

WE AND OUR SUCCESSORS SHALL DO JUSTICE BY ALL

PROVINCIAL
GOVERNMENT
IN UTRECHT:
A HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE

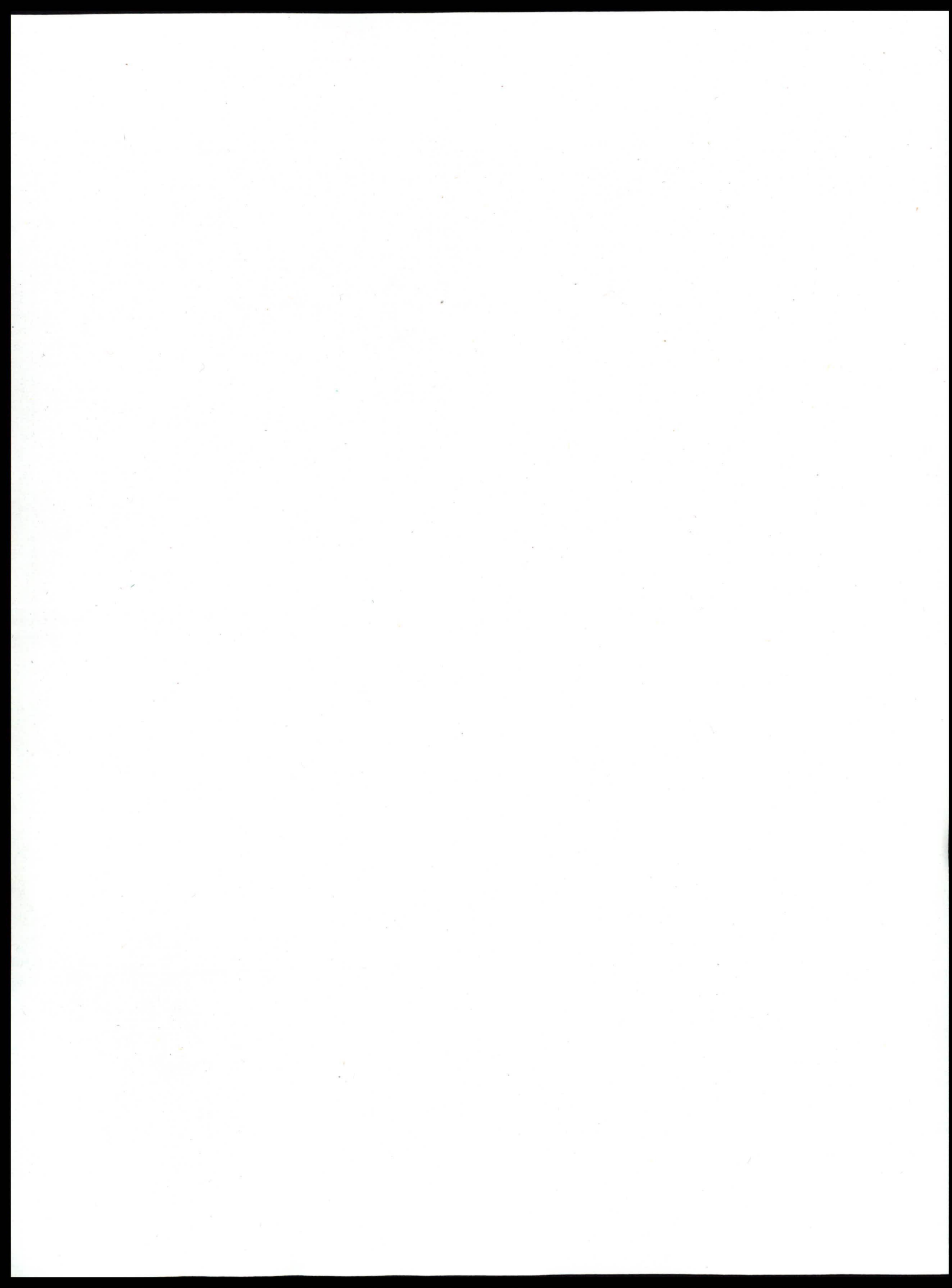


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RENGER DE BRUIN

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RENGER DE BRUIN



FOREWORD

HOW OLD IS THE PROVINCE OF UTRECHT?

This is a question we like to ask new officials who join the provincial service.

When they hear that the formal status of the region dates back to 1375, their reaction is usually a combination of amazement and awe.

The present history of provincial government in Utrecht was written by Professor Renger de Bruin to mark the transfer of the 1920–1989 provincial records to The Utrecht Archives. It provides an overview that takes the reader all the way from a charter of rights known as the Landbrief to provincial administration as we know it today.

This story covers over six hundred years. It is a story of mild stubbornness involving a provincial government of moderate obstinacy – a government that served under the Holy Roman Empire and the Dutch Republic, knew occupation by the Spanish, French and Germans, and is now part of a constitutional monarchy.

What should we make of the lot that befell David of Burgundy, the bishop of Utrecht, who was taken prisoner by the States of Utrecht during a power-struggle and carried off to Amersfoort in a dung cart? Equally, what can we learn from the story of the same States in 1786, who, loyal to the Prince of Orange, moved the seat of government to Amersfoort after an exchange of fire with the Patriot militia? Bad times make for good reading, but quieter periods, too, are described clearly and accessibly.

By definition, this document can be nothing more than a snapshot in time.

History is old politics; politics is the history of today. As Europe grows and society becomes increasingly complex, will the present boundaries of our province still be the same another six hundred years from now? Only time will tell. Long live the history of the Province of Utrecht!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

mr B. Staal,
Queen's Commissioner

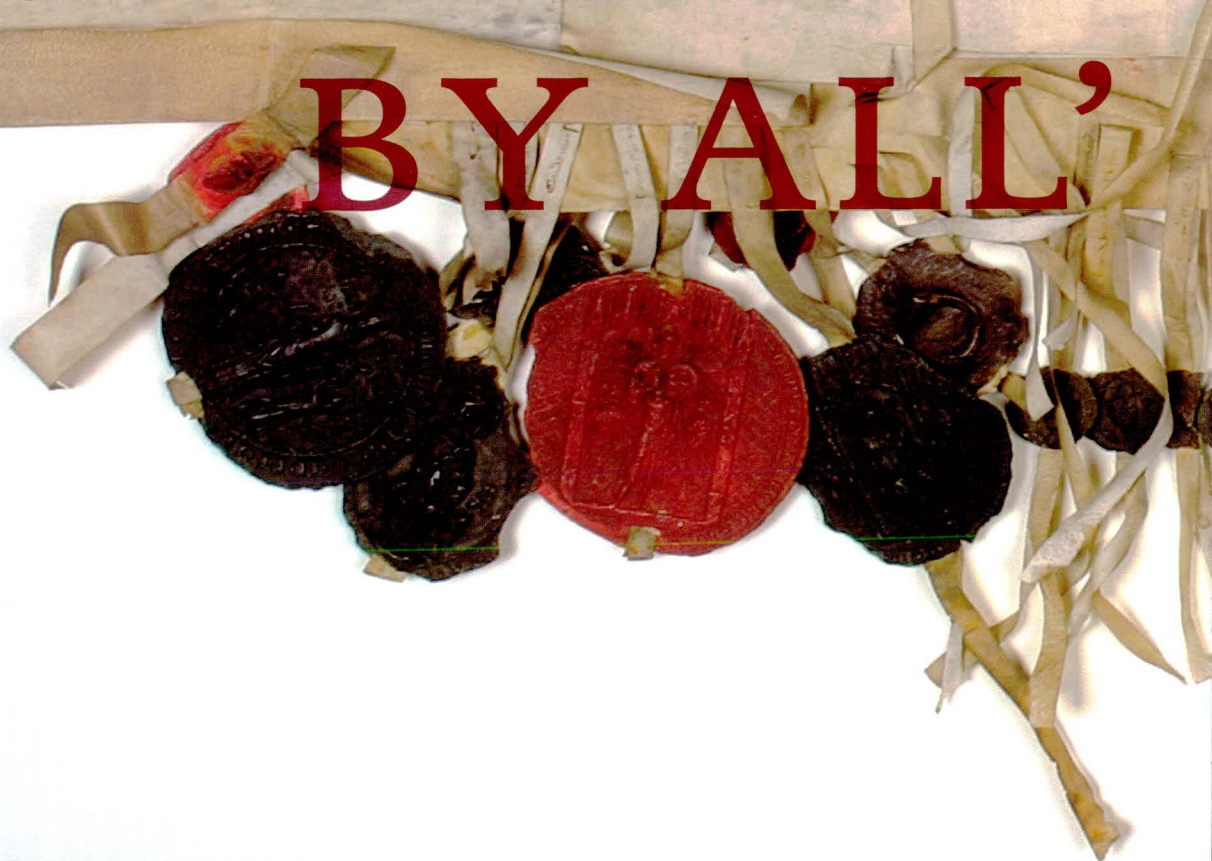




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INTRODUCTION

The turnout of voters at provincial elections in the Netherlands is alarmingly low – only European Parliament elections attract fewer voters. This fact has led to complaints that, as a tier of government, the province no longer has any appeal to voters; it has even been suggested that the provinces should be abolished or reorganised.

What few people realise is that the Dutch provinces are administrative units whose history often far predates that of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its predecessor, the Dutch Republic. In the case of Utrecht, the history of the province in fact goes back more than seven centuries: by the end of the thirteenth century there was already an administrative unit that covered approximately the same area as the present province. Together with the “Oversticht”, or upper bishopric (Overijssel, Drenthe and the town of Groningen), this “Nedersticht”, or lower section of the bishopric, was what remained of the temporal possessions of the Bishop of Utrecht after encroachment by the neighbouring principalities of Holland and Gelre.

In 1375, the Bishop of Utrecht’s financial problems were such that, in return for credit, he made a number of concessions to persons of power and influence in the Nedersticht. In the Sticht Landbrief, a charter of rights, he made a number of solemn promises, one of which was “We and our successors shall do justice by all according to the laws of the Sticht.”¹ The Bishop set up a body, the States (Staten), representing the various classes of society or “estates”: the clergy, the nobility and the towns. For centuries, the “States of the Nedersticht” represented the people of the Sticht and served as their administrators, being elected at various times by the clergy, the nobility, the city fathers or even by the populace; at other times they were appointed by the temporal ruler.

This book examines the history of local government in the area that is now the Province of Utrecht. It focuses in particular on the structure of the system and the way it operated, but also deals with external events that influenced the way Utrecht was administered, for example its annexation by Charles V, the French invasions of 1672 and 1795, and the Second World War. Public administration cannot, after all, be viewed in isolation from social and economic trends; from land reclamation in the Middle Ages through to the traffic problems of the present day, these will therefore be dealt with.

One topic that recurs again and again is the actual size of the area in question. By the late thirteenth century, the Nedersticht covered approximately the same area as the present Province of Utrecht, but in the course of time a number of places were or were not included, particularly along the western boundary.

At first sight, a history of provincial government may seem to be something dull, legalistic and bureaucratic. This book hopes to be rather different. We will of course need to explain certain highly complex procedures, for example those of the bodies making up the States in the seventeenth century, or the way in which

the democratic principles of the French Revolution were given shape within the Province. However, we will also look at the individuals who carried out the work of administration, as well as those profited from it and those who were its victims. We will encounter such colourful figures as Bishop David of Burgundy, who was captured and taken off to Amersfoort in a dung cart; Gillis van Ledenbergh, the Secretary to the States, who was accused of treason and, after committing suicide, was hanged from the gallows in his coffin; and the Governor of the Province J.M. van Tuyll van Serooskerken, who was transferred after becoming involved in a corruption scandal.

The narrative is chronological. To provide the necessary context for the founding of the States – by virtue of the “Landbrief” – in 1375, we start with early history of the area covered by the bishopric. The five subsequent chapters deal with the various periods after 1375, with the cut-off point in each case being an event that drastically altered the way Utrecht was administered. We end at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the role of provincial government as the middle tier of the Dutch public administration system.

695–1375

The bishops of Utrecht saw themselves as successors to Saint Willibrord, the English missionary who landed in the delta of the Rhine in 690 to preach the gospel to the heathen Frisians. The fact that they were unreceptive to his message compelled him to collaborate with the Franks, whose Empire stretched all the way from the Pyrenees to the south of what is now the Netherlands. As his base, the Frankish king gave Willibrord the old Roman fort of Trajectum, situated at what is now Cathedral Square (Domplein). This location – which marked the split of the two major waterways of the region, the Rhine and the Vecht – had long been disputed by the Frisians and the Franks.

THE FOUNDING OF THE BISHOPRIC

The Frankish ruler's pious act was in fact part of his policy of expansion. Earlier in the same century, the Frankish king Dagobert had already founded a church at the same place as a base for converting the Frisians, but his efforts had come to nothing. Willibrord commenced the holy work again, dedicating his church to Saint Martin, the patron saint of the Franks. In 695 he received the Pope's blessing and was consecrated "Archbishop of the Frisians" in Rome.

Willibrord's real patron was not in fact the king of the Franks but the "Mayor of the Palace" (major palatii), Pepin II. The Mayors of the Palace were royal officials who had taken over power from the kings of the Merovingian dynasty, who ruled only in name. Pepin II was a forceful administrator who was greatly concerned about the security of the northern boundary of the kingdom, and who wished to continue the hitherto unsuccessful policy of conversion to Christianity. In the year of Willibrord's consecration, 695, Pepin concluded a peace treaty with the Frisian king Radbod, leading to a period of peace that was favourable to missionary work.

Willibrord continually expanded his position, founding a second church, that of Saint Salvator, or the Old Minster. In 719, he was joined by a monk from his own country, Boniface. Their missionary work amongst the Frisians was given powerful support by Charles Martel, the Frankish Mayor of the Palace, one of the sons of Pepin II; it was he who granted the old Roman fortresses of Trajectum and Fectio (Vechten) to the Utrecht church, together with all their appurtenances. This laid the basis for the territorial possessions of the bishops of Utrecht, which were later to become so extensive.

At this period, however, Utrecht still had no bishop. Willibrord had never referred to himself as such, nor had Boniface, who succeeded him on his death in 739. Unlike those within the Roman system, bishops in the Anglo-Saxon tradition to which Willibrord and Boniface belonged did not have a central seat from which

they administered their bishopric. They were in fact spiritual leaders who lived in a monastic setting.

Demands by the Archbishop of Cologne that the Utrecht missionary bishops should subjugate themselves to him were rejected. After the murder of Boniface in 754, his pupil Gregory became the first Utrecht church leader of Frankish origin, but it was only Gregory's successor Alberic who became the first actual Bishop of Utrecht. Alberic had arranged a settlement with the Archbishop of Cologne, and was consecrated in Cologne in 777. From then on Utrecht was a normal bishopric under the authority of the Archbishop of Cologne, an area covering more or less the same territory as the present-day Netherlands without the Provinces of North Brabant, Limburg and the Groningen Ommelanden.

The seat of the Bishop of Utrecht was the centre of a flourishing spiritual life and had an important monastic school. Utrecht became the base for completing the conversion of the Frisians and commencing that of the Saxons.

It was Charlemagne who definitively subjected these two peoples to Frankish rule. The son of Pepin III ("Pepin the Short"), who in 751 had advanced from being Mayor of the Palace to King of the Franks, Charlemagne greatly expanded the Frankish kingdom. Regarding the conversion of the areas he conquered to be the best guarantee of their continuing subjugation, this "apostle with a sword" did not shrink from using violent methods when the new peoples of his kingdom continued to prefer their old heathen Germanic gods to the gospel preached by the missionaries.

In reward for his blessed work of spreading the Word, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day 800. Charlemagne's policy of reinforcing his authority by means of the Christian religion meant that it was no more than logical for him to provide powerful support for the bishops within his Empire, particularly those whose sees were in peripheral areas. This policy also benefited the bishops of Utrecht, who came to possess a growing amount of land within the bishopric and who took on an increasing number of worldly tasks.

BISHOP IN EXILE

Under Charlemagne, the delta area of the Rhine flourished, with the city of Utrecht as its cultural heart, and the town of Dorestad, 25 kilometres upstream, as its economic centre. This period of prosperity came to an end in 814 on the death of Charlemagne. His successor, Louis the Pious, was a weak figure and was also seriously at odds with his own sons; in 843, this led to the splitting up of the Frankish Empire. By the Treaty of Verdun, Charles the Bald received the West Frankish State (France) and Louis the German the East Frankish State (Germany). Their brother Lothair received the Middle Kingdom, a long strip of territory stretching from Italy to the North Sea.



Statue of St Willibrord in St John's Churchyard (Janskerkhof), Utrecht. The statue, by Albert Termoten, was placed here in 1939, 1200 years after the death of Willibrord.

The Norsemen at Dorestad.
(Educational picture by J.H. Isings, 1932.)



Political unrest led to a serious weakening of imperial authority and of the national defences, thus encouraging groups of Scandinavians – who were eager to gain territory – to undertake a series of raids. Their longboats brought ever-increasing numbers of Norsemen (i.e. Vikings) to the coasts of Frankish territory. Starting in 834, they regularly plundered Dorestad, leading to the demise of the port there. Nor did they spare Utrecht. After the raid in 857, Bishop Hunger no longer felt safe there and relocated his See first to near Roermond, then to Prüm (in the Eifel region north of Trier) and finally to Deventer, where his successors continued to reside. The fortress situated at what is now Cathedral Square was occupied by the Norsemen, who had come not merely as plunderers but as settlers. Their leader Rorik and his successor Godfried even received lands in fief, ruling over large areas of the Rhine delta, including the town of Utrecht itself.

Increasing security allowed for the re-establishment of contact between the Bishop and his original See. After dying in Deventer in 898, Bishop Odilbald was buried in Utrecht. His successor Radbod was able to visit Utrecht on a number of occasions, although he continued to reside in Deventer. Ultimately, Radbod's own successor, Balderik, was able to return to Utrecht a few years after 925. By then, circumstances were favourable. The German king Henry the Fowler (919–936) succeeded in merging the fragmented Middle Kingdom, which included the Rhine delta, with his East Frankish domains in 925, thus creating the Holy Roman Empire, to which Utrecht would belong for centuries (formally even until 1648). The German king restored his authority in the areas that had been ruled by the Vikings, where a number of noblemen, including the founding father of the Counts of Holland, had succeeded in amassing power.

PROTÉGÉS OF THE EMPEROR

The German kings were chosen for life by the leading nobles of their kingdom, the “Electors”. They could then be crowned Emperor by the Pope, though in practice this did not always happen. While Henry the Fowler was not crowned, for example, his son Otto the Great (936–973) and his successors were.

Although some noble families, such as the Saxon dynasty founded by Henry the Fowler, succeeded in being elected for several generations in succession, the German monarchy did not become truly hereditary like that of France. In the long run, this seriously weakened the position of the kings or Emperors – a process that was exacerbated by the developing feudal system.

Lacking money, the rulers gave territory to their subordinates – the counts – as a fief or feudal benefice. These counts were succeeded by their sons, weakening the grasp of successive Emperors on their dominions. If a count did not have a son, the territory reverted to the Emperor. The fact that bishops did not have sons – or at least none who were legitimate – meant that when they died the Emperor would always be able to regain and rebestow the fiefdom. The German Emperors

Crypt of St Peter's (Pieterskerk) in Utrecht, showing the tomb of Bishop Bernold, who commissioned the building.

had the right to appoint bishops within the Empire and they gladly endowed them with large fiefdoms, thus making them lords temporal as well as spiritual. The bishops, who often rose from the imperial chancellery, were reliable and well-trained servants. The Bishop of Utrecht became the Emperor's pawn in the Rhine delta, and in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries received lands comprising the present provinces of Utrecht, Overijssel and Drenthe, as well as the town of Groningen, the Veluwe heathlands, and parts of Holland. This secular territory covered more than half the bishopric.

The ties between the Bishop of Utrecht and his master were very close, with most of the Emperors visiting the bishopric one or more times during their reign. They even had a residence of their own, Lofen Palace (the name refers to its pillared gallery or "loggia"). Conversely, the bishops of Utrecht frequently went to visit the Emperor. The Emperors of the Salian dynasty (1024–1125) had particularly strong links with Utrecht. Bishop Bernold (1027–1054) was a confident of the Emperors Conrad II (1024–1039) and Henry III (1039–1056). These two granted him extensive territories, including Groningen and Oldenzaal.



A number of Emperors supported the bishops of Utrecht in an ambitious programme of building that was intended to give the bishopric greater prestige. The eleventh century saw the building of a number of large Romanesque churches in Utrecht: the Cathedral (St Martin's), the abbey of St Paul, and the churches of St Peter (Pieterskerk), St John (Janskerk) and St Mary (Mariakerk). Together, these formed a cross on the ground plan of the city. The plan for this cross of churches is ascribed to Bishop Bernold and his patron, the Emperor Henry III, and it was possibly intended as a monument to Henry's father Conrad II, who had died in Utrecht. The building of St Mary's towards the end of the eleventh century completed the cross of churches. St Mary's was built by Bishop Koenraad (1076–1099), with support from the Emperor Henry IV (1057–1106). The Emperor, for his part, could rely on the loyalty of the bishops of Utrecht in his conflict with the Pope regarding who should appoint bishops within the Empire. This "investiture controversy" arose when Pope Gregory VII condemned the practice whereby the German Emperor appointed bishops, even going so far as to excommunicate the Emperor at Easter 1076, when Henry IV was residing in Utrecht. The then Bishop Willem took the side of his lord, scathingly denouncing the papal anathema during a sermon on 27 March 1076. That same evening, the Cathedral was struck by lightning and a few weeks later the Bishop himself died, events which were taken by the faithful to represent divine retribution. Henry IV made his peace with the Pope, but later continued the dispute. The conflict dragged on for decades, with the Emperor gradually losing the support of the bishops, such as Gobebald, Bishop of Utrecht from 1114 to 1128, who took the side of the Pope. Emperor Henry V (1106–1125) saw himself compelled to enter into a compromise and, by the Concordat of Worms (1122), the Pope and the Emperor agreed that in future bishops would be proposed by the local faithful. If their proposal was approved, the candidate would be consecrated bishop by the authority of the Pope, and the Emperor would appoint him his temporal liegeman. A candidate who had been chosen as bishop but not yet consecrated was referred to as the "bishop elect". This was a status beyond which a number of such candidates did not advance.

CHOSEN BY CANONS

The power to appoint bishops came to lie with the clergy and lay people of the bishopric, although the latter were soon excluded and it was the collegiate chapters who made the choice, with the person elected taking his oath at a meeting of the chapter. The clergy making up the chapter attached to the Cathedral and the four other chapters in the town (those of the Old Minster, St Peter, St John and St Mary) came from leading families. They had taken a vow of chastity but not of poverty and they lived in spacious residences in "closes" that excluded the world outside. This new system meant that the Bishop of Utrecht became much more dependent on his own senior clergy. In addition,



The German Emperor Henry IV.
The Church of St Mary in the background
was founded by him and Bishop Koenraad.
(Painting by Jan van Bijlert, 1641.)

his election was greatly influenced by the nobility and by the two neighbouring princedoms, those of Holland and Gelre. In 1178, for example, the Count of Holland, Floris III, succeeded in having his brother Boudewijn elected to the See of Utrecht. Similarly, in 1212 the Count of Gelre ensured that his son was elected.



Silver seals (14th century) of the collegiate chapters of Utrecht Cathedral and St John's. The seals were used for documents issued by the chapters.

At first, the Emperor was still able to influence the choice of bishop, but that influence declined in the course of the twelfth century, ultimately coming to an end in 1213. The fact that the Emperor was no longer able to determine who was elected meant that the bishops of Utrecht were no longer useful as advanced pawns in the imperial power game. Moreover, on the death of Henry V in Utrecht in 1125, a new imperial dynasty came to power, that of Hohenstaufen. More interested in Italy than in the delta of the Rhine, these new rulers hardly ever visited Utrecht.

The removal of imperial protection weakened the position of the bishops vis-à-vis their competitors both within and beyond their own territory. The main external competitors were the Counts of Holland and Gelre, who expanded their territory at the cost of the temporal bishopric, the "Sticht". Holland successfully conquered large areas to the west, while Gelre took over the Veluwe heathlands. As a result, the territory of the Bishop of Utrecht was divided into two areas, the Nedersticht ("Lower Sticht") and the Oversticht ("Upper Sticht", consisting of Overijssel, Drenthe and the city of Groningen). The Bishop's power over the latter area was reduced by the crushing defeat suffered by Bishop Otto II in 1227 at Ane at the hands of his rebellious liegeman Rudolf van Coevorden, the Bishop himself dying in the swamps of Drenthe.

The Counts of Holland and Gelre attempted to recruit allies among those in positions of power within the territory held by the Bishop, who found himself confronted by increasingly influential power blocks. These were initially made up of senior clergy, particularly the canons in their chapters, whose influence had been increased by the fact that after the Concordat of Worms they took it upon themselves to select the Bishop. The chapters were also extremely rich. They had invested in the scheme to reclaim the extensive swamplands along the Rhine and the Vecht – started by the Bishop in the tenth century – and this had given them extensive landholdings. In the second quarter of the eleventh century, the Bishop had also made the provosts of the chapters responsible for administering the Church's possessions. The influence of the chapters was further increased by the fact that they had the right to administer their own system of justice: a particular area surrounding their church – the "immunity" – was exempt from temporal jurisdiction and subject only to that of the Church.

POWERFUL KNIGHTS

Another group whom the Bishop increasingly had to consider were the nobility. The Bishop's own bodyguard, his bondsmen, developed into a social upper class in addition to a small group of high-born people, the nobiles. A number of families died out, however, while others came to be resident outside the area subject to the Bishop (the forefathers of the Counts of Holland and Gelre, for example, had belonged to the episcopal nobility). The size of the Utrecht nobility grew again when the ministeriales (bonded soldiers serving the Bishop)

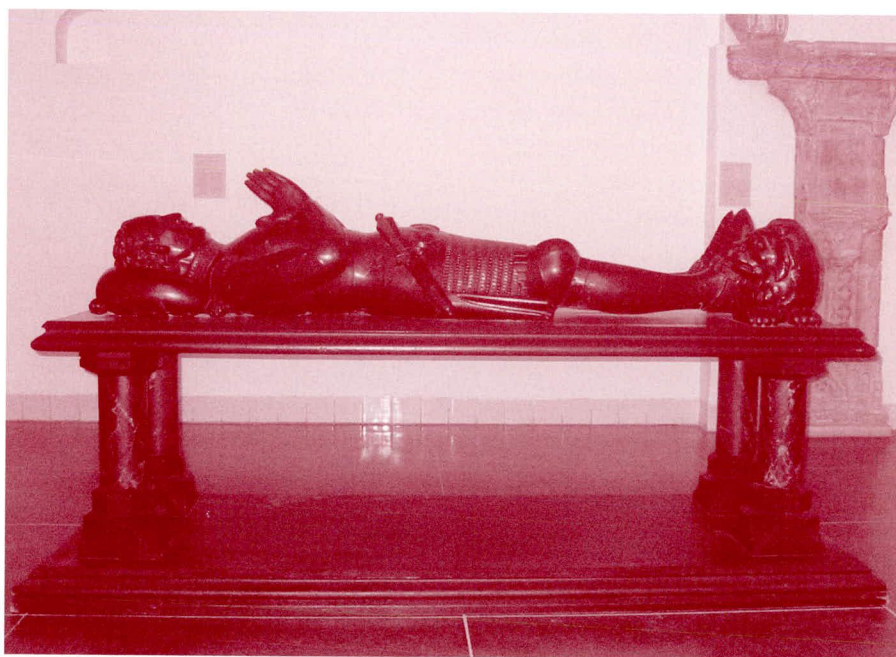


Utrecht

- Diocese of Utrecht
 - Het Nedersticht
 - Het Oversticht
- } Temporal territory

and rich farmers who had profited from land reclamation schemes succeeded in joining its ranks. From the thirteenth century on, the noble upper class became known as the knights (*ridders*), i.e. the gentry. By successfully preventing the advance of others from further down the social ladder, they were able to develop into a hereditary, exclusive nobility. The leading noble family were the Van Cuijks, who even provided one of the bishops, Bishop Andries (1128–1139). Families such as the Van Wulvens also belonged to the nobility who served the Bishop; from them, the Van Sterkenburg and Van Hardenbroek families were descended. Other leading families included Van Zuylen, Van Renesse, Van Drakenburg and Van Amstel.

The bishops gradually relinquished more and more powers to the nobility, who succeeded in making the associated offices hereditary. (The Van Zuylen family, for example, were the hereditary episcopal marshals for two centuries.)



Effigy on the tomb of a knight of the Drakenburg family. From one of the monastery churches in Utrecht (c. 1370–1390).

Originally, these offices were positions at the bishop's court, for example those of steward (*drost*) and cupbearer (*schenker*), who served at table; marshal (*maarschalk*), who was in charge of the horse; and chamberlain (*kameraar*), who acted as gentleman-in-waiting and treasurer. The burgrave (*burggraaf*) was charged with the defence of the Bishop's fortified palace. Increasing administrative complexity meant that these court functionaries were given duties within the extensive domains belonging to the Bishop. As distances increased and their offices became hereditary, their independence also increased.

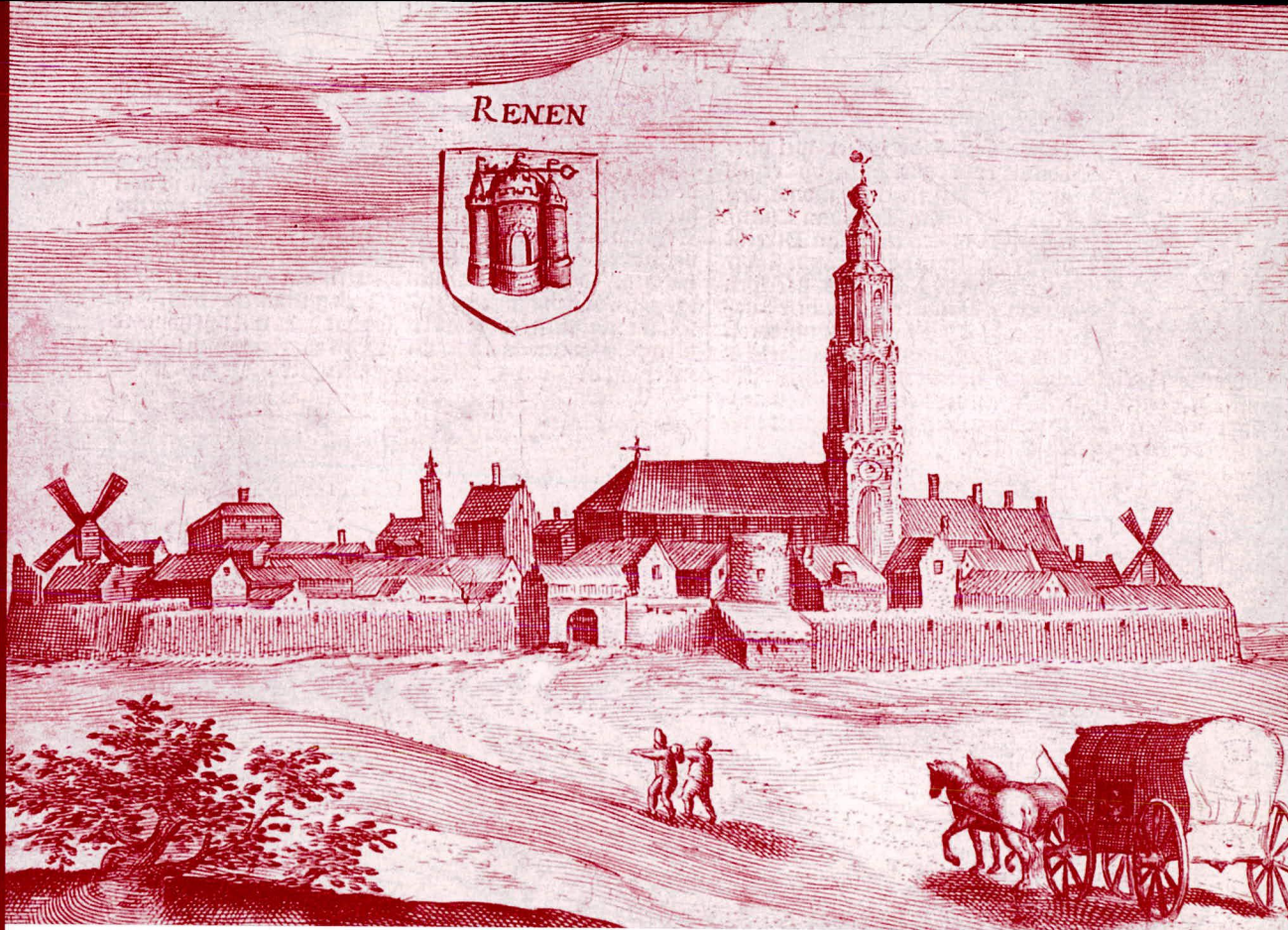
The position of the nobility was significantly advanced from the mid-thirteenth century on when the Bishop permitted them to build castles. This had originally been the exclusive privilege of the Emperor, and it was consequently the Bishop

who had castles constructed in order to defend the boundaries of his territory, in particular against the forces of Holland, in such places as Woerden, Montfoort and Vreeland. In the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however, the nobility built fortified houses throughout the Nedersticht, for example at Zuylen, Drakenburg, Sterkenburg and Hardenbroek.

The Bishop frequently found himself in conflict with his noble servants, with this sometimes taking the form of armed struggle, for example in the case of the revolt of the ministeriales in 1159–1160, a conflict in which the Counts of Holland and Gelre intervened on opposing sides. This was to become the pattern over the next few centuries, leading to the weakening of the Bishop's authority that we have just referred to, and also to territorial losses. More peaceful contacts between the Bishop and his leading spiritual and temporal subjects took place at the episcopal synod, which later became known as the Bishop's Grand Council (*grote raad*). The clergy were represented by the chapters. The leading noble families that had originally held seats on the Grand Council either died out or became independent rulers such as the Counts of Holland, Cleves and Bentheim. Their places were taken by ministeriales. This forum for meetings between the Bishop and his leading subjects later came to be known as the Chapter General (*kapittel-generaal*), with the synod dealing from then on only with spiritual matters.

View of Rhenen, showing the church of St Cunera and the town wall. The right to construct the latter was granted by the charter of 1364. (Anonymous 17th century engraving.)





THE RISE OF THE TOWNS

Towns – particularly the town of Utrecht itself – became an increasingly important factor in the politics of the Sticht. In the second quarter of the tenth century, a trading settlement began to grow up at the gates of the Bishop's fortress; soon it was flourishing. This settlement, known as Stathe (related to the English "staithe", a landing stage for cargo vessels) was situated between the present Town Hall and Zadelstraat. Its inhabitants enjoyed the protection of the Bishop. Soon after returning to the original seat of his power, Bishop Balderik began to encourage the growth of Stathe, for example by setting up a mint there. The right to mint coinage in Utrecht, a privilege granted by the king, was a precondition for Stathe to become an important trading centre.

Stathe had a direct link to the North Sea via the river now known as the "Old Rhine", but in the course of the tenth century this silted up. There was, however, a better route to the sea, first via the river Vecht and then via the Almere, the predecessor of the Zuider Zee (now the IJsselmeer). A new settlement grew up on the banks of the Vecht slightly to the north of Stathe which took over the function of the silted-up harbour there. A canal, the northern section of the present Old Canal (Oude Gracht), was excavated between the two settlements in about 1000. At the same time, the Rhine was dammed in such a way that all

Sterkenburg Castle on the Langbroekwetering canal. Built in the second half of the 13th century by a branch of the Van Wulven family, who from then on were known as 'Van Sterkenburg'.



Citizens of Utrecht, clad only in their shirts, hand over the keys of the city to Count William IV of Holland. Apart from this humiliation, Utrecht got off lightly; continuation of the siege would have thwarted the Count's plans to invade Friesland. (From *Remissorium Philippi*, a 15th-century manuscript.)

Shoe of a bishop. Discovered in 1921 during excavations in Utrecht Cathedral in a tomb under the chapel of Guy of Avesnes, Bishop of Utrecht from 1301 to 1317.



its water was diverted into the Vecht. Silting continued, however, meaning that accessibility remained a problem. The final blow came in 1122 when Bishop Godebald had the Rhine dammed at Wijk bij Duurstede so as to protect his reclaimed lands from flooding. The merchants of Utrecht protested strongly to Emperor Henry V, and to compensate them he granted them a city charter. In this way, he also rewarded the burgesses for their loyalty when his guard were attacked by the Bishop's bondsmen and ministeriales during Whitsuntide in 1122, when Henry was visiting Utrecht.

The charter meant that the city's inhabitants were not subject to tolls, could be tried solely by their own magistrates (schepenen), and were also permitted to fortify the town. Within a few years, a wall was constructed enclosing the Bishop's fortress, the collegiate churches and the various civil settlements. This area, more or less covering the present city centre, was a very large one for the period, and included a large number of green areas which were later built on. The size of the population increased from some 3000 in the year 1200 to 20,000 in about 1500.

Damming the Rhine at Wijk bij Duurstede had caused the downstream section to dwindle into a meandering stream, the Crooked Rhine (Kromme Rijn). In order to link Utrecht to the main river, the Vaartse Rijn (i.e. "Navigation Rhine") canal was excavated. A dam was built across this to prevent floods, and later the same was done in the Vecht at Muiden, which became Utrecht's seaport.

Larger ships could no longer reach Utrecht itself, and as a result it eventually lost its long-distance trade, developing instead into a regional market town. Reclamation had turned the surrounding area into fertile agricultural land producing a wide range of agricultural products. There was also a major demand for implements, utensils, and luxury goods, which was largely satisfied by the trade and industry that grew up in the town. Shoemakers, tailors, clothiers, smiths and potters settled in various parts of the town, organising themselves in the course of the thirteenth century into guilds which increasingly competed with the leading merchants, who had become a powerful patrician class. Trade and industry also developed in other parts of the Nedersticht, resulting in extensive urbanisation. Initially, it was only Utrecht and Muiden that had a charter, but from 1250 on, charters were granted to other places such as Rhenen, Amersfoort, Vreeland, Oudewater, 't Gein, Wijk bij Duurstede, Montfoort and IJsselstein.

THE THREAT OF RUIN

Economic developments led to an increasingly important role for cash, with trade by means of barter gradually disappearing. Engaging in warfare also required cash, something which the Bishop of Utrecht was sadly lacking. In fact, he had no proper system of taxation at his disposal and he had to a large extent transferred the administration of his domains to the chapters and the nobility.

In order to raise funds, he took to mortgaging the land and castles that he still held, something that gradually decreased his authority still further.

One figure who was able to profit enormously from the problems of the Sticht was Count Floris V of Holland (1256–1296), who in 1278 occupied the city of Utrecht, where the guilds had wrested power from the patrician class. This urban elite was supported by the Bishop, but because he was unable to put down the rebellion they called in the aid of the Count of Holland. Although he dealt with the matter quickly, the price they paid for this help was high: areas in the west of the Nedersticht – for example Amstelland, the Gooi area and the “Land van Woerden” – were ceded to Holland. Others, such as Montfoort and Ijsselstein, became independent.

This loss of territory meant that Utrecht lost its access to the sea: to control shipping, Floris built a castle, Muiderslot, at the mouth of the Vecht. For many years after, the Count was all-powerful in Utrecht but in 1296 he was taken prisoner there by a group of nobles and during an attempt to free him at Muiderslot he was murdered.

In the ensuing period of confusion, a number of powerful bishops succeeded in averting the threatened demise of their temporal rule. They were able to profit from problems within Holland and Gelre, and managed put a stop to the continuing division of territory between the two. The strongest of these fourteenth-century bishops was Jan van Arkel (1342–1364), who succeeded in extracting money from the towns, and was thus able to regain lost territory. He bought back offices that had been pledged, subjugated rebellious nobles and even managed to stand up to the power of Holland. In 1345, Utrecht even proved able to withstand a siege by Count William IV. Under Jan van Arkel’s successors, however, things again went wrong from the financial point of view. Jan van Virnenburg (1364–1371) was forced to pay a large sum of money for his freedom after being taken prisoner by his opponents in the Oversticht. The next bishop, Arnoud van Horn (1371–1378), interfered in the struggle for the succession in Gelre as a means of weakening the enemy to the east. On the “western front”, he then went to war with Holland for Vreeswijk, which was strategically situated at the junction of the Vaartse Rijn canal and the Lek.

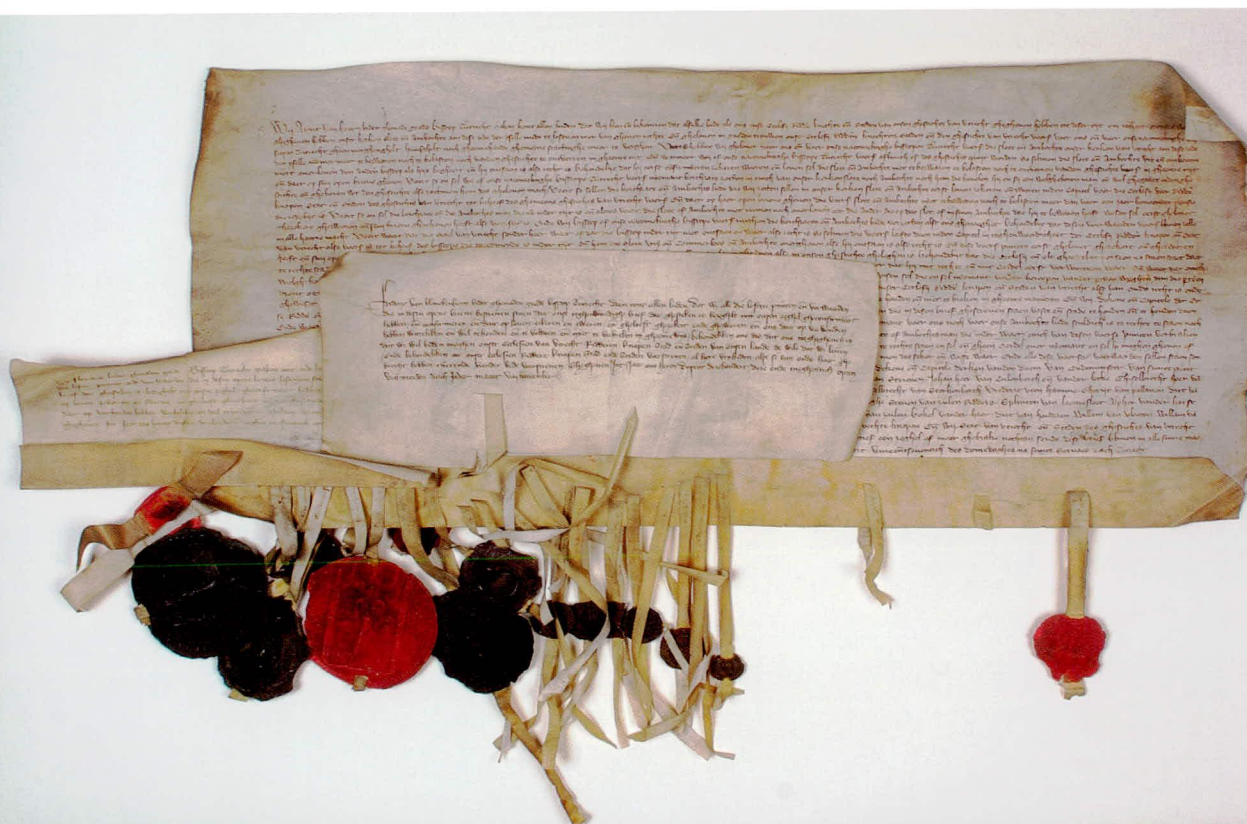
THE BISHOP'S POWER CURTAILED

1375–1528

Bishop Arnoud van Horn was at rock bottom when, in the spring of 1375, he called upon his subjects in the Nedersticht to help him out. He succeeded in gaining their approval for his levying a land tax known as morgengeld. In return, the representatives of the chapters, the gentry and the towns – the three estates – demanded that he set out their various rights in writing. Arnoud agreed and on 17 May, Saint Servatius' Day, he promulgated a document setting out the privileges of the three estates.

THE STICHT LANDBRIEF

In part, the Sticht Landbrief simply codified what was already done in actual practice. But it also contained a number of new provisions. The forum for negotiations between the Bishop and the three estates was given a sound basis in the States (Staten) of the Nedersticht. Because the Bishop could henceforth not engage in warfare without the consent of the States, the latter gained a decisive influence on the foreign policy of the Nedersticht. And because the Bishop was also required to gain the consent of the States before levying taxes, they controlled the way he dealt with expenditure. He was also required to promise not to pledge any more land, castles or offices; this was intended to prevent further disintegration of the Nedersticht. Offices would no longer be



Caricature of a clerk reading a document.
Fragment of a marginal illumination in the
"pontifical" (book of rites) of St Mary's.



considered to be his property to dispose of, but as duties to be carried out. Those holding these offices were required to have been born within the Sticht; before being appointed, they had to take an oath before the States. The Bishop undertook to honour the provisions of the Landbrief. Should he not do so, his subjects would no longer be bound by the oath they had sworn to him.

The Landbrief would determine the administrative structure of the Nedersticht for the next century and a half, with the States playing a crucial role. On a few occasions, the first being in 1426, they were actually referred to as the "three states" (dryen staten). Normally, however, they were known as the Chapter General. This is a somewhat confusing term, because it was also used to refer to the joint sessions of the five chapters as such, making it difficult to determine how often the States actually met. Ten or so times a year would seem to be a reasonable estimate, with the Chapter General of the five Utrecht chapters meeting much more frequently. Compared to administrative bodies elsewhere, the representatives of the three estates in Utrecht tended to meet more often.

Meetings of the States generally took place in the large chapterhouse of the Cathedral, or occasionally at one of the other collegiate churches, usually beginning at nine o'clock in the morning. Although it was formally the Bishop who was empowered to do so, it was in actual fact the Dean of the Cathedral who convened the meetings, which he chaired. He also acted as the spokesman of

the States vis-à-vis the world outside, and was empowered to require any inhabitant of the Nedersticht – including the Bishop – to appear before the States. Conversely, the Dean was required to call a meeting of the States when requested to do so. Letters of convocation were delivered by messengers to those expected to attend. The necessary secretarial work was carried out by the Cathedral chapter on behalf of the States. We know hardly any of the names of those who attended but it is likely that they were prominent representatives of the three estates. In principle, votes were taken by each estate individually.

THE THREE ESTATES

The first of the estates making up the States of the Nedersticht consisted of the five Utrecht chapters; these considered themselves to represent on the clergy of the Nedersticht, and even of the bishopric as a whole. In principle, all the canons who were eligible could attend meetings of the States; in practice, however, there was a system of delegates. Attendance by members of the second estate, which represented all temporal persons outside the towns, was open to all gentry of the Nedersticht. Although there were sixty of these in the mid-fifteenth century, it is unclear how many actually attended the meetings in the chapterhouse of Utrecht Cathedral. Unlike the chapters, the gentry had no organisation of their own. They were by no means as well able to prepare their contribution to meetings of the States as the canons, meaning that their influence was much less. As a body, they themselves hardly ever requested that the States convene; at most, this was done by individual noblemen.

The third estate, representing the towns, was dominated by Utrecht itself, for the seat of the Bishop was by far the largest and richest town of the Nedersticht. Formally, such settlements as Vreeland and Bunschoten also had a charter, but



Jacob van Driebergen (1436-1509), canon of St John's from 1454, and, from 1502, vice-dean of the chapter. All members of the chapters had the right to attend sessions of the States. (Portrait by an unknown painter of the Northern Netherlandish school, 1502.)

in actual fact they amounted to no more than villages, and were hardly ever represented at meetings of the States. Such mini-towns and a number of individual residents did, however, request meetings of the States. In such cases, it was concrete interests that were at stake, for example complaints against action taken by episcopal functionaries.

Within the Nedersticht, it was only Amersfoort, Rhenen and later Wijk bij Duurstede that counted as real towns. Montfoort and IJsselstein, which were independent, were not represented in the States; naturally, the same applied to the towns located in areas that had become part of Holland, such as Muiden, Oudewater and Woerden. But neither were the representatives of Amersfoort, Rhenen and Wijk bij Duurstede often to be seen at meetings of the States. They had little influence, and even when they did attend, they found themselves bound by decisions in which they had no say. Travelling to the capital, moreover, was a major undertaking. In 1485, for example, the burgomasters of Rhenen asked themselves why they had to attend the States, wondering "Why should we go to all this trouble? It is after all a minor matter for us."

The representatives of the city of Utrecht always attended, and the burgomasters, councillors and town clerk were always to be found there. (Like the canons, they did not have very far to go!) Without the capital, the Nedersticht could not be administered at all, even financially.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Utrecht had a system of city administration that was relatively democratic. The guilds had taken over power from the patricians in 1304, and had laid down reforms in a Guilds Charter (*gildenbrief*), with this being confirmed in a new Charter in 1341. Three factors underlay their successful seizure of power: divisions between the patrician families, the support of their Flemish counterparts – still flushed with their victory at the Battle of the Golden Spurs in 1302 – and the blessing of the Bishop himself.

Under the terms of the Guilds Charter, the members of the guilds elected their own leaders (*oudermannen*) who then appointed the 24 members of the city council; these, in their turn, appointed the twelve magistrates. Each of these bodies annually appointed one of the two burgomasters. Ultimately, the patricians took control of the guilds and increased their influence over the city council, but the system whereby the council was elected by representatives of the guilds continued until 1528.

The Bishop himself hardly ever attended meetings of the States, being represented by the Dean of the Cathedral. Rather than being a mere functionary who carried out administrative work on behalf of the Bishop, the latter was a senior member of a powerful council – a fact that increased the independence of the States, and also the dominance of the chapters over that body. The Bishop appeared in person only when requested to do so by the States. In other words, a dualistic system had been created, with the Bishop and his officials on the one hand and the assembly of States on the other, with the latter supervising matters. That supervision extended, for example, to the construction, management and maintenance of dikes (both the chapters, which owned a great deal of land, and



the city of Utrecht itself had a great deal at stake where proper water management was concerned). The tasks of the States as a whole were delegated to “deputations” (deputaties), committees that were dissolved when they had carried out their appointed task.

The States of the Nedersticht consisted of members of a small number of families.

The chapters, which dominated proceedings, had long been made up of members of leading families, something that continued to be the case in the fifteenth century. The canons came from the Utrecht patrician class or from the gentry. The latter were also represented by the second estate; those who spoke in the chapterhouse of the Cathedral on behalf of the third estate were generally Utrecht patricians. These leading non-noble families handed down membership of the city council and the board of magistrates from father to son. Groupings arose within the three estates that shared common interests and were held together by family ties. These factions carried on an often fierce struggle for power, and also looked to external allies.

A PROSPEROUS PERIOD

After the promulgation of the Landbrief, things went well with the Nedersticht for some considerable time. The financial side of things had been more or less taken care of, the assembly of the States provided a peaceful channel for dealing with conflicting interests, and a number of the bishops were in fact competent and forceful individuals.

Arnoud van Horn, who had promulgated the Landbrief, was a good organiser and capable of inspiring people. He was an intellectual, a doctor of canon law who endowed his court with an aura of cultivation. He himself played the contemporary forerunner of the violin. In 1378, he left to become Bishop of Liège.

Despite his advanced years – he was already 64 when he was elected – Arnoud van Horn's successor Floris van Wevelinkhoven (1379–1393) was an even more energetic administrator. Like Jan van Arkel earlier in the century, he resisted rebellious noblemen, who this time came in the guise of Gijsbert van Abcoude, Splinter van Loenersloot and Hendrik, Burgrave of Montfoort. In 1387, the Bishop besieged the castle at Montfoort for four months, using heavy weapons such as ballistas and siege guns, until the previous Bishop – Arnoud van Horn, who was related to the Burgrave of Montfoort – was able to reconcile the opposing parties.

In his struggle, Bishop Floris had been supported by the chapters and the towns; these had secured their position sufficiently to no longer view the Bishop as a competitor. Their interests were best served by reining in the gentry and excluding hostile external parties such as Holland and Gelre. The city also needed the Bishop's support in its struggle with IJsselstein – now an independent principality under the protection of Holland – which constantly flared up anew. Disputes between leading families continued to endanger this rational policy, but they did not get out of hand to the extent they had done a century previously.

The next Bishop, Frederik van Blankenheim (1393–1423), succeeded in getting the support of the chapters and the towns for successful military operations. He consolidated his position within the Oversticht, and also managed to gain Hagestein for the Nedersticht. The territorial integrity envisaged in the Sticht Landbrief seemed to have been guaranteed.

Seal of the town of Amersfoort, bearing the patron saint, St George. The oldest wax seal made with it dates from 1367. The arms of St George, a red cross on a white (or silver) field, are still the arms of the town.

A gold coin (écu) minted in Utrecht showing Bishop Floris van Wevelinkhoven as temporal ruler (holding a sword).



The fact that Bishops Jan van Arkel and Frederik van Blankenheim were able to prevent further decline and even regain territory was not due simply to their own administrative and military capabilities, or to the support of their subjects. To a great extent, the two men were also able to profit from the problems facing their archenemies, the Counts of Holland and Gelre. Holland had already gone through a troubled period after the death of Floris V, but matters really went wrong when Count William IV, who had besieged Utrecht, fell in battle against the Frisians in 1345. His sister Margaret of Bavaria and her son William V disputed one another's right to the principality. Both of them recruited supporters, who referred to themselves as the Hooks (Hoeken) and the Codfish (Kabeljauw). The disputes between these two parties dragged on for generations, long after the deaths of the two claimants. They were an explosive mixture of dynastic claims, economic interests and feuding between noble families, with the fatal addition of external interference. There was a similar conflict in Gelre, where in 1343 a dispute between two brothers over what had recently become the dukedom led to a struggle between the Heeckeren and Bronkhorst factions.

The conflict between the Lichtenberg and Lokhorst factions within the Nedersticht was similar to those in the neighbouring principalities, and was in fact related to them. The former group, which took its name from Jacob van Lichtenberg, supported Holland, and was aided by a number of leading noble families and the ancient patrician class within the towns. Their opponents, named after the Cathedral Provost Hendrik van Lokhorst, supported Gelre, and relied on the aid of the guilds within the city of Utrecht. The policies pursued by a number of competent bishops – who, as rulers, were not parties to the dynastic conflict (unlike the Count of Holland and the Duke of Gelre) – and were able to prevent the conflict between the Lichtenberg and Lokhorst parties escalating within the Nedersticht to the same extent as in the two neighbouring principalities. The support the bishops enjoyed from the cities and the chapters was highly significant. Seeing their interests threatened by the disputes between the noble families, the city fathers and the canons wished to prevent the same thing happening within the Nedersticht. It was far better to deal with such disputes by negotiation within such bodies as the States.

IN THE GRIP OF BURGUNDY

The situation in Holland got out of hand entirely when Jacoba of Bavaria became Countess on the death of her father William VI in 1417. The conflict between the Hooks and the Codfish once more erupted with renewed intensity. The Bishop of Utrecht took the side of Jacoba's Hook party and – despite his age – Frederik van Blankenheim once more went into battle. The opposing party had a more powerful ally, namely Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, who continued the policy pursued by his father and grandfather of systematically adding territory to the Dukedom, thus making this branch of the French royal family into a

The former Bishop's residence (bisschopshof) on the west side of Cathedral Square (Domplein). (Etching by J. Ottens after G. Roghman, c. 1640.)

powerful dynasty. With Flanders and Brabant already in his possession, Philip was preparing to expand to the north. In 1428, he forced Jacoba to make a settlement, and five years later he formally took over the countship. The Sticht now had an extremely dangerous neighbour.

The extent of the threat posed by Burgundy to the independence of the Sticht had already become clear after the death of Frederik van Blankenheim in 1423.

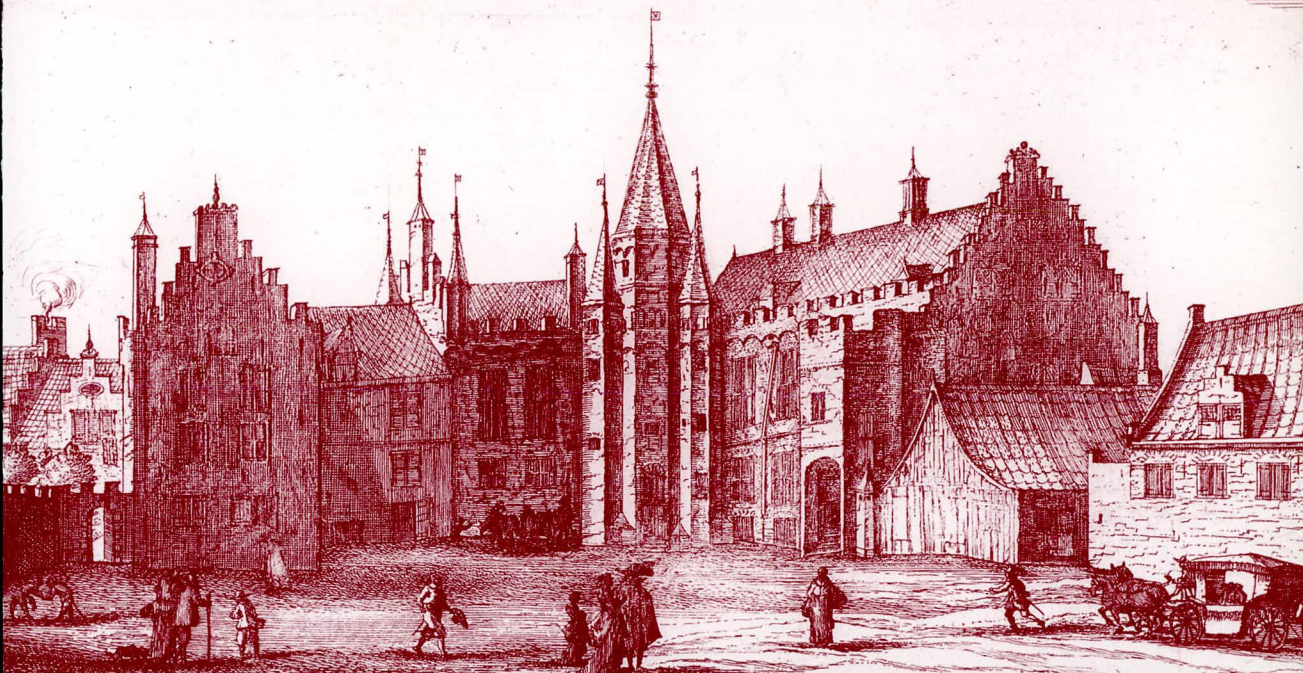
The chapters elected the Cologne canon Rudolf van Diepholt to succeed him, but the Pope put forward a rival candidate, Zweder van Culemborg, who was supported by Philip the Good and by the Duke of Gelre. The chapters and the States of the Nedersticht threw their support behind Rudolf van Diepholt.

This "Schism of Utrecht" divided the bishopric to the core, giving outsiders an opportunity to interfere in its affairs to an extent not seen for a century.

Although Rudolf van Diepholt received the Pope's blessing in 1432 and Duke Philip also recognised him, his opponent refused to give in and the conflict dragged on for years. To some extent the damage could be restricted, not only because Rudolf was a reasonably competent man, but also because his reign as Bishop lasted for a long period. But towards the end of this period he found himself in conflict with the States, which considered that he gave too much priority to his personal interests. As guardian of the privileges set out in the Landbrief of 1375, the States regularly gave the Bishop a rap across the knuckles.

After the death of Rudolf van Diepholt in 1455, it became clear just how much the Sticht had become the captive of Burgundy. The chapters elected the Cathedral provost Gijsbrecht van Brederode, the scion of a renowned noble family, as

het Hoff van de Graeff van Solms, eertyts vande Bisschoppen.



Bishop. Philip the Good, however, wished to see his bastard son David appointed to the See. He pushed through this decision by force of arms, with David's appointment later being sanctioned by the Pope.

During his long episcopate, which lasted from 1456 to 1496, David of Burgundy served the interests of his family very well. In order to reduce his dependence on the most powerful town in his see, David relocated his residence to Wijk bij Duurstede, building a splendid castle there so as to hold court in the manner to which he was accustomed at home. His administration was also typically Burgundian. He was an able and energetic ruler who strove to create an efficient, centralised administration. With the support of his powerful father and – after the latter's death in 1467 – that of his half-brother Charles the Bold, Bishop David ruled in an increasingly authoritarian manner. Even more than his predecessor, he did everything possible to reduce the power of the States.

At first, he took the existing relationships into account and his manoeuvres were still cautious, but in 1470 he carried out what amounted to a coup, imprisoning his greatest enemies, the Brederode family, and sidelining the States. He gained enormous influence over the city council in Utrecht, and also exerted his power within the most significant component of the States, namely the chapters.

By setting up a supreme court – the Schive – intended to improve the administration of justice, which had hitherto been ineffective, Bishop David set aside the principle of trial by members of one's own estate, subjugating the States to episcopal authority in this respect. The States of the Nedersticht thus lost one of their most important privileges, namely that of taking cognisance of complaints against the Bishop and his marshals with respect to their legal acts. In the vital area of water management, David of Burgundy also curtailed the power of the States by withdrawing their right of inspection.

With these measures, the Bishop seriously infringed the rights of the States as set out in the Sticht Landbrief. This decrease in the significance of the States and of the Chapter General was reflected in the reduced frequency of their meetings, from 100 in 1470–71 to 35 in 1473–74. The Burgundian bishop also stirred up ill feeling by appointing French-speaking individuals from his native country to official posts, in contravention of the provision in the Landbrief that such positions should only be occupied by persons born within the Sticht.

David was able to assert himself in this way because all those involved feared his half-brother Charles the Bold. By a series of conquests, the latter annexed a number of areas to his domains, including Gelre. The result was that the Sticht was now wedged between Burgundian territories. Charles was openly striving to create an independent kingdom between that of France and the German Empire. It seemed obvious that the Sticht would become part of it: within the territory he controlled, Charles aimed to create a unified system of administration, and he showed little respect for the privileges enjoyed by towns and individual regions. In his attempt to destroy the influence of the States within the Nedersticht, Bishop David could rely on the full support of his half-brother.

Bishop David of Burgundy tears the Order of the Golden Fleece from around the neck of Reinoud II van Brederode in 1470. Brederode's arrest marked the start of the Bishop's takeover of power in the Nedersticht. (Copperplate engraving by R. Vinckles after I. Buys, 1787.)



In 1477, the Burgundian dream evaporated. Early in that year, Charles the Bold fell in battle outside Nancy. He left no son but a daughter, Maria, who was not yet twenty. She was no match for the various domestic and foreign enemies who sought revenge for what Charles had inflicted on them. The French King Louis XI, who had watched Burgundian expansion with great concern, invaded Burgundy. Some Burgundian possessions, such as Gelre, successfully extricated themselves from the Burgundian yoke, while in others voices were raised demanding the return of privileges abrogated by Charles the Bold.

Maria complied, entering into an agreement with the States General, the Great Privilege, that re-confirmed the ancient rights. The States General supplied Maria with the financing necessary for a defensive war against France, but the separate assemblies making up the States General also had to give their consent. Maria's marriage to the Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg, the son of the German Emperor Frederick III, in the summer of 1477 gave her a powerful spouse on whom she could rely for support. With his aid Maria succeeded in turning the French tide, although not without having to give up some territory, including the ancestral domain of Burgundy itself. Internally too, it would be years before her authority was restored. Her early death in 1482 led to further unrest. Maximilian, however, as the guardian of his infant son Philip the Handsome, stubbornly continued the work of regaining the Burgundian possessions, which now fell into the lap of the house of Habsburg.

In Utrecht too, the crisis within the house of Burgundy gave rise to the restoration of the lost privileges. The States of the Nedersticht, which had been silenced for seven years, regained their rights. In late June 1477, Bishop David concluded a treaty with the States, the "Composition", in which he undertook to observe the provisions of the Landbrief of 1375 in full, to restore ancient feudal rights, to abolish the Schive, reverse disputed reforms, and dismiss French-speaking officials – those of "Walloon tongue" (*walsche tongen*) – from their posts. The States were once again entitled to call the Bishop to account: in 1479, for example, he had to explain to them why he had not allowed them to inspect the records regarding the proceeds of the morgengeld land tax for 1472.

The Bishop was a cunning individual. Though his opponents kept close track of his every move, he played a subtle power game that enabled him gradually to regain his authority. In this he had the support of Archduke Maximilian, who began to take control of matters within Burgundian territory. One setback was a revolt by the Hooks party in Holland in 1480. This took place with the support of sympathisers in Utrecht, and it was only with considerable difficulty that Maximilian able to quell it.

Dissatisfaction in the Nedersticht with the policies of Bishop David became increasingly vocal. His main opponent was the Burgrave of Montfoort. Utrecht received him as a military leader to protect the city against the forces of the Bishop, should that be necessary. Armed conflict followed in August

1481 when David – at the request of Maximilian – attempted to extradite the Hooks, who had fled to Utrecht after the rebellion in Holland had been put down. The asylum seekers resisted and were supported by their Utrecht sympathisers. Fighting alongside the Burgrave's forces, they drove out the Bishop's supporters from the town.

This was the beginning of a bloody civil war that raged within the Nedersticht for the next two years. Utrecht and Amersfoort, together with a number of noblemen, defended themselves against the Bishop, who was supported by the majority of the gentry. The Duke of Gelre, who had only just freed himself from Burgundian rule, supported the rebel towns, but the Bishop had a far more powerful ally: Archduke Maximilian himself. Although Maximilian sent an army of mercenaries to put down the rebellion, this proved to be no easy matter, and the rebels enjoyed a number of successes. At Vreeswijk, an army made up of Utrecht militia and mercenaries defeated the forces of Holland, while the forces of Amersfoort and its Gelre allies surrounded the Bishop's captain of horse, Jan van Schaffelaar, in the church in Barneveld. To ensure the unhindered withdrawal of his men, Van Schaffelaar jumped from the tower. Utrecht forces, however, suffered a terrible defeat at Westbroek. The Archduke's troops drove the rebels further and further into retreat and early in 1483 Utrecht was forced to concede. Bishop David was able to return to his capital on 21 April of that year but after an attack by the Hooks some weeks later he was taken prisoner. He was carried off to Amersfoort in a dung cart and there released.

This insult did not go unavenged: Maximilian laid siege to Utrecht. After holding out for two months, the city capitulated on humiliating conditions. It was not permitted to rebuild its walls, which had been destroyed; a garrison was imposed, and Maximilian was henceforth the ruler of the city. The guilds, which had provided support for the resistance, lost their influence on the administration of the town. For the present, there would be no return to normal relations.

For decades, the damage inflicted during the civil war, the debts it had incurred, and the tribute that was to be paid to Maximilian all continued to impose a heavy burden on the city fathers and the States of the Nedersticht. So as to cope with the most acute financial difficulties, the Bishop and the States concluded a settlement in the summer of 1484 setting out the share of both sides. The chapters, whose great wealth meant that they would be required to provide a large amount of funds, resisted for some time, but they ultimately conceded. Bishop David pressed his nephew the Archduke to moderate the terms of the capitulation treaty of 1483. Even though he was unsuccessful, the fact that Maximilian had other matters on his mind meant that in actual practice things became more flexible. Towards the end of the 1480s, for example, the garrison was withdrawn, and the city was permitted to rebuild its fortifications, with the guilds once more being able to elect the city council.

During this period, Bishop David sought a rapprochement with the States so as not to become the captive of his nephew Maximilian, whom he had increasingly come to distrust. Maximilian attempted to impose a successor on his uncle, whose health was failing, in the person of Frederick of Baden. The idea was that the latter should become the suffragan bishop and that on the death of Bishop David he would be elected by the chapters. David succeeded in preventing this construction with the aid of the States of the Nedersticht. On 16 April 1496, he died at his castle in Duurstede.

The candidate proposed by Maximilian – who had since become Emperor – was Frederick of Baden. In order to prevent the chapters electing anyone else during an emergency session, the governor (slotvoogd) of the castle at Wijk bij Duurstede, David's half-brother Philip, held on to the body of the dead Bishop, invoking the rule that no election could be held until after he had been interred. The resulting delay meant that there was sufficient time to put the necessary pressure on the canons. A few weeks later Frederick of Baden was elected.

Although he was the Habsburg candidate, Bishop Frederick attempted to promote the interests of the Sticht as best he could, aiming to ensure good relations with the States and respecting their privileges. He was, however, in an impossible position. His financial situation was lamentable. The inadequate dues paid by such towns as Amersfoort meant that his income was insufficient, while his military expenditure was very high. His territory was squeezed between that of the Habsburgs and Gelre, which were engaged in a life or death struggle.

Like those of the Oversticht, the States of the Nedersticht tended towards Gelre.

The Emperor himself considered that Bishop Frederick provided insufficient counterweight, and in 1516 Maximilian forced him to abdicate, putting forward Philip of Burgundy in his place. This bastard son of Philip the Good was accepted by the chapters and consecrated by the Pope. But while he had the same taste for splendid court life as his half-brother David, he did not have David's administrative ability. The fact that Philip blindly implemented Habsburg policy unavoidably led to strained relations with the estates. In 1522, for example, he came into conflict with the chapters on an issue that would be the cause of considerable trouble over the next few decades. The Bishop had one of the Cathedral clergy imprisoned on account of his Lutheran sympathies; the Cathedral canons demanded – fruitlessly – that he be released.

When Philip of Burgundy died in 1524, the Utrecht chapters chose the Cologne Cathedral canon Henry of Bavaria as his successor. This choice met with the approval of Charles V, who had succeeded his grandfather Maximilian as Emperor in 1519, and who was also the heir to the domains of Burgundy. But for the Duke of Gelre, who had supported his opponent, it was anything but acceptable.

Neither did Henry succeed in being accepted within the bishopric, where pro-Gelre forces were powerful. One major handicap was the fact that he had not been

consecrated by the Pope, and was therefore merely the bishop elect. Within a year of his election, he was confronted by a rebellion by his capital, supported by Gelre, and he also came into conflict with the States. The only support he enjoyed was that of a number of smaller towns and certain noble families. In despair, he called upon Charles V to break the resistance. Charles demanded in return that Henry of Bavaria should transfer his temporal authority to the Empire. Henry consented to this in October 1527. The States were fiercely opposed, waging a hopeless struggle with the assistance of Gelre. Despite the military talents of the Gelre general Maarten van Rossem, the conflict was settled within a few months. Charles V added the Nedersticht and the Oversticht to his Burgundian inheritance, that collection of counties and dukedoms known by the umbrella term Netherlands or Low Countries (Nederlanden).



The Amersfoort deeds chest, used to store the town's financial documents.

1528-1618

On 21 October 1528, a solemn meeting took place in the chapterhouse of Utrecht Cathedral, with the States witnessing the transfer by Henry of Bavaria of his temporal powers to Anthonis van Lalaing, Count of Hoogstraten, who was acting on behalf of the Emperor. The Bishop Elect released his subjects from the oath they had taken to him. All then proceeded to the Cathedral, where mass was said in honour of the Holy Spirit. The same afternoon, the bell of the Burghers' Church (Buurkerk) summoned the burgesses of Utrecht to Neude Square to take the oath to their new master. Coins were thrown down to the populace from an attic window, an ancient way for rulers to boost their popularity.

ADMINISTRATION FROM BRUSSELS

This transfer of temporal authority still needed to be confirmed by the Pope.

Though the latter initially raised objections, the Emperor's supporters within the Vatican, including Cardinal Willem van Enckevoirt, were able to convince the Holy Father to consent. Henry of Bavaria, who regretted handing over his power, now had to make way for a successor as Bishop too, in the person of Willem van Enckevoirt. The latter had been proposed to the Pope by the Emperor Charles in return for services rendered. The chapters had lost their electoral power, meaning that matters had in fact being restored to the situation prior to 1122. The new Bishop decided that he would administer his diocese from Rome, and he appointed a deputy.

The work of reorganising temporal authority had in the meantime commenced.

From now on, the Nedersticht was known as the domain (heerlijkheid) of Utrecht, and the Oversticht as the domains of Overijssel and Drenthe. The city of Groningen was combined with the previously Friesian districts known as the Ommelanden and Friesland itself also became a domain. All these territories owed allegiance to Charles V. In 1543, Charles finally added the Dukedom of Gelre to his territories in the Netherlands, which together formed the Burgundian Kreis (administrative district). His new domains were incorporated into the administrative system designed by Philip the Good, which had been increasingly centralised. Charles V was represented in these territories by a governor known as the "Stadholder" (Stadhouder). Utrecht was administered by the same Stadholder as Holland and Zeeland, the Count of Hoogstraten, who held temporal authority. The fact that Utrecht had the same Stadholder as its ancient archenemy Holland indicated just how much it had lost its independence.

The Stadholders themselves were subordinate to a Governor-General or Viceroy (landvoogd) who ruled over the full extent of the Burgundian domains from Brussels. This position was first held by Charles' aunt Margaret of Austria, and,

1600

after her death in 1530, by his sister Maria of Hungary. Throughout his enormous dominions – they comprised not only the Netherlands but also Austria, parts of Italy and the whole of Spain, together with his new American colonies – Charles appointed trustworthy deputies, with whom he was in constant correspondence. He also made efforts to visit his different possessions on a regular basis. Besides being the hereditary ruler of these extensive domains, Charles V had been Emperor since 1519 and he saw it as his task to restore that position – which had been increasingly eroded since the twelfth century – to its former glory. His hereditary domains served to realise that goal; Utrecht was thus merely a small cog in the enormous machine.

For that cog to run smoothly, it needed to be adjusted. The greatest risk of obstruction came from insurgency on the part of the city of Utrecht itself. The garrison of the citadel, Vredenburg, which Charles had constructed on the western side of the city, offered a sufficient guarantee against this. The city council, previously elected by the rebellious guilds, was now appointed en bloc by the Stadholder. The fact that this had to be done annually increased its dependence and consequently its loyalty. The council and the magistrates were housed in a single town hall, which had been totally renovated, and an envoy of the Stadholder was present at their meetings.

The position of Utrecht itself within the States was weakened by increasing the input of the smaller towns, which included not only Amersfoort, Rhenen and Wijk bij Duurstede but also Montfoort (since 1538). These measures were used as a means of successfully controlling the Third Estate within the States. The First Estate, which in the past had included all the canons who were entitled to vote, henceforth consisted of one or two representatives of each chapter. The government in Brussels, moreover, was able to influence the appointment of canons, although the chapters continued to be a bulwark of the Utrecht elite.

The central authority was less successful in gaining a grip on the Second Estate.

One attempt to do so was the imposition of a qualification for membership whereby the nobleman concerned was required to be in possession of a knightly residence. A list was drawn up in 1536 of castles that complied with the criteria – which, for example, included the possession of a moat. However, it did not prove possible to restrict to a particular maximum the number of noblemen entitled to attend meetings of the States. All in all, the position of the Utrecht nobility was significantly stronger than it had been previously.

CHARLES V AND THE STATES OF UTRECHT

- The powers of the representatives of the estates – henceforth known as the States of Utrecht – were greatly restricted. As in areas acquired previously, a regional audit office and a court were instituted. These implemented the policies of the Governess-General and her advisory councils in Brussels: the Council of Finance, the Council of State and the Privy Council.

KAROLVS • V • DEI • GRA • ROMANORVM
HISPANIARVM • REX •



The Emperor Charles V (1500-1558).
(Portrait by an unknown painter of the
Southern Netherlandish school, c. 1540.)

Vredenburg Castle in Utrecht.
(Painting by Willem Cornelisz. van
Swanenburgh, 1658.)



Just like David of Burgundy's Schive, the High Court of Utrecht entirely undermined the powers of the States. As a court of appeal in civil and water management cases, this court restricted the competence of lower courts and saw to it that legislation promulgated in Brussels penetrated to the lowest levels. The members of the court, which sat in the immediate vicinity of Vredenburg Castle, were trained lawyers from the Habsburg chancelleries, most of them from outside Utrecht. The president regularly acted as deputy for the Stadholder. The High Court of Utrecht also ruled on accusations of heresy. Charles V, who found himself confronted by a number of Lutheran princes within the Empire, wished to combat the rise of Protestantism in the Low Countries. The lower courts and the chapters sometimes displayed a tendency to protect people who came from their own locality, but Charles – believing his ideal of a Christian Empire to be threatened by the schism Luther had created within the church – saw heresy as *lèse majesté*, one of the most serious of crimes. There were a number of trials for heresy during the 1530s and 1540s, particularly of Anabaptists, the violence of whose activities was considered to be especially dangerous.

The new audit office and the Steward-General of the Domains (*rentmeester-generaal van de domeinen*) appointed by the Stadholder had to deal with the chaos left by the bishops. The popularity of the new regime was greatly increased by financial improvements, the restoration of public order and – with the conquest of Gelre in 1543 – the end of generations of warfare. The urban patrician class and the nobility were particularly happy with Habsburg rule, not least because of the positions of distinction to which they were appointed. In 1540, the people of the Sticht were able to welcome their new sovereign in person when he came to visit Utrecht. The reception that Charles received – organised by the painter Jan van Scorel – was a splendid one, although the States of Utrecht still did not feel able to present him with a suitable gift of welcome.

Drastic taxation measures were necessary to balance the finances; for these to be carried through the consent of the States was still required. The Sticht Landbrief, which set out the right of the States to grant requests by the ruler for funds, remained in force. When proposing taxation plans, the three estates did their best to ensure that they were not adversely affected. This was especially the case with the gentry, but even the smaller towns stubbornly defended their privileges. Though the city of Utrecht and the chapters adopted a much more constructive attitude, they were unsuccessful in their attempt to persuade the other parties to follow. It was ultimately the Governess-General herself, Maria of Hungary, who in 1539 proposed a solution in the form of a tax on land, the *oudeschildgeld*. Despite concessions to the major landowners, who were well represented in the States, obstruction meant that it took nine years for a definitive system to be introduced.

In the late 1540s, the States of Utrecht were relatively co-operative where finances were concerned. In 1549, they approved a request for 24,000 guilders, and when the Crown Prince – later to become Philip II – visited Utrecht that same year, they allocated 16,000 guilders in gifts for him and his entourage. A few years

later, however, when Charles V again approached them for funds, this time to finance his war against France, they were less amenable. In response to his request for a large sum in 1557, their representatives in the States General – the assembly of all regional States (first convened by Philip the Good in 1464) which Utrecht had been a member of since 1534 – decided to obstruct the procedure. As unanimity was required, their refusal to vote in favour of the request was a serious problem, and it was only after lengthy negotiations that the region voted to donate 72,000 guilders rather than the 117,000 originally requested.

THE KING OF SPAIN

By this time, there was a new ruler, Charles V having abdicated in 1555. He left the position of Emperor and his Austrian dominions to his brother Ferdinand; Spain and the Low Countries he left to his son Philip II. After his father's abdication, Philip remained in the Low Countries for another four years, for as long as the war against France lasted. He then moved back permanently to Spain, where he had grown up and where he felt at home. He saw the Netherlands – which he had entrusted to his half-sister Margaret of Parma as Governess-General – as part of his Spanish empire. They served to generate funds with which to realise his great ideal of restoring Catholic unity under Habsburg leadership.

Philip took the preservation of the faith very seriously. In order to better propagate the “purified” Catholic faith after the Council of Trent, he initiated a restructuring of the Church whereby Utrecht was no longer subject to the Archbishop of Cologne but became an archbishopric itself, with subordinate bishoprics such as those in Haarlem and Deventer. The new bishops would not be recruited from the nobility as hitherto, but would be skilled theologians, although Philip emphatically retained the right to nominate them. The nobility considered this to be a serious violation of their interests and the Utrecht chapters were angered because their rights had been seriously curtailed. While the first Archbishop of Utrecht, Frederik Schenk van Toutenburg, did come from one of the chapters, being the Provost of St Peter's, he was a typical protégé of the sovereign.

But it was not merely with better pastors that Philip intended to combat the rise of Protestantism; he also intended to do so with an iron hand. Philip was especially worried by Calvinism, a new movement named after the Geneva reformer John Calvin, which began to recruit increasing numbers of supporters in the Low Countries in the course of the 1550s. In April 1559, he promulgated a series of measures that were so severe that they were referred to as the “Edict of Blood”. This centralised policy, which was symbolised by its merciless persecution of heretics (in contravention of the legal protection they had previously enjoyed) came to be seen as dictatorial.

The States General were extremely concerned about the erosion of powers, and regularly expressed their reluctance to carry out the King's wishes. The States of Utrecht refused in both 1562 and 1563 to accede to his requests for funds.

In particular, it was the nobility who opposed Philip's centralised policies within the various administrative bodies. Their actual leader was the Stadholder of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, William of Nassau, Prince of Orange (better known as "William the Silent"). Opposition nobles objected to the increasing concentration of power in the hands of the Governess-General. The advisory bodies – the Council of Finance, the Privy Council and the Council of State – were made up for the most part of loyal, well-educated officials, and were acquiring an increasing amount of power at the cost of the States General, which were dominated by the nobility. In the view of the latter, the most senior official of the Council of State, Cardinal Granvelle, was the embodiment of that policy. Granvelle's forced departure in 1564 was a tremendous success for the nobility. The conflict now rapidly came to a head. That same year, William the Silent declared that he was unable to agree to the infringement of freedom of conscience. The States of Utrecht supported the chapters in their opposition to the implementation of the decisions taken at the Council of Trent that endowed the Bishop with the power of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Here too, the King was forced to make concessions. A small group of noblemen associated with Hendrik van Brederode, Lord of Vianen, submitted a petition in April 1566 requesting that the various religious edicts be moderated. This caused Margaret of Parma to panic, and to promise that she would urge the Inquisition to rein itself in.

The reform-minded section of the population took heart from this. Dozens of Calvinists went from Utrecht to Culemborg to attend services – now legal – at the castle of the Count, who was sympathetic to Protestantism. Culemborg and Vianen, like IJsselstein, Buren and Leerdam, were independent little princedoms which did not belong to the Habsburg domains. Open-air sermons soon began to be held in the fields outside the towns, including Utrecht. Demands then came for churches to be made available for Protestant worship. When these demands were not acceded to, churches were taken over by force and images of the saints were destroyed. The "Iconoclastic Fury" or the "Breaking of the Images" began in Flanders on 10 August 1566, reaching Utrecht two weeks later. The Calvinists, who referred to themselves as "reformed", were given St James's, though they were later forced to give it up again; the Stadholder provided them with an area outside White Nuns Gate (Wittevrouwenpoort) where they could hold open-air sermons, referred to as the "Sand Church" (zandkerk).

The States of Utrecht were not best pleased by William the Silent's indulgent policy. Distrusting him because of his friendship with leading protestants such as Hendrik van Brederode, they feared an attack from Vianen in support of the Calvinists, and discussed setting up a defence force. Initially, nothing much came of this, as the gentry and the small towns wished to shift the costs involved onto the capital and the chapters. But after there had been an attack from Hagestein, and after Brederode had recruited large numbers of troops (paid for by the Calvinists of Antwerp), the States decided to raise two companies of infantry and to ask the Governess-General to appoint a general, thus bypassing the Stadholder, William the Silent. Margaret of Parma then dispatched the

Frederik Schenk
van Toutenburg
(1503-1580),
Archbishop
of Utrecht
(1561-1580).
(Copperplate
engraving, 1714.)



Stadholder of Gelre to Utrecht to impose order. He drove out the irregular troops from the region and put an end to the preaching of open-air sermons. William the Silent, realising that his position had become untenable, retreated to his family fortress in Dillenburg. Brederode also fled.

The two noblemen had in fact left just in time, because it was King Philip's intention to severely punish all those who had been involved in the unrest or who had been tolerant of it. To that end, he despatched one of his confidants to the Low Countries, the Duke of Alba (or Alva), who in August 1567 replaced Margaret as Governor-General. Alba considered the measures taken by the authorities to be completely inadequate, and set up a "Council of Troubles" (Raad van Beroerten). This court of law, whose task it was to investigate the unrest of the past two years, quickly earned itself the nickname "Council of Blood" (Bloedraad). Within just a few weeks, a branch of the Council was set up in Utrecht. This ordered the arrest of hundreds of people; others fled.

The Council of Troubles constituted a flagrant violation of the privileges guaranteeing that citizens would be tried before their own representative bodies. But Alba had more up his sleeve. In order to deal with the financial problems, he designed a system of taxation intended to generate regular income: the "Tenth Penny" (Tiende Penning), a 10 percent tax on the sale of movable property; a 5 percent tax (Twintigste Penning) on the sale of real estate; and a 1 percent tax (Honderdste Penning) on all property.

By robbing them of one of their most important privileges – that of granting the monarch's requests for funds – these taxes would render the States powerless. When the proposal for them came before the States General in March 1569, the States of Utrecht therefore dismissed it. The decision cost them dearly. In August, troops were billeted on the city of Utrecht, and other towns were informed that they could expect the same. Towards the end of the year, the Governor-General proposed that the States of Utrecht should simply be abolished. The States panicked and allocated their ruler no less than 162,000 guilders; even so, their offer was refused.

Alba's intention was to break the power of the States. Late in 1569, the Council of Troubles accused the States of Utrecht of having been too indulgent to the rebels of August 1566, despite their having been in no way sympathetic to Protestantism. Judgement followed in July 1570, with the States being dissolved. The privileges and exemption from tax enjoyed by the city of Utrecht were withdrawn. Goods and income belonging to the city were confiscated. Protests were to no avail; Alba allowed no appeal.

ousting tyranny

William the Silent, who had already attempted an unsuccessful incursion into the Low Countries in 1568, saw the unrest caused by Alba's harsh regime as offering an opportunity for revolt. Early in 1572, exiles returning from England, the "Sea

Beggars" (Watergeuzen), commenced an advance through Holland and Zeeland. A number of Orange armies also advanced on land. The States of Holland once more proclaimed William Stadholder, effectively giving notice that they would no longer obey the central government.

In the Sticht, Amersfoort opened its gates to the Beggars. In Utrecht, a similar act was made impossible by the presence of the Spanish garrison in Vredenburg Castle. To improve the town's defensive capacity, Alba set up a town militia – a counteroffensive that brought Amersfoort back into the royalist camp in mid-November.

In Holland itself, the Spanish campaign came to a halt in mid-1573 at the gates of Alkmaar. Alba had to withdraw. His successor Luis de Requesens attempted to restore the King's authority in a more conciliatory manner, one that also benefited the States of Utrecht, which in 1574 regained their powers. The price for this, however, was 200,000 guilders, payable to the Governor-General, who was in a precarious financial situation. The States demanded that the judgement rendered in 1570 should be countermanded; they also demanded full rehabilitation. Negotiations dragged on for two years. The States got their way, and the sum of 200,000 guilders was set off against loans provided previously.

By then, Requesens had died and the government in Brussels was in a state of total chaos. The Spanish treasury was no longer in a position to pay for the war. Troops went unpaid and consequently began to mutiny. In the areas that remained loyal to the crown, this led to pressure to bring hostilities with Holland and Zeeland to an end. The States General, which in the meantime had assumed power, entered into negotiations with the two rebellious regions, resulting in the Pacification of Ghent (November 1576). Free traffic and trade between the various regions was restored and it was agreed that the religious situation would remain as it was, with the Calvinists forming the official church in Holland and Zeeland, and the Catholics forming it elsewhere. The judgements rendered by the Council of Troubles were set aside. William the Silent was rehabilitated, with his possessions, including the barony of IJsselstein, being restored. He was also recognised as the Stadholder of Holland and Zeeland, although not of Utrecht. All the various regions agreed that Spanish troops should be withdrawn from the Low Countries.

The garrison of Vredenburg Castle were also required to withdraw. The Spanish commander refused to comply, however, whereupon the town militia began to besiege the fortress with the aid of German mercenaries. The latter had been serving Spain but were now in the pay of the States, which acquired the necessary funds by means of a loan which they had forced the Archbishop to provide. After some six weeks, the Vredenburg garrison surrendered. Because of fears that the new Spanish Governor-General of the Low Countries, Don Juan of Austria (a bastard son of Charles V), would once more use the Castle to dominate the town, the captains of the militia set about having it demolished and they also pressed for William the Silent to be appointed Stadholder of Utrecht once more.



Verhemmen hier sel al hi luyck of schandte duedolke in synen tyranijgen troon en
grawdelle die delyck ghevoert om daryghels loen bleef hem doegen vol deur druckend
vanden geschieden maet by hem sijn scherprichter en synen bloetract door h
Gods woert ut haere handen en vallen deur dreege hem te doet haer vrom
en die dant verhou die waeren onthals en inde bloetmeere gneet vint ma
• A. 1710



This piece of propaganda of 1615 is by an unknown painter of the Northern Netherlandish school, and illustrates a popular allegory of the tyranny of the Duke of Alba in the Low Countries. The Governor-General is shown seated on a throne and holding the chains binding the seventeen Dutch maidens who symbolise the seventeen provinces. Executions are taking place in the background.

The States of Utrecht were extremely divided on the question of whether William should become Stadholder. The town of Utrecht itself, together with the chapters of the Cathedral, St John's and St Peter's were in favour, whereas Amersfoort, Rhenen and the chapters of Old Minster and St Mary's were against. The gentry's position was halfway between the two extremes. William's opponents feared that because he had become a Calvinist he would not respect the rights of the Catholic Church. The threat posed by Don Juan caused opposition to dwindle away, and William's visit to Utrecht in August 1577 boosted his popularity to such an extent that there could no longer be any doubt about his return.

The negotiations now concerned only the conditions on which he would do so.

William guaranteed that he would neither "obstruct nor prevent" the "Roman faith". Conversely, persecution of Protestants would also cease. One gain achieved by the Stadholder was that he acquired a great deal of influence over the composition of Utrecht's city administration. The "Treaty of Satisfaction" was signed on 9 October 1577, with a delegation of militia captains being present.

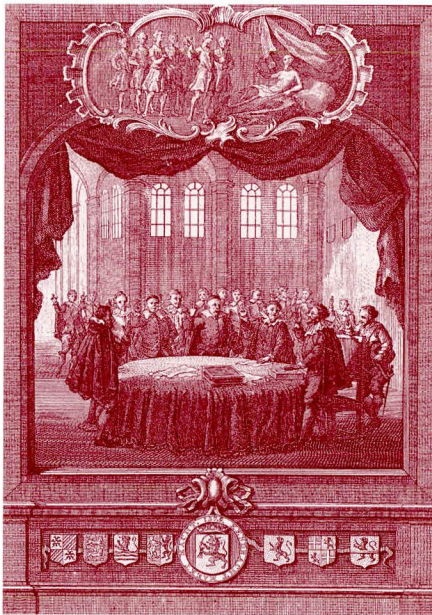
The city militia, whose roots were in the guilds, had gained a position of considerable power, especially after the German troops had left the region, and Calvinism acquired an increasing number of converts within its ranks. The city administration, appointed in November 1577 according to the new regulations, was also made up of Protestant sympathisers; this was particularly the case among those who had returned from exile. These people did not accept the dominant position retained by the Catholic Church. The town council supported the priest of St James's, Hubert Duifhuis, who was increasingly moving in the direction of Protestantism. In the summer of 1578, he publicly broke with Rome, and after a great deal of discussion was allowed to form his own congregation. The Calvinists also demanded recognition, taking over the church of the Franciscans, which had remained empty after its owners had been driven out of the town due to their Spanish sympathies.

"OUT OF THE DEPTHS HAVE I CRIED UNTO THEE"

Due to the way the revolt developed, the position of the Catholic Church came under even greater pressure. The army of the States General was unable to withstand the forces of Don Juan; it also turned out to be extremely difficult to finance operations. In order to contribute, Utrecht had the silverware in the Cathedral treasury melted down in early 1578.

Even so, the King's troops made a breakthrough under the new Governor-General, Alessandro Farnese, Duke of Parma, who had been appointed on the death of Don Juan in October 1578. Farnese, the son of Margaret of Parma, combined exceptional military ability with adroit diplomacy. He gained the sympathy of the leading Catholic nobility, who were concerned at the rise of Calvinism. On 6 January 1579, a number of territories in Wallonia, where this group was

dominant, were reconciled with the King by the Union of Arras. For radical Calvinists, this provided proof of their belief that the Catholic party could not be trusted: they demanded that harsh measures be taken. William the Silent, however, who wished to hold things together, pleaded for a policy of reconciliation. Other longstanding advocates of a harsher approach were the leaders of Holland and the Stadholder of Gelre, Jan van Nassau, the strict Calvinist brother of William the Silent. He was granted his wish in the form of the Union of Utrecht, which was concluded on 23 January 1579. The Secretary to the States of Utrecht, Floris Thin, who played a major part in drafting the text, pleaded for the document to be signed by the States of Utrecht. He had to overcome major opposition, however. The city and the chapters of the Cathedral and St John's were in favour, with the three other chapters and Amersfoort opposing. The smaller towns were not represented, and the gentry were divided. The opponents were put under considerable pressure to agree. It was only Amersfoort which continued to refuse, but in March 1579 it was brought into line by force. Ultimately, a large part of the rebellious region agreed to the Union of Utrecht.



The Union of Utrecht. The delegates are depicted standing round a table and taking the oath. Above them is an allegory. (Copperplate engraving by N. van de Meer after G. Backer, late 18th century.)

Although the Union of Utrecht viewed religion as a regional matter, maintaining the status quo in the Sticht, the position of the Catholic Church was increasingly eroded. In Utrecht itself, the Calvinists took over another two churches, the Burghers' Church and the Church of St Nicholas. They were also permitted to hold public office. The Catholics, who still retained most of the churches, were no longer allowed to hold processions. The chapters came under pressure because the States of Utrecht first ruled that new canons should be born in the Sticht and should be well disposed towards the revolt; it then abrogated to itself the right to appoint them.





The siege of Vredenburg Castle, with the expulsion of the Spanish garrison by the Utrecht militia, assisted by German mercenaries. The figure of Trijn van de

Leemput, who is said to have started the demolition of the castle, was added later. (Painting by Joost Cornelisz. Droochsloot, 1646.)

In March 1580, the Catholic Count of Rennenberg – the Stadholder of Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe – took the side of the King, and handed over large areas to the Spaniards. As a result, calls for Catholicism to be banned became increasingly vocal. Utrecht town council came out in favour, but William the Silent attempted to reconcile the various different religions. The States of Utrecht appointed a commission, which produced its report in mid-June. While the States attempted to delay any decision, the city of Utrecht itself proposed that Catholic services should be prohibited. The States agreed to this, despite objections from the chapters and the smaller towns. Utrecht itself and the gentry were emphatically in favour of the proposal.

The Catholic Church as an organisation was prohibited, and its buildings were sequestered. Few of these, however, were allocated to what was still the small Calvinist congregation.

In the Cathedral, which now stood empty, one more mass was said: the requiem for Archbishop Schenk van Toutenburg on 30 August 1580. When the *De Profundis* (Psalm 130) was sung – in Latin of course – the Calvinists insisted on singing their own version in Dutch at the same time (“Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee”). When those who remained true to the church of Rome attempted to silence these heretical voices, the solemn requiem degenerated into a full-scale brawl. The next day, the Cathedral was once more abandoned. Early in 1581, the canons of the Cathedral relinquished the building to the Calvinists.

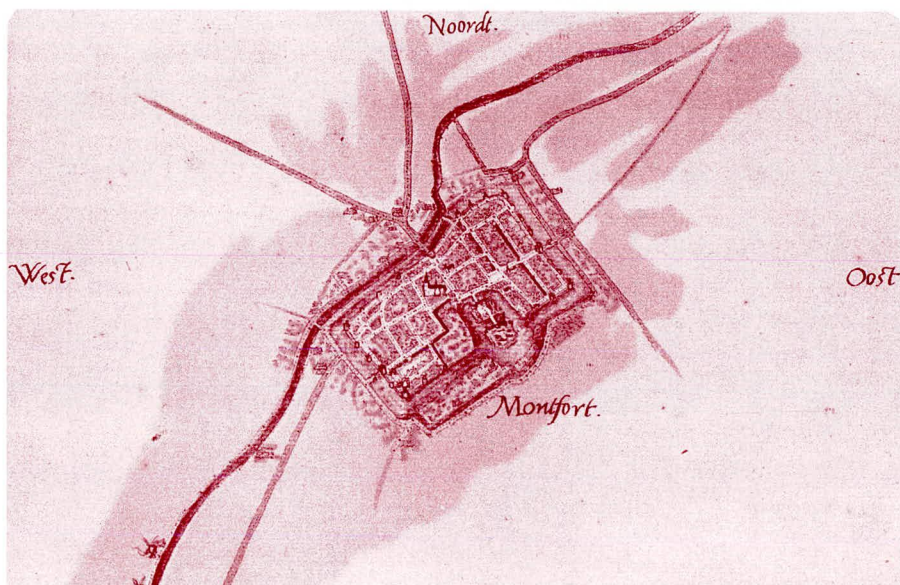
In Utrecht, too, Calvinism had thus become the officially recognised religion: the public church. However, it was not the only denomination, and initially only a minority of the population belonged to it. There was in fact a Protestant alternative, the congregation led by Hubert Duifhuis at St James’s, which enjoyed the protection of the city council. The same was not true of the small groups of Lutherans and Anabaptists, although these did enjoy freedom of conscience. The Union of Utrecht provided that “each individual shall be free to practise his religion and no person shall be held or investigated on the grounds thereof.”

Catholics could also profit from this freedom of conscience and, as individuals, were safe. After a time, they were permitted to hold meetings in private houses, which eventually developed into clandestine churches or “conventicles”.

In the long run, a third of the population of the towns of Utrecht and Amersfoort remained true to the Catholic faith; in Wijk bij Duurstede it was half, and in Montfoort the majority. In Rhenen, however, the whole population joined the Calvinists.

In the countryside, the situation was extremely variable. There were largely Catholic areas in the south and west but also entirely Calvinist ones, for example the hills of the Heuvelrug. The choice made by the local nobility was decisive. In areas where noble families, such as Van Reede or Taets van Amerongen, had joined the Calvinists and prevented the practice of Catholicism, the peasantry joined the public church. Where a Catholic priest was a guest in the castle of such Catholic nobles as Van Zuylen van Nyevelt or Ram van Schalkwijk, the local populace

Plan of
Montfoort.
(Anonymous
17th-century
engraving.)



remained within the flock. William the Silent, too, prevented any stringent whole-scale changeover to Protestantism within his domains.

After the confiscation of the churches, the dismantling of Catholic institutions was undertaken with a certain amount of circumspection. Nuns, for example, were not forced to leave but the nunneries they occupied were allowed to die out. Matters were entirely different in the case of monasteries, whose property was sequestrated. The Abbey of St Paul, for example, became the High Court of Utrecht. Despite pressure from the Calvinists, the most respected institution, namely the chapters, were neither abolished nor dispossessed: as they owned about a third of all land in the Province, the economic consequences of doing so would have been enormous. Quite simply, the interests of the nobility and of the urban patrician class were too significant. The “prebends” (i.e. benefices or “livings”) which their younger sons enjoyed as members of a chapter provided them with a comfortable income and a great deal of influence. Moreover, unlike most of the monastic orders, the chapters had been favourable to the revolt, or at least those of the Cathedral, St John’s and St Peter’s.

Secularisation was therefore a much better solution. The canons were no longer priests, but the guardians of the enormous property owned by their chapters. The process whereby Protestants could acquire a prebend was already under way; now, it accelerated. It became increasingly difficult for Catholics to acquire a position within a chapter and ultimately they were prohibited from doing so. Some new canons were appointed by the chapters themselves, and others by the States.

The chapters retained their position within the States, meaning that Utrecht was the sole region that still had all three estates. In all the other assemblies of the States, the first estate had disappeared. The Utrecht chapters were represented within the States by delegates (geëligeerden, i.e. “elected ones”) who formed the

First Tier (Eerste Lid) of the States. The chapters were not free to nominate whoever they wished. The city of Utrecht nominated two of the canons, with the gentry and the small towns selecting one of them (a process known as *electie*), and with the Stadholder being required to approve the choice (*approbatie*). After an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the city of Utrecht to have the First Tier abolished, this solution was decided on in the spring of 1582.

SOVEREIGN STATES

The States of Utrecht, which now met in what had been the former Franciscan monastery at St John's Churchyard (Janskerkhof), took a crucial decision in 1581 to renounce their allegiance to Philip II as their sovereign. In July of that year, the States General "abjured" the King, and three months later the States of Utrecht themselves passed an "Act of Abjuration" (*Acte van Verlatinghe*), with only Amersfoort voting against. The arguments presented by the States in favour of this step amounted to a summary of all the misdeeds of the past twenty years. It was not merely the King's servants, such as Alba, who were accused, but even the King himself. As far as the States of Utrecht were concerned, an additional argument lay in the fact that Utrecht had been ruled by the Habsburgs for just half a century.

Because the search for a new sovereign was unsuccessful, the rebellious region became a republic, in which the States of the separate provinces were sovereign: the Republic of the United Netherlands. While the delegates of the various different Provincial States met as the States General, they were specifically mandated by those whom they represented. If they wished to change their position on a matter, they were required to consult their own Provincial States beforehand. When ruling on essential matters, the States General were only permitted to decide unanimously. The position of Stadholder was maintained, no longer as the representative of the sovereign, but as the servant of the States. In actual fact his power had increased, for example, because of the prestige of William the Silent and the agreements reached in the Treaty of Satisfaction. His position in the Province of Utrecht was further reinforced by his extensive possessions in the region, which included the barony of IJsselstein, which was not part of the Province but enjoyed an independent position within the Republic. Nevertheless, the powers of the States of Utrecht were greater after 1581 than they had ever been. Under the rule of the bishops, their function had basically been a supervisory one, which had been eroded under the Habsburgs. Now, however, they were given full responsibility for regional government. Despite the greatly increased frequency of their meetings, an executive board was necessary. This became the Chamber of Deputies (*Gedeputeerde Staten*), which was introduced in 1578. This body met each week, sometimes several times. It prepared decrees, appointment orders and budgets, and, after these had been voted on by the States, it saw to their implementation.

Goert van Reede
van Saesfeld
(1516-1585)
and his wife
Geertruid van
Nijenrode.
(Anonymous
double portrait.)

The States constantly guarded their competence and even tried to extend it.

The duties of the High Court of Utrecht were restricted to the administration of justice. In the field of finance, the States took over the powers of the regional audit office, abolishing that institution in 1584. However, internal differences meant that the States did not succeed in their attempts to modernise the taxation system. As had always been the case, the members were motivated by their own particular interests. The first two tiers opposed direct taxation, while the towns were against its indirect counterpart. Given the balance of powers, it was usually the latter option that was forced through. Control of tax collection by “tax farmers” was weak and although the Chamber of Deputies suspected that there were “many cases of fraud”, it was not able to do much about it.

The shortages had to be made up for by means of loans, meaning that interest charges weighed increasingly heavily on the budget.

In the field of water management policy, the States left a great deal to the water-control boards after 1580. The States and the provincial Chamber of Deputies were assisted in carrying out their duties by a modest civil service headed by the Secretary (secretaris). Unlike civil servants in the past, who were subordinate to the sovereign, with the States being at most able to monitor them, these officials were now responsible to the sovereign States.

Within the States themselves, there had been a significant increase in the power of the Second Tier. Over the past few years, the gentry had manoeuvred effectively



and had eventually decided matters. Most noblemen had come down on the side of the revolt and the Reformation, even figures such as Goert Van Reede, who, when he was the sheriff (schout) of Utrecht in the 1550s, had been an enthusiastic persecutor of heretics. In 1581, he was one of those who pressed for the renunciation of allegiance to Philip II within the States General.

Increasingly, the gentry attempted to close ranks. In 1597, they drew up a new list of those who owned a knightly residence. In order to be classified as a member of the gentry, a nobleman was now required to be Calvinist, a criterion that became ever more strictly enforced. The fact that the country was now a republic meant that no new nobles could be created, making the existing nobility increasingly exclusive. This more powerful position of the gentry also had economic reasons: the significant rise in agricultural prices in the course of the sixteenth century generated higher rents, of which the nobility were the main beneficiary.

One important factor determining the power of the gentry was the influence they had on the composition of the two other tiers. In the case of the First Tier, the gentry could interfere in the appointment of canons and of their delegates via the Provincial States. They could also influence city government in Utrecht, having a major say in the appointment of the council (which rotated annually), the burgomasters and the magistrates. The senior burgomaster was always a nobleman, as were the magistrates of the towns. These powers held by the gentry were anathema to the militia captains, who fondly recalled the situation prior to 1528, when the city council had been elected by the guilds. They were also angered by the religious policy of the city and of the States, which – rather than have a strictly organised Reformed (i.e. Calvinist) church with a clear-cut creed – gave preference to a broadly based Protestant people's church and sympathised with Hubert Duifhuis's congregation at St James. This "libertine" view of the church also allowed for a high degree of influence on the part of the civic authorities, whereas the orthodox Calvinists strove for independence. The size of the Calvinist congregation in Utrecht increased during this period, partly because of the influx of Flemings and Brabanters who fled there in the face of the Spanish advance. These newcomers, in particular, were orthodox hardliners.

CONFRONTATION

The differences of opinion eventually came to a head in the mid-1580s, by which time wartime conditions had become extremely grim. The Spaniards had almost completely conquered the southern and eastern areas of the Low Countries. To widespread dismay, the leader of the revolt, William the Silent, was assassinated in July 1584. It was not until November 1585 that a new Stadholder was appointed. In Holland and Zeeland, this was William's 17-year-old son Maurits. The States of Utrecht appointed the Stadholder of Gelre, Count Adolf of Nieuwenaar and Meurs, to the same position in their own province. After the fall of Antwerp in the summer of 1585, the States General appealed for assistance to

THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS OF THE STATES

THE GREAT CHAPTERHOUSE OF UTRECHT CATHEDRAL, 1375–1581

When Utrecht was ruled by its bishops, the States of the Nedersticht usually met in the building belonging to the most important member: the Chapter of the Cathedral. The fact that this chapter carried out the clerical work for the States meant that this was also where the archives were held. This large building contained a number of meeting rooms, with the Second Estate, for example, meeting in their own Knights' Hall (ridderkamer). Plenary sessions of the States were held in the Great Chapterhouse, which was rebuilt in 1495. It was in this hall – now the auditorium of Utrecht University – that the Union of Utrecht was concluded in 1579.

When he put an end to the temporal authority of the bishops in 1528, Charles V also greatly reduced the powers of the States, ending the domination of the collegiate chapters. Meetings could no longer be held under the aegis of the Cathedral Chapter, and the States were assigned a meeting place in the building that housed the High Court of Utrecht. Because the latter was intended to serve the central authority, it was located next to the fortress of Vredenburg. (The complex had been built almost fifty years previously as the Hospice of St Elisabeth to take care of orphans.)

In 1570, the Court relocated to Drift Street, taking over a house – today number 25 – that had been forfeited by the exile Jan van Renesse. The States – restored after being abolished by the Duke of Alba – were also given “a room in which to meet”. When Van Renesse's possessions were restored to him in 1577, the States returned to the Chapterhouse of the Cathedral, which also meant that they were no longer dominated by the High Court of Utrecht.



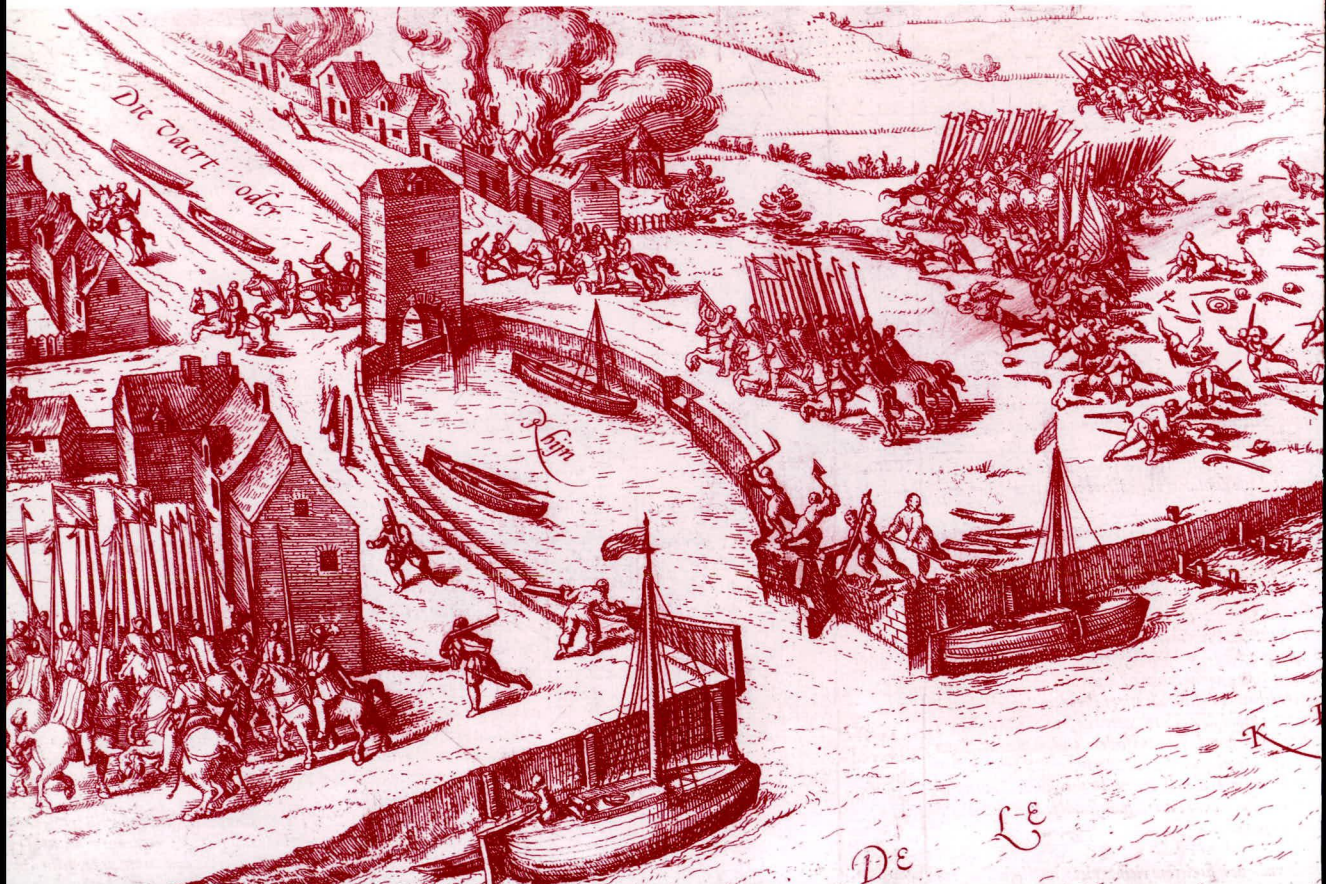
The Chapterhouse of Utrecht Cathedral, where most of the meetings of the States of the Nedersticht took place until 1528. Between 1577 and 1581, this room was the venue for meetings of the States of Utrecht. It is now the auditorium of Utrecht University.

the English Queen Elizabeth I, who dispatched her favourite Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. In order to be more independent of the States of Holland, which now dominated the remaining area that was in revolt, he established his headquarters in Utrecht.

Leicester reinforced his power-base by seeking to ally himself with the dissatisfied captains of the Utrecht city militia. With his support, these took over the town in April 1586 and sent a number of “libertine” patricians into exile, including the burgomaster Dirk de Gooyer, the Secretary to the States Floris Thin, and the leader of the chapter delegates, Floris Heermale. The new city council was dominated by orthodox Calvinists, and forced Duifhuis’s congregation at St James’s to merge with the Calvinist congregation.

Strict Calvinist morality was now imposed on every aspect of life. Catholic symbols such as the choir of the Burghers’ Church and the Old Minster were demolished. The council was determined to get rid of the chapters entirely, and, on 1 December 1586, it voted to abolish them, a decision that led to a breach between Utrecht and the two first tiers within the States. For reasons of security, these decided to hold further meetings in Wijk bij Duurstede, thus producing a schism that divided the States in two. A compromise was reached in 1587, with the city accepting the continued existence of the First Tier, although changes in its composition meant that the chapter delegates more frequently voted with the city against the gentry. Increasingly, the Utrecht city fathers followed their own course. They wished, for example, to make the Queen of England their

Prince Maurits dismisses the mercenaries in Utrecht’s Neude Square in 1618. (Painting by Pauwels van Hillegaert, 1620-1630.)





sovereign, even sending a delegation to England, entirely at their own initiative. This included the Utrecht preacher Herman Moded, who had lived in England as a refugee and who spoke the language fluently.

This led to the Utrecht authorities becoming isolated, with their opponents on the lookout for an opportunity to hit back. That opportunity came with the return of Leicester to England, where he died in September 1588. Acting with the support of Holland, in particular Stadholder Maurits and the Grand Pensionary (raadpensionaris, i.e. legal adviser) Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, Adolf of Nieuwenaar restored the previous administrative situation. Exiles such as Thin and Heermale were allowed to return and were given back their positions.

In the realm of religion, the States abolished the Calvinist theocracy, introducing a libertine model which they set out in the Utrecht church regulations of 1593. While these regulations provided for greater influence on the part of the authorities, they omitted such typically Calvinist elements as strict discipline and a closely defined doctrine. In this respect, Utrecht differed from the other provinces, which had a classically Calvinist ecclesiastical structure in which these significant elements featured.

Politically, the Sticht emphatically took its lead from Holland, and both provinces had the same Stadholder from 1590 on, when the States of Utrecht appointed Maurits as their Stadholder on the death of Nieuwenaar. In the same year, Oldenbarnevelt's protégé Gilles van Ledenbergh was appointed Secretary to the Utrecht States in succession to Floris Thin, who had died. This pro-Holland policy enjoyed a reasonable level of consensus within the States. The nobility

Attack by
Spanish troops
on the lock at
Vreeswijk, 1585.
(Etching from
Hogenberg's
book of prints.)

of the Sticht and the urban patricians jointly dominated the Province. A large number of the old-established families had come out in favour of the Reformation, in its moderate Utrecht variant. Families that remained Catholic could no longer be involved in any way in the various administrative bodies. Political stability was greatly encouraged by the military victories of Maurits, who succeeded between 1588 and 1598 in ousting the Spaniards from the northern Low Countries. Now that that threat had disappeared, voices were raised among the merchants of Holland in favour of ending the struggle. Oldenbarnevelt made himself the spokesman of these views, thus finding himself opposed to Maurits. The States of Utrecht supported the peace policy, leading to the conclusion of the Twelve-Year Truce in 1609.

During this ceasefire, the young Republic would be split by a conflict originating in a theological dispute between two professors at the University of Leiden, Jacobus Arminius and Franciscus Gomarus. Although few people understood the precise nuances of this scholarly dispute regarding predestination, it led to a major upheaval because of the way in which it touched on the position of the church within society. The question was whether there should be an inclusive Protestant people's church, with a great deal of influence on the part of the authorities, as in the Province of Utrecht; or an independent church of



Dirk de Goyer (1538-1601), prominent Utrecht city politician. (Portrait by an unknown painter, 1588.)

“true believers”, such as that in the city of Utrecht between 1586 and 1588. This religious conflict was also related to the issue of whether the struggle against the archenemy, Spain, should be continued, or whether a definitive peace was desirable.

The proponents of an inclusive church and a peace policy called themselves “Remonstrants” and their opponents “Counter-Remonstrants” in reference

to the petitions (a remonstrance and a counter-remonstrance) which the two parties had submitted to the States of Holland. The Remonstrants had a large number of supporters in Holland, where they had the backing of a majority within the States. However, with the exception of Utrecht – The States of Utrecht were faithful allies of Oldenbarnevelt, who was a Remonstrant sympathiser – they had little support elsewhere.

Being unable to gain a foothold within the church in Utrecht, the Counter-Remonstrants were forced to hold their services outside the Province, a situation that for older members of the congregation was reminiscent of times past. As a result, the States were accused of acting in the same way as had the Duke of Alba. The States of Utrecht feared that there might be a Counter-Remonstrant revolt, particularly in Utrecht itself, where in January 1610 the patrician city administration had been toppled by a movement rooted in the guilds and with links to the orthodox Calvinists. As had been the case a quarter century previously, religious and economic demands had brought the city into conflict with the gentry and the chapters. However, action by military forces representing Holland quickly led to the old situation being restored.

Fear of an uprising and mistrust of the city militia led in August 1617 to the States of Utrecht recruiting mercenaries (*waardgelders*), a step urged by Oldenbarnevelt. Prince Maurits, the Stadholder, saw this as an infringement of his authority as military commander. Shortly before, he had openly come out in favour of the Counter-Remonstrants, despite having previously shown his indifference by remarking that he did not know whether predestination was “blue or green”. A showdown was now inevitable.

1618-1780

Early on the morning of 31 May 1618, Utrecht's Neude Square was full of soldiers. In a surprise operation, Prince Maurits dismissed the *waardgelders* of the States of Utrecht and restored his own military authority. The leaders of the province and city were arrested. One of the prisoners, the Secretary to the States Gilles van Ledenberg, later committed suicide in prison. To prevent him escaping his just punishment, his coffin – with his body inside it – was strung up from a gallows in The Hague.

THE GENTRY SHORN OF THEIR POWERS

After deposing those in power, the Stadholder replaced them with his own supporters, appointing Counter-Remonstrant sympathisers to the city council, which was henceforth known as the *vroedschap* (literally “the wise ones”). Some of these came from the guilds, for example the painter Paulus Moreelse. Although members of established patrician families were also appointed, for example Philip Ram, the monopoly of that social group had been broken.

Because the members of the council were henceforth appointed for life, they were in a stronger position vis-à-vis the gentry. The fact that Utrecht burgomasters were no longer permitted to be gentry also led to a shift in the balance of power. The burgomasters, like the magistrates, were now appointed annually by the Stadholder on the basis of nominations by the city council.

The Sticht nobility also had less of a hold over the First Tier within the States.

Only four of the eight chapter delegates, who were appointed by the gentry on the basis of nominations by the city, could henceforth be of noble birth. In the case of the Second Tier, Maurits took action by no longer convoking notorious opponents for the States. This power to invite or not invite noblemen to sit in the States was an important means of curbing the power of the gentry.

The Stadholder strengthened his grip on the States by working with confidants such as the new Secretary, Anthony van Hilten, who had previously been Maurits's own private secretary. Van Hilten kept his master – and his master's successors – fully informed of the situation in Utrecht. The position of Secretary to the States, from now on known as the Clerk (*griffier*), was simultaneously reduced to a purely administrative function, involving such things as recording the decisions of the States in the resolutions ledger.

In contrast, the power of the Provincial Chamber of Deputies increased.

The disproportionate influence of the nobility within the Chamber of Deputies was reduced by having each of the three tiers represented by four individuals. The opposing interests of the members and the resulting conflicts constantly gave the Stadholder an excellent opportunity to act as referee. For example, the rural industries run by the aristocracy – brickyards, for example – were a major

Gilles van Ledenberch, the Secretary to the States, committed suicide in prison. To prevent him escaping his just punishment, his coffin – with his body inside it – was strung up from a gallows outside The Hague in 1619. (Drawing by E. van de Velde.)



irritation to the towns, which also considered that the tax burden was unfairly distributed. The eagerness of the city of Utrecht, in particular, to take over the property of the chapters was felt by the First Tier to be a threat. Within the Third Tier, there was animosity between Utrecht, which considered itself to be the sole representative of the urban element, and the four other towns. Amersfoort, Rhenen, Wijk bij Duurstede and Montfoort could naturally reckon on the support of the chapter delegates and the gentry, who used them as a kind of counterweight against the power of the capital, Utrecht. Besides taxation, the conflicts between and within the three members of the States primarily concerned the right to bestow offices. Whenever a post became vacant, each of the different parties put forward its own candidate.

The religious dispute was settled at the National Synod of Dort (i.e. Dordrecht), which condemned the Remonstrants early in 1619. The Calvinist church, including that in the Sticht, became thoroughly Calvinist, with a strictly formulated creed, a “bottom-up” organisation, and an independent position with respect to the authorities. The Remonstrants, in so far as they refused to conform, set up a denomination of their own, the Remonstrant Brotherhood. Though they were persecuted at first, things became more liberal after the death of Prince Maurits in 1625: Frederik Hendrik, his brother and successor, had had Remonstrant sympathies, and now argued in favour of moderation. In the States of Utrecht, he enjoyed the support of others whose Remonstrant connections led to their being referred to as the “Arminian” faction. Protected by the new Stadholder, one particular member of the gentry, Godard Van Reede van Nederhorst, found his star quickly rising. The protection he gave to Remonstrants in 1627 brought him into such serious conflict with the Counter-Remonstrant majority within the city council that he feared arrest by the magistrates. This was prevented by the support he enjoyed from the majority in the States and – in the background – of the Stadholder. The political pattern

in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would be typified by the behaviour of factions of this kind, operating on the basis of common interests and convictions, and reinforced by ties of family and friendship. Within the city and the States, individuals and groupings were continually looking for the right allies; in these political machinations the Stadholder played a crucial role.



Anthony van Hilten (1586-1670), originally a servant to Prince Maurits, and, after 1618, Clerk (griffier) to the States of Utrecht. (Portrait by Cornelis Jonson van Ceulen I, c. 1650.)

Frederik Hendrik became Stadholder under difficult circumstances. War had once more broken out with Spain in 1621, and at first things did not go well for the Republic. In 1627, however, Frederik Hendrik began a successful counter-offensive, and two years later was in a position to lay siege to 's-Hertogenbosch. As a diversionary manoeuvre, the Spaniards commenced an incursion into Gelderland in late July, advancing on Amersfoort, which surrendered without a shot being fired.

Utrecht was also under threat, and the Chamber of Deputies – now in almost continuous session – called on the States General and the Stadholder to send aid. But Frederik Hendrik did not allow himself to be persuaded to withdraw troops from the force that lay before 's-Hertogenbosch. Instead, he gave orders to create a defensive “water line” across the Province of Utrecht by inundating a strip of land. Extensive areas were flooded, including the Naardermeer and Horstermeer polders, which had only recently been drained. New defences were hastily constructed around Utrecht itself. These preserved the city from an attack by the Spanish forces, which plundered the surrounding countryside right up to the suburbs of the city. Frederik Hendrik sent a small force which took the strategic fortress of Wesel on the Rhine, cutting off supplies to the Spaniards, who were forced to beat a hasty retreat. 's-Hertogenbosch then capitulated.

MONEY TROUBLES

Utrecht had been saved, but the damage was enormous. Land had been inundated, farms plundered, castles burned to the ground – all of this when the economy

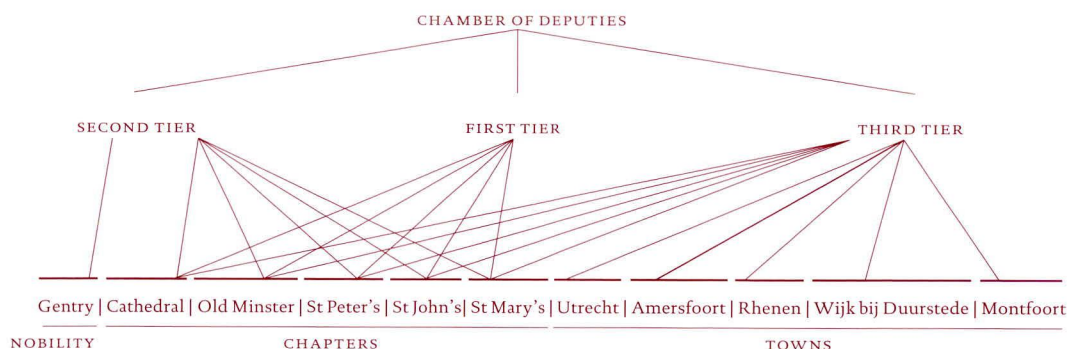
of the Sticht already lagged behind that of Holland. One consequence was that the city of Utrecht, once by far the most populous town of the northern Low Countries, was overtaken first by Amsterdam, later by The Hague and Rotterdam, and finally by Haarlem and Leiden. The States of Utrecht attempted to recover the cost of defending the city in August 1629 from the States General – and therefore in fact from Holland – which paid 58% of the cost of the campaigns. Because the Province of Utrecht had the greatest difficulty in finding even the 6% that it was required to pay, the States received regular demands for payment from The Hague.

The various groups within the Province all attempted to get one another to cover the bills. The gentry believed that the city of Utrecht should pay a large portion, for example for the defence works constructed in the summer of 1629. Utrecht city council, which was dominated by orthodox Calvinists, repeatedly proposed to take over the property of the chapters, which led in each case to resistance on the part of the chapter delegates and the gentry. One method of payment which enjoyed general support was for money to be recovered more quickly from the tax farmers, and then used to pay off high-interest loans.

Income from taxation was necessary not merely to cover the cost of waging war.

It was also needed to pay interest charges and to carry out public works, such as improving the waterway connection to Amsterdam by turning the River Vecht into a canal and constructing the towpath along it. Another ambitious project was the idea of setting up a university. Though at first the States of Utrecht could not agree on how this should be financed, in 1636 Utrecht city council pushed through a motion that the city's own university should be established.

The leader in this was the Calvinist theologian Gisbertus Voetius, who had close links with the ruling faction within the council. Voetius was to be a professor at Utrecht University for 40 years.



Composition of the States of Utrecht.



In its conflict with the States, the city of Utrecht was at a structural disadvantage.

Votes were taken on an estate-by-estate basis, and as long as the gentry and chapter delegates were in agreement with one another, the result was always a 2-to-1 majority in their favour. Considering this to be extremely unjust, the city pressed for a system requiring unanimity on major issues, as in the States General. The dispute dragged on for years until a solution was achieved in 1645 after mediation by the Stadholder. The new regulations stated that outvoting was no longer to be permitted on issues of religion, sovereignty, war and peace, taxation or the bestowal of high offices. In other words, outvoting was possible only on minor matters, which were in any case dealt with by the Chamber of Deputies. In the case of essential issues, total unanimity was required. In effect, this meant that the States of Utrecht – like the national political body – were operating according to a consensus-oriented “Polder Model” *avant la lettre*.

As had happened earlier in the century, the gigantic sums of money swallowed up by the war against Spain gave rise to pressure for peace, certainly now that the Spanish threat had been removed by Frederik Hendrik’s conquests in the south of the Low Countries. In addition, Spain had also been at war with France since 1635.

Those in favour of a peace settlement wished to make use of the funds that would become available to reduce the burden of taxation, bring down the level of debt and perhaps introduce new policies. This movement was particularly strong amongst the merchant class in Amsterdam. Its opponents were to be found in three main groups: in the border areas (where people naturally wished to see the front located at a greater distance); among those with an interest in the Dutch West India Company (such as the people of Zeeland, who were engaged in a profitable overseas war against Spain); and in the ranks of orthodox Calvinists.

The latter viewed continuing the war with Spain, the archenemy, as a sacred duty, with the ultimate aim being to liberate the southern Low Countries from the yoke of Rome. The hardliners within the Calvinist church included a disproportionate number of exiles from Flanders or Brabant or their direct descendants.

Sack of a village. After a long interruption, warfare returned to the province of Utrecht in 1629. It was rural areas that suffered most. (Painting by Joost Cornelisz. Droochsloot, 1626.)

Godard van Reede van Nederhorst (1588-1648), for many years the most powerful figure in the States of Utrecht. He represented the province at the peace negotiations in Münster, where he opposed any rapprochement with Spain. (Portrait by Anselmus van Hulle, 1647-1648.)



The attitude taken by the Catholics of Amersfoort in 1629 and the discovery of a Catholic plot in Utrecht in the late 1630s reinforced anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish sentiments.

WARFARE AND A PEACE TREATY

While Frederik Hendrik was less strictly in favour of continued warfare than his half-brother had been, he realised that his power depended to a great extent on his position as commander-in-chief. He dreamed of taking Antwerp, but after 1637 got no further than capturing such small towns as Hulst and Philippine. As Stadholder, he did not have much of a say in the political decisions taken by the States of Holland. In the case of Utrecht, however – where he had wide powers, and where a number of his confidants held positions within various tiers of the States – he could influence things to a considerable extent. His first right-hand man in Utrecht – the chapter delegate Adriaan Ploos van Amstel, who died in 1639 – was succeeded by Godard van Reede van Nederhorst, who, together with his brothers Ernst and Johan and a small group of friends such as Pieter van Hardenbroek and Jacob van Asch van Wijck, controlled the first and second tiers of the States. He was able to placate the city of Utrecht by strenuously opposing any rapprochement with Spain.

The militant opposition expressed by Van Reede van Nederhorst to any policy of peacemaking had to do not only with the power struggle within the States and his relationship to the Stadholder, but also with his own personal interests and opinions. Since the 1620s, he had held a major stake in the armaments industry, with complex shareholdings in a network of cannon factories extending from Amersfoort and Rhenen to as far away as Lübeck and Sweden. This meant that his personal interests ran parallel to those of the city of Utrecht, which was an important centre for the production of muskets and pistols. Because his investments in draining the Horstermeer and Naardermeer polders had been wiped out by the inundations in 1629, he was extremely resentful of the Spaniards. The fact that his maternal grandfather had been a Brabantine refugee served only to intensify his anti-Spanish feelings.

It was this “hawk”, of all people, who represented the Province of Utrecht at the peace negotiations between the Republic and Spain that began – after lengthy preparations – in the Westphalian town of Münster in 1646. As was to be expected, Van Reede van Nederhorst adopted a tactic of obstructing the rapprochement that soon began to develop; he continued to be obstructive even when Frederik Hendrik was persuaded to join those pressing for peace. Nederhorst’s anti-Spanish attitude was probably encouraged by bribes that he received from France, which was at great pains to keep the Dutch in the struggle. Nevertheless, Utrecht’s negotiator was unable to prevent a peace treaty, the Treaty of Münster, being signed – after 18 months of talks – on 30 January 1648, although he still refused to put his own signature to it.

Because the Union of Utrecht provided for unanimity in matters of war and peace, his refusal was in fact a serious problem. Every province was required to concur, and Utrecht therefore came under heavy pressure from the other provinces. This had its effect, because despite the support of the new Stadholder William II – who had replaced his father on the latter's death in March 1647 and who wished to continue the war – Nederhorst's position within the States of Utrecht quickly crumbled. It was only with difficulty that he was able to prevent a motion being adopted in the Second Tier of the States to ratify the Treaty of Münster. In doing so, he cast a vote himself, something which was illegal, given that as ambassador in Münster he was in the service of the States General and therefore not entitled to vote at a meeting of the Provincial States.

His opponents protested to the Chamber of Deputies and ensured that their objection was recorded in the resolutions ledger of the States of Utrecht.

This damaged Nederhorst's position to such an extent that the city council and the chapter delegates allowed themselves to be talked round. Within the First Tier of the States, Nederhorst's brother Johan van Reede van Renswoude attempted to turn the tide, but after the death of Jacob van Asch van Wijck, he no longer had any trusty supporters among the delegates of the chapters. The position of the anti-peace party had therefore also become hopeless among the gentry, and on 16 April 1648 the States of Utrecht voted to ratify the peace treaty. On 15 May, the solemn oath was sworn in Münster Town Hall. Utrecht's diplomatic representative was absent due to illness. It was in fact a genuine illness and not just a diplomatic cold: six weeks later, Godard van Reede van Nederhorst was dead.

A FAILED COUP D'ÉTAT AND A PREMATURE DEATH

The Treaty of Münster was solemnly proclaimed on 5 June 1648; in Utrecht the bells of the Cathedral rang out in celebration. After 80 years of war with Spain, both sides had laid down their arms. The populace rejoiced while the administration counted the cost.



Two flintlock pistols by the Utrecht gunsmith Jan Knoop (1610/15-1660/87). In the 17th century, Utrecht was an important centre of the armaments industry.

A large part of the ruinously expensive army could now be disbanded. The States of Utrecht could also reduce the size of the forces they financed. There was less rejoicing on the part of those whose existence depended on the war, such as arms manufacturers and army officers, who came from the ranks of the nobility. The orthodox Calvinists, too, were saddened by the abandonment of the religious struggle. The young Stadholder William II was particularly disappointed because, like his father and his uncle, he had hoped to win glory on the battlefield. For him, the downsizing of the army was an encroachment on his powers and authority.

William II attempted to channel all this discontent into a renewal of hostilities. In doing so, however, he found himself opposed by the States of Holland, and particularly by Amsterdam. In July 1650, he undertook military action against that city. However, his operations were unsuccessful and the country was in turmoil. Opinions within the States of Utrecht were divided: while the city itself was outraged, the gentry were extremely understanding. Like the gentry, the chapter delegates did not wish to vote in favour of a complaint against the Stadholder, and for this reason no vote was taken.

Hardly six months after his attempted coup, William II died of smallpox aged only 24. A week later, his widow Mary Stuart, a daughter of the English King Charles I, gave birth to a son. Not liking the idea of having a Stadholder who was merely a babe in arms, the States of Holland left the position vacant, as did their colleagues in Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland and Overijssel. The northern provinces, under the Stadholder of Friesland, went their own way. This decision by the States marked the beginning of the "First Stadholderless Period", which was to last until 1672.

TRUE FREEDOM

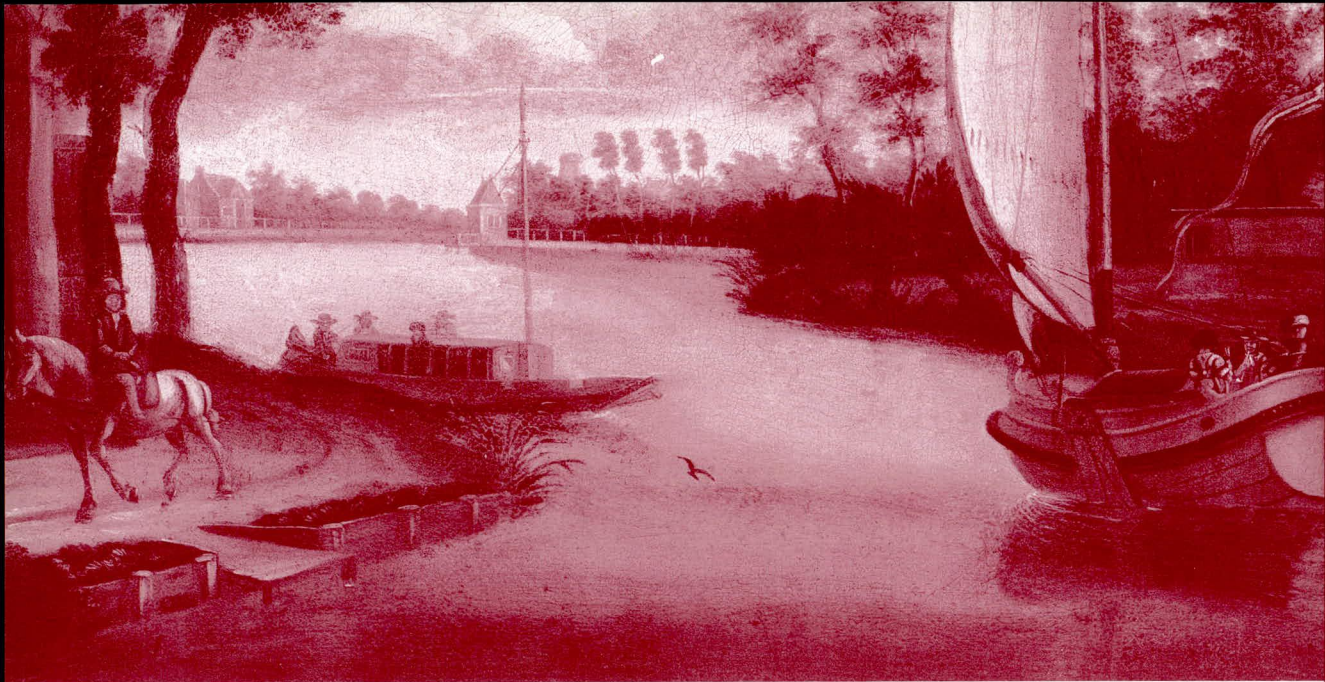
No longer hampered by a Stadholder, the States of Utrecht enjoyed greater powers than ever before. The sovereignty of the Province was undisputed and the talk was of "true freedom". The Chamber of Deputies in fact constituted the government of the Province and it was they who convened the States – and, at once or twice a month, even on a relatively frequent basis. In times of crisis, the States even met every week.

In a small region like Utrecht, the distances that its members needed to travel were not very great. Sessions took place in the Chamber of the States in St John's Churchyard, which had recently been rebuilt; this was just around the corner from Utrecht city council. Most noblemen and chapter delegates had a house in town. Though access was rather more difficult for representatives from the smaller towns, good transport connections, for example by canal barge, meant that they were never more than a few hours away.

The States of Utrecht hardly ever met with all members present; the maximum number also fluctuated due to differences in the numbers of noblemen who

Johan van Reede van Renswoude (1593-1682) became the head of the Van Reede clan after the death of his brother Godard. He was for many years the President of the States of Utrecht. (Anonymous miniature, 1672/73.)





had been convoked and the composition of the urban delegations. Between 1650 and 1672, there were usually somewhere between 15 and 25 persons present at meetings of the States. Besides the twelve Deputies, there were usually between four and seven chapter delegates present. The convoked members of the gentry numbered between four and ten, and the delegates of the towns between four and eleven.

Meetings were chaired by the longest-serving member of the chapter delegates.

The first item on the agenda was “generality” affairs, i.e. politics in The Hague. There was a delegate to the States General representing each Tier of the States, and these gave their reports. In cases where generality affairs were not merely noted but had to be voted on, the members were required to consult those whom they represented. The gentry, who had a meeting venue next to the Assembly Hall of the States, were frequently able to do so very quickly, and they often succeeded in determining the line they would take the very same day. If the First Tier concurred, the issue was immediately settled. While this meant that the towns lost out, in important issues they could still invoke the 1645 regulations, which required unanimity.

Rather than taking a decision, the States could also set up a committee to investigate a particular matter further. During the First Stadholderless Period, the greater significance of the States led to an increase in the number of such matters.

The city of Utrecht was very much in favour of this approach because it allowed it to prevent decisions being pushed through by the First and Second Tiers, with the smaller towns being excluded.

In the Chamber of Deputies, Utrecht was compelled to put up with the presence of the smaller towns. The Third Tier consisted, in addition to the two Utrecht burgomasters, of an ex-burgomaster of Amersfoort and, alternately, one from Rhenen, Wijk bij Duurstede and Montfoort. Officially, the Chamber of Deputies

dealt only with matters of minor importance, but in fact it also arranged important decisions in advance. Because it was only decisions that were minuted, the Deputies could speak freely, making it easier to arrive at a compromise. The members of the Chamber of Deputies were always well informed because they were entitled to open the post. Meetings of the States were often simply an extension of those of the Chamber of Deputies, for one thing because not many other people were present, sometimes only about five. The Deputies also dominated meetings of the various committees.

The importance of the Chamber of Deputies is shown by the fact that the leading provincial regents (i.e. ruling aristocrats) were members, with the exception of the three delegates of Utrecht to the States General; these were entitled to a seat in the States of Utrecht, but not in the Chamber of Deputies. By around 1650, one of them, the chapter delegate Johan van Reede van Renswoude, who was also the President of the States, had acquired an extremely powerful position. After the death of his brother Godard in 1648, he made good use of the Van Reede network. His second cousin Godard van Reede van Amerongen, also a delegate to the States General, was the leading figure among the gentry. However, his frequent absences in The Hague or on diplomatic missions abroad weakened his position among the gentry and in the States of Utrecht. His support for the house of Orange enjoyed the agreement of his fellow noblemen. It was a different matter in the case of Renswoude, whose non-noble opponents within the First Tier, for example Everard van Weede van Dijkveld, exploited this fact. By establishing good relations with the young Grand Pensionary of Holland, Johan de Witt – the embodiment of “true freedom” – the President of the States of Utrecht could compensate for the disadvantages of being a supporter of Orange. In the meantime, he kept open the lines of communication with the house of Orange.

The city of Utrecht itself adopted a staunchly Republican (i.e. anti-Orangist) position, supporting the policy of Holland. Not having a Stadholder had major advantages for the urban regents. They were able, for example, to fill any vacancies that occurred within their own ranks, and could also elect their own burgomasters and magistrates. While the chapter delegates and the gentry considered that this was a right that belonged to the sovereign States, this was a point of view they did not succeed in enforcing.

A hereditary oligarchy of regents, involving only a small number of families, was thus able to develop within the various town councils. In the course of the 1650s, the balance within Utrecht city council shifted. Since 1618, there had been an orthodox Calvinist majority, one with good relations to the church council, but in 1660 that relationship was completely overturned when a row about the old demand for confiscation of the property of the chapters got out of hand and the town council expelled a number of preachers from the city.

The riots this caused among the populace in support of the preachers could only be put down with the help of Holland. This affair brought the majority faction, led by Nicolaas Hamel and Lambert van Velthuysen, closer to Holland, while the

Canal barge on the River Vecht. (Detail from an anonymous painting of “Nijenrode Castle on the Vecht at Breukelen”, second half of the 17th century.)



Lambert van Velthuysen (1622-1685), a prominent member of the Utrecht city council, was a leading anti-Orangist. In 1672, he arranged the capitulation of Utrecht to the French; two years later was therefore forced to resign. (Portrait by Jan van Wijckersloot, 1665.)

opposition, with Professor Voetius as their external adviser, sought closer ties with the house of Orange, and thus also with the latter's supporters within the States. Hitherto, the issue of the property of the chapters had prevented the orthodox Calvinists from having anything to do with this group, the gentry, or the delegates of the chapters.

Discord regarding the position of the house of Orange meant that the States of Utrecht adopted a relatively passive attitude in discussions on the future role of the infant son of the previous Stadholder. The result was already uncertain because of the shaky balance of power between the Van Reede clan and the group associated with Hamel and Van Weede van Dijkveld. In 1666, the States of Utrecht supported the admission of the young Prince to the Council of State, while a year later Hamel succeeded in forcing through a motion for the definitive abolition of the stadholdership, in this following the lead of Holland.

AN ANNUS HORRIBILIS WITH CONSEQUENCES

Discussion of the future role of the Prince of Orange was very much influenced by the international situation. The signing of the Treaty of Münster in 1648 had not in fact signalled the advent of a century of peace. There had been two separate wars with Britain, although the greatest threat was from France, whose king, Louis XIV, was conducting a policy of aggression and seemed about to take over the Spanish Netherlands.

Johan de Witt hoped to put a stop to his ambitions by means of diplomacy, ignoring warnings from diplomats such as Godard van Reede van Amerongen. On 12 June

The new Code of Government of 1674, which gave the Stadholder extensive powers, was solemnly promulgated on the steps of the Assembly Hall of the States (Statenkamer) at St John's Churchyard. (Anonymous painting, 1674.)

1672, French armies invaded the Republic, while Britain, Münster and Cologne also declared war. The blame was laid on De Witt, and the people called for the return of Orange.

The States General then appointed the young William III to the position of commander-in-chief. William – the “William of Orange” who became King of Great Britain and Ireland in 1688 – organised the defence of the Republic, by means that included the inundation of the area along the Vecht. His decision to do this was approved by the States primarily because it was supported by the city.

His demands that some of the outer suburbs of Utrecht should be burned down in order to create an unrestricted field of fire was rejected, however. Defending the city was now very difficult and some members of the elite, including most of the chapter delegates and nobility, fled to Holland. The States commenced negotiations with the French and when a French unit appeared at White Nuns Gate (Wittevrouwenpoort), Hamel and Van Velthuysen admitted them.

The French occupation of the city and the Province had thus begun. The States of Utrecht, dominated by the city now that the rest of its members had fled, proved extremely co-operative, for example allowing the Cathedral to once more become a place of Catholic worship.



In Holland, Utrecht's capitulation was seen as treason. Holland continued to resist under the leadership of William III, who had been appointed Stadholder, while the fleet, commanded by Admiral Michiel de Ruyter, was able to repel the British. The next year, things went well for the Republic. A surprise attack by the Prince's forces had led to the capture of Bonn, thus cutting off the French supply route, and the French commander thereupon withdrew from Utrecht, although not before demanding and receiving the enormous sum of 450,000 guilders as the price for not plundering the city.

The regions that had continued the struggle against France no longer wished Utrecht, Gelderland or Overijssel to be admitted to the States General because of the haste with which they had capitulated. It was in fact the Stadholder who took the side of the three provinces in this respect – but at a price. A Code of Government was introduced giving William III great influence over each of the three provinces. The powers of the Stadholder in the Code of Government of 1674 were considerably wider than those in the Treaty of Satisfaction of 1577 or the Code of 1618. Members of Utrecht city council, for example, had to be reappointed annually by the Stadholder, who also chose the two burgomasters and the twelve magistrates each year from a list nominated by the council. The First Tier of the States came entirely under the control of the Stadholder because it was henceforth he who appointed the chapter delegates, as well as new canons in the event of vacancies arising. The chapter delegates also had to be reappointed every three years. Influencing the Second Tier was always more difficult, but here, too, William managed to advance his supporters, for example by ignoring the rule that those on active military service could not be appointed.

In the States, the Stadholder – wielding accusations of collaboration – carried out a series of drastic purges. He dismissed four of the 15 gentry members, and, in the case of the chapter delegates, no fewer than six of the eight, including Everard van Weede van Dijkveld. Johan van Reede van Renswoude, now aged 81, who had resigned in 1671, returned and once more took up his position as President of the States. Only 13 of the 40 seats on Utrecht city council were held by previous incumbents. The opposition faction, which had close ties to the orthodox Calvinists led by Voetius, were returned to power. The aged professor had the pleasure of seeing his grandson Paulus Voet van Winssen made a member of the council. In all these purges and appointments, the Prince was advised by confidants such as Godard van Reede van Amerongen.

Politics in the Sticht primarily involved drumming up support for William III, who was conducting the war with France – which lasted until 1678 – with varying success. The struggle was costing an enormous amount of money, which had to be provided by the provinces. In this respect, the States of Utrecht already had problems enough. Even before the French occupation, they had been in financial difficulties, and in 1663 they had been forced to set up an audit office.

However, the consequences of the French occupation proved truly disastrous.

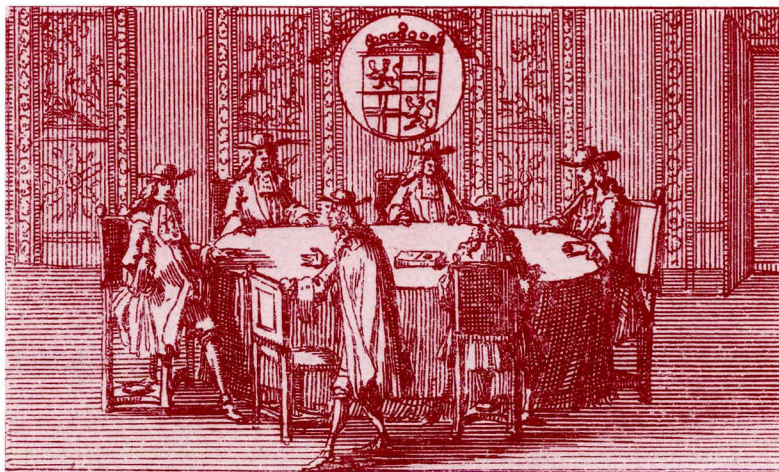
It took years to pay off the 450,000 guilders granted to the French as the price of the city not being pillaged. Inundations and plundering led to a fall in

proceeds from taxation. The economy of Utrecht, which had already been lagging behind that of Holland and which since 1660 had been more or less at a standstill, found itself in a crisis that lasted for years, a situation made all the worse by a series of disasters including poor harvests and the catastrophic storm that devastated the city in 1674.

William III's primary concern was his struggle, both political and military, with France. He booked an enormous success when in 1688 he took power in Great Britain by opposing his father-in-law James II in the Glorious Revolution, acceding to the throne with his wife Mary. Political affairs he left to his confidants, within the States of Utrecht the chairman, Van Reede van Renswoude. On his death in 1682, the latter was succeeded by Everard van Weede van Dijkveld, his old opponent, who had made a surprising re-entry to the States in 1677. The Stadholder did not view the new chairman's Republican past as a problem provided he supported his foreign policy. Everard was also able to bring back his old friends, who had been ousted with him in 1674, and to undermine his old opponents such as Van Reede van Amerongen. Van Weede van Dijkveld, who was nicknamed the "Grand Duke" (*grootvorst*), was constantly at pains to demonstrate his power, for example travelling from place to place in a coach drawn by six horses.

TRUE FREEDOM ONCE AGAIN

The balance of power within the Sticht remained the same until 1702, when both William III and his "fixer" within the Sticht died. The King-Stadholder had no issue and, as in 1650, the States of Holland made use of the absence of any obvious successor to decide not to appoint any successor at all. The States of Utrecht again followed their lead. Doing so allowed them to dispense with the hated Code of Government and everything returned to the situation as it had been prior to 1672. The chapter delegates were once more members for life,



Meeting of
the Chamber
of Deputies
(Gedeputeerde
Staten)
of Utrecht.
(Anonymous
engraving,
c. 1700.)

and the canons were again appointed in accordance with the old procedures. The chapter delegates were also neatly divided into nobles and burgesses, whereas under William III, the nobles had been disproportionately powerful. The gentry returned to the Code of 1667. Because it was no longer the Stadholder who decided who was appointed, they could determine for themselves who belonged to the Second Tier. The number was smaller than in the past, between five and thirteen members. Town councils were again appointed for life, as they had been before 1672, and they could fill vacancies and elect burgomasters and magistrates themselves.

In Zeeland, Gelderland and Overijssel, the transition to the Second Stadholderless Period gave rise to serious unrest, the Plooierijen, which early in 1703 spread to Amersfoort and Rhenen. In Amersfoort, the rebels even succeeded in instituting an elected city government. The States of Utrecht put down the rebellion with a firm hand, and with the backing of Holland they despatched troops to Amersfoort, where two leaders of the popular movement were later beheaded.

Fear of unrest and a desire to safeguard one's own position were the main features of the political climate during the Second Stadholderless Period. Between 1650



Paulus Voet van Winssen (1651-1720), grandson of the leading Calvinist theologian Gisbertus Voetius, became a member of Utrecht city council in 1674 and Clerk to the States of Utrecht in 1685. (Portrait by Martinus de la Court, 1703.)

and 1672, the disputes had been fierce, but now the tendency was to exclude any surprises by means of carefully constructed agreements. These "contracts of correspondence" determined how the various lucrative posts were to be distributed in such a way that all concerned had their turn and no conflicts needed to arise which might threaten the status quo.

Utrecht city council, for example, was divided into two classes and these had agreed in detail on who should hold the positions of burgomaster or chapter delegate.

Cushion with an embroidery of the arms of the Province of Utrecht, 1685. Used by Jacob Martens (1636-1693) during meetings of the States of Utrecht. Martens represented the city of Utrecht from 1674 to 1693.

There were similar “correspondences” within the first two Tiers of the States of Utrecht. The great importance attached to seniority meant that matters were clearly arranged: if one was a member long enough, one eventually had one’s turn in office.

In contrast to the First Stadholderless Period, there was no strong lobby in favour of the house of Orange. The Stadholder of Friesland, Johan Willem Friso, whom William III had made his heir, enjoyed little support and after he drowned while crossing the Hollands Diep near Dordrecht in 1711, he – just like William II in 1650 – left a pregnant widow who then produced a son. The infant, Willem Karel Hendrik Friso, did not have the charisma associated with direct descent from William the Silent; in any case, and it had become clear over the course of time that things could work very effectively even without a Stadholder.



THE PEACE OF UTRECHT

The most pressing question in the first few years after 1702 was the third war with France, the War of the Spanish Succession, which had broken out shortly before the death of William III. Louis XIV had succeeded in having his grandson made King of Spain as Philip V, and this constituted a serious threat to the European balance of power. While Holland favoured taking a hard line against the enemy, the States of Utrecht pressed for the acceptance of France's peace proposals. The chapter delegate Godard Willem van Tuyll van Serooskerken, Lord of Welland, was the leading proponent of the latter course of action. He had the reputation of being extremely pro-French, something that French diplomats were aware of. Because of the role he had played in the capitulation of Utrecht two years previously, he had been removed from his position of chapter delegate in 1674. It was not until 1702 that he returned to the States, assuming the seat made vacant by the death of Van Weede van Dijkveld, as well as the latter's post of delegate to the States General. Welland also got on well with his fellow representative of the gentry, Frederik Adriaan van Reede van Renswoude, who was one of his cousins. Frederik Adriaan was a grandson of Johan van Reede van Renswoude, and despite his Orangist family background had become a leading supporter of the Republic.



Frederik Adriaan van Reede van Renswoude (1659-1738) represented the gentry of Utrecht in the States General. (Portrait by A. van Heusden.)

In December 1704, French diplomats commenced efforts to drive a wedge between the Republic and Great Britain. Early in March 1705, Welland was able to persuade the States of Utrecht, during a secret session, to come out in favour of peace negotiations, although these were to take place in consultation with the allies. Welland hoped that with this resolution under his belt he could force a decision through the States General, where it would shortly be his turn to act as chairman. Leading politicians in Holland were outraged and the Utrecht proposal had no chance whatsoever of succeeding.

Peace negotiations in Utrecht. The envoys are depicted sitting at a round table. (Copperplate engraving by S. Fokke, 18th century.)



Under British leadership, the struggle continued unabated. In France, Welland was by now viewed as the leader of the Republicans, with all hopes being pinned on him. He took a number of opportunities to argue against the British, striving to bring about peace with France and corresponding in this connection with like-minded individuals throughout the Republic. Welland's contacts with French diplomats began to attract notice and he himself pressed for greater caution. By the spring of 1706, it was clear to the French that his position had been seriously weakened.

The leading role in the peace party was now assumed by Van Reede van Renswoude, but Welland continued to operate in the background. Early in 1708, he was able to get the States of Utrecht to cut their share of the defence budget, which led to furious protests from the States General. Shortly after, Welland died of an attack of colic. French diplomats were saddened but their British colleagues did not mourn this "professed Friend to France".

In the ensuing years, the States of Utrecht continued to follow Welland's line, regularly using financial arguments to press for a conciliatory attitude during the peace negotiations, which were resumed time and again. Renswoude proved to be an eloquent interpreter of these feelings, regularly attacking the British allies and speaking in positive terms of the French opponents. He referred to Louis XIV as "that good king".

Opposition to this pacifist policy on the part of the States of Utrecht came from within its own ranks, with the leading figure being Joost Taets van Amerongen van Natewisch, one of the gentry, who opposed "this mischievous desire to achieve an untimely peace." He took the view that the financial arguments were not convincing, as the money worries affected the whole Republic and not merely Utrecht. In 1711, he was able to defeat a motion in the States of Utrecht

to the effect that troops in the service of the Province of Utrecht should only be paid for one more month.

In the same year, elections in Britain returned a Tory government, which was prepared to make peace with France, and in January 1712 a major peace conference was convened in Utrecht. Renswoude was appointed negotiator on behalf of the States of Utrecht. As in Münster some sixty years before, a member of the Van Reede family represented the Sticht; this time, however, he was not a hawk but a dove. With his colleagues from Friesland, Gelderland and Zeeland, he pressed for rapid progress to be made. His views made little difference because it was the British and French negotiators who actually took the decisions. As a French diplomat put it when speaking to one of the Dutch participants: "We are negotiating in your country, about you and without you." The Peace of Utrecht was finally signed on 11 April 1713. Philip V was recognised as king of Spain, and the Spanish Netherlands transferred to Austria.

DEBT RESTRUCTURING

Peace did not come a moment too soon because the financial situation of the States of Utrecht – the argument they had used to support their pacifist point of view – was indeed atrocious. The States did not only have to pay almost two million guilders in interest for 1713; after 40 years of war with France, in an unfavourable economic climate, the Province's debts had risen to astronomical heights.

In 1714, they commenced a drastic reorganisation of their finances. One important cut involved reducing the number of troops, something that the Peace of Utrecht had made possible. The States were also able to convert existing loans into loans at a lower rate of interest. The sale of domains also produced necessary funds. Both private individuals and the City of Utrecht itself bought up provincial land and lordships of the manor (i.e. authority over the villages). The total package of measures ensured that by 1718 there was a budget surplus, and that the States could even introduce a series of tax cuts.

This tax advantage stimulated the economy of the Sticht, which had been recovering since the turn of the century. Industry was booming in a number of towns, particularly textile production. The east of the Province saw the rise of tobacco growing and processing. New crops such as tobacco and potatoes had a beneficial impact on the countryside, where recovery was continually threatened by epidemics of rinderpest and other diseases of cattle. In the Vecht area, peat cutting was an important source of income.

In the decades following the Peace of Utrecht, successful financial policies, the reasonable level of consensus with regard to the stadholdership, and effective agreements on the distribution of offices all led to an unfamiliar quiet in the States of Utrecht. Until the 1720s, Van Reede van Renswoude still played a prominent role, but he was increasingly overshadowed by Taets van Amerongen van Natewisch, with whom he was reconciled in 1725.

Charles VI, and launched an attack supported by France. Britain and the Dutch Republic supported Maria Theresa but for the time being stayed out of the war.

In the context of the States General, Utrecht was one of those that wished to avoid a confrontation with France but the French declaration of war on Britain in March 1744 and a French incursion into the Southern Netherlands later that year dragged the Republic in. Things did not go well and the French were gradually able to take over the Austrian Netherlands, even crossing the southern border of the Republic itself in April 1747.



Stadholder William IV (1711-1751) and his consort Anne of Hanover (1709-1759). William IV became the General Hereditary Stadholder of the United Netherlands in 1747. After his death, Princess Anne acted as regent to their infant son. (Portraits by Hendrik Carré, 1756.)

This attack led the populace to call for the return of the house of Orange once more.

The various Provincial States complied. Early in May, the States of Utrecht appointed Willem Karel Hendrik Friso to the stadholdership as Willem (William) IV. This step had been opposed by Utrecht city council, but after Orangist rioting, the local regents were forced to give in. An attempt by the States to retain some room for manoeuvre failed, and they were forced to accept the complete reintroduction of the Code of Government of 1674. In the autumn of 1747, the stadholdership even became hereditary in all provinces, in both the male and female lines. Within the States of Utrecht, a group led by the Utrecht burgomaster A.A. Wittewael van Stoetwegen unsuccessfully opposed this decision.

People had high hopes of the new Stadholder but his supporters were soon disappointed. Unlike William III in 1672, William IV did not position himself at the head of a popular movement, but left the regents in their positions. Nor did he bring about any reversal in the progress of the war, and in September 1747 French forces even succeeded in taking the town of Bergen op Zoom. Taxes were raised considerably to finance the struggle but in the course of 1748 there was active opposition, particularly in the towns of Holland, to the taxation system, which was largely based on excise duties collected by tax farmers. The opponents demanded administrative reforms in the form of an increase in the power of the Stadholder but at the same time greater influence on the part of the people.



There were also disturbances in Utrecht. After some considerable hesitation as to what policy he should adopt, William IV responded with a combination of concessions and repression. The tax system was altered, the powers of the Stadholder extended and the ringleaders of the disturbances were punished, with two of them even being sent to the gallows in Utrecht.

Although leading republican regents were forced to give way in favour of politically reliable figures, there were in fact few new faces. Nevertheless, the changes that were actually made were extremely effective and – precisely by making use of the existing structures – William IV was able to acquire a position of power greater than that of any Stadholder before him. His early death in 1751 did not signal the start of another “Stadholderless Period”; the hereditary nature of the new-style stadholdership meant he was succeeded by his three-year-old son.

William IV’s widow acted as regent, although she had to fight for her powers. A separate regency agreement was required in each of the Provinces. Surprisingly, Anne of Hanover met with considerable opposition from the gentry in the States of Utrecht. The leader of the Second Tier, Diederik Jacob

THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS OF THE STATES

THE ASSEMBLY HALL OF THE STATES (STATENKAMER) AT ST JOHN'S CHURCHYARD (JANSKERKHOF), 1581–1810

In 1581, the now sovereign States moved into new accommodation, the former monastery of the “Friars Minor” or Franciscans (Minrebroederklooster) at St John's Churchyard. The Franciscans, who had been in Utrecht since the thirteenth century, had been driven out in 1577 because of their Spanish sympathies, leaving their imposing monastery empty, even though it had only been completed in 1518. From 1581, the States met in the refectory, which comprised three rooms. Some sixty years after the arrival of the States, the building – by now known as the Statenkamer (Assembly Hall of the States) – was refined by the addition of such features as a gate giving on to St John's Churchyard. The three different “estates” each had its own assembly hall, the gentry later gaining theirs in the adjoining Knights' Hall or ridderschapshuis). The various offices were also housed within the complex, for example the Secretariat, the Finance Department and the Chancellery. With the imposition of the Batavian Republic in 1795, the name Statenkamer was changed to Landschapshuis (Hall of the District), and the complex was used by the successive revolutionary administrations. When the unified state was set up in 1798, the provincial coats of arms were chipped out of the façade. The building did not fall vacant after the abolition of the province but was used by the commission whose task it was to settle its financial affairs. With the setting up of the “department” of Utrecht in 1802, it became the Departmental Government Building (Departementshuis), remaining so until the department was abolished in 1810. The Court of First Instance then moved into the old Franciscan monastery. Today the building is the library of the Faculty of Law of Utrecht University.

The Meeting Chamber of the States of Utrecht at the Statenkamer at St John's Churchyard on the occasion of the reception of William III in 1674. (Anonymous painting,)



Five years later, Van Reede van Renswoude was very much in need of the support of his former opponent when he became involved in a sex scandal. The Utrecht wine merchant Barend Blomsaet was arrested on a charge of indulging in homosexual acts, a crime that in the eighteenth century carried the death penalty. Under torture, Blomsaet admitted to "vile and unnatural acts with other male persons" and divulged the names of his partners, including Van Reede van Renswoude. The latter made good his escape and due to his good political contacts avoided conviction. Other members of the homosexual network were not as lucky, however, for the judges sentenced eleven of them to death, two to life imprisonment and six to banishment. Blomsaet was garrotted at Utrecht Town Hall. The scandal meant the end of Renswoude's role in politics. He died in 1738. As Taets van Amerongen had died three years previously, the most prominent politician in the Province was now the chapter delegate Hendrik van Nellesteyn, who had been President of the States since 1733. A great deal was initially expected of him, but he did not succeed in providing the States with leadership, which therefore became increasingly divided.

One question which again arose was that of the stadholdership. The Stadholder of Friesland, Willem Karel Hendrik Friso, reached the age of majority in 1731, and three years later married Anne of Hanover, eldest daughter of the British King George II. Gelderland had already restored the Stadholder in 1724 and the discussion had also flared up again elsewhere.

In Utrecht, the picture gradually began to change. In 1735, a motion put forward by three chapter delegates to have the Prince appointed to the post of General received the support of Van Nellesteyn, who first managed to have it accepted by the First Tier and then submitted it to the States. It was adopted with the support of the first two Tiers and of the representatives of Amersfoort, Rhenen and Wijk bij Duurstede, to the great anger of Utrecht.

The city, still a bulwark of republicanism, attempted unsuccessfully to have the decision declared invalid because it contravened the unanimity rule.

The representatives of the gentry in the generality, Lodewijk Adriaan van Nassau van Zeist, a descendant of one of Prince Maurits's bastards, continued to press for the post of General to be granted to the Stadholder of Friesland but he failed to gain the support of his colleagues from the Sticht, both of whom were staunch Republicans. Ultimately, the Prince was in fact assigned the rank of Lieutenant-General in 1742. The States of Utrecht, Friesland and Groningen considered that this was insufficient, but their protest had no effect.

WAR ONCE MORE AND A NEW STADHOLDER

The appointment of the Prince to the rank of Lieutenant-General took place in wartime, the War of the Austrian Succession having broken out two years previously. The new superpower, Prussia, refused to recognise the succession to the Austrian throne of Maria Theresa, the daughter of the Emperor

Van Tuyll van Serooskerken, Lord of Zuylen, was true to his republican past and adopted a critical position. Nevertheless, with the support of the chapter delegates and the City of Utrecht itself, Anne managed to bring about an acceptable agreement in April 1754, with particular support coming from the chapter delegate Jan Pestere. Anne was in sore need of reliable supporters such as Pestere because she was entirely unable to get on with many of the regents. On her death in 1759, the Regency passed to Duke Ludwig Ernst of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, a confidant of the court. The unpopular “Fat Duke” was forced to return a number of the powers of the Stadholder to the Provincial States and the town councils, but the system of power based on confidants in the provinces had now become so effective that the provinces could not return to their “true freedom”. The Duke continued to have great influence after William V was declared to be of age in 1766. A year later, the Prince married the 16-year-old Wilhelmina of Prussia, a niece of Frederick the Great.

St John's Churchyard in Utrecht, with the Assembly Hall of the States on the right. (Painting by Isaak Ouwater, 1779.)

Willem Nicolaas Pestere (1717-1794), for decades the Stadholder's all-powerful right-hand man in the Province of Utrecht. (Portrait by Jean Fournier, 1752.)



William IV and William V enjoyed significantly greater powers than their predecessors due to their holding the general hereditary stadholdership. In the Provinces, the Stadholder exerted his controlling political influence via a pyramid made up of his favourites – in other words, through a system of patronage. He had a “fixer” in each region, the Lieutenant Stadholder, who was in direct contact with the court. In Utrecht, William IV promoted his confidant Johan Daniël d’Ablaing van Giessenburg, and for a time he was all-powerful within the Province, determining who the Stadholder would appoint to various positions. The various Tiers of the States did not dare to take any decisions without hearing what D’Ablaing had to say about the matter concerned “because they were as afraid as weasels of him”.



Stadholder William V (1748-1806). William V became General Hereditary Stadholder on the death of his father in 1751. Until he came of age in 1766, there was a regency: first that of his mother Anne of Hanover (until her death in 1759), then that of the Duke of Brunswick. (Portrait by an unknown painter of the Northern Netherlandish school, c. 1770.)

D’Ablaing’s arrogance got him into difficulties after the death of his patron in 1751, and he was gradually ousted by the brothers Jan and Willem Nicolaas Pesters, who were the favourites of Anne of Hanover. The support Jan Pesters had given her during the conflict regarding the regency agreement was the start of an increasingly close collaboration. In late 1750, he was nominated as a chapter delegate by William IV, despite opposition in the States. He would soon become a delegate to the Council of State, remaining a member until 1795. By the end of Anne’s period as regent, the two brothers had entirely eclipsed D’Ablaing, and Willem Nicolaas Pesters had become the new Lieutenant Stadholder for the Province of Utrecht. He was a clever opportunist and had, for example, switched his allegiance to the house of Orange in 1747 after previously

being a republican. He managed to patch up things with the "Fat Duke", and was thus able to retain his position after the death of Anne of Hanover in 1759. The Pestere brothers made an excellent team: as a member of the States of Utrecht and of the Council of State, Jan concerned himself with provincial and national politics while Willem Nicolaas concentrated on the lower levels. With both the formal and informal powers of the Stadholder in their hands, they were able to manipulate the different tiers of the States of Utrecht. As in the period from 1674 to 1702, the fact that they were required to surrender their posts periodically – every three years for chapter delegates and annually in the case of members of the city council – placed the regents in a highly dependent position.

Additional agreements such as the Amersfoort administrative code of 1750 increased the power of the Stadholder even further, and consequently that of Pestere. The latter, moreover, was able to commit the regents by means of "contracts of correspondence", reserving favours for those who participated. In 1759, for example he arranged a coercive contract of this kind with 24 members of Utrecht city council. Those who co-operated with him could expect to be appointed to various offices, while those who opposed him were excluded from any kind of advancement. Pestere also had great influence on the towns via the sheriffs, who were appointed by the Stadholder.

The Second Tier was always more difficult, if only because its members were appointed for life. Here too, however, Pestere was able to use the prospect of advancement as an enticement. There was good reason why the Lieutenant Stadholder was nicknamed "the St Nicholas (i.e. Santa Claus) of the Sticht".

The system of patronage even extended as far as such unskilled positions as that of city porter. Because a significant part of the services were performed by civil servants, the pyramid of patronage was an important factor in the economy of the Province. Those who were not part of it were at a disadvantage. A lot of ill feeling was created by the fact that people were appointed without complying with the formal requirements – such as the stipulation that they should be a citizen: giving preferential treatment to foreigners had been viewed as a major injustice even back in the time of David of Burgundy. The level of bitterness was all the greater because of the high level of unemployment around 1770.





1780-1850

In the night of 25-26 September 1781, a pamphlet was distributed throughout the country bearing the title *To the People of the Netherlands (Aan het Volk van Nederland)*. It contained a fierce indictment of the Stadholder: "Prince William, it is all your fault!" The anonymous author – who later turned out to be the Overijssel nobleman Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol – made the Stadholder the scapegoat for the disastrous war against Britain that had broken out the previous year. His pamphlet also contained a programme for a political turnaround which would focus on the citizen, who would stand up for his rights through the press and by bearing arms.

TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION

The 1781 pamphlet was the first time the singular proper noun "Nederland" had been used in Dutch. In doing so, it relegated the sovereignty of the separate provinces to a thing of the past. Its nationalist tone found expression in the name of the citizens' movement which then arose: the Patriots. Besides opposing the Stadholder, the Patriots opposed the regents who were loyal to him. Given the hated Pestere regime, it is unsurprising that the Patriot movement was particularly strong in Utrecht. An opposition periodical published in Utrecht from 1781 on, *De Post van den Neder-Rhyn* (Lower Rhine Post), was to gain major national importance. Edited by the journalist Pieter 't Hoen, the Post was written by a group of politically committed students associated with the Ceylonese Pieter Philip Jurriaan Quint Ondaatje.

The critical articles in the Post annoyed the States of Utrecht to such an extent that in July 1781 they issued an edict against subversive publications. However, their efforts to take effective action against the opposition press ended in a series of embarrassing defeats in court. Periodicals such as the Post continued to be published, and took pleasure in drawing attention to the criticism expressed within Utrecht city council of the system of favouritism run by Pestere.

But real change came about from outside the city council. Early in 1783, citizens demanded the restoration of the city militia, which had fallen into decay. The council grumbled and complained but it nevertheless agreed, although it still managed to retain control because the militia's officers were members of the council. Thereupon, Ondaatje and his sympathisers decided to set up a drill corps – as Van der Capellen had recommended – calling it *Pro Patria et Libertate*. Similar volunteer corps were also set up in other places, for example in Amersfoort.

The volunteer corps were a means of exerting political pressure, namely against the powers of William V. In January 1784, Utrecht city council even went so far as to appoint a new member. Seeing this as an infringement of his right to appoint

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The Pro Patria et
Libertate corps
drilling in the
Sterrenbos field,
to the west of the
city of Utrecht.
(Anonymous
painting, c. 1785.)

council members, the Prince protested to the States of Utrecht, which set up a grievance committee. The council called on citizens to make their grievances known.

One of the proposals submitted was an attempt on the part of the council to amend the Code of Government in such a way as to reduce the powers of the Stadholder and increase those of the regents. The proposal received only a single signature, however. A set of draft regulations drawn up by Ondaatje and others was more successful, being signed by no less than 1215 citizens. This proposal envisaged council members being elected for life by the citizenry, who would also appoint delegates to monitor the council.

Throughout the summer, there was a tussle between the council, which wished to pass on the whole business to the grievance committee appointed by the States and representatives of the citizens movement, who wanted to carry through the administrative reforms themselves. A group of Patriot regents associated with Adriaan Hendrik Eyck supported the latter demand, and an increasing number of regents in Amersfoort and Wijk bij Duurstede also began to sympathise with the objectives of the Patriot movement. The democratic draft regulations drawn up in the provincial capital were imitated in Amersfoort and there was also support in the countryside.

After considering all the plans, the States put forward a proposal, a reglement-reformatoir, on 1 September 1784 which would reduce the power of the Stadholder and increase that of the regents. The citizenry, however, would not be given any influence. While Utrecht city council was satisfied with this, it felt itself forced to allow the populace to have a say. Those who had signed the draft regulations were represented by 24 constituents (geconstitueerden) with Ondaatje as their spokesman. In Amersfoort, 18 constituents were elected in accordance with this example, including Steven Camp, the command of the local drill corps, who became the leader. The constituents of both towns rejected the reglement-reformatoir as being insufficient, while the Prince thought that it went much too far. In the States, he was supported only by the chapter delegates, with the majority being in favour of the reglement-reformatoir. The urban regents attempted to play for time but both the Amersfoort and Utrecht constituents pressed for negotiations.

From February 1785, the revolution rapidly gained momentum. When a vacancy arose, Utrecht city council appointed the anti-Patriot Jonathan Sichterman to be the new member. The Patriots were incensed. Ondaatje protested on their behalf in the council chamber, while Utrecht citizens voiced their outrage on the bridge outside the Town Hall (Stadhuisbrug). Intimidated, the city council reversed Sichterman's appointment. Ondaatje triumphantly dismissed his followers.

But the rejoicing was premature. The unacceptable appointment had been reversed, but in the course of 1785 the opposing party managed to regain the ground it had lost. In early July, for example, the States of Utrecht prohibited the organisation of petitions, a favourite form of protest. Later the same month, they refused to admit the representatives of Wijk bij Duurstede to the meeting of the States



Occupation of Amersfoort by the Stadholder's troops in August 1785. (Engraving by R. Vinkeles after J. Buys, 1793.)

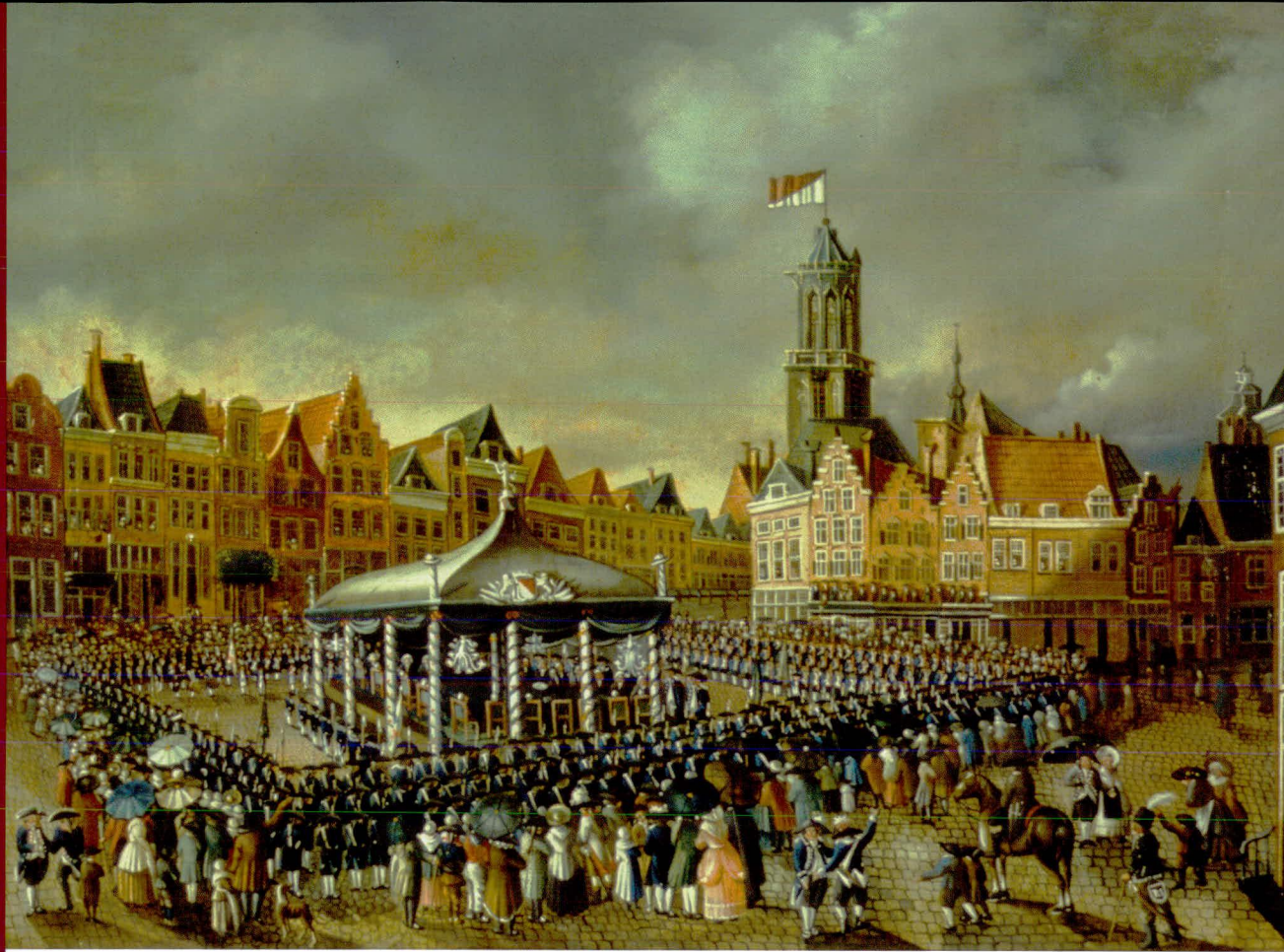
The new members of Utrecht city council take the oath to uphold the new Code of Government. The ceremony took place in Neude Square on 12 October 1786, in a specially constructed "Temple of Freedom". (Anonymous painting, late 18th century.)

because of the democratic administrative regulations that had been drawn up in that town. They also set up a committee whose remit was to make the people of Wijk bij Duurstede toe the line.

When Amersfoort Patriots tried to take over power a month later, the States did not content themselves with merely setting up a committee. After receiving a request from local Orangists, which the High Court of Utrecht supported, the States asked William V to send troops and Amersfoort was occupied.

It was feared that the same would happen in Utrecht but the Stadholder did not dare take the necessary drastic action. The Patriots took heart and increased pressure for the introduction of a democratic system. On 19 December 1785, they once more made use of the tactic that had been so effective in March earlier that year: they surrounded the Town Hall while Ondaatje put their demands to the city council. On this occasion, one of the burgomasters was even beaten up. Next day, the council gave in, promising to introduce the new system in three months time. The States, however, refused to confirm the decision and to release the city regents from their oath to uphold the Code of Government of 1674. For the Utrecht regents, this was an excellent excuse to delay matters.

Tension mounted as the critical date of 20 March 1786 approached. On that day, the city council met to discuss the militia's demand for the new regulations to be introduced. Despite there being a blizzard, the Town Hall was once more



surrounded. The militia, assembled in Neude Square, reiterated their demands. In the end, the city council consented to three regents – Patriot sympathisers – administering the oath to uphold the new regulations to the militia. While this was an interim solution with which the Patriots were not satisfied, it did definitively bring the militia over to their side, and ultimately it would prove to be decisive. On 2 August 1786, they deposed the city council. Seven of its members who supported the Patriot movement were allowed to remain, with elections being held for the other seats according to the democratic regulations that had come into force. The opposition regent Adriaan Hendrik Eyck became the first burgomaster.

THE STATES DIVIDED AND THEN REUNITED

The States of Utrecht condemned the takeover of power and relocated to Amersfoort. At St John's Churchyard, the towns of Utrecht, Wijk bij Duurstede and Montfoort, together with a number of the chapter delegates and one of the gentry, set up a Patriot provincial administration, which also claimed to be the rightful government. Together, the overwhelming majority of the first and second Tiers plus the representatives of Amersfoort and Rhenen set up the

States of Amersfoort. As in 1587, there were now two Assemblies of the States, with almost exactly the same divisions within them.

Both parties prepared for military action. In Amersfoort, the garrison was increased in strength, while Utrecht received assistance from Holland. The expected attack by the Stadholder's troops again failed to materialise and a system of fronts was created. Units of the militia and forces sent by Holland took up position along the Crooked Rhine and the Vecht, while units deployed by the Prince were concentrated around a camp at Zeist. Early in May 1787, William V decided to act. On 9 May, his troops surrounded Utrecht and occupied the strategic lock at Vreeswijk, where late in the evening there was a skirmish between the Stadholder's troops and a unit from Utrecht. The former fired a volley; the Utrecht unit – completely unexpectedly – returned fire, whereupon the Prince's soldiers fled in panic.

After this victory, the Patriots felt as if they were invulnerable, but in fact they greatly overestimated their position. Later confrontations did not turn out quite so favourably for them. On 5 July, a regiment of the Stadholder's troops occupied Wijk bij Duurstede, which had quickly capitulated after the States promised an amnesty for members of the Patriot movement in the town. A committee of the States restored the former town council, and from 11 July on Wijk bij Duurstede was represented in the States that met in Amersfoort. Utrecht decided not to attempt to liberate Wijk bij Duurstede. The weak military position of the Patriots became apparent when a sortie they made was defeated at Soestdijk in late July.

At that point, the situation looked extremely threatening because the issue had become an international one. Towards the end of June, Princess Wilhelmina, the wife of William V, had attempted to travel to The Hague with a view to leading an Orangist revolt. She was intercepted at the Utrecht-Holland border and sent back to Nijmegen, where the princely couple had chosen to go into exile.

Gravely insulted, Wilhelmina then wrote to her brother Frederick William II of Prussia, who demanded that the States of Holland atone for the insult to his sister. Over the course of the summer, a diplomatic tussle took place. When it became clear that France was not going to support the Patriots, Prussian troops crossed the Dutch border on 13 September, meeting little resistance. Within two days, the decision was taken to evacuate Utrecht. Although Burgomaster Eyck and the States of Utrecht attempted to persuade the commander-in-chief of the forces sent by Holland not to withdraw, there was no other option than to flee, first to Amsterdam and then abroad.

The refugees escaped the violence of the Orangists that broke out after the entry of Prussian troops and those of the Stadholder. The members of the city council who had been deposed in 1786 met once more and took the oath to support the Code of Government of 1674. The Stadholder was requested to make appointments to fill the vacant seats. The States of Utrecht returned to St John's Churchyard, where William V attended one of their meetings.

Military encounter at Vreeswijk on 9 May 1787. This clash between the Stadholder's troops and the Utrecht militia took place late in the evening; the artist, however, has brightened up the scene. (Anonymous 18th-century copperplate engraving.)



The Pesterey brothers recovered their position of influence. Having been returned to power, the regents above all wanted peace and quiet. The city council already prohibited assemblies and acts of violence on 21 September 1787, followed by the States a week later. It was intended that the Patriots should be punished in an orderly fashion. Those who had fled lost their positions and also – to an extent – their property. However, a more flexible approach soon took over, with the States of Utrecht co-operating. An amnesty was proclaimed, while press censorship was evaded and Patriots once more assembled in the guise of seemingly innocent reading clubs.

Events in France, where a large number of Patriot exiles had taken refuge, were decisive for future developments. The French Revolution broke out in 1789, becoming ever more radical. In 1792-93, the revolutionary regime declared war on a number of princes, including the Dutch Stadholder. The struggle fluctuated back and forth until the French armies made a breakthrough in June 1794.

Patriot activity increased enormously, including in the Sticht. In late July, the States of Utrecht introduced measures against the reading clubs, which they accused of propagating “the pernicious and exaggerated doctrine of Freedom and Equality”, and they tightened up the regulations on press censorship. All the same, the revolutionaries were in a position to think seriously about a takeover of power, because, towards the end of the summer of 1794, the French army crossed the southern border of the Republic and in the course of the autumn reached the major rivers (i.e. the Meuse and the various branches of the Rhine). When an unusually harsh frost caused the rivers to freeze over at around the turn of the year, the French were able to continue their advance.

As in 1672, the States of Utrecht commenced negotiations, resulting in capitulation on 16 January 1795. One of the conditions agreed on was a guarantee regarding persons and goods, so that looting was prevented. The incumbent regents could remain in their posts for the time being. The French commander, Charles Pichegru, who was not really a supporter of revolution, was in fact happy to co-operate with them.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PROVINCIAL DEMOCRACY

However, orders came down from above to allow the Revolution to take its course, and on Sunday 25 January 1795 a Revolutionary Committee deposed Utrecht city council and proposed a "Provisional Municipality" to the assembled populace. This provisional government contained not only patricians who supported the Patriots, but also members of other social classes. One breakthrough was the fact that – for the first time since the late sixteenth century – Catholics were permitted to be members. The same happened in Amersfoort, Wijk bij Duurstede and Montfoort. The States of Utrecht were deposed on 28 January, with the first and second Tiers being abolished because they were considered to be outmoded representatives of particular social classes. The stadholdership and the holding of offices by inheritance were also done away with. A provisional administration, the "Provisional Representatives of the Land of Utrecht", was formed by the four revolutionary towns. Rhenen did not join until mid-February after the Provisional Representatives had imposed the Revolution there with military assistance. IJsselstein, a possession of the house of Orange that had been confiscated, became part of Holland and not of Utrecht. Elections were called for the rural areas – hitherto represented by the gentry – on a quarter (i.e. district) basis. In late March, the representatives of the rural areas took their seats, whereupon the designation "Provisional" was dropped. The five towns and the four districts each had a vote in the assembly, Utrecht having prevented the rural areas getting a fifth vote.

Early in 1795, the Committee of Rural Affairs set up by the provisional administration of the province replaced most of the village administrators by supporters of the Revolution. In some places, this went without a hitch, for example in Houten, where a "Tree of Liberty" had been planted immediately after the capitulation and where a Revolutionary Committee had been set up.

In other places, such as Nigtevecht, external pressure was necessary. One revolutionary measure that had drastic consequences for the rural areas was the abolition of manorial rights, which were done away with by the Provisional Representatives in February 1795 as being contrary to the rights of man and the citizen. Vreeswijk, over which the city of Utrecht had exercised manorial rights since 1582, was the subject of a lengthy dispute between the city and the Representatives, until it was eventually decided that the peoples of Utrecht and Vreeswijk would henceforth be one.



Wooden attendance board for meetings of the "Representatives of the Land of Utrecht", 1795.

One significant element in this struggle was the conflict between moderate and radical revolutionaries that manifested itself throughout the whole of the Batavian Republic. In the towns of Utrecht, the moderates constituted a majority on the municipal councils, while the radicals organised clubs and took control of district committees. In doing so, they enjoyed the support of the provincial administration. The Representatives, invoking revolutionary principles, wished to reduce the autonomy of the towns, thus giving the ancient conflict between the States and the city a new ideological element. The main point at issue was how to define the term "domesticq" – in other words, which issues still fell within the remit of municipal self-government, and which within the authority of the Province.

The conflict between the provincial and urban administrations intensified in 1796.

The main issue concerned the drawing up of a democratic administrative system to replace the provisional system introduced in 1795. There were two plans for the provincial system, one of which was drawn up by the city of Utrecht and the Nederkwartier (the north-western district of the Province). The alternative, which was of a more revolutionary nature, for example with respect to local autonomy and the right to vote, was put forward by the Representatives. The matter was to be decided on by referendum. Attempts by the Representatives to manipulate the result led to strenuous protests from the city, and both parties were forced to compromise.

In the course of September, elections were held for the provincial administration, with the Province being divided up into eighteen districts, each consisting of ten "primary assemblies" or constituencies (*grondvergaderingen*). Those who were entitled to vote came together in one of the latter, and jointly appointed an elector. The electors then elected the members of the Provincial Administration on a district basis. Members of the Administration were not required to be resident within their own district. Pieter Linthorst, for example, who came from Utrecht, was elected for the first Amersfoort district. Members were entitled to vote as they saw fit at meetings of the Provincial Administration, without having to consult their district, which served merely as an electoral instrument. They were elected for a limited period, with a third of them resigning each year, although the latter were immediately eligible for re-election.

THE END OF THE PROVINCE OF UTRECHT

In the course of 1796, work also began on drawing up new administrative regulations for the country as a whole. An elected National Assembly would decide on these. Within the Assembly, there were three schools of thought: unitarians, who favoured a unified state along French lines, and who wished to get rid of the existing provinces; federalists, who wished to see as many powers as possible remain in the hands of provincial government bodies; and moderates, who took up a position between the other two. A constitutional committee produced its report in 1797. A series of debates in the National Assembly then led to a compromise, the Design for the Constitution, which was submitted to the people of the Republic in a referendum. It was rejected by a large majority in early August. A second National Assembly then attempted to come up with a new proposal but failed to do so due to internal discord.

The French authorities, which had become impatient and were beginning to fear for the stability of their satellite state, decided in early January 1798 to support the radical unitarians in their struggle for a unified state. With French support, these seized power in a coup d'état on 22 January. An Executive Body (*Uitvoerend Bewind*) led by the Tilburg textile manufacturer Pieter Vreede took charge. Opponents within the National Assembly were arrested.

At local and provincial government level, too, the consequences of the coup soon made themselves felt. On 25 January 1798, the Provincial Administration of the Land of Utrecht, with a number of moderates resigning, transformed itself into the "Intermediary Administrative Government of the Former Province of Utrecht", with the words "administrative" and "former" indicating that those involved understood the implications of the future unified state.

None of this helped. The Executive Body intended to conduct a purge of provincial and local government, and on 23 February the Intermediary Administrative Government of the Former Province of Utrecht was installed. This consisted of such staunch radicals as Steven Camp and Pieter Linthorst. The latter became chairman and energetically commenced the purge, armed with instructions from The Hague that all "useless and undeserving public officials" should be dismissed. Towns and villages were given new administrators, selected primarily on the basis of their political reliability.



Hendrik Willem Bosch (1768-1800) resigned as a member of the Provincial Executive of Utrecht because he was against the concessions made to the perpetrators of the coup d'état of 22 January 1798.

Municipal boundaries were also redrawn, with a number of courts in rural areas being cut from 120 to 75. Houten, for example was combined with 't Goy, Schonauwen, Wulven, Oud-Wulven, Heemstede and Slagmaat. This measure, which led to strenuous protests, was carried through with a view to retrenchment and improved efficiency. Its object was also to purge the administrative bureaucracy and this produced a serious conflict between the regional authorities and the new city council in Utrecht itself, which initially refused to dismiss Orangist officials.

In the meantime, a constitution was introduced which rigorously enforced the unified state. Legislative power was vested in an elected Representative Body, while the executive power was in the hands of the Executive Body, with subordinate "agents" or ministers. The provinces were replaced by



“departments” which followed the French example by being named after geographical features such as rivers. In order to break down old regional ties, these had entirely different boundaries to those of the former provinces. The basic principle was one of population, including for the “rings” (i.e. circuits or districts) into which the departments were subdivided. The former province of Utrecht was split up into three different departments, those of the Rhine, the Delf and Texel.

Setting up the new structure was a gigantic operation and it was not until March 1799 that the departmental system actually took effect. The Departmental Administration of the Rhine, for which elections had been held three months previously, then took office. There were to be conflicts between Utrecht city council and the next-up layer of government. As in 1798, the city fathers attempted to protect Orangist officials from being dismissed on orders from above; by playing for time, they were in fact able to reduce the number of dismissals to a minimum.

THE REBIRTH OF UTRECHT AS A DEPARTMENT

The flames of revolution gradually died down. The constitution, a system produced by radical revolutionaries, was only a mediocre success. Supplementary legislation, for example to introduce a new system of taxation or a municipalities act, did not get off the ground. As a result, the division into departments was incomplete. In fact, the “Commissioners to Administer the Finances of the

Former Province of Utrecht” amounted to the old provincial administration in a new guise. One consequence of the lack of transparency in the political structure was that the work of combating serious crime, a task previously always organised at provincial level, came to be neglected. Bands of organised criminals encountered little opposition, and groups such as the Zwartjesgoed (i.e. Black Folk) regularly perpetrated robberies in the Utrecht countryside, for example at homes and farms near Leusden and Zeist.

There were increasing demands for the measures introduced in 1798 to be done away with. After a coup d'état and a manipulated referendum, a new constitution was promulgated in September 1801 which to a large extent reintroduced the old provincial boundaries and names, although the term department was retained. A number of changes had been introduced in the meantime, for example the merging of Vianen with Utrecht. The departments were also given greater autonomy, but not sovereignty. The principle of the unified state was retained. Orangists got back their political rights and the Stadholder, who had been ousted of course, gave his supporters permission to make use of them. Administrative positions were neatly distributed between Orangists, moderate Patriots and radicals. The Departmental Administration of the Land of Utrecht, which took office in June 1802, included four supporters of the Prince, among them the nobleman Jan Hendrik van Lynden van Lunenburg and the Utrecht ex-regent and lawyer Philip Ram, who had consulted William V on renewed political participation on the part of Orangists.

Map of the
“Department of
the Rhine”.
(Copperplate
engraving by C.
van Baarsel after
C. Covens, 1799.)



Philip Ram (1753-1817). Prior to the revolution, Ram was a member of Utrecht city council, and later financial secretary to the States of Utrecht. From 1795 he held no office until he became a member of the administration of the department (1802-1807) and then burgomaster of Utrecht (1807-1811). (Portrait by Pieter Christoffel Wonder, c. 1810.)

The Departmental Administration was appointed by The Hague, but there was an indirect electoral system that operated when members resigned periodically, as was required, and when vacancies arose as a result of retirement or death. This severely restricted the influence of the populace, not only because of its complexity, but also because it involved the partial implementation of a property qualification or “census”. This system also applied to the two members who represented Utrecht in the Legislative Body, which had replaced the

Representative Body. The 1801 Constitution extended not only departmental but also local autonomy, once more distinguishing between the towns and the country. Drawing up local regulations was a time-consuming affair which had yet to be completed when in 1805 the constitution was once more amended. The amended constitution of 1805 was directly imposed by the French head of state, Napoleon Bonaparte, who had crowned himself Emperor shortly before. He wished there to be a monocratic authority in the Batavian Republic and he considered the Republic's representative in Paris, Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, to be the man for the job. In February 1805, Napoleon despatched Schimmelpenninck to the Republic with a ready-made constitution. This was voted through the Legislative Body without much debate and the ensuing referendum was merely a formality. The policy of decentralisation was largely reversed, and a centralised system was imposed on the departments and the municipalities.

Napoleon was still not satisfied, and early in 1806 he renamed the country the Kingdom of Holland, with his younger brother Louis (Louis Napoleon) as its head of state. The structure of the state was then centralised even further. At the head of the departments, which no longer had any autonomy whatsoever, came landdrosts (i.e. chief administrators or bailiffs), who were assisted by "assessors". The landdrost had a number of sub-bailiffs (*kwartierdrosten*) in the "quarters" into which the departments were subdivided. The landdrost of Utrecht was Jan Hendrik van Lynden van Lunenburg, with Jan Maximiliaan van Tuyll van Serooskerken becoming the sub-bailiff for the first quarter (Utrecht) and the ex-leader of the Patriots Steven Camp for the second (Amersfoort). The department of Utrecht was expanded by the addition of the former barony of IJsselstein and a number of other areas that had previously belonged to Holland, including Oudewater and Woerden. However, the areas to the south of the Lek, together with Vianen and Hagestein, had to be given up.



Jan Maximiliaan van Tuyll van Serooskerken (1771-1843) was sub-bailiff (*kwartierdrost*) from 1807 and later sub-prefect of Utrecht. From 1814 to 1828 he was Governor of the Province of Utrecht and then of North Holland.

During his short period of residence in Utrecht, Louis Napoleon acquired a large number of buildings in Wittevrouwenstraat and Drift for conversion into a palace. The architect J.D. Zocher (senior) was assigned to supervise the work. In 1814, by which time the complex was standing empty, the new Provincial States moved in, at a stroke filling the building with a shipload of "archives and furniture" brought down from Amsterdam. (Four years earlier, when the department of Utrecht was abolished, this material had become the responsibility of the Département du Zuyderzée.) The Provincial Clerk's department, which was charged with looking after the documents, was housed in a wing of the palace on Drift Street. The Provincial States met in Louis Napoleon's audience chamber, at the back of this part of the building. Nowadays, the complex houses the University library and the library of the Faculty of Humanities.

INCORPORATION AND LIBERATION

Louis Napoleon made himself popular with his subjects by making an effort to learn the Dutch language and by averting or circumventing all kinds of unfavourable measures such as the introduction of compulsion military service and the trade boycott aimed at bringing Britain to its knees, the "Continental System". However, all this increasingly irritated his brother the Emperor, who in the summer of 1810 incorporated the Kingdom of Holland into the French Empire. French legislation took effect on 1 January 1811. The department of Utrecht and Amstelland (North Holland) were merged to form the Département du Zuyderzée, with its capital in Amsterdam. Count de Celles, a tough Bonapartist bureaucrat from Brussels, became the prefect. Utrecht had a sub-prefect for the third arrondissement, Van Tuyll van Serooskerken. In the arrondissement of Amersfoort, the sub-bailiff Albert Carel Snouckaert van Schauburg, who had succeeded Steven Camp in January 1810, was retained as sub-prefect.

Municipal boundaries were more redrawn, with the number of municipalities being reduced. Stoetwegen, Cattenbroek and Austerlitz, for example, were added to Zeist. The municipalities were administered by a mayor (maire) and a number of "adjuncts" (adjoints, i.e. assistants). The municipal council (conseil municipal) had merely an advisory role.

These administrative reforms were among the most drastic changes there had ever been. Within only a year, the administration of justice had been reorganised and a registry introduced. A completely new system of weights and measures was also imposed. Public finances were reorganised by means of measures that

included tax increases, cuts in poor relief and partial cancellation of the national debt. Together with the strict application of the Continental System, these measures resulted in great poverty among the people of Utrecht. The introduction of compulsory military service provoked a great deal of opposition and, for the first time since 1795, led to actual resistance, with riots taking place in Utrecht in March 1811. Many traditional institutions were also abolished, including the chapters. The centuries-old heritage of what once been the most important of the three estates within the States of Utrecht disappeared ingloriously into Napoleon's coffers.

A number of administrators, for example the sub-prefect Van Tuyll van Serooskerken and the Mayor of Utrecht Adriaan van Dielen, attempted to tone down the French measures, much to the displeasure of the prefect, Count de Celles. After the death of Van Dielen, De Celles promoted the deputy mayor, Paulus Wilhelmus Bosch van Drakestein, to be his successor. Bosch van Drakestein faithfully carried out the orders of the prefect, sometimes more exactly than he need have done; this did little to improve his popularity, which was almost nonexistent in the first place. The Utrecht elite saw him as a typical parvenu – one who was also a Catholic.

The difference between the two styles of administration became clear after the failure of Napoleon's Russian campaign in December 1812. Bosch van Drakestein wished to take a hard line against the passive resistance of the populace, while Van Tuyll van Serooskerken favoured a more cautious approach.

Despite the disaster in Russia, the French were still fully in control in the Netherlands. This changed, however, after the crushing defeat suffered by Napoleon's armies at Leipzig in October 1813. The French retreated in panic on all fronts, pursued by Prussian, Russian and Austrian forces. The French garrison evacuated Utrecht in the early morning of 28 November and the same afternoon a Cossack patrol arrived to announce the advance of the Prussian-Russian army.

Mayor Bosch van Drakestein, who had remained faithful to the French to the last, handed in his resignation, and, in consultation with Van Tuyll van Serooskerken, an interim administration was imposed on the city. Van Tuyll van Serooskerken attempted to revive the province of Utrecht, but he was reined in by the General Administration formed in The Hague by Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp after the departure of the French. As long as war against the French continued, no real changes were to be made.

RESTORED BUT POWERLESS

The new King William I (the son of the last Stadholder), who had returned to the land of his birth, was not in any way in favour of a return to the past. He wished to retain the achievements of the unified state, and it was only in certain respects that he permitted the previous situation to be restored. The old provinces were



The arrival of the Cossacks at Utrecht's
"White Nuns Gate" on 28 November 1813.
The advance of the Prussian-Russian army
put an end to almost nineteen years of
French domination. (Painting by Pieter
Gerardus van Os, 1816.)

reintroduced early in 1814, and were now actually called "provinces" again. While they were returned to their previous size, any boundary whose enclaves made it too capricious was straightened out. The boundary between Utrecht and Holland was redrawn, for example, with IJsselstein and Loenen being given to Utrecht and such small villages as Nederhorst den Berg to Holland. Attempts to retain Oudewater were unsuccessful.

The restored provinces had hardly any actual sovereignty, and were in fact merely administrative units in the same way as the departments had been under Napoleonic rule. The Provincial States of Utrecht, which met for the first time on 19 September 1814, had very little authority. Power in the Province was in the hands of the Governor, who carried out the orders of the King. He also exercised control over the municipalities, extending to every detail of local administration, for example the heating of schools and fire safety regulations.

The Governor inspected a number of municipalities each year, with his officials checking the records and accounts. The provincial civil service, which was small in number and headed by a Clerk (*griffier*), was employed by the state, and had the task of assisting the Governor as representative of the central authority. The ex-sub-prefect, Van Tuyll van Serooskerken, was appointed Governor of Utrecht; he left the actual work to the Clerk. According to one commentator, the Governor "is unable to commit his ideas to paper and has never learned how to work."

The Chamber of Deputies (*Gedeputeerde Staten*), i.e. the Provincial Executive, was chosen by the Provincial States and were the Governor's closest advisers.² He chaired both bodies, looking down upon the members of the States from a throne. The Provincial Executive prepared the few duties which the Provincial States still retained, for example appointing municipal councils in rural areas, in such a way that it took the actual decisions itself. The States met only once or twice a year and royal approval was necessary for any further meetings. The main task of the States during its regular sessions was to elect the members of the Provincial Executive or members of the Lower House of Parliament.

Under the new constitution, the Upper House of Parliament was appointed by the King, and the Lower House by the various different Provincial States, with a specific number being appointed by each province. In determining who would represent Utrecht in the Lower House, the States were not at liberty to choose whoever they wished. For example, the opposition Member of Parliament Jacob Gerard van Nes van Meerkerk was not re-elected in 1818, the King having given instructions to that effect to the Governor.

The Provincial States, which in Utrecht had 36 members, were initially appointed by the King and included such familiar figures as the ex-landdrost Van Lynden van Lunenburg and the ex-mayor Bosch van Drakestein. There were elections from 1817 to elect or re-elect members, who were required to resign at regular intervals. The elections were on the basis of class and therefore constituted a restoration of one aspect of the old system. The municipal councils of the six towns (IJsselstein having been added to the previous five) appointed the twelve

THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS OF THE STATES

THE POPE'S HOUSE (PAUSHUIZE), 1834–1849

The imposing “Pope’s House” is located at the corner of Kromme Nieuwegracht Street. It was built in 1517 at the behest of Adriaen Floriszoon – later Pope Adrian VI – who had been born in Utrecht. The building had already had numerous owners before being bought by Louis Napoleon in 1807. It remained the property of the state after the French left, and was used as the official residence of the newly appointed Governor J.M. Baron van Tuyll van Serooskerken.

To ensure that the States and the Provincial Clerk’s department were housed under his own roof – where he could keep an eye on them – Van Tuyll’s successor, Florent Lord Ertborn had the Utrecht architect Christiaan Kramm add a number of annexes. These also provided space for government departments such as the telegraph service. Building was severely delayed by the Belgian Revolution, and Ertborn, who came from Antwerp, was forced to leave. Work was finally completed in 1834, and the building was ready for occupation. The luxuriously appointed Assembly Hall of the States, located where the stables had been, could only be reached via the Governor’s official residence, a fact that symbolised the dependence of the States.



The ballroom of the “Pope’s House”, used as the Assembly Hall of the States from 1831 to 1849.

town representatives to the States, with the nobility of the Sticht appointing the twelve who represented the gentry; the remaining twelve were elected by representatives of the landowners. The abolition of the chapters was not reversed, meaning that the old First Estate was no longer represented.

Elections to the various different component bodies took place according to highly complex procedures. In the case of members of the municipal councils, who were appointed for life, vacancies were filled by an electoral college, one third of whose members resigned every three years but remained eligible for re-election. The same applied in the case of vacancies. Ballot papers were collected from the voter's home; even with this convenience, however, participation was at a low level. Ballot papers were either not submitted or were left blank. One of the electors in Rhenen wrote on his blank ballot paper "As you wish, sir" (*doet uw ee sin heer*). The result was predictable: members were usually simply re-elected.

The electoral colleges for the section of the States representing the landowners were elected according to a similar system, and the nobility selected their representatives during a meeting of the gentry. There was a property qualification for each tier of the system, with the lowest being for voters in the small towns and the highest for members of Parliament. Just which members of the nobility belonged to the gentry was determined by the King and might include newly created nobles, among them Catholics.

The policies of William I – since 1815 King of the United Netherlands, which included Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg – was rather ambivalent. On the one hand, he retained the centralised state imposed by Napoleon, with his Governors – who received an extremely generous salary, together with a fine official residence, such as the Pope's House (*Paushuize*) in Utrecht – acting like prefects. On the other hand, he filled positions with members of the local nobility who were able to remember the old Republic and who surrounded themselves with family coteries, something that the Governor of Utrecht was highly expert at doing. He had a brother-in-law and a second cousin on the Provincial Executive and another brother-in-law in the States. Members of his family could always approach Governor Van Tuyll for preferment. His son, for example, became inspector of taxes.

The corruption and nepotism at the Pope's House became so blatant that in 1826 two officials of the Provincial Clerk's office informed the Ministry of the Interior. When the Governor heard of this, he took steps against the two whistleblowers: demotion and dismissal. The Minister, however, ordered him to reverse these decisions. An investigation had shown that the Provincial Clerk's office was guilty of tampering with dues and bills, that tax assessments were too low, incorrect reports were submitted to the Minister and that incompetent members of the Governor's family had been appointed to official positions.

The Minister of the Interior, Pierre van Gobbelschroy, who came from Flanders, advised the King to transfer Van Tuyll – but, so as to avoid a scandal, not to do so immediately. In 1828, William I appointed Van Tuyll Governor of North Holland

The Belgian Revolution in the summer of 1830 led to tensions – including in the northern part of the Kingdom – between Catholics and Protestants. Voluntary militia groups helped maintain order. These mounted volunteers are shown patrolling the largely Catholic countryside near Utrecht. (Lithograph by M. Houtman after A. Verhoesen, 19th century.)



as part of a series of appointments intended to deal with various problems associated with the local governors. In Utrecht, the Antwerp nobleman Florent Lord Ertborn became Governor.

FORCEFUL ADMINISTRATORS

In contrast to his predecessor, Van Ertborn was highly energetic, a man who conscientiously undertook the prescribed tours of inspection throughout the Province. He also concentrated the apparatus of provincial government in a single location by moving the Assembly Chamber of the States and the Provincial Clerk's office to the Pope's House. He did, however, purchase new buildings along Kromme Nieuwegracht Street without informing the Provincial Executive. Although an outsider, he was quickly able to build up a network of contacts within the Sticht, completing his process of naturalisation by marrying a Utrecht girl, Adrienne Eleonore Sophie Baroness van Heeckeren.

The marriage between the 46-year-old bachelor (who had quite a reputation as a frequenter of brothels) and this 17-year-old created something of a sensation. Even more shocking was the fact that it was a mixed marriage, Van Ertborn's young wife being a Protestant. His position as a Catholic from the south of the country became untenable when the Belgian Revolution broke out in the summer of 1830. At the end of October of that year he resigned.

After a period during which the office of Governor was temporarily filled by one of the members of the Provincial Executive, Lodewijk van Toulon was appointed Governor in 1831. Van Toulon was not a member of the nobility, coming from a family of regents in Gouda. He was an ideal public administrator: a well-organised worker and strictly loyal to the King. He was cleverly able, for example, to ensure that the Provincial States did not elect any members to the Lower House of Parliament who might act as an opposition. His loyalty also became apparent in the hard line he took in dealing with the dissenting *Afgescheidenen*, a new religious congregation founded after a schism within the Dutch Reformed Church, as the old Calvinist church was now known. William I was much displeased by the schism and Van Toulon sent in the military police (*marechaussee*) to disrupt services held by the *Afgescheidenen*, also billeting soldiers on members of the congregation in Bunschoten. Van Toulon's authority in taking this action against the *Afgescheidenen* was justified in terms of the responsibility the Governor had for preserving public order.

Van Toulon completed the conversion of the Pope's House and the introduction of the land registry – work that was already in progress – involving himself personally in the details. He also supervised the reorganisation of the judiciary in 1838. The old Abbey of St Paul's, which housed the Supreme Court of Utrecht, was comprehensively rebuilt.



Frederik van de Poll (1780-1853), Governor of the Province of Utrecht, 1840-1850.

Van Toulon's favourite area of policy was provincial water management and he had previously been the dike warden (*dijkgraaf*) of the area near Gouda known as the Land van Steijn en Willis. He also tackled the problems that had arisen in Utrecht due to the uncontrolled digging of peat in the northwest of the Province; by increasing the capacity of the windmills used to pump away water, he succeeded in restoring the water balance. Van Toulon also concerned himself with the compulsory purchase proceedings necessary for the construction of the railway between Amsterdam and Arnhem, which started in 1838.

He did not live to see Utrecht's first train, however, for he died early in 1840 at the age of 72. It was not until September, shortly before he himself abdicated, that William I appointed Frederik van de Poll to succeed him. Van de Poll was a controversial figure. As burgomaster of Amsterdam, he had been known for his nepotism and had repeatedly come into conflict with the city council. His failure to take effective action during a tax riot in 1835 led to his being reprimanded by the King, whereupon he resigned. He attempted to rehabilitate himself as a member of the Provincial Executive of North Holland and of the Lower House of Parliament. In Parliament, he argued in favour of the provinces being combined into four or five regions so as to increase administrative efficiency and reduce the size of the civil service. Van de Poll saw the consequent "extinguishing of the provincial spirit" as a good thing because it would strengthen the authority of central government.

As Governor of Utrecht, Van de Poll faithfully implemented the decrees promulgated by the monarch. He also took his supervisory task seriously, submitting detailed reports to the new King, William II. A new reporting system increased efficiency. In his annual reports, Van de Poll pointed out, amongst other things, that a large number of municipalities in rural areas functioned ineffectively and he advised that they should be merged.

He also expressed his concern at increasing social divisions. The economic crisis of the 1840s led to great poverty, exacerbated by the failure of the potato crop in 1847 and by outbreaks of cholera. Van de Poll also drew attention to the way in which a small elite were amassing wealth. He envisaged solving the problem of poverty by means of legislation, a remarkable view to take in the mid-nineteenth century. The Governor also expressed great concern at the increasing hostility between Protestants and Catholics, relations between the different denominations having worsened significantly since the Belgian Revolution. The growing size of the Catholic portion of the population, the building of new Catholic churches and rumours that a new archbishopric of Utrecht was to be established all made Protestants feel they were under threat, and to fear the resurgence of religious persecution.

TOWARDS A NEW SYSTEM

Like his predecessors, Van de Poll saw to it that the Provincial States did not elect undesirable members of Parliament. After the election of the Utrecht burgomaster Nicolaas Kien in 1845 – the Governor having done the necessary arm-twisting to ensure that the right candidate was chosen – the director of the King's cabinet indicated that the choice had been "gratifying".

The electoral system was nevertheless the subject of increasing criticism.

The Leiden professor Johan Rudolf Thorbecke produced a detailed alternative. Thorbecke believed that the Lower House of Parliament should no longer be selected by the Provincial States, but directly by those who had the vote.

At first, there was little support for his ideas within the Province of Utrecht, but from 1846 on an opposition party grew up led by a liberal member of the States, Gerard Johannes Beeldsnijder van Voshol, who proposed that meetings of the Provincial States should henceforth be open to the public. He argued that citizens had the right to know how their taxes were being spent and how well the members of the States functioned, so that they could determine whether they deserved to be re-elected.

The Governor saw to it that this proposal did not come up for discussion.

Nevertheless, Beeldsnijder was able to publicise matters by passing on confidential documents to a journalist friend who then published them. He was also one of the founders of the Rhine Society (*Rijnsociëteit*), the Utrecht branch of the liberal Amstel Society (*Amstelsociëteit*) of Amsterdam.

The liberal movement did not appear to be enjoying much in the way of success, but things changed when, early in 1848, William II was panic-stricken by the news that revolutions had broken out in Paris and Berlin. Fearing that the Netherlands would be next, and wishing to pre-empt revolution, he instructed Thorbecke to design a liberal constitution, and then put Parliament under so much pressure that it was forced to vote it through.

The new constitution created an entirely different system of government.

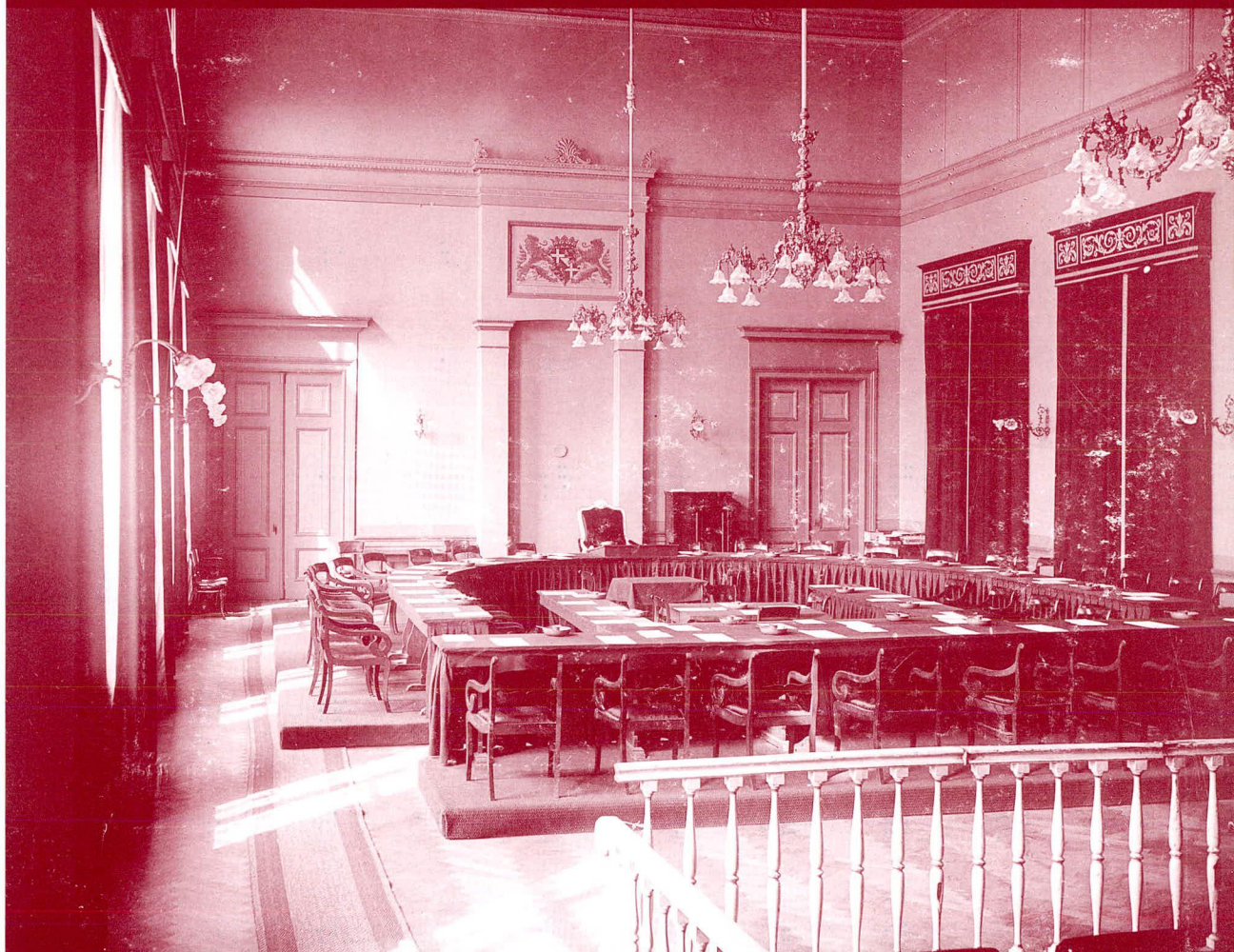
The provision that ministers were responsible and the monarch subject to immunity shifted the focus from the head of state to the Cabinet. Another important feature was that henceforth municipal councils, Provincial States and the Lower House of Parliament would be directly elected by those who had the right to vote. As a compromise, the Provincial States were permitted to elect the members of the Upper House of Parliament (the Senate).

In order to implement the new system at local and provincial level, detailed legislation was necessary. Thorbecke, who had become Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior in 1849, got to work. His legislative endeavours brought him into constant conflict with the new King William III, who had succeeded his father after the latter's death from a heart attack in March 1849. The new monarch – who, as Crown Prince, had execrated the concessions made to the liberals – was extremely uncomfortable with the new system. William's impotent anger always received an icy reception from the coolly intellectual Thorbecke. Whenever the King refused once more to sign an act of Parliament, his Prime Minister simply waited calmly until – furiously uttering expletives – the monarch appended his signature.

THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS OF THE STATES THE ARTS AND SCIENCES BUILDING, 1849–1916

The fact that it was forced to meet right next to the private apartments of the Governor was extremely inconvenient for the Provincial States, even from the practical point of view: the assembly chamber also served as their dining room. A solution was found in the form of a meeting venue elsewhere. In return for providing funding for the Arts and Sciences Building in Mariaplaats Square (built in 1847), the Provincial Executive (Gedeputeerde Staten) acquired the right to use it for the biannual meetings of the States, with the first taking place on 3 July 1849. The assembly chamber proved to be too large, and the Executive wished to make a cut in the grant. Negotiations eventually led to the tenant setting up room 11 for meetings of the States every six months for an annual fee of 500 guilders.

The Assembly Hall of the Provincial States
of Utrecht in the Arts and Sciences
Building, 1915.



1850-2003

On 6 July 1850, William III was forced to carry out a most unpleasant task, namely to sign a new act of Parliament submitted to him by Thorbecke. This was the Act Regulating the Composition and Power of the Provincial States (*Wet regelende de samenstelling en de magt van de Provinciale Staten*). This piece of legislation, later referred to simply as the Provinces Act, implemented the principles of the 1848 constitution at the level of provincial administration.

GREATER POWERS FOR THE STATES

The new Provinces Act tilted the balance towards greater provincial autonomy once more. The powers of the Governor – henceforth known as the King’s Commissioner – were greatly reduced, and, despite what the change of name might suggest, actual contact with the monarch was far less frequent. The Commissioner was now primarily a civil servant responsible to the Minister of the Interior. The administrative responsibilities of the Provincial States had been significantly increased. They now had a provincial budget at their disposal, but the fact that the provinces were not permitted to raise taxes themselves meant that they continued to be very much dependent on national government. The most important duty of the States was to supervise the lower echelons of public administration. There was strict control of the activities of municipalities and water boards, particularly where finances were concerned. Legislation enacted in The Hague was passed on to local government bodies by the provincial administration for implementation. The policy fields that fell within the competence of the States also covered transport and communications (including road maintenance), agriculture, trade and industry, healthcare and poor relief, education and religious matters. The provincial administration dealt with signposts along the roads, determined where tolls should be levied, promulgated regulations to prevent foot and mouth disease, implemented measures to combat cholera, and gave instructions for the suppression of begging. The Provincial Executive was required to produce an annual report on all these matters and the Commissioner also submitted a confidential report to the Minister regarding the situation in the Province. He chaired meetings of the Provincial Executive, which took place almost every week. Most of the Deputies’ time was taken up with hearing appeals because the provincial administration acted as the appeal board for a large number of disputes, for example between municipalities themselves, between individuals and municipalities, and regarding roads. Meetings of the Provincial States, which were now open to the public, no longer took place in the Pope’s House but in the new Arts and Sciences Building.

They were held twice a year and were chaired by the King's Commissioner. The 41 members of the States were no longer appointed according to the section of society they represented but directly elected by the voters. The property qualification for voting differed from place to place and was determined by the amount of direct tax paid. The minimum varied from 24 guilders in rural areas to 60 guilders in Utrecht itself. These figures were higher than those entitling persons to vote under the previous system because voters now elected candidates directly. In 1850, almost 4,400 residents of the Sticht were entitled to vote. The Province was divided into three – later five – electoral districts. The elections led to a major change in that only fifteen members of the States had held seats previously.

Thorbecke wished the new system to enjoy sufficient support. For example, he did not want to have any professed opponents of the constitution appointed to the position of King's Commissioner; as a result Van de Poll was forced to leave Utrecht. He had in fact simplified matters for the Minister by committing a number of blunders. In late 1849, for example, he proposed that his son should become burgomaster of Abcoude, and was immediately reprimanded for doing so. He then attempted to protect the corrupt burgomaster of Zeist – who had held his position since as far back as 1811 – from being dismissed. The King was prepared to grant Van de Poll's wish, but as usual it was the Minister who won.

Thorbecke then advised the monarch to dismiss Van de Poll, together with his counterpart in Groningen. Needless to say, William III had no wish to dispose of his loyal servant, but he was once more compelled to give way to the tenacious minister. The Commissioner's valediction was published in the official gazette, the *Provinciale en Stads-Courant*, for 2 September 1850 and amounted to an accusation: he had had no wish to resign, believing that the King did not agree with Thorbecke's decision, and he hinted in guarded terms that he feared that the country was on its way to becoming a republic.

Van Toulon and Van de Poll had been from patrician families, but the new King's Commissioner, Schelte Baron van Heemstra, was once more a nobleman. At meetings of the States, he would come across a number of fellow nobles: seven members of the States belonged to the nobility. Although that was fewer than prior to 1850, over the next few decades the number increased to almost the old level. In fact, most of the Commissioners appointed in the first hundred years after the Provinces Act came into force were noblemen. The Provincial States of Utrecht generally elected a member of the nobility to sit in the Upper House of Parliament. The non-noble members of the States, the Deputies and Commissioners also belonged to the upper classes, often to the old patriciate that had run the towns prior to 1795.

In appointing Baron van Heemstra, Thorbecke had appointed a true kindred spirit and personal friend as King's Commissioner. In the previous few years, they had jointly striven to push through a new constitution. Van Heemstra did not disappoint, doing a great deal, for example, to improve the quality of local



A. Penniman

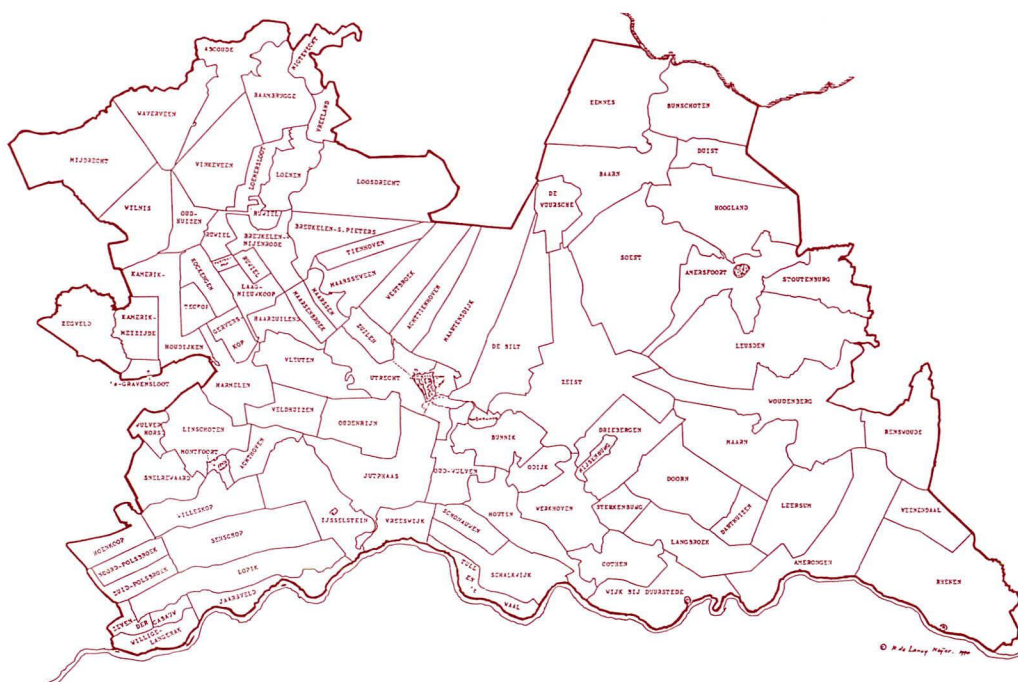


government. In fact, he went so far in dismissing incompetent officials that Thorbecke had to warn him that doing so would cost a lot of money in the form of early pensions.

The Commissioner also pressed for a reorganisation of the municipalities and this was carried out in 1857. After the introduction of the 1851 Municipalities Act, which had put an end to the legal distinction between the towns and rural areas, it had become clear that a number of rural municipalities were too small to function effectively, and their number was reduced from 92 to 72. Oudwulven and Schonauwen, for example, were incorporated into Houten and Rhijnauwen into Bunnik. The Commissioner also intervened in the appointment of burgomasters, supporting the nomination of Catholics.

Although himself a Protestant, Van Heemstra was not influenced by the anti-Catholic feelings that were so powerful in the mid-nineteenth century. Tension reached fever pitch in 1853, when the Pope decided to restore the episcopal hierarchy in the northern Netherlands by making Utrecht the seat of an archbishop. There was a wave of protest, the "April Movement", and the King's sympathetic response to this led to Thorbecke's resignation. When the King visited Utrecht in September 1853, he received expressions of support for his stance, together with a petition against the restoration of the episcopal hierarchy. There were rumours of an impending coup that would reverse the liberal reforms.

These political and religious tensions led to an increase in the extent to which people became involved in electoral associations, which would ultimately develop into real political parties.



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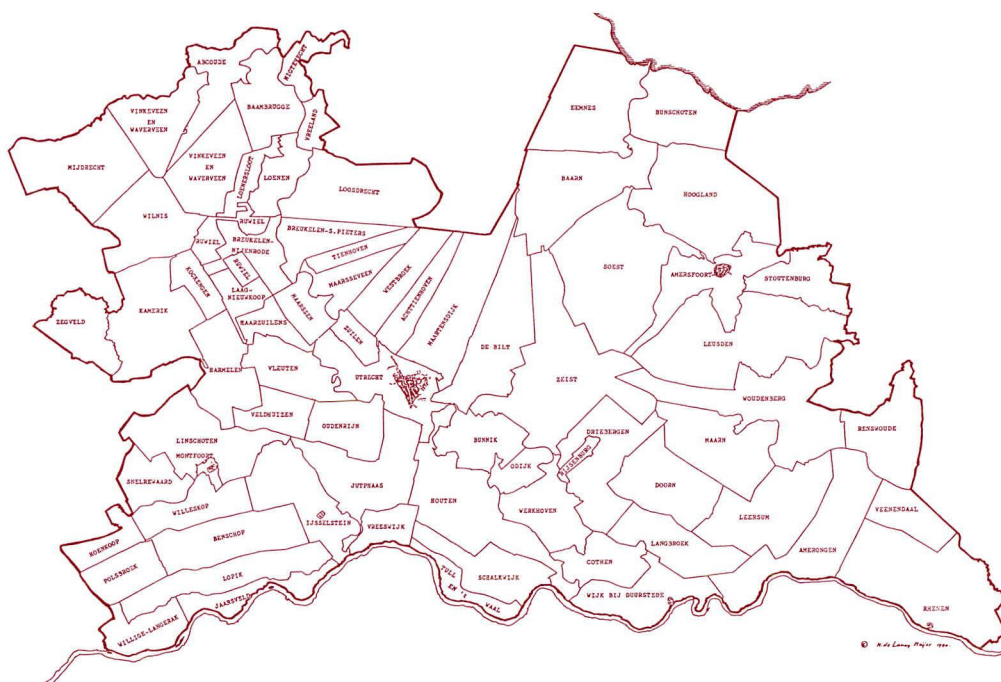
In September 1853, King William III visited the "Pope's House" (Paushuizen) in Utrecht. A group of leading citizens led by the ultra-conservative university professor G.J. Mulder presented him with an anti-Catholic and anti-liberal petition. The King's sympathetic reply encouraged rumours of an impending coup by reactionaries. (Painting by Nicolaas Pieneman, 1853-1856.)

Four major movements could be distinguished: liberals, conservatives, anti-revolutionaries and Catholics. The system of constituencies – which meant that those candidates who secured a majority of the votes were elected – forced candidates to enter into strategic alliances. At first, the liberals and the Catholics collaborated, but that agreement came to an end in 1864 when the Pope condemned liberalism. Efforts to introduce a system of denominational education, the "Schools Controversy", brought together Catholics and orthodox Protestant anti-revolutionaries.

The latter were the first grouping to set up a modern political party when, in 1878, Utrecht saw the birth of the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), founded by the militant clergyman Abraham Kuyper with support from such people as Barthold Baron de Geer van Jutphaas, a member of the Provincial States of Utrecht. Seven years later, the Liberal Union was set up, but it was soon to be split by internal controversy. It was only at a much later stage that the Catholics set up a real political party, the Roman Catholic Party (RKSP). The conservatives did not form their own party, finding a home on the right wing of the liberal movement and in the Christian Historical Union (CHU), a right-wing group that had split from the ARP. The Protestant nobility residing in Utrecht's Heuvelrug area played a major role within the CHU, and the party was characterised by an apolitical administrator's mentality until well into the twentieth century.

An entirely new movement that developed after about 1880 was that of socialism. The Social-Democratic Workers Party (SDAP) was set up in 1894, one of the founders being the Utrecht lawyer Pieter Jelles Troelstra. Both the religious

Municipalities of the Province of Utrecht before and after the reorganisation of 1857. (Map by H. de Lanoy Meijer, 1990.)





parties and the SDAP benefited from the extension of the right to vote that was implemented from the 1880s on.

Political distinctions first became clear in the Lower House of Parliament.

Later, municipal councils became politicised, at least in larger towns such as Utrecht and Amersfoort. The politicisation of Provincial States did not occur until much later, one reason for this being that the States did not to any great extent deal with politically sensitive policy issues such as education. Supervision of water boards and health care did not really touch on conflicts of ideology.

Although the 1850 Provinces Act had considerably increased the powers of the Provincial States, real power continued to be vested in the Provincial Executive and the King's Commissioner. And while the powers of the Commissioner were reduced in 1850, forceful individuals such as Baron van Heemstra could still have a great deal of influence.

Van Heemstra regularly came up with proposals. After the restructuring of the municipalities, he broached the idea of a new water board structure which, for one thing, would involve reducing the total number. In 1857, the States took a decision to that effect but it would be years before the changes were actually implemented. By that time, Van Heemstra had already left, and his successor Herman Hendrik Röell had gone too. Röell had only been the King's Commissioner in Utrecht for two years when he was appointed to the same position in North Holland in 1860. Van Heemstra had moved on to become Commissioner in Zeeland.

The States complained about this all too rapid turnover of Commissioners, but in the case of the next person to hold the position they had little reason to do so. Elisa Cornelis Unico van Doorn was to be King's Commissioner for a long time, remaining in his post until he was honourably discharged in 1880 due to his advanced age: by then he was over 80. The fact that he had submitted the request to be discharged himself was a great relief to the Minister of the Interior, and he was rewarded with the title of jonkheer (esquire). Van Doorn was a far less enterprising administrator than his predecessors, being much more of a caretaker who simply attempted to avoid conflict. As a conscientious civil servant, he reported on provincial affairs and made proposals for appointments.

OLD AND NEW DUTIES

Neither would it have been possible to accuse Van Doorn's successor, Jan Arend Godert Baron de Vos van Steenwijk, of youthful enthusiasm. He was already 62 when he was appointed and had had a successful career in public administration. In his address to the States on being installed as Commissioner, he admitted that he knew little about the Province and he asked the States to bear with him until he was ready to act.

They waited in vain, because De Vos van Steenwijk's primary concern was his own accommodation. The Pope's House was renovated but the ministry refused to approve the Commissioner's proposals for altering the plans. The conflict became so heated that De Vos van Steenwijk resigned, not even two years after taking up his post. His successor, Eduard Herman s' Jacob, was of an entirely different mettle. Like his two brothers, he had been the director of a railway company, and had then made a name for himself as a conservative member of Parliament.

The new Commissioner's expertise where transport issues were concerned proved valuable in view of a number of pressing issues of the day. Since early 1882, the Province had had its own Public Works and Water Management Department, the Executive having been forced to set up this body by the central government. The introduction of the Department – which consisted of a provincial engineer, a supervisor of peat cutting, two supervisors of roadworks and two secretaries – amounted to a large-scale expansion of the civil service. Since being reorganised in 1879, the Provincial Clerk's office had had a staff of 21, distributed across three different departments. Office work for the Provincial Public Works and Water Management Department was carried out at the official residence of the chief engineer K. van Rijn, who remained in charge for 22 years. The department dealt with both "wet" public works (drainage and canals) and "dry" public works (roads).

Where "wet" public works were concerned, there were major problems caused by peat cutting, which was taking place on an ever-increasing scale; these problems, however, were largely the concern of the various water boards. Ultimately, the

Assembly
Chamber of
the Deputies.
(Watercolour by
A. Grolman, late
19th century.)

construction of steam-driven pumping stations provided a solution. Another problem concerned the construction of a canal between the rivers Vecht and Eem so as to improve access to Amersfoort. The King's Commissioner, s' Jacob devoted himself to this project.

A much more important project, however, was that to construct the Merwede Canal that would link Amsterdam with Germany; this also offered major benefits for the city of Utrecht. This was a task for the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management (a national body), but the Province was involved because of the necessary compulsory purchase proceedings. These were also relevant to the construction of steam tramways, which brought about a revolution in regional transport during this period. Towards the end of 1882, a provincial ordinance was passed but this proved insufficient. The provincial government had always had a great influence on public transport. That had been the case with the canal barges during the period of the Dutch Republic, and it remained so with stagecoaches after the French occupation, with steam-driven trams in the years around 1880, and later with buses.

It was of major importance for the Province that there should be an increase in its income. Beginning in 1887, the Province was permitted to levy a provincial surcharge on a number of taxes but the lion's share of its income was still provided by The Hague. The sum provided was rather more than 50,000 guilders and it only increased very slowly.

The energetic s' Jacob became increasingly irritated at what he considered to be the passive and negative attitude of the Provincial States; he was incensed when the States regularly voted against proposals submitted by the Executive. In his view, the States lived "outside the atmosphere of provincial politics". s' Jacob did not



Frederik Alexander Carel Count van Lynden van Sandenburg (1873-1932), Queen's Commissioner for the Province of Utrecht, 1914-1924.

subscribe to any political movement that greatly favoured increased democracy. His work was also hampered by ill health: he was troubled by "a painful nervous complaint". Courses of treatment abroad did not help and in the late summer of 1888 he resigned.

His successor, Alexander Baron Schimmelpenninck van der Oije, was another man who did not make a very energetic Commissioner; instead, he tended simply to carry out the prescribed duties, such as visiting municipalities and reporting to the minister. In his reports, he constantly presented a positive picture of the prevailing administrative relationships and of the situation in the Province. Any dossiers regarding such matters as steam trams he preferred to pass on, for example to the ministries responsible.

Towards the end of his term of office, Schimmelpenninck van der Oije found himself confronted by a new phenomenon in the field of "dry" public works, when in 1902 Baron Van Zuylen van Nyevelt, who was an enthusiastic pioneer of the automobile, was found to be driving on roads where this was prohibited. The Commissioner considered that he should be summonsed, believing that car owners drove too fast, and he expressed his displeasure at penalties being imposed which he thought too lenient.

The relationship between the Commissioner and the Provincial States was far better than in the case of his predecessor. Unlike s' Jacob, he did not have any clear-cut opinions, but acted more as a neutral chairman. To the world outside, he conformed entirely to the wishes of the Provincial Executive, and when he ceased to be Commissioner in July 1905, he received numerous plaudits for his impartiality.

In the meantime, the accession of Queen Wilhelmina had led to the function being renamed "Queen's Commissioner". The successor to Schimmelpenninck van der Oije was not someone from outside, as had been the case in the past, but one of the members of the Provincial Executive, Francis David Count Schimmelpenninck. He, too, was by no means an overzealous administrator. The most complicated issue with which he had to deal was the request by the city of Utrecht to be allowed to expand. The boundaries of the municipality were still the same as they had been in the Middle Ages, and this was an obstacle to housing construction. The Provincial Executive carried out an investigation, and, after considering the objections raised by adjoining municipalities, came to the conclusion that any extensive redrawing of municipal boundaries was undesirable.

Count Schimmelpenninck resigned early in 1914 and was replaced by another member of the Provincial Executive. Like the two previous Commissioners, Frederik Alexander Carel Count van Lynden van Sandenburg was a Protestant nobleman; he had also been a backbench Member of Parliament for the Anti-Revolutionary Party. He was a far more decisive administrator than his two predecessors, one who was capable of shouldering the increasingly demanding duties of public administration brought about, for one thing, by the outbreak of the First World War just two weeks after he had been sworn in.

Disastrous flooding in the north-east of the Province in 1916 also led to a greater demand for decisive action on the part of the authorities. The actual role that the authorities should play was the main issue in the debates which, between 1914 and 1916, led to the first real political division within the States, namely on the issue of electricity generation.

Since the turn of the century, the demand for electricity had greatly increased, and was already being met by a number of municipal and private companies.

The question was whether a provincial electricity company should be set up.

The liberal members of the States, as opponents of government interference, considered that the work of generating electricity should be left to the private sector. After consultations, including with the American professor C.P.

Feldmann of Delft Technical College, the Provincial Executive produced an interim solution in the form of a public limited company managed by the Province. Similar companies already existed in Gelderland and North Brabant.

After a motion to set up a company wholly owned by the Province had been rejected by 34 votes to 4, the Provincial States decided (in May 1916) to set up a public limited company, the Utrecht Provincial Electricity Company (PUEM), with Van Lynden van Sandenburg becoming the chairman of the supervisory board. PUEM later collaborated with the city of Utrecht to generate electricity, in the shape of the Utrecht Provincial and Municipal Electricity Supply Company (PEGUS). The provision of drinking water, dealt with by private companies, came under the control of the Province in 1923, and from then on regional drinking water suppliers were required to hold a permit issued by the Province.



The "Pope's House" and the provincial buildings at number 20 Achter Sint Pieter Street.

THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS OF THE STATES

ACHTER SINT PIETER STREET, 1916–1996

The years 1915–1916 saw the drastic rebuilding of the Pope's House and the adjoining premises. Numerous new buildings arose, and all that remained of Kramm's building of almost a century previously was the Assembly Chamber. This was used for receptions and balls, the States having moved to the Arts and Sciences Building in 1849. In 1916, the States were given their own wing, with an Assembly Chamber, in the new building occupied by the Provincial Clerk's department at number 20 Achter Sint Pieter Street. (The Queen's Commissioner and the Clerk's department had their offices in the Pope's House, where the Provincial Executive also met.) The building was state property, and the Assembly Chamber was held on a lease. In 1943, the Nazi (NSB) Commissioner W.B. Engelbrecht decided to take over the building without any payment being made, a transaction confirmed after the War.

Initially, the complex provided enough room for the organisations occupying it, but as the provincial civil service expanded, accommodation became an increasing problem. In 1954, the new Queen's Commissioner F.A.C. Count van Lynden van Sandenburg decided not to reside in the Pope's House; to some extent, this helped relieve the pressure. Even so, an increasing amount of office space had to be provided in premises adjoining the Pope's House.



The Assembly
Hall of the States
at number 20
Achter Sint Pieter
Street, 1990.

The debates concerning the setting up of PUEM signalled the start of the politicisation of provincial politics, a process that became much more intense after the Constitution was amended in 1917. Universal male suffrage was introduced, followed a few years later by votes for women.

The constituency system was replaced by proportional representation. Members of Parliament, town councils and the Provincial States would no longer be individuals selected by a particular district, but would be elected by means of a system of lists. This led to the creation of clearly distinguished groups or parties within the Provincial States. The religious parties ARP, CHU and RKSP did well in the next elections, far more so in Utrecht than in the rest of the country as a whole, taking 25 of the 41 seats in the States. The liberals lost a large number of seats, and the social democrats were represented in the States for the first time, although their support among electors was less than the left had hoped. The SDAP included the first woman member of the States, Hendrika Bernardina Bakhuis-Wolters. The Provincial Executive mirrored the balance of power within the States. In 1933, two of its members represented the RKSP, one the ARP and one the CHU, and there was also one liberal and one social democrat. In the Provincial States – which in 1916 had ceased to meet at the Arts and Sciences Building, and moved to a new provincial government building next door to the Pope's House at number 20 Achter Sint Pieter Street – the development of political parties meant that the tone of debates was much fiercer. Polarisation was particularly noticeable in the conflicts between the liberals and social democrats, and, to prevent political machinations causing debates to get out of hand, Commissioner Van Lynden frequently found it necessary to call members to order when they insulted one another.



Anton Mussert (1894-1946), chief engineer of the Provincial Public Works and Water Management Department from 1927-1934, leader of the Dutch Nazi Party (NSB). (Photo, 1927.)

Surfacing the
road from Leersum
to Woudenberg
in 1924.



The importance of plenary sessions of the States increased. In the past, proposals by the Provincial Executive had often been accepted without any debate, and a great deal of the real work had been done in committee; this approach was now considered undemocratic. Members of one of the committees, for example, who had been conducting an investigation into working conditions at a factory had contented themselves with merely talking to the managing director; the SDAP members objected that they had failed to talk to any of the workers, and had not gone to inspect the factory for themselves. The social democrats were primarily interested in such issues as working conditions, while the Christian parties saw themselves as guardians of public morality. The ARP, for example, objected to any further funding being provided for the library in Zeist because a work by Émile Zola was found to be among the books that could be borrowed.

The conflicts became truly bitter in 1935 when the Dutch National Socialist Movement (NSB) gained four seats in the Provincial States. The party had been set up four years previously and its founders included two provincial officials, Anton Mussert and Cornelis van Geelkerken. These individuals were the clearest representatives of the right-wing nationalist climate within the Provincial Clerk's department. Mussert had been employed by the Provincial Public Works and Water Management Department since 1920, becoming chief engineer in 1927, when he replaced Henri Ernst Ram, who had himself succeeded the first director of the Department, K. van Rijn, in 1904.

Mussert's appointment was by no means uncontroversial. He had not got on well with his superior, who was not good at delegating tasks, meaning that Mussert felt that he was not given enough to do. The conflicts between them had in fact been one reason why Ram had taken early retirement. There was a majority of 23 votes in the States in favour of appointing Mussert, who was number two on the list of names proposed by the Provincial Executive. Mussert's lobby among the members of the States had been successful.

Compared to his predecessor, the ambitious Mussert was far more proactive.

The range of work carried out by the Provincial Public Works and Water Management Department increased significantly, particularly because of the huge increase in road traffic. On the road from Woerden to Utrecht via Harmelen, for example, the number of vehicles rose from 10 in 1908 to 339 in 1923. The new chief engineer was extremely interested in road construction and he visited the Department's drawing office – whose staff he had increased to four – on a daily basis. By now, the Department, until 1916 housed in the residence of the director, had moved to the new Provincial Clerk's building at number 20 Achter St. Pieter Street. During this period, its staff increased to 20, and it would later be enlarged even further. This meant that a genuine provincial civil service was developing, employing staff who since 1905 had no longer been employed by the state but by the Province.

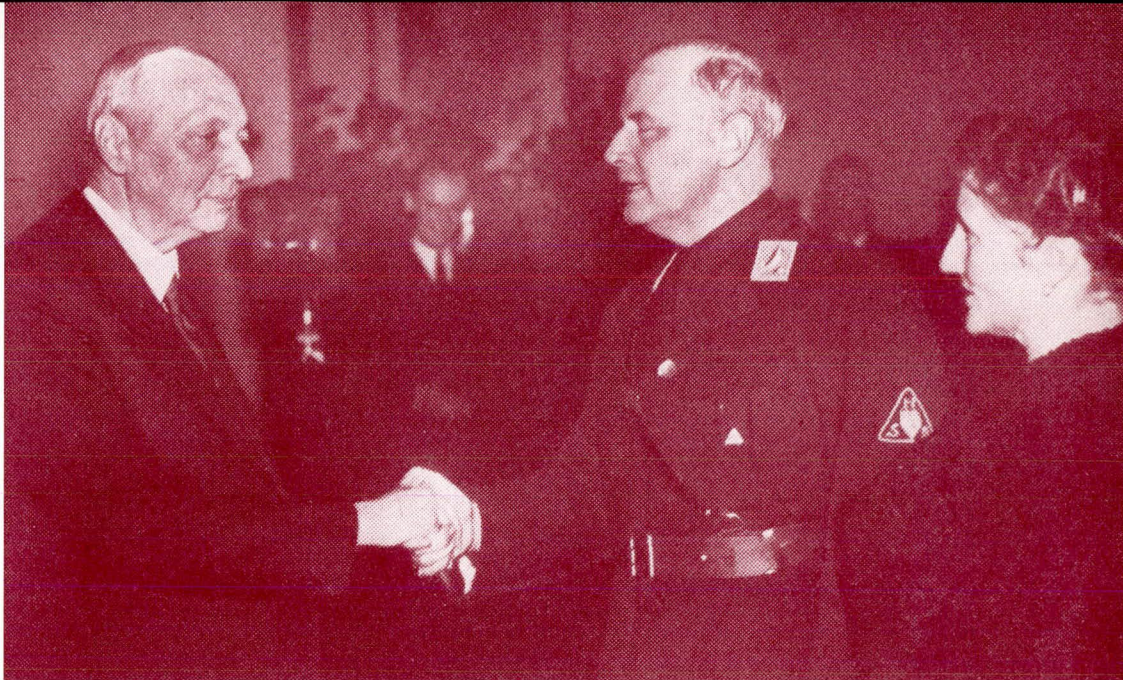
As chief engineer, Mussert dealt not only with roads but also with “wet” public works, particularly drainage problems and improvements to the Merwede Canal. His plans for the latter were the instigation for construction of the Amsterdam-Rhine Canal, which was originally meant to run via Amersfoort. Mussert was assisted in his work by Commissioner Herman Theodoor s' Jacob, who had succeeded Van Lynden van Sandenburg in 1924 and who was the son of the Ediard Herman s' Jacob who had held the post almost fifty years previously.

Mussert's career in the Province eventually came to an end because of his political activities. In February 1934, the States prohibited provincial civil servants from being members of extremist organisations such as the NSB, thus extending the prohibition that already applied to state civil servants. The chief engineer was urgently requested to resign his membership of the NSB. When he refused, he was honourably discharged with effect from 1 May 1934. The same applied to Van Geelkerken. Mussert was praised by Commissioner s' Jacob, who left at about the same time for health reasons. The Commissioner regretted the fact that this capable official, who had done so much good work on the provincial road system, was to be dismissed because of “the present escalation of political relations”. From then on, Mussert and Van Geelkerken devoted themselves to building up the NSB, and a year later the party succeeded in winning the elections to the States, of which Van Geelkerken himself became a member. After that, the Dutch Nazis found themselves in a downward spiral of internal conflict and electoral defeat.

THE PROVINCE IN WARTIME

Things only became more favourable for the NSB after the German invasion of the Netherlands on 10 May 1940, an event which came as a complete shock for most Dutch people. The country had hoped that, as during the First World War, it would be able to stay out of the conflict that had broken out in September 1939.

The Queen's
Commissioner
F.E. Müller greet-
ing his successor
W.B. Engelbrecht
in October 1941.



The Province of Utrecht was extremely important in the defence of the country against the German army because it contained the Grebbe Line and the New Dutch Waterline fortifications. The then Commissioner, Lodewijk Hendrik Nicolaas Bosch Lord of Rosenthal, who had held the post since 1934, played an active role in organising the necessary defensive inundations. He had even proposed purchasing anti-aircraft guns at the expense of the Province.

The unequal struggle against the invader lasted only five days before the Dutch forces capitulated. During the ensuing occupation, the Germans were initially reticent, for example leaving the various administrative bodies in place. This also applied to the Province, although the title "Queen's Commissioner" was replaced by "Provincial Commissioner". One of the first tasks of the provincial administration was to deal with the damage caused in the east of the Province by the fighting there, and the Commissioner set up a special "Grebbe Committee" to supervise.

In contrast to most of his colleagues, Commissioner Bosch van Rosenthal was from the very beginning emphatically anti-German. Addressing officials of the Provincial Clerk's office on 15 May 1940, he stated "Germany is our enemy, and anyone who does not think so is not a true Dutchman. Civil servants are part of the Dutch administration." He was entirely unable to pardon the co-operative behaviour of the various secretaries-general who had taken over the job of running the country.

His anti-German views also found expression in the aloof attitude he adopted in his contacts with the occupying forces, and he had an aristocratic contempt for the Nazis, who often came from the lower orders of society. He refused to shake hands with them and conducted any discussions with them without sitting down. He was, however, on good terms with the German "Representative" (Beaufragte) for the Province, the nobleman Von Alberti, even shaking hands

with him when he left, though he had major problems in dealing with Von Alberti's successor, the fanatical Nazi A. Joaquim. After being accused of opposition and of withholding information, Bosch van Rosenthal was dismissed in February 1941. He withdrew to his country house in Zeist and became increasingly involved in resistance work.

The new Commissioner was Frederik Ernst Müller, an NSB man. Müller had been the co-director of the Utrecht boneblack factory, had joined the NSB early on, and was a close associate of Mussert. But while his speeches were full of national-socialist rhetoric, in actual fact the changes he introduced were relatively few. Meetings of the Provincial Executive concerned such ordinary matters as appeals, and at first the composition of the Executive remained unchanged. However, two members who resigned were replaced by members of the NSB. Müller was cautious about appointing NSB burgomasters because he wished to preserve good relations. He was in fact an extremely passive administrator and was nicknamed "Just Leave It in My In-Tray" (*Leg maar neer*) by the burgomaster of Utrecht Gerard Abraham Willem Ter Pelkwijk. Müller constantly waited to see what orders he would receive from the occupation authorities or from the Secretary-General, K.J. Frederiks. It was only where measures against Dutch Jews were concerned that this vicious anti-Semite displayed any initiative of his own.

Major changes were introduced in the administration of the Province on 1 September 1941. The Provincial States were abolished and power was henceforth vested in the Commissioner. The "administrative councillors" (*bestuursraden*), as the members of the Provincial Executive were now known, merely had a supporting role. Three members of the Executive who objected to the Commissioner about the new set-up expected that they would be dismissed, but Müller allowed them to remain in their posts. He himself left at the end of October to become burgomaster of Rotterdam. His successor, Willem Bernard Engelbrecht, was an ex-diplomat who had only joined the NSB after the Germans had invaded. He, too, was by no means an impressive figure. According to burgomaster Ter Pelkwijk, the 60-year-old Commissioner "gave the impression of being senile".



The Dutch Resistance arrest Provincial Clerk H. van der Weerd (in light raincoat) and 'Administrative Councillor' L. Brands Buijs in May 1945.

Like his predecessor, Engelbrecht was in no way fanatical about the work of "Nazifying" the provincial administration. That, however, was something that the occupying forces took care of. In January 1942, the position of Provincial Clerk became a national-socialist function, and in July the four pre-war members of the executive who remained were replaced by NSB men. From then on, the provincial government was forced to toe the Nazi line and became a body that implemented decisions taken by the Germans. During the War, the extension of the tasks of the Province that had been taking place over the past few decades was intensified, for example with respect to public housing. The Provincial Planning Authority (PPD) was set up in 1943 and continued the work of two commissions set up before the War, namely the Provincial Building Commission and the Regional Planning Commission. The Provincial Public Works and Water Management Department, now directed by Mussert's successor F.E.D. Enschedé, concerned itself with road maintenance – something vital to the occupying forces – and with the construction of the Utrecht section of the road from Hilversum to Heemstede. With the Allied advance in the late summer of 1944, the issue of inundation once more became important. Enschedé and his staff succeeded in persuading the occupiers not to implement the plans they had for extensive inundation of the west of the Province. Nevertheless, by early 1945 some 20,000 hectares were flooded.

MORE AND MORE TASKS

The German capitulation on 5 May 1945 ended the occupation of the Province of Utrecht. Collaborators such as Commissioner Engelbrecht were arrested. Engelbrecht was eventually sentenced to three years imprisonment, while Mussert himself was executed.

Bosch van Rosenthal returned to the Pope's House, but the Provincial States remained suspended and it was only in July 1946 and that they assembled again. The Commissioner did not chair them, having been on sick leave for more than six months. He left at the end of the year and was replaced by a new Commissioner, Maurits Antoon Reinalda, who, unlike the previous holders of the office, did not come from the CHU or ARP but was a social democrat. His personal background was also very different: all the previous Commissioners had come from noble or patrician families but Reinalda was the son of a railway fireman. In spite of this, he was well able to fit into the prevailing administrative system. He held the office of Commissioner for seven years and was succeeded by someone who fitted the old pattern perfectly: Constant Theodore Emmo Count Van Lynden Van Sandenburg, whose father had been Commissioner from 1914 to 1924. The members of the States also continued to be taken from the old administrative families. After 1919, the number who came from patrician families had fallen but they had by no means disappeared. Aristocratic names can still be found in the attendance registers for the second half of the twentieth century.



Sewage works in Bunnik, 1987.

After the War, the range of government tasks and duties increased enormously, including those of the provinces. This trend was intensified by the increase in traffic and the growth of the population. Until the early 1960s, motorcars had been used mainly by businessmen and the wealthier section of the population, but from then on they became available to almost everyone. The corresponding increase in road traffic also had its effect on the provincial road system and Utrecht's function as a transport node made this all the more so.

Post-war reconstruction and the need to deal with the housing shortage meant that the Province became increasingly responsible for spatial planning. The Provincial Planning Authority produced long-term plans for this. The largest post-war project was the expansion of the city of Utrecht itself. This was accompanied by a radical redrawing of boundaries, with most of the municipalities of Oudenburg and Zuilen being merged with Utrecht on 1 January 1954, together with parts of Achttienhoven, Westbroek, Maartensdijk, Jutphaas, Houten and De Bilt. Existing residential areas such as Zuilen, Hoograven and Tuindorp also joined Utrecht, and the land that had been acquired was used to create districts such as Kanaleneiland and Overvecht. Much later, Amersfoort expanded in the same way when it took over Hoogland. The Province attempted to gain control of housing construction by designating "urban development areas" such as Nieuwegein and Houten. In the case of Maarssenbroek, planned by the municipality of Maarssen in collaboration with a project developer, the provincial government was unsuccessful. However, it was able to ensure that the gently rolling hills of the Heuvelrug region remained a green belt area. In 1962, the Province produced a "regional plan" for the Heuvelrug, the first of its kind.

Preserving the natural beauty of the Heuvelrug was part of the Province's environmental policy. Since its inception, the Provincial Public Works and Water Management Department had concerned itself with the harmful effects of industrial activity, applying the provisions of the Nuisance Act. A provincial

THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS OF THE STATES PROVINCIAL OFFICES, RIJNSWEERD (SINCE 1996)

In 1978, part of the provincial civil service moved into a new building in Rijnsweerd designed by the local architect Jaap Lengkeek. This was a complex consisting of a series of linked "stars" of between two and six storeys in height. Lengkeek had designed the building to fit into the landscape, and the surrounding "ecological" garden was part of that approach. After the complex was completed in 1987, the States decided to leave the city centre entirely. Lengkeek and his partner Jan de Jong were asked to design a new provincial government building, to be built next to the "stars" complex. They added two new stars: a low-rise Assembly Chamber for the States and a 65-metre-high office block. The complex is designed to be energy-efficient, for example having an energy-storage system. Like the 1970s building, the new complex gives a prominent place to works of art. In the new building, there are five large snow crystals by the Amsterdam artist Titia Ex. The building was officially opened on 3 April 1996, and the Provincial States of Utrecht moved into their new home. The city-centre buildings were sold, although the Pope's House continued to be used for various events.

The Assembly Hall of the States at the new provincial buildings in Rijnsweerd.



planning authority was set up in 1929, one of whose tasks was to preserve the beauty of the countryside.

In the 1950s, groundwater quality was a major priority and in 1957, the Central Netherlands Water Supply Company was set up. Later, the emphasis shifted to the quality of surface waters. During the 1970s, the Province took over the municipal sewage processing plants. This was financed by means of a water-pollution levy based on the principle of "the polluter pays". This approach led to a major reduction in pollution, particularly of the Loosdrecht and Vinkeveen lakes. The role of the environment in provincial policy became so important that in 1972 a separate unit was set up within the Provincial Department of Public Works and Water Management to deal with it.

In a way, the classic task of supervising the water boards was made easier by the reduction in their number: in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, there were numerous mergers, leaving only a small number of large entities. As of 1 January 1994, the Crooked Rhine, Leidse Rijn and Lopikerwaard areas (together with part of Amstel and Vecht and various unregulated areas) were combined, bringing most of the Province of Utrecht within the remit of a single District Water Control Board: the Hoogheemraadschap Stichtse Rijnlanden.

Another new job for the Provincial Department of Public Works and Water Management was to supervise land consolidation. This process, intended to improve agricultural efficiency by restructuring landholdings, improving drainage and constructing access roads, had started in the 1920s. The role of the provinces was significantly increased when the Land Consolidation Act was amended in 1954.

These new tasks for provincial government related, either directly or indirectly, to water management, which had already been made one of the duties of the States in the Sticht Landbrief. Since the Second World War, a number of entirely unrelated aspects of life have also come to be dealt with by the Province, for example sport, recreation, healthcare and culture. This involves implementing policy that was previously the task of other authorities, for example the legislation dealing with homes for the elderly, which was transferred from the national government to the provinces in the 1980s. It also involves the provision of funding and managing developments on a variety of fronts.

The Province's duties also include stimulating the economy. It was for this reason that the Economic and Technological Institute (ETI) was set up after the War; until 1994, this worked in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce. Major economic successes have been achieved within the Province of Utrecht. Employment, especially in the services sector, increased dramatically towards the end of the twentieth century; in mid-2002, the Utrecht region was found to have the lowest level of unemployment in the whole European Union: 1.2% compared to an national average of 2.8% and to a European figure of 7.6%. Unfortunately, this prosperity is now behind us and in the near future a wide-ranging policy of economic incentives will again be required.

The provincial civil service, shown in late 1948 in the Assembly Chamber of the States.



In the years around 1990, negative reactions to the continuing increase in government intervention led to calls for less interference on the part of the authorities. As part of the process of privatisation, the States decided to dispose of the Province's holding in UNA and REMU, the successors to PEGUS and PUEM. Various water management tasks were transferred to the water boards, as had in fact already happened in the 1580s. As of 1 January 1997, supervision of water quality was transferred to the water boards.

BETTER EQUIPPED FOR THE TASK

The increase in the number of tasks falling to the provinces after the Second World War led to a corresponding increase in the size of the provincial civil service. In 1950, a hundred and twenty-five people worked for the Provincial Clerk's Office, the Department of Public Works and Water Management and the Provincial Planning Authority; by 1980 this was just under 900. Growth then eased off, with the total figure increasing in the course of the 1980s to slightly more than 1,000. There was a radical reorganisation in 1989 whereby the three earlier components were incorporated into a new structure. Besides units headed by the Provincial Clerk and a Support Unit, this consisted of four departments dealing with Public Space & Green Areas; Water & the Environment; Roads, Traffic & Transport; and Welfare, Economics & Administration. In the first five years of the 1990s, the number of provincial civil servants grew to more than 1,100. When areas such as water quality management were hived off, this was later reduced by approximately 250. The increase in the number of civil servants had radical consequences for their accommodation, and there was constant rebuilding and extension work in and around the Pope's House. The Department of Public Works and Water Management, for example, moved to the other side of Achter Sint Pieter Street in 1947, and into a new building there in 1961. Ultimately, however, it became

clear that the housing problem could not be solved by providing office space in the city centre, and in 1977 a large number of staff moved to the new provincial offices in Rijnsweerd (on the eastern fringes of the city), being followed in 1996 by the rest of the civil service, together with the Provincial States, Provincial Executive and the Queen's Commissioner. A new tower block was built next to the 20-year-old low-rise building, with a new Assembly Chamber for the States at its base.

The expansion of the provincial civil service naturally led to much higher wage costs. In 1948, the wage bill for staff of the Provincial Clerk's Department was still less than 400,000 guilders, but ten years later it had risen to more than one million, and in another ten years to almost 4 million. In the course of the 1970s there was a similar trend at the Provincial Planning Authority and at the Provincial Department of Public Works and Water Management. By the end of the twentieth century, the Province was spending an annual total of about NLG 73 million on staff costs, although this represented only part of provincial expenditure as a whole.

The extension of the tasks of the Province expressed itself in a major increase in the number of items that needed to be budgeted for, ranging from rat poison to subsidies for music schools. Total expenditure (excluding investment) was a good 3 million guilders in 1948 (the first normal financial year after the War), but in less than twenty years it increased by a factor of ten. Starting in the mid-1960s, there was an exponential increase in expenditure. After a period of stasis in about 1980 (when the figure was approximately NLG 200 million), there was again a period of major growth, leading to a total of almost NLG 700 million in 1996.

Since then, the level of expenditure has fluctuated very considerably. The major increase in provincial expenditure in the 50 years since the end of the Second World War has in part been the result of inflation, which was particularly high in the 1970s. While it has been in line with the overall rise in public expenditure, it is also partly the result of the Province taking on new tasks. In the mid-1980s,



Protest by civil servants against the proposed 3.5% wage cut in the Assembly Chamber of the States in October 1983.



Provincial
Executive, 2002

for example, expenditure increased due to the fact that the legislation on homes for the elderly came to be implemented by the provinces; in a number of cases, however, it suddenly decreased when various services were privatised or contracted out in the 1990s.

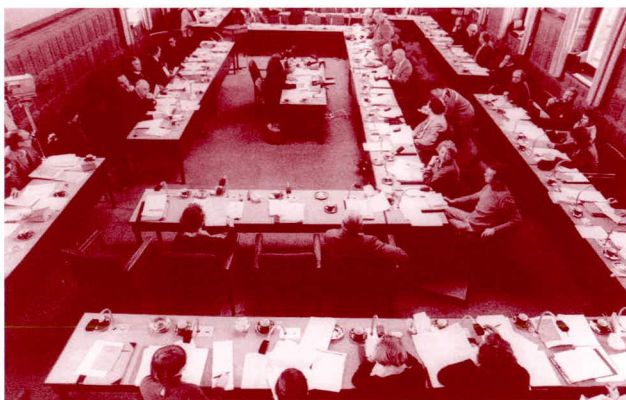
To cover its increasing costs, the Province was able to make use of the Provincial Financing Fund introduced in 1948. In the early 1950s, this covered a third of the Province's income, a proportion that later increased. In addition, there was already income in the form of a surcharge on national taxation, dividends on shares in utility companies, and the interest generated by invested capital and loans extended by the Province. In the case of public works, which accounted for more than half of provincial expenditure, central government funding for roads and water management covered most of that expenditure. The same applied to the implementation of new tasks by the Province, for example the legislation on homes for the elderly.

Besides changes in the provincial civil service, there were also changes in the government of the Province. The 1850 Provinces Act was replaced in 1962 by a new one, and 1966 saw the introduction of a new set of "Instructions" for the Queen's Commissioner. In 1983, the Provinces Act was amended in line with the constitutional amendment adopted in the same year. The new system codified the trend for the provinces to become an independent tier of government positioned between the state and the municipalities. The Queen's Commissioner, originally – as "Governor" – a state civil servant whose task it was to counteract any tendency towards his province acting independently, now became the head of the provincial government and was no longer appointed for life but for six years (with reappointment being possible).

The Queen's Commissioners for the Province who succeeded Reinalda once more matched the classic Utrecht profile. Constant Theodore Emmo Count van Lynden van Sandenburg (1954-1970), Pieter Jacobus Verdam (1970-1980), Pieter van Dijke (1980-1985) and Pieter Adriaan Cornelis Beelaerts van Blokland (1985-1997) all came from the ARP or the CHU, had extensive experience in local and provincial government, and, with the exception of Van Dijke, came from families that had been active in public administration for generations. Verdam and Beelaerts had also been government ministers. The appointment of Beelaerts's successor brought in a figure – as in 1946 – with an entirely different political background: Boele Staal is a member of the Democrats '66 party (D66).

As a matter of fact, the political background of the Queen's Commissioner is not of any great importance. He is expected to chair the Provincial States and the Provincial Executive in an impartial manner. Relationships within those bodies are in any case not as strictly polarised as they are in other levels of government. In the course of the 1970s, the larger municipalities replaced the traditional executive representing the political composition of the town or city council, implementing policy-based executives according to a majority on the council. Within the Provincial Executive, however, the major parties are represented proportionally. Deputies are selected for a period of four years by the Provincial States and resign – or can be dismissed – because of incompatibility of functions or misconduct. They continue to form part of the Provincial States, but after the Provincial elections in 2003 (as with the municipalities in 2002) a dual system is to be introduced whereby members of the Provincial Executive will be required to give up their seat in the Provincial States in the same way as government ministers cannot simultaneously be Members of Parliament. This new system will bring about major changes in the relationship between the Provincial Executive and the Provincial States, with the former having a management function and the latter a monitoring one. This increased role as representative of the people means that members of the Provincial States can also take policy initiatives and indicate policy frameworks.

The current rules for the duties of Deputies as provided for in the 1962 Provinces Act are in line with these trends. The Provincial Executive is an executive committee



Meeting of the Provincial States, May 1985.

formed from the provincial administration. The main task of the Provincial Executive has not changed since this body was set up (as the Chamber of Deputies) in 1578: it prepares the decisions that are to be taken by the Provincial States and then implements them. Each Deputy is responsible for a number of portfolios covering some of the tasks of the Province that we have looked at: spatial planning, the environment, care, culture, provincial finance etc. The governmental task of the Deputies also involves implementing regulations imposed by the national government within the framework of decentralisation. The Provincial Executive, whose meetings – unlike those of the Provincial States – are not held in public, is obliged to inform the States about all elements of policy unless this is contrary to the public interest. After the Second World War, the number of members remained at six, but after the elections in 1999 was increased to seven. One member resigned but was not replaced. When this book was published, the Executive was thus back to its old size.

For the Provincial States, the 1962 Provinces Act served to codify their more significant role; this was further reinforced by the amendment that took effect in 1983. The States now meet each month and their members also carry out a great deal of work in committee. Committees of the States deal with the various areas of policy that are the concern of provincial politics. The chairmen of the different parties meet to discuss confidential matters. Although there has been an enormous increase in the amount of work required of members of the Provincial States, membership is still considered to be a part-time job carried out in addition to one's normal work, and one for which one receives only expenses. Membership of the Provincial Executive, however, is a full-time salaried appointment. Parties within the States are supported by an assistant, and can also call in the aid of the civil service. The number of members rose from 41 to 55 in 1962, to 59 eight years later, eventually reaching 63 in 1991.

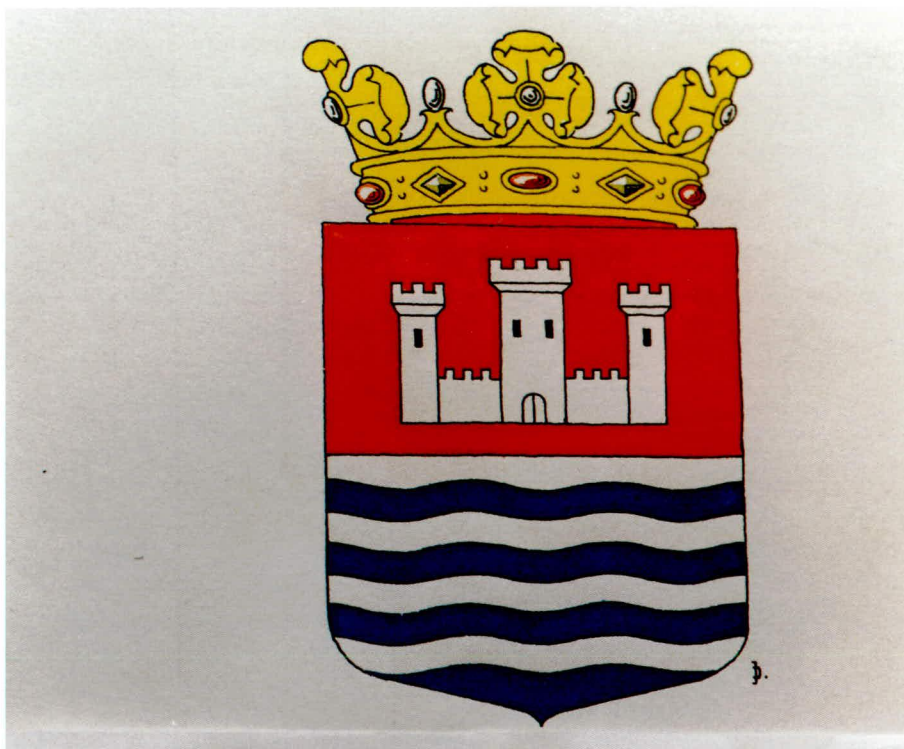
Elections to the Provincial States caused few surprises during the first 20 years after the War. Despite calls for political modernisation, the old parties were resurrected, even if in some cases it was under a new name. The RKSP, for example, changed its name to Catholic People's Party (KVP); the SDAP became part of the broader-based Labour Party (PvdA); while the liberals regrouped to form the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). A number of small parties such as the communists (CPN) and the strict protestants (SGP) were also represented in the Provincial States. The denominational parties constituted the majority, having particularly strong support in farming areas. The KVP, for example, was by far the strongest party in the largely Catholic municipalities of the Crooked Rhine area. The social democrats drew most of their support from the towns and from smaller but industrialised municipalities such as Zuilen, while the liberals did well in prosperous commuter towns such as De Bilt, Zeist and Doorn.

The 1966 elections brought about a change in this picture, with the PvdA suffering major losses and the denominational parties minor ones. The Farmers' Party led by Hendrik Koekoek won four seats in the Provincial States (only to disappear

again four years later). The VVD and the newcomer D66 were the major winners. The KVP lost a large number of seats, and for the first time in half a century the denominational parties no longer held the majority. The ARP, too, had lost seats, and suffered a further major defeat in 1974, as did the CHU. The three losing parties then formed a joint Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA) and this new combination was successful at the elections in 1978. From then on, the Christian Democrats generally won about 20 seats, only to suffer major losses once more in the 1990s.

From 1970 on, the PvdA operated in combination with other parties: in 1970 with the Radical Political Party (PPR) and the Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP) as the Progressive Agreement Group (PAK); in 1974 with D66 and the PPR as the Progressive Combination Utrecht (PKU); and then twice with a PvdA/PPR list. Since 1987, the PvdA has once more being represented independently in the Provincial States. The PPR, PSP and CPN have combined to form Green Left (GroenLinks). The provincial election results for the left-wing parties are variable, as are those for the CDA.

The only party that has made steady long-term gains is the VVD. At the first post-war elections, the liberals were even smaller than the communists (CPN). In the 1950s and 1960s, the VVD gradually increased its share of the vote but still failed to gain any seats on the Provincial Executive, only succeeding in doing so after its election success in 1970. In 1995, the VVD jumped from 13 to 21 seats, making it by far the largest party; four years later it remained the largest party, despite losing some seats.



Coat of arms of Nieuwegein (founded 1971), referring to the lost medieval town of 't Gein.



The new provincial buildings in Rijnsweerd under construction, 1995.

With the abolition of compulsory voting in 1970, the turnout at elections has become an uncertain factor, with the number of voters falling from 94.7% of those eligible to 68.7%. In an attempt to prevent voter apathy brought about by “over-frequent” elections, changes were made in the late 1980s so that elections to the Provincial States and to municipal councils would no longer be held in the same year. The period of office of the Provincial States elected in 1982 was therefore extended to 1987. This still did not help, and voter turnout reached a low point of 47.5% at the elections in 1999.

Partly because of the major fluctuations in the results, members of the Provincial States now hold their seat for a much shorter average period than in the past. In 1997 the average was 7.5 years, compared to 14.5 years precisely a century before, when H.G. van der Poel had been a member for no less than 47 years. In 1997, the chairman of the SGP, W. Nagtegaal, was the longest-serving member, at 27 years. Currently, the chairman of the VVD, C.G.J. van den Oosten, is the longest-serving member, having first been elected in 1974.

BOUNDARIES REDRAWN

The Province has always played a major role in preparations to redraw municipal boundaries, although the final decision is of course taken by Parliament. Since the reorganisation in 1857, there had for many years been hardly any changes in municipal boundaries; that situation changed considerably after the Second World War. The first changes (in 1954) applied to the area around Utrecht itself, and were followed by a series of other reorganisations. The one taking place in

2001, which added Vleuten-De Meern to Utrecht, Maartensdijk to De Bilt and Harmelen to Woerden, has left the Province with 33 municipalities, in other words, half the number that there were fifty years ago. The Crooked Rhine region, for example, now has only three municipalities – Wijk bij Duurstede, Bunnik and Houten – as opposed to nine in 1960 and 13 before the reorganisation of 1857.

In most cases, the new municipalities were given the name of the largest town or village they contained, but in two cases an entirely new name was introduced. In 1971, Jutphaas and Vreeswijk were merged to create Nieuwegein, whose name refers to the lost medieval town of Gein. Mijdrecht, Wilnis and Vinkeveen-en-Waverveen were merged in 1988 as “De Ronde Venen” (i.e. The Round Fens). The newly created municipality of Nieuwegein was also designated an urban growth centre, and would ultimately become the third largest town in the Province after Utrecht and Amersfoort. It should be remarked that such municipal reorganisation often meets with a great deal of resistance, particularly in smaller municipalities which are merged into larger ones. Vleuten-De Meern, for example, strongly resisted being subsumed within Utrecht.

The boundaries of the Province itself, which were defined in 1820, have also been subject to alteration in the period since the Second World War. Two towns captured by Floris V in the thirteenth century were transferred from the Province of South Holland to Utrecht: Oudewater in 1970 and Woerden 20 years later. Vianen became part of the city of Utrecht in 2001, while Loosdrecht was transferred to North Holland. At various times, small-scale corrections have also been made to the boundary with Gelderland near Amersfoort and Veenendaal.

Far more drastic than this tinkering with boundaries are the various plans that have been proposed for a total restructuring of the Dutch provinces. Wilhelm Friedrich de Gaay Fortman, Minister of the Interior in the Cabinet headed by Joop den Uyl (PvdA) from 1973 to 1977, proposed dividing the country up into 24 regions. The thinking behind this was that a system of smaller units would bring the middle tier of public administration “closer” to citizens. Opposition to this proposal was strongest in those provinces with a powerful sense of provincial identity, for example North Brabant and Limburg; Friesland had already been exempted from the proposal for that very reason. In Utrecht, such feelings are far less powerful; there are few residents of the old Sticht, for example, who know the words to the provincial anthem introduced in 1952. By contrast, a far greater number of Limburgers know the words to that province’s regional anthem.

The Minister’s plans were quietly shelved; some 20 years later, a further proposal for a system of urban provinces was also dropped after it had failed to gain a majority in the referendum held in Amsterdam. Restructuring of the system of provinces came under discussion once more at the start of the new millennium. This time, it would not involve splitting up provinces but merging them into larger units. The idea of halving the number of provinces so as to produce six regions was one of the many topics touched on by Pim Fortuyn in a book which bore the challenging title *De Puinhopen van acht jaar Paars* (The Mess left by

Eight Years of the "Purple" Cabinet). Interestingly enough, Fortuyn based his proposed new system on historical arguments. It was for that reason that he wished to leave the Province of Utrecht as it was: it had "always been independent", he stated.

At about the same time, in March 2002, Leendert Geelhoed – Advocate General at the European Court of Justice and a former top civil servant in The Hague – presented a detailed plan that also envisaged merging provinces so as to leave a total of six. As in 1798, the Province of Utrecht would be divided up into three new units: Utrecht itself, together with Almere and Lelystad, as part of a "Randstad" combination with North and South Holland (the "Randstad" is the major conurbation stretching from Rotterdam to Amsterdam); the Heuvelrug with Overijssel and Gelderland; and the rest with Flevoland without the towns. Geelhoed believes that this would put the new regions in a stronger position within the context of a united Europe: "As a region, Bavaria actually means something in Brussels – it's taken seriously." Geelhoed believes that, by that standard, the present Dutch provinces are too small. "If Brussels were to have to deal with a 'Province of Holland' that included Rotterdam, Utrecht, Amsterdam and The Hague, it would be dealing with something of real substance that it could not ignore." Geelhoed sees the present system of provinces as like firing buckshot: "You can't really shoot anything much bigger than a sparrow, and certainly not big game."

At the moment (early 2003), plans for restructuring the provinces do not enjoy the same high priority as a year ago. The CDA/VVD/Fortuynist coalition government led by Jan-Peter Balkenende restricted its changes to the structure of the lower levels of government to the introduction – already planned for some considerable time – of a system whereby burgomasters would be elected, rather than appointed by the Queen as at present. During the annual Interprovincial Consultations in September 2002, the Minister of the Interior, Johan Remkes, was highly critical of the Geelhoed proposals, saying that he preferred "to deal with problems in a practical and concrete manner within the existing overall structure of the country's administrative organisation: national government – provinces – municipalities".

The fall of the Balkenende government on 16 October 2002 put a stop for the present to reform proposals in all areas of policy. There is no longer much danger of the abolition of the Province of Utrecht in the near future. It would seem that – after the Duke of Alba, Napoleon and De Gaay Fortman – the Sticht will also be able to survive Geelhoed. Nevertheless, history is full of surprises and no political structure has ever proved to be eternal, although some regional entities do seem to last for a very long time. The Sticht – which can look back on a history of more than seven centuries – is one of the more stable.

When we look back on seven centuries of provincial government in Utrecht, we can identify a series of fluctuations in the relationship between the executive power and the Provincial States. The Bishop of Utrecht, originally the powerful representative of the German Emperor, became to be increasingly wedged in between the various forces within his temporal domains – the Sticht – and beyond. In 1375, he granted a number of rights to the representatives of the different classes of society or “estates” assembled in the “States of the Nedersticht”. These monitored the activities of the Bishop and there was fruitful co-operation between them until the area came to be dominated by the advancing might of the Dukes of Burgundy. Their successor Charles V incorporated the temporal domains of the Bishop of Utrecht into his Empire, and restricted the powers of the States.

The revolt against Charles’s son Philip II produced a federal republic in which the States of the various different provinces constituted the central, sovereign government. The States of Utrecht also came to have greater powers than ever before, particularly during periods when those powers were not restricted by the rule of a Stadholder. The imposition of the Batavian Republic in 1795 introduced an entirely new system of government inspired by the example of France, which had conquered the country. A democratically elected provincial government was set up and the name “States” disappeared. The Province itself also disappeared – and was revived – twice, in 1798 and in 1811.

The new structure introduced in 1814 reintroduced the term “province”, together with the old boundaries of the Province of Utrecht and the Provincial States, but it did not bring back the old powers. The King’s authority was exercised by a Governor, and little was possible in the way of opposition. The Provinces Act of 1850, which was based on the new constitution introduced two years previously, gave greater powers to the Provincial States. Since then, the powers of the States and the tasks of the Province have gradually increased. Over the past 25 years, various radical proposals have been put forward to reform and reorganise the system of government at provincial level. Up to now, however, none of these have actually been implemented. The twelve Dutch provinces constitute a strong tier of government with historic roots. Most of them, including the Province of Utrecht, are administrative units older than the Kingdom of the Netherlands itself.

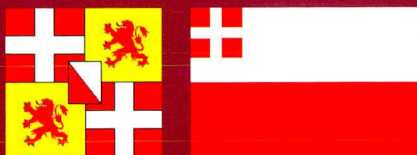
THE COAT OF ARMS AND FLAG OF THE PROVINCE OF UTRECHT

The arms of the Province of Utrecht were defined in 1858 as follows: "Quarterly of gules and or, I and IV a cross argent, II and III a lion rampant gules, armed and langued azure; over all an inescutcheon, per bend argent and gules. The shield is crested by a coronet of five leaves or. Supporters: two lions rampant guardant or." In normal language, this "blazon" means: a shield divided into four quarters, the first and third red with a silver cross, and the second and fourth gold with a standing red lion whose claws and tongue are blue. In the centre of the arms is a small shield divided diagonally into a silver and a red half. The arms are surmounted by a coronet with five fleurs-de-lis and supported by two gold lions standing and facing the observer.

This coat of arms bears witness to the administrative changes that the Sticht has gone through over the centuries. The original arms of the bishop were a silver cross on a red field; these came from the banner of the German emperor, whose liegeman the bishop was, and are retained in the top left-hand and bottom right-hand quarters of the arms of the Province. The annexation of the Low Countries by Charles V meant that the Nedersticht became subordinate to Holland, with which it shared its Stadhouder. The red lion of Holland was introduced, sometimes with and sometimes without the addition of the silver cross of the Sticht or of the red and white arms of the city of Utrecht.

After their "abjuration" of Philip II in 1581, the States of Utrecht decided to combine these different arms into the present quartered arms with an inescutcheon (a small central shield), although the latter element was often omitted during the seventeenth century, only becoming an integral part of the coat of arms in 1705. The reorganisation of the "departments" in 1798 meant the disappearance of the Province, and thus also its coat of arms. The latter returned when Utrecht was resurrected (as a department) in 1802, but without the inescutcheon. The resulting arms were used until 1810, when Utrecht became part of the Département du Zuyderzée. The revival of the Province led to the reintroduction of the arms of 1705, and these were made definitive in 1858. Since then, the only variations have been in the lions that support the shield.

The Provincial States of Utrecht decided to introduce a provincial flag only in 1952: "Two horizontal stripes, the upper white and the lower red; in the top corner of the white stripe on the flagstaff side, a red square two-thirds of the height of that stripe, charged with a white cross." An earlier design (1938), produced on the occasion of the fortieth year of Queen Wilhelmina's reign, was considered to be much too fussy. The Dutch Herald's College eventually proposed the flag described above, and this was accepted by the States.



DIVISION OF SEATS IN THE PROVINCIAL STATES OF UTRECHT, 1927-2003

TABLE 1	1927	1931	1935	1939
SDAP	8	8	9	10
RKSP	11	11	11	12
ARP	8	8	7	8
CHU	6	6	5	5
SGP	2	2	2	1
VDB	2	2	1	2
Vrijheidsbond/LSP	4	4	2	2
NSB			4	1
Total	41	41	41	41

TABLE 2	1946
PvdA*	12
KVP/CDA**	11
ARP	7
CHU	5
SGP	1
VVD	2
CPN/PSP/PPR***	3
D'66	
GPV/RPF	
Overig***	
SP	
Total	41

950	1954	1958	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978	1982	1987	1991	1995	1999
1	12	13	17	13	15	20	18	12	16	10	9	10
2	12	12	15	14	12	8	21	18	19	19	12	13
	6	5	7	6	6	4						
	5	5	7	8	7	5						
	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	4	5	6	7	10	15	13	17	11	13	21	18
	1		1	2	1	2	1	3	4	4	5	8
					5		4	5	5	11	7	5
					1	1		2	2	3	4	4
			4			2				1	2	1
											1	2
1	41	41	55	55	59	59	59	59	59	63	63	63

* Between 1970 and 1982 combined with other left-wing parties

** In 1974 KVP, ARP and CHU merged to form the Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA)

*** Increasing co-operation between the small left-wing parties in the years after 1970 finally led to the formation of the Green Left Party

**** CDA

This list gives the names of the bishops of Utrecht up to the point when they were required to give up their temporal power in 1528. It includes the names of “anti-bishops”, indicating these by means of indentation. The first three individuals on the list were leaders of the Utrecht church, but not actually bishops. After 1528, it was the Habsburg sovereigns Charles V and Philip II who ruled Utrecht, although they were actually represented by Stadholders. After the “abjuration” of Philip II, that function continued to exist, with the Stadholder – formally the servant of the now sovereign States – wielding great power. It was only during the various “Stadholderless Periods” that the States enjoyed full sovereignty. In 1795, a system was introduced whereby the chairmanship or presidency would rotate. In 1807, the “department” of Utrecht was given a landdrost (i.e. a chief administrator or bailiff), and when French domination of the Netherlands came to an end, he was replaced by a Governor. In 1850, this title was changed to King’s Commissioner, and, with the accession of Queen Wilhelmina in 1890, to Queen’s Commissioner. During the German occupation of the Netherlands (1940–1945), the highest official was referred to as the Provincial Commissioner.

BISHOPS

Willibrord	690 – 739	Dirk van Holland	1196 – 1197
Bonifatius	739 – 754	Dirk van Ahr	1197 – 1212
Gregorius	ca. 740? – 774	Otto I van Gelre	1212 – 1215
		Otto II van Lippe	1215 – 1227
Alberic I	ca. 777 – ca. 784	Wilbrand van Oldenburg	1227 – 1233
Theodard	ca. 784 – ca. 790	Otto III van Holland	1233 – 1249
Hamacar	ca. 790 – 806	Hendrik van Vianden	1249 – 1267
Ricfried	806 – 815/816	Jan van Nassau (bishop-elect)	1268 – 1290
Frederic	815/816 – 835/837	Jan van Sierck	1291 – 1296
Alberic II	838 – 844	Willem Berthout	1296 – 1301
Eginhard	844/845	Gwijde van Avesnes	1301 – 1317
Liudger	ca. 850 – ca. 854	Frederik van Sierck	1317 – 1322
Hunger	ca. 854 – 866	Jacob van Oudshoorn	1322
Alfried	867 – 867/869	Jan van Bronkhorst	1322 – 1323
Odilbald	867/879 – 898	Jan van Diest	1323 – 1340
Egilbert	899	Nicolaas van Caputiis	1341 – 1342
Radbod	899 – 917	Jan van Arkel	1342 – 1364
Balderik	917 – 975	Jan van Virmenburg	1364 – 1371
Folcmar or Poppo	976 – 990	Arnoud van Horn	1371 – 1378
Boudewijn I	991 – 995	Floris van Wevelinkhoven	1379 – 1393
Ansried	995 – 1010	Frederik van Blankenheim	1393 – 1423
Adelbold	1010 – 1026	Rudolf van Diepholt	1423 – 1455
Bernold	1026 – 1054	Zweder van Culemborg	1425 – 1432
Willem	1054 – 1076	Walraven van Meurs	1434 – 1449
Koenraad	1076 – 1099	Gijsbrecht van Brederode	1455 – 1456
Burchard	1100 – 1112	David van Bourgondië	1456 – 1496
Godebald	1114 – 1127	Engelbert van Kleef (protector)	1482 – 1483
Andries van Cuijk	1128 – 1139	Frederik van Baden	1496 – 1516
Hartbert	1139 – 1150	Filips van Bourgondië	1517 – 1524
Herman van Horne	1151 – 1156	Hendrik van Beieren (bishop-elect)	1524 – 1528
Govert van Rhenen	1156 – 1178		
Boudewijn II van Holland	1178 – 1196		
Arnold van Isenburg	1196 – 1197		

SOVEREIGNS

Charles V	1528 – 1555
Philip II	1555 – 1581

STADHOLDERS

Anthonis van Lalaing, Count of Hoogstraten	1529 – 1540
René van Chalon, Prince of Orange	1540 – 1544
Lodewijk van Vlaanderen, Lord of Praat	1544 – 1547
Maximiliaan van Bourgondië, Lord of Veere	1547 – 1558
William (I), Prince of Orange, Count of Nassau	1558 – 1567
Maximiliaan van Hénin-Liétard, Count of Bossu	1567 – 1577
William I, Prince of Orange	1577 – 1584
Joost de Soete, Lord of Villers	1584 – 1585
Adolf van Meurs, Count of Nieuwenaar	1585 – 1589
Maurits	1590 – 1625
Frederik Hendrik	1625 – 1647
William II	1647 – 1650
First Stadholderless Period	1650 – 1672
William III	1672 – 1702
Second Stadholderless Period	1672 – 1702
William IV	1747 – 1751
William V	1751 – 1795

LANDDROST (I.E. CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR) OF THE DEPARTMENT OF UTRECHT

J.H. van Lynden van Lunenburg	1807 – 1810
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GOVERNORS

J. M. Baron van Tuyll van Serooskerken van Vleuten	1814 – 1828
Florent Lord Ertborn	1828 – 1830
Lodewijk van Toulon	1831 – 1840
Frederik van de Poll	1840 – 1850

KING'S/QUEEN'S COMMISSIONERS

S. Baron van Heemstra	1850 – 1858
Jhr. (esquire) H.H. Röell	1858 – 1860
Jhr. (esquire) E.C.U. van Doorn	1860 – 1880
J.A.G. Baron de Vos van Steenwijk	1880 – 1882
E.H. s'Jacob	1882 – 1888
A. Baron Schimmelpenninck van der Oye	1888 – 1905
F.D. Count Schimmelpenninck	1905 – 1914
F.A.C. Count van Lynden van Sandenburg	1914 – 1924
H.Th. s'Jacob	1924 – 1934
L.H.N. Bosch, Lord of Rosenthal	1934 – 1941
F.E. Müller	1941
W.B. Engelbrecht	1941 – 1945
L.H.N. Bosch, Lord of Rosenthal	1945 – 1946
M.A. Reinalda	1947 – 1954
C.Th.E. Count van Lynden van Sandenburg	1954 – 1970
P.J. Verdam	1970 – 1980
P. van Dijke	1980 – 1985
Jhr. (esquire) P.A.C. Beelaerts van Blokland	1985 – 1997
B. Staal	1998 –

FURTHER READING

FOR FOOTNOTES AND A FULL BIBLIOGRAPHY, PLEASE SEE THE DUTCH EDITION OF THIS BOOK:

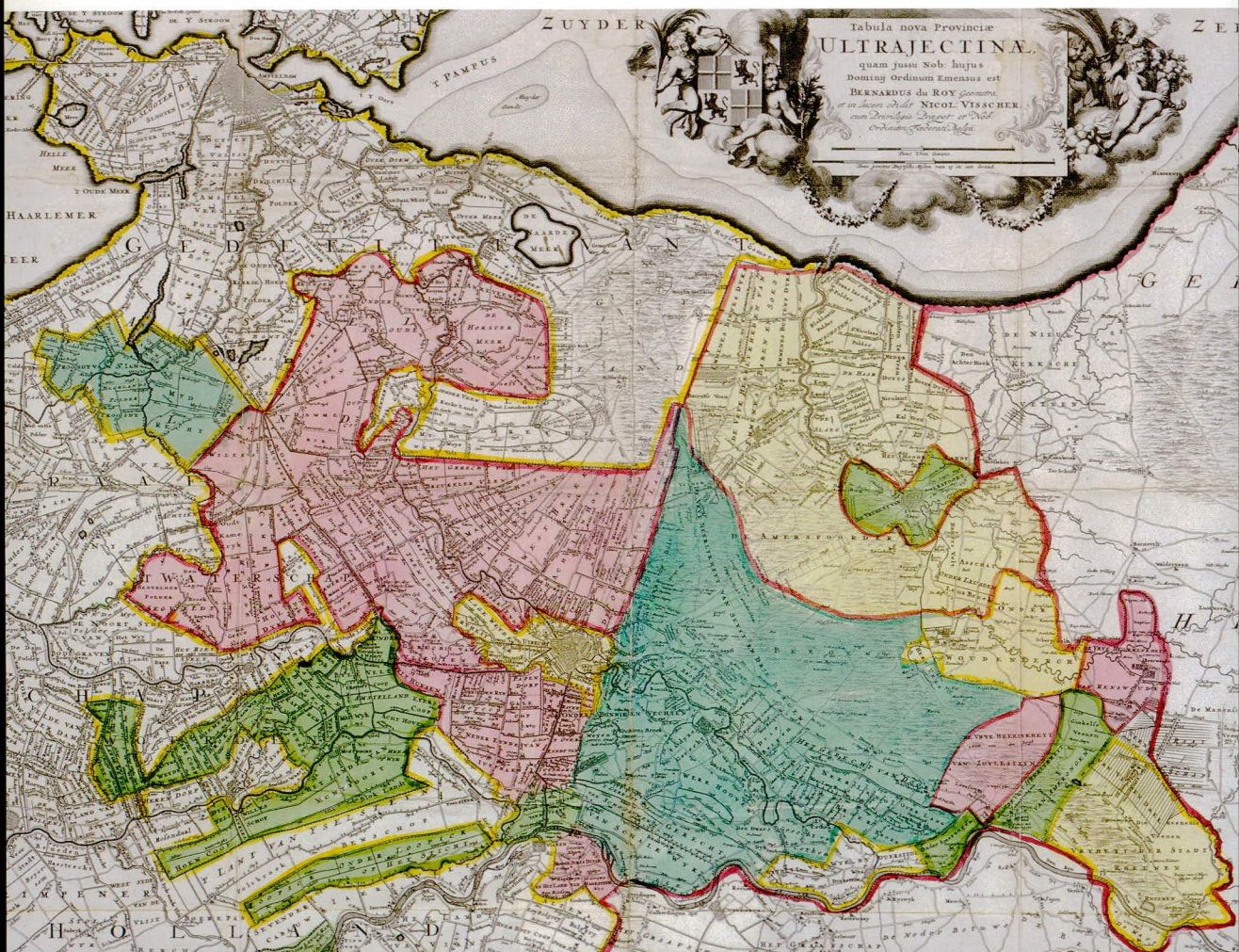
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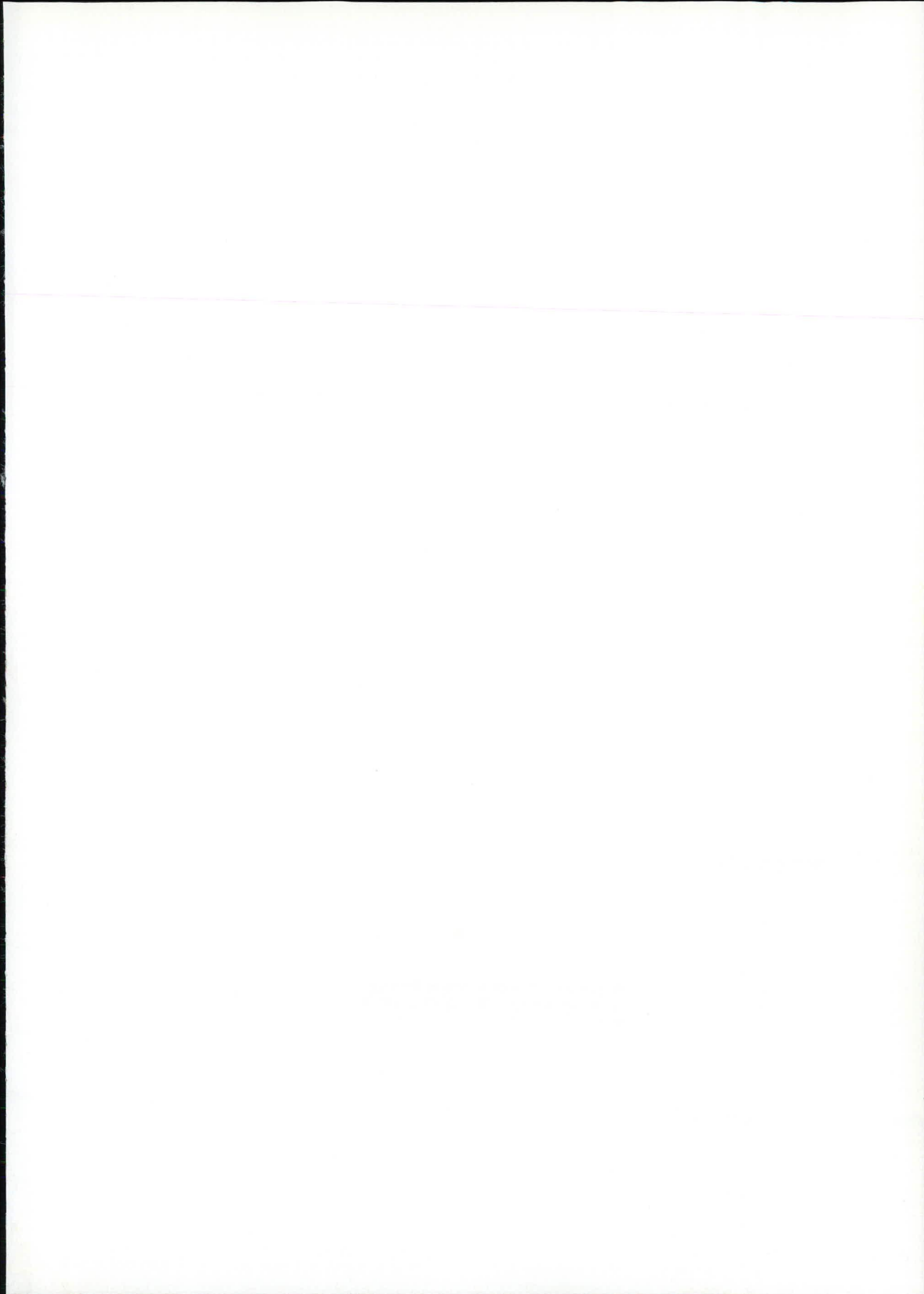
NOTES

¹ "Voert selle wij ende onse nacomelinghe, bisscope voers., alle man lantrecht doen, alse in onsen Gestichte ghelegen is"; in modern Dutch "Wij and onze opvolgers zullen iedereen recht doen volgens het Stichtse landrecht." Stichtse *Landbrief*, art. 9, in: H.L.Ph. Leeuwenberg and L. van Tongerloo (ed.), *Van Standen tot Staten. 600 jaar Staten van Utrecht* (Utrecht, 1975), 13, 15.

² (Note by translator) From this point on, the translation uses the accepted modern translation "Provincial Executive" for *Gedeputeerde Staten*, rather than the somewhat "historical" term "Chamber of Deputies".

Tabula nova provinciae Ultrajectinae.
Map of the Province of Utrecht.
(Copperplate engraving by L. van Anse
after B. de Roy, c. 1680.)





COLOPHON

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The provinces are the forgotten face of public administration in the Netherlands. Voter turnout at provincial elections is poor, and sometimes there are plans to abolish the provinces altogether. Yet few people realise that most Dutch provinces are older than the Netherlands as a whole.

This book traces the history of Utrecht's provincial administration from the Middle Ages until the present. The provincial assembly dates back to 1375, when a bishop desperate for credit signed the Stichtse Landbrief, a charter of rights that granted far-reaching concessions to the local nobility. "We and our successors shall do justice by all," he swore. The result was a profitable collaboration with the representatives of those nobles: the States of Utrecht.

While the States went on to know glory, they were also to taste despair, such as their dissolution under the Duke of Alba in 1570, the abolition of the province under Napoleon, and their suspension during the Second World War. But after each of these threats to their existence, the States were re-established.

In the years since 1945, the duties of the province have expanded so much that their policies now affect the daily lives of each and every citizen, covering everything from waste-water purification to care for the elderly, and from road-repairs to subsidies sports clubs.

The author, Renger de Bruin (1956), is curator of the history department at Centraal Museum Utrecht and Professor of Utrecht Studies at Utrecht University