

Welcome to episode 12! With the Dutch on the rocks, facing down their darkest hours, and with their Anglo-French enemies tearing up all before them as they reached closer to the beating heart of the republic, it seemed as though nothing could resist the ambition or power of the two cousins. The Dutch, it seemed, were to be a mere footnote to history; a tragic case of a republic overstepping its place in the world. Few statesmen remained in the republic to redeem this grim picture – how, one could reasonably ask, was a state the size of the Netherlands meant to resist the forces of the strongest land power arguably in the world? Johan de Witt and a few of his allies believed they had the answer. It would not be pretty, it would not be easy, and in many places it would not be popular, but he was determined to prevent the downfall of his country of birth, either to the external threats on its independence, or the divisions which seemed to destroy it from within. It was a herculean task that the GP had before him, but just like in 1654 and 1665, he faced it with a nerve, with a tenacity and perhaps a whiff of resignation, that was matched only by his domestic rival, the Prince of Orange. Let's get to it, as I take you to mid-June 1672, with the DR in the throes of the most trying period in its history, the *rampjaar*.

"The declaration of war against the States-General of the United Provinces has not been at all well received by the common people here; they would much rather see the weapons of this kingdom turned against France."

The words of an anonymous London correspondent for the Dutch pamphlet the *Sincere Harlem Current*, 15th April 1672.

The great judgement of his enemy, the most satisfying revenge, the terrible wrath of the two cousins' war, finally seemed to have come to pass. Charles II must have looked at the situation unfolding in the Netherlands with a mixture of glee and ambition. By the end of June 1672, after barely three months' worth of campaigning, the Dutch Republic of old seemed to be buckling at record speed under the multiple invasions, domestic squabbles and sheer panic and confusion which reigned across the state. It seemed only logical that in this position, with its best strategic defences either bypassed, seized or coming under direct attack, that the Dutch would sue for peace, and thus would follow the next phase of the Anglo-French plan: dividing the spoils. It was just as well William of Orange was on hand, and it was just as well that the regent party continued to be perceived by the common people as the faction most responsible for the calamities which had befallen their country. Little

thought was given to the efforts of Johan de Witt, who worked tirelessly to keep it all together, or his brother Cornelius, who had ventured out amongst the outnumbered Dutch fleet led by Admiral de Ruyter, or the sacrifices they had made for their country. Even less thought was given by the commonality of the Netherlands towards the idea that they were as much to blame for running about like panicked amateurs, or fanning petty provincial jealousies, or opposing any efforts to deal with the invading French and Germans as a combined force.

Efforts to open the sluices and let the seawater in were constantly opposed, and within Holland only Amsterdam continued to hold firm against the cacophony of hysteria which seemed to have gradually built since the spring. So determined were the commonality to both oppose the enemy but bear no responsibility for the disasters themselves, that a cruel result emerged from the chaos which greatly benefit Charles' cause. Only the Orange party should control the Republic, the people cried; only William could lead them and only clemency on the part of England could save them from certain slavery to France. All this led conveniently to Charles' planned deployment of two members of his cabal: Buckingham and Arlington, who would soon depart for the Netherlands. As the Dutch house seemed to burn down, Charles' gambling was apparently vindicated. For all his optimism and rampant enthusiasm for sticking it to the Dutch though, one wonders if, in the back of his mind, he worried for what might befall his regime or reign should the war continue. Driven though Charles had been towards leading his nation to war with the Dutch for the second time in seven years, he was mindful of the fact that the country as a whole were not on side with these plans. Furthermore, his entire means of getting his kingdom ready for the affair had consisted of a PR campaign based on lies and deceit; not merely to the public, but to Parliament as well.

Perhaps most infamously, the always stingy Parliament had been persuaded to grant large sums in April 1671 for the purpose, Charles claimed, of increasing the strength of the fleet and aiding its ability to project its power within the TA. The TA was and had been popular in England; such factors gel with the reputed increase in anti-French sentiment since the end of the last Anglo-Dutch war, which was caused by two major factors. The first reason for anti-French sentiments were sourced from French intervention within that previous Anglo-Dutch War, an event which less aware Englishmen liked to point to as the major cause of Britain's vulnerability and loss during that conflict. The intervention of France, even while it fulfilled its terms of the defence pact with the Dutch – and not to a far enough extent, the Dutch would add – was presented as a great betrayal, and indeed Charles had lulled himself somewhat

unreasonably into a false sense of security during 1666 that France would not intervene owing to the close family ties of Bourbon with Stuart, but he had been disappointed. Disingenuous as Louis' acts on behalf of the Dutch had been, and prompted as they had been mainly by fears that the Bishop of Munster was about to seize the republic for himself, the act nonetheless persuaded many in London that France could not be trusted.

The second reason for increased anti-French feeling was the blatant and simultaneous increase in anti-Catholic feeling, fears and propaganda since the 1660s. Despite the express intentions of Charles to reduce these sentiments, the suspicion and fear of that denomination was on the rise, and 'popery' as it was known soon became the bugbear of English imaginations, determined as it was to overtake their reformed sensibilities and cast their glorious religion back to the dark ages. Such fears were hardly aided by Charles' brother James' rumoured conversion by 1670, and as we have seen in the terms of the treaty of Dover, the English would have been horrified had they discovered that Charles, however sincere he may have been, committed himself to convert as well. Though this clause wouldn't last 1670's curious redefinition of the two allies' terms thanks to the clueless Buckingham, the remnants of it would have sufficiently spooked Brits to no end.

In spring 1672, before the war erupted, Charles accepted the need to get his countrymen on side with what was about to come, and planned a way to change the growing anti-French sentiment back into those of the anti-Dutch variety. To do so he would have to construct an incident which would insult the very fibre of an Englishman's being, and in searching for such an insult he settled on England's relationship with the sea. Specifically, the idea that England owned mastery over the seas, and could thus claim the salutes from other ships as a result of this mastery. It was a strange practice, and in many ways whiffs of national honour, or at the very least a specifically English take on the concept. Popularly upheld views on the kingdom's supremacy over the seas meant that any incident in which the enemy did not give to England what this status demanded would represent an insult. So it was that Charles sought to make a mountain out of a molehill when in mid-March, less than a fortnight before actually attacking the Dutch and sparking off the war, the English yacht *Merlin* was ordered to provoke a response from a Dutch commercial fleet as it approached the Channel. First the yacht was to signal for the Dutch salute; a practice in which the opposite number essentially displayed their submission to your superior position in both rhetoric and fact by hoisting special flags on the mast. When the Dutch failed to do this, the *Merlin* fired what would later be described as a 'warning shot' directly at one of the most heavily laden Dutch vessels.

Seeing their most valuable possessions under threat, the incredulous Dutch annihilated the *Merlin*, and once it limped home Charles believed he had the tinder he needed to launch the war. In Peter Geyl's words, Charles' endeavour to 'arouse his people against the old rival over the flag issue had not been unsuccessful, but his position was weak all the same.'¹

That it was weak had much to do with Charles' untimely decision to push through the most sensitive of all legislation, that of the religious kind, right at the point when, as we saw, Catholic suspicion was at an all-time high. The declaration of indulgences, as it was called, granted Catholics the right to worship in private and apply for a licence to worship in public; it removed old restrictions and penal laws on Catholic citizens and seemed to encourage dissenters and Catholics alike out of the woodwork and back into society. I shouldn't need to tell you that such an act of tolerance was both an inherently good thing and indicative of Charles' character. The problem was, not only did it come just at the point when Catholic prejudices were soaring, it also was announced on 15th March 1672, which meant that Parliament had to deal with this controversial piece of legislation less than two weeks before the war with the Dutch broke out, and his kingdom was as divided as it could be when that occurred. This latter point would have been true, except that Charles didn't even consult Parliament when he passed the measure, he simply announced it within the confines of the Declaration which his office issued to the country. With Parliament bypassed in favour of a quick solution, worse was yet to come for the distraught English when they read deeper into the document, wherein Charles had declared his intention to make use of 'that supreme power in ecclesiastical matters which is not only inherent within us, but hath been declared and recognised so by several statutes and Acts of Parliament...';² in other words, he was merely operating within the confines of his position as the head of the realm and religion.

Yet as Antonia Fraser noted in her biography of Charles II, not everyone agreed on this interpretation either of how Britain's constitution worked or where Charles' powers within it lay. To cut past the nitty gritty details, this declaration in the short term had the effect of drawing out the different strands of English opinion; the judges opposed it because they claimed Charles didn't have the power to pass it; some MPs were furious because they had been blatantly overlooked, while some of Charles' inner circle believed that the ruling was a step in the right direction. What it really did was rouse divisions and passions at the worst possible moment, and draw attention away from the *Merlin* incident, the result being the

¹ Geyl, p. 338.

² Fraser, pp. 395-396.

British quickly forgot about why they were meant to be fighting the Dutch, and saw the circumstances of the war – with the Catholic French partner, the suspiciously shiny navy and the undercurrent of shadiness – as ill omens which in fact made many wish for peace. The situation was captured by the historian CR Boxer in his article ‘Some Second Thoughts on the Third Anglo-Dutch War, 1672-1674’, wherein he wrote:

With the deliberately staged incident of the royal yacht Merlin, which had orders to make the whole Dutch fleet strike their flags to her, and with Charles II's overblown complaints about allegedly insulting Dutch pictures, medals and pamphlets, it became increasingly obvious that, as Lord Arlington told the Foreign Affairs Committee: “our business is to break with them and yet to lay the breach at their door.” But probably the great majority of people in England, and certainly a great majority of the Nonconformists, hoped up to the last moment that another Anglo-Dutch War could somehow be avoided. Many people in the United Provinces hoped the same thing; and this hope amounted to a firm conviction with most of the Orangists. They argued that Charles could be placated by restoring his young nephew, the third William, to all the honours and dignities which his ancestors had held as stadtholders of several provinces and as commanders-in-chief of them all. These hopes and expectations on both sides of the North Sea were soon disappointed; but they were widely shared and they were only finally shattered by the traumatic events of the spring and summer of 1672.³

Even at this point, the unmistakably English historical quality of fearing, loathing and siding against France, was making itself felt. It remained to be seen if these feelings could be overcome by the sheer weight either of England's successes and the resulting – hopefully popular – gains from the conflict, or by the French destruction of the Dutch state itself. Were victory to come quickly, Charles would be able to present the affair as justification for his policy course, to MPs as much as the public. Vindication, as Charles almost certainly knew, could only be found in victory.

It is unlikely that de Witt cared one fig for the state of public opinion in England, and if he did it was only insofar as he recognised that Dutch public opinion continued to insist that London would save the republic, if affairs became too grim to resist, from being a French vassal state. With the upturn in anti-French sentiment in both states, this meant that any English overtures would reinforce this belief, and thus make de Witt's and his party's original opposition to William of Orange's promotion seem like virtual treason. Through their resistance to these promotions – the relenting after much resistance to William becoming CG, and the Perpetual Edict which banned the position of stadtholder – the Dutch regent party were presented as the faction that deliberately jeopardised Dutch security, because they

³ Boxer, p. 72.

deprived the country of the friendship which would have been enjoyed with England if only they had allowed the King's nephew to assume his rightful offices sooner. This belief, based entirely on false pretences, and one which cropped up in the previous Anglo-Dutch War, was of course cultivated and encouraged by Charles, who sought in the years since the war to sow division like weeds amongst Dutch society. Charles and his agents, it has to be said, were so successful in this strategy that a level of anger remained within segments of the Dutch populace over the victories the Dutch enjoyed in the previous war.

This explains the scene where outraged Dutch citizens stormed the town hall of Cornelius de Witt's hometown and tore the painting off the wall which depicted that admiral's role in the incredible victory in the Medway against British vessels. Charles had referred to this painting and other memorabilia which referenced the previous war in exalted terms, and thus when Dutch citizens vandalised the painting, cutting Cornelius de Witt's head out of it and then burning it, they did so in the mistaken belief that such acts of wanton arrogance and pomp had alienated their potential English ally and doomed the Dutch Republic to suffer. Instead of focusing on the bettering of an Anglo-Dutch relationship, Johan de Witt and his corrupt friends had taken bribes from Paris which meant that the state was wide open when the French and their allies arrived. With England insulted and on hand also to give the Dutch their comeuppance, the self-inflicted doom of the regent party was laid bare for all to see.

Of course de Witt had fought tooth and nail against these ridiculous ideas, just as he continued to fight against the state of turmoil which existed in the republic. As the refugees poured into Holland, laden down with all they could carry, it cast a sorry shadow over what had once been a deep-seated Dutch military pride. The Orangists, no doubt, would attempt to blame the regents for this state of affairs too, but as we saw in episodes past the sheer divisions of the Dutch state system and the arguments over issues like William's position in the state had proved fatal distractions to the more important tasks of improving the defences and preparing the army. The result of this neglect was that the overjoyed Orangists bore witness to William III as their CG, but he barely had the remnants of an army to call his own, and the defensive lines which had so often saved the republic had mostly been overcome. Into these desperate circumstances, de Witt informed an ally that 'I see our greatest misfortune not in the power or progress of the enemy, but in the general insurrection, the disobedience and reluctance of our citizens and peasants, by which the strength of authority is sapped and action everywhere held up.' Similarly did the deputies of the States of Holland argue before a thoroughly spooked and demoralised States General on 21st June 'the military position was

not nearly as grave as the lack of courage!’ Indeed, perhaps more grave was the rampant misinformation spread amongst the populace – rather than scramble to man defensive positions or implement desperate countermeasures, segments of Dutch society were attempting to score political points, within a political system that appeared itself doomed.

Peter Geyl’s depressing analysis of the war is more detailed and sprinkled with the kind of witty asides which only a native of the country could have added, but we won’t follow his coverage entirely lest we become bogged down in the sheer amount of fortresses and towns which fell to the French and the Bishop of Munster’s forces. We saw last time how the French had manoeuvred their main army in such a way as to appear at the soft underbelly of the republic and threaten its most vulnerable defences, rather than approach from the front and run the gauntlet of the rivers Meuse and Rhine, as had been – somewhat naively it should be added – expected by the Dutch high command, or what remained of that high command by this point. Amidst cries for the regents to *do something*, came the reports of citizens surrendering in droves, and closing the gates of numerous cities to the Dutch armies which planned to resist. Yet somehow an undercurrent of rage was building against the regents who attempted to rouse the resistance of the republic’s citizens, and were faced with near daily depressions as the citizens of cities along critical defensive lines, such as the river IJssel which bisects the province of Overijssel in half, and thus provides a handy defensive line within one of the republic’s most exposed provinces, willingly pressed for an ‘accord’ with the advancing enemy.

‘As a result of party struggle that divided the whole country’, noted Peter Geyl, ‘the commonality turned a blind eye to cowardice among the citizens and soldiery, and blamed every defeat on the “treacherous” regents, and the regents of Holland in particular.’⁴ It was said that the army had been deliberately neglected by the regents and the navy strengthened, so that de Witt’s brother Cornelius might gain a great victory at sea while William of Orange as CG would be disgraced in defeat. Another pamphlet claimed that when three of the highest ranking bureaucrats in the state had questioned de Witt as to what should be done, ‘he merely shrugged his shoulders and said that a good and speedy accommodation with the enemy might be the best way out.’ And this, as Geyl noted with a palpable sense of exasperation, ‘of a man who, with Batavian tenacity, was doing his utmost and who, if necessary, was prepared

⁴ Geyl, p. 346.

to hold out in a remote corner of the country!’⁵ De Witt may not have realised the true extent to which the hatred against him was growing in the republic he had for so long served, but he was soon to be given a taste of it. On the evening of 21st June, when four well-to-do sons of leading Orangists made their way home, they noticed that a light was on in the assembly room of the States of Holland. ‘The states are still at it!’ one of them remarked, ‘and the Grand Pensionary must be with them. The sooner that scoundrel is out of the way the better for us all!’ They waited for the room to darken and de Witt to emerge, torch lit, on his familiar route home, and the four men, whom Geyl labels somewhat disingenuously as ‘heroes’, knocked the torch out of de Witt’s hand, and set upon him. De Witt was stabbed repeatedly in the shoulder and side, and once the four had finished, they left the Grand Pensionary for dead. As he lay on the ground bleeding, de Witt must have despaired of the state of affairs in his homeland that these men should seek to attack him rather than venture to attack the actual enemy of the republic, which gained more ground with every passing day.

The four were later intercepted by a policeman, after de Witt’s body was found on the street. They had tried to lay low, but their bloodied clothes and disposal of the weapon nearby gave them away. All turned out to be the sons, as we said, of leading Orangists, and the greatest injustice was that in the case of the one man who was executed for the attack, he became a martyr dedicated to the cause of his nation’s salvation. Seriously, I have not time for martyrs. What was interesting about the event was the nature of the legal proceedings against the four men. In the trial that followed, though the Orangists attempted to make much of the event and line it up as a kind of propaganda coup against the forces of evil within the realm. As he awaited his execution, one of the perpetrators of the attack supposedly embraced a spiritual degree of self-sacrifice, inducing the jailors to refrain from cursing and blessing all he came in contact with. The pamphlet on the actual execution itself, entitled *The Struggle of Jacob* after Jacob van de Graeff who would be beheaded for his role in the attack, obscured some convenient details. While Jacob did not admit wrongdoing, admitting only that he was as sinful as other men, he did ask one figure in particular for a pardon, and that figure was Johan de Witt. The Grand Pensionary had survived the attempt on his life, and from his sickbed he gathered information on the unfolding diplomatic situation.

By the end of June 1672, Louis XIV, it seemed, was confident of a total Dutch surrender. The embassy to Louis was only sent on 22nd June after bitter debates within the States General,

⁵ Geyl, p. 347.

but probably only because de Witt, who wholly opposed any line of communications being opened with Louis, was at that stage fresh off an attempt on his life and thus absent from the national assembly. Whatever the reasons, the Dutch were in a bad way, so when an embassy led by former ambassador to France Peter de Groot arrived in the French military HQ on the River Ijssel on 23rd June 1672, they hoped to gain something from the experience. Louis XIV, riding high after fulfilling his quest for glory, and seeing no signs of the ride ending anytime soon, milked the processions for all they were worth. They were met by Louvois, the Secretary of State for War in France, and his colleague, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, a man named Simon de Pomponne, who in the event was the former ambassador to the Dutch. Facing these two titans of French politics, whom Peter de Groot almost certainly recognised from his heady days as ambassador, the supremacy of France was laid on thick – on 24th June the two Frenchmen refused to state any terms at first, and spent a few hours enlightening the Dutchmen on the desperate state of affairs in the republic, asking them to consider ‘in which state their affairs already were, and how much worse they would soon become.’

Later that day terms were announced, but they were impossibly high. Louis was to be allowed deal with the conquered territories as he saw fit, which by this point included almost a third of Dutch land. He could choose to sell back the lands or keep them, but if he chose the former then France would choose the sale price, and this in addition to a massive war indemnity which the Dutch couldn't possibly afford. As if this wasn't bad enough, Louis's terms included the caveat that Charles was in no way affected by this deal, meaning Britain could continue or end the war irrespective of Dutch decisions here. Aghast and insulted, the Dutch delegation returned home on 25th June, and de Groot met immediately with the States of Holland, who reps from the major towns of that province were beginning to despair. Only Amsterdam seemed to speak up against the overwhelming sense of hopelessness; there seemed within each of the delegates no appetite for actual resistance, and many argued that de Groot should be sent back not with, as de Groot had suggested, with an offer merely of the Generality Lands outside of the republic, but with no limitations on what he could offer at all. Had the situation really come to this?

Again did Amsterdam resist the trend, and this time the voice of her pensionary seemed to persuade some of the reps to roll back their initial offers. Everyone was instructed to leave The Hague and go home to debate the matter further in their town halls, such was the deep nature of Dutch domestic politics. The example was provided by the pensionary of the States of Holland, a resident of Amsterdam and thus present in its town hall, who for the record

would have been a direct underling of the *Grand Pensionary* in de Witt, of Denmark during the Swedish Deluges. In that case the invasion of Denmark had been halted at Copenhagen, and while the rest of the country had fallen to invader that city alone stood firm and resolute in its principles of resistance. Again this pensionary tried to steel his peers in the town hall not to lose heart; to remember in addition that they didn't speak for the nation, merely one town within one province, and that any agreement reached her would have first to be presented to Holland and then the States General for deliberation. With the way the war was going, the pensionary argued, other powers like the Emperor and Sweden couldn't remain silent for long, while Brandenburg's promised troops were surely en route. 'God has a thousand means of redressing the state in its distress', the pensionary concluded, and this seemed to do the trick. Amsterdam's deputies settled on the following proposal to bring to the States of Holland – Amsterdam would offer Louis a large cash bribe to evacuate his soldiers, and Louis would thus ensure that France's allies make peace; there would be no redistribution of territory to the invader, and France would not have free reign over Dutch land. When a somewhat spirited de Groot received this letter and arrived to present it at the States of Holland, he discovered to his horror what had gone down there – the largest provincial assembly in the republic had, in its panic, decided to proceed without Amsterdam's input.

In the time Amsterdam's deputies had debated the matter away from The Hague in their town hall, the States of Holland's reps had felt the pressure – hailing as many of them did from more exposed towns, with the absence of Amsterdam's deputies to urge them forward, capitulation again seemed favourable. Thus the official line of Holland had it that Peter de Groot would be free to negotiate with full powers to give what he saw fit – when this was brought to the SG, in the absence of Amsterdam's influence don't forget, the other provinces, approved of the line. De Groot would be sent back with his old delegation partners to meet with the indomitable Frenchmen and their king, this time apparently free to offer the moon if it was believed to halt the French advance. Yet even within the delegation divisions presented themselves; one of de Groot's peers hailed from a city in Holland that had actually abstained from voting for the delegation to be sent at all, yet his diplomatic expertise was said to be urgently required, so he had gone along. Thus the 18 towns that made up the States of Holland were by no means unified even if its deputies had voted to send this delegation to Louis, and even though they somewhat cynically acted before Amsterdam's deputies could return to oppose their measure.

Of course, the famous event which greets us from history and the major reason why these considerable Dutch divisions pale into the background, is found in Louis' incredible act on 27th June, when, receiving the Dutch for the second time, this time round offered terms which were so 'pointlessly humiliating' in the words of one of Louis' biographers, Antony Levi, that the Dutch couldn't possibly accept them. What were the terms? Where before Louis had requested vague prizes, and seemed mostly focused on gaining money from the settlement, these unrealistic requests were now added to as underlying principles of the peace. Furthermore, Louis was now actually demanding land within the DR; not merely the entirety of the Generality Lands, but also vast tracts of land in Overijssel and Groningen, a revocation of all Dutch trade deals which could be judged 'unfavourable' to France, the granting of equal rights to Catholics, the promise to negotiate over a partition of the Dutch East India Company, and again, Louis claimed that these demands were apart from those of his allies, who he could not or would not speak for. Stunned into silence by these 'offers', the Dutch delegation returned home on 1st July, once again empty handed. As extensive as their powers had been, nowhere within them lay the powers to divide the republic's provinces and cleave off lands which these delegates did not hail from and thus, according to the Dutch traditions, could not speak for.

Peter de Groot appeared before the States of Holland in the evening of 1st July 1672 to give his account of the negotiations. Amsterdam had already lodged a vicious complaint against the deputies there in previous days, for their deliberate exclusion of Amsterdam from the debate. Now though the deputies of the 18 towns listened to de Groot's report with a growing sense of rage. What made it all worse and which no doubt added to the creeping sense that discussion hadn't in fact worked, was the fact that in the meantime the commonality had discovered de Groot's mission, and learned of the insistence on nothing being off the table when it came to negotiations with Louis. It was fortunate for the Holland reps at least that Louis didn't demand something they felt in a position to give; rather than present their case as hopeless, the deputies could instead present the person of Louis as so arrogant and unreasonable that hopefully this would cover up the initial timidity which the regents of Holland had shown. In time, and history had cooperated with this trend, the people would focus on Louis' arrogance rather than their own bureaucrats' willingness to submit, but before this happened de Witt was informed late on 29th June the nature of what was going down, and he recognised the whole incident for what it was – a PR disaster which would only benefit the Orangists.

Certainly, de Witt appreciate that the situation was grave, but the image of Holland's regents submitting without apprehension – however true this picture was – captured the imagination of the panicked populace both in the towns of Holland and outside of Holland. Soon, the same citizens who had been falling over themselves to surrender to the invader were accusing their reps of high treason and calling for their heads. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy – the regents had *always* coveted the despicable affections of France, now they sought to speak for the whole country and force a nationwide peace. Quite aside from the fact that this wasn't true, the aforementioned panic and lack of will to resist the invader was again conveniently forgotten. The scapegoat was well and truly cooked – across the towns of Holland the cries went out, increasingly difficult to resist, of armed bands of peasants and other rabble seizing town halls and forcing the deputies there to accept the Prince of Orange as the Stadtholder, on pain of death if they refused. Peter Geyl's exasperation is again palpable, as he questions why the Dutch citizen here can produce so much aggression and energy against his fellow man, but remained quiet and submissive in the face of the foreign advance. Perhaps these people genuinely believed that the Prince of Orange could save them, and that thus they did not need to be overtly brave – all they really needed to do, was disrupt the regent regime and push the prince forward in their place.

That this pressure became too much and eventually succeeded was confirmed on 3rd July 1672. William of Orange, in the blur of activity which had occurred during the preceding days, was legally declared Stadtholder of Holland – the Perpetual Edict was in tatters and de Witt, laid up in still in bed, accepted that he had failed in his ambition to save the republic, as he saw it, from the intrigues of that House. William III, or arguably his allies in the Holland citizenry, had made political capital from the republic's distress in international affairs, just as the GP always feared they would, having first done so during the SADW. Still in Holland the debate raged on – though the deputies had heard de Groot's report from his meeting with the French on 1st July, domestic matters had once again overruled paying them much attention. Their blood had been boiling since, but now, fresh off an incredible regime change which the week before nobody could have expected, they had more of an opportunity to discuss what to do next. Finally, with the full awareness of the situation put before them again, and with the commonality at least momentarily appeased, de Groot's delegation could be given the attention it required.

As each town argued in turn, Amsterdam and Rotterdam collectively asserted that Louis' proposals were impossibly humiliating, and that with their new Stadtholder they should rally

the citizenry to resist the French. The concessions and grants to Louis would ‘force us to live with the knife permanently on our throats’, in the words of one deputy from Delft, while another insisted that it was ‘far better to die with sword in hand.’ Finally, it seemed, the Dutch courage seemed to be returning. Having dealt with the divisions of their republic, albeit somewhat crudely and arguably against the will of many, the DR seemed at last able to present a united front. Into this growing sense of resilience entered Conrad van Beuningen, the former ambassador to London and now a visiting deputy to the States of Holland. Rather than send another delegation to the French, van Beuningen insisted, the time had come for negotiations to be cut off. The time had come, as a growing number of deputies in Holland had come to accept, to accept that peace at any price was not worth paying for. The sluices were to be opened, and the seawater allowed to consume all flat lands that existed for the enemy to roam on. Cram the peasants, the citizens and the soldiers into the fortresses that dominated the submerged lands, and place their CG at the head of this new line of defence. Agreements rang out, and with that horses were sent to pass the messages along to the other provinces – whatever the strategic situation, however grave the divisions of the state, and however supreme the position of the French and allied armies, all would know one truth. The rampjaar was over – *now* the Dutch would fight to the bitter end.

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