

THE NAKED KUYPER¹

Thierry Baudet appeared publicly this week in a spicy holiday photo. Contrary to today, during the last century, a similar occasion of a naked politician evoked much ridicule.

In the autumn of 1911, the former leader of the anti-revolutionaries in the more liberal Dutch press did not call him “Abraham” but Adam Kuyper.

Unlike the current Member of Parliament, Theirre Baudet, Kuyper did not publish a nude picture of himself. That would have been unthinkable a century ago. But he had been seen naked in front of the window of his room during a stay in a Brussels hotel.

The makers of political prints immediately made hay out of this scene. Albert Hahn drew Kuyper as “Manneke Pis.”² L.J. Jordaan depicted him between two policemen with only a top hat, an umbrella and a Bible for the noble parts.

The true facts of the events on Thursday morning 21 September 1911 will never be completely clear. According to news agency Reuters, Kuyper had been exposed to the hotel window, where in a short time 'a large crowd' had gathered to see the man in full glory. The police who were warned about this would have taken the Dutch ex-politician for questioning.

The 73-year-old Kuyper himself came up with a less scandalous lecture. Because of a throat condition, he had been in a sanatorium in Dresden for weeks. Even after his departure there, he had to do nude gymnastics on a doctor's prescription every day. A Brussels citizen opposite the hotel had seen him at work. According to Kuyper, that story and the promise to henceforth close the curtains for the police who came to inquire.

Both tendencies to magnify and downplay are understandable in the light of the time. Kuyper had a powerful past as founder of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, founder of the Free University, founder of Reformed churches, chief editor of the

¹*Trouw*, October 6, 2017. The article was forwarded to me without full disclosure. Translator n.n., but I, Jan H. Boer, the proprietor of this website, edited the translation. Apparently, Thierry Baudet, a politician, exposed himself naked publicly. This is the event that evoked this article. Not all Kuyper stories are heavy in tone; here's a light-hearted one, though Kuyper might not have regarded it as such.

²*Manneke Pis* is a famous landmark in Brussels, a small statue of a urinating naked boy. It even has a major hotel named after it. The name is in the

newspaper De Standaard and premier. Politically he was played out, but his stature was still big. Moreover, his party had recently taken the lead in implementing strict ethical legislation.

"By the way, nobody needs to be aware of the man's lack of clothes," Het Volk, the newspaper of the Social Democrats, sneered. "In the last few years he has taken up so many old things and thrown in the corner that he does not have anything left to cover his nakedness, and even his shawl seems to be missing."

On the 6th of October a sample of investigative journalism by *Het Volk* about the case was published under the somewhat ambiguous headline 'The Brussels case'. Because how could Kuyper's exercises in the rooms on the second floor simply attract the attention of passersby? A journalist wrote from the Belgian capital: "The windows of the Métropole hotel are equipped with very tight curtains, and in the rather thick façade wall they go much further than is the case with Dutch homes".

Exhibitionist?

Kuyper, the reporter concluded, had to deliberately slip away the curtains and stand very close to the window. The suggestion, though unspoken, is that... the former leader of the anti-revolutionaries might be something of an exhibitionist?

The journalist had also checked the Belgian Penal Code and found Article 385: "He who publicly curses good manners by acts that hurt the shame, is punished with a prison sentence of eight days to a year and with a fine of 26 to 500. The guilty parties will also be released from their civil rights. "

But it would not come that far in Kuypers case, Het Volk predicted. "It is understood that, in order to prevent international unpleasantness, better to serve international courtesy, the Belgian justice will not like to refer to public trial, where a conviction is inevitable."

There was indeed no persecution. The affair would be brought up to Kuyper's death in 1920 with some regularity.