

## **“DIE MAN IS GEEL VAN JALOESIE EN ROOIWARM VAN HAAT”: THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN TWO AFRIKANER HISTORIANS, 1956-1963**

**Paul Dunn (etv)**

### **Summary**

*F.A. van Jaarsveld responded vehemently to two articles by M.C.E. van Schoor on the Slagtersnek episode, published in **Die Taalgenoot** in 1957. Van Jaarsveld accused Van Schoor of plagiarising his ideas on the development of the nineteenth-century Afrikaner’s national and historical consciousness. In 1958, their friendship came under even more pressure because of Van Schoor’s comments in **Die Volksblad** on the contents of Van Jaarsveld’s lecture at a congress in Pretoria and his response to this criticism. Although they had apparently sorted out their difference of opinion by August 1958, the friendship remained tense. This is quite clear from Van Jaarsveld’s reaction to Van Schoor’s doctoral dissertation in 1962. Their letters which are being preserved in the F.A. van Jaarsveld collection in the National Archives in Pretoria give us an insight into the friendship between these two historians who made such an influential contribution to the Afrikaner nationalist discourse on the development of the Afrikaner’s national and historical consciousness in the nineteenth century. Their friendship turned sour in the period from 1956 to 1963, due to their rivalry for academic stature, professional jealousy and back-stabbing.*

### **1. “My ‘line of argument’ verskil bitter min van joune”: plagiarism or own conclusions?**

In April 1957, *Die Taalgenoot* published the second article in a two-part series, “Die galge-skaduwee van Slagtersnek”, written by M.C.E. van Schoor, a teacher and part-time History lecturer at the University of the Orange Free State (UOFS) in Bloemfontein. At the bottom of the article, a footnote appeared: “Vergelyk die artikel van dr. F.A. van Jaarsveld: **Die Ontstaan van die Afrikaanse Geskiedskrywing in Standpunte**, Nuwe Reeks, No.10 waar hierdie gedagtes oorspronklik uitgewerk is en wat hierdie artikel geïnspireer het – M.C.E. v. S.” (“Compare F.A. van Jaarsveld’s article ... where these ideas were originally worked out and which inspired this article”). This footnote was the

result of the correspondence between the author and F.A. van Jaarsveld after the publication of the first article in March 1957.

In the first article, Van Schoor argues that the Slagtersnek episode had enough historical significance for the frontier farmers, for them to justify the rebellion as an act of resistance against the colonial government, in order to justify their emigration from the Cape Colony as an act of peaceful resistance. Van Schoor promises the reader that his second article will deal with the way the Slagtersnek episode had influenced what he calls “ons Afrikaanse volksgedagte” after the Great Trek – and especially after the Transvaal War of Independence (1880-1881) and the Jameson Raid (1895-1896) (Van Schoor 1957a: 4-5). Shortly after the publication of this article, Van Schoor wrote to his friend and fellow historian, F.A. van Jaarsveld, a teacher at the Kensington Afrikaans medium High School in Johannesburg. The first trace of correspondence between them to be found in the F.A. van Jaarsveld collection in the National Archives in Pretoria is a letter from Van Schoor to Van Jaarsveld, dated 29 March 1954. They had probably first met when Van Jaarsveld took up a position as acting History lecturer at the UOFS in the second term of 1953.

The letter which Van Jaarsveld received on 19 March 1957 set off a fiery correspondence between the two men. In his letter, Van Schoor tells Van Jaarsveld that he has just sent his second Slagtersnek article to *Die Taalgenoot*: “Kommentaar sal welkom wees, aangesien jy my waarskynlik van plagiaat sal kan beskuldig.” (“Your comments would be appreciated, because you would probably be able to accuse me of plagiarism”). Van Schoor says a colleague, Frans van Rensburg, brought Van Jaarsveld’s article “Die ontstaan van die Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing” (*Standpunte* 10:42-53) to his attention when he had already nearly finished his second article. He recalls that Van Jaarsveld had told him about the article in *Standpunte*, but claims that he had not read it before writing the articles for *Die Taalgenoot*: “my ‘line of argument’ verskil bitter min van joune waar dit die geskiedskrywing van Slagtersnek aangaan. Jy moet dit egter as ’n gevolgtrekking beskou waartoe ek selfstandig gekom het.” (“My line of argument on the historiography

on Slagtersnek differs very little from yours. You must, however, regard it as a conclusion I have reached independently.”) (VJ 16).<sup>1</sup>

Van Schoor apparently wrote this letter as a precautionary measure. He must have known that his second article, to be published less than a month later, contained ideas on the development of the nineteenth century Afrikaner’s national and historical consciousness, which were almost exactly similar to those Van Jaarsveld worked out in his articles in the *Hertzog-annale* (1955) and *Standpunte* (1956). Van Schoor must have anticipated that Van Jaarsveld could accuse him of plagiarism, if the second article was published without any reference to or acknowledgement of these two articles. His letter was intended to convince Van Jaarsveld that he had reached his conclusions independently, but it had the opposite effect. It triggered Van Jaarsveld to write a note in the margin: “met ander man se kalwers ploeg” (“ploughing with someone else’s oxen”). On the second page, Van Schoor changes the subject. He writes that all indications are that a permanent lectureship would be created in the History department at the UOFS before the end of 1957. From this letter, it seems Van Jaarsveld had earlier promised Van Schoor that he would not apply against him for a permanent position in that department. Both of them had been unsuccessful in trying to get an academic position, while working as history teachers and temporary lecturers – Van Schoor since finishing his MA thesis in 1946; Van Jaarsveld since completing his doctorate in the Netherlands in 1950.

Van Jaarsveld responded almost immediately to Van Schoor’s letter. In his letter of 20 March 1957, he reminds Van Schoor that he had sent him a letter and a postcard in August 1956, informing him that his article “Die ontstaan van die Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing” had been published in *Standpunte* (VJ 16). Van Jaarsveld writes that Van Schoor was aware that this was an extension of a previous article, “Die ontstaans-geskiedenis van die begrippe ‘Voortrekkers’ en ‘Groot Trek’” [*Hertzog-annale* 4(2): 75-94]. In this article, Van Jaarsveld links the development of these two terms to the so-called “awakening” of the Afrikaner’s national consciousness in the period from 1868 to

---

<sup>1</sup> The abbreviation *VJ* is used to refer to the F.A. van Jaarsveld collection in this paper. The accompanying number refers to the volume of the collection in which the letter can be found.

1881, which was, according to him, inextricably tied to the development of their historical consciousness and Afrikaans historiography. Until 1868, the Afrikaner – or “die Afrikaanssprekendes” as Van Jaarsveld calls them - had no national and historical consciousness.<sup>2</sup> This changed when the British government adopted a policy of active interference and territorial expansion that put renewed pressure on the two Boer Republics. The British annexation of Basutoland (1868) and the Diamond Fields (1871) resulted in the development of a national consciousness in the Orange Free State. The Afrikaners in the Cape Colony followed suit, in sympathy with their “landgenote en bloedverwante” (“countrymen and blood relatives”; Van Jaarsveld 1955: 90) in the Boer Republic. The British annexation of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (1877) and the Transvaal War of Independence (1880-1881) brought the development of a national consciousness in the two Boer Republics and among Colonial Afrikaners full circle (Van Jaarsveld 1955:91).

In “Die ontstaan van die Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing”, Van Jaarsveld reiterates that the Afrikaner’s national and historical consciousness developed in the period from 1868 to 1881, in reaction to the British government’s policy of active interference and territorial expansion. He also elaborates on what he believes to be the inextricable link between the development of the Afrikaner’s national consciousness and Afrikaans historiography in this period (Van Jaarsveld 1956: 44-51). According to Van Jaarsveld, Dutch texts which were published before 1868, cannot be regarded as Afrikaans historiography. This is because these texts were published before the development period of Afrikaans historiography and they, consequently, had no influence on the development of the Afrikaner’s national and historical consciousness. Van Jaarsveld (1956: 53) includes Dutch works published in the period from 1868 to 1881 in the corpus of Afrikaans historiography, due to “die agtergrond en ‘gees’ waarvan dit uitvloeisel was” (“the background and ‘spirit’ from which it originated”). According to Van Jaarsveld, the Afrikaner’s national and

---

<sup>2</sup> The term *Afrikaansprekendes* is inaccurate, because Afrikaner nationalism always used skin colour as a criterium to distinguish between Afrikaners (white Afrikaans speakers) and “non-white” Afrikaans speakers. In his later work, Van Jaarsveld uses the term *Afrikaners*. The use of this term in reference to the eighteenth and nineteenth century is also problematic. Giliomee (1987: 120-121) explains the different meanings in which the term *Afrikaners* were used in these two centuries. I am using this term to refer specifically to white Afrikaans speakers.

historical consciousness was mainly reflected in Dutch publications written by Dutchmen like H.J. Hofstede, E.J.P. Jorissen, J.A. Roorda Smit and Frans Lion Cachet. Most of them were writing primarily for a Dutch – and not a South African – audience. This flaw in Van Jaarsveld’s argument stems from his projection of twentieth century Afrikaner nationalism on this period in South African history, and the Dutch and Afrikaans history texts published in this time.

In his letter of 20 March 1957, Van Jaarsveld accuses Van Schoor of plagiarising some of the ideas he worked out in his two articles: “Jy het dus van die idees en gedagtes van my oorgeneem sonder om my erkenning daarvoor te verleen. In die geskiedeniswetenskap is dit nie etiket nie.” (“You used some of my ideas and thoughts without giving me any acknowledgement. In the study of history, this is not etiquette.”) Van Jaarsveld ends the letter on a threatening note: “Ek kan hierdie saak egter nie hier laat berus nie. Dit gaan te ver. Jy sal dus weer in ander verband hiervan verneem.” (“I can’t leave this matter here. It goes too far. You will, therefore, hear about this matter again in a different way.”) (VJ 16). Van Jaarsveld’s letter must be regarded as a direct response to Van Schoor’s, since there is no indication that he had read the second (as yet unpublished) article by this time or had suspected Van Schoor of plagiarism before receiving his letter on 19 March 1957.

As he promised (or threatened) in his letter to Van Schoor, Van Jaarsveld did not leave the matter there. He wrote to the editor of *Die Taalgenoot*, accusing Van Schoor of plagiarising the ideas he had worked out in his two articles. To prove his case, Van Jaarsveld quotes extensively from Van Schoor’s letters he received on 9 August 1956 and 19 March 1957. In the first letter, Van Schoor acknowledges that he had read both Van Jaarsveld’s articles. In the second letter, however, he claims he had not read the *Standpunte* article before finishing his second article for *Die Taalgenoot*: “Uit hierdie twee briewe waarvan ek die oorspronklike eksemplare besit, is dit duidelik dat daar sprake van plagiaat is. Die persoon het my artikels gebruik en nou maak hy asof dit sy eie is.” (“From these two letters, of which I possess the original copies, it is clear that this is plagiarism. This person used my articles and is now to pretending as if they are his own.”) Van Jaarsveld suggests that the second Slagtersnek article should not be published. If it was too late to hold the article, a caption indicating that its basic content was derived

from his articles should be added at the top: “U moet meld dat mnr. Van Schoor my artikels geraadpleeg het maar dié feit verswyg het.” (“You must mention that mr Van Schoor consulted my articles but kept quite about this fact.”) Van Jaarsveld insists that he wants to see the wording of this caption before it was printed: “Indien u nie aan hierdie versoek voldoen nie, is ek bereid om die saak in die hand van my prokureur te gee. Ek het ’n sterk saak.” (“If you do not adhere to this request, I am prepared to leave this matter in the hands of my lawyer. I have a strong case.”) (VJ 27).

Van Jaarsveld also wrote to Frans van Rensburg, including a copy of his letter to Van Schoor. In his letter to Van Rensburg, Van Jaarsveld writes that he does not mind if other historians elaborate on some of his ideas: “Maar dan verwag jy dat die persoon wat by jou aansluit jou aanvoorkom ten minste sal erken, en nie ontken nie, of selfs onteien nie.” (“But then you expect that the person who elaborates on your work would, at least, recognise your spade-work, instead of not acknowledging it, or even disowning it.”) Van Jaarsveld says he found it necessary to write to Van Rensburg about this matter, because his name was mentioned in Van Schoor’s letter. Once again, he threatens to take matters further (VJ 27).

Van Schoor responded to Van Jaarsveld’s letter on 26 March 1957. He writes that he has not received the original letter, but he is in possession of the copy sent to Van Rensburg. Van Schoor explains why he had not chosen his words better in the previous letter: “ek skryf en werk nou al vir drie jaar onder ’n druk wat haas ’n breekpunt moet bereik.” (“I’ve been writing and working under pressure for three years now and might reach breaking point soon.”) He acknowledges that it was not Van Rensburg who told him about Van Jaarsveld’s article in *Standpunte*, but somebody else. He says he will reveal this person’s name to Van Jaarsveld, on condition that “die saak op ’n ander toon opgelos kan word as die verskuilde bedreiging wat onderaan jou brief staan” (“the matter can be resolved on a different tone than with the hidden threats at the bottom of your letter.”) (VJ 16).

Van Schoor acknowledges that Van Jaarsveld has assembled (seemingly) incriminating evidence against him. He admits that he had read the *Standpunte* article before writing his two articles for *Die Taalgenoot*: “al het ek die inhoud van die Standpunte-artikel ‘vergeet’, moet ek ook volkome toegee ... dat dit my onbewus waarskynlik baie sterk beïnvloed het.” (“although I ‘forgot’ the contents of the Standpunte article, I must admit that ... it probably unknowingly influenced me very strongly.”) Van Schoor reminds Van Jaarsveld of a conversation they once had in Bloemfontein, in which they shared the same opinions on the development of the Afrikaner’s national consciousness – opinions which had developed independently, through their own research. To prove that he could not have been influenced by Van Jaarsveld’s articles, Van Schoor mentions that he had sent the first chapters of his doctoral dissertation - in which he deals with this subject - to his typist, Kitty Malan, in Potchefstroom in January 1956: “Sedertdien was hierdie hoofstukke nog nooit weer in my hande nie.” (“Since then, these chapters have never been in my hands again.”) He requests Van Jaarsveld to ask Malan to send him these chapters. Van Schoor apologises for initially claiming that he had not read the *Standpunte* article, but adds that Van Jaarsveld should find stronger evidence than “my eie bedenklike blaps” (“my own precarious mistake”). He explains that this mistake was understandable, since it was “ ’n artikel wat ek nou nie juis as hoogstaande wetenskaplik beskou nie [en dit het verskyn] in ’n blad wat hom [nie] vir die bevordering van die historiese wetenskap beywer nie” (“an article which I do not regard as highly scientific, and which appeared in a publication which does not strive for promoting historical science”) (VJ 16).

Van Schoor challenges Van Jaarsveld to read his two articles impartially and to point out to what extent he had used the ideas worked out in the articles in the *Hertzog-annale* and *Standpunte*. He also attaches the footnote referring to the *Standpunte* article which he had sent to the editor of *Die Taalgenoot*, after receiving Van Jaarsveld’s letter of 20 March 1957. Van Schoor is of the opinion that he is selling himself short by giving Van Jaarsveld acknowledgement for the ideas he had used in his articles for *Die Taalgenoot*. Van Schoor questions Van Jaarsveld’s motives for accusing him of plagiarism: “Wil jy

my nou op historiese terreine breek, wil jy my jou vyand maak, wil jy my ‘swart maak’ vir ’n menslike tekortkoming? (“Do you want to break me? Do you want to make me your enemy? Do you want to taint me for a human shortcoming?”) According to Van Schoor, Van Jaarsveld will not achieve much by doing this, except to damage his own reputation. He says he will throw in the towel immediately, if Van Jaarsveld takes legal steps against him (VJ 16).

Van Schoor expresses his amazement about Van Jaarsveld’s statement to Van Rensburg that his letters had contained “’n gees ... wat my diep seergemaak het” (“a spirit which hurt me deeply”) since June 1956. Van Schoor tells Van Jaarsveld that he has been trying his utmost to change the antipathy towards him in Bloemfontein. He reckons that Van Jaarsveld’s accusations have dealt their friendship a serious blow: “Goed, my optrede was die oorsaak daarvan, maar is jou houding te regverdig? Voordat ons die saak nie uitmaak nie, sal ek jou in die toekoms altoos as my potensiele vyand aanvoel.” (Van Schoor’s emphasis; “I admit that my *behaviour* was the cause of this, but is your *attitude* justifiable? Until we clear this matter up, I will always regard you as a potential enemy.”) Van Jaarsveld was convinced that Van Schoor was responsible for his reputation as “’n moeilike man” (“a difficult man”) in Bloemfontein. In a note written on 8 February 1993 – nearly 36 years after the plagiarism incident – Van Jaarsveld recalls a conversation with Ben Liebenberg in the 1960’s. Van Schoor had apparently told Liebenberg, who had studied in Bloemfontein and later became History professor at UNISA, that Van Jaarsveld had plagiarised his ideas for the book *Die ontwaking van die Afrikaanse nasionale bewussyn* (1957). Van Jaarsveld was also told that Van Schoor had incited his students and his colleagues against him: “Daar was van sy kant blykbaar ’n jaloesie wat hy nooit oorwin het nie.” (“From his side, there was apparently a jealousy which he never conquered.”) (VJ 16).

On 30 March 1957, Van Jaarsveld responded with a letter in which he accepted Van Schoor’s apology and apologised to him in turn. Van Schoor who was still convinced that he might have sold himself short, replied on 9 April 1957: “(E)k het miskien darem te veel toegegee om te beweer dat jou artikel in Standpunte my ‘geïnspireer’ het, maar ek



wou die volle lengte gaan om jou te oortuig dat ek nie daarop uit was om jou gedagtes te plunder nie.” (“I might have conceded to much by claiming that your article in Standpunte ‘inspired’ me, but I wanted to do everything possible to convince that I was not trying to plunder your ideas.”) Van Schoor assures Van Jaarsveld that he has put the matter, which he describes as a series of misunderstandings, behind him. According to him, these events will only strengthen their friendship. Before concluding his letter with some academic small talk, Van Schoor asks Van Jaarsveld if he can help him out with articles for *Die Taalgenoot* - a request which Van Jaarsveld turned down, because he had too much other work (VJ 12).

So, did Van Jaarsveld have any justification to accuse Van Schoor of plagiarism? And would he, indeed, have had a strong case against him, if he took legal action? The word *plagiarism* originates from the Latin word *plagiarius*, meaning “kidnapper”. Van Gorp (1986:305) defines plagiarism as: “Het gebruiken van de persoonlijke ideeën, werkwijze, vormgeving e.d. van iemand anders, zonder de bron te vermelden. Men geeft aldus de schijn er de schepper van te zijn. Plagiaat is dus een vorm van wederrechtelijke toeëigening van andermans werk.” (“Plagiarism is the use of somebody else’s personal ideas, methodology, style etc., without quoting the source. The plagiarist pretends to be the creator of this work. Plagiarism is, therefore, a form of the illegal appropriation of somebody else’s work.”) Plagiarism is not a technical legal term. In South Africa, it constitutes a contravention of the Copyright Act. If Van Jaarsveld wanted to take legal action against Van Schoor in 1957, he would have had to do this in terms of the Copyright Act of 1923.

Van Schoor’s second Slagtersnek article was published in the April 1957 edition of *Die Taalgenoot*. The footnote acknowledging that it had been inspired by Van Jaarsveld’s *Standpunte* article, was made applicable to three paragraphs in Van Schoor’s article through the use of asterisks. His account of the development of the Afrikaner’s national consciousness – “volksgevoel” or “volksbesef” as he calls it – and the effect this had on the historiography of the Slagtersnek episode is very similar to the ideas Van Jaarsveld worked out in his two articles. He argues that the Slagtersnek episode faded away into

temporary oblivion, after the British authorities recognised the independence of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek and the Orange Free State. When the British government changed its policy in the 1860's and the independence of the two Boer Republics came under threat, the Afrikaners started regarding themselves as “'n bepaalde lotsgemeenskap met 'n eie en besondere historiese verlede” (Van Schoor 1957b: 4; “a specific community with a shared destiny, and their own and unique historical past”). This paragraph was attributed to inspiration by Van Jaarsveld's article.

Van Schoor uses exactly the same historical framework as Van Jaarsveld in his account of the development of the Afrikaner's national and historical consciousness in the period from 1868 to 1881. It started in the Orange Free State, after the British annexation of Basutholand (1868) and the Diamond Fields (1871). The next phase was the “awakening” of a national consciousness among the Afrikaners in the Cape Colony, which led to the formation of the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners in Paarl: “(Daar) is naas die taal ook na die Afrikaner se geskiedenis gegryp om hom dwarsoor Suid-Afrika van sy gemeenskaplike lotsverlede bewus te maak.” (Van Schoor 1957b: 4; “The language and the Afrikaner's history was used to make him aware of his shared past with a destiny, throughout South Africa.”) This paragraph was also attributed to inspiration by the *Standpunte* article. Just like Van Jaarsveld, Van Schoor attributes the development of a national and historical consciousness among the Afrikaners in the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek to the British annexation of the Transvaal (1877) and the Transvaal War of Independence (1880-1881). Inspiration by Van Jaarsveld's article is also acknowledged at the end of this paragraph. In the rest of his article, Van Schoor shows how what he calls “volksbewuste skrywers” - many of them Dutchmen - described Afrikaner history “met die doel om sy volksbesef en nasionale trots nog sterker uit te bou” (1957b: 5; “with the aim to build up his national consciousness and pride even more”).

In a letter written on 25 April 1957, Van Jaarsveld reminds Van Schoor that they had initially started their correspondence to share their thoughts on the study of history. In their letters, they also confided in each other about their personal problems. After receiving two letters in June and July 1956, Van Jaarsveld felt that Van Schoor was

trying to abuse the problems originating from his criticism on the work of older Afrikaner historians. It was apparently in these letters that Van Schoor had first told Van Jaarsveld that he has a reputation as “’n moeilike man” (“a difficult man”) in Bloemfontein. Van Jaarsveld suspects that Van Schoor was doing this to strengthen his chances, should another permanent position be created at the UOFS History department: “Ek kon nie anders as om uit jou briewe af te lei dat jy my as ’n soort konkurrent beskou ... Ék het nooit in gedagte gehad ’n posisie in Bloemfontein nie.” (“After reading your letters, the only conclusion I could come to was that you regarded me as some kind of rival. I never had a position in Bloemfontein in mind.”) Van Jaarsveld suggests that it could cause problems for Van Schoor, if he showed these two letters to members of the University Council, but downplays the apparent threat immediately: “Ek uiter hier nie ’n dreigement nie en ek sal nooit so iets doen nie.” (“I am not threatening you and I would never do something like that.”) Van Jaarsveld requests Van Schoor to keep the contents of their letters confidential. He adds that they will remain friends, but that he will never be able to take Van Schoor into his confidence again. He hints at the possibility of emigrating, because of the antipathy towards him in Afrikaner intellectual circles and his failed attempts to get a teaching position at a South African university: “Vir my is daar in hierdie land nie meer ’n toekoms nie. Dis verby. Die lewe kan hard wees en meer genadeloos as wat ’n mens besef. Beskou my nooit as ’n gevaar vir jou nie.” (“There is no future for me in this country. It’s over. Life can be tough and more merciless than you realize. Never regard as a rival.”) From his correspondence with G.D. Scholtz and others, it is clear that Van Jaarsveld seriously considered emigration to the United States in 1957 (VJ 16).

In his reply on 27 April 1957, Van Schoor accuses Van Jaarsveld of breaking the confidentiality of their correspondence by sending a copy of his letter to Frans van Rensburg: “Ek wil ook byvoeg dat ek geen korrespondensie tussen ons bewaar nie ... Kan ek dieselfde van jou verwag?” (“I also want to add that I do not keep any of our correspondence. Can I expect the same from you?”) Van Schoor never got an answer to this. He was apparently completely unaware that Van Jaarsveld kept all his correspondence and documentation for posterity. In this letter, Van Schoor also denies that he had

ever pulled any strings to get an academic position or another job. He adds: “As ons twee ooit teen mekaar appliseer en jy is suksesvol, weet ek dat ek die eerste sal wil wees om jou geluk te wens.” (“If we ever apply for the same job and you are successful, I know that I would be the first one to congratulate you.”) This is exactly what happened in 1967 when Van Jaarsveld was appointed as the first head of the History department at the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg – a position Van Schoor had also applied for. According to Van Jaarsveld’s note of 8 February 1993, this strengthened Van Schoor’s jealousy of him. At the end of his letter, Van Schoor suggests that they should try to find a new basis for their friendship when they meet again (VJ 16).

This letter brought to an end the correspondence about the plagiarism issue. Several questions remain: Why did Van Schoor initially claim that he had not read the *Standpunte* article? Did he genuinely forget about it or was he blatantly lying to cover up what could have been perceived as plagiarism? Had Van Schoor really forgotten the contents of the article? How much was he, in fact, (unknowingly or otherwise) influenced by Van Jaarsveld’s ideas? Or had he really reached his conclusions independently? Was it merely a case of two (jealous) historians researching the same subject and sharing the same opinions on that topic? If Van Jaarsveld was so adamant that he had a strong case against Van Schoor, why did he not pursue it legally? One thing is clear, though, from their letters: in 1957, the friendship between Van Jaarsveld and Van Schoor had turned sour because of rivalry for academic stature, professional jealousy, distrust and back-stabbing.

In September 1957, both of them were appointed at UNISA – Van Jaarsveld as senior lecturer and Van Schoor as lecturer. Van Jaarsveld wrote to Van Schoor on 28 September 1957, asking him that they should work together closely in Pretoria: “Ek sal jou met al my kragte steun. Kan ek dieselfde van jou verwag? ... Laat wat verby is, verby wees.” (“I will support you with all my energy. Can I expect the same from you? ... Let bygones be bygones.”) (VJ 16). In his reply on 1 October 1957, Van Schoor writes that he still has to decide whether he will accept the position at UNISA. He lists the factors he has to consider in making up his mind about moving to Pretoria. These include the salary scale at UNISA, the possibility of a permanent position in Bloemfontein and his access to the

Free State Archives. After receiving Van Jaarsveld's letter, Van Schoor was convinced that they would be able to work together in the same department (VJ 16).

Van Jaarsveld took up his position as senior lecturer at UNISA on 1 January 1958, but Van Schoor decided to stay in Bloemfontein where he had been appointed as a full-time temporary lecturer at the UOFS History department. It is not clear how much the stand-off with Van Jaarsveld a few months earlier had influenced Van Schoor's decision not to accept the position at UNISA.

## **2. "Ek het geleer dat 'n koerant 'n gevaarlike ding is": The *Volksblad* episode**

On 6 February 1958, Van Jaarsveld read a paper titled "Die Afrikaner se geskiedsbeeld" at the fourth "Kongres ter Bevordering van die Wysbegeerte" in Pretoria. Van Jaarsveld wanted to give the audience a sense of the conception the Afrikaner had formed of himself and his own nationalism, and how this was reflected in Afrikaans historiography. He shows that contemporary Afrikaners regard their history as a political instrument that can be used to boost Afrikaner nationalism, while English speaking South Africans complain that the history taught at school is biased (Van Jaarsveld 1962: 56-60). Van Jaarsveld (1962: 60-64) argues that the Afrikaner's historic conception ("geskiedsbeeld") developed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a direct reaction to the British-centred "Cape History". He reiterates that the Afrikaner's historical consciousness and conception developed simultaneously with Afrikaner nationalism in the period from 1868 to 1881 (Van Jaarsveld 1962: 65-67). According to Van Jaarsveld (1962: 67-71), the Afrikaner's historical conception was determined by Afrikaner nationalism and an Old Testament view of the past. This was manifested in the texts regarded by Van Jaarsveld as examples of pre-scientific Afrikaans historiography. Van Jaarsveld thinks that the Afrikaner's historical conception has become anachronistic and oversimplified: "Deur die loop van jare het die tydsituasie waaruit die beeld te voorskyn gekom het, verander ... Tog het die tradisionele geskiedsbeeld met al sy mitiese elemente haas onveranderd bly voortbestaan. Politici het die kunsmatig in die lewe probeer hou." (Van Jaarsveld 1962: 76-77; "As the years went by, the historical situation from which this conception

developed, changed. Yet, the traditional historical conception with all its mythical elements remained mostly unchanged. Politicians have been trying to sustain it artificially.”) Van Jaarsveld (1962: 78) says this historical conception will have to be broadened by incorporating universal aspects.

On 15 February 1958, Van Schoor wrote a short, friendly letter to Van Jaarsveld. On the same day, *Die Volksblad* published an article in which Van Schoor and a colleague, Neethling, labeled Van Jaarsveld as a “neo-historian”. Their comments were based on reports that Van Jaarsveld had said in his lecture that politicians should not use historical facts as part of their rhetoric and that a general South African history was not being taught in schools. He had reportedly also called for “’n nuwe, breër uitkyk” (“a new, broader perspective”) on South African history. Van Schoor, however, mentioned nothing about this article in his letter (VJ 27). Van Jaarsveld replied on 19 February 1958: “As historikus weet jy dat ’n mens moeilik op grond van ’n verslag van ’n paar reëls iemand se lesing kan beoordeel.” (“As a historian, you know that it is difficult to judge someone’s lecture on a report of a few lines.”) He calls the newspaper’s representation “’n karikatuur” (“a caricature”) of his paper: “Ek kan nie een van die reëls soos deur die Volksblad gekwoteer, terugvind in my lesing nie. Ek het nooit beweer dat politici nie die feite van die verlede kan gebruik nie.” (“I cannot find any of the lines quoted by Die Volksblad in my lecture. I never said that politicians may not use the facts of the past.”) Van Jaarsveld speculates that *Die Volksblad* might have asked Van Schoor for his comments, in an attempt to portray them as two historians with directly opposing views on the value of the study of history: “Ek neem jou nie in die minste kwalik nie. Maar ek voel net jammer dat ons in die openbaar as twee teenoorgesteldes voorgestel word, terwyl jy weet hoe ons oor sake voel.” (“I do not blame you, at all. But it is a pity that we are represented as two opponents in public, while you know how we feel about matters.”) (VJ 17).

On 20 February 1958, Van Jaarsveld wrote to the editor of *Die Volksblad*, requesting him to publish his response to the newspaper article (VJ 27). Two days later, the deputy editor of *Die Volksblad*, S.F. Zaaiman, outlined the newspaper’s objections to the letter Van

Jaarsveld had sent for publication. Zaaiman points out that the report in *Die Volksblad* was not the newspaper's representation of Van Jaarsveld's lecture, because they had received it from a news agency. Van Schoor and Neethling used the SAPA report to formulate their opinions. Zaaiman emphasizes it that the newspaper article contained comments by two independent experts. This means that the newspaper cannot be held responsible for their comments. Zaaiman suggests that Van Jaarsveld should rather send a summary of his lecture for publication in *Die Volksblad* (VJ 27).

In his reply on 24 February 1958, Van Jaarsveld accused *Die Volksblad* of a choosing a misleading caption for the article and of distorting the news agency report. The newspaper's representation of the contents of his lecture, he says, has serious consequences for his reputation in the Orange Free State: "Enige man ... sal tot geen ander gevolgtrekking kán kom as dat hy hier met 'n slegte Afrikaner te doen het nie ... wat deur die groot ligte aan die firmament van die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing, mnre. M.C.E. van Schoor en Neethling in die openbaar gekorrigeer moet word." ("Anybody will come to the conclusion that I am a bad Afrikaner ... who needs to be corrected in public by the big stars in the firmament of South African historiography.") Van Jaarsveld demands the opportunity to defend himself against the criticism leveled against him by Van Schoor en Neethling. He refuses to send a summary of his lecture and insists that his letter should be published in *Die Volksblad* (VJ 27).

Van Jaarsveld's letter was finally published in *Die Volksblad* on 3 March 1958. In it, he says the comments on his lecture were invalid, because the newspaper's article was based on a secondary source and completely inaccurate: "U weergawe en kommentaar ... is nie veel meer as 'n karikatuur van wat ek in werklikheid voorgelees het nie." ("Your version and comments ... are not much more than a caricature of my lecture.") He writes that Van Schoor and Neethling would not have made such rash judgements, if they had personally heard his lecture. After reading this letter in the newspaper, Van Schoor wrote to Van Jaarsveld to explain what had happened. He says he had been approached by a reporter from *Die Volksblad* to respond to the comments on Van Jaarsveld's lecture in another Bloemfontein-based newspaper, *The Friend*. The reporter gave him a translated

version of that report which did not make any sense to him, but he was still asked for his comments. Van Schoor writes that he has already discussed this matter with the newspaper's editorial staff. He was upset, because his comments had been used out of context. The article created the impression that he was commenting on Van Jaarsveld's lecture, but he was actually responding to the comments in *The Friend*: "Jy sal begryp dat ek onder geen omstandighede wil hê dat enige iets weer 'n verwydering tussen ons kan teweegbring nie" ("You will understand that, under no circumstances, do I ever want anything to cause estrangement between us again.") (VJ 17). Van Jaarsveld responded on 8 March 1958, saying that he blames *Die Volksblad* for casting suspicion on him by distorting the contents of his lecture: "Ek het geleer dat 'n koerant 'n gevaarlike ding is." ("I have learnt that a newspaper is a dangerous thing.") (VJ 17). On 13 March 1958, Van Jaarsveld received a letter from the newspaper's deputy editor, S.F. Zaaïman. He admits that the newspaper had made a mistake by publishing the comments of Van Schoor and Neethling without giving an accurate summary of Van Jaarsveld's lecture: "(G)raag wil ons u weer verseker dat daar hoegenaamd geen opsetlike kwaadwillige bedoelings van ons kant was nie." ("We would like to assure you again that there were no deliberate malicious intentions on our part.") (VJ 27).

Although Van Jaarsveld told Van Schoor that he did not blame him for the article in *Die Volksblad*, a letter he wrote to Frans van Rensburg on 8 April 1958 tells a different story. He never sent the letter to Van Rensburg, but kept it for posterity. In the letter, Van Jaarsveld tells Van Rensburg how *Die Volksblad* had distorted the contents of his lecture. He also criticizes Van Schoor's behaviour severely: "(H)y het dit goed gedink om my in die openbaar d.m.w. die Volksblad te korrigeer asof ek 'n klomp onsin kwyt geraak het ... Hy het my nie betyds gewaarsku dat hy iets teen my in die pers het nie." ("He saw it fit to correct me publicly in Die Volksblad as if I was talking a lot of nonsense ... He did not warn me in time that he had something against me in the press.") Van Jaarsveld defends his response to the article: "My eer as wetenskaplike was op die spel. In Bloemfontein en in die Vrystaat word [Van Schoor] nogal as gesaghebbende aangeprys." ("My honour as a scientist was at stake. In Bloemfontein and in the Free State, he is regarded as a rather authoritative figure.") Van Jaarsveld makes three conclusions from



this incident. Firstly, Van Schoor was aware of what *Die Volksblad* was trying to do – i.e. to cast suspicion on Van Jaarsveld. Secondly, Van Schoor does not have any regard for his work as a historian and would, therefore, use the first opportunity he could get to cast suspicion on Van Jaarsveld’s work. Lastly, Van Jaarsveld says if the roles were reversed, he would not have commented on a lecture by Van Schoor. If he had responded and he had realized that the newspaper had twisted his comments, he would have warned Van Schoor. The letter shows that the *Volksblad* episode had, just like the plagiarism issue, harmed the friendship between Van Jaarsveld and Van Schoor (VJ 17). This incident apparently strengthened the rivalry, professional jealousy and distrust between the two historians. Van Jaarsveld and Van Schoor resumed their correspondence in August 1958, but their friendship remained markedly tense in the next five years.

### **3. “Ek hoop dat jy nie beginselbesware teen my werk koester nie”: Van Jaarsveld’s response to Van Schoor’s doctoral dissertation**

On 8 May 1961, just more than three years after the controversy around the article in *Die Volksblad* had subsided, Van Schoor wrote to Van Jaarsveld to congratulate him on his promotion to professor. This must have made him rather jealous of Van Jaarsveld. Van Schoor was nearly two years older than the newly appointed professor, but he was still only a lecturer who had been working on his doctoral dissertation since 1948. Van Schoor’s only criticism on Van Jaarsveld’s inaugural lecture, “Ou en nuwe weë in die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing”, was that he had overrated the value of some works by another Afrikaner historian, G.D. Scholtz. Van Schoor tells Van Jaarsveld that he is finishing off his dissertation, before sending it to his Potchefstroom promoter D.W. Krüger. He also writes that he has no regrets for not accepting the position as lecturer at UNISA in 1958, but he complains that he does not have as much time for research as he would have had at a non-residential university (VJ 17). Van Jaarsveld counters this statement in his reply on 13 May 1958: “Ons het hier baie werk ... Jy het seker nog nie 120 derdejaar-studente gehad om na te sien nie.” (“We have a lot of work here ... You surely have not had to mark the papers of 120 third year students.”) (VJ 17). Van Schoor mentions that he and his colleague, J.J. Oberholster, are trying to establish closer contact between History lecturers at university level – a suggestion to which Van Jaarsveld

responded positively. In his letter, Van Schoor writes that he is busy compiling a book on the methodology of history (VJ 17). Van Jaarsveld is, however, quick to point out that H.J. de Vleeschauwer had recently published a book on the same subject: “Of daar na die verskyning van hierdie boek oor die metodiek nog ruimte sal wees vir ’n tweede betwyfel ek.” (“I doubt it whether there will be a demand for a second book after the publication of this book on methodology”). Van Jaarsveld had clearly done this to show Van Schoor that he had not done his research properly and that he was not fully aware of new developments in his field of study (VJ 17).

Van Schoor finished his doctoral dissertation, “Die nasionale en politieke bewuswording van die Afrikaner in migrasie en sy ontluiking in Transgariëp to 1854”, in 1961. Having read the dissertation, Van Jaarsveld wrote to Van Schoor on 15 October 1962, telling him that he had sent him copies of two of his publications, *Die Tydgenootlike Beoordeling van die Groot Trek* (1962) and *Lewende verlede* (1962): “Ek hoop ... dat jy nie beginselbesware teen my werk koester nie.” (“I hope that you do not have objections to my work on matters of principle.”) This remark - which Van Schoor regarded as “ontaktvol” (“tactless”) - should be seen in the context of Van Jaarsveld’s comments on Van Schoor’s dissertation in the same letter. Van Jaarsveld responds to a footnote in Van Schoor’s preface in which he indicates that he came to different conclusions than Van Jaarsveld in his *Die ontwaking van die Afrikaanse nasionale bewussyn* (1957): “Ek vind dit eienaardig dat jy vooruitverwys na ’n werk wat nog moet kom terwyl jy in jou teks nie in ’n enkele voetnoot na my ‘Ontwaking’ verwys nie, nòg jou ‘ander’ gevolgtrekkings met my bevindings uiteensit” (Van Jaarsveld’s emphasis; “I find it strange that you refer to a work that must still come, while you do not refer to my book in a single footnote in your text. You also do not explain your conclusions as an alternative to mine.”) It has caught Van Jaarsveld’s attention that Van Schoor only refers to his doctoral dissertation, published as *Die eenheidstrewes van die Republikeinse Afrikaners I, Pioniershartstogte, 1836-1864* (1950). Van Jaarsveld corrects a few inaccuracies in his friend’s dissertation and outlines some other objections to the contents, but expresses his appreciation for Van Schoor’s critical approach to the ideas he worked out in *Die eenheidstrewes* (VJ 17).

From his reply of 16 October 1962, it is clear that Van Schoor had taken offense to the tone of Van Jaarsveld's letter. Van Schoor describes himself as an open-minded academic who always instructs his students to read a scientific work themselves to determine if his objections to its contents are justified or not. He defends his decision to refer only to Van Jaarsveld's doctoral dissertation: "(J)uis omdat my verhandeling, of die gedeelte wat ingehandig is, reeds vóór jou werk voltooi is, het ek met opset my bevindinge so gelaat sodat dit met joune vergelyk kan word." (Van Schoor's emphasis; "Because my dissertation, or at least the part I handed in, had been completed before your work [i.e. *Die ontwaking*], I deliberately left my conclusions unchanged, so that it could be compared with yours.") Van Schoor says he did not refer to *Die ontwaking van die Afrikaanse nasionale bewussyn*, to show that he had reached his conclusions independently, through his own research. He assures Van Jaarsveld that he refers frequently to *Die ontwaking* in the second (unfinished) part of his dissertation, which was still work in progress. Van Schoor interprets Van Jaarsveld's positive response to his critical approach to ideas worked out in *Die eenheidstrew*e as an indication that they can have fruitful differences of opinion. In the next paragraph, he expresses his concern about the tone of Van Jaarsveld's letter: "Dit bevat nie 'n enkele woord van waardering of verdoeming nie. Dit gaan net om die punte wat jou raak." ("It does not contain a single word of appreciation or damnation. It only touches on the issues that concern you.") Van Schoor ends his letter with an apology, in case he had interpreted Van Jaarsveld's letter wrongly (VJ 17).

Van Jaarsveld replied on 23 October 1962, writing that Van Schoor had completely misinterpreted his letter: "Dit spyt my dat my brief jou gemoedstoestand en gesindhede tot openbaring gebring het - ek het werklik nie bedoel om aan te val of te verwyt nie; bloot om 'n gesprek te open" ("It is a pity that my letter has brought your state of mind and attitudes to the fore. I really did not mean to attack or to blame you. I just wanted to start a discussion") (VJ 17). Van Schoor retorted in an emotional letter on 24 October 1962: "Om te wil beweer dat ek agter elke sin of woord iets verdags sien, is 'n growwe oordrywing, en as jy wil beweer dat jou brief my gemoedstoestand en gesindhede tot openbaring gebring het, kan ek dieselfde na jou terugslinger." ("To claim that I see

something suspicious behind every sentence or word, is a gross exaggeration. And if you want to claim that your letter brought my state of mind and attitudes to the fore, I can throw the same claims back at you.”) He continues: “(D)it is juis jou gemoedstoestand en gesindheid waarin jy ’n gesprek wil open waarteen ek beswaar aangeteken het. (“I actually objected to the state of mind and attitude in which you want to open a discussion.”) In a note on the letter, Van Jaarsveld wrote that he could not respond to such accusations, since Van Schoor’s tone was “emosioneel, bitter en rusierig” (“emotional, bitter and quarrelsome”). In another note, Van Jaarsveld wrote this about Van Schoor: “Die man is geel van jaloesie en rooiwarm van haat. Laat hy in sy eie vet gaarkook.” (“The man is yellow with envy and red-hot with hatred. Let him boil in his own fat.”) (VJ 17).

From 18 February to 2 March 1963, Van Jaarsveld visited Bloemfontein to do research in the Free State Archives. He recorded an incident during this visit in an extended note which he made on a letter written to Van Schoor on 15 March 1963. Van Jaarsveld recalls how Van Schoor asked him to come to his house to discuss a certain matter. During their conversation, Van Schoor brought up their correspondence of the previous year on his doctoral dissertation: “Hy het met ’n belydenis begin deur die ‘agtergrond’ van sy briewe te verduidelik. Daaruit het groot griewe teen my geblyk en baie verkeerde en gevaarlike dinge.” (“He started with a confession by explaining the ‘background’ to his letters. Big grievances against me and many wrong and dangerous things emerged from this.”) Van Schoor was apparently aggrieved because Van Jaarsveld had stolen his thunder by publishing *Die ontwaking van die Afrikaanse nasionale bewussyn* (1957). Van Schoor apparently said he had considered abandoning his doctoral dissertation after the publication of this book. According to Van Jaarsveld, he also feared that Van Jaarsveld would apply for a position in Bloemfontein when the head of the History department, C.J. Uys, retires: “Uit alles het dit duidelik geword dat Bloemfontein ’n skindernes is, dat daar baie kwaad van my gepraat word ... Daar heers ’n uitermate van jaloesie teenoor my. Ek mag nie publiseer nie! Dis ’n doodsonde wat teen ’n mens tel.” (“From all of this, it was clear that Bloemfontein is a hub for gossiping and that a lot of bad things are being said of me ... There is an excessive jealousy against me. I may not publish! It is a mortal sin

that counts against me.” Van Jaarsveld’s conclusion is that these feelings against him originated from gossip between the staff members of the History departments in Bloemfontein and Stellenbosch. He suspects Van Schoor, J.J. Oberholster (UOFS), D.J. Kotzé (US) and Marius Swart (US) to have been involved in this. He reserves his harshest judgement for Van Schoor: “Van Schoor self is my gevaarlikste ‘vriend’ ... Tienie werk agteraf – skinder verskriklik en is ongevoelig, ly waarskynlik vervolgings- en grootheidswaan, wil verheerlik en geken word. As historikus is hy tog nie tot veel in staat nie en ly hy aan ’n beperkte blik. Arme man, hy kom my geestelik siek voor.” (“Van Schoor is my most dangerous ‘friend’ ... Tienie does things behind your back – he gossips a lot and is insensitive. He probably suffers from a persecution complex and delusions of grandeur. He wants to be glorified and acknowledged. As a historian, he is not able to do much and his work suffers from a limited perspective. Poor man, he seems to be emotionally unstable.”) (VJ 17).

Van Schoor replied to Van Jaarsveld’s letter with a postcard on 25 March 1963, blissfully unaware of his friend’s harsh judgement on his personality and his abilities as a historian (VJ 17). After this, there are no traces of correspondence between the two historians in the F.A. van Jaarsveld collection until May 1979. If they were corresponding in this period, what happened to these letters? Did Van Jaarsveld lose or destroy them? This seems highly unlikely against the background of Van Jaarsveld’s apparent egoistic urge to preserve all his documents for posterity. Does this mean that there had been a breakdown in their correspondence for more than 16 years? The incident in which Van Jaarsveld was tarred and feathered by members of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, while delivering a lecture on the significance of the Battle of Blood River in South African history, at UNISA on 28 March 1979 provided the stimulus to restart their correspondence. On 9 May 1979, Van Schoor writes that *Die Volksblad* had approached for comment on Van Jaarsveld’s lecture. Probably having the *Volksblad* episode of 21 years earlier at the back of his mind, Van Schoor writes: “My antwoord was dat ek 90% met jou saamstem en die 10% waarvan ek met jou verskil oor tegniese aspekte van brontleding gaan (die teks van die Gelofte) en niks vir die gewone publiek inhou nie, en ook nie die grond kon wees vir die fanatici se optrede teen jou nie.” (“My answer was

that I agree with you 90 per cent and that the 10 per cent on which I differ with you is linked to technical aspects of source analysis (the text of the Vow/Covenant) which does not mean anything for the general public, and which could not have been the grounds for what the fanatics did to you.”) (VJ 21).

## **Bibliography**

F.A. van Jaarsveld collection (A2055): National Archives, Pretoria. Volumes 12, 16, 17, 21 and 27.

Giliomee, Hermann. 1987. The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1870-1915. *Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Joernaal* 19:115-142.

Politici het die reg om feite uit die verlede te gebruik. 1958. *Die Volksblad*, 15 Februarie.

Van Gorp, H. e.a. 1993. *Lexicon van Literaire Termen*. Groningen:Wolters-Noordhoff.

Van Jaarsveld, F.A. 1955. Die ontstaansgeskiedenis van die begrippe ‘Voortrekkers’ en ‘Groot Trek’. *Hertzog-annale van die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns* 4(2): 75-94.

Van Jaarsveld, F.A. 1956. Die ontstaan van die Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing. *Standpunte* 10: 42-53.

Van Jaarsveld, F.A. 1962. *Lewende verlede*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel.

Van Schoor, M.C.E. 1957a. Die galge-skaduwee van Slagtersnek. *Die Taalgenoot*, March 1957, 4-5.

Van Schoor, M.C.E. 1957b. Die galge-skaduwee van Slagtersnek. *Die Taalgenoot*, April 1957, 4-6