist. Nowadays *Het Nederlands Dagblad* is a small newspaper with around twenty two thousand subscribers.

De Waarheid was the most politicized newspaper of the four. This daily newspaper was the official bulletin of the Dutch Communist Party. The aim of the Dutch Communist Party was to spread communism across the world. Their way of reporting was therefore quite leftist, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialistic. The number of subscribers fluctuated with the popularity of communism. Just after the end of the Second World War and during the Vietnam War, for example, the number of subscribers was higher than it was during less turbulent times. *De Waarheid* nevertheless did not survive the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today the newspaper continues its activities online.

The Civil Rights Movement is a much too complex and extended period in history to research in total. The reports on four particular key events will therefore be looked at in this research. The first event that will be investigated is the Little Rock Crisis of 1957. This event is chosen because it was the first event of the Civil Rights Movement that generated a substantial amount of coverage in the Dutch press. The second event that will be investigated are the Birmingham riots of May 1963. These actions created a lot of international media attention. The picture of an activist being attacked by dogs during a protest have become some of the most memorable photographs of the sixties. The reaction of the Dutch press to the Selma Voting Campaign will be the third subject of this investigation. The final event that will be analysed is the assassination of King and its aftermath. King's death marks the end of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement and its large demonstrations. Important events that took place at the same time as these four events, such as the assassination of Malcolm X or the March on Washington, are also incorporated in this research.

Historiography

Scholars who began writing about the movement in the late 1960s and 1970s focused on leaders and events of national significance. (...) The techniques of social history, which were beginning to reconstruct the fields of women's, labour, and African American history by illuminating the everyday lives of ordinary people, at first left the study of civil rights virtually untouched.⁹ This trend is reflected in the reports of the Dutch press on the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement was to the Dutch press a narrative of big men. The stories of ordinary activists were left out of the reports. Another important similarity between the reports of the Dutch press and the contemporary historiography is the way both depicted the idealistic foundations of the Movement. The ideas of King and his colleagues were not static. As the Civil Rights Movement progressed their ideas of how the struggle could be won changed. Martin Luther King's ideas were regarded as unchanging and linear in both scholarly works and the articles on the Civil Rights Movement.

Comparative research on Dutch newspapers has been done numerous times. The coverage of a variety of mostly national topics has been investigated. Comparative newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Movement in the Dutch press has, however, never been done before. American newspapers have been mostly used by historians who investigated the depiction of the struggle. The two foremost works that have been published on the treatment of the Civil Rights Movement in American newspapers are the thesis of Ruben Burney in 1983 and the dissertation of Yolanda Denise Campbell in 2011.¹⁰

Burney has looked at how the black newspaper *The Chicago Defender*, the white mainstream newspaper *The New York Times* and the white southern newspaper *The Atlanta Constitution* reported on the Civil Rights Movement. Ruben has taken a theoretical approach. He analysed these three newspapers by using various theoretical frameworks, such as the Neo-Gandhian worldview that regards the Civil Rights Movement as naturally non-violent. Ruben made some unexpected findings. It is especially notable that *The Chicago Defender* was not nearly as positive in its opinion of the Civil Rights Movement as expected.

Campbell's approach is less theoretical. Campbell researched eight American newspapers from the period 1954 - 1964. These newspapers, such as *The Birmingham News*, *The Clarion Ledger* and *The Jackson Advocate*, were selected because of their specific black

⁹Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now, The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," in: *The American Historical Review* (April, 1991, No.2) 456-471.

¹⁰Ruben Burney, *Newspaper Coverage Of The Early 1960s Civil Rights Movement: A Content Analysis of World Views* (1983).

Yolanda Denise Campbell, *Outsiders Within: A Framing Analysis of Eight Black and White U.S. Newspapers' Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1964* (2011).

or white background and readership. Campbell compared these eight newspapers on various elements, such as the content and length of articles and editorials. Campbell's findings were in line with those of Burney. She found out that the newspapers, despite their black or white background, did not report on the Civil Rights Movement, as was expected of them in general. Most newspapers tried to be neutral instead of reporting a stereotyped version of certain events.

It will be interesting to see how the Dutch press will report on the Civil Rights Movement. What will be their angle? On what will they put their focus? What information will they leave out? Will their way of reporting, just like the American newspapers in similar research, be surprising? Or will the newspapers just stay close to their political background?

The answers to these questions will, above all, give a better understanding of how the Dutch press handled the Civil Rights Movement and how this relates to the American reports. The reports also present us with a better understanding of how Dutch society looked at civil disobedience in general and the Civil Rights Movement in particular. In the period after the Second World War the Dutch people still had much reverence for authority. The United States, as the liberators of Western Europe, enjoyed much respect. How did the press deal with these sentiments? And how did the public react to these reports? In this sense the Civil Rights Movement was for Dutch society much more than just a struggle for human rights. It was the beginning of an era that was defined by a generation of politically active youngsters that demanded an end to the status quo. The press coverage in this research will show how Dutch society reacted to the changing tide.

The Little Rock Crisis 1957

On the 28th of August 1955, the fourteen-year-old black boy Emmett Till was brutally lynched by Roy Bryant and his half-brother J.W. Milam. The murder and the subsequent trial are identified as one of the catalysts for the modern Civil Rights Movement. The importance of the event was reflected in the amount of media coverage it generated. The case filled the front pages of American newspapers for weeks on end. The Dutch press followed the trend by publishing a total of 55 articles on the murder.¹¹ Although this does not seem very many, very few other race-related incidents received a similar amount of attention.¹²

In contrast to the murder of Emmett Till, another important event in the early Civil Rights Movement, the *Brown versus Board of Education* case, received almost no coverage. The trial, which provided school integration with a legal foundation, just did not seem that relevant to most Dutch newspapers. The lack of pictures probably further contributed to the lack of reports on the subject. What about the Little Rock crisis of 1957? Most readers, considering how very little was published on the Brown case, must have been astonished to see how much attention was given to the Little Rock Nine in the following months. Between the beginning of September 1957 and the end of the year, over 200 articles were published in the four Dutch national newspapers. A harbinger of this media storm were the articles that were published in the first two days of the crisis.

On 5 and 6 September, a total of nine articles were published on the subject. *De Telegraaf* and *Het Vrije Volk* published front-page stories on the Little Rock situation.¹³ The reports focused on the Little Rock Nine being prevented from entering the school by a superior number of armed, mean-looking troops. The reports left no doubt as to which group the Dutch press sympathised with. Both articles emphasised how much the innocent and powerless black children were harassed by a white mob. This angle was further enforced by the two photographs that accompanied these first nine articles. *Het Vrije Volk* published a front-page picture of two soldiers guarding the front entrance of the Little Rock Central High

¹¹Examples of reports on the murder:

“Blanke negerlynchers vrijgesproken,” *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, October 11, 1955.

“Emmetts moeder opgenomen,” *De Telegraaf*, October 4, 1955.

¹²Black individuals such as Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey received a fair amount of attention in the Dutch press, specific events such as the Harlem riots of 1935 or the 1943. Detroit riots however received only very little coverage.

¹³“Hard tegen hard in Little Rock,” *Het Vrije Volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, September 5, 1957.

“Tweehonderd man tegen 9 kinderen,” *De Telegraaf*, September 5, 1957.

“Eisenhower grijpt in: Soldaten houden deur nog dicht,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 6, 1957.

School.¹⁴ The next day, the same paper published a photo of black students in Greensboro being harassed by a large group of whites on their front page.¹⁵

In the first days of the crisis, the situation in Little Rock was portrayed by the Dutch press as the fight of a few innocent black children versus a hostile white power bloc. No mention was made of the (black) organisations and initiatives that were behind the integrationist efforts in Little Rock. It must have seemed to most readers that these nine black students had decided to enrol at the Little Rock Central High School on their own initiative. This image was featured in short articles on the newspapers' front pages, but also in the more extensive background articles. In an article of *Het Vrije Volk* of September 6th, the writer wrote about the situation of African Americans in the United States. According to him the emancipation of African Americans in the South was promoted because of the efforts of the Congress, Supreme Courts, local politicians and the rise of a black proletariat.¹⁶

The emphasis on the role of the national government is reflected in other articles that were published in the first week of the crisis. Headlines with titles like *Eisenhower reacts* and *Eisenhower warns governor*, made it clear that the newspapers expected the solution to come from the central government.¹⁷ This is understandable when we consider that most of the civil rights organisations with a more bottom-up approach, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), were not yet active. The articles represent a phase of the civil rights movement when the NAACP was at the forefront of the struggle.

A second theme that echoed throughout these first news reports was the Cold War. The communist newspaper *De Waarheid* opened its reports on Little Rock with a front-page story about a journalist from the *New York Times* who was prevented from talking with a black student by a colonel. The story of the journalist from the *New York Times* was copied by *De Telegraaf*.¹⁸ The newspaper mentioned the issue in a neutral way. This was different from the reports from *De Waarheid*. This paper, with its strong, anti-America, anti-capitalistic approach, used the incident to attack the United States, stating that this was a typical case of *America's freedom of press*.¹⁹

Little Rock remained on the front pages of the newspapers in the coming days of the crisis. *De Telegraaf*, *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Waarheid* all added photos to their reports. The

¹⁴“Hard tegen hard in Little Rock,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 5, 1957.

¹⁵“Eisenhower grijpt in: Soldaten houden deur nog dicht,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 6, 1957.

¹⁶“Septemberstorm in VS,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 6, 1957.

¹⁷“Eisenhower grijpt in: Soldaten houden deur nog dicht,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 6, 1957.

¹⁸“Eisenhower grijpt in,” *De Telegraaf*, September 6, 1957.

¹⁹“Journalist mocht niet bij „blanke” school,” *De Waarheid*, September 6, 1957.

photos, in line with the text, all emphasised the position of the oppressed black students.²⁰ The pictures of the black students, harassed by a white mob, were especially popular. They were printed three times in one week.²¹ The situation, in which black students were harassed and blocked by a white mob, was dramatised in the press. *De Telegraaf* and *Het Vrije Volk* in particular used the pictures in combination with screaming titles like *Dragged off high schools' staircases, witch hunters and negroes walking the gauntlet*.²² Especially in *De Telegraaf*, very little background information was provided on the case.

An exception to this sensational manner of reporting were that week's articles in *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*. This Protestant paper, which appeared three times a week, had a fixed group of readers. This was probably the reason for the reserved manner of reporting, using very few photographs or sensational titles. This resulted in *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* publishing an extensive background story on the crisis, linking the events to America's history of slavery.

The lack of photographs and the scope of the reports were not the only thing that differed from the reports in the other papers. All newspapers had strongly condemned the treatment of the black students at the high school and the position of African Americans in general. It seemed that *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* shared these views, given the substantiated historical background story that explained the plight of black people in the United States. However, the newspaper unveiled its racist sentiments when it touched upon the current situation in South Africa:

In South Africa lives a white minority that, because of her diligence and intelligence, has created modern South Africa. These whites live among a big majority of blacks. These blacks, that in general arrived much later than the whites, are at a level of development, civilization and morals that is a thousand years behind that of the white Afrikaners. We must clearly confess that in a case of total integration and amalgamation, the Afrikaner culture would be totally destroyed in less than a quarter of a century.²³

²⁰“Ku Klux Klan in actie in Little Rock,” *De Telegraaf*, September 7, 1957.

“Gouverneur wordt vervolgd School opgeblazen in Nashville,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 10, 1957.

“Nu in North Little Rock: Geweld tegen leergierigen,” *De Telegraaf*, September 10, 1957.

“Met Dulles „voor de vrijheid” Eisenhower doet niets,” *De Waarheid*, September 11, 1957.

²¹“Verdediging,” *De Telegraaf*, September 10, 1957.

“Arrestatie,” *De Telegraaf*, September 7, 1957.

“Gouverneur wordt vervolgd. School opgeblazen in Nashville,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 10, 1957.

²²Idem.

“Ku Klux Klan in actie in Little Rock,” *De Telegraaf*, September 7, 1957.

“Met Dulles „voor de vrijheid” Eisenhower doet niets,” *De Waarheid*, September 11, 1957.

²³“Buitenlands overzicht de Amerikaanse negers,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 11, 1957.

Although the writer does not explicitly say that he wants to bring apartheid to the United States,²⁴ he clearly supports the idea of segregating black and white people. The newspaper does not dissociate itself in any way from the statements of the reporter. We can therefore conclude that the *Het Gereformeerde Gezinsblad* was the only newspaper that openly sided with governor Faubus and his anti-integrationist policies.

Why does the position of *Het Gereformeerde Gezinsblad* differ so much from the other newspapers? Siding with Faubus was, according to the condemnations in the other newspapers, clearly not an option. The answer can be found in the conservative nature of the paper. *Het Gereformeerde Gezinsblad* feels outmoded, it has very few to no photographs and the layout probably has not been changed for years. Old-fashioned themes, not least the social-Darwinist ideas of the writer, perfectly match the image of the paper. A liberal, integration-minded stance would probably have offended its readership.

The reports of *De Waarheid* were mixed. On the one hand, they provided well-researched background articles on the Little Rock situation, while on the other hand they published articles and editorials that simply blamed America's imperialism for all of its problems. A good example of the more extensive reports on the Little Rock situation were the reports of *De Waarheid* of September 10th 1957.²⁵ The readers were updated on the current situation and the background story. For the first time, pastor and activist Fred Shuttlesworth was mentioned. This shows that *De Waarheid*, even without its own reporter on the scene, was capable of providing its readership with impartial reports.

Not all reports, however, were as unbiased as the September 10th report. *De Waarheid* did not hesitate to use the Little Rock situation as a propaganda tool. Articles with titles like *Washington wants to impose its will on the whole world* and *Lever for upcoming U.S. imperialism* left very little to the imagination of the reader.²⁶ The most outstanding example of this anti-America stance was a cartoon that was published on the front page of *De Waarheid* on September 10.²⁷ The cartoon shows a four-legged monster with an evil looking face that wears a capitalist top hat adorned with the American flag. He strangles a black man with one of his hands while holding the American flag in the other. This scene takes place with the skyline of New York in the background, including a prominent Statue of Liberty, and an enormous mushroom cloud following the detonation of an atomic bomb.

²⁴ The writer remarks later on that for certain reasons, like the ratio blacks to whites, he does not regard total apartheid in the United States as necessary.

²⁵ "Little Rock ('n Roll...) Negerscholieren weggejaagd," *De Waarheid*, September 10, 1957.

²⁶ "Washington wants to impose its will on the whole world," *De Waarheid*, September 11, 1957.

"Lever for upcoming U.S. imperialism," *De Waarheid*, September 11, 1957.

²⁷ "Nikkers zijn beesten," *De Waarheid*, September 10, 1957.

The artist touches upon several fears and images of the United States that were quite common in most anti-America circles during the Cold War. The top hat represents ruthless capitalism and the atomic bomb represents the fear of a nuclear war. The trampled black man, who strongly contrasts with the enormous Statue of Liberty, symbolises the black minority in the United States. Although no direct reference to Little Rock is made, the cartoon is clearly criticising the treatment of black people in the United States.

The Little Rock situation remained in the newspapers during the next week of the crisis. However, most articles were shorter and were not always published on the front page. During the third week of the crisis no newspapers, except *De Telegraaf*, published a photo of the Little Rock crisis.²⁸ It seemed that after the initial weeks of the crisis, with the appearance of strong images of the Little Rock Nine and state troopers around the high school, most media kept to publishing Reuters or AFP news on the current situation.²⁹

A lot of Southerners felt that this was a struggle of the South versus the rest of the United States. They felt that their policy of segregation worked well/smoothly and that Northerners were creating a problem by trying to force racial integration upon the South. This viewpoint, of the officious Yankee government versus the independent Southerners, seems to be reflected in various reports on the crisis. Almost all of them portrayed the conflict as a fight between the interfering Northerners and the stubborn South.³⁰

No newspaper believed that Faubus would win in the long run. The reports depicted Faubus as a stubborn man who could only delay the inevitable. Not everyone, however, regarded Governor Faubus as the only person stalling racial integration. *Het Vrije Volk* published a poem that criticised President Eisenhower for preferring to protect his friendship with the South over stopping the mistreatment of black people.³¹ It is notable that no such criticism was voiced by *De Waarheid*.

Like *Het Vrije Volk*, *De Telegraaf* published an article that focussed on the sentiments of the local Southerners. Writer Don Iddon wrote a report on his visit to Little Rock for the newspaper.³² Iddon painted a gloomy picture of the city, stating that the peaceful town had changed into a small police state filled with scared black people and racist, violent white people. Just as in the piece of *Het Vrije Volk*, this article strong North versus South

²⁸“Little Rock: fase in zorgvuldig opgezette actie,” *De Telegraaf*, September 12, 1957.

²⁹ Examples: “Garde te Little Rock blijft op post,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 12, 1957.

³⁰ Some examples of articles painting the Little Rock crisis as a struggle of Faubus versus the government: “Faubus vraagt Ike geduld,” *De Telegraaf*, September 13, 1957.

“Faubus doet Eisenhower vage beloften,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 16, 1957.

³¹“Schone zaak,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 14, 1957.

³²“Faubus niet tot overgave bereid. Door Don Iddon,” *De Telegraaf*, September 13, 1957.

sentiments. In contrast to the first days of the crisis the newspapers managed to incorporate more local voices into their reports. The opinions of black people and moderate white people were, however, still missing in the coverage. Iddon stated that he did not speak with any black people because of them 'being too afraid to talk to a damned Yankee.' This statement partly gives an explanation for this phenomenon. Iddon, and other reporters writing for the Dutch papers, did not seem to have the right contacts in the black community. Their reports were a result of their failure to get in touch with local black community leaders such as the NAACP leader Daisy Bates.

Just as it seemed that the reports on the Crisis would lack a black protagonist, the famous musician Louis Armstrong decided to get involved. Armstrong, who was asked by the American government to give some 'goodwill' concerts in Moscow, had decided not to perform because of the handling of the Little Rock crisis. Armstrong's political struggle with the American government was reported on to a greater extent by the Dutch press.³³ Armstrong's bold statement received so much attention because he was one of very few African Americans famous enough to influence the ongoing debate around the crisis. His speaking out against the American government, and against Governor Faubus in particular, was a huge boost for the integrationists.

The Armstrong reports in the Dutch newspapers were special, and not solely for their content. For the first time since the beginning of the crisis, the Dutch press managed to portray the African-American as more than just a willing victim of racial segregation. The earlier reports on Little Rock almost all failed to present the reasons behind the Little Rock situation. Instead of an organised action by the NAACP and locals like Fred Shuttlesworth, the situation was portrayed as a spontaneous action by some black students. Black people seemed to lack any agency, needing soldiers to protect them from the white mob and needing President Eisenhower to control Faubus. When Armstrong told the American government to 'go to hell', the Dutch readership got a taste of black sentiments surrounding the situation for the first time.

In the middle of September it seemed that, with Faubus and Eisenhower working on the problem behind the scenes, and Armstrong still travelling abroad to Russia, the situation in Little Rock had come to a standstill. This development was reflected by the amount of coverage Little Rock received. Without striking photos or interesting stories to tell, reports on

³³"Armstrong weigert goodwill-reis naar Rusland te maken," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 19, 1957.

"Armstrong tot Washington: „Loop naar de hel," *De Waarheid*, September 20, 1957.

"Goede beurt' van Eisenhower Armstrong toch naar Rusland?," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 25, 1957.

the Crisis moved to the back pages of the papers. Most newspapers solely published news-agency stories or no articles at all.³⁴ Just as the crisis seemed to be over and some newspapers already reported on Faubus taking his troops away from the school,³⁵ unrest broke out again. The Dutch press was quick to increase its reports on the Little Rock situation. A new wave of front-page articles appeared. Most papers ran relatively short stories on the situation that were supplemented with photographs of black people being intimidated or even beat up by a white mob.³⁶ The front photograph by *Het Vrije Volk* of a beaten-down black man is quite shocking, even by modern standards.³⁷

Het Vrije Volk and *De Waarheid* sided with the integrationists, openly expressing their disbelief and discontent.³⁸ *Het Vrije Volk* printed a cartoon on its front page of a fragile and unhappy looking female student facing a row of soldiers' backs.³⁹ The readership of *De Waarheid* stood out by openly expressing their disbelief and discontent concerning the Little Rock situation by sending the newspaper letters. One of the four letters the newspaper received even wanted the working class of Amsterdam to strike in protest against the (foreign) policies of the United States.⁴⁰

De Telegraaf was more neutral in its reports. Both newspapers published reports on the Little Rock Crisis on their front pages but without the shocking photographs or screaming headlines. The reports of *De Telegraaf* especially were much less sensational than those of a few weeks prior. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* published four articles on the renewed unrest in Little Rock. The content of these articles was ambivalent. On the one hand the newspapers published a graphic report of a white mob that attacked the black students that were trying to enter the school. Even the most radical segregationist must have felt sympathy for the plight of the black students.⁴¹ On the other hand the newspaper still seemed to agree with Faubus' way of handling the situation. The newspapers titled a front-page article on the Crisis: "Eisenhower threatens to use violence."⁴² The writer made it look like Eisenhower sent his troops to Little Rock with the intent of using violence instead of keeping the peace. No mention was made of Faubus' use of state troopers.

³⁴ *Het Gereformeerd gezinsblad* published no reports on the story at all.

³⁵ "Troepen voor school weg," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 21, 1957.

"Troepen weg van schoolplein in Little Rock," *De Waarheid*, September 21, 1957.

³⁶ Example: "Negers in gevangenis van Little Rock," *De Waarheid*, September 25, 1957.

³⁷ "Blank Little Rock slaat er op los," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 24, 1957.

³⁸ "Faubus: „Ik wist het wel," *De Waarheid*, September 24, 1957.

"Blank Little Rock slaat er op los," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 24, 1957.

³⁹ "Cartoon," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 24, 1957.

⁴⁰ "Waarom geen protest?," *De Waarheid*, September 23, 1957.

⁴¹ "Onrust wegens het toelaten van negerleerlingen," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 25, 1957.

⁴² "Eisenhower dreigt met geweld," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 25, 1957.

The preference of *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* for Governor Faubus was made clearer in an article they published three days later:

He [Faubus] demanded from the population that, despite their city being under siege, the law should always be obeyed. The governor pointed out that while the National Guard had kept the peace no incidents had occurred. This was in contrast to the situation following the arrival of 1200 federal troops when multiple incidents had taken place including beatings and stabbings with a bayonet. Faubus promised to continue to defend the right of his people to solve their own problems in a peaceful manner.⁴³

This article is a mix of an overly positive description of the Crisis and a defence of Faubus' administration. The article, called *No more incidents in Little Rock*, seemed to want to convince its readers that the situation had stabilised. It is true that no violent incidents had taken place in those two days. It is, however, incorrect to report that no more incidents had taken place at all. Even more notable was the fact that the newspaper did not criticise Faubus at all. Faubus is portrayed as a trustworthy civil servant who wants to help his citizens solely by obeying the law. No mention is made of Faubus's own illegal behaviour. What about his refusal to obey the rulings of the Federal Court? *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* sided with the conservative South. But instead of openly expressing their opinions, just as *Het Vrije Volk* and especially *De Waarheid* had done, the paper expressed its stand in a more subtle manner.

Little Rock seemed to trigger a flood of short reports centred on black people. Most of these events were related, but not directly connected with the events in Little Rock. The reports, reporting on local things like the murder of a black sheriff,⁴⁴ would have never made the Dutch news prior to the Crisis. Little Rock was clearly a hot topic and the newspapers tried to serve the public by publishing reports on other race-related incidents.

At the beginning of October, one month after the start of the crisis, Little Rock was still present in all newspapers. The focus of the reports, however, seemed to shift from direct reports on the situation to background articles. Governor Faubus especially seemed to take the spotlight. Multiple articles appeared that were solely about the man himself. A reporter of *De Telegraaf* had the honour to meet Faubus in his own home. This unusual setting yields an unusual insight into the personal life of the man, including an entertaining quote of Faubus

⁴³“Geen incidenten meer in Little Rock,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 28, 1957.

⁴⁴ See for example: “Little Rock: negersherrif gedood,” *De Telegraaf*, September 17, 1957.

“Aanslag op neger-ingeneur,” *De Waarheid*, September 25, 1957.

“De Opheffing van de rassenscheiding op de Amerikaanse scholen,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 25, 1957.

yelling to his wife because of food.⁴⁵ This article is nevertheless informative for everyone who wants to get a better understanding of Faubus' motivations. It deals with his upbringing in the Greasy Creek and explains why so many Southerners supported his administration.

The angle of Faubus, symbolising Southern conservatism, was most prominently present in the reports on the relationship between Washington and the Southern political apparatus. Faubus and Eisenhower were presented as counterparts in most articles; Faubus as the rebel, representing the racist South, versus the almighty Eisenhower.⁴⁶ *De Telegraaf* perfectly expressed this point of view with their one-page article of September 3rd 1957. The article that deals with Eisenhower's interference is accompanied by two separate photographs of Faubus and Eisenhower on both sides of the page.⁴⁷ This page almost looks like an announcement for a boxing-match. Eisenhower and Faubus are the contestants fighting each other over the grand prize; control over Little Rock in particular and the South in general.

This is an example of a particular way of reporting that focuses on reducing a complicated news event into a simple story. The great advantage of this method for a newspaper is the fact that it saves a lot of time and energy. These simple articles also attract a large, less informed public. The biggest disadvantage of this method is the fact that smaller, but also important parts of the news event are left out. Very few newspapers incorporated the history of slavery and the Reconstruction into their news reports or background articles. An even bigger shortcoming on almost all reports was the lack of any information on the organisations behind the Crisis. In all reports on Little Rock the NAACP was only mentioned three times. This proves how very little the Dutch press knew of how the protests were organised.

In short, although the Little Rock Crisis was about black rights, the stories in the Dutch newspapers were filled with solely white protagonists. On the one hand this is probably a result of poor reporting. It seemed that the Dutch press, even though they had reporters on the scene, were unable to get in touch with black organisers. On the other hand, it is possibly the result of the Dutch racial climate of the 1950s. Surinam and the Dutch Antilles were still colonised by the Netherlands. The general feeling towards the black population of these colonies was still paternalistic. It seems that this prevailing idea, of black people being unable to stand up for themselves, is reflected in the nature of the reports.

⁴⁵“Faubus van Little Rock,” *De Telegraaf*, September 27, 1957.

⁴⁶ See for example: “Na tegenwerking van Faubus: Paratroepen blijven nog in Little Rock,” *Het Vrije Volk*, October 2, 1957.

⁴⁷“Laat en lauw ingrijpen heeft gemoederen onnodig verontrust. Little Rock beweest niemand een Dienst,” *De Telegraaf*, October 3, 1957.

The Cold War was present in the reports on Little Rock throughout the Crisis. As the situation dragged on and the newspapers sought new angles to report on the situation, the struggle of the East against the West became a frequently used frame. *De Waarheid*, with its communist background, was keen in linking the situation to world politics. *De Waarheid*, in contrast to the other newspapers, painted Little Rock as a consequence of not only Southern politics but of the entire U.S. political system.⁴⁸ A notable photograph was published by *De Waarheid* on their front page of 28 October 1957.⁴⁹ The picture, appended with a caption saying *This is not Little Rock (The Free World) It is Kiev (Bolsjewism)*, shows a South African participant of a communist conference in Kiev being cheered on by a large crowd of locals. The propaganda photograph is clearly a stab at the “free world,” intended on convincing the Dutch public of the equality that everyone in the Soviet Union enjoyed. *De Waarheid* has various other examples of articles that have little (news) value besides the propagandistic dimension.⁵⁰

The other Dutch newspapers did not propagate their political ideas as openly in their reports on Little Rock as *De Waarheid* did. The Cold War was, however, still present in their reports on the Crisis. Two specific international events, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957, were given the most attention. In the autumn of 1956 Hungarian civilians started a rebellion against their Soviet oppressors. This uprising was, after the Polish Poznań uprising of 1956, one of the very first mass revolts against Soviet rule. The Hungarian uprising, that claimed the lives of over 2500 people, was a big blow to Soviet prestige. Life under Soviet rule did not turn out to be as exquisite as Soviet propaganda had depicted it to be.

Faubus himself was the first to mention the Hungarian uprising in relation to the Little Rock situation. Faubus mentioned in a television speech that he felt that the quietness of Little Rock was the same quietness that the people in Budapest currently enjoyed. Faubus’ statements were, of course, an attack on Eisenhower and his use of Federal troops. It is, however, also notable that *Het Vrije Volk* chose to use this particular quote as a leading caption to the story. It seems that the editor may have felt that Faubus had a point, but it is more likely that he used the quote because of its ridiculousness. *De Telegraaf* also reported on Little Rock and the Hungarian Uprising. The paper suspected the Soviet Union of using the

⁴⁸“Little Rock – Amerika – Vrije Wereld,” *De Telegraaf*, September 27, 1957.

“Pogrom door hogehand georganiseerd,” *De Waarheid*, September 27, 1957.

⁴⁹“Dit is niet Little Rock (Vrije Wereld). Het is Kiew (Bolsjewisme),” *De Waarheid* September 28, 1957.

⁵⁰ Example: “Intimidaties in Little Rock duren voort Boycot-actie blanke leerlingen mislukt,” *De Waarheid* October 4, 1957.

Little Rock Crisis as a political tool. According to the article, the Soviet Union was planning on confronting the United States with the Little Rock Crisis as soon as they brought up Hungary in the United Nations.⁵¹

The Hungarian Uprising was a sore point for all supporters of Marx's utopia. Little Rock provided an opportunity to limit the damage the Uprising had done to the Soviet Union's international standing. *De Waarheid* received three letters from readers that connected Little Rock to the Hungarian uprising.⁵² They felt that both the Dutch press and the Western World had devoted too much negative attention to the Uprising in contrast to Little Rock. Or as one of them stated:

It was the Meyer Sluysers [a liberal Dutch writer and journalist] of the 'free world' that praised the contra revolutionary criminals from inside and outside Hungary. It is striking that these propagandists of the dark only lie or remain silent about the atrocities in Little Rock.⁵³

There are two sides to the criticism of this angry reader. On the one hand, he brings up a valid point when he speaks about the lack of criticism the Dutch press directed at the United States government. Their critique was almost solely aimed at governor Faubus and the stubborn Southerners. The United States as a whole is rarely discussed or criticised. This phenomenon is related to the Cold War sentiments of the time. The Netherlands had only ten years earlier been liberated from the Germans by the United States. The Marshall Plan had strongly aided Western Europe's economic recovery. These sentiments, in combination with fear for Soviet Russia, made it hard for the Dutch press to firmly criticise the United States.

On the other hand, comparing the uprising in Hungary with the Little Rock Crisis is, despite the hardships American black people suffered over the years, inappropriate. The Soviet authorities killed over 2500 civilians during the Uprising while the Little Rock Crisis luckily did not cost any lives. It is therefore understandable that the Dutch press gave a great deal of attention to the situation in Hungary and that their reports were critical of Russia's conduct. The editors of *De Waarheid* had the political tact not to compare both events, since they understood that nothing could be gained from it.

However, it was not long before *De Waarheid* got the chance to show the Dutch public a better picture of the Soviet Union. On October 4, 1957 the Soviet Union launched the very first satellite, the Sputnik. This was a great defeat for the West because this proved the

⁵¹"Te laat," *De Telegraaf*, October 1, 1957.

⁵²"Hongarije – Little Rock," *De Waarheid*, October 1, 1957.

⁵³"Letter by Wouter Kalf," *De Waarheid*, October 1, 1957.

Soviets' military and technological advantage. *De Waarheid* published an article that argued that the Sputnik allowed the Soviet Union to launch bombs far more powerful than the one dropped on Hiroshima, stating that even “the biggest retard in Little Rock had to accept the undisputed military superiority of the Soviet Union.”⁵⁴ The launch of the Sputnik was a defeat for the West, but especially for President Eisenhower. He was questioned about the issue in the Senate and his political enemies addressed it in connection with his handling of the Little Rock Crisis.⁵⁵

At the end of 1957 the Dutch public had become familiar with the situation in Little Rock. This resulted in the occurrence of news stories on Little Rock that did not originate from the United States but from The Netherlands instead. *De Telegraaf* published two articles on a nineteen-year-old Dutch student who had a meeting with Governor Faubus.⁵⁶ Although the story is entertaining, it offers, besides the fact that the student is Dutch, very little actual news value. Another example of the incorporation of Little Rock into the daily news was a report by *De Telegraaf* about the visit of the black opera performer Charles Holland to Amsterdam.⁵⁷ His depiction of Othello seemed to contain, according to the newspaper, numerous parallels with the Little Rock Crisis. The amount of letters on Little Rock proves that *De Waarheid's* supporters were politically active. They granted the newspaper additional opportunities to criticise America's handling of the Crisis.

A local protester, for example, used plaster to change the name of the *Vrijheidslaan* [Freedom Lane] in Amsterdam into the ‘Little Rock Lane.’ This was not solely a protest aimed at the United States but also at the city council who only recently had decided to get rid of the original name of the street; *The Stalin Lane*. The newspaper made good use of the action, publicising a picture of the new sign on its front page.⁵⁸ Other examples of *De Waarheid* making news out of its own initiatives were reports on the protest action of the Dutch communist youth league and the argument the newspaper had with fellow newspaper *Het Parool*.⁵⁹

The attention of the Dutch press granted to Little Rock slowly disappeared at the end of the year. Mention was made of the local circumstances but no more extensive articles were published. It can be concluded that with the Little Rock Campaign the Movement had won a

⁵⁴“Spoetnik: einde van de grote leugen,” *De Waarheid*, October 15, 1957.

⁵⁵“Venijnig...,” *De Telegraaf*, October 22, 1957.

⁵⁶“Haagse studente sprak met Orval Faubus,” *De Telegraaf*, September 30, 1957.

“Niet vriendelijk,” *De Telegraaf*, October 1, 1957.

⁵⁷“Binding,” *De Telegraaf*, October 31, 1957.

⁵⁸“Nieuwe Naam,” *De Waarheid*, October 10, 1957.

⁵⁹“ANJV-protest tegen neger-vervolging,” *De Waarheid*, October 4, 1957.

“Pagina dertien Het Parool,” *De Waarheid*, November 2, 1957.

battle but not the war. The course of Governor Faubus' career makes this clear. Faubus had decided to send troops to Little Rock. It is questionable whether or not this helped the cause of keeping the South segregated. The images of the Crisis shocked people around the world, resulting in widespread support for racial integration. For Faubus himself all the media attention had a positive side to it. A wide range of his actions, from his television appearances up to his election campaign, became front-page news.⁶⁰ This made Faubus a true celebrity in the South. So many Southerners were satisfied with his handling of the Little Rock situation that he, against all expectations, got re-elected. This proves how the tactic of the Movement to attract media attention was a double-edged sword. On the one hand all the articles and reports on how black people were treated by the white establishment worked in favour of the Movement. On the other hand, smart politicians, such as Faubus, understood how they could use the press to their advantage.

The Birmingham Campaign 1963

Prior to the Birmingham riots of May 1963, the Civil Rights campaign in the city did not attract much attention in the Dutch press. From January to April 1963 only five short news stories on the situation in the city were published. Most of them were centred on Martin Luther King's run-in with the law.⁶¹ In some back-page articles, there were short notices on how King got locked up. The lack of coverage in the Dutch press corresponds with the small amount of attention the Birmingham campaign received in the American press. The lack of students willing to risk arrest and a lack of violent reactions from the police resulted in a shortage of stories exciting enough for the press to publish.⁶²

Two weeks later the SCLC campaign again appeared in the Dutch newspapers. The difference in the amount of attention the Birmingham situation received in contrast to earlier that same year could not have been greater. Riots, mass arrests and the presence of black celebrities were topics of interest for the Dutch press and its public. In the first weeks of May alone over 80 articles on the civil unrest in the city were published. The media storm took off with reports on the so-called "Children's Crusade." This event, organised by Reverend James

⁶⁰"Gouverneur Orval Faubus heeft goede reden om bang te zijn," *Het Vrije Volk*, October 4, 1957.

⁶¹"Buitenlands overzicht Washington contra Little Rock," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, October 2, 1957.

⁶¹"Zenuwenoerlog' in Alabama-140 negers gearresteerd," *Het Vrije Volk*, April 11, 1963.

"Negers mogen niet in Alabama demonstreren," *De Waarheid*, April 12, 1963.

"Martin E. King gearresteerd," *Het Vrije Volk*, April 13, 1963.

"Martin Luther King gearresteerd," *De Waarheid*, April 13, 1963

"Ds. King vrijgelaten," *De Telegraaf*, April 22, 1963.

⁶² Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (1997) 227.

Bevel, consisted of hundreds of young school students marching in protest against segregation in the city. The use, and especially the arrest, of hundreds of youngsters was enough reason for the Dutch press to run stories on the SCLC campaign in Birmingham.⁶³ The most notable report was printed in *De Waarheid*. This paper ran an article on the Crusade including a picture of the marching children and statements from Fred Shuttlesworth.⁶⁴

The Birmingham jail was overcrowded because of the many arrests that were made during the Crusade. This forced the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, to change his police tactics. He decided to keep protesters out of the downtown business area by any means necessary. The SCLC decided to seek confrontation by again organising a protest rally in downtown Birmingham. This decision resulted in an enormous clash between the black protesters on one side and the white public and Birmingham police force on the other side. Black protesters were hit and attacked by high-pressure water hoses, clubs and police dogs.

The physical abuse the protesters were subjected to was not in vain. Stories and pictures of the May 4th protest graced front pages all over the world. The image of Parker High School student Walter Gadsden being attacked by two police dogs in particular became one of the most famous pictures of the sixties. The Dutch press devoted a lot of attention to the protest and the violent police reaction that followed. *De Waarheid's* edition of May 6, 1963 seemed solely centred on the protests.⁶⁵ The famous picture of Gadsden appeared front page and the paper published six articles on the protest. A major difference between the reports on this march and the earlier reports on Little Rock was the clear presence of black leadership. Black people were no longer portrayed as helpless victims, waiting for white northern liberals to save them. *De Waarheid* quoted Martin Luther King saying: "*It is not hard for us to recruit people out of the 140,000 negroes that live in Birmingham. Students are crowding in front of our office, waiting to enrol. We will not stop until at least some of our wishes have been fulfilled.*"⁶⁶ Black leadership was also present in pictures of the protest. Pictures of singer Harry Belafonte, Martin Luther King and Roy Wilkins were present in the reports.

⁶³"450 negerkinderen in arrest na betoging tegen rassenscheiding," *Het Vrije volk*, May 3, 1963.

"Alabama politie arresteert 450 negerkinderen," *De Waarheid*, May 3, 1963.

"Na demonstraties: Arrestatie 450 negerkinderen," *De Telegraaf*, May 4, 1963.

⁶⁴"Alabama politie arresteert 450 negerkinderen," *De Waarheid*, May 3, 1963.

⁶⁵*De Waarheid*, May 6, 1963.

⁶⁶"Genoeg betogers," *De Waarheid*, May 6, 1963.

Just like *De Waarheid*, *De Telegraaf* devoted a great deal of attention to the May protest. It published the picture of Gadsden on the front page and its own local reporter wrote two articles on the unrest in Birmingham.⁶⁷ The tone and content of the reports were however different from the reports in *De Waarheid*. It seemed that the editors of the newspapers wanted to downplay the importance and extent of the unrest. The picture of Gadsden was accompanied with the headline: *Small, bloody riots in Birmingham*.⁶⁸ The riots were bloody but definitely not small. A reporter is said to have stated that no military action he had witnessed had ever disturbed him as much as the police actions in Birmingham.⁶⁹ The article itself, in contrast to the title of the front-page image, expressed the chaotic and violent atmosphere of the day:

The firm police commissioner Eugene Connor, who organised the attack on the protesters last Saturday, stated that he was intent on using the dogs again. This same man shouted yesterday, after he had given the order to use the dogs: ‘Let them dogs loose on these niggers! Let them run, let them run!’⁷⁰

The reports were clearly not in favour of the Birmingham police force. The writer of the article however did not fail to mention the use of violence from the side of the black protesters: “*During the riots, which lasted for hours, bottles and stones were hurled at the policemen.*” Before this article no other Dutch newspaper, besides *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, had made mention of the violent behaviour of the black protesters. This was a clear shift from the reports of *De Telegraaf* since the Little Rock Crisis.

Het Vrije Volk published a total of three articles on the May 4th protest.⁷¹ Its approach was different from that of *De Waarheid* and *De Telegraaf*. Instead of making the riots a headline story, the newspaper decided to take a more analytical approach. In a well-written editorial, an editor gave his views on the May march in particular, and the Civil Rights movement in general.⁷² The anonymous writer managed to give a proper analysis of the political situation in industrial Birmingham, and why in this particular city, such violent riots took place. The writer regarded the (violent) white opposition as a necessary and natural

⁶⁷“Bloedige relletjes in Birmingham (VS),” *De Telegraaf*, May 6, 1963.

“Incidenten,” *De Telegraaf*, May 6, 1963.

⁶⁸“Bloedige relletjes in Birmingham (VS),” *De Telegraaf*, May 6, 1963.

⁶⁹Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, the Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (2001) 368.

⁷⁰“Incidenten,” *De Telegraaf*, May 6, 1963.

⁷¹“Gevangenis in Birmingham zijn overvol,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 7, 1963.

“Birmingham-een geboorteprocès VAN DAG TOT DAG,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 7, 1963.

“Weer betogingen in Birmingham. Gouverneur zet staatspolitie in,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 8, 1963.

⁷²“Birmingham-een geboorteprocès. Van dag tot dag,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 7, 1963.

element in the development of the Deep South towards a desegregated society: “*Birmingham will go the same way as any other desegregated city in the South. I fear it will be a fierce fight. But we must know that this is part of the way up.*” This optimism is different from the reports in both *De Waarheid* and *De Telegraaf*. The latter had warned its readers for a future full of racial violence.⁷³

Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad also published a short article on the riots on its front page.⁷⁴ The article was different from that of the other newspapers. It seemed incomplete and one-sided. No mention was made of the use of fire hoses or dogs. Instead of defending the black protesters for their efforts to end segregation, they are judged for “*causing the authorities of Birmingham great problems by flooding the jails.*” No further background information was provided. According to the article the protest must have been the action of some dissatisfied black people instead of a well-organised group of Civil Rights activists. This negative way of reporting is in line with the paper’s earlier reports on the Little Rock Crisis. The black leadership is largely ignored and the black protest regarded as a nuisance.

De Waarheid, always ready to take an opportunity to make politics out of the news, used the Birmingham riots, just as it had done with the Little Rock Crisis, to attack both the U.S. and the Dutch press. *De Waarheid* published an article that attacked *Het Vrije Volk* and *Het Algemeen Handelsblad* for misinforming the public by making it believe that the Kennedy administration supported the black protestors: “*No sign of sympathy from the Kennedy administration for the struggle of the negroes must be taken seriously as long as the true offenders are protected. Even if this protection solely consists of keeping silent.*”⁷⁵ *De Waarheid* definitely had a point: the Dutch press was not as critical of the central U.S. government as it could be. The Dutch press was, during both the Little Rock Crisis and the Birmingham campaign, keen on solely blaming the policies and actions of the local authorities. As well as the local authorities, South Africa and its system of Apartheid was another reason for some Dutch newspapers to go easy on the United States. An article of *Het Vrije Volk*, for example, stated that the plight of black people in the U.S. was fortunately not as bad as that of their counterparts in South Africa.⁷⁶ At this time it just seemed that the Dutch press, with the exception of *De Waarheid*, just did not dare to criticise the United States’ government due to the fact that it had been such a loyal ally during the Second World War.

⁷³“Incidenten,” *De Telegraaf*, May 6, 1963.

⁷⁴“Gevangenis in Birmingham overvol,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, May 8, 1963.

⁷⁵“Amerika vecht,” *De Waarheid*, May 8, 1963.

⁷⁶“Birmingham-een geboortepoces. Van dag tot dag,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 7, 1963.

In the coming days the newspapers continued to publish pictures and news stories about Birmingham on their front pages. Most of the articles were short Reuters or AP stories that updated the reader on the negotiations in Birmingham. The situation of the incarcerated children was dominant in these reports,⁷⁷ and this seemed to have struck a nerve with the Dutch public. *Het Vrije Volk* published a very dramatic picture of a sad looking black boy stretching his hands through a fence.⁷⁸ It is questionable whether or not the boy really found himself in the Birmingham state prison. The gesture of the boy seems posed and it is hard to believe that a photographer could get as close to the jail and the prisoners as the picture suggests.

In contrast to the Little Rock Crisis the Birmingham campaign was portrayed more as a black initiative. Both (local) black leaders and black celebrities were quite present in the reports on the Birmingham campaign. *De Waarheid* for example published two articles on the arrival of world champion boxer Floyd Patterson, the baseball legend Jackie Robinson and the comedian Dick Gregory.⁷⁹ The stories of *De Waarheid* on the efforts of these three men are, despite the secular nature of the newspapers, put in a religious framework. The men are going on a “pilgrimage” to the South and the decision of Floyd Patterson to postpone his training for a world championship match is presented as an almost religious sacrifice for the greater good.⁸⁰

This religious theme was absent in the reports on the Little Rock Crisis. Even *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* did not use it. The Dutch press clearly started to regard the Civil Rights Struggle as a religiously tainted movement after the SCLC and especially Martin Luther King took over leadership. Martin Luther King, with his message of non-violence and love, became a favourite of the Dutch press:

The soul of the struggle that is being fought in Birmingham, Alabama for the Civil Rights of the American black man, is again the Reverend Martin Luther King. Since 1954 he has appeared everywhere where the American Negro fought for equal rights. He has been called a modern Moses, the prophet of equality, the peaceful fighter against racist bigotry. (...) His life was in danger, a bomb destroyed his home and he personally evoked the ungovernable wrath of the white supremacists. But his tactics [of boycotting Montgomery’s

⁷⁷“Nog geen zekerheid over akkoord in Birmingham,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 10, 1963.

“Kinderen vrij zonder borgtocht,” *De Waarheid*, May 10, 1963.

“Akkoord in Birmingham,” *De Telegraaf*, May 11, 1963.

⁷⁸“Nog geen zekerheid over akkoord in Birmingham,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 10, 1963.

⁷⁹“Floyd Patterson naar Alabama,” *De Waarheid*, May 10, 1963.

“Birmingham gaat vóór titelgevecht,” *De Waarheid*, May 10, 1963.

⁸⁰ *Idem*.

local bus service] became an overwhelming success. This was the start of his unique career devoted to human rights.⁸¹

This is a short extract from a much longer article of *Het Vrije Volk* on King. This hagiographical article, including a big picture of a preaching King, shows how the Dutch newspapers, with the exception of *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, treated him. To them King was more than just an activist, he was a symbol of hope, forgiveness and even the presence of God on Earth.

There are multiple downsides to this treatment of King, besides the fact that the press should always approach its subjects from a critical viewpoint. Many reports portrayed the Civil Rights movement as a one-man show. King takes all the credit while local leaders and other activists are barely mentioned. This can lead to a misunderstanding of the nature, extent and historical roots of the Movement. An uninformed reader could even assume, with the information that was given in most articles, that before King's arrival black people were not fighting for their rights at all. A second downside to this approach is a bit more philosophical. By portraying King as a saint, it almost implies that the problem of racial inequality in the U.S. could only be solved by godly intervention. The human aspect of the struggle, especially the fact that the Kennedy administration had the power to solve the problems by changing its policies, is left out.

On May 11, just when the situation seemed to be under control because of the intervention of the white business elite, a group of white extremists decided to bomb the Gaston Motel (where King had left only hours before) and the house of A. D. King, Martin Luther King's brother. The bombings, the subsequent riots and Kennedy's reaction of sending federal troops, triggered a series of articles. On their front page *De Waarheid* published a picture of the destroyed Motel.⁸² The bombings gave the paper another reason to criticise the Kennedy Administration for its approach and its hypocrisy in relation to its foreign policies.

In a short editorial, the paper commented on some of the international reactions to Kennedy's actions: "The events in Nashville and Birmingham seem to have severe consequences for Washington, especially in Africa. (...) Newspapers all over Africa report and comment on the fact that America applauds democracy overseas while it violates it at home." This commentary on the African press has to be seen in the context of the Cold War. Third World countries such as Nigeria still had to be won over for international communism. Criticism of the United States, expressed by representatives of a Third World country, was

⁸¹"Martin King: vreedzame vechter tegen rassenwaan," *Het Vrije Volk*, May 11, 1963.

⁸²"Rassisten verscherpen terreur in Alabama," *De Waarheid*, May 13, 1963.

appreciated by the readership of *De Waarheid*. It is notable that, in contrast to the Little Rock Crisis, no newspapers other than *De Waarheid* were connecting the events in Birmingham to the Cold War. No newspaper was, for example, concerned with the damage the Civil Rights movement did to America's international standing. This is odd considering that the Cold War was still a very hot topic in 1963.

Het Vrije Volk and *De Waarheid* both published pictures of the burned-out hotel on their front pages.⁸³ They clearly sympathised with the black population of Birmingham. Little attention was devoted to the destruction the black rioters caused. The reports focussed on the bombings. The approach of *De Telegraaf* was, however, different. In the past the newspaper had mostly favoured the position of the black protesters, emphasising their difficulties. The articles on the Birmingham riots seemed to shift away from this liberal view towards a much more conservative approach. The articles on the riots did not focus on the plight of the black population but on the problems the riots caused for the white establishment. The newspaper, for example, published a picture of a bleeding police officer prominently on its front page.⁸⁴ The articles spoke solely of white people being wounded while little mention was made of any police violence.⁸⁵

All four newspapers devoted attention to Kennedy's involvement in suppressing the riots. Two articles were focussed solely on his decision to send troops to Birmingham.⁸⁶ In contrast to the reports on the Little Rock Crisis, the voice of white segregationists was largely absent. Governor Wallace of Alabama opposed the decision of Kennedy to send troops to his state, speaking out against the President's policies in Congress. Wallace, however, did not manage to attract the amount of media attention his colleague Faubus did. He probably was not as eager as Faubus to make himself a symbol of Southern racism and segregation, at least at this point in time. Connor managed to attract much more attention with his firm actions.

The riots in Birmingham triggered violent black resistance in other parts of the United States. Riots in Cambridge, Greensboro, Maryland and New York all received a fair amount of attention even though the scale of the events was no reason for the amount of international media attention they received.⁸⁷ It seems that the plight of America's black population started

⁸³ Idem.

⁸⁴ "Kennedy stuurt federale troepen naar Birmingham," *Het Vrije Volk*, May 13, 1963.

⁸⁵ "Bommen en gewonden tijdens strijd in Alabama," *De Telegraaf*, May 13, 1963.

⁸⁶ Idem.

⁸⁷ "Kennedy zendt troepen naar Birmingham Om negers te beschermen," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, May 14, 1963.

"Leger in Alabama Birmingham," *De Telegraaf*, May 14, 1963.

⁸⁷ "In New Yorks negerwijk," *De Waarheid*, May 16, 1963.

"Ook in Cambridge komen negers in verzet," *De Waarheid*, May 15, 1963.

to receive attention in Dutch society. The main Dutch socialist party, *De Partij van de Arbeid*, for example, sent a telegram of protest to Alabama.⁸⁸ *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, unexpectedly, ran an extensive front-page story on the riots and Kennedy's response.⁸⁹ It is notable that the reports of *De Telegraaf* seemed to follow the same conservative approach as it had in previous weeks. The black protesters were portrayed solely as rioters while the white establishment solely seemed to suffer:

Again yesterday, race riots broke out in Birmingham. A rioting group of screaming and cursing negroes threw stones and bottles at passing cars. The weary police had again to patrol the city centre because of the blacks destroying the windows of houses and offices. Two white boys were stabbed during a fight with the black rioters.⁹⁰

It is not entirely clear why the reports of *De Telegraaf* on the Birmingham riots were suddenly so negative and centred on a small group of black troublemakers. It could have been the personal choice of the journalist to report in such a manner but it is also likely that the editors had decided to change the nature of the reports. The nature of the reports at least gives a glimpse of the current, conservative and rightwing approach of the newspaper. It is especially notable how no mention was made of the death of black protesters.

De Telegraaf was not the only newspaper that had a strong opinion on the racial unrest in the United States. At the end of May, *Het Vrije Volk* published an article that gave voice to the feelings of the black writer James Baldwin and the black psychologist Kenneth Clark after their meeting with the Attorney General Robert Kennedy: "*We are shocked because of his naivety. (...) We do not understand each other at all, we could easily have spoken a totally different language.*"⁹¹ That same week *Het Vrije Volk* published an editorial article on the dangers of the race problem not being solved soon: "*For a long time the negroes have waited on a legal solution. (...) But the moment will come when they will get the feeling that talking will lead to nowhere. We can already hear those sentiments echoing through the new and threatening tone of some black leaders.*"⁹² Although the writer did not explicitly mention any names it seems clear that the writer is hinting at the growing popularity of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam. *Het Vrije Volk* was ahead of its Dutch counterparts, by recognizing this problem and being active in spreading their opinion.

"Ook in Maryland rassen-onlusten," *Het Vrije Volk*, May 15, 1963.

"Negerstudenten demonstreren in Greensboro," *Het Vrije Volk*, May 16, 1963.

"Negerjongeren hand in hand door Greensboro," *De Waarheid*, May 17, 1963.

⁸⁸"PvdA-protest per telegram naar Alabama," *Het Vrije Volk*, May 16, 1963.

⁸⁹"Kennedy pleit voor rechten van negers," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, May 21, 1963.

⁹⁰"Weer gewonden bij relletjes in Alabama," *De Telegraaf*, May 15, 1963.

⁹¹"Auteur Baldwin: Robert Kennedy begrijpt 't niet," *Het Vrije Volk*, May 27, 1963.

"Rassenconflict op gevaarlijk punt. Van dag tot dag," *Het Vrije Volk*, May 31, 1963.

De Waarheid was again vocal in commenting on the conflict. The paper published critical letters of readers,⁹³ a critical editorial,⁹⁴ and two cartoons on the situation.⁹⁵ The first cartoon, printed on the bottom of the fifth page, shows the American flag with its stripes turning into prison bars. Through the bars looks a frightened black man at the reader. The cartoon criticises both the mass incarceration of black protesters by the city government and the treatment of black Americans in general.⁹⁶

The second cartoon is more specifically aimed at the Civil Rights Movement. This cartoon, which was also published on the fifth page, shows a black family of two adults and a child walking hand in hand while staring at a point on the horizon. Behind them on the ground are different signs they have stepped on. The signs state segregationist slogans such as *rooms for whites only*, *blacks prohibited* and *school, white only*.⁹⁷ Although the cartoon is not well drawn, it is an evocative presentation of some elements of the Movement. The positive look of the cartoon conflicts with the article that accompanies it. The article paints a grim picture of the treatment of some black activists: “*The prison guards cocked their guns and shot at the group of girls. The guns turned out to be loaded with blanks. The girls were terrified, two even passed out.*”⁹⁸

De Telegraaf published, somewhat unexpectedly, a one-page article written by the black author James Baldwin. This article, which was published on the 21st page of the paper, was accompanied by a cartoon showing a crowd of black citizens looking angrily at the reader. The image has an eerie feel to it, as if it were only a matter of time before the group would turn violent. The anger and militancy that the picture radiates is reflected in Baldwin’s plea. The core of his argument was based on the assumption that hate and ignorance in the heart of white America was the sole reason for the current race problem: “*Before he [the white man] does something else, it should be wise for him to wonder why he has the urge to see the nigger in the negro. I am not a nigger, I am a human being.*”⁹⁹ The choice of *De Telegraaf* to give Baldwin, and his message of white guilt, a platform is notable. Baldwin, who in the article also showed clear doubt about King’s chances of success, spread a message

⁹³“Spaans riet,” *De Waarheid*, June 1, 1963.

⁹⁴“Rassenscheiding ook in Amerikaanse UNO-delegatie,” *De Waarheid*, June 6, 1963.

⁹⁵“Is het slecht als neger geboren te zijn?,” *De Waarheid*, June 7, 1963.

“Achtienjarig negermeisje naar rechtbank : „Ik zal strijden tot wij vrij zijn,” *De Waarheid*, June 16, 1963.

⁹⁶“Is het slecht als neger geboren te zijn?,” *De Waarheid*, June 7, 1963.

⁹⁷“Achtienjarig negermeisje naar rechtbank : „Ik zal strijden tot wij vrij zijn,” *De Waarheid*, June 14, 1963.

⁹⁸ *Idem*.

⁹⁹“Wat mij verbijstert,” *De Telegraaf*, June 15, 1963.

that was not very often voiced in *De Telegraaf*: Baldwin blamed not only the openly racist South, but white America in general for the plight of black America.

In the coming weeks *De Telegraaf* surprised everyone by publishing an exclusive interview with King and two exclusive interviews with Robert Kennedy. The article on King, promoted as an exclusive interview, seemed to have been little more than a short talk.¹⁰⁰ The interview is little more than quotes of King mixed with information on the current state of affairs. The two interviews with Kennedy, however, are a good example of high-quality journalistic work.¹⁰¹ The questions that Kennedy has to answer are critical and on point. Most interesting are probably the questions on the relationship between Kennedy and King. The interviewer manages to find out that Kennedy was quite displeased with the timing of the Birmingham protests. *De Telegraaf*, by publishing these three interviews, did something that none of the other Dutch newspapers had done before. The newspaper managed to give its readership an inside look into the political game behind the Movement.

On August 27 and 28 1963, America witnessed one of the largest political rallies for human rights in its history. The march on Washington, organised by Civil Rights activists A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, brought around 250,000 people together, all demanding equal civil and economic rights for African Americans. The march was a huge media event in and outside the United States. This is reflected in the Dutch press. Some Dutch newspapers started their reports on the event by actually announcing the broadcast of the event on television,¹⁰² or calling up participants for a similar march in Amsterdam.¹⁰³ The march itself was front-page news for all four newspapers. The editors of the newspapers expected the public to know quite a lot about the background of the march already because very little attention was devoted to the Civil Rights Movement or the organisers of the march. The emphasis lay on the march as an event on its own and the symbolic significance of the event for all African-Americans: “There is no better symbol of hope than the sights of all those black people gathered around the Lincoln Memorial. They all hope that this event will be the key to a brighter and more just future.”¹⁰⁴

It is notable how much emphasis was put on the peaceful course of the march.¹⁰⁵ It seems that the newspapers had expected, with the recent race riots in mind, a much more

¹⁰⁰“Weinig twijfel,” *De Telegraaf*, June 26, 1963.

¹⁰¹ “Bordjes weg,” *De Telegraaf*, June 28, 1963.

“Naijver,” *De Telegraaf*, July 6, 1963.

¹⁰²“Mars naar Washington' via Telstar op tv,” *De Telegraaf*, August 26, 1963.

¹⁰³“Woensdagavond: Solidariteitsbetoging met Washingtonmars,” *De Waarheid*, August 26, 1963.

“Mars indrukwekkend en gedisciplineerd,” *Het Vrije Volk*, August 29, 1963.

¹⁰⁵“De mars naar Washington Demonstratie verliep rustig,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, August 30, 1963.

violent and poorly organised event. Also notable is the fact that no mention is made of King's famous *I have a dream* speech while A. Philip Randolph's ending speech received some media attention.¹⁰⁶ It seems that it was only much later that the Dutch press and public really started to understand the significance of King's speech.

August 1963 was a relatively calm month for Birmingham and its police force. It seemed that the March on Washington had drawn attention away from most local activists. However, the situation soon changed when, during a race riot that was triggered by the bombing of the house of activist Arthur Shores, a protester was killed by police bullets. This incident and the subsequent decision of governor Wallace to send troops to Birmingham resulted in a series of demonstrations and riots. Both the killing of John Foley and Wallace's reaction were front-page news.¹⁰⁷ The Alabama governor in particular was at the centre of attention, in contrast to his earlier absence. His political struggle with Birmingham's city council was featured prominently.¹⁰⁸ Rather strange was the article of *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* of September 6 reporting on its front page that racial integration in Birmingham was progressing quietly.¹⁰⁹

America's racial problems already revealed the different nature of the Dutch newspapers. While *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* and *De Telegraaf* tended to report from the perspective of the government, it seemed that *Het Vrije Volk* and especially *De Waarheid* focussed on the problems and hardships the protesters suffered. This is beautifully depicted by three pictures *Het Vrije Volk*, *De Waarheid* and *De Telegraaf* published in their newspapers on September 10. Black students were allowed to enter a formerly all white school in Alabama, while on the orders of governor Wallace schools in Mobile, Tuskegee and Birmingham remained segregated. Both events were captured in separate pictures: a black Alabama boy was caught on camera entering a school building together with his father. The segregated situation in Birmingham and the other cities was depicted by a picture of a cordon

"Geen enkele wanklank. Washington-mars een waardige betoging," *De Telegraaf*, August 29, 1963.

"Mars indrukwekkend en gedisciplineerd," *Het Vrije Volk*, August 29, 1963.

¹⁰⁶"Ongeacht persoonlijke offers," *De Waarheid*, August 29, 1963.

¹⁰⁷"Gouverneur Wallace weer in actie in Alabama Politie-macht houdt negers uit scholen," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 4, 1963.

"Birmingham-News: Gouverneur tart plaatselijke autoriteiten," *De Waarheid*, September 4, 1963.

"Negers naar school Alabama haalde bakzeil," *De Telegraaf*, September 5, 1963.

"Staatspolitie weg uit Birmingham," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 6, 1963.

¹⁰⁸"Gemeenteraad Huntsville tegen Wallace," *De Waarheid*, September 6, 1963.

"Maatregelen tegen Wallace," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 10, 1963.

¹⁰⁹"Rustige integratie in Birmingham," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 6, 1963.

of tough-looking state troopers that kept some black students from entering the Murphy High School in Mobile.¹¹⁰

Het Vrije Volk published both pictures with the caption “two victories in Alabama.” *Het Vrije Volk* took the middle road in its depiction of the race struggle in the South. On the one hand they showed how progress is made, while on the other hand they make clear that there was still a lot of ground to be won. *De Telegraaf*, however was, much more inclined to emphasize the positive developments in America’s racial struggle. The editors of the newspaper published the picture of the boy entering the school prominently on their front page. It is clear that *De Telegraaf* wanted to show its readership how much progress was being made. Only in its second column did the article mention how black students were still unable to attend public schools in Mobile, Tuskegee and Birmingham. *De Waarheid* posted only the picture of the Murphy High School on its front page. Although the newspaper makes mention of the fact that some black people in Huntsville were allowed to enter a formerly white school, the article itself is focussed on Wallace and his use of state troopers. The use of these pictures shows how the opinion of the public can easily be manipulated when the context is missing. *De Waarheid* did not hesitate to alter reality once in a while.

The editors of *De Waarheid* felt that their readers had to be better informed on the current race struggle in the South. Therefore the next day an extensive article and a cartoon on Alabama were published on the paper's front page.¹¹¹ The article deals with the situation in Alabama in general and with the actions of governor Wallace in particular. The cartoon on the same page shows three armed police officers in front of a high school. The caption states: “Governor Wallace has hired new bouncers for all public schools in Alabama.” It is notable that *De Waarheid* switched from criticising Kennedy’s administration to solely depicting Wallace as the reason for the South’s stance. This change can be traced back to Kennedy’s own actions. He openly positioned himself, in contrast to a few months earlier, as opposing Wallace and his segregationist policies.¹¹² This probably gave *De Waarheid* the idea that Kennedy was determined to really solve the race problem this time.

The opposition to racial equality reached a new peak when on Sunday, September 15, 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed by four members of the Ku Klux Klan. The bomb, composed of at least 15 sticks of dynamite, killed four little girls and wounded 22 others. The

¹¹⁰“Kennedy beschuldigt gouverneur "Wallace stuurt aan op federaal ingrijpen,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 10, 1963.

“Negers in Huntsville toch naar school,” *De Waarheid*, September 10, 1963.

“Teruggestuurd,” *De Telegraaf*, September 10, 1963.

¹¹¹“Bres in rassenscheiding Alabama,” *De Waarheid*, September 11, 1963.

¹¹²“Maatregel tegen gouverneur Wallace,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 12, 1963.

crime generated a public outcry throughout the United States and the rest of the world. The bombings triggered a series of riots that cost the lives of another two black boys. Both events became instant front-page news for all four Dutch newspapers. *Het Vrije Volk* reported on the bombings in a sensational and suggestive way (for their standards): “The Sunday school was hit the hardest because of the fact that the school was located in the basement. At the moment of the bombing the children were just studying the Gospel of Matthew: I command you, love your enemies.¹¹³” The newspaper gave much prominence to King in its reports on the bombing. His reactions to the events were widely reported and no comments by any other (black) leader were mentioned. This proves how important and influential King had become.

The reports of *De Waarheid* on the bombing and the subsequent killing of the two boys were emotional. The newspaper ran the headline: “Six negro children murdered in Alabama.” The headline was accompanied by a moving picture of the mother of one of the murdered girls who had just heard the terrible news of the death of her child. The article itself further emphasised the devastation that surrounded the bombings:

The body of the fourteen-year-old Cynthia Wesley was so terribly mutilated by the blast that it only could be identified by the clothes and the ring the girl had worn. While rescuers were still looking for survivors in the wreckage, a negress stood next to them, full of pain and sorrow. In her hand she was holding a small shoe, the shoe of her deceased daughter.

Why did *De Waarheid* decide to report in such an explicit and dramatic fashion? From the very start of the Civil Rights Movement *De Waarheid* had followed and supported the black activists. Their sentiments might sometimes have been politically motivated but their support was, in contrast to newspapers as *De Telegraaf* or *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, always in favour of total racial integration. The bombing and killing of the two black boys probably shocked the editors in the Netherlands and the journalist at the scene very much. The nature of their reports could have been motivated by political reasons but it seems more likely that they reported out of feelings of grief and horror.

The reports of *De Telegraaf* and *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* were not as explicit or emotional as those of *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Waarheid*, but they were almost as extensive. On September 17 alone *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* published four articles on the subject.¹¹⁴

¹¹³“Bomaanslag op negerkerk in birmingham: vier kinderen omgekomen,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 16, 1963.

¹¹⁴“Vier kinderen gedood bij ontploffing in negerkerk,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 17, 1963.

“Arrestatie,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 17, 1963.

“Waarschuwing van negerleider,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 17, 1963.

“Nieuwe slachtoffers in Birmingham,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 17, 1963.

“Ontploffing in kerk,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 17, 1963.

The articles missed the emotional feel of the articles of the other newspapers: they were all written in a typically businesslike manner. The amount of attention the newspaper gave these events in the coming days, however, proves how much impact the bombings had made. Like *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Waarheid*, *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* reported King's reaction and warned of future violence.

In contrast to the events in Little Rock, the Birmingham campaign and subsequent riots elicited relatively few reactions from Dutch society. A few months earlier the Dutch socialist party (PVDA) had sent a telegram out of protest to the local government in Alabama, but the general public seemed to be less concerned with the situation in Birmingham.¹¹⁵ *De Waarheid*, for example, received only one letter on the subject in contrast to the seven letters they received concerning the Little Rock Crisis. The church bombings, however, triggered a series of reactions. A group of youngsters staged a protest in front of the American embassy in The Hague and another group of over a hundred activists had to be removed from the sidewalk in front of the American Consulate in Amsterdam.¹¹⁶ The protesters were mostly left-wing students from local schools and universities.

People also made smaller gestures to show their dismay and support. A high school in Doorn, for example, sent a telegram to the Dutch queen Juliana asking her to personally try to influence Kennedy's decision making.¹¹⁷ Another action came from a neighbourhood in Rotterdam that sent a protest letter to the American embassy in The Hague.¹¹⁸

How is it possible that the Birmingham bombings created, in contrast to the earlier Birmingham demonstrations, so much more protest in Dutch society? The difference has everything to do with both the savage nature of the bombings and the fact that innocent children in a church were killed. The young victims were mentioned by name, the bloody details of their death were widely reported on and their burial also made headlines.¹¹⁹ The involvement of children, as during the Little Rock Crisis, seemed to strike a nerve with the public. The leaders of the Civil Rights Movement were aware of this fact, as the Children's March proves.. An event as dramatic as the church bombing was not, however, something that anyone wanted to consider a blessing in disguise.

"Schietpartijen," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 17, 1963.

¹¹⁵"PvdA-protest per telegram naar Alabama," *Het Vrije Volk*, May 16, 1963.

¹¹⁶"Betogingen in Amsterdam en Den Haag," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 17, 1963.

¹¹⁷"Lyceï telegrafeert Koningin over bomaanslag Birmingham," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 18, 1963.

"Protesten uit Rotterdam," *De Waarheid*, September 18, 1963.

¹¹⁹"Zondag betogingen tegen kindermoord. Aangrijpende begrafenis van slachtoffertjes," *De Waarheid*, September 19, 1963.

"Gedode negerkinderen herdacht in veel Amerikaanse steden," *Het Vrije Volk*, September 23, 1963.

"Slachtoffers van aanslag in Birmingham begraven," *De Telegraaf*, September 20, 1963.

The Dutch press which, in contrast to the Little Rock Crisis, had published relatively few editorials and commentaries on the Birmingham riots, did not seem to follow the example of the Dutch public. In the days after the bombings only *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Telegraaf* published commentaries on the events.¹²⁰ *Het Vrije Volk* criticised the American government while *De Telegraaf*, just as it had done before with their critique on Wallace, solely blamed the KKK for the unrest in the South. It is not clear why the Dutch press did not comment very much on the Birmingham bombing and subsequent riots. Especially notable is the lack of commentary from *De Waarheid*.

The 16th Street Baptist Church has been labelled as a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement. It is said that it contributed to support for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by more conservative elements in the American government and society. The bombing, however, did not significantly change how the Dutch press reported on the Civil Rights Movement. In the weeks that followed, the attention of the Dutch press on Birmingham slowly but surely died out. The reports that were written on the subject had the same approach as before. *De Waarheid* accused all capitalists of being racist and *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* again spoke negatively about America's black population. The latter newspaper, for example, managed to make it seem that a group of black students had attacked their own teachers with rocks.¹²¹ Although American society was slowly but surely changing, it seemed that it would still take a while before the Dutch press could rid itself of its fixed assumptions and preconceptions.

The Selma Campaign 1965

On January 2, 1965 King officially started the Selma Voting Rights Campaign by addressing a large group of locals and activists in the Brown Chapel Church. This campaign, organised by both the SCLC and SNCC, had the aim to expand the voter registration drive in Selma and adjacent counties. Despite King's involvement, and the announcement of Sheriff Clark that he would not tolerate any mass meetings, the Dutch press did not seem to be very interested in the upcoming campaign. Only *De Waarheid* published a short back-page article on King

¹²⁰“Over het nut van beschouwingen,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 17, 1963.

“Eén weg,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 18, 1963.

“Oogkleppen,” *De Telegraaf*, September 19, 1963.

¹²¹“De rassenkwestie in Amerika,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 27, 1963.

“Sinds 1931 „wereldhoofdstad van de moord” US Steel organiseerde rassensrijd,” *De Waarheid*, September 28, 1963.

launching the Selma campaign.¹²² Even *De Telegraaf*, with its own U.S. reporter, did not report anything.

This lack of interest cannot be explained by a lack of general interest from the Dutch press or public for King and the Civil Rights Movement. The year before, both the rumours about King receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and the final allocation of the award received a great deal of attention.¹²³ Even King's decision to use the prize money in favour of the Movement became front-page news.¹²⁴ It seems that the fact that the SCLC had started another campaign simply was not enough to attract the attention of the Dutch press. They wanted riots or at least some arrests before they deemed it worthy of reporting. However, it would not be long before the Selma campaign produced its first small media moment.

On the morning of January 18 King was assaulted in the lobby of a hotel by Jimmy George Robinson, the leader of the right-wing National States Rights Party. King was knocked down and kicked by Robinson before his helpers could rescue him. Robinson, together with American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell, had travelled to Selma to confront King and spread their message of white supremacy. Surprisingly enough, before the attack, King had actually allowed both men to speak at one of the mass meetings. The assault on King was mentioned in all four Dutch newspapers. *De Waarheid*, *Het Vrije Volk* and *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* all published the story on their front pages.¹²⁵ *Het Vrije Volk* also printed a picture of the arrest of Robinson and an article on the sentence he received.¹²⁶

In the following weeks, black people in Selma continued to try to register as voters. Sheriff Clark responded by arresting both the organizers and the participants of these mass registration drives. Clark's police force arrested up to 200 black people a day. These mass arrests resulted in media coverage. Most newspapers printed short Reuters stories on their back pages. Only *De Waarheid* took the effort to print a more extensive article on the Selma campaign. The article presented some interesting background information on the registration

¹²²"Luther King opent massa-actie in Alabama," *De Waarheid*, Januari 4, 1965.

¹²³"Dr. Luther King kandidaat voor Nobelprijs '64," *Het Vrije Volk*, January 31, 1964.

"Geruchten in Oslo Nobelprijs voor King?," *Het Vrije Volk*, October 8, 1964.

"Nobel-vredesprijs voor ds. Martin Luther King," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, October 16, 1964.

"Nobelprijzen uitgereikt," *De Telegraaf*, December 11, 1964.

¹²⁴"Ds. Luther King (in ziekenhuis): „Geld Nobelprijs voor strijd om burgerrechten," *Het Vrije Volk*, October 15, 1964.

"King besteedt Nobelprijs als strijdkas," *De Telegraaf*, October 15, 1964.

¹²⁵"Bij ingang blank hotel. Amerikaanse nazi trapt Luther King," *Het Vrije Volk*, January 19, 1965.

"Martin King aangevallen," *De Telegraaf*, January 19, 1965.

"Luther King aangevallen," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, January 20, 1965.

¹²⁶"Aanvaller van ds. King krijgt twee maanden," *Het Vrije Volk*, January 20, 1965.

campaign. It mentioned for example that the questions on the registration test were so hard to answer that even the members of the Supreme Court would possibly have failed to register.¹²⁷ These kinds of reports must have given the average Dutch reader a better idea of how the racist system was rigged. That same week, *De Waarheid*, was the only newspaper that devoted attention to the fact that one hundred years previously the United States had abolished slavery. The paper ran an extensive background article about slavery, the Civil War and Lincoln.¹²⁸

At the beginning of February, King was arrested alongside hundreds of other activists. Just like the assault on King a few weeks prior, his arrest received a lot of attention. *Het Vrije Volk* ran a picture of police Chief Wilson Baker meeting King while triumphantly holding handcuffs.¹²⁹ The fact of King's arrest in and of itself offered little news value. Almost all newspapers just copied the same statistics about the fact that King had been arrested for the seventeenth time.¹³⁰ *De Waarheid* was again the only newspaper that tried to add depth to the reports. The article that they published, reported about King but also about the situation in other cities and the attempts of King's wives and Abernathy to get in touch with their husbands.¹³¹

Despite the coverage that the Selma campaign received during January and the start of February, the SCLC and SNCC clearly needed more than the arrest of King to attract international media attention. The reports on the campaign thus far were numerous but short. The release of King, for example, was reason for all four newspapers to write some reports. These reports were short and printed on the back pages.¹³²

Fortunately for the Movement, there was, just like Bull Connor in Birmingham, a local police commissioner who preferred to solve problems violently. From the very start of the Selma campaign Sheriff Clark had shown himself to be the local bully. He did not hesitate to arrest children or let his police officers use their sticks on innocent bystanders. Clark's policies of arresting as many protesters as possible created a backlash. Soon the jails became

¹²⁷“Proef te moeilijk voor opperrechter,” *De Waarheid*, February 2, 1965.

¹²⁸“Honderd jaar geleden kwam einde aan slavernij,” *De Waarheid*, January 30, 1965.

¹²⁹“Luther King gearresteerd,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 2, 1965.

¹³⁰“Luther King wil gevangenis uit op voorwaarden,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 3, 1965.

“Dr. King gearresteerd,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, February 3, 1965.

“Ds. King blijft in de gevangenis,” *De Telegraaf*, February 3, 1965.

¹³¹ “De campagne voor stemrecht in Alabama Martin Luther King leidt actie vanuit cel,” *De Waarheid*, February 5, 1965.

¹³²“King vrij Politie van Selma arresteert weer Honderden negers,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 6, 1965.

“Ds. King op vrije voeten,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, February 9, 1965.

“Ds. King uit gevangenis,” *De Telegraaf*, February 6, 1965.

“King vrij op borgtocht,” *De Waarheid*, February 6, 1965.

overcrowded and activists had to be jailed in camps.¹³³ Clark could have gotten away with his actions were it not for the fact that black children were also forced to march to these camps:

Sherriff Clark and his helpers rounded all children up before they started the march to the camp some eight miles ahead. From time to time the children were forced to run, the ones who could not keep up with the others were hit lightly by batons in the back. (...) ‘You guys love to march don’t you?’ This is what the policemen, armed with electric cattle sticks, screamed at the group of children ranging in age from 9 to 17 years. To prevent reporters from following the group Clark parked his car sideways in front of a bridge.¹³⁴

The children never reached the camp because they managed to escape while they marched through a black neighbourhood. Despite the attempts of Clark to prevent the press from reporting about the march, different newspapers published stories on the event. King reacted to the events with his usual message of calm and peace. However, King must have realised that, just like the Children’s Crusade in Birmingham, this forced march was an excellent opportunity to reveal the South’s true face. King found himself in a difficult position. On the one hand the use of children had proven to be a successful strategy, on the other hand it must have been hard to continue this strategy while these youngsters had to face such abuse at the hands of the police.

The march of the children was not the only event that showed Clark and his police force in a bad light. James Bevel, one of King’s closest advisors, had contracted pneumonia while in prison. He was rushed to the hospital with a high fever. Clark, fearing a possible escape, posted a policeman at Bevel’s door and chained his foot to his bed. Soon articles with headline such as *Negro chained to sickbed* and *Selma Sherrif versus patient* appeared in the papers.¹³⁵ Although Clark’s fear of a possible escape might have been grounded, it was not a clever decision of him to chain Bevel to his bed. He could have expected the leaders of the Movement to use this against him. Only a few days later Clark himself found out how his actions had propelled him into the spotlight. His hospitalisation due to severe fatigue resulted in three small articles.¹³⁶ It is notable how something as trivial as Clark’s hospitalisation could generate more media attention than the arrests of hundreds of activists a month earlier.

¹³³“Cellen zijn overvol. Negers uit Selma nu naar kampen,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 5, 1965.

¹³⁴“„Jullie willen toch zo graag lopen...” Politie Selma dwingt kinderen tot looppas,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 11, 1965.

¹³⁵“Neger lag geketend op ziekbed,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 13, 1965.

“Selma’s sheriff contra patiënt,” *De Telegraaf*, February 13, 1965.

¹³⁶“Sherriff van Selma oververmoeid,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 13, 1965.

“Sheriff overwerkt,” *Het vrije volk*, February 13, 1965.

“Sheriff Jim Clark in ziekenhuis,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, February 16, 1965.

In the following week the activists continued their voter registration drives. Almost every evening they marched through the streets of Selma or through one of Alabama's other major cities. On the night of February 18, while marching through the neighbouring city of Marion, protester Jimmie Lee Jackson was shot by Alabama State Trooper corporal James Bonard Fowler. Jackson died a few days later due to internal bleeding. Jackson's murder did not generate much attention in the Dutch press. Two small articles were published on the incident and only one on his burial a few weeks later.¹³⁷ Jackson's death could have probably generated more coverage if it was not for the fact that three days after the shooting Malcolm X was murdered in New York City.

Before his death Malcolm had already received some attention from the Dutch press,¹³⁸ but his assassination launched him and other black Muslims into the spotlight. In 1965 the four Dutch newspapers published a total of almost 40 articles all together about the black leader. Most articles dealt with his assassination and the subsequent trial of his killers.¹³⁹ *Het Vrije Volk* published a background article that connected Malcolm's death to the current struggle in Selma.¹⁴⁰ Meanwhile *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* used the opportunity to attack both Malcolm and the Civil Rights Movement:

The assassination of Malcolm X reminds the world of the fact that there are black leaders other than Dr. Martin Luther King, the leader of the so-called non-violent resistance Movement (even though this Movement is far from non-violent).(…) This confused mind [Malcolm], who spoke so rudely of the assassination of his President, was killed himself by a murderer. It is said that the murderer originates from the same extremist Muslim circle and that Malcolm's murder has something to do with the conflict between the Black Muslims and his own Black Nationalistic Party. This way of silencing someone is of course very reprehensible; it must however be said that a very dangerous mind has been silenced.¹⁴¹

Even though the article is about Malcolm X and not about King, the author of the article starts off by criticising King. The writer points out that King's Movement is far from the non-violent movement King portrayed it to be. However, he does not offer any proof for his statements. The author's criticism seems to be personally motivated: no neutral journalist

¹³⁷“Nieuwe betogingen in Alabama op komst,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 20, 1965.

“Persconferentie,” *De Waarheid*, March 15, 1965.

“Indrukwekkende begrafenis. Negerdemonstrant in Selma vermoord,” *De Waarheid*, March 4, 1965.

¹³⁸“Leuzen,” *Het Vrije Volk*, July 21, 1964.

“Wat gevaarlijk is,” *De Telegraaf*, June 15, 1963.

¹³⁹“Amerikaanse negerleider vermoord,” *De Waarheid*, February 22, 1965.

“Negerleider Malcolm X gedood,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 22, 1965.

“Elyah Muhammad verklaart: Zwarte Moslims niet schuldig aan moord op Malcolm X,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, February 24, 1965.

¹⁴⁰“Verscherping van oude tegenstelling,” *Het Vrije Volk*, February 24, 1965.

¹⁴¹“Buitenlands overzicht wie was Malcolm X?,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, February 24, 1965.

could otherwise state that King's movement showed violent traits. The writer continues with an overview of Malcolm's life and political ideas. The article breathes a feeling of dislike and bias. The author, for example, falsely states that no white people were allowed at Malcolm's meetings. The true feelings of the author towards Malcolm are, however, mostly found in the author's closing statement. Although he states that he finds this way of silencing someone *reprehensible*, his following sentence "it must however be said that a very dangerous mind has been silenced" seems to suggest otherwise. The opinion of the author fits the reports of *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* on the Civil Rights Movement at the time. Their reports were often more critical than in favour of the actions of King and his followers.

On March 7, John Lewis of SNCC and the Reverend Hosea Williams of SCLC led a march of around 550 to 600 activists through Selma and the neighbouring region. The marchers met no opposition until they decided to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge into Dallas County. They were met on the other side of the bridge by Sheriff Clark and a large group of state troopers and deputized locals. Williams and his group were asked once to disband but before the group could react in a coordinated manner Clark and the commanding officer John Cloud gave the sign for an all-out attack. The unarmed activists were knocked on the ground and beaten with sticks while another group of troopers fired tear gas at them. The attack finished with a charge of mounted policemen.

On this Bloody Sunday, as the black community soon called it, seventeen marchers were rushed to the hospital and around fifty others had to be treated for lesser injuries. The event was witnessed and caught on camera by several reporters. The images of the brutal attack shocked audiences around the world. A photo of Amelia Boynton, who lay beaten unconscious on the pavement of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, appeared on the front page of newspapers around the world. *Het Vrije Volk* published two photographs of the attack on the front page; one of Boynton and another one of a group of gasmask wearing troopers attacking the protesters with their sticks. *De Waarheid* published the same picture on its front page. *De Telegraaf* and *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* also published stories of the event on their front pages but without any pictures.¹⁴²

De Telegraaf and *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* stuck solely to the facts in their articles while *De Waarheid* and *Het Vrije Volk* commented on the events. *De Waarheid* pointed out the hypocrisy of the U.S. concerning the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam:

¹⁴²"Traangas tegen negers," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, March 3, 1965.

"Met knuppels en traangas. Betoging in Selma uiteengeslagen," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, March 9, 1965.

"Protestmars in Selma: Politie slaat in op Betogende negers," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 8, 1965.

"„Alabama-mars" aangevallen door staatsstroepen," *De Waarheid*, March 8, 1965.

From April 1963 up to January 1965 27 people in the South have been killed because of their efforts to secure the civil rights of people. On only a few occasions have the offenders been arrested. The same kinds of people are saying they are “protecting the liberties of the Vietnamese people.” A more distasteful mockery is not possible!¹⁴³

Although *De Waarheid* seemed to exaggerate the number of offenders that had been arrested, the discrepancy between the internal situation in the U.S. and the face it shows the world is real. *De Waarheid* criticised, in contrast to the other newspapers, not one part of the U.S. government but the whole system. *Het Vrije Volk*, in comparison, put the blame of the attack in its articles solely on Wallace and the local police. For example, they quoted the Democrat politician James G. O’Hara as saying: *This angry SS styled action under the leadership of the demagogue Wallace must have shocked and shamed Americans.* *Het Vrije Volk* thus drew a clear distinction between Wallace and “the Americans.” They did not feel, in contrast to *De Waarheid*, that the American government by itself was part of the problem. The different opinions can be traced to the Cold War. *De Waarheid* still held strong anti-American convictions. They propagated the supremacy of socialism over America’s capitalistic model. To them the treatment of black people was only a sign of the rottenness of the system.

After the events of the first march, King and James Bevel decided to organise a second march that had to be held on March 9, 1965. The SCLC’s call for clergy and citizens from across the country to join was answered en masse. Hundreds of people, shocked by the cruel images of Bloody Sunday, joined in to show their support. The SCLC wanted to prevent another outbreak of violence by gaining a court order that would prohibit the police from interfering.

After a legal battle with Federal Judge Frank Minis Johnson and a heated internal debate with SNCC, King decided not to continue the planned march. Turnaround Tuesday, as this day became known, created confusion and consternation among the participants. Only the SCLC leaders had been told of the plan to cancel this second march. King, however, asked them to remain in Selma for another march once the legal problems had been settled.

The Dutch press seemed to be just as confused about the cancellation as the participants of this second march. All four newspapers incorrectly reported that local police and troops, just like during the first march, had prevented King and his followers from crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge into the adjoining county.¹⁴⁴ It was King himself who

¹⁴³“Beelden uit Amerika,” *De Waarheid*, March 8, 1965.

¹⁴⁴“„Vrijheidsmars” naar Montgomery opnieuw verhinderd,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, March 11, 1965.

decided, although the police unexpectedly stood aside,¹⁴⁵ not to continue. This day became known as Turnaround Tuesday. *Het Vrije Volk*, *De Waarheid* and *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* all seemed to have followed an incorrect AP report. *De Telegraaf*, having its own reporter on the scene, made a big mistake by reporting in two separate articles that King and the marchers had been stopped by the police.¹⁴⁶

Although King did everything he could to prevent any more protesters from getting hurt, he could not have foreseen what would happen that very same evening. Three white ministers, in Selma for the march, were attacked and beaten with clubs by four KKK members. Two days later Reverend Reeb died at Birmingham's University Hospital due to head trauma. At first, news of the attack was overshadowed by Turnaround Tuesday. However as soon as the details of the attack became clear, the (Dutch) press devoted a great deal of attention to Reeb. *Het Vrije Volk* published a graphic description of the beating on its front page: "The white minister James Reeb (36) from Boston, who joined the black activists in Selma, is currently dying in a local hospital. Racists literally just bashed his skull in."¹⁴⁷ All three other newspapers also printed articles about the beating and subsequent police investigation on both its front pages and back pages.¹⁴⁸

Two days later, after it had become clear that Reeb had died from his injuries, a second round of articles was published on the incident. *Het Vrije Volk* again published the same story, but now updated with the news of Reeb's death. Added to the story was a picture of a smiling Reeb: the newspaper editors seemed to feel the need to give the anonymous Reeb a face.¹⁴⁹ *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, normally very sparing with its reports on the Movement, published a back page article on the matter: "President Johnson (...), Ms. Johnson and vice president Humphrey have all sent their condolences to Reeb's widow."¹⁵⁰ Reeb's death generated much attention because of the violent nature of his murder and, more importantly, the fact that Reeb was a white minister from Boston. His death stood out from

"Troepen vrijdelen mars. King. Ds. King laat betogers terugkeren," *De Telegraaf*, March 11, 1965.

"Mars van negers snel afgelopen," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 10, 1965.

"Grootste betoging voor vrijheid in Alabama Mars van Selma naar Montgomery voor tweede maal verhinderd," *De Waarheid*, March 10, 1965.

¹⁴⁵ David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross* (1993), 401-405.

¹⁴⁶"Troepen vrijdelen mars. King. Ds. King laat betogers terugkeren," *De Telegraaf*, March 10, 1965.

"Politie hield negermars weer tegen," *De Telegraaf*, March 11, 1965.

¹⁴⁷"Demonstraties breiden zich uit Proces over „Mars op Montgomery",," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 11, 1965.

¹⁴⁸"Schedelbreuk," *De Telegraaf*, March 11, 1965.

"De strijd voor liet stemrecht in Alabama President Johnson kreeg demonstranten in „eigen huis,"," *De Waarheid*, March 12, 1965.

"Drie arrestaties na mishandeling predikanten in Selma," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, March 12, 1965.

¹⁴⁹"Rassenintegratie: Amerika wacht op Johnson," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 13, 1965.

¹⁵⁰"In Selma neergeslagen predikant overleden," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, March 13, 1965.

the regular cases of black people being killed by the KKK. For a newspaper such as *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, Minister Reeb resembled a way of living most readers and journalists could relate to.

Just as with other violent incidents, the murder of Reeb created a new wave of interest from the Dutch press in the Movement. This interest was further strengthened by the fact that President Johnson introduced the Voting Rights Act to Congress on March 17. A dichotomy arose in the reports on the Movement. Newspapers kept reporting on the events in Selma while at the same time President Johnson received full attention for his plans. *De Waarheid* was neutral in its response to Johnson's speech. They mentioned his plans on their front page but left out any critique.¹⁵¹ *Het Vrije Volk*, always in favour of America's central government, seemed to be impressed by Johnson's rhetoric. Their whole front-page article on the Act was little more than highlights of Johnson's speech: "America can no longer wait. The time has come for every American to be able to vote, no matter his race or colour."¹⁵² It is notable that the newspaper failed to place Johnson's speech in a larger perspective. Some criticism or remarks on the treatment of black people by the American government in the past would have been justified. The only note of critique in that day's edition of *Het Vrije Volk* was to be found in the letter of a concerned reader who wished to send a warning to the paper.¹⁵³

Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad was again quick to pick up on the news. The newspaper focussed its attention on Governor Wallace, pointing out how his mismanagement and stubbornness had worsened the plight of African-Americans. President Johnson was, in contrast, presented as the nation's rescuer: "President Johnson made the following suggestions to Governor Wallace during their talks: 1) Support our national suffrage. 2) Respect the peaceful protests. 3 Host a meeting in your state of black people and white people. Try to bring them together."¹⁵⁴ *De Telegraaf* also pointed its criticism towards Wallace by publishing a cartoon on its front page. The cartoon shows a stately, almost majestic looking King, staring right at the reader. Below at his feet we see a little man with a whip trying to draw King's attention. The text accompanying the little man reads "Wallace" and the cartoon is called The King and I.¹⁵⁵ The message of the cartoon is clear. Wallace, even with a whip (probably representing both his political power and America's past of

¹⁵¹"President Johnson vandaag voor huis van afgevaardigden," *De Waarheid*, March 15, 1965.

"Rede Johnson," *De Waarheid*, March 16, 1965.

¹⁵²"President Johnson tot Amerikaanse volk: 'Wij kunnen niet langer wachten – stemrecht voor elke Amerikaan'," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 16, 1965.

¹⁵³"Meneer de redacteur," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 16, 1965.

¹⁵⁴"Johnson na gesprek met gouverneur Wallace: „Geen strijd met de wapens, doch via het recht",
Gereformeerd Gezinsblad, March 16, 1965

¹⁵⁵"Negerkiezers toegestaan zich te registreren," *De Telegraaf*, March 16, 1965.

domestic slavery) will not keep King from reaching his goal. Wallace is only a small element in the bigger scheme of things. With this cartoon *De Telegraaf* was the only newspaper that actually seemed to highlight the role King and his Movement played in the creation of the historic Civil Rights Act. This way of reporting is reminiscent of 1957 when the black residents of Little Rock were portrayed as victims, waiting to be saved by white America.

The Voting Rights Act did not keep the activists from protesting or the police from interfering. The day after the presentation of the Act to Congress both *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Waarheid* ran a picture on their front page of a battle that took place in Montgomery between protesters and the police.¹⁵⁶ The ongoing unrest, the death of Reeb and the introduction of the Act inspired three commentary pieces. *De Telegraaf* published an editorial on the introduction of the Act and the necessity of it all:

From a propagandist point of view the enormous publicity the country received after Selma was a bad thing. This is however unjust. People forget that the disturbances are only coming from a fraction of the American society. President Johnson has proven with his speech that the biggest part of America has nothing to do with it. This unrest is just the last convulsion of a revolution. At the end America wanted this revolution herself.¹⁵⁷

According to the writer only a small fraction of American society did not want black people to obtain equal rights. One of his main arguments for this statement is the fact that President Johnson, originating from the South, brought this Act before Congress. The writer of this editorial, however, misses one very important point. What did the American government do for black rights before the Civil Rights Movement became such success? Without the actions of SCLC, SNCC, and other organisations and individuals, the faults in America's political system would not have been revealed to the outside world. It would have taken a long time before Washington would even have dared to impose progressive legislation. The ideas of the writer match the conservative ideas of *Het Gereformeerde Gezinsblad*. Both seem to suggest that the protests of the Civil Rights Movement only hurt America's international standing and that with some patience the race problem would have solved itself.

On the same page, commentator Leonhard Huizinga in his weekly piece also commentated on America's politics: "If only the terrible governor Wallace had been a little bit more reluctant in his extremist ways, it might have taken a while. But this terrible Wallace

¹⁵⁶"Politie slaat erop in Montgomery – wie gaf opdracht?," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 17, 1965

"Demonstraties in Montgomery Alabama-politie sloeg in op studenten," *De Waarheid*, March 17, 1965

¹⁵⁷"Redevoering," *De Telegraaf*, March 17, 1965

has forced Johnson to transform himself in one day from a politician to a statesman.”¹⁵⁸ Huizinga manages to point out what the writer of the editorial completely seemed to miss. His piece is called 'Irony' and that is exactly how the situation can be described best. It was not President Johnson who suddenly had decided it was time for African-Americans to obtain equal rights. It was the policy of Governor Wallace, deciding to use police violence against unarmed protesters, that put America in a bad light. Johnson was forced to introduce his “historical bill” to Congress. It is notable how two very different opinions, both written by employees of *De Telegraaf*, can be found on the same page.

In its daily editorial *Het Vrije Volk* also devoted attention to the events in America. The perspective of the piece corresponded with the euphoric articles the newspaper had already published on the new bill.¹⁵⁹ James Reeb is explicitly mentioned as having died for the ideals of the Movement and as an example of the universalism of the Movement. It is odd that, according to the writer of the article, the death of Reeb was a sign of the universalistic ideals of the Movement. Were the aims of the Movement not universal during the Little Rock Crisis? Did the involvement, and more importantly, the death of Reeb change the Movement? Although the writer himself does not give an answer, the fact that Reeb, instead of King, is brought up in relation to the Civil Rights Act proves how much his death had influenced the Dutch reports. The brutal death of the white minister Reeb also seemed to have hit a nerve in Dutch society. A group of ministers from Rotterdam organised a fundraiser for Reeb’s widow and his three children. They asked all *Vrije Volk* readers to donate as much money as possible.¹⁶⁰

Despite the progress that was made in the last week, King and his followers still wanted to march from Selma to Montgomery. The Dutch press had not forgotten them. All four newspapers kept their readers informed on the latest developments. Notable is the fact that *De Waarheid*, as the only newspaper, reported on the additional goals of the protesters. In addition to equal rights they also started to demand proper streets and a functioning sewerage system.¹⁶¹ It is odd that *De Waarheid* did not use this opportunity to criticise the American government. Wallace, who in the meantime had become almost as famous as Governor Faubus, was the focus of these reports. His attempts to prevent the march from taking place were not appreciated. With article titles such as *Freedom march will continue, no matter how*

¹⁵⁸“Leonard Huizinga. Ironie,” *De Telegraaf*, March 17, 1965.

¹⁵⁹“Van dag tot dag commentaren. Solidariteit,” *Het Vrije Volk*, March 17, 1965.

¹⁶⁰“Actie voor weduwe van dominee Reeb,” *Het Vrije Volk*, March 18, 1965.

¹⁶¹“Vijf dagen Vrijheidsmars in Alabama,” *De Waarheid*, March 18, 1965.

stubborn Wallace is and premature reports on the march itself, the Dutch press seemed to be sure of Wallace's defeat.¹⁶²

A piece by the American journalist and commentator Walter Lippmann was published in *Het Vrije Volk* on the eve of the march. Lippmann's comments were in line with the liberal socialist views of *Het Vrije Volk*. Selma was, according to Lippmann, a national tragedy that could only be undone by implementing proper legislation.¹⁶³ Just as during the Birmingham riots the editors of *De Telegraaf* made room for a one page special on Selma. The special was accompanied by a picture of Bloody Sunday, one of King with his son and one of Sheriff Clark.¹⁶⁴ Before reporting on the current state of affairs, the article started out by giving an overview of the racial history of the city and the current state of affairs:

Selma is a city with around 29,500 inhabitants, 14,400 white and 15,100 black. On the electoral lists, however, 99 percent is white and only 1 percent is black. In Selma a Negro is expected to know his place. A local police regulation from 1852 states: A Negro found in the city while smoking a cigar or pipe or walking with a walking stick should be punished with 39 whippings. Since 1852 not much has changed. (...) The symbol of Selma is Sheriff Clark, 43, a well-built negro hater who leads a group of KKK deputies.

The writer of the article did not leave much room for any nuance. His account of Selma's past and current state of affairs is filled with racist anecdotes and examples. The writer creates an image of a city rotten to the bone. The article continues with the introduction of King and his fellow activists. The villain of Selma, as Clark is called, is pitted against the martyr of Selma, the murdered activist Jimmie Lee Jackson. The writer sketches a situation of good against evil, of King versus Clark. Although the comparison seems to work for the message the writer wants to transmit, it is not totally fair. The writer for example makes assumptions about Clark that are not verifiable. The comparisons he draws between Selma's past and present racist policies are sometimes incorrect, for example.

Despite those flaws the article also makes a few points that have been left out in many other commentaries. The writer makes it clear that it was Bloody Sunday, and especially the killing of Reeb, that forced President Johnson into action:

¹⁶²“Selma bereidt zich voor op vrijheidsmars,” *De Waarheid*, March 19, 1965.

“Vrijheidsmars gaat door – hoe Wallace ook tegenwerkt,” *Het Vrije Volk*, March 19, 1965.

“Vijfdaagse vrijheidsmars,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, March 19, 1965.

¹⁶³“Walter Lippman: Selma eist nationale daad van berouw en genoegdoening,” *Het Vrije Volk*, March 20, 1965.

¹⁶⁴“„Bloedmars" en moord dwongen de president in te grijpen,” *De Telegraaf*, March 20, 1965.

But just as so often happens in America, just when the struggle for voting rights in Selma seemed to have come to a standstill, King received unexpected help. On a Tuesday night four frustrated race haters ambushed three white ministers who had participated in the march earlier that day. Two days later, one of them, Minister James Reeb, died because of the wounds the three had inflicted on him. This really started the show. [Lont in het kruidvat]. From all sides protests poured in, condemning the murder of this innocent, unarmed man. (...) President Johnson had to choose sides this time.

Why do so few other commentators mention the connection between the murder of Reeb and the seamless introduction of the Voting Rights Act? Reeb had been the centre of attention for quite some time, but the Dutch press did not bring it up at all. And why did Reeb's death, in contrast to the murders on other innocent and unarmed activists, create such a large response? The answer to both questions is Reeb's background, he was a white minister from Boston. He was an unusual victim of racial violence. This resulted in an unusual reaction. Both Washington and the press seemed to have wanted to make a point of his death. For the first time they might have felt that without serious government interference the situation could become uncontrollable.

To openly admit the link between the murder of the white man Reeb and the new legislation might however have been a bit too much for the liberal press. This would have meant having to admit to their readers that the American government, who they openly supported, only wanted to take serious action after white lives had been endangered. Why *De Waarheid* did not use this opportunity to criticise Washington is not clear. The editors of the newspaper seemed, in contrast to the Little Rock Crisis and the Birmingham riots, less eager to profit politically from the situation.

On March 20 the official march from Selma to Montgomery finally started. The editors of *De Waarheid* reserved a large section of their newspaper for the start of the march. They printed a picture of King and other leaders marching with garlands around their necks on the front page.¹⁶⁵ The March itself was announced as a historical event: "The biggest demonstration that has ever taken place in the South of America has started today." The front-page article on the event was written in the same style, exaggerating the number of participants into the tens of thousands. On the back page readers were further informed of the goals of the march and the dangers the marchers faced.

Het Vrije Volk deemed the news of the start of the march just as important as *De Waarheid*. The newspaper editors published an article about the march on its front page including a picture of a marching King and a land map of the route. The reporting of *Het Vrije*

¹⁶⁵"Vrijheidsmars trekt door Alabama," *De Waarheid*, March 22, 1965.

Volk was less exuberant than that of *De Waarheid*. The article informed its readers of the progress and wellbeing of the 3000 marchers. The screaming headlines were, however, missing. *De Telegraaf* reported on the march in the same style as *Het Vrije Volk*, modestly and to the point.¹⁶⁶ It is notable that all three newspapers speak of a different number of marchers - ranging from tens of thousands to less than 3000. Despite a court order that ruled that only 300 marchers were allowed to start marching it probably was not clear to the organisers how many people actually participated. Therefore the numbers quoted in the articles also fluctuated greatly.

Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad was the only newspaper that, besides the regular reports, also published an editorial on the March. In contrast to other newspapers *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* was critical of King and his actions:

In an earlier article on the events in Selma we have already mentioned that we do not think the non-violent methods of King are in line with the respect a government, even that of a state, deserves. We have not changed our opinion even though President Johnson has decided to support the actions of the Negroes. Resistance is still resistance. (...) The problem of the South is the mixing of different cultures by great numbers of people with different traditions. If this happens the dangers of the loss of mores and the emergence of immorality are real. These various cultural traditions can not be ignored, even if someone cites a hundred times from the 1776 Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal. We think that forcing people to mix, as King does, is as despicable as the shameless hate white people show towards black people.¹⁶⁷

From the very start of the Civil Rights Movement *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* was not very supportive of King and his fellow activists. Their reports were sometimes neutral. More often, however, the tone of their reports, in combination with their uncritical reports of South African Apartheid, gave proof of their racist sentiments. Never before had a piece in this newspaper been as openly negative and racist as this one. Firstly, the writer of the article seems to have an enormous respect for the law and a great dislike of everyone who seems to disobey it. According to the writer the activists should have waited for the government to solve their problems instead of taking matters into their own hands. To him the fact that President Johnson supported them did not change anything. The question is how the writer thinks real change should come about without protests. And what about the right of people to protest? The writer delivers no answers.

¹⁶⁶“Geen incidenten op eerste etappe van vrijheidsmars,” *Het Vrije Volk*, March 22, 1965.

“Eerste dag zonder incidenten. Op mars door Alabama,” *De Telegraaf*, March 22, 1965.

¹⁶⁷“Buitenlands overzicht. Op mars in Alabama,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, March 24, 1965.

The writer continues his critique on King by accusing him of forcing white people and black people to mix. According to him, mixing the races is the main problem of the South. His argumentation is based on the age-old racist assumption that interracial relations lead to a loss of morals. The writer does not understand, or does not want to acknowledge, that he is as racist as the Southerners he is writing about. He ends by saying that he finds the hate that white people show against black people despicable but his earlier statements leave little doubt about his true feelings. It is not possible to say why the writer has these racist ideas. What, however, is clear is the fact that at the time *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* was probably the only Dutch national newspaper that, because of its conservative nature, still tolerated these views.

While *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* propagated respect for the law and the government, *De Waarheid* published a front-page article that focused on anti-American protests in Amsterdam. On Wednesday, March 24, a large group of Dutch high school students had protested in front of the American consulate in Amsterdam against the treatment of African-Americans. The Amsterdam police responded by removing the students by force. *De Waarheid* turned the incident into a major issue. On the front page the editors of the newspapers published two pictures of the event: one of the peaceful students and another of a male student being chased by an officer.¹⁶⁸ The accompanying back-page article was filled with quotes such as: “It looks just like Selma out here.”¹⁶⁹ Although *De Waarheid* seemed less willing than before to make politics out of the Civil Rights Movement these articles prove that the newspaper had not lost anything of its activist nature.

Aside from some minor incidents the march to Montgomery had gone well. On Thursday, March 25, around 25,000 people listened to the speech King delivered in front of the State Capitol Building. Fate, however, still struck when that same evening the white activist Viola Liuzzo was shot dead by members of the KKK. The 39-year-old mother of five was killed in her car while she returned from a trip shuttling fellow activists to the Montgomery airport.

The murder of Liuzzo diverted most of the press attention away from the march. *De Waarheid* was the only newspaper that devoted some attention to the event by publishing a picture of the end of the march in their daily editorial.¹⁷⁰ All other newspapers ignored the end of the march and instead made the murder of Liuzzo front-page news. *Het Vrije Volk*

¹⁶⁸“Stemrecht voor negers” Scholieren bij Amerikaans consulaat,” *De Waarheid*, March 25, 1965.

¹⁶⁹“Sympathie,” *De Waarheid*, March 25, 1965.

¹⁷⁰“Historische mars,” *De De Waarheid*, March 26, 1965.

published two articles on the incident and a big picture of Liuzzo's shocked children.¹⁷¹ The picture had no other purpose than to bring home to the reader what terrible consequences the murder had. The day after the murder, President Johnson issued a statement wherein he strongly condemned the actions of the KKK: "President Johnson labels the murder on the mother of five a terrible crime and calls out to the KKK: 'become humans!'"¹⁷²

The consequences of the attack for the KKK were twofold. They were despised for their actions but it also yielded them an unprecedented amount of media attention. Both *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Telegraaf* published pictures of the KKK grand wizard Robert M. Shelton Jr. and gave him room to spread his message: "The civil rights activists are trying to turn Liuzzo into a martyr. Their only reason for this is to hide the fact that the march has turned into a farce."¹⁷³ In the months after the murder the Dutch press kept their readership updated on the trial. Even almost half a year after the murder the press kept writing background articles on the case.¹⁷⁴ Just like the murder on James Reeb the Dutch press and its readership were curious about the aftermath of the incident.

After the end of the march the attention in the press for the Selma campaign slowly faded away. Some short back-page articles were published on Selma and the Civil Rights Act but all in all Selma did not generate any more attention. Surprisingly enough it was *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* that published an article that dealt with the Civil Rights Movement and the Selma campaign five months after the march: "The activists in Selma have ensured that, because of a new law, after the coming elections, various districts will have a black administration. That is an unprecedented development."¹⁷⁵ The newspaper was right about the fact that Selma had been a turning point for the Civil Rights Movement. To what extent the actions of King and his followers or the deaths of Reeb and Liuzzo are the main reasons for this development, can be debated.

King's assassination and its aftermath, 1968

After the great successes of the Civil Rights Movement in the South, King and his followers tried to spread their message of universal human rights to the North. At the beginning of 1966 the SCLC started a campaign against unfair housing practices in Chicago with the help of

¹⁷¹"Moord op vrouw aan einde van vrijheidsmars," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 26, 1965.

¹⁷²"Johnson noemt moord op moeder van vijf kinderen 'afschuimlijhe misdaad,'" *Het Vrije Volk*, March 27, 1965.

¹⁷³"„Omkopen",," *De Telegraaf*, March 29, 1965.

"Klan'-leiders willen gesprek met Jhonson," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 29, 1965.

¹⁷⁴"Die gekke wereld," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 23, 1965.

¹⁷⁵"Buitenlands overzicht. Een vonk in het kruitvat," *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, August 19, 1965.

local groups. Despite King's efforts and good intentions the campaign was not as successful as he had hoped. The organised marches were met with a lot of hostility and the participants themselves were not as motivated and disciplined as in the South. During the Chicago campaign, King devoted a great deal of attention to poverty and the plight of poor black people in his speeches. King felt that by fighting poverty he could further improve the situation of his people. Another topic that became dominant in King's political purview was his fierce opposition of the war in Vietnam. During the last months of King's life, the media attention he received was mostly centred on these two topics.

At the end of 1966 King started to display himself as a strong opponent of the war in Vietnam to a growing degree. He participated in various anti-war rallies such as the great anti-war march in New York, May 1967.¹⁷⁶ In contrast to the reports on King's campaign for black rights, the reports in the Dutch press were not as numerous or as positive. King was mentioned a few times because he was present but other (black) leaders such as the performer Harold Belafonte seemed to draw more attention.¹⁷⁷ The uncritical approach that King had enjoyed earlier seemed to have disappeared. *De Telegraaf* published a pungently critical article on King's current position:

The times of the big crusades of some years ago are over. Crusades like the big march on Washington of 1963, the march from Selma to Montgomery or one of those other meetings of black people and white people who sang, clapped and prayed, are over. Over are the days when white students helped poor black people. Over are the days when church organisations and all-important Negro organisations worked together. Over are the days of King as the powerful leader.¹⁷⁸

What can explain the melancholia and the criticism in this piece? It is true that the high point of the Civil Rights Movement was over. The 1964 Civil Rights Act had been a turning point in the struggle. But the statement that King is no longer a powerful leader seemed overdone. The critique seems related towards King's position on Vietnam, although it was not explicitly mentioned. At this time, publicly speaking out against the war in Vietnam was still an unpopular thing to do in conservative circles, like those of *De Telegraaf*. With his pacifistic activities, King had changed in the eyes of some from a progressive liberal into a dangerous pacifist or even a communist. These sentiments definitely influenced the opinion of the Dutch press.

¹⁷⁶“Voor vrede in Vietnam Demonstratie half miljoen mensen in New York,” *De Waarheid*, April 15, 1967.

¹⁷⁷“Weersvoorspelling,” *De Waarheid*, April 17, 1967.

¹⁷⁸“Bezorgdheid,” *De Telegraaf*, April 18, 1967.

During 1967 King was mentioned in the Dutch press on various occasions. For example, he received a large inheritance and made some speeches wherein he criticised President Johnson.¹⁷⁹ Almost all these reports were printed on the back pages of the newspapers, squished between other unimportant articles on foreign events. In 1967 the only real front-page coverage King received, was when he returned to Birmingham for a five day prison sentence he had to serve because of his involvement in an illegal sit-in.¹⁸⁰ The fact that this news, instead of his anti-war efforts, made the headlines, reveals much about the position of King at the time. King tried to spread his anti-war message in the press but an old conviction, arising from the Birmingham protests, got him on the front page.

The reports on King at the beginning of 1968 were not much different from those of 1967. Poverty and the war in Vietnam were still the main topics. Despite King's efforts he did not succeed in making headlines. It was the more radical activist Stokely Carmichael that seemed to draw the most attention. *De Telegraaf* published a portrait of Carmichael, including an analysis of his popularity: "They [the negroes] no longer trust leaders like Martin Luther King and Roy Wilkins (...) They know that despite King's good work he is paid at least 75,000 dollars a year. He swims in wealth while his people are rotting away in poor neighbourhoods. That's why King is out."¹⁸¹ It seemed that the Dutch press felt that King's days as a leader were over. Because of his Nobel Prize and huge salary, King no longer seemed able to relate with the ordinary black man. This opinion seems to fit in with a longer tradition of articles that predicted that the black population would turn to more radical leaders.

Despite this negative coverage King still enjoyed a large following. Shortly before his murder he was busy organising a second march on Washington.¹⁸² Besides that he was also frequently participating in smaller marches and protests. For example, King supported the striking garbage men of Memphis with a march. It was unfortunate for the SCLC that this event turned into a fiasco. Participants started rioting and the police responded by killing one of them and hurting several others. This march resulted in a lot of negative media attention for King. *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Telegraaf* both ran articles with titles like *Negro killed during King's march* and *Luther King's march turns into a raid*.¹⁸³ When a few of King's marches

¹⁷⁹"Verzet tegen Vietnam-politiek regering-Johnson. Verklaring van vier Amerikaanse," *De Waarheid*, August 19, 1967.

"Luther King bepleit grote actie," *Het Vrije Volk*, August 16, 1967.

"Legaat voor King," *De Telegraaf*, June 27, 1967.

¹⁸⁰"Luther King in arrest," *Het Vrije Volk*, October 31, 1967.

¹⁸¹"Ongerust," *De Telegraaf*, January 25, 1968.

¹⁸²"Plan voor mars op Washington," *Het Vrije Volk*, 3 February, 1968.

"Weer mars naar Washington," *Het Vrije Volk*, 5 February, 1968.

¹⁸³"Tijdens mars van ds. King Neger gedood bij relletjes," *Het Vrije Volk*, March 29, 1968.

had turned violent in the past, the Dutch press never explicitly put the blame on King. For the very first time King was openly linked to and even held responsible for the bad behaviour of his followers. It seemed that King, now that he had started to spread less popular ideas, no longer enjoyed the status of the untouchable messiah. The Dutch media had to get used to the new King. They still had to find a way to deal with his pacifist ideas.

On Thursday, April 4, 1968, King was staying in room 306 at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. When in town, he always stayed at this exact motel and room: the owner of the motel Walter Bailey stated that the room was therefore known as the "King–Abernathy Suite."¹⁸⁴ On the particular evening of King's death he had gone out from his room onto the balcony. A few seconds after King stepped onto the balcony he was hit by a single bullet in the head. King was rushed to St. Joseph's Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 7:05 p.m. that evening. The murderer, James Earl Ray, managed to stay on the run before he was arrested in London on June 8, 1968. Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison and he died there on April 23, 1998, at the age of 70. King's assassination resulted in a wave of civil unrest throughout large parts of the United States. These riots, also known as the Holy Week Uprising, are said to have been the greatest wave of social unrest the United States experienced since the Civil War.¹⁸⁵ At least 43 people were killed and over 2500 were injured during the unrest.

The news of the murder became the headline in all four Dutch newspapers. All newspapers dedicated large parts of their editions to the murder and the subsequent riots. *De Waarheid* opened on its front page with a picture of King and another one of some burning buildings in New York. The paper devoted a lot of attention to the riots. The newspaper was clearly supporting the activists:

Hardly one and a half miles away from the White House in Washington police forces, using clubs and tear gas, entered the Negro district this morning. It was officially stated that a lot of Negroes were arrested during "cleansing actions." During demonstrations in Nashville, also in the state of Tennessee, a 13-year-old black boy was shot by the police this morning. Later that day black people started to get confronted by the 4000 troopers who were sent by the governor to, as they said, "keep the peace."¹⁸⁶

"Luther King's mars liep ... uit óp plundertocht," *De Telegraaf*, March 29, 1968.

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/crim/mlk/part6.htm> (09-17-16).

¹⁸⁵ Peter B. Levy, "The Dream Deferred: The Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., and the Holy Week Uprisings of 1968," in: Jessica I. Elfenbein, et al. *Baltimore '68 : riots and rebirth in an American city* (2011).

¹⁸⁶ "Schokkend," *De Waarheid*, April 5, 1968.

"„Wij zijn in beweging en niets kan ons tegenhouden" Martin Luther King," *De Waarheid*, April 5, 1968.

It is notable that at the top of the front page *De Waarheid* printed an appeal, issued by various left-wing organisations such as the communist party of Amsterdam, to attend a demonstration in support of the Movement. Before the murder of King *De Waarheid* had often made mention of demonstrations (in support of the Civil Rights Movement) before. The newspaper had never before been used as a medium to actively recruit people to participate in marches and political actions. It seemed that in the past, the editors of the paper did not want to link their newspaper so closely to the same actions they were reporting on. The assassination of King and the subsequent march, however, seemed important enough to make an exception.

Het Vrije Volk published a picture of King on its front page, another one of the motel and one of the riots in Harlem.¹⁸⁷ In contrast to *De Waarheid*, *Het Vrije Volk* put much more focus on King and his legacy, instead of the riots. On the front page *Het Vrije Volk* ran a commentary piece on King and the current state of the U.S.:

The death of this man, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner ever, comes at a critical point. Everywhere we hear sounds of the long and hot summer that is awaiting America. The Negroes in the ghettos are rebellious. Extremists are trying to use the feelings of these Negroes. Martin Luther King, who still enjoyed a large following of black people and most sane white people, was a counterbalance to this. His authority might have prevented the worst. With his death, extremism from both sides will only increase.¹⁸⁸

During the whole Civil Rights era people feared that the situation might escalate someday. The increasing popularity of Malcolm X was one of the developments that frightened the public. Now that King had been killed, political commentators expected the Civil Rights struggle to escalate, or as *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* had called this expected escalation in one of their articles a few months earlier: “*The expected rise of the black Hitlers.*”¹⁸⁹

On its second page *Het Vrije Volk* continued with reports on King’s death. The articles on this page reflected this same fearful vision of a black population, controlled by violent black leaders. In the opening article writer James Baldwin was quoted stating that even King could not solve America’s race problem because “He was surrounded by people who were a product of a society that glorifies crime.”¹⁹⁰ The rest of the article portrayed King as the only factor that had kept African-Americans from turning violent. Although it is not mentioned as

¹⁸⁷“Dader voortvluchtig na aanslag in Memphis (Tennessee). Rellen laaien op in steden. Blanke vermoordt Luther King (39),” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 5, 1968.

¹⁸⁸“Commentaar Luther King,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 5, 1968.

¹⁸⁹“Buitenlands overzicht. Wallace, Gardner, Luther King,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, February 14, 1968.

¹⁹⁰“Portret van een groot leider Martin Luther Kings strijd begon in 1956,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 5, 1968.

explicitly as in the commentary article on the front page, the writer of this article also seemed to expect a very violent future for America.

Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad treated the death of King in an unusual way. Instead of printing an article about the murder, as all other newspapers did, *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* focussed first and foremost on the riots: “Hundreds of Negroes in Washington have gone wild because of King’s murder, started to riot and plunder. (...) A lot of shops and cars have been burned down.”¹⁹¹ Why were the riots and not the murder of King the main story for *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*? King was, despite his religious background, unpopular in most conservative circles. His ideas of letting white people and black people live together were, as earlier articles prove, controversial. Although the newspaper gives no glimpse of these sentiments, any signs of true grief or shock were missing.

Was the newspaper not concerned at all about the possible radicalisation of black America? A commentary piece in the foreign news section sheds a light on the issue. It seems that in contrast to the impersonal articles on the front page the writer of the commentary actually grasped what King’s death meant for relations in black America: “King has always fought against these sentiments [black versus white violence]. He made several speeches in favour of racial cooperation. He stated correctly that black power is as bad as white power.”¹⁹² This was, however, not the only reason why the writer of the commentary grieved for the loss of King. Never before had *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, despite its Christian roots, brought the religious impact of King into the discussion. With his death it seemed that the newspaper wanted to bring up an issue about religion and the Civil Rights Movement:

These Negroes consider themselves a nation colonised by whites. Just like their colonial counterparts they feel that they have to be liberated. That is why Kenyatta from Kenya, Nkrumah from Ghana and Malcolm X are more loved than Jesus Christ. That is why people created their own gods. (...) The white men need to realise that he blocks the path of the black man towards Jesus. When he does not accept his fellow black man as his equal he commits a sin that will only turn against him. The Cross of Christ was not established for black people or white people only. Every being on Earth depends on Him.

According to the reasoning of the writer, black people turned to leaders such as Kenyatta, Nkrumah and Malcolm X because white men did not treat them as equals. This was regarded by the writer as problematic. Not just because black people deserved equality but mostly because black people therefore treated their newfound black leaders as gods. Idolatry was, of

¹⁹¹“Rouw in Amerika na moord op ds. Martin Luther King,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, April 6, 1968.

¹⁹²“Buitenlands overzicht. De dood van ds. Luther King,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, April 6, 1968.

course, not permitted by the Church. According to the writer white people had to open their hearts to black people in order for them to be saved from imposters like Kenyatta. If that did not happen both races would be damned. What is the position of King in this account? Although the writer does not mention it explicitly, the death of King must have been a huge loss for him. Considering his views, he must have regarded King as the ideal black leader. It is notable that during King's life these sentiments were never expressed by this newspaper. King was vilified for his ideas of racial integration instead of being honoured for keeping black people on Christ's path.

On its front page *De Telegraaf* published the famous picture of the followers of King pointing at the spot from which the deadly shot was fired. *De Telegraaf* regarded the news of King's murder important enough to send a special extra reporter to the U.S. The coverage of *De Telegraaf* was therefore even more extended than that of the other newspapers. A total of four pages were dedicated to King. Just like the other three newspapers, *De Telegraaf* reported extensively on the murder of King and the ensuing riots. *De Telegraaf* did this in a notably visual manner by publishing a smaller picture of a shot King and two large close-ups of King's head capped by a towel. The newspaper assigned a section of its four-page special on King, to the reactions in Dutch society on the murder. Throughout the country, vigils and marches were organised for him. The reactions of members of society prove how famous King was and how shocked the public was by his death.

The next day, *De Waarheid* published an edition with a cover page solely based on the events in America.¹⁹³ Two elements dominated the cover page: articles on police violence against the rioters and the socialist protests in Amsterdam. In their articles, *De Waarheid* made it seem that black people were attacked by the police forces without any reason. In the cover article called *Tank against Negroes in Washington and Chicago*, a story on the ongoing riots was published. No mention is made of the fact that black people were damaging their own neighbourhoods or plundering stores just for financial gain. *De Waarheid* wanted to make it look like the American government was violently harassing its black population without any reason. The newspaper could have published a much more balanced article on the subject. *De Waarheid* did not do this because this narrative fitted much better into their negative portrayal of Johnson's administration.

¹⁹³“Uitgaansverbod in Washington,” *De Waarheid*, April 8, 1968.

“Steun aan negerbeweging Grote betoging van solidariteit,” *De Waarheid*, April 8, 1968.

In imitation of *De Telegraaf*, *Het Vrije Volk* also asked a special reporter to give his views on the events in the United States. Reporter A. de Swaan published an interesting piece on the role of the press in relation to the riots.¹⁹⁴ He stated that the American press was very dependent for their news on the tainted information of the police. Gathering news independently was quite hard according to his account. In order to prevent the situation escalating any further, the press also censored itself. According to Swaan the riots were just as bad in Pittsburgh as in Watts or Detroit, but because of national security, the press kept these reports out of their stories. It is interesting how Swaan is able to analyse how the American media, in cooperation with the government, tried to prevent the riots from escalating any further.

The next day, the newspapers were still dominated by the murder of King and subsequent riots. All newspapers published pictures on their front pages concerning the events. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* put its focus on President Johnson and the handling of the riots. The tone of the article was impersonal and pragmatic: “Six thousand federate troops are sent to Chicago in order to help the local police force in suppressing the riots.”¹⁹⁵ *De Telegraaf* put a lot of emphasis on the riots in their articles. However their tone was more emotional and sensational: “Most people stay in their homes because of the curfew. Parts of America are trembling with fear because of the coming civil war.”¹⁹⁶ The contrast between the reports is clear. While *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* portrayed the riots as just a problem that could be handled with some extra military forces, *De Telegraaf* expected the riots to turn into a civil war. The picture accompanying the article, showing fully armed troops riding in a jeep through burning Washington, only enforced this idea.

De Waarheid and *Het Vrije Volk* devoted more attention to King and his funeral. On the front page *Het Vrije Volk* published a picture of the church where King was laid out and one of King's grave. His translated epitaph was quoted at the beginning of the article on his funeral. The article itself gave an extensive description of the funeral and the emotional reactions of people, such as King's wife Coretta.¹⁹⁷ *De Waarheid* also opened their daily editorial with King's funeral. They reported on the continuing riots, but they seemed hesitant

¹⁹⁴“Dr. King geëerd in massale mars,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 8, 1968.

¹⁹⁵“Na de dood van ds. King President Johnson zal begrafenis bijwonen,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, April 8, 1968.

¹⁹⁶“Angst voor burgeroorlog beheerst velen. Chaos duurt voort in Noord-Amerika. Enorme schade in vele steden Door Otto Kuijk,” *De Telegraaf*, April 8, 1968.

¹⁹⁷“Johnson verhinderd – Atlanta vreest onlusten na begrafenis. Wereld volgt begrafenis ds. Luther King,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 9, 1968.

to mention the damage black people were doing to their own communities.¹⁹⁸ It seemed that this just did not fit in with their dominant story of black people being victimised by the police.

Shortly before his death King had given an interview to the Dutch KRO television network. *De Waarheid* published the interview in full. This piece clarifies how King had changed his focus from fighting for equal rights to fighting poverty and ending the war in Vietnam: “A lot is cut in the fight against poverty. The dump clean-up is cut. The program for affordable rent is cut. (...) So much is cut in order to fight this war.”¹⁹⁹ We can be sure that if King had not been murdered he would have been even more popular with the socialist press.

The murder of King resulted in an avalanche of reactions around the world. From Africa to the Netherlands leaders expressed their disbelief and condolences with public statements. King had become such an icon that the public also wanted to share their emotions with the rest of society. Various people sent letters to the Dutch press to express their feelings. These letters can be divided into two categories; one expressed condolences and grief, the other one political commentary. The letters in the first category mostly had the same message. According to these accounts King had been a terrific leader and he would be missed dearly.²⁰⁰ A creative reader sent a poem she wrote about King to *De Telegraaf*. The poem, named *Day of Brothers*, was a homage to King. All these letters expressed the sincere feelings of grief felt by most of the public. The political letters, however, show how King’s death also had its impact on the Dutch political situation.

A reader of *Het Vrije Volk* sent a letter to the newspaper the day after King had been buried. In the letter the writer called up all socialist elements to work together against the capitalistic world order.²⁰¹ According to the writer, the death of King had been another sign that capitalism was about to disappear. He felt that the time had come for all socialists the world over to unite. The writer of another letter in *Het Vrije Volk* of the same date was also in favour of communism. In the letter, an earlier Dutch critic of King was attacked for his negative remarks on King’s possible communist ties.²⁰² The next day two other letters were sent to *Het Vrije Volk*. One called upon all Dutch people to continue King’s struggle; the

¹⁹⁸“Eerbetoen aan King—steun voor stakende negerarbeiders INDRUKWEKKENDE MARS.,” *De Waarheid*, April 9, 1968.

¹⁹⁹“TV-interview vlak voor zijn dood King: Oorlog tegen armoede Weg uit Vietnam,” *De Waarheid*, April 9, 1968.

²⁰⁰“Brieven van lezers. Martin Luther King,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 9, 1968.

“Waardigheid. Wat anderen ervan denkend,” *De Telegraaf*, April 10, 1968.

²⁰¹“Handen ineen,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 10, 1968.

²⁰²“Zonder commentaar,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 10, 1968.

second criticised the Dutch government and Dutch society for being just as racist as the U.S.: “Even for the participants of the silent march the question ‘how would you react if your daughter comes home with a Negro’ is something they frown upon.”²⁰³ It is notable that these communist letters were sent to *Het Vrije Volk* instead of to *De Waarheid*. It seems that the writers wanted to spread their message to a readership that was less familiar with these views.

Despite the fact that King had been buried, the riots continued. The coverage followed mostly the same pattern as it had before King’s funeral. *De Waarheid* and to a lesser extent *Het Vrije Volk* focussed on the brutal treatment of black people, while *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* in particular focussed on the looting. The difference in approach can be derived from the titles of the articles. An article on the 10th of April in *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* was called *Looting in the U.S.* while an item in *De Waarheid* the following day was titled *Negroes brutally treated*.²⁰⁴ Not all reporters relapsed into their stereotypical way of reporting. *De Telegraaf*, with their two local reporters, published a moving and detailed article on King’s funeral.²⁰⁵ A. de Swaan, the special reporter of *Het Vrije Volk*, again wrote an interesting article on the situation in the U.S. This time he focussed his attention on King’s legacy:

Last night's San Francisco Express Times opened with the despicable but true title: King’s body stolen! The establishment has maimed Martin Luther King beyond recognition. They have cut away everything that reminds them of his protest against tanks and napalm, the violence of the men in power. Only his rejection of arson and riots, the violence of the have-nots, is left alive.²⁰⁶

In his article Swaan points out how selective the appreciation for King actually was. While the black rioters were reminded by people like President Johnson of King’s nonviolent ideas, King’s criticism of the war in Vietnam was totally ignored. Swaan believed that the riots were seen by the establishment as a necessary evil. In order to control the protesters an eruption once in a while was simply something the government had to deal with. Swaan was negative about the chances of finding a solution. He felt that black people were alone in their problems. Even if someone like Robert Kennedy had a proper solution, he would not have dared to enforce it because of his fear of losing voters. In his views Swaan was more negative

²⁰³“Drie vragen,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 11, 1968.

²⁰⁴“Buitenlands overzicht. Plunderen in de V.S.,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, April 10, 1968.

“Vijf doden bij politieacties in Kansas City Bruut geweld tegen negerbevolking.,” *De Waarheid*, April 11, 1968.

²⁰⁵ “Ontroerend afscheid van Ds. King Stoet van zes kilometer door Otto Kuijk,” *De Telegraaf*, April 10, 1968.

²⁰⁶“King is dood, leve King Berkeley, Californie, woensdagavond. door A. de Swaan,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 11, 1968.

than most of the articles that appeared in the Dutch press. Most newspapers had, despite King's death, some hope of a quick resolve of the affair. Swaan gave the Dutch public a grimmer image than they were used to.

Otto Kuijk, a critic for *De Telegraaf*, had a different opinion on the whole matter. Kuijk based his article of April 12th on a conversation he had with a young American at the airport. This American had said to Kuijk that "For America to grow up as a country it has to undergo a terrible disaster."²⁰⁷ Kuijk felt that the death of King and the resulting hate, anger and sorrow might be the "terrible disaster" the U.S. needed. Kuijk had hoped that King's death would become a turning point. In contrast to Swaab, he had the idea that "The Great Society President Johnson has dreamed of might become a reality one day."

The death of King had an unexpected result. The refound interest of the public in King resulted in a wave of commercial products 'in honour of King' that swept the market. Products such as books, medals and commemorative coins seemed to be sold everywhere. All newspapers except *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* were eager to facilitate these undertakings.²⁰⁸ Only a few days after King's death advertisements of various products started to appear alongside articles on the famous civil rights leader. King was yet to be buried but people were already encouraged to keep him in memory by buying a coin with his image and date of death. All newspapers, of course, were commercial enterprises that kept themselves in business by selling editions and publishing advertisements. It is, however, a peculiar thing to see a newspaper like *Het Vrije Volk* run a sensational advertisement on some King product next to an article that deals with the burial of the very same man.

In the following month *De Telegraaf* presented their own plans to make profit out of the events. Reporters Otto Kuijk and Bart van Veen had written a book on King that was commissioned by the newspaper itself. In the weeks before the book was published the readership was made aware of the upcoming publication: "*Teleboek 'books that people talk about' present; The shot that shocked the world. Martin Luther King is dead. The world cries.*"²⁰⁹ In connection with the publication of the book on November 11th *De Telegraaf* published a review of the book. This review was nothing more than a puff piece. The review also included a few short extracts from the book. It is notable that these fragments were full of assumptions about King's motivations and emotions. The article, for example, recreates a

²⁰⁷"Ontmoeting door Leonhard Huizinga," *De Telegraaf*, April 12, 1968.

²⁰⁸"Advertentie," *Het Vrije Volk*, April 16, 1968.

"Advertentie," *De Telegraaf*, April 10, 1968.

"Pegasus-affiche met beeltenis van King," *De Waarheid*, April 16, 1968.

²⁰⁹"Advertentie," *De Telegraaf*, April 10, 1968.

scene in a shoe store that evidently made the eight-year-old King decide to become a civil rights worker.²¹⁰ With this book and article *De Telegraaf* seemed to have chosen profit over integrity.

The third main news story, aside from the murder of King and the riots, was the news of the search for King's murderer James Earl Ray. On the day of the assassination Ray fled from Memphis to Canada. Under a false name and with a fake passport he took a flight to London where he stayed until he was arrested on June 8, 1968. He confessed to the crime on March 10, 1969 and after pleading guilty he was sentenced to 99 years in prison. In 1998, at the age of seventy, Ray died in prison from a chronic hepatitis C infection.

Shortly after the murder the Dutch press did not seem to be interested in the man who had actually assassinated King. Mention was made of what eye-witnesses had seen, but the murder and the riots received far more attention. On November 11, almost a week after the murder, the first articles on the search for the murderer started to appear. The first articles, however, were little more than speculation on the possible whereabouts of the suspect. *Het Vrije Volk*, for example, published an article on its front page that solely dealt with the possible location of the killers' car.²¹¹ The next day *De Telegraaf* published an article with almost exactly the same message; no traces were found but the police will keep looking.²¹² *De Waarheid* started to spread rumours of a possible conspiracy. In an extensive article, accompanied by two pictures, the newspaper presented the theory to its readers:

Has the attorney general Clark spread nonsense when he said that the murder would be solved soon? Or does the true murderer enjoy protection in the highest circles of society? These are the questions people in America are asking. The mysterious atmosphere that surrounds this investigation seems to match that of the investigation on the Kennedy murder. Back then the official authorities stated: 'There is no conspiracy, Oswald is the only killer.' (...) But that was 1963, not 1968. Even the FBI is using the word conspiracy, which says a lot about the current changes taking place in the U.S.²¹³

The following week *De Waarheid* continued spreading rumours by publishing another article that suggested that the unknown murderer of King, just like Lee Harvey Oswald, had been murdered himself and that his identity was kept secret by the authorities.²¹⁴ *De Waarheid*, however, was not the only newspaper that believed in some kind of conspiracy surrounding

²¹⁰“Otto Kuijk en Bart van Veen brachten op boeiende wijze het leven van,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 5, 1968.

²¹¹“Auto van moordenaar ds. King gevonden,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 12, 1968.

²¹²“Ds. King leeft voort als martelaar. Moordenaar nog steeds niet gepakt door OTTO KUIJK,” *De Telegraaf*, April 13, 1968.

²¹³“Onbeantwoorde vragen over moord King,” *De Waarheid*, April 19, 1968.

²¹⁴“Moordenaar King zou zijn geliquideerd,” *De Waarheid*, April 26, 1968.

King's death. *Het Vrije Volk* published two articles on the possibility of King having been killed by a professional assassin. In one article a sum of 5000 dollars was mentioned for the murder of King.²¹⁵ The next day, however, *Het Vrije Volk* published another story mentioning a source that claimed to have been offered a million dollars to kill King. According to this report the King's killers were the same people that were behind the assassination of President Kennedy.²¹⁶

Why did *Waarheid* and *Het Vrije Volk* publish such speculative articles? Did they truly believe that the murder of King was the work of the American authorities? *De Waarheid* especially had always been suspicious of the U.S. government, but never before had the newspaper openly given proof of believing in conspiracy theories. The difference between past events, such as the murder of Malcolm X, and the current situation, was the fact that no murderer had yet been found. The absence of a suspect and unclear messages from the government encouraged the idea that something was not right. These rumours, which were mostly spread in smaller American newspapers,²¹⁷ were shared by *De Waarheid* and *Het Vrije Volk*. In their urge to publish at least something on the King case, both newspapers went along with the craze.

Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad and *De Telegraaf* took a different strategy. Instead of publishing conspiracy theories they kept to dull news stories based on police reports.²¹⁸ Although these articles were far from exciting, they kept to the truth. It is especially notable that *De Telegraaf* did not print these articles although their public was probably interested in these made-up stories as well. *De Waarheid* and *Het Vrije Volk* continued to print these conspiracy theories up to the moment of Ray's arrest on June 8, 1968. From that moment on both newspapers dropped the conspiracy theories and returned to regular reports.

At the end of his life King was trying to create more attention and understanding for the poor circumstances most black people were living in. The average black man made substantially less money than the average white man. Because of bad schooling and racism it was much more difficult, if not impossible, for black people to enter the higher ranks of society. Before King's death the subject had received very little to no attention from the Dutch press. Only some mention was made of King's plans to organise another march on Washington. Even *De Waarheid* published no articles on the situation even though it could

²¹⁵“King gedood door beroepsmoordenaar,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 24, 1968.

²¹⁶“Miljoen voor moord op King,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 25, 1968.

²¹⁷“Onbeantwoorde vragen over Moord King,” *De Waarheid*, April 19, 1968.

²¹⁸“Duizenden jagen op moordenaar van King,” *De Telegraaf*, April 19, 1968.

“Arrestatiebevel inzake moord op ds. King,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, April 19, 1968.

have been an interesting topic in their struggle against American capitalism. Because of King's death the subject suddenly became a topic of interest.

De Waarheid printed one short article and one longer article on the poverty of African-Americans and their relationship to the rise of the black power movement.²¹⁹ *Het Vrije Volk* also published a short article on poverty in the U.S. and the efforts of King in trying to raise awareness for the problem.²²⁰ Shortly before his death King had been busy with the organisation of a Poor People's Campaign. The campaign demanded economic and human rights for poor Americans of all backgrounds. An important part of the Campaign was the Poor People's March. Just like the March on Washington in 1963 King wanted this march to become an enormous gathering of dissatisfied citizens. He wanted to pressure the government in Washington to act by literally bringing the problem to their doorstep. The Campaign was not a great success. It seemed that the Johnson administration was mostly preoccupied with the War in Vietnam.

Despite the disappointing results, after King's death Ralph Abernathy and Coretta King continued the campaign. On 2 May 1968 the two Civil Rights leaders gave the go-ahead for the start of the campaign in Memphis. In the following weeks people were going to protest and march all over the country to raise awareness of their financial situation. The centre of attention was the Poor People's March on Washington. Starting from May 12 for two weeks straight Coretta King and her fellow activist held a protest demanding an Economic Bill of Rights. In contrast to Luther King's attempts to draw attention to America's poor, the Poor People Campaign soon had the attention of both the U.S. and foreign press.

De Telegraaf and *Het Vrije Volk* announced the start of the campaign in articles on their back pages while *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* and *De Waarheid* deemed it important enough for the front page.²²¹ Accompanying a short article on the start of the campaign in Memphis, *De Waarheid* published a picture of a large crowd of activists.²²² In all articles on the campaign, King's presence was felt. The fact that he had helped organise the campaign

²¹⁹“Armoede,” *De Waarheid*, April 12, 1968.

“Geweld,” *De Waarheid*, April 12, 1968.

²²⁰“Honger in Ver. Staten,” *Het Vrije Volk*, April 24, 1968.

²²¹“Na arrestatie propagandist Mars der Armen Studentendemonstraties in Marks (VS),” *De Waarheid*, May 2, 1968.

“Armen op mars naar Washington,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 2, 1968.

“„Campagne van de armen" in Amerika,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, May 2, 1968.

“Mars der Armen begonnen,” *De Waarheid*, May 3, 1968

“„Armoedemars" in Memphis van start,” *De Telegraaf*, May 3, 1968.

²²²“Mars der Armen begonnen,” *De Waarheid*, May 3, 1968.

before he died seemed more important than the campaign itself. King's murderer was still on the loose and the press just was not finished with the whole episode yet.

In the days that followed, the march continued to grow. Slowly the emphasis of the coverage changed from King's death to the actual events. Coretta King led a successful Mother's Day march through the centre of Washington. In a growing number of cities people also took to the streets in protest.²²³ Various articles appeared on the events.²²⁴ *De Waarheid* was especially eager to report on the campaign. They published various articles and photographs on the marchers. The concept of poor people camping in self-made huts in front of the Capital must have been an intriguing idea to them. It seemed that the whole campaign had the blessing of the Dutch press. Even *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* praised the organisers for not being as radical as other black leaders, such as Carmichael.²²⁵

On June 8, 1968 King's murderer Ray was arrested at a London airport while he was trying to flee to Canada. Ray's arrest was not as big a news story as might be expected. The cause for this was the murder of Robert Kennedy two days earlier. Kennedy's death made headlines all over the world and took attention away from the King case. The event was a turning point in the reports on King. After Kennedy's death the reports on the King case, such as the arrest of Ray, did not create as much attention as before. Almost all articles on King during the rest of the year were printed on the back pages.²²⁶

²²³“Voorproefje armen-campagne Mevrouw King aan hoofd van ‚Moederdagmars’,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 14, 1968

²²⁴“„Mars der armen,” schrikbeeld voor Washington” *De Telegraaf*, May 9, 1968

“Mars der armen groeit,” *Het Vrije Volk*, May 10, 1968.

²²⁵“Buitenlands overzicht „De Mars der Armen”,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, May 22, 1968.

²²⁶ Examples: “Vaarwel, oom Tom,” *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*, September 17, 1968.

“Film over ds. King,” *Het Vrije Volk*, September 5, 1968.

“Moord op King geen complot,” *Het Vrije Volk*, June 27, 1968.

“Familie King naar ons land gevraagd,” *De Telegraaf*, July 3, 1968.

Reflection

On August 28, 1963 Martin Luther King delivered his famous “I have a dream’ speech in front of the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Fifty years later, on August 28, 2013, the event and therewith the Civil Rights Movement was commemorated all over the world. The Netherlands was no exception. On the television, in the newspapers and on the Internet, historians and commentators shed their light on King, his speech and the Civil Rights Movement. King took the lead in almost all stories. It is interesting to see how fifty years after the Civil Rights Movement, King has become the one and only poster child of the mainstream Movement. Persons such as Ralph Abernathy, John Lewis, James Bevel and Governor Wallace seem to have disappeared from the nation’s collective memory. The Dutch historical perception of the Civil Rights Movement seems to have narrowed on King and his seemingly glorious victories.

This is not the way Dutch contemporaries thought about the Civil Rights Movement. They were comprehensively informed of the events in the United States on the radio, sometimes television and especially newspapers. In order to get a better understanding of how Dutch society thought of the Civil Rights Movement it is therefore important to take a look at the way the Dutch press portrayed the Movement. This gives a better understanding of how Dutch society looked at the Civil Rights Movement in general and civil disobedience in particular. The Sixties were a time of turmoil and social unrest. In what way was the Dutch society informed about these issues? Did the press support the activists or were they reluctant to accept the fact that people were demanding changes by taking to the streets? The Dutch perspective was, however, not the only reason why it is important to take a closer look at the Dutch reports on the Movement.

The leadership of the Movement realised that for true change to take place they needed the support of the (international) community. To bring their message to their designated public, they had to make use of the national and international press. For the press to remain interested in the Movement, the leadership constantly had to come up with newsworthy actions and events. This resulted in various campaigns that were designed to create as many headlines as possible. It is safe to say that the Civil Rights Movement was made for, and by, the (international) press. The Netherlands was one of the West European countries that was able to put pressure on American officials. Partly for this reason King visited the Netherlands in 1964 and 1965. The Dutch press played a key role in transmitting the message of the Civil Rights Movement to the Dutch public. The question that was central to this research was

therefore, how, and why in this particular way, did the Dutch writing press report on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States?

The Little Rock Crisis has been central to the first chapter of this research because it was the first event in the Movement that received a fair amount of attention in the Dutch press. It was, however, not the very first important event during the first phase of the Civil Rights Movement. In the spring of 1954, the United States Supreme Court declared during the *Brown versus Board of Education* case that the separation in public schools between black and white students was unconstitutional. This was an enormous breakthrough for the situation of black people in the United States. It is notable that the *Brown versus Board of Education* case was not mentioned at all in any of the four newspapers. This cannot be explained through a general lack of interest in the situation of black people in the United States. A year later, the murder of Emmet Till received a lot of media attention in the Dutch newspapers, including the publication of various pictures.

There are two possible explanations for the total lack of reports on the Brown case. It seems that at the time, the Dutch journalists just did not understand how important the Brown case was for race relations in America. The newspapers did not have a special American reporter that was informed on the whole situation. A second possible explanation for the lack of reports is the nature of the Brown case. It was, in contrast to the Till murder, not a very visually attractive event. There were no pictures of Till or the perpetrators to show. The newspaper editors might just have decided that the news did not interest their readership.

The coverage on the Little Rock Crisis of 1957 was a front-page event for all four newspapers. Pictures of the Little Rock Nine graced the front pages of all four newspapers except *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*. The pictures themselves, of a white mob harassing a small group of black children, corresponded to the perception of the Dutch press. The situation in Little Rock was portrayed as a fight of a few innocent black children versus a hostile white power bloc. In the articles on the situation no mention was made of the various (black) organisations that were behind the integrationist efforts in Little Rock. It must have seemed to most readers that these nine black children had decided to enrol at the Little Rock Central High School all on their own.

Why did the Dutch press pay so little attention to the black organisations that were behind the action? Why did they make it seem to be a spontaneous action started by only a few black youngsters? This way of reporting is in line with the racist mind-set most people had in the Fifties. Colonialism was on its way back, but it was still believed that the non-

Western world needed the West for advice and guidance. The white man, even after the horrors of the Second World War, was just deemed superior. In this sense, very few Dutch people expected black people to be capable of organising such an action on their own. Black people were mostly regarded as servants or entertainers, not (civil) leaders or organisers. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* during this period had an especially racist world-view. In an editorial they declared for example that they understood why the government of South Africa kept the races separated with their apartheid policies. This shows how racist the mainstream media was at the time.

A strong theme that echoed through the reports on the Little Rock Crisis was the Cold War. In the mid-Fifties, the tension between the East and the West was rising. A lot of people were afraid that the conflict might come to a violent climax. *De Waarheid*, the newspaper of the Dutch communist party, was especially keen on making politics out of the Little Rock situation. They published various, very politically minded articles, editorials and cartoons. An article about a journalist that was harassed by a trooper, for example, was made into a larger issue of press freedom in America. According to *De Waarheid* free press in the United States in fact did not exist at all. The close involvement of *De Waarheid* had two sides to it. On the one hand, the newspaper was far from objective in its reporting. On the other hand, *De Waarheid* was the only Dutch newspaper that delivered background information on the Civil Rights Movement. Only later *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Telegraaf* started to incorporate more information into their reports. To portray the side of the white Southerners both newspapers ran some interviews with locals.

A key player in the Little Rock Crisis was Governor Faubus. The way the Dutch press reported about him shows to a large extent what side the various newspapers were on. *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Telegraaf* were critical of Faubus and the way he handled the crisis. In various articles and editorials they made clear that they felt that Faubus was part of the problem because he represented the racist and old-fashioned white South. It is notable how both newspapers did not dare to criticise President Eisenhower or the federal government in Washington. Pro-American sentiments, traceable to the Second World War, were the cause for this attitude. *De Waarheid* was the only newspaper that criticised both Faubus and the federal government. This criticism was fuelled by *De Waarheid's* anti-capitalist background. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* was very much in favour of Faubus and his policies. The newspaper criticised the way some white protesters had treated Little Rock's black students. The newspaper was, however, not critical at all of Faubus's use of soldiers.. They reasoned that because of the exceptional circumstances the use of force was condoned.

The reports of the Dutch press on the Little Rock Crisis were very much in line with what was to be expected of them seen from their social and political backgrounds. An overarching sentiment that stands out is how very little information all the newspapers provided on the black organisers behind the efforts to integrate Little Rock Central High School. This can mostly be traced back to racism. In the minds of most Dutch people it just seemed impossible that black people, without help from white leaders, were able to organise such an action all on their own.

The second event that has been researched was the Birmingham riots of May 1963. The riots were provoked by the bombing of the residences of various black leaders that were in town to protest for equal rights. The Dutch press paid little attention to the actions of King and his SCLC in the first months of the campaign. Between January and April 1963 King and his colleagues were struggling to attract the attention of the press. King's short arrest yielded some coverage but the SCLC needed a bigger event to truly attract some international media attention. They found this in the so-called 'Children's Crusade.' The images and stories of children marching and protesting in the streets of Birmingham were a true hit. All newspapers with the exception of *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* published stories of the march on their front pages.

The SCLC, understanding that they had to make use of the momentum, decided to organise more protests. Their plan worked. The Dutch press paid a great deal of attention to the May protests and how they were violently suppressed. The images of the student Walter Gadsden, attacked by police dogs, were published by *Het Vrije Volk*, *De Waarheid* and *De Telegraaf*. The reports in all three newspapers condemned the actions of the police, although to varying degrees. *De Waarheid* and *Het Vrije Volk* were very critical of how police forces behaved, while *De Telegraaf* was more reluctant in its reporting. The latter newspaper, for example, mentioned the fact that the protesters also destroyed the property of the innocent merchants and inhabitants of Birmingham.

It is notable that, in contrast to the reports on the Little Rock Crisis, the black leadership was very present in the reports. Articles and pictures of leaders such as King, Wilkins and Belafonte graced the pages. To the Dutch public it no longer seemed that the actions were solely organised by white liberals from the North. King especially received a great deal of attention. His message of love and non-violence seemed to strike a chord with the Dutch press. The admiration of *De Waarheid* and especially *Het Vrije Volk* for King came close to hagiography. He was more than just an activist, he was a symbol of hope, forgiveness

and even the presence of God. The downside of this approach was the fact that it must have seemed to the public that King did it mostly on his own. Very little to no attention was paid to other activists other than famous leaders such as King and Harry Belafonte.

Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad was again very critical of the Civil Rights Movement and its actions. During the Little Rock Crisis the newspaper had defended Governor Faubus for his use of troopers. The newspaper continued to support the local government during the Birmingham Campaign. Their reports on the various events, such as the May riots, were focussed on the problems the protesters caused. No mention was made of the use of the fire hoses or the police dogs that were set on the unarmed activists. Instead of defending the black protesters for trying to end segregation the newspaper portrayed them as a bunch of unorganized lunatics. This way of reporting fits in with the profile of the newspaper. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* was very pro-government and against organisations that wanted to change the status quo.

A turning point in the campaign was the bombing of the Gaston motel and the house of King's brother. The riots that followed spread to other parts of the United States. This chaos forced President Kennedy to act. All three newspapers except *De Waarheid* were positive about the way Kennedy handled the situation. Kennedy, however, was not the only leader that was given the chance by the Dutch press to voice their opinion. Various renowned black people such as writer James Baldwin and Professor Kenneth Clark were quoted or interviewed. *De Telegraaf* ran a set of exclusive, extensive interviews with King, James Baldwin and Robert Kennedy. *De Telegraaf*, the newspaper that had reported in a conservative and not very innovative way, surprisingly enough turned out to be the Dutch newspaper with the most exclusive information - its interview with Robert Kennedy was especially excellent.

In the reporting of the Birmingham Campaign and related events such as the March on Washington, a trend can be found. The reports of *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Waarheid* were mostly from the perspective of the activists. Their reports were therefore often very personal and emotional, but not always objective. *De Waarheid* especially did not hesitate to shape the events to their own agenda. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* and *De Telegraaf* mostly tried to portray the difficulties the (local) government faced. Their conservative nature resulted in reports that were generally objective but also impersonal and even cold hearted.

The major difference between the reports on the Little Rock Crisis and the Birmingham Campaign was the strong presence in the reports of various black leaders. These leaders were given the opportunity, especially by *De Telegraaf*, to give their take on the

whole ordeal. This resulted in news coverage that gave a much better understanding and representation of the race situation in the United States.

The third event of the Civil Rights Movement that has been investigated was the voting rights campaign in Selma of the beginning of 1965. In contrast to the Little Rock Crisis and the Birmingham campaign the Dutch press took quicker notice of the various actions of the SCLC and SNCC. This mostly had to do with the fact that King was assaulted in the lobby of a Selma hotel by some right wing extremists. The event sparked a wave of front-page articles in the Dutch press. The enormous attention for this relatively small event can be explained as a result of King's popularity in the Netherlands. After his visit to the Netherlands in 1964 King had become a celebrity. The news of his assault but also the minor news of him donating the Noble Peace Prize money to the Movement became front-page news. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* was the only newspaper that did not take part in this blind adulation of King.

Since the beginning of the Movement the SCLC had increasingly learned what methods they could use to generate media attention. One of their proven tactics was to provoke a local police commissioner into taking grave measures. The actions of sheriff Clark, such as forcing children to march to a camp or locking the sick James Bevel to his bed, generated a great deal of attention in the Dutch press. *De Telegraaf*, always looking for a spectacular story, was especially eager to report on Clark's actions.

At the same time the campaign in Selma took place, Malcolm X was assassinated in New York. Before his death Malcolm had already received some attention from the Dutch press; his assassination, however, launched him into the spotlight. A total of forty articles, strongly varying in size, were published on the event. *Het Vrije Volk* and *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* were the newspapers that placed Malcolm in relation to the situation in Selma. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* published an editorial that criticised King by equating his aims with Malcolm's. The article is characteristic for the stance of *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*. The newspaper just did not want anything to change in the relationship between white people and non-white people. The newspaper was, as its articles on South Africa prove, still very racist at the time.

On March 7, Sheriff Clark and a group of armed troopers very violently prevented a group of activists from crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge into Dallas County. The stories and pictures of Clark's men, sadistically beating up the unarmed marchers, instantly became front-page news. All four newspapers published stories of the event on their front pages. The various stories again made clear what the newspapers thought regarding who was responsible

for Bloody Sunday in particular and the Civil Rights Movement in general. *De Waarheid* felt that the whole capitalist system was to blame for the events. They compared the events in Selma to the way the United States were handling the war in Vietnam. The other newspapers, especially *Het Vrije Volk*, did not blame the entire American government - only Governor Wallace and the local police. To support this view they published articles about Democrats who condemned the incident. This difference can be explained as a result of the ongoing Cold War. While most of the Dutch press felt that the American government was doing everything in their power to solve the problem, *De Waarheid* regarded the overall treatment of African Americans as only proof of the rottenness of the capitalist system.

The need to report quickly on what was going on in Selma resulted, for the very first time, in incorrect reports. This was mostly the fault of AP news, which distributed wrong information. The only newspaper that can be accused of doing sloppy journalist work was *De Telegraaf*. This newspaper was the only newsprint that actually had a reporter on the scene. This, notably enough, did not result in better or more interesting articles. The local *Telegraaf* journalist did not really mingle with the activists or the locals. This was a missed opportunity for *De Telegraaf* to give its readership a better idea of what sentiments were at play.

After a second and (this time) successful march, the white Reverend James Reeb was brutally attacked by four KKK members. He died from his injuries two days later. Immediately after the incident, even before it became clear that Reeb had died, a torrent of stories appeared. All four newspapers published stories of what had happened to Reeb and how shocked everyone was by his death. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* even published an article on how the wife of President Johnson had sent her condolences to Reeb's wife. It is notable how much attention the death of Reeb created in contrast to the deaths of other activists such as the black activist Jimmie Lee Jackson, who was killed by police bullets. The great amount of coverage on Reeb, in contrast to Jackson, can be explained by looking at Reeb's identity. He was a white minister from Boston who got killed while trying to help his fellow men. His story was more relatable for most readers than the death of an anonymous black activist.

Around the time of Reeb's death the Voting Rights Act was introduced to Congress. The Dutch press seemed very pleased with Johnson's plans. All newspapers, except *De Waarheid*, emphasised again how they felt that only Wallace and his fellow Southern politicians were to blame for the plight of African-Americans. In various articles and editorials the Act and its possible impact were further discussed. It is notable that one commentator of *Het Vrije Volk* mentioned that the coverage surrounding the death of Reeb

had made it much easier for the Act to be passed. The commentators, however, did not seem to be able or willing to reflect on their reports and on how they, just like the rest of the press, had propelled Reeb into the spotlight. The same happened with the murder of Viola Liuzzo a little over two weeks later. The press paid a great deal of attention to the death of the young and beautiful Liuzzo while the reasons behind the various problems and issues remained largely untouched.

The Dutch press had to choose what they would like to put their focus on. The reports on the Selma campaign prove that sensational news often got the preference over background stories. The sensational events definitely helped the Civil Rights Movement gain momentum. To aid the public's general understanding of the Civil Rights Movement it would, however, have been better if more attention had been paid to the origins of the conflict.

The final event that has been investigated in this thesis was the assassination of King and its aftermath. After the heyday of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement was over, King started to widen his scope. He increasingly criticised the U.S. government for its involvement in Vietnam, for example. The Dutch press was clearly not as supportive of King when he spoke out against the war in Vietnam as they were when King campaigned for civil rights. *De Telegraaf* published an article on King stating that the days of the great civil leader were over. In another article *De Telegraaf* analysed how Stokely Carmichael had risen to prominence because black people no longer trusted King or Wilkins. Shortly before his death King organised a march in support of the striking garbage men of Memphis. The march turned violent and the Dutch press explicitly blamed King for the unrest. It can be concluded that shortly before King's death the Dutch press, with the exception of *De Waarheid*, had lost their faith in King.

On Thursday, April 4, 1968, King was murdered by James Earl Ray. The news of the murder, and the riots that ensued in various cities in the United States, became huge news in all four newspapers. They all published a great amount of articles and photos on the events. Their angles were, however, quite different. From the content of the articles it seemed that the reporters of *De Waarheid* were very shocked with the news of King's death. This is not that strange considering how supportive the newspapers had always been of King. King's death also meant that the newspaper had lost a strong voice against the War in Vietnam. In the days after the event they published two issues that were mostly about King. It is notable that *De Waarheid* on the front page of the edition of April 5th called people up to demonstrate in favour of the Civil Rights Movement. Although the newspaper had reported about Dutch

demonstrations that supported the Movement, never before had *De Waarheid* actually called people up to demonstrate. This proves how much of an impact King's death had made and what impact the Civil Rights Movement had in Dutch society.

De Telegraaf reported on the death of King and the riots in a very visual way. Articles were adorned with a large number of pictures of the events. *De Telegraaf* was also the only newspaper that published pictures of a dead King underneath a blanket. The reports fit the sensational style of reporting of *De Telegraaf*, which it maintained throughout all the events. In reaction to the ongoing unrest, *De Telegraaf* sent a special extra reporter to the United States to report on the events. However, this reporter did not add much more understanding to the whole situation.

The decision of the newspaper to send a special reporter, however, shows how big the news was and how much readers wanted to get to know the latest updates. In imitation of *De Telegraaf*, *Het Vrije Volk* also sent a special reporter to the United States. Swaab wrote two very interesting and insightful pieces. For example, he exposed how much the American press depended on the biased reports of the police or how selective the appreciation of King had been. It is a pity that *Het Vrije Volk* had not made use of Swaab a bit earlier. His viewpoints were a welcome change in *Het Vrije Volk's* usually uncritical way of reporting.

Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad opened, unlike the other three newspapers, not with the death of King but with the news of how much damage rioters had done in various American cities. The newspaper did write about King's assassination but sincere grief or shock seemed missing. In a notable editorial the newspaper brought up the relation between religion and the Civil Rights Movement. The writer very oddly claimed that white men had to accept black men, not just because their racism was groundless, but because by following black leaders such as Kenyatta or Malcolm X, black people would never turn towards Jesus. Although *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* no longer openly defended apartheid in their articles, the newspaper still retained some of its racist undertone.

Despite the fact that King had been buried, the riots continued and so did the extensive reporting on the events. A trend can be found in how the newspapers dealt with the riots. *De Waarheid* and *Het Vrije Volk* focussed on the brutal treatment of black people while *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* focussed especially on the looting. There was money to be made out of King's death. Both *De Telegraaf* and *Het Vrije Volk* ran advertisements of various (self-produced) items such as books, commemoration coins and posters. These newspapers were businesses that had to generate revenue. It is nevertheless odd to see an advertisement of

some kind of King product next to a serious article dealing with the aftermath of his assassination.

It took quite some time before Ray was caught. This fed the idea of a possible conspiracy. *De Waarheid* and *Het Vrije Volk* published various conspiracy theories on why no murderer had yet been caught. *De Waarheid*, for example, spread rumours about King's murderer being protected by the American government. Both newspapers spread these rumours mostly because the public was still hungry for news. When Ray was caught the reports on the murder and the riots slowly but surely moved back further towards the back pages of the newspapers, until they disappeared all together. The Dutch press might have paid more attention to King's commemoration were it not for the fact that on June 6, 1968 Robert Kennedy was murdered. The attention of the Dutch press just moved from one tragedy to another.

Conclusion

The question central to this research was: How, and why in this particular way, did the Dutch written press report on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States? The four newspapers that have been researched all had very distinctive backgrounds. This raised certain expectations about the content of their reports. The newspapers, however, did not always report on the Civil Rights Movement as should be expected of them, although this difference was sometimes subtle and took place over time. It is clear that the Dutch press, just like the newspapers in the works of Campbell and Burney, made reports that sometimes went against their (political) identity. *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Telegraaf* in particular, to a larger extent than their more extremist counterparts, published reports that displayed various ideas and viewpoints. This has a lot to do with the fact that *De Telegraaf* had the resources to station a reporter in the United States. This resulted in high quality articles that sketched a different image of the whole Movement. The same happened when *Het Vrije Volk* sent their own reporter to the United States after King's death. The articles of de Swaan were among the best the newspaper published.

Did King and his fellow activist succeed in their goal of putting pressure on the American government by seeking international recognition? Although this question cannot fully be answered based on this research, it can be concluded that, at least for the Netherlands, the strategy worked. Firstly, the struggle of black people in the United States received more attention in the Dutch press than ever before. While the *Brown versus Board of Education*

case of 1954 did not even make the papers, something was reported on the Movement almost every day in the mid-Sixties.

Secondly, the press became more positive about the Movement as time progressed. King especially seemed to have stolen the hearts of the Dutch media and public. His stature, and therefore his struggle, reached almost religious dimensions at one point. *Het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad* was the only newspaper that remained sceptical of King's ideas and actions even after his death. Thirdly, and most importantly, Dutch society started to put pressure on American officials. This ranged from a Dutch schoolgirl criticizing Governor Faubus in an interview to students protesting in front of the American embassy in Amsterdam. This proves that in the end the strategy of the Movement was effective. King and his fellow leaders managed to show the rest of the world the true face of the United States.

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