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HOLLAND
AND THE WAR

BY
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The Kingdom of the Netherlands less correctly but more tly known to us as Holland, was before the .Germans invaded it, one of the most prosperous countries in the world. Its democratic institutions and its high standard of civilization made it in many respects a model state. In its relations with its neighbours, including Germany, it did nothing which could have excused an act of aggression. Professor O. N. Clark's pamphlet gives a picture of Holland as she was before the, invasion—her economics, her social structure, and her constitution—and against this background describes her foreign policy during recent years, and the circumstances of her entry into the war as Great Britain's ally, an ally with powerful material resources in her East Indian Empire.

Fuller information on Dutch foreign relations will be found in the annual volumes of the *Survey of International Affairs* published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs. In *The Rape of the Netherlands* (1940) Dr. E. N. van Kleffens, the present Dutch Foreign Minister, has eloquently described the invasion and the course of events before it. The internal history of the country down to 1923 is described in Professor A. J. Barnouw's *Holland under Queen Wilhelmina* (1923); and the same author's book *The Dutch: a Portrait Study of the People of Holland* (1940) gives intimate pictures of many aspects of private and public life. The short articles in the *Annual Register* give the most accessible English accounts of domestic events in the most recent years. For the Netherlands Indies there are full studies on the political side in the second volume of Dr. A. D. A. de Kat Angelino's *Colonial Policy* (1931), and on the economic side in Mr. J. S. FurnivalPs *Netherlands India* (1939).

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HOLLAND AND THE WAR

OFFICIALLY the country of our Dutch allies is known as 'the Kingdom of the Netherlands', but we usually call it 'Holland', and this is the most convenient name though, strictly speaking, it is not correct. It is the official name of one part of the country only, the part now divided into the two provinces of North and South Holland; but Dutchmen themselves often use it for the whole country, just as we often say 'England' when we mean the United Kingdom. 'Holland' is a shorter and handier name than 'the Netherlands', and 'the Netherlands' is confusing because the Southern or Spanish or Austrian Netherlands, often mentioned in historical books about former centuries, are the country which we now call Belgium, and scarcely even overlap with the present 'Kingdom of the Netherlands'. 'The Low Countries', which is another way of saying 'the Netherlands', is used more vaguely to describe the whole region, mostly low-lying, which includes Holland, Belgium, and Luxemburg.

Before the German invasion Holland was one of the most prosperous countries in the world. For one thing, it had a lower death-rate than any other country. The 'expectation of life' was greater than anywhere else: a girl born in Australia could look forward to a slightly longer life than a Dutch girl, but, with this one exception, Holland took the first place: even the Australian boy had the prospect of a shorter life than the Dutch boy. This was the more remarkable because a low death-rate usually goes with a low birth-rate, but in Holland the birth-rate was high. Another test of prosperity is national income. In average real income per head of population, in the period 1925-34, Holland was amongst the richest

continental countries of Europe. It was one of the five continental countries which were so rich that they had money to lend abroad.

This prosperity was due to good management profiting from natural opportunity.

Economic Geography

The area of the European part of the kingdom is slightly less than that of the six northern counties of England. While these six counties have a population of more than twelve millions, Holland has a little more than eight and a half, but even this makes it one of the most densely populated countries of Europe. The reasons for this close concentration of people are geographical. Holland is a delta-land. Two of the great inland waterways of Europe, the Rhine and the Meuse or Maas, flow through Dutch territory to the sea. Neither of them has a single estuary: they break up into a number of channels, and these are connected with one another, and with the rivers of Belgium, France, and Germany, by a network of canals. These waterways are vital links in the transport system of western Europe, and not only of western Europe but of the world, for Holland lies in the centre of the world's most highly industrialized zone. Rotterdam was the chief inlet for ore and other overseas supplies to the industrial district of the Ruhr, and the chief outlet for the export of its finished products overseas. Amsterdam, connected with the North Sea by a ship canal, shared with Rotterdam the seaborne trade of the vast and populous basins of the Rhine and Meuse and the county bordering the Danube as far as Budapest. The German ports of Hamburg, Bremen, and Emden, and the Belgian port of Antwerp, though their chief business was with the areas flanking this hinterland of the **Dutch ports, were to a certain extent competitors**

within it; but the geographical advantage of the Dutch ports was never overcome either by political measures like tariffs or by expenditure on competing waterways.

For centuries past the Dutch have taken advantage of their geographical opportunities by following the sea, with the result that they had important fisheries, a considerable merchant fleet (the eighth largest in the world), a great shipbuilding industry (the third largest in the world, and in some ways highly specialized), and various subsidiary industries. Their forefathers have handed down to them a great colonial empire, exceeded in population only by those of Great Britain and France, and containing some of the richest of all colonial territories. The Dutch East Indies produce more than one-third of the world's rubber, one-fifth of its palm-oil products, nine-tenths of the cinchona bark from which quinine is made, 30 per cent, of all coco-nut products, 17 per cent, of tea, and a high proportion of tin and mineral oil. Besides these East Indian islands the Dutch have two possessions in the Western Hemisphere, Surinam on the north coast of South America and the island of Curacao, where the oil from Venepuela is refined. They are vigorous and enlightened colonial administrators, and they have made great contributions to all the sciences on which colonial administration depends—tropical medicine, agriculture and economics, and the studies of the laws, languages, customs, and religions of the East Indian peoples. Their empire provided employment for a surprisingly large proportion of the educated class, and materials for a number of light industries like the cigar-manufacture and the refining or processing of cocoa, sugar, rubber, rice, oil, coffee, and tea. From it was derived a considerable part of the Wealth which made **Amsterdam** a capital-market. The outside **world** benefited from

the generous open-door policy of the Dutch. The trade of all nations had access to her colonies, and, more than that, foreign capital was welcomed in their development, and foreigners, including many Germans, were appointed to technical and other posts in the Government service there.

Agriculture

After the seaports and waterways and the colonial empire, agriculture was the most decisive factor in Holland's economic position. Dutch agriculture was in many ways like British agriculture. As in England, there is very little forest-land. Dutch agriculture, like British, had to stand up against foreign competition and also against the domestic competition of the towns for labour and investment. It gave employment to about one-fifth of the population, a greater proportion than in Britain, but much less than in Denmark or France, where the proportion was about one-third. There is a class of landless labourers like those of Great Britain, more numerous in proportion than the agricultural proletariat* of any other continental country. Dutch, like British, agriculture was very varied. About half the land is cultivated by its owners themselves, and about half rented from landlords. More than half the farms are very small. Holland has to support a far denser rural population than Great Britain: it has four times as many agriculturists per acre of land as Great Britain has. Consequently agriculture was an export industry: in prosperous times about half the agricultural output was sold abroad. Since permanent pasture predominated considerably over arable, there were also food imports, especially of cereals: in the proportion of food imported Holland stood between France and Belgium.

The Dutch farmers were well educated, technically

efficient, and good business men, successful in working co-operative organizations. The chief standing problem was how to maintain the great and growing agricultural population at a satisfactory standard of life. One method of tackling this was the reclamation of land from the sea and lakes, in which the Dutch have been experts for centuries. The draining of the Zuyder Zee, which was begun more than twenty years ago, is the greatest reclamation scheme in the world, and when it is completed it will have added 7 per cent, to the area of the country's agricultural land.

Industry

Until after the war of 1914-18 Dutch industry was relatively unimportant; but in the last twenty years there has been a growth of industry resembling in some ways the industrialization of England south of the Trent. There is, however, this great difference that Holland has no native mineral resources except coal. The coal-field of Limburg produced in 1937, more than four times as much as in 1917, or slightly less than half the production of Belgium. About half was exported and half kept for home consumption. There were more than 30,000 miners, of whom many were foreign immigrants—Poles, Czechs, and about 8,000 Germans. Some of the mines are State-owned; of the privately owned mines the majority were in French and Belgian hands. Most of the other industries are 'light' industries. Foreign sources supplied the raw materials for the textile industry (mainly cotton, mainly in the district of Twente), and for the manufacture of margarine, electrical supplies, artificial silk, boots and shoes, and glass. The oil and margarine industries were connected with great combinations in which British capital predominated. Assembling plants for aeroplanes employed about 6,000 men; the manufacture of aero engines was begun

only in 1930; there was one assembling factory for motor vehicles.

Economic Policy

A generation ago the Dutch were a free-trade people: both at home and in the colonies they based their economic policy on free imports and sound money. By degrees they have departed from this tradition, but slowly and reluctantly. The decisive steps resulted from the great depression of the nineteen-thirties. The fall in the prices of primary products hit both the colonies and Dutch home agriculture; shipping was laid up as it was everywhere else; the transit trade declined; there was grave unemployment; the revenue from taxation dropped. The State applied, to begin with, the traditional remedies of liberal economics: it cut down government expenditure of all kinds, including that on official salaries; it increased taxation; it provided relief for the unemployed. But the restrictive measures themselves increased the hardships of the population, and the attempts of other states to protect themselves against the depression made matters worse. Great Britain, at that time second only to Germany and later surpassing even Germany as a market for Dutch exports, found herself compelled to restrict agricultural imports by quotas, and this meant that a great part of the demand for Dutch dairy and market-garden produce disappeared. By the Ottawa system again Great Britain granted preferences to her own colonies which restricted the markets of Dutch colonial produce, and, again, when Great Britain left the gold standard Dutch exporters and shipowners suffered a disadvantage. What Great Britain felt compelled to do in these ways was only what the other great nations had begun long before, and continued to do in increasing measure. The Dutch had no

choice but to follow suit. For a comparatively small nation and empire this forced movement towards autarky had none of the attractions which it seemed to offer to greater economic units; the Dutch, in the Treaty of Ouchy of 1932, therefore attempted a mutual lowering of trade barriers with the Belgians, which might have been extended to other countries. It would have required, however, a renunciation on the part of Great Britain and other states of their existing 'most favoured nation*' rights, and this they were unwilling to grant. The Dutch consequently had to act alone.

On the monetary side they moved slowly. When Great Britain went off gold, the Dutch kept to the gold standard; but lively controversy went on for several years between those who held the traditional doctrines of sound currency and those who wished to devalue and so to encourage exports and diminish unemployment. In September 1936, however, France and Switzerland gave up the gold standard and Holland too went over to a managed currency.

Commercial policy also was transformed by a series of improvisations which, by 1939, had settled down into a definite system. Imports were subjected to a system of quotas. To encourage colonial exports and to protect Dutch exports to the colonies against foreign, and especially Japanese, competition, the quota-system was applied to the colonial trade. The Dutch colonies participated in the action of the international controls of rubber, tea, sugar, and tin. Home agriculture was drastically controlled. The dairy herd, the pigs, and poultry, and the other exporting branches were reduced; and agricultural exports were heavily subsidized by taxing the home consumer through charging him a higher price. On the other hand, the home production of cereals was expanded in order to lessen the expenditure on imports. Altogether from

1934. to 1936 one-third of their gross receipts was paid to the farmers by the State.

The result of these and similar measures was that at the outbreak of war in 1939 the Dutch economic system was one of controlled capitalism. There was general regimentation by state authorities. This new system brought with it inevitable changes in the structure of industry, especially a tendency to concentration in the hands of large firms. It mitigated, though it did not solve, the problem of unemployment. On the whole it brought the Dutch through the period of crisis with their economy sound and capable of recovery, but at the price of hardships similar to those which Great Britain had to endure in the same period. The Dutch were able to achieve so much while at the same time avoiding acute social strife because their democratic system of government responded to the demands made upon it.

Social Structure

The Dutch nation was socially and politically sounder than any of its continental neighbours; and this soundness had deep roots in history and tradition. Holland, like England, was a business nation, with a rich inheritance of culture and public spirit.

Although there was no hereditary element in the legislature, there was a nobility, but it was neither feudal nor plutocratic. Among the five or six hundred families which enjoy hereditary titles there are a few with ancient countships of the Holy Roman Empire, and a few higher titles have been created by the Dutch Crown; but the majority have the title of *Jonkheer* which, like the others, descends to all the sons of each of its holders, not, like English titles, only to the eldest son. This title was given, when the Kingdom of the Netherlands was formed in 1814, to

all those who could prove that their ancestors had been for three generations members of the patriciates of the Dutch cities in the former republican days. They were thus members of a governing class but not of a landed class; and in spite of Dutch conservatism the governing class steadily widened through the nineteenth century, very much as it did in England, by the addition of new elements from the world of business and the professions which took their place beside the old hereditary elements. The pathway to employment in official positions was not kept open in the same way as in England. There was no Civil Service Commission, providing equality of opportunity by means of competitive examinations; each government department made its own appointments, and influence of various kinds, including both social influence and party influence, was useful in getting these appointments; but a high standard of competence was demanded, and the general result was a system not very dissimilar from ours.

Until quite recently the daily intercourse of different classes in Holland was noticeably less familiar than in England: social distinctions were more emphasized; but custom in these matters was altering. The general outward tone of Dutch social life was democratic. There was no servility anywhere, and life in general was free, indeed it was almost free and easy. A great deal of Dutch life was summed up in the fact that among eight million people there were four million bicycles. The roads were flat and many of them had Bicycle tracks. People of all classes rode on them for business or pleasure, from workmen going to work to army officers with clips on their Bicycles to hold their swords. When petrol was short the Queen herself pedalled through the streets. The democratic push-bike was a symbol of a genuinely democratic society.

Education

The Dutch are one of the most highly educated peoples in the world. As linguists they probably hold the first place in Europe, in the sense that a larger proportion of them than of any other nation read, speak, and write foreign languages. As a small nation surrounded by great nations they need this knowledge if they are to use their opportunities to the full; but they do not learn foreign languages only for utilitarian reasons: they have a correspondingly wide understanding of foreign nations, their literatures and points of view. Not only in language-teaching but in the teaching of all subjects their schools are excellent. The great majority of boys and girls of all classes are educated in aay-schools of various grades, many of which are co-educational. Among the Dutch as among ourselves there has been a long series of controversies about religious education. The system now in force is that confessional schools are subsidized by the State in the same way as the neutral schools which, in earlier days, had an exclusive right to state support.

The Dutch regard their universities and their other institutions for higher education with well founded pride. Leyden, the oldest of them, has been since the sixteenth century one of the world's greatest centres of learning and science. The other Dutch universities are worthy of the same traditions. It is natural that they should be specially famous for their Oriental studies; but there is no faculty in which Holland has not some of the living leaders of the world's thought. Utrecht and Groningen, like Leyden, are state universities: and it is characteristic of Dutch freedom that there are side by side with them, in friendly rivalry and co-operation, three private universities, the municipal university of Amsterdam, the Free University of **the same** city, which is Calvinistic, and the Catholic

University of Nymwegen. The great Technical High School at Delft is a state institution granting degrees in every branch of engineering and industrial technology.

This admirable educational system has a marked effect on the quality of Dutch private and public life. It gives a high standard of general culture and of professional competence. The administrative work of the senior officials of the Dutch ministries, as exemplified, for instance, in their reports and memoranda, strikes everyone who comes into contact with it as extremely well done. The Dutch newspapers before the German invasion were suited to an educated public. They were solid, well informed, and sober in expression.

The Diversity of Dutch Life

Although Holland is a small country, Dutch life is rich in variety. Influences flow in from the colonial world and from the great neighbouring foreign nations. There is less centralization than in England and France, so that the provinces are less provincial. The seat of the court, the parliament, the government departments, and the highest law-courts is The Hague; but Amsterdam, the greatest city, is nominally the capital, and various activities which in many countries are concentrated in the capital are here spread through other towns.

The diversity of Dutch life does not arise from racial diversity. There is indeed one local linguistic minority: the Frisians have their own language, which though closely akin to Dutch is more closely akin to English, and to the Dutch is a foreign language which they cannot understand. It is spoken by some three hundred thousand country-people in the province of Friesland and by a few thousands in the North Frisian islands, which belong to Germany and Denmark.

These are the remnants of the Frisian people, who once covered a much wider area. There has of late years been a Frisian movement; the language is now taught in rather more than 100 of the elementary schools in Friesland (about one-fifth of the whole number) and consequently it is holding its ground. The Frisian movement is not, however, a political or nationalist movement; the Frisians are good Dutchmen, and to Dutch life generally the province contributes a specially respected element, men with a reputation for uprightness and character. At the present moment both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister are Frisians, the former a Frisian-speaker to whom Dutch is a second language, as English is a second language to Mr. Lloyd-George.

Its geographical position and its international commerce have for centuries past attracted many foreign immigrants to Holland, most of whom in the course of time have been absorbed into the native population; but there are two foreign colonies which have not been fully assimilated. The proportion of Jews is higher than in any other country of western Europe. There was not, however, a 'Jewish problem' in the Netherlands except in so far as the refugees created a new problem after 1933. In this respect, and in the relations between the Jews and the rest of the population, Holland was similar to Great Britain: there was no native anti-Semitism of a virulent kind. There was, however, a German problem.. The Germans permanently resident in Holland numbered more than a hundred thousand of every class in society; and among them the various official and semi-official organizations for Germans abroad had great numbers of adherents. The more dangerous political activities of the German colony were, however, secret, and few people knew how serious they were.

The other foreign colonies in the country were far

less numerous and are not worth mentioning among the elements of variety in Dutch life. One of the roots of that variety is diversity of religion: there is no western country in which religion has a greater influence on public life. Englishmen often think of the Dutch as a nation of Calvinists; but this is a mistake. The Dutch have official statistics of the numbers of adherents of the several churches. According to these the Netherlands Reformed Church, the largest single body, which was once the established church of the State, includes about one-third of the population. Other Protestant sects, not all of which are Calvinistic, account for about the same number, while more than a third are Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholics are strongest in the southern provinces, North Brabant and Limburg, where they form a great majority of the population, and where they have the Belgian and German Catholics as neighbours. They are a noticeable element in most of the other provinces as well, and as they tend to have larger families they are a growing element. They have maintained themselves ever since the Reformation side by side with the Calvinists in many places, often through local and personal accidents. Of the two famous neighbouring villages where British tourists used to stare at the picturesque costumes of the fisher-folk, Voerendaal is Catholic and Marken is Protestant. It is only in the northerly provinces of Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe that the Catholics are a small minority.

Constitution

Holland was governed by a democratic constitutional monarchy. The position of the monarchy is in general, though not in every detail, similar to that of the British monarchy. The Queen is **the** symbol of the unity and freedom of the nation. Though they **have** worn a crown only since **1814**, **her** family gave **the**

Dutch republic its stadholders, who were its first servants in war and peace, its principal officers throughout almost the whole of its existence from the time when William the Silent stood forward as the hero of their first war of independence.

The legislature is a parliament of the regular western type. The Lower Chamber (which is called, rather confusingly for British readers, the Second Chamber, a name we usually give to the upper chamber of a legislature) has 100 members elected for four years by proportional representation, the whole country forming a single constituency. The First, or Upper, Chamber has fifty members, elected for six years by the states, or local government assemblies, of the eleven provinces, which in turn are chosen every four years by popular vote. Treaties, in consequence of a constitutional amendment of 1922, require the consent of both Chambers. The Ministers are not members of either Chamber and members who become Ministers vacate their seats; but they have the right to sit and speak in either Chamber, so that they answer questions and pilot their business through the parliament in much the same way as ours, though far less of their time is spent in managing parliamentary business.

The Dutch system of government was thus, like our own, parliamentary democracy. The most distinctive features of its practical working arose from the system of proportional representation. This system gave great power to the electoral organizations of the parties. The details of the system were modified after it was first introduced in order to restrain the evil, common to most systems of proportional representation, of the small freak party; but it was not completely freed from this evil, and it made the working of democracy different in various ways from what we are used to here.

Most of the members of the Chambers owe their

importance to their political activities; few of them have, like so many British politicians, a position of their own in the social or business life of the country as prominent as any they can win by a political career. In the Upper Chamber there are a few men of this standing, such as landowners or retired generals, and there the proportion of substantial business men is greater than in the Lower Chamber; but the majority in both are professional men, with, characteristic of Holland, some ministers of religion, both Catholic and Protestant. There are both Social Democrats and Catholics of working-class origin; but these, as in other countries, have worked their way up as trade-union officials, political journalists, or party organizers. Altogether the two Chambers consisted of adequate but not very authoritative members.

Parties

Party feeling in the Netherlands ran high, partly because the element of religious difference was involved in it. The parties are many, but they fall into groups of which the first is that of the confessional religious parties. The largest single party is the Roman Catholic party. Like the Catholics in some other countries the Dutch Catholics agree on educational and many other matters, but in social questions are divided into conservatives and a more democratic wing. The party which represents the Dutch Reformed Church is the Christian Historical party, while the nonconforming Protestant sects, strong among the lower middle class, have the Anti-Revolutionary party. The present Prime Minister, Professor Gerbrandy, and his predecessor Dr. Colijn both belong to the Anti-Revolutionary party. The Liberals represent the secularist middle class of professional and business men: they have sunk in numbers to a small fraction of the electorate, but they

still include some of the country's best brains and abilities. The 'Vrijzinnig' (independent) Democrats are a small party of liberals or radicals.

The Social Democratic party, although it had a similar basis in trade unionism, was until recent years both more revolutionary and less practical than the British Labour party. The Dutch are conservative in many ways and particularly in matters affecting property. They have, for instance, never given formal recognition to the Soviet regime in Russia. The distrust of Socialists as advocates of lavish expenditure by the State and by local authorities was very widespread. They were the last nation in western Europe to include Socialist ministers in their cabinet.

The party system under proportional representation necessarily led to complicated coalitions: since that system came into force there has never been a simple one-party government. From 1918 to 1925 there was a Christian coalition, a Roman Catholic prime minister being supported by the orthodox Calvinists; but after 1925 government could be carried on only by non-party cabinets of experts who took charge of the government departments but did not command parliamentary majorities. This unsatisfactory state of things came to an end with the economic depression, the return of the danger of war, and the consequent demand for a national policy. In 1933 Dr. Cohjn, a strong man with wide experience in the colonial army, in business and politics, became prime minister at the head of a coalition of all the non-socialist parties. He carried through the changes in economic policy, and set about the task of rearmament; but by the summer of 1939 he was no longer able to hold together in his cabinet the advocates of greater social expenditure and the orthodox liberal economists. A few years earlier the Socialists had virtually dropped their republicanism, and in 1937 they had abandoned

their opposition to all military expenditure. The path to office was thus open to them, and Dr. Colijn made way for the government which is still in office, though in exile. It is a coalition mainly of the Catholics, Socialists, and Christian Historical: three of **the** ministers belonged to other parties, but two of them had not had parliamentary careers, and the third, Professor Gerbrandy, who became prime minister in 1940, joined as an individual, without committing his party. The Minister of Defence, Colonel Dijkhoorn, belongs to no party.

National Socialism in Holland

Outside the normal party system are the extremist groups, of Communists and National Socialists. Communism in Holland has gone through the same stages as in other countries, but it has never been strong. The National Socialists have played a more prominent part, though they have never been a factor of first-rate importance in Dutch political life. Apart from some minor dissident formations, they are organized in the N.S.B. (*Nationaal Socialistische Beweging*) which was founded in 1931 by A. A. Mussert, its present Leader. Mussert was a civil engineer who had a respectable position in the Government service. He first took part in politics in 1925-7 as an organizer of **the** nationalistic opposition to the Treaty with Belgium.¹ As a demagogue he is second-rate. His ablest colleague is the fanatical M. M. Rost van Tonningen, who was financial representative of the **League of Nations in Austria from 1931 to 1936. The Germans have put him in charge first of the Dutch labour organizations and now of the Netherlands Bank; but he has the disadvantage, for a National Socialist, of having East-Indian blood. The N.S.B. was organized on the familiar German model**

¹ See below, p. 23.

and Mussert worked by propaganda on anti-Semitic and racialist lines, by infecting the public services, by creating 'incidents', and by arming and drilling his followers. The popularity of the movement may be judged from its electoral history, which consisted of a rise and a fall. During the depression the N.S.B. was able to exploit the discontent of the peasants, of the lower middle class, and of the youth generally. It obtained financial support from some employers who supposed that in Germany National Socialism was saving capitalism from its enemies; and it appealed to some of the conservative elements of society. Consequently in the elections for the Provincial States in 1935 it obtained 79 per cent, of all the votes cast; but it never did so well again. The course of events in Germany was against it. The open militarism of the German Nazis set the pacific and individualist Dutchmen against them; their excesses disgusted both trade unionists and employers. Finally the German aggressions of 1936-9 aroused apprehensions for Dutch independence and led people of all classes to rally to the House of Orange. Consequently the popularity of the movement fell away and in 1939 it won only 3.7 per cent. of the votes for the Provincial Estates, it never had more than four of the hundred seats in the Lower Chamber.

The attitude of the N.S.B. to Dutch independence was cunningly deceptive. Its leaders always professed to be patriots and denounced the internationalism of Catholics and Socialists; but the object of their patriotism was not the Dutch kingdom but the Dietsch* race. This race, the existence of which is more than questionable from the point of view of ethnology and history, is that of which the Dutch are said to form a part, the other parts being first the Flemings¹ who live in Belgium and a small corner

¹ The Flemings live in the more northerly parts of Belgium and

of France, and secondly the Dutch of South Africa. The N.S.B. were not the first to use the idea of the Dietsch race in politics. From the 1890's there grew up a sympathy among some Dutchmen, mainly students and 'intellectuals', for Flemish nationalism, and an ill-defined desire for Dutch-Flemish co-operation. This movement, to which at one stage the name of 'the Great Netherlands idea*' was given, led to no practical result except that it may have contributed to the gradual realization of Flemish demands in Belgium. Some of its Dutch supporters were liberals in the wider sense of the term: with the rise of the German danger these, as patriotic Dutchmen, became anti-German. The N.S.B. with its cruder appeal took up the Dietsch idea, and used it, as German propaganda did, to support Flemish extremism against Belgian unity, and to attack British imperialism in South Africa. Clear-sighted men knew that the pretence of patriotism was a mere camouflage for pro-German treachery, and in the course of the year 1930 the insolence of the N.S.B. and its association with treasonable activities opened the eyes of some of its dupes. It was not, however, until the German invasion that it came out openly in its true colours.

Frontiers

The modern period of Dutch foreign policy began with the separation of Holland and Belgium, which were united under a Dutch king from 1814 until the Belgians revolted and proclaimed their independence in 1831. It was not until 1839 that the Dutch, the Belgians, and the Great Powers finally agreed on the terms of the separation. It was in this settlement that their language is Dutch, but it is spoken in a variety of dialects. In 1930 43 per cent, of the population of Belgium spoke only Flemish, 38 per cent, only French, and 13 per cent, both languages. The dividing line between the two languages is shown on the map: Brussels, the capital, is a town of mixed speech.

Holland got her present southern frontiers. Her frontiers do not follow prominent geographical features; they cut across the great rivers; out that does not mean that they are artificial. They are historic and national. Their course was determined by events which happened centuries ago, and by the simple fact that, because of their history, the people on one side of the line are Dutchmen while the people on the other side are Germans or Belgians. From the North Sea to the River Waal the frontier was laid down, though it was not a new line even then, in the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. The frontier with Belgium is practically the same as it was in 1790 (before the French revolutionary wars), and except in one part this frontier of 1790 had been the same since 1648 and earlier.

Two points about this Dutch-Belgian frontier need to be explained. There is a small isolated piece of Dutch territory, Dutch Flanders, on the left bank of the mouth of the Scheldt. This is very important strategically because it means that the Scheldt at its mouth runs through Dutch territorial waters. But there is nothing accidental or anomalous about Dutch Flanders. Its population is completely Dutch, and it has been Dutch for more than three centuries. The other part of the frontier that looks odd on the map is the Limburg appendix'. This piece of Dutch territory running down between Belgium and Germany on the right bank of the River Maas is about twenty-five miles long from north to south and at its narrowest point only about four miles wide. It bars some of the routes between Belgium and Germany; but the Dutch could not possibly defend it unless they were in alliance with either the Belgians or the Germans. It is Dutch because the town of Maastricht, at the principal crossing of the Maas in this region, has been Dutch since 1648, but until 1831 was an isolated

enclave, and, at the separation from Belgium the rest of Limburg had to be divided between the Belgians and the Dutch. The Dutch king was also Grand Duke of Luxemburg.¹ He handed over part of his Luxemburg duchy to the Belgians and in exchange received as a territorial indemnity part of the Belgian province of Limburg. In sentiment this is now completely Dutch.

Relations with Belgium

Holland and Belgium are neighbours and part of their boundary is the River Scheldt. A regime for this waterway was agreed upon in 1839; but no such agreement could last for ever without revision. When Belgium was released from compulsory neutrality in the Treaty of Versailles adjustments were needed, and there was a negotiation on the whole question of old and new waterways which was broken off by the Belgians in 1920. It was afterwards resumed and agreement was reached in 1925; but the Dutch Upper Chamber refused its consent, fearing that the treaty would give Antwerp advantages to the detriment of Rotterdam. It was not until Belgian policy towards the Great Powers fell into line with that of Holland that the two nations came closer together. As the fear of German aggression grew, their mutual relations improved, and the exchange of royal visits in 1918 and 1939, to celebrate the completion of a hundred years of peace after the separation, marked a real political friendship.

Foreign Policy

Throughout the modern period until 1940 Holland constantly followed in-

¹ The personal union
accession of the present
See below, p. 26.

ciple was neutrality in the quarrels of the Great Powers. Holland was not compelled by treaty to be neutral, like Belgium or Switzerland. The neutrality of Belgium was imposed by the Powers at the time of the separation and was accompanied by the guarantee which Germany broke in 1914; but, Holland, although her geographical position was almost as dangerous as Belgium's, remained free to make alliances and received no guarantee. There never was a time, however, when Dutch statesmen were seriously tempted to make an alliance with any of the three Great Powers concerned. Great Britain was not a military power on the Continent before 1914 and could offer the Dutch no assistance by land if they were attacked. She was indeed a great naval power, and the Dutch navy was not strong enough to defend the Dutch Indies against a Great power, but this was no reason for an English alliance. On the one hand, no one ever imagined that Great Britain would covet the Dutch Indies, while, on the other hand, it was certain that Great Britain for her own reasons, without any treaty of alliance, would come to the defence of the Dutch Indies if any other Power were to attack them, for the Dutch Indies lay on the flank of her route from India to China and made a line of stepping-stones from Singapore to Australia. At the Washington Conference of 1921 the Great Powers interested in the Pacific did indeed undertake to respect the rights of the Dutch in the East Indies; but this promise given to the Dutch did not amount to a guarantee.

The rivalry of France and Prussia was the one great fact of continental power politics which overshadowed Holland from near at hand, and Dutch neutrality meant first and foremost that the Dutch would not take sides in this dispute. After the war of 1870 the danger of aggression came from the side of Germany,

and the Dutch recognized this fact when they fortified their eastern frontier and modernized their system of defence by inundations shortly after that time; but there were strong reasons why they should not seek their safety in a defensive alliance with the French. For one thing France was not their immediate neighbour and could not give them help by land except through Belgium, which was bound to neutrality. For another thing Holland depended for a great part of its livelihood on German trade, and so on German friendship. The ambitions of German expansionists threatened the small states of Europe; and pan-Germans often spoke of the Dutch as a Kindred people very suitable for absorption in greater Germany. But the Dutch believed that the best way to escape this danger was not to obtain guarantees but to behave with absolute fairness and correctness to all the Great Powers.

The policy of neutrality was interpreted differently by different schools of Dutch thinkers. Some thought that it was a positive contribution to the peace of Europe and the improvement of international relations; and they contrasted the pacific internationalism of the Dutch with the warlike rivalries of the Great Powers. Others thought that it was a regrettable but necessary consequence of Dutch weakness. But there was overwhelming agreement that there was no practical alternative; and Dutch governments, in times of peace, meticulously avoided even the appearance of serving the interests of any other state.

In the war of 1914-18 both sides kept their promises to respect Dutch neutrality on land. The Dutch army was mobilized throughout the war to prevent any violation of the territory, but it never went into action because neither side could violate Dutch soil. At the end of the war there was for a short time some fear that the victorious Powers might reward the Belgians and

punish the Dutch for their neutrality by settling in Belgium's favour some of the complicated disputes over waterways or even by handing over Dutch Limburg and Dutch Flanders. Great Britain, the United States, and France, however, had no such intention, and it seemed that Dutch neutrality during the war had succeeded. The Dutch had undergone economic hardships from the blockade and counter-blockade, but they had been spared what the Belgians had suffered. They did, however, at this time depart from their policy of neutrality by becoming members of the League of Nations. The League was intended to be not an alliance against any state but a general association of states; and its attempt to organize European security offered the same promise to the Dutch as to the rest of Europe.

In the twenty years which followed the League, as an organization for European security, gradually broke down. The Dutch in League matters took the same general line as the other small western and northern states. From a very early stage their confidence in collective security was qualified by anxiety for themselves. After the remilitarization of the Rhine and the breakdown of sanctions against Italy these small Powers lost faith in the League's ability to protect them and by 1938 the Dutch Government, with others, no longer held itself bound either to take part in collective action or to permit the passage of troops which were to enforce the Covenant. This was a full return to the old policy of neutrality; but neutrality now did not seem to mean such complete isolation as that of 1914-18. In the first place, Belgium, which had been released in 1919 from its obligatory neutrality, had in 1935 abandoned its policy of alliance with France and announced a neutrality policy on the Dutch model; so that Holland would not stand alone but would have another neutral as neighbour. Secondly, these two

states were loosely associated with the four northern states, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. As early as 1930 some of these states had met at Oslo and formed the 'Oslo Group' which held common deliberations, sometimes joined also by Switzerland, on questions relating to their economic affairs and the law and practice of neutrality.

Neutrality seemed less lonely; but the grim fact of German power taught the Dutch that they, like all the threatened states, must look to their armaments. They were much more exposed to the danger of a German attack than in 1914. The eastern frontier of Belgium had in the meantime been heavily fortified; and if the Germans wanted to turn the left flank of the French and British armies it would be much harder to do it by attacking only Belgium, so that there was a far greater inducement than in 1914 to attack Holland as well. Unfortunately, Dr. Colijn's government had at the same time to cope with the economic depression, and rearmament was tied up with the division of opinion over saving or spending. When a European war was seen to be imminent in 1939, the Dutch, in conjunction with the other Oslo states, appealed to the consciences of the Great Powers. The group held a one-day conference at Brussels on the 23rd of August, and King Leopold of the Belgians on their behalf broadcast an appeal for peace that evening. By that time, however, war was certain. The German minister at The Hague gave, with unusual emphasis, an assurance that Germany would respect the sanctity and integrity of Dutch soil. Preparations for the defence of neutrality were pushed on. Mobilization was ordered, between three and four hundred thousand men were called up. Economic regulations, for ensuring stocks of food and raw materials, were put into force. As a last attempt King Leopold and Queen Wilhelmina on the 28th offered their good offices to Germany,

France, Great Britain, Italy, and Poland; but in vain.

For the first eight months of the war the Dutch followed with absolute consistency the policy so begun. When Poland was beaten Hitler made a speech which was described by the Germans as a peace offer: the Dutch Government thought that it might lead to a settlement, and therefore on the 7th of November the Queen, again in conjunction with the King of the Belgians, made a second tender of good offices; but again without success. Holland could now do no more than look after the welfare of its own people and avoid giving just cause of complaint to either side. The economic problem at home was difficult: blockade and counter-blockade imposed restrictions which had to be met by the strengthening of controls at home, and by fresh government expenditure on supplies and on relief for the growing numbers of unemployed. In asserting their trading rights, in protesting against flights of belligerent aircraft over their territories, in protesting against the sinking of their ships, the Dutch punctiliously fulfilled the duties of neutrals under international law. It is true that they had far more to complain of against the Germans than against the French and British: while one side confiscated contraband, the other committed wholesale murder on the high seas and, in the Venlo incident of November 1939, violated their territory by land. In every case, however, the Dutch Government behaved correctly to both sides. As the weeks went on it became **more and more clear that** correctness could **not** exorcise the German danger. Three times news **was** received which led to preparations for resisting **an** immediate invasion. Each **of these alarms** blew over; **and we do not yet know how much there was behind them; but besides these alarms there was a general worsening of the attitude of Germany. There were**

threats and complaints in the German press; there were spies everywhere; traitors had to be arrested; the N.S.B. was ominously busy.

The Invasion and the War

At dawn on the 10th of May the Germans invaded Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, and France by land and air. The Dutch did their duty and did it bravely; but their resistance was battered down by an enormous preponderance of force, and, as we all remember, by the surprise of parachutists and the ubiauitous treachery of Germans behind the front. A mechanized column pushed northwards across the Moerdijk Bridge, taking the main defences, the line of inundations between the Zuyder Zee and the Waal, in the rear. When the Dutch air force had been practically annihilated the German bombers perpetrated the crime of Rotterdam. With French and British help resistance was maintained for a few days in Zeeland; but the main Dutch forces had no choice but surrender. The Queen and her Government moved to London.

From there they are directing the war effort of the Dutch navy, of the colonies, and of free Dutchmen all over the world. In Great Britain there is a Dutch Legion consisting of the troops which escaped from Holland, and the recruits who have been added by the conscription of Dutchmen resident here. The Dutch navy, as we hear from time to time when its exploits are reported, is co-operating with the British. The Dutch merchant fleet is an important factor in the Allied effort at sea. The economic resources of the Dutch empire, with its great fund of organizing ability, are thrown into the struggle.

The German Occupation

German occupation is much the same in all countries; the chief difference is the order in which **the**

various forms of oppression come in. In Holland there was at first a pretence of mildness. From the first the press was controlled and there were wholesale requisitions; but no quisling government has been set up, if only because the N.D.B. cannot muster sufficient men of experience and ability to man a large municipality, let alone a government. At the head of each department of state is its 'Secretary-General', in normal times the official permanent head under the Minister. The Secretaries-General are now under Seyss-Inquart, the German Governor-General. The pretence of mildness did not last long. When the Germans saw that there was no response to their clumsy blandishments, they brought in their familiar devices, the Gestapo, wholesale internments in concentration camps, compulsory transference of workmen to Germany, closing of universities, permission for the N.S.B. to form storm-troops, anti-Semitic laws, provocations which ended in street fights and led on to repression. Members or supporters of the N.S.B. have been made governors of the provinces of Limburg and Utrecht, and burgomasters of Amsterdam and other towns where there were strikes or disturbances. Huge financial exactions and the plundering of food and raw materials have made the country poor and wretched.

The Dutch people have never loved the Germans and now they hate them. Some bold spirits have secretly organized resistance, and fifteen were executed in March 1941, on what evidence we do not know. The time when open resistance can bring success has not yet come; but courageous protests against injustices have been made by the churches. There is proof that the nation is loyal to the House of Orange and refuses to be convinced by German propaganda.

Since the parliament cannot sit, and since the people **have** gone through and are still going through terrible experiences, there is a widespread desire for discus-

sion and the expression of political ideals. This has led to the formation of the Netherlands Union (*Nederlandsche Unie*), which began in July 1940 and is said to have attained the astonishing membership of more than half a million. The great majority of the members of the Union seem to have joined it as a demonstration of patriotic feeling, and in some of their statements its leaders have stood out boldly against germanization; but they have made mistakes which savour of political inexperience, for instance, in hoping to press on with social reforms during the occupation, and some of their statements do not match well with the parliamentary tradition. In a recent broadcast the Queen expressed the true national view: 'It is not open to any doubt that our political order will have to take into account the changed circumstances and the experiences of recent times. As soon as possible after our liberation the first cuttings for this will have to be planted.' But not till then.

Holland's Aims in die War

The neutrality which had given Holland a hundred years of peace was destroyed by the Germans on the 10th of May, 1940. Germany had obtained such a lead in armaments, especially in mechanized troops and aircraft, that no Dutch armaments would have been adequate to keep the invader out of the country. The first purpose of the Dutch resistance is to win back the freedom of the country, but Dutch war aims are not confined to this one point. Although they came into the war by an entirely different road from ourselves, and although they are making their contribution as a fully independent ally, not as a satellite state, still they are fighting for the wider aim of the Allies, a just and stable international order. As Lord Halifax said in New York: 'It is not possible now to draw detailed plans for the future structure of the

community of nations. These must naturally await discussion in free council by those concerned.' One of the questions for that discussion is this: how can the small nations enjoy their independence without continual danger not only to themselves but also to their neighbours, even their greater neighbours, from the menace of the aggressors?

The freedom of the Netherlands is valuable to us not merely on strategic grounds. It has been of immense value to the civilization of all Europe and all the world. Dutch independence has been the foundation of the greatness of Dutchmen in many generations who have given to the world new and living thoughts and experiences and beliefs. For nearly four hundred years the Dutch people have stood up for their freedom against the tyranny of successive invaders; and the free nations who have welcomed them as Allies recognize that the world needs them as a free nation. Just as their freedom must be restored by the joint effort of the Allies, so its preservation, once it is restored, must depend on the collective strength and wisdom of the friends of justice. In a recent speech Prince Bernhard, the Queen's soldier son-in-law, expressed his heartfelt wish that the close ties of friendship and co-operation which now linked Great Britain and the Netherlands might always be maintained. He said: *Many great responsibilities we share, and I believe that the influence of our present brotherhood in arms may reach far beyond the war issue of the moment.'

