The publication of the seventeenth and last volume in the series *Briefwisseling van Hugo Grotius* marks the end of an enterprise which goes back to the years of the first World War. December 1916 saw the foundation of the Association for the edition of the works of Grotius ('Vereeniging tot de uitgave van de werken van Grotius'). Under the chairmanship of the Leiden Professor Cornelis van Vollenhoven, the Association gave vent to the conviction that the edition of Grotius' correspondence was to be given priority, because of the many details it contained on the realization of his works ('omdat daar de aanwijzingen te vinden zijn voor het tot stand komen van zijn werken'). The members of the Association, referred to in the introduction to the first volume of the *Briefwisseling* as men of authority ('mannen van gezag'), even declared themselves willing to lend financial support and to yield a certain amount of money every year on behalf of the edition. With the aid of authorities like C. van Vollenhoven, E.A. van Beresteyn, A. Eekhof, W.J.M. van Eysinga and J. Huizinga, vol. I of the *Briefwisseling van Hugo Grotius* appeared in 1928, edited by P.C. Molhuysen. Some years later, in 1936, Molhuysen also published vol. II. After this, many years went by before the series was continued: in 1961 B.L. Meulenbroek published vol. III. Since then, vols. IV-XVI saw the light more or less intermittently. Besides P.C. Molhuysen and B.L. Meulenbroek, C.M. Schulten, P.P. Witkam, C.M. Ridderikhoff and H.J.M. Nellen were also engaged in the edition.

After the publication of vols. I and II, a file of letters was kept, to be published in due time in a supplementary volume. Not surprisingly, this file increased through the years: from the introductions to the vols. III-XIV it can be easily deduced that the editors of Grotius' correspondence only gradually succeeded in coping with the voluminous source-material, dispersed as it is over many European archives and libraries, and, initially, inventorized for the most part only deficiently. In the introduction to vol. V, p. viii for example, the editor B.L. Meulenbroek remarked that the chance of newly found letters being published in their appropriate place decreased as the series.
went along. He then stated rather laconically: ‘Of course, there always remains the inevitable refuge to the supplement’ (‘Welnu, dan hebben we altijd nog de onvermijdelijke vluchthaven van het supplement’). Eventually, this supplementary volume came to contain 310 letters plus 85 annexes, not known before or now presented in a better version. Of these 310 letters, Grotius sent 105 himself and received 205.

In general it can be said that this volume offers letters and annexes dating from every phase of Grotius’ life, documents that are very diverse in character. Although the reader is not supplied with new important information on the preparation of famous works like *Mare liberum* (1609) or *De iure belli ac pacis* (1625), this does not mean that these letters and annexes do not form a valuable addition to the material gathered in the previous sixteen volumes. Grotius’ eventful life and career are well reflected, albeit with many gaps. From his schooldays in Delft for example dates a short letter with an oration, destined for his uncle Cornelis de Groot (no. 1B). On the other hand we do not have any letters from Grotius’ student days in Leiden. Only after Grotius settled himself in Delft (1597/1598) and, later on, in The Hague (1599), the flow of letters increases, first and for all in the form of dedications addressed to dignitaries like Henri II de Bourbon, prince of Condé (no. 7A) and Reinoud van Brederode (no. 45A). When Grotius is nominated judge-advocate at the Court of Holland (1607), the quantity of the (mainly official) correspondence increases. From this time, letters of dedication were also addressed to Grotius himself, showing that his fame was spreading quickly (nos. 250A, 389A and 473A). During the years of Grotius’ activities as pensionary of Rotterdam (1613-1618), the religious and political controversies which paralyzed Holland at the end of the Truce, are repeatedly mentioned. Furthermore, we have letters on Grotius’ captivity in The Hague as well as at Loevestein Castle (1618-1621). In the following periods of exile, spent in Paris (1621-1631) and, after a short Dutch intermezzo, in Hamburg (1632-1634), Grotius could only maintain relations with his family and his friends by keeping up a regular correspondence; many of these letters, amongst which quite a few exchanged with his brothers-in-law Nicolaes and Johan van Reigersberch, are included in this supplementary volume. As in the previous volumes of the *Briefwisseling*, the documents related to Grotius’ Swedish embassy in Paris (1635-1645) make up an important part of the correspondence of the last phase of his life.

Once again, preparations for this last volume in the series have made it apparent that the search for Grotius’ legacy will every now and then lead to the discovery of an unknown letter. An explanation might be that Grotius’