

Queen Wilhelmina and the Boers, 1899-1902



Image 1. Visit of President Kruger, welcomed by Queen Wilhelmina, in The Hague 1900.

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Introduction

There has been a great deal written on the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), from the importance of cricket to the life of prisoners in the prison camps on Ceylon and other isles of the British Empire. Almost every subject has been thoroughly researched and discussed. However, the role of one person, that of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, has never been thoroughly examined. Queen Wilhelmina can be found in almost every study about the Second Anglo-Boer War, but none of the literature elaborates on the exact role Wilhelmina played during the conflict. Every book has a few phrases that highlights the involvement of Wilhelmina, but that is often the most you will read about her in relation to the conflict. Although Wilhelmina's role is still unclear, she is regularly described in literature as an international symbol of Boer support.

The tensions and causes of the Second Anglo-Boer War can already be found in the early though relatively short history of South Africa. The first tensions between the Boers and the British originated around 1806, when the Netherlands handed their territory in South Africa over to Great Britain after the Battle of Blaauwberg (January 8th, 1806), in light of the Napoleonic Wars.¹ The Dutch immigrants and Huguenots from different European origins did not think much of the new British authorities. The British wanted to decrease the importance of the Dutch language and culture of the European settlers, also known as Boers, and raise taxes. In an attempt to remove themselves from British authority, the Boers emigrated northwards to create their own independent states. This immigration is called the Great Trek (Afrikaans: Die Groot Trek).

Despite the Great Trek, tension between the Boers and British kept on rising to its climax in 1880, with the First Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881). In 1877, the British governor annexed the Boer republic of Transvaal. The British motivation was that the virtually bankrupt Transvaal could not guarantee the safety of its population against invading native groups. Great Britain took on this task now. The government of Transvaal protested but was bribed by the British, except vice president Paul Kruger (1828-1904). It would take Kruger multiple years before he was able to unite the Boers against British domination. On the 16th of December in 1880, the republic of Transvaal was restored and renamed the South African Republic. This conflict would only have three major battles where surprisingly the British tasted defeat. The war ended with the Convention of Pretoria on April 5th 1881, and the Anglo-Boer conflict and tensions appeared to decrease from here onwards. However, nothing could be further from the truth, and the following incident happened in 1896. The South African Republic (or Transvaal) was startled by a coup d'état, also known as the Jameson Raid. British militia entered Transvaal and attempted to evoke a rebellion amongst the primarily British *uitlanders* (outlanders; foreigners, guest workers). The pretext for this raid was the fact that uitlanders were

¹ M.R.D. Anderson, *Blue Berg: Britain takes the Cape* (Cape Town 2008).

discriminated in the Boer republics, but the real reason for the raid was probably the very valuable minerals such as diamonds and gold that the Boers had found. The Boers were able to stop the raid and on top of that, the guest workers did not start a rebellion. However, the Boers now felt directly threatened by Great Britain. To protect themselves, the Boer republics sought contact with France and Germany and bought modern weapons from these countries. Contact was also sought with German South-West Africa, which was unacceptable for the British, as Germany showed an increasing interest in expanding their influence and power in Africa.² The raid also resulted in a closer cooperation of the two Boer republics, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. A military pact was concluded in 1897, in opposition to perceived British imperialism.³

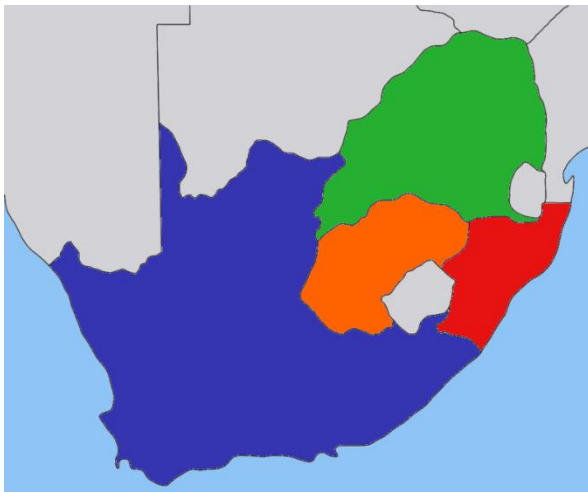


Image 2. The geography of the region: South African Republic/Transvaal (Green), Orange Free State (Orange), Natal (Red) The British Cape Colony (Blue).

In an attempt to ease the renewed tensions between the Boer republics and Great Britain, a conference was arranged by president Steyn of the Orange Free State. The now president of the South African Republic Paul Kruger and the governor of the British Cape Colony Sir Alfred Milner met on May 31st 1899 in Bloemfontein. Although the conference was arranged to ease tensions, ironically it resulted in more friction. The subject of the conference was the enfranchisement of uitlanders in the Boer republics. However, Milner had such high

demands that the conference was doomed to fail from the start. As a reaction to the failed conference, the British sent soldiers to Natal, located along the border with Transvaal. By September 22nd 1899 the British force had reached the impressive number of 57,000 men. Kruger saw that war was inevitable. An ultimatum was sent by Kruger and his parliament to the British. The British had to retreat their forces that had accumulated along the border with Transvaal. However, the British did not react to the ultimatum that expired on October 12th 1899, and as a result Boer forces attacked the Cape Colony and Natal. The Second Anglo-Boer War had begun.

The initially increasing tensions and the resulting outbreak of war between the Boer republics and Great Britain caused friction in international politics as well. Many countries did not agree with the British actions. However, these countries did not have the individual power to stand up to the British, or they were too afraid to harm their national interests. The British army was, after

² M. Bossenbroek, *De Boerenoorlog* (Amsterdam 2014) 138-139.

³ Bossenbroek, *De Boerenoorlog*, 140.

all, the strongest and largest force in the world with a navy that was larger than that of France, Russia and Germany combined.⁴ Besides, almost every nation was in some way depending on the British Empire in the sphere of natural resources, economy, colonies, etc. Nevertheless, there was in many countries a great sympathy and support towards the Boers, especially in Europe.

There was one country where pro-Boer feelings were the strongest, namely the Netherlands. While the Netherlands played a very important role during the Second Anglo-Boer War, these days the conflict is a largely forgotten chapter of the Dutch national history. There has been some attention to the Second Anglo-Boer War in recent years. The book *De Boerenoorlog* (The Boer War) by Martin Bossenbroek received the Dutch *Libris Geschiedenis Prijs* (Libris History Prize) in 2013. Also, the year 2017 was unofficially dedicated to the commemoration of 400 years of Dutch-South African relations, in which the Second Anglo-Boer War played an important part. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam presented a large exhibition on this subject, which was accompanied by a published book and a television series of seven episodes.⁵ However, little attention is paid to the Second Anglo-Boer War in Dutch schools and universities, and the war does not have a place in the Dutch consciousness. Only some neighbourhoods and street names recall the era. Although the Dutch state did not undertake any military action, thousands of Dutchmen decided to join the Boers and fight with them.⁶ Also, numerous citizens' initiatives were introduced in the Netherlands to collect and send funds, food, clothing and other necessities to the Boers. By far, the Netherlands was the country that tried to promote the Boer interests the most. Alongside the official representatives of the Boer republics, the young Queen Wilhelmina (1880-1962) became one of the most prominent international figures in the pro-Boer movement. Although no existing literature refers to Wilhelmina as a "patroness of the Boer-cause", such an image is created through the many laudatory poems, personal letters, certificates and other ways of showing gratitude to Wilhelmina from the international public during and shortly after the conflict.^{7 8 9}

Since 1885 a tradition began where the birthday of princess Wilhelmina was publically celebrated in the Netherlands. After Wilhelmina's coronation, the day was renamed *Koninginnedag* (Queensday). August 31st 1901, was Wilhelmina's 21st birthday. It is not surprising that in 1901 festivities were organised to celebrate Wilhelmina's birthday in the Netherlands, but it is surprising that it was also celebrated in Boer prisoner of war camps on, for example, Bermuda, Saint-Helena

⁴ Koninklijk Huisarchief, Den Haag, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2.

⁵ Rijksmuseum, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/goede-hoop> (consulted on 4-11-2017).

⁶ V. Kuitenbrouwer, *War of words: Dutch pro-Boer propaganda and the South African War (1899-1902)* (Amsterdam 2012) 177.

⁷ A. Pijnacker Hordijk, *Voor Wilhelmina en voor Kruger* (Naaldwijk 1900/1901).

⁸ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 803.

⁹ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. 10A-XIII, Certificaat.

and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).¹⁰ The fact that the day was referred to as Wilhelmina-dag (Wilhelmina day) instead of Queensday suggests that the Boers did not see Wilhelmina as their queen. However, it does mean that Wilhelmina held a special place in the hearts and minds of the Boers, as they devoted an entire day of sports, theatre plays and other festivities in her name.¹¹ These sources underline the international public's perception of queen Wilhelmina's role during the Second Anglo-Boer War.

Wilhelmina did not see herself as the heroine or patroness of the Boers. On January 29th, 1902, she looked back on the period since she had become queen and wrote in a notebook: "For the whole world I became a heroine, very easy, but not complimentary, since I had done nothing in this case, received the most ridiculous letters from places all over the world; especially a steady flow of praises came from France! I have never seen such an exaggerated reaction."¹² Despite her own opinion, the name Wilhelmina is connected to the Second Anglo-Boer War to this date, as her name and persona can be found in almost all the literature regarding the Second Anglo-Boer War. However, what did Wilhelmina actually do for the Boers and their cause? This is an especially interesting question as existing literature on the Second Anglo-Boer War does not elaborate on her exact role, but foremost because Wilhelmina said: "(...) but I have done more for the Boers than my fellow countrymen will ever know (...)"¹³. This statement therefore provides an opportunity to look into what Wilhelmina actually did, but also what she has done out of the view of the general public.

Before this question can be answered, it is necessary to understand the relationship between the Netherlands and the Boer republics. The first chapter will therefore analyse how Wilhelmina perceived this relation, as it might have influenced her actions. Other existing opinions in the Netherlands will be discussed as well. The second chapter will discuss what the Netherlands did in support of the Boers, and what Wilhelmina's role was in these actions. The third chapter will discuss the multiple attempts of intervention and mediation between Great Britain and the Boer republics.

¹⁰ E.F.E. Douwes Dekker, *Wilhelmina-dag op Ceylon: herinneringsalbum van de Ragamafeesten op den 31sten augustus 1901* (Haarlem 1901) 7.

¹¹ Douwes Dekker, *Wilhelmina-dag op Ceylon: herinneringsalbum van de Ragamafeesten op den 31sten augustus 1901*, 7.

¹² Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. "Voor de gehele wereld werd ik eene heldin, recht gemakkelijk, maar niet complimenteus, daar ik u deze zaak toch niets gedaan had, kreeg de bespottelijkste brieven van alle oorden der wereld; vooral van uit Frankrijk vloeide de stroom der loftuitingen mild! Nooit heb ik zulk eene overdreven beweging gezien."

¹³ E. van Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers: Nederlands constitutionele monarchie historisch-staatsrechtelijk belicht* (Zwolle 1971) 200. "(...) maar heb meer gedaan voor de Boeren dan mijne landgenooten weten (...)"

Again, Wilhelmina's role in these interventions will be analysed. The fourth and last chapter will compare the actions of Wilhelmina, the German emperor Wilhelm II and the Russian Tsar Nicolas II. Although multiple European states and their leaders did support the Boer republics during the Second Anglo-Boer War, Wilhelmina seems to have had a special place in the hearts and minds of the Boers and also in the history of the Second Anglo-Boer War. It is therefore necessary to compare their actions, positions and to what extent they were limited in supporting the Boers by those positions. All of this is vital to answer the question of what Wilhelmina actually did for the Boer cause.



Image 3. Portrait of President Paul Kruger.

As stated before, there is not much literature specifically on Wilhelmina's role during the Second Anglo-Boer War. The only book that touches on the subject is *Wilhelmina: De jonge koning* (Wilhelmina: The young queen) by Cees Fasseur. This book is a biography of Wilhelmina's life, with a sub-chapter dedicated to the Second Anglo-Boer War. Although this sub-chapter discusses some of the matters that this research will also mention regarding Wilhelmina's actions during the conflict, Fasseur conducts a rather superficial analysis, analysing her actions in a wider geopolitical context. Fasseur did use the same (primary) sources as this research, but besides some quotations, does not go in depth on Wilhelmina's thoughts, actions, ideas or motivations. This research will go more in depth on these matters, including her specific actions that benefited the Boer cause.

Another book that can provide insights into Wilhelmina's personal life is the book *Eenzaam maar niet alleen* (Lonely but not alone). This is a memoir by Wilhelmina in which she looks back on her personal life, especially her childhood in the 1880's and 1890's. She discusses very personal childhood struggles, the evolution of her character and personal relations, but she consciously refuses to discuss political subjects. However, this book provides valuable insights into how Wilhelmina experienced the life at court, the life of a queen-to-be and how her opinions, ideas and character developed throughout her childhood.

The Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs, Willem Hendrik de Beaufort, was often occupied with the Second Anglo-Boer War. Because of his position, he was also in close contact with Queen Wilhelmina. His diary was published by J.P. de Valk. It provides insights into his personal opinions, but also those of Wilhelmina because of their close relationship.

Another person who was in close contact with Queen Wilhelmina was the vice-president of the Council of State J.W.M. Schorer. In *Raadsman achter de troon* (Counselor behind the Throne), another book edited by J.P. de Valk, the diary of Schorer is published. As the vice-president of the Council of State, Schorer was the political and constitutional advisor of the head of state. Since his appointment in 1897, Schorer made notes of his meetings with Queen-regent Emma, Queen Wilhelmina and her husband prince Hendrik. Schorer's notes provide an insight into the way Wilhelmina interpreted her task, and also her struggles with the Dutch constitution and her limited amount of power.

Apart from the limited literature specifically about Wilhelmina's role, and other more general literature on the Second Anglo-Boer War, examination of the Netherlands around 1900 and the Dutch-Boer relations can help understand the role Wilhelmina played in a wider context. *De Boerenoorlog* (The Boer War), a book by Martin Bossenbroek, was awarded the Dutch *Libris Geschiedenis Prijs*. This book tells the story of the Boer War from the perspective of three important individuals from the War. What is more important for this research is that this book is written along Dutch themes, which might give a better insight in Dutch opinion and involvement in the Second Anglo-Boer War.

Another important work for this research is *Holland op zijn breedst* (Holland on its widest), also by Martin Bossenbroek. In this book, Bossenbroek describes Dutch society around 1900, the emergence of Dutch nationalism, imperialism, the Dutch national and international politics and a new national self-awareness. The Dutch achievements in the Malay Archipelago and more importantly, the achievements of the kinsmen in South Africa and its reflection on Dutch society play an important role in this book.

A book which goes deeper into the Dutch-Boer relations is *Nederland en de opkomst van het moderne imperialisme* (the Netherlands and the emerge of modern imperialism) by M. Kuitenbrouwer. In his book, Kuitenbrouwer describes the rise of Dutch imperialism and its evolution, focusing especially on Aceh and the Dutch-Boer relations in South-Africa.

As a result of the limited coverage in the literature of Wilhelmina and the Second Anglo-Boer War, this research has to base its findings to some extent on primary or archival sources. This research was permitted to consult documents from the Royal House Archives (Koninklijk Huisarchief), located on the premises of Palace Noordeinde in The Hague. This is the private archive of the Dutch royal family. Therefore, this research had access to unique correspondences, notes and multiple self-written notebooks of Queen Wilhelmina. This research is therefore able to examine personal opinions of the queen regarding the Second Anglo-Boer War. The most important documents for this research from this archive are three notebooks from a series of four, written by Wilhelmina herself on January 29th 1902. That means that she was 21 years old at the time when she wrote down her

thoughts, almost four months before the official end of the war. In these notebooks Wilhelmina describes her experiences of the first 3.5 years as queen of the Netherlands.

Also used for this research was the National Archive in The Hague. The National Archive manages the archives of the government, but also the archives of societal organisations and individuals who were of national importance. Documents relating to the government and Department of Foreign Affairs in the period 1899-1902 relating to the Second Anglo-Boer War which can provide especially valuable information for this research are located here.

Queen Wilhelmina and the Boer Republics

The Dutch relationship with South Africa starts with the creation of the refreshment station on the south point of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, in 1652. The station was founded by Jan van Riebeeck, by commission of the Dutch United East Indies Company (Dutch: Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC)). The station was used by the VOC to refresh supplies on ships that travelled between the Netherlands and Asia. Although a Dutch overseas possession, there was not much public interest in the Cape Colony. The VOC did not appreciate attention for their work overseas. Furthermore, the Cape Colony was “just” a refreshment station. The public was far more interested in the possessions in Asia, which actually produced the valuables.¹⁴

As stated in the introduction, the Cape Colony was ceded to the British in 1806 as a result of the Napoleonic Wars. This meant that the overseas possession, with approximately 26,000 white inhabitants of mostly Dutch descent, were now completely out of Dutch control.¹⁵ The Dutch lack of interest continued during important events such as the Great Trek and the founding of the Boer republics.

However, Dutch interest in the Boers and South Africa developed from 1880 onwards, when news about the Boer struggle to retake and re-establish the British-annexed Boer republic of Transvaal (First Anglo-Boer War, 1880-1881) reached the Netherlands. This not only affected the interaction between the Boers and the Dutch, but also how they perceived their relations. This chapter will therefore discuss how Wilhelmina perceived relations with the Boer republics and also the origins of these relations. It is important for this research to understand Wilhelmina’s view on these relations, as it might have influenced the decisions and actions that she took. To assess if Wilhelmina’s opinion about these relations was common or uncommon, this chapter will therefore also discuss other ideas about what these relations should look like.

Kinship

In the mid-19th century, the Netherlands were still adapting to their new position in the world. The Dutch were still looking back at the Dutch Golden Age (17th century), when they were the centre of trade and played a leading role in international politics. Since the Napoleonic Wars, the overseas possessions of the Netherlands had shrunk. With the cession of Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka) and the Cape Colony, the Netherlands had lost its strategic positions along important sea lanes to the Indies. Furthermore, after 1854, the Dutch lost their monopoly on trade with Japan. From a place of

¹⁴ B.J.H. Graaf, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap: Nederland en de Afrikaners 1902-1930* (Vrije Universiteit 1993) 1.

¹⁵ Graaf, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap*, 1.

leadership in the Western World in nearly every sphere of life, it had fallen behind the other countries of Western Europe.¹⁶ The decreasing importance of the Netherlands was also felt on a national level. It took the Netherlands quite some time to recover from the ravages of the French period (1795-1813). Despite efforts by William I of the Netherlands (nicknamed the merchant king (1772-1843)) to stimulate trade and industry, the Netherlands did not start to recover until the last two decades of the 19th century.¹⁷

Although a small power, the Netherlands had the characteristics of a major power. It possessed a disproportional large empire and fought, just as other major European powers did at that time, a colonial war in Aceh (1873-1914). However, the country was far too weak to engage in power politics. It was unable to protect its colonial empire, and even protecting the motherland was problematic with the now unified German state in the east and Great Britain in the west.¹⁸ To protect its own territory and empire, the Netherlands had to follow a strict policy of neutrality, which was based on three pillars: keep as much as possible out of the power politics of the major powers, preserving the Dutch neutrality during international conflicts and promoting the international free trade/market.¹⁹

The rise of Dutch interest in the Boers coincides with the emergence of Dutch nationalism. Dutch nationalism was characterized by a new colonial interest, the kinship and struggle of the Boers and re-found pride in the Dutch royal family.²⁰ According to Schutte, the modernising and revitalising Dutch society was stimulated by the First Anglo-Boer War.²¹ As discussed before, the Dutch felt that there was not much to be proud of on a national and international level, but many started to identify themselves with the Boers. They saw the Boers as members of the Dutch tribe, kinsmen (Dutch: stamverwanten) on a different continent. The Boers spoke Dutch, were Calvinists and were fighting as a small nation against a major power. This was very recognizable for the Dutch.

The idea of kinship was the theme for the relations from 1880/1881 until the end of the Boer republics in 1902. The kinship-rhetoric based itself around the historic and cultural bond between the Boers and the Dutch. The mutual feelings of kinship accounted for a mutual favourable disposition. But the Dutch also felt it was their moral obligation to support 'their relatives'.

Although the intensive relations between the Netherlands and the Boer republics started around 1880/1881, the seeds for the renewed relations were already planted a few years before.

¹⁶ A. Vandenbosch, *Dutch foreign policy since 1815: a study in small power politics* (Den Haag 1959) 70.

¹⁷ Vandenbosch, *Dutch foreign policy since 1815*, 70.

¹⁸ Ibidem 71.

¹⁹ G.J. Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners: adhesie en aversie* (Franeker 1986) 5.

²⁰ M. Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst: Indië en Zuid-Afrika in de Nederlandse cultuur omstreeks 1900* (Amsterdam 1996) 12.

²¹ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 5.

Perhaps more interestingly, it was initiated by the Boers. In 1875, the Consul General of the Republic of the Orange Free State, H. A. L. Hamelberg, visited the *Nederlandse Taal- en Letteren Congres* (Dutch Language and Literature Congress) in Maastricht, the Netherlands. Here, Hamelberg addressed the audience, pleading for support for the neglected brothers (*verwaarloosde broeders*) in South Africa.²² Hamelberg was pleading for a more intensive relationship between the nations, however it's not clear how intensive this was to be. Based on the forum where he spoke these words, one can argue that this relationship was foremost on a cultural level. That same year, the president of the Transvaal T.F. Burgers visited the Netherlands as well. Burgers wanted to change the Dutch perspective of the Boers in South Africa, but also to show Dutch possibilities in the Boer republics. However, he also spoke about the idea of a Greater Holland below the Southern Cross (*Groot Holland onder het Zuiderkruis*).²³ Contrary to the statements made by Hamelberg, Burgers' remarks are quite clearly suggesting a desire of the incorporation of the Boer republics (or at least the Transvaal) in the Dutch Kingdom/Empire.

The support for and the identification with the Boers also fits in with the Dutch moralistic view of the late 19th century. According to Boogman, the Dutch looked moralistically down on the crude power politics of the major European powers.²⁴ The Boers fought in 1880 for the liberation of the Transvaal, which Great Britain had officially recognized in 1852, but defiled in 1877. It was a conflict about respecting international law and the sovereignty of a nation and its people. As a small, militarily weak state, the Netherlands valued this right highly. If Great Britain won this conflict, it would provide a precedent for other major powers to annex and conquer small nations. Therefore, the Boers were not only fighting for themselves but also for other small nations and the freedom of its population, such as the Netherlands.²⁵ An aspect of self-interest is seen here.

There are also other examples of Dutch self-interest. The Dutch identified themselves with the Boers, but also with what they did. Internationally the word 'Dutch' was now also used for the Boers.²⁶ A new national confidence rose and grew with every victory of their cousins over the British, but also the self-esteem and international prestige of the Dutch grew. The conflict in the Transvaal had another result on Dutch society, which was becoming heavily segregated along political, religious and social lines. The First Anglo-Boer War, and later the Second Anglo-Boer War, touched people

²² W. Jonckheere, 'Myth and Afrikaner Idealization in Dutch Historical Novels' in: *History in Dutch Studies* (Oxford 2003) 87.

²³ Jonckheere, 'Myth and Afrikaner Idealization in Dutch Historical Novels' in: *History in Dutch Studies*, 87.

²⁴ Graaf, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap*, 2.

²⁵ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.3.

²⁶ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.3.

from all walks of Dutch society. It unified the population, despite the different political, religious and social convictions.²⁷

New Holland

The First Anglo-Boer War ended in 1881, and resulted in the re-establishment of the independent Boer republic Transvaal under the new name South African Republic. Although the newspaper's interest in the Boers ended, the interest of the Dutch population continued through the establishment of organisations such as the *Nederlandsch Zuid-Afrikaansche Vereeniging* (Dutch South African Society (NZAV)). Organisations such as the NZAV informed the Dutch public about the events in South Africa, but also promoted closer ties with the Boers.

From 1881 onwards, the Dutch attitude towards the Boer republics started to change. The Boer victory changed the Dutch perception of the Boers completely. The Boers had been seen as lazy, degenerate and sly. Yet after their victory over the British, they were regarded by the Dutch as heroic lost brothers, *Hollandsche Afrikaners* (Dutch Afrikaners) and as distant cousins with Dutch rebel blood in their veins (*de verre neef met Geuzenbloed in de aderen*).²⁸

With this new positive perspective of the Boer, the idea of kinship was extended to an attitude of "cultural imperialism".²⁹ The cultural imperialism was mostly concerned around education, immigration and investments. But overall, there was now much more interaction between the nations. The NZAV for example, recruited emigrants to go to South Africa, to help develop the Boer republics.

As stated before, education was part of the cultural imperialism. Many scholars were active in the NZAV. Because neither of the Boer republics had a university, these men wanted to improve the opportunities for the Boers to go and study in the Netherlands. The *studiefonds* (study fund) was founded in 1885 by the NZAV for this purpose. Despite the fund, only 45 students participated in the program until 1902.³⁰ Furthermore, the program led to tensions between the liberals and Protestants in the Netherlands. In general, Dutch universities were liberal institutions, except for the newly founded Free University which was founded by the orthodox Protestant Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper tried to persuade the South African Republic's government to send members of the program to his

²⁷ Graaf, *De mythe van de stamverwantschap*, 3.

²⁸ Jonckheere, 'Myth and Afrikaner Idealization in Dutch Historical Novels' in: *History in Dutch Studies*, 88.

²⁹ G.J. Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 41.

³⁰ Schutte, *Nederland en de Afrikaners*, 52.

university only. The Boers ignored Kuypers' suggestion and other universities remained very popular among the Boers.³¹

Language was another important issue for academics. To ensure a more intensive relationship between the Netherlands and the Boer republics, a common language was seen as an absolute requirement. Although Dutch and the High-Dutch (Hoog-Hollandsch) of the Boers are closely related, they are different. Moreover, in the late 19th century Afrikaans was on the rise. Due to the complicated grammar and rules, Dutch was far less popular at schools than English. Therefore, students often decided to learn English because it was easier for them.³² In the Netherlands the *Vereeniging tot vereenvoudiging van onze schrijftaal* (Society for the simplification of our written language) was founded, as it was thought that a simpler form of Dutch would benefit ties with the kinsmen in South Africa.³³

After the end of the annexation, the national institutions of the South African Republic grew rapidly as a result of the gold rush. However, Kruger felt that the candidates from the South African Republic were underqualified. The candidates from the British Cape Colony were not trusted by the Boers; even the Dutch speaking candidates were unattractive for political reasons. Kruger therefore searched for candidates in the Netherlands. During the 1890's approximately 18% of all officials in the South African Republic were born in the Netherlands.³⁴ Because of the many Dutchmen in important positions and the mutual favourable idea of kinship, some started to dream about a 'New Holland'.

As stated before, it was the South African Republic's president Burgers who spoke in 1875 of the idea of a Greater Holland below the Southern Cross. This idea of New Holland (or Greater Holland) can be divided into two interpretations, a positive and a negative interpretation. The positive interpretation is where the Boer republics would be incorporated in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The traditional concept of a colony, one could say, with the exception that the relationship would be more about cooperation than Dutch domination. This interpretation is positive due to the idea that the Dutch territory would increase, together with the economy, international importance, prestige and self-confidence of the Dutch.³⁵

The negative interpretation of New Holland is fuelled by the Dutch pessimistic view at that time. Since the separation of Belgium, the Netherlands was a small, militarily weak nation. The major powers in Europe were trying to expand their influence in every way possible. The Dutch knew that

³¹ C.A.J. van Koppen, *De Geuzen van de negentiende eeuw. Abraham Kuyper en Zuid-Afrika* (Wormer 1992) 127-130.

³² Kuitenbrouwer, *War of words: Dutch pro-Boer propaganda and the South African War (1899-1902)*, 43.

³³ Kuitenbrouwer, *War of words*, 43.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 49.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 20.

the Netherlands could not do anything in case of an invasion. Therefore, they saw in the Boer republics a place of refuge.³⁶ A place with a similar language, religion and people. The Dutch wanted to keep the Boer republics independent so that if something happened to the Netherlands, they could flee to the Boer republics and continue their existence. It does not necessarily mean that the Boer republics came under the Dutch realm. This pessimistic, defensive interpretation is supported by the historians Kuitenbrouwer, Schutte and Van Koppen.

However, all the reasons mentioned in this chapter can be traced back to a single fear - the disappearance of the Dutch tribe or race. This perception is expressed by the minister of Foreign Affairs De Beaufort in his diary which is dated September 1900. In this piece, De Beaufort questions the ability of the Dutch to maintain a country or territory, and at the same time retain international relations. "This is the second time in this century that the Dutch tribe is set back in her political development by the power of events. Belgium became officially a French country, with French as official language. (...) It would be an important study, to examine to which extent the peculiarities of the Dutch character contributed to the course of events. Does the Dutchmen lack what is needed for the foundation and retaining a nation?"³⁷

Reforming the Boer republics into a Dutch colony was also against the moral conviction of the Dutch. As stated before, the conflict between the Transvaal and the British was the struggle for the smaller nations and the right of self-determination and respect for international law. The Netherlands would lose prestige if they first supported the Boers, but then colonised them themselves. Besides that, without Boer consent the Netherlands would be unable to enforce reform of the Boer republics into a Dutch colony.

The increasing Dutch relation/bond was not supported by every inhabitant of the Boer republics. Two particular groups were against the growing influence of the Dutch. The first group were the uitlanders. Uitlanders were the (mainly British) workmen that mostly arrived during the gold rush in Transvaal. Exact figures are uncertain, as the first census of the Transvaal was not taken until April 1904. However, the Transvaal government made policy on the assumption that there were 60,000 uitlanders to 30,000 Transvaalers (figures refer to adult males only).³⁸ Others claimed the ratio to be 4:1 or even 10:1.³⁹ Despite being a huge portion of the population, the uitlanders had very

³⁶ M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst van het moderne imperialisme: koloniën en buitenlandse politiek 1870-1902* (Amsterdam 1985) 141.

³⁷ J.P. de Valk and M. van Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918, Eerste band: 1874-1910* ('s-Gravenhage 1993) 85-86. "Zoo is tweemaal in deze eeuw de Nederlandsche stam in hare staatkundige ontwikkeling door de macht der gebeurtenissen geknot. België werd officieel een Fransch land, met het Fransch als officieele taal. (...) Het zou een belangrijke studie zijn, te onderzoeken in hoever de eigenaardigheden van het Nederlandsche karakter tot den loop dezer gebeurtenissen hebben bijgedragen. Mist de Nederlander hetgeen nodig is voor het grondvesten en behouden van een staatkundig volksbestaan?"

³⁸ J.S. Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic* (Clarendon Press, 1961), 2

³⁹ Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic*, 2.

limited political rights and were heavily taxed. The uitlanders associated the Dutchmen with the rule of Kruger, who kept the uitlanders marginalised and disenfranchised. The second group were the so-called progressives. This group had far more influence because it consisted of people who were born in the South African Republic (so called *burghers*), and therefore had the right to vote in the Boer republics. This group supported closer ties with the British Cape Colony, and therefore stood in sharp contrast to Kruger's policy of strongly defending the independence of the South African Republic and British influence.⁴⁰

Wilhelmina

The popularity of the Dutch royal family was to some extent a representation of the Dutch pessimistic view at that time. Many scandals, such as the homosexual relations of King William II (1792-1849) and several dozen illegitimate children from various mistresses by King William III (1817-1890) had decreased the popularity of the Dutch royal family amongst the Dutch population.⁴¹

This negative attitude towards the royal family started to change during the second marriage of King William III with Princess Emma of Waldeck and Pyrmont (1858-1934) in 1879. Despite the immense 41 year difference in age, the news of the second marriage was received by the parliament and ministers without any objections. However, the Dutch public reacted in general with indifference and prejudice because of the age difference.⁴²

An event where Emma managed to increase their popularity was just after the failed Jameson Raid in 1896. The Jameson Raid was a climax between Boers and British, but also between the Dutch and British. The news of the failed Jameson Raid was received with great happiness in the Netherlands. The British were offended by the Dutch reaction. It was Emma who decided to visit the British envoy in



Image 4. Queen Wilhelmina, coronation painting, 1898.

⁴⁰ Kuitenbrouwer, *War of words*, 50.

⁴¹ H. de Jongh, *Koning Willem III en zijn bastaarden* (Uitgeverij Aspect B.V. 2012).

⁴² D. van der Meulen, *Koning Willem III 1817-1890* (Boom Amsterdam 2013) 546.

The Hague, with which she gained a lot of respect from the Dutch politicians and public.⁴³

The birth of a new princess, Wilhelmina, was also received with great happiness. The positive perception the Dutch population had of Emma was very important after 1888 when it was decided to give the custody over princess Wilhelmina to Emma, because William III was suffering from dementia.⁴⁴ Emma already had a strong voice in how Wilhelmina was raised, especially since 1884 when the last son of three from William III's first marriage died. This meant that Wilhelmina was now first in line to become queen of the Netherlands.

King William III eventually died due to his illness in 1890. Although Wilhelmina was next in line, she had not reached adulthood yet. This meant that Queen Emma became regent until Wilhelmina was legally an adult on August 31st 1898.

During her lifetime, Wilhelmina grew to become a strong, respected queen, loved by her subjects. Two women in particular, her mother Emma and her governess Miss Winter, played an important role in Wilhelmina's upbringing, the formation of her character and therefore also her popularity as queen. Wilhelmina admired Miss Winter for her strong, open and sincere personality. In her memoir Wilhelmina describes Miss Winter: "She herself did not hide for anybody or evade anyone. She was a 'bold woman'."⁴⁵ Throughout her life, Wilhelmina was a bold woman as well.

Emma contributed strongly to Wilhelmina's life. The title of her memoir, *Eenzaam maar niet alleen* (Lonely but not alone) underlines Wilhelmina's feelings. She describes how she felt as if she was locked up in "the cage (de kooi)". There were always people around her, but only with a few she could act as Wilhelmina, express her true personal opinions, and not as the queen or queen-to-be. Wilhelmina states: "(...), only in the intimacy with mother I could be just a human."⁴⁶ As a child, but especially during her reign, Emma remained for Wilhelmina the person to turn to for advice.

Emma played an important role in the popularity of Wilhelmina amongst the Dutch subjects and in renewing the Dutch monarchy. Emma organised PR events, in which Wilhelmina, in the beginning as the young queen-to-be and later as queen, played an important role. Both Emma and Wilhelmina were able to renew the monarchy, which was now surrounded by ceremonial, militaristic display and the royal family was exalted as a national symbol.⁴⁷ And this loving relationship was mutual. For example, Wilhelmina insisted that on her coronation no "crowned heads" would be

⁴³ J. Abeling, *Teloorgang en wederopstanding van de Nederlandse monarchie, 1848-1898* (Prometheus, 1996).

⁴⁴ Abeling, *Teloorgang en wederopstanding van de Nederlandse monarchie*, 111.

⁴⁵ H.K.H. Prinses Wilhelmina der Nederlanden, *Eenzaam maar niet alleen* (Amsterdam 1959) 53-54. "Zijzelf kroop voor niemand in haar schulp of ging voor wie ook uit de weg. Zij was een 'bold woman'."

⁴⁶ Wilhelmina der Nederlanden, *Eenzaam maar niet alleen*, 61. "(...), alleen in de intimiteit met moeder kon ik gewoon mens zijn."

⁴⁷ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 12.

present. Nothing was supposed to stand between her and her people. She did not want to be distracted by foreign royalties, but devoted herself to the Dutch public.⁴⁸

Despite only being 18 years old, she was able to impress foreign diplomats and heads of state. Every time Wilhelmina gave a speech to diplomats, she managed to impress them. The combination of her young appearance, her strong and clear voice, and the appearance of standing there without being nervous or scared, are common reactions to her speeches.⁴⁹

Despite being loved by her subjects and impressing foreign diplomats and heads of state, Wilhelmina was not always comfortable with the role she had to play as a queen(-to be) in her personal life, but also within the parliamentary constitutional monarchy that the Netherlands was (and still is). Especially in regard to the Second Anglo-Boer War, Wilhelmina was struggling with the limitations of her position. She wrote in her notebook: "(...) the government did not fulfil the urge in their hearts and I felt that the public wished to see me openly revealing my sympathy for our kinsmen; how could I as the head of state!"⁵⁰ Wilhelmina had this feeling of powerlessness since childhood. As stated before, she felt she was locked in a 'cage', making it impossible to express her true feelings or act in the way she wanted to. "Already then, there was in my subconsciousness an unsatisfactoriness about the powerlessness, which was accompanied by being locked in a cage, whereby made taking an initiative, of any kind, impossible."⁵¹

Despite being closely related to the British royal family, Wilhelmina always spoke highly of the Boers. Throughout her writings, she referred to the Boers as "kinsmen" (stamverwanten) and a "blood relationship/ consanguinity" (bloedverwantschap). In a letter to Queen Victoria on September 8th 1899, Wilhelmina elaborates on these feelings when she writes: "to one of which I am attached by bonds of friendship, to other by ties of common origin."⁵² Wilhelmina cleverly avoids saying which relation refers to the Boers and which one to Victoria and the British royal family. However, with this letter she openly declares that the Dutch and the Boers are related.

It is not that surprising that Wilhelmina became anti-British when looking at the environment she grew up in. Wilhelmina grew up during times of increasing tensions between the Boers and British. Wilhelmina was born in 1880, which means that she was only one at the time of the First

⁴⁸ J.P. Valk, *Raadsman achter de troon: dagboekantekeningen van jhr. Mr. J.W.M. Schorer, vice-president van de Raad van State* (Hilversum 2002) 40.

⁴⁹ Valk, *Raadsman achter de troon*, 40 & Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*.

⁵⁰ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. "(...) de regeering voldeed niet aan den drang der harten en ik gevoelde zelf ook dat het volk gaarne had gezien dat ik openlijk blij gaf van sympathie voor onze stamverwanten; hoe kon ik dit echter als staatshoofd!"

⁵¹ Wilhelmina der Nederlanden, *Eenzaam maar niet alleen*, 76. "Toen reeds was er in mijn onderbewustzijn een onbevredigheid over de onmacht, die het in een kooi opgesloten zitten meebracht, waardoor het nemen van een initiatief, welk dan ook, onmogelijk was."

⁵² Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54.

Anglo-Boer war and too young to be aware of the events happening around her at the time. However, as previously discussed, the First Anglo-Boer War had greatly influenced the Dutch society. It was this atmosphere of re-found nationalism, pride and moralistic struggles that influenced her ideas and actions. As the tensions between the Boers and the British kept on rising, anti-British sentiments increased amongst Wilhelmina and the Dutch population.

As a result of these anti-British feelings, the Netherlands started to shift their focus from Great Britain to Germany. During the 1890's, the Dutch trade with Germany grew tremendously. The modernisation of the Dutch economy was, to a great extent, based on German investments, technology and market.⁵³ Wilhelmina's close and heartfelt family ties with Germany, and because Kaiser Wilhelm and Queen Wilhelmina both supported the Boer effort of independence and were against British policy in the war, contributed to this shift of focus. Also, with the increasing tension between Great Britain and the Netherlands, because of the passive Dutch support, it is not unthinkable that Wilhelmina believed that Germany could help the Netherlands in case of an escalating conflict.⁵⁴ Around 1900 there came repeatedly from the German side a plea for a common customs union, followed by close political and military collaboration in Europe and overseas. The Dutch ambassador in Berlin, Van Tets van Goudriaan, reported that admiral von Tirpitz and other 'high-ranking seaman and commanding officers', but also 'industrialists, merchants and scholars' insisted on such collaboration, especially because of England.⁵⁵ Van Tets van Goudriaan's report suggests that Germany saw the Netherlands as part of their zone of influence. In case of a conflict, Germany would therefore support (and probably help) the Netherlands. However, the fact that the Netherlands had to watch out for Germany's influence was also seen in the Netherlands itself. Kuyper warned for the "germanification of our people on different aspects".⁵⁶ Also Wilhelmina warned against too much collaboration, especially in regard to the Dutch Indies.⁵⁷

Wilhelmina's anti-British sentiments also had implications for her personal life. When suitable candidates for marriage were proposed, British candidates were not even considered. However, despite Wilhelmina's anti-British sentiments in general, she remained pragmatic and open to personal relations and respect between British subjects and herself. As stated before, Wilhelmina's governess, the British Miss Winter, remained a close friend throughout her life. Despite their close friendship, Wilhelmina did not spare Miss Winter from her pro-Boer and anti-British

⁵³ Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst van het moderne imperialisme*, 142.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 143.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 142.

⁵⁶ *Idem*.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 143

feelings. Wilhelmina once told Miss Winter that the Boers were ‘excellent shots’, who have mastered the art of warfare.⁵⁸

Despite tension and conflicting beliefs about the Boer republics, Wilhelmina demanded that the British royal family (but also Great Britain as a whole) be treated with the utmost respect, preventing any cause of the British being offended and escalating the decreasing relationship even more. In one of Wilhelmina’s journals, she describes another “incident” (of which the date is not specified). The British queen often travelled via the harbour of Flushing (Dutch: Vlissingen) and took the train to Germany. At the passing train stations, Dutchmen were standing at the platforms singing the Transvaal national anthem. Wilhelmina wrote: “(...) once and nevermore, because I said measures had to be taken so the people at the stations would not be able to get even near the Queen.”⁵⁹

Although supporting the Boers, Wilhelmina was very critical of the press in the Netherlands and abroad. As historian Vincent Kuitenbrouwer describes in his book *War of Words*, the press played an important role in the Second Anglo-Boer War. Contrary to the European governments and heads of state, the newspaper expressed and even exaggerated the feelings of the general public. Wilhelmina therefore accused the press of being subjective, whipping up the public and distorting or exaggerating the actual events in the Boer republics. But Wilhelmina found the caricatures the worst, mocking Queen Victoria and her councillors. Although Wilhelmina criticised the Dutch press, she adds that “the caricatures were by far surpassed by those of other countries”.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ C. Fasseur, *Wilhelmina: De jonge koningin* (Meppel 1998) 199.

⁵⁹ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. “(...) ééns en niet meer, want ik liet zeggen dat er maatregelen genomen moesten worden om het volk op alle stations zelfs uit de verte geen toegang te geven tot den Koningin.”

⁶⁰ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2.

However, this negative feeling is contrary to an audience which Wilhelmina had with the board of the *Nederlandse Journalistenkring* (Dutch Journalist Circle (NJK)), represented by its chairman Abraham Kuyper, vice-chairman P.J. Appel and secretary J. Deen. During this audience, Wilhelmina expressed her warm approval of Kuyper's very pro-Boer article in *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Wilhelmina hoped that this article would be spread abroad, especially in the United States. After the audience was publicised in the Dutch press, the American envoy to the Hague, Stanford Newel, asked De Beaufort for an explanation. The startled De Beaufort denied the correctness of the



Image 5. Dutch caricature of Queen Victoria, from the album *John Bull in Africa*, published in 1900.

reports. However, Kuyper notified Leyds that “the comments of the Queen “(...) were stronger than the newspapers reported”.⁶¹

Although it seems that Wilhelmina perceived the relationship from a kinship point of view, she also describes the pessimistic view. On April 1st 1902, she wrote that the nations of the world “(...) by not going against England, silently honoured the principles for a major power to destroy a smaller one.”⁶²

Wilhelmina knew that the Dutch army was no match against Great Britain or a united Germany. It was therefore a reasonable fear that what was happening in South Africa could happen to the Netherlands as well.

As discussed previously, the pessimistic view contained the conviction that the Boer republics were seen as a place of refuge for the Dutch in case the Netherlands ceased to exist. Wilhelmina’s statement does not mention this place of refuge. This is probably because she wrote this in April 1902, at the end of the Second Anglo-Boer War when the fate of the Boer republics was already sealed. This meant that the perceived place of refuge did not exist anymore and might therefore be absent from her pessimistic view.

⁶¹ Koppen, *De Geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 179.

⁶² Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.3. “(...) dat het wereld concert (...) door Engeland niet tegen te gaan stilzwijgend het beginsel heeft gehuldigd dat eene groote mogendheid eene kleine kan en mag vernietigen (...)”

Dutch advantages from the Second Anglo-Boer War

It is important to keep in mind that Wilhelmina was well aware of the impact the Boer War had had on Dutch society. As discussed before, the divided Dutch society was now united in supporting the Boers. Wilhelmina wrote in her journal on April 1st 1902: "A good consequence of the war for us was that it created unity; the people were feeling one due to the common interest in the Boers."⁶³

Because Wilhelmina was very aware of the impact the Anglo-Boer War had on Dutch society, it might be the case that she took advantage of the situation to maintain or increase her own popularity.

However, it seems more likely that Wilhelmina acted out of compassion, within limits so that the international interests and relations of the Netherlands were not impaired, rather than personal gain. This opinion is supported by a related event that took place after the Boer War. On July the 14th 1904, Paul Kruger died in Clarens, Switzerland. Shortly after his death, the Dutch cabinet expressed the idea of providing a warship to transfer Kruger's remains to South Africa. After informing Kruger's relatives, and receiving a positive answer from them, it was decided to consult Wilhelmina. The Queen refused, as Kruger was no longer a head of state and there was no sign that the transport of his remains were threatened by molestation of any kind.⁶⁴ A second attempt was taken on July 27th by the Minister of Water Management De Marez Oyens (1845-1911). Again, Wilhelmina refused the proposition, as the cabinet should first contact the British government to see if they would not take offense by the offer. In a letter to the (by then) Minister of Foreign Affairs Melvil van Lynden (1843-1910), informing him about Wilhelmina's response, Oyens quoted the Queen: "I am just considering things from a merchant's perspective. The proposed transport cannot bring us an asset, and thus, when the chances of harm are not removed, then I have to maintain my position."⁶⁵ Wilhelmina expected that the relationship between Great Britain and the Netherlands would deteriorate by this action, a relationship that was starting to improve again.⁶⁶ This statement is representative of Wilhelmina's whole approach throughout the Second Anglo-Boer War.

Wilhelmina's view on the relationship between the Netherlands and the Boer republics was therefore not very different from the general opinion of the Dutch population. She perceived the relation from a kinship perspective. However, she also saw the struggle of the Boers as an essential war for the protection of the rights of small nations. Although pessimistic, Wilhelmina did not state

⁶³ Koninklijk Huisarchief, Inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. "Een goed gevolg van den oorlog was voor ons dat het eendracht kweekt; het volk gevoelde zich meer dan anders één door het gemeenschappelijk belang in de zaak der Boeren."

⁶⁴ Koppen, *De Geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 205.

⁶⁵ Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers: Nederlands constitutionele monarchie historisch-staatsrechtelijk belicht*, 205. "Ik ben gewoon de zaken te beschouwen uit een koopmansstandpunt. Voordeel kan ons bedoeld transport niet opleveren en wanneer dus de kans op nadeel niet is weggenomen, dan moet ik mijn standpunt handhaven."

⁶⁶ Koppen, *De Geuzen van de negentiende eeuw*, 205.

that she perceived a New Holland as a colony, nor as place of refuge; just as a precedent for the future, which could have consequences for the Netherlands.

Dutch support

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Netherlands were supporting the Boer cause because of the idea of kinship, rising nationalism and a new desire to become a colonial power. How the Dutch public supported the Boers has already been researched by Martin Bossenbroek in his book *Holland op zijn breedst*. While Bossenbroek did discuss the Dutch government's actions, he did not take account of Wilhelmina's influence. This chapter will therefore analyse how the Dutch government supported the Boers, focusing primarily on Wilhelmina's role and perspective.

The First Hague peace conference

In 1899 the Russian Tsar Nicholas II (1868-1918) wanted to organise a peace conference to agree on the methods of war. As peace conferences are delicate diplomatic affairs, they tend not to be held on the territory of one of the major powers. A location for the peace conference was searched for, and countries such as Denmark and Belgium were named as possible host countries. However, the Netherlands was asked to host the conference. Wilhelmina, who did not see the use of a peace conference, found this a "doubtful honour" for two reasons. Foremost, Wilhelmina felt that by being asked to host the conference, the Netherlands were marked as a mediocre, insignificant state.⁶⁷ As stated before, the Netherlands were still longing for the heydays of the Dutch Golden Age. Wilhelmina was now confronted with the current international position of the Netherlands.

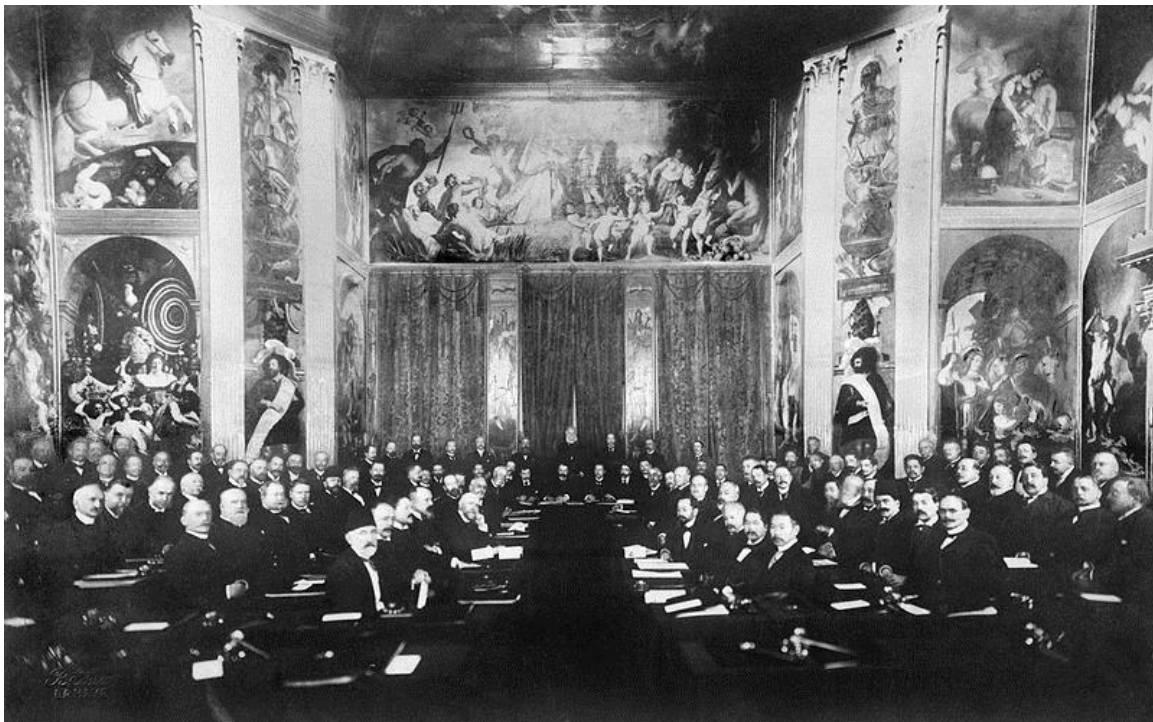


Image 6. The First Hague Conference 1899.

⁶⁷ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2.

However, in contrast to Wilhelmina's vision of the Netherlands being marked as an insignificant state, the Dutch population was thrilled by the news. Wilhelmina writes: "Great was the joy of the public when it heard of these plans; the feeling of self-satisfaction of the people was thereby of course greatly caressed."⁶⁸ Secondly, Wilhelmina was very much aware of the potential problems surrounding the organisation of such a conference - inviting the nations. The invitation for the Holy See, but more importantly for this research, the invitation for the Boer republics became problematic.

Throughout the preparation of the conference, it was not completely clear who was responsible for the invitations, and therefore who had the right to invite certain nations. The problems started when Van der Hoeven, the Secretary-General of the South African Republic's embassy in the Netherlands, contacted de Beaufort on whether his government could expect an invitation. Apparently, the Russian Count Mouravieff (1845-1900), who was assigned by the Russian government to supervise the organisation of the conference, had given him some hope. De Beaufort had advised Van der Hoeven to contact Mouravieff whom, at least at that stage, he deemed ultimately responsible for the invitation policy.⁶⁹ De Beaufort hurried to instruct the Dutch ambassador to Russia Van Stoetwegen, to promote that the list of invitations, if not composed by Russia alone, should be prepared in joint consultation, but under no circumstances with responsibility to be borne by the Netherlands exclusively.⁷⁰

On February 21st, the Dutch ambassador to Germany, Van Tets van Goudriaan, sent a message from Berlin that the German ministry had been alarmed by the news received through its embassy in The Hague, that De Beaufort intended to send a formal invitation to the South African Republic. The German government anticipated serious problems with the British on this point. It therefore advised De Beaufort not to take any such steps before contacting London. The next day, De Beaufort sent word to his ambassador that Mouravieff and himself were in agreement that Great Britain would never tolerate the presence of the Transvaal or the Orange Free State at the conference.⁷¹

That same day, at his weekly reception of ambassadors, De Beaufort had a long interview with the British ambassador Howard. Despite De Beaufort's efforts to direct the conversation to the subject of what the British opinion was on a possible invitation for the Boer republics, the British ambassador did not refer to the Boer republics during this conversation. De Beaufort concluded that

⁶⁸ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. "Groot was de vreugde van het publiek toen het van deze plannen hoorde; het ijdelheidsgevoel van het volk was daardoor natuurlijk hooglijk gestreeld."

⁶⁹ A.C.G.M. Eyffinger, *The 1899 Hague peace conference: 'The parliament of man, the federation of the world'* (Den Haag 1991) 89.

⁷⁰ Eyffinger, *The 1899 Hague peace conference*, 89.

⁷¹ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 48.

British policy was aimed at a confrontation: having the Boer republics invited first, only then to oppose their invitation and by doing so, publically embarrass the Boer republics. De Beaufort concluded that the best thing to do was persuade the Boer republics to decline an invitation in advance, just as Brazil and the Sultan of Morocco had already done.⁷²

On the 28 February, De Beaufort once more contacted Van Stoetwegen. De Beaufort declared that it was better not to invite the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Any request from Pretoria should be countered by stipulating that no African state was being invited and that no exception was made.⁷³ Later, on March 16th, De Beaufort contacted Van Tets on the matter. Ambassador Howard had come over to the ministry to confide that the British government did not acknowledge the diplomatic status of the Transvaal minister.⁷⁴ Finally, on March 24th, a first official letter came in from a Boer republic. Van Boeschoten, *chargé d'affaires* of the South African Legation in Brussels, sent a response. He confirmed the interest of his government in the peace conference and anticipated that invitations would be dispatched any day now, and would indeed emanate from De Beaufort. The next day, De Beaufort sent a formal reply in which he stated that he had reasons to believe that the Russian government did not intend to address an invitation to any African state.⁷⁵

The Dutch newspapers received the news by criticizing the Dutch government for letting its kinsmen down. The parliament convened to discuss the issue. De Beaufort had sold out the Boers. He received insulting letters which declared him to be a traitor and a weakling and insisted on his resignation. Also, Queen Wilhelmina called him a “weakling” for not inviting the Boers.⁷⁶ Although Queen Wilhelmina blamed de Beaufort and Mouravieff for the problems regarding the Boer republics, one should not forget that the Netherlands, over the past half-century, as the reverse side of her policy of the strictest neutrality, inevitably had somewhat lost her touch with the delicate manoeuvres that power politics needs.

Wilhelmina looked back on the peace conference in one of her journals, stating that nobody was nor could be aware of the damage that was done by not inviting the Boer republics.⁷⁷ The conference was held only months before hostilities in South Africa began. It was Wilhelmina’s opinion that if the Boer republics were invited, the Second Anglo-Boer War could have been avoided or contained to some extent.

⁷² Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 48.

⁷³ Eyffinger, *The 1899 Hague peace conference*, 91.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 92.

⁷⁵ *Idem*.

⁷⁶ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.1.

⁷⁷ *Idem*.

The Gelderland

One of the most famous events during the Second Anglo-Boer War, in which the Netherlands played an important role, was the sending of the ironclad H. M. Gelderland. By September 1900, most of the conventional forces of the two Boer republics were defeated. The Boer conventional forces that were still fighting often had to fight against an overwhelmingly large number of British troops. Kruger was therefore not able to have an army to protect him, and was constantly on the move to keep out of British hands.

At that time, Kruger resided at Waterval-Onder. But the British broke through during the Battle of Dalmanutha, where the Boer forces under general Botha were not able to stop the overwhelming number of British forces.⁷⁸ The war was brought too close for comfort, as the British were now able to march to Waterval-Boven, which was linked by a tunnel to Waterval-Onder. Kruger had to move from Waterval-Onder to Nelspruit. As the British continued their approach without much resistance, now to Nelspruit, it was decided to bring Kruger to the capital of the Portuguese colony of Moçambique, Lourenço Marques. From there, he would travel to Europe in order to raise support for the Boers, but also to rest due to his weak health. Officially, Kruger had been granted six months' leave in order to promote the Boer cause in Europe.⁷⁹

A train took Kruger across the border to Lourenço Marques. It did not stop at the train station, but shunted onto a siding, where he could reach the house of the Transvaal and Dutch Consul General Gerhard Pott under the cover of darkness. There, Kruger waited to board the first outgoing ship, which was the *Herzog* of the German East Africa Line.⁸⁰ However, as a high-profile individual, Kruger's every move was followed by interested parties.

Despite being a Portuguese colony, the real governor was the British Consul General Crowe. Portugal was heavily reliant on Great Britain for financial backing.⁸¹ The Dutch consul to Lisbon, W.M. van Weede van Berencamp, thought there was another reason for Portugal's cooperation with the British. In a letter to De Beaufort on September 19th, 1900, the consul expressed the feeling that Portugal's collaboration with the British was a result of the fear that the British would annex Moçambique if they would not cooperate with them.⁸² The British pressured the Portuguese Governor Antonio José de Souza Machado to deal with the situation. He asked Kruger the next morning after his arrival to accompany him right away, as he was to be the guest of the Portuguese

⁷⁸ J. Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger: A Biography* (London 1974) 245.

⁷⁹ Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger: A Biography*, 247.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 248.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 247.

⁸² Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801.

government.⁸³ However, Kruger became a virtual prisoner in the Governor's residence. He was no longer allowed to get visits from Boers in Lourenço Marques, nor from members of his own escort.⁸⁴

Rumours of Kruger's desire to travel to Europe, as his health prevented him taking part in the conflict, reached Europe. The Dutch government wanted to provide a ship for his voyage. However, the Dutch Royal Navy ship *Friesland* that was stationed at Lourenço Marquez to support and remove Dutch refugees, had just set sail for the Dutch Indies. Another ship, the *Gelderland*, was located in the Red Sea on its way to the Dutch Indies from the Netherlands, and received orders to sail for Lourenço Marquez to pick up Kruger.⁸⁵ Why Governor de Souza Machado kept Kruger imprisoned but then let him go on the *Gelderland* is not clear. Wilhelmina wrote: "Although I am not familiar with the particulars that happened to him (Ed. Kruger), I do have a strong feeling that Portugal negotiated with the British government, if the latter wished to have Kruger, and if the Governor of L. M. (Ed. Lourenço Marques) had to extradite him."⁸⁶ This theory was also believed by Van Weede. In a letter to De Beaufort of September 16th, Van Weede reported a meeting he had with the Portuguese minister of foreign affairs João Marcellino Arroyo about Kruger's arrival in Lourenço Marques and his desire to take the Herzog to Europe. Van Weede believed that one could add "if England allows".⁸⁷ Despite these suspicions, there are no sources to support this theory.

According to Johannes Meintjes, author of Kruger's biography, it was Queen Wilhelmina who spontaneously began diplomatic moves to rescue Kruger.⁸⁸ She received the approval of Queen Victoria to send the *Gelderland* to pick up Kruger. Kruger boarded the ship on the 19th of October 1900, and the ship set sail on the 20th. Although the sending of the *Gelderland* was surrounded by an air of victory and seemed a hazardously spontaneous act, the reality is far from that. It was a well-calculated action, with the British and Portuguese governments informed. Furthermore, the role that Queen Wilhelmina played in the whole affair might not be as clear and as important as Meintjes suggests in his biography.

It has often been thought, as expressed in Kruger's biography by Meintjes, that Queen Wilhelmina played an important role in the sending of the *Gelderland*. It was Wilhelmina who got Queen Victoria's permission, and it was Wilhelmina who "with marvellous tact and diplomacy arranged everything".⁸⁹ However, it seems that Meintjes mixes the symbolic power and position of

⁸³ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801.

⁸⁴ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 801.

⁸⁵ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2.

⁸⁶ Idem. "Ofschoon ik de bijzonderheden van wat met hem gebeurde, niet ken, heb ik toch een sterk vermoeden dat Portugal met de Britsche regeering heeft onderhandeld of deze laatste Krüger wenschte te hebben en of de Gouverneur van L.M. hem moest uitleveren."

⁸⁷ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 801.

⁸⁸ Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger: A Biography*, 248.

⁸⁹ Idem.

Wilhelmina within the constitutional monarchy, with the power and position of the Dutch government, who acts in the name of the Queen, because Wilhelmina's role was generally rather small.

The idea of sending a ship did not come from Wilhelmina, but from the Minister of Navy, J.A. Röell. The Dutch public was getting more and more frustrated that the government was not doing anything actively in support of the Boers. It was the belief of the prime minister Pierson and the minister of Foreign Affairs De Beaufort that something had to be done to ease this tension. Röell proposed the idea to send the *Gelderland* to pick up Kruger.⁹⁰

Also, within the correspondence in preparation of sending the *Gelderland*, Wilhelmina's name is mentioned only once, in a telegram to the Dutch representatives for Portugal, Great-Britain and Lourenço Marquez, who had to inform the respective governments. The telegram, sent on the 15th September 1900 by De Beaufort, states: "As a result of the orders of Her Majesty the Queen, I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that Her Majesty grants permission to offer to the Sir President of the South African Republic a warship for his trip to the Netherlands."⁹¹

In one of her journals, Wilhelmina states that she only approved the proposed idea of sending the *Gelderland*.⁹² This would be in line with another similar event discussed earlier in this work. The returning of Kruger's remains in 1904 shows similarities with the sending of the *Gelderland*. The idea came from a minister and was proposed to Wilhelmina. The only exception is that Wilhelmina saw no risk or disadvantages for the Netherlands, and allowed the action. The fact that Wilhelmina gave only her approval in the matter corresponds with what Wilhelmina wrote in her journal and is not very surprising. The queen is the only one with special authority to authorise the use of a warship.⁹³

The impression that the sending of the *Gelderland* seemed a risky, spontaneous act is also incorrect. Diplomatic preparations started on September 15th in 1900. An offer for providing the *Gelderland* from the Dutch government was sent on September 15th to Kruger. The next day, although it was not yet clear if Kruger accepted the offer, a telegram was sent to the Portuguese and British authorities notifying them that a Dutch ship was offered to Kruger to bring him to the Netherlands. As will be discussed later, we know from De Beaufort's diary that the British consul in

⁹⁰ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 186.

⁹¹ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801. "Tengevolgen de bevelen van Hare Majesteit de Koningin heb ik de eer Uwer Excellentie mede te delen dat Hare Majesteit machtiging verleent om aan den Heer President der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek een oorlogschip aan te bieden ten behoeve van zijne reis naar Nederland. De Directeur van het Kabinet der Koningin."

⁹² Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. "De regeering stelde mij einde Augustus begin September voor een schip te zenden om den krijgshaard af te halen; ik stemde toe."

⁹³ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 173.

The Hague, Howard, was already informed on the 15th. He came to visit De Beaufort the next day on the 16th.⁹⁴ On the 17th, Kruger accepted the offer and asked when he could expect the arrival of the ship. Although Howard had already informed De Beaufort about British opinion on the 16th, the official telegram came on the 19th. The British government stated, “it does not concern Her Majesty’s Victoria’s Government, having neither the wish nor the power to interfere with Mr. Kruger’s departure nor with the ship which he may elect”.⁹⁵

The preparations for the Gelderland itself started on September 16th 1900, when the Commander of the Gelderland received the message that he had to remain in the port of Perim, where the ship was located at the time. On the 19th the ship was ordered to get a hold of the necessary nautical maps for its destination. These maps were acquired on the 22nd of September. However, that same day De Beaufort sent to the Dutch consul in Lourenço Marquez the message that the Gelderland could not arrive before October 10th. De Beaufort does not elaborate on the reasons for this delay. It is possible that the scarcity of coals at Lourenço Marquez was the gating issue. The Gelderland needed 500 tons of coal for its return voyage. From the 22nd of September until the 5th of October, Dutch authorities were trying to arrange the acquisition of the coal. Eventually, it was agreed on October 5th with the French government that the Netherlands would buy the coal from the reserves in the port of Djibouti for 65 francs per tonnage, but with the limitation that there should be no interaction between the ship and the shore.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 88.

⁹⁵ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 801.

⁹⁶ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801.

These letters, telegrams and other correspondences show that the event was well organised and consulted. Despite being less romantic as thought, it does not compromise the symbolic meaning of the event. It shows not only that the Boers did have support in Europe, but also that they were willing to act on it.



Image 7. Paul Kruger and the crew of the 'Gelderland', on-board the ship.

The risk of the whole affair was also very low because of the estimated results it would have. The sending of the Gelderland was a win-win situation for all parties involved (the Netherlands, the Boers and Great Britain). For the British, the Gelderland meant a solution of what to do with Paul Kruger. With Kruger technically imprisoned in Lourenço Marques, it was just a matter of transferring him to a British prison and giving him a trial. However, capturing and eventually prosecuting Kruger would not mean the end of the war. It would probably provoke and infuriate the Boers and pro-Boer European countries even more, with a possible escalation of the conflict and the involvement of European forces. Therefore, having Kruger in captivity would prolong the Boer War and harm the British goal to conquer and pacify South Africa quickly. Meanwhile, for the Boers, the Gelderland meant that Paul Kruger could continue his fight from Europe and be out of danger. Being in Europe made it easier for him to visit nations and their governments that were in favour of the Boers, to ask for funds, weapons, mediation or even military intervention to support the war efforts. But more importantly, the Boer leader remained free, which was again symbolically important to keep the Boer moral high.

For the Dutch, the sending of the Gelderland was the long awaited act of support. The Dutch public had felt that the government was not doing enough to support the Boers.⁹⁷ They wanted action, rather than the passive words of support that were often heard from the government and read in the newspapers. Wilhelmina states in her journal: “It speaks for itself that the general public thought of the government as lax and would have liked nothing more than it ceding for the good cause; the government did not fulfil that desire in their hearts (...). Now finally came the deed which the people so desired.”⁹⁸ It was also a welcome “success” for the Dutch government. After months of insults by the public, but also by the political opposition, they finally received some positive support.

The possible negative result for the Anglo-Dutch relations, by offering the Gelderland, were estimated by the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs De Beaufort to be negligible. Kruger’s voyage was on medical grounds, not political, and Kruger would pass his position as president to Schalk Burger, making Kruger a “normal” individual. The British authorities could not take offence by this simple act. Fasseur writes in his book *Wilhelmina: The young queen* that De Beaufort had made sure he had the secret approval of the British for offering the Gelderland to Kruger.⁹⁹ This is not surprising, as we have seen throughout this research that the Dutch government did everything they could to keep from deteriorating the Dutch-Anglo relations any further. Also, when the Dutch cabinet wanted to offer a Dutch naval vessel to repatriate Kruger’s remains in 1904, Wilhelmina demanded that the cabinet should first contact the British government, to make sure they would not take offense by the offer.

However, there are reasons to doubt Fasseur’s statement. Fasseur does not provide a source for his statement, nor can we find any similar statement in the published diaries of De Beaufort by de Valk and van Faassen or archival sources. In the diaries of De Beaufort, we can even find a statement that proves the opposite. De Beaufort writes: “Immediately after the offer (Ed. the offer of the Gelderland to Kruger) was made I had my secretary-general Mr. Ruysenaers send to the English ambassador to inform him. I did not want to consult them in advance”.¹⁰⁰ De Beaufort did not want to inform the British authorities before the offer had been made because it would pose an opportunity for the British to express their disagreement in advance. If the Dutch government

⁹⁷ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 88.

⁹⁸ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. “Het spreekt van zelf dat het grote publiek de regeering laks noemde en niets liever had gewild dan een partij kiezen voor de goede zaak; de regeering voldeed niet aan den drang der harten (...). Nu kwam eindelijk de daad die het volk zo wenschte.”

⁹⁹ Fasseur, *Wilhelmina: De jonge koningin*, 199.

¹⁰⁰ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 88. “Dadelijk nadat het aanbod was gedaan had ik mijn secretaris-generaal mr. Ruysenaers naar den Engelschen gezant gezonden om het hem mede te deelen. Vooraf raadplegen wilde ik niet.”

continued their effort despite the expressed British opinion, the action could then be perceived as hostile or unfriendly and posing a possible risk for the Anglo-Dutch relations.¹⁰¹

On top of that, the British government were very much aware of the motivation behind the offer of the Gelderland. After informing Sir Henry Howard, the British ambassador in The Hague, Howard came the next morning to De Beaufort. Howard told De Beaufort that England would have preferred that the offer was not made at all, but that no offence was taken. He understood very well that the offer was made for the Netherlands, and specifically to ease the Dutch public opinion. Howard said: "It will do you a lot of good here".¹⁰²

Marseille instead of the Netherlands

There is still another question that arises: Why was Kruger brought to Marseille in France and not to a city in the Netherlands? As it was a Dutch action, it would be logical to bring Kruger to the Netherlands where the Dutch nationals could celebrate the whole action. Although it was stated earlier that the ship would bring Kruger to the Netherlands, in a telegram from De Beaufort to the Dutch consul in Lourenço Marquez on the 22nd of September, it was stated that Kruger was transported to "any European port".¹⁰³

According to Meintjes, the Gelderland was not to take Kruger through British waters. Meintjes does not provide a source for this information nor any motivation.¹⁰⁴ Although it seems logical that contact with British held territories should be avoided (as previously seen with the replenishment of the coal supply of the Gelderland), it was probably not a requirement for the journey, as the Gelderland visited the harbour of Port-Said in Egypt anyhow.

However, we do know that a voyage to the Netherlands would take much longer. If the Gelderland wanted to reach the Netherlands, it had to sail either around the Cape of Good Hope and western Africa or through the Mediterranean and the Strait of Gibraltar. In the same telegram from September 22nd, De Beaufort himself suggests a Mediterranean port because the Atlantic was very rough. The questionable health of Kruger might have influenced the decision to shorten his time at sea, so he would receive care more quickly.

Another reason might be found in the archives. The Dutch National Archive in The Hague holds a specific map containing all the documents regarding the sending of the Gelderland. These documents are all diplomatic correspondences between Dutch representatives of the government

¹⁰¹ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 88.

¹⁰² Idem. "Ça vous fera beaucoup de bien ici."

¹⁰³ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801.

¹⁰⁴ Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger*, 248.

and representatives of involved nations. However, one document was a letter from the director of the *Assurantie-Maatschappij tegen brandschade "de Nederlanden"* (Insurance Company against damage by fire "the Netherlands") on September 28th 1900.¹⁰⁵ This document is remarkable as it is the only document from a private company that is included in the map. In this letter, the director expresses his understanding for sending the *Gelderland*, but moreover expresses their fear of British retaliation for the action of the Dutch government. The retrieval of Kruger to the Netherlands would spark anti-British demonstrations. In reaction to these demonstrations, it is the fear of the director that the British will boycott Dutch products and businesses. He therefore suggests to bring Kruger to Marseille.¹⁰⁶

It is impossible that this letter had influenced De Beaufort, as he already suggested in the telegram from the 22nd of September sending the *Gelderland* to a Mediterranean port. However, this letter might have enforced the conviction of the Dutch government to bring Kruger ashore in a Mediterranean port, and as a result, they might have tried to persuade Kruger or Leyds into this decision.

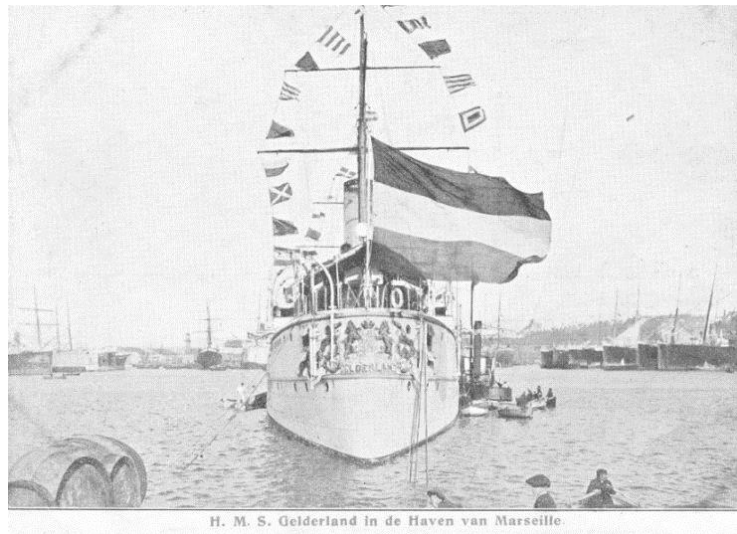


Image 8. The '*Gelderland*' in the port of Marseille.

Kruger would express his desired destination (Marseille) in a telegram on the 24th of October, almost a month later.¹⁰⁷ In the meantime, Leyds had arranged with the French government the most ideal place of arrival from where Kruger could start his European mission.¹⁰⁸ However, there are no documents that confirm the influence of the letter.

Despite no evidence of its influence on Dutch policy, the letter of the Insurance Company "The Netherlands" might contain the same fears that existed amongst the Dutch government regarding bringing Kruger to the Netherlands. If Kruger debarked in the Netherlands, it would probably have resulted in festivities and demonstrations (as seen in Marseille), which could harm the Anglo-Dutch relations. As stated before, the Dutch government was very jumpy about every public

¹⁰⁵ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 803.

¹⁰⁶ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801.

¹⁰⁷ *Idem.*

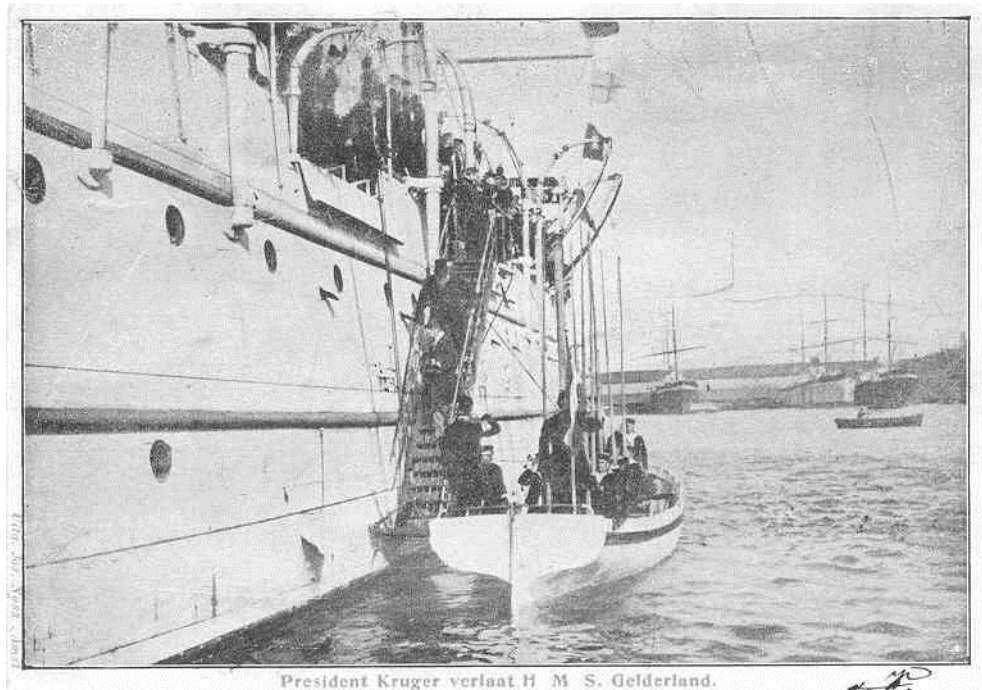
¹⁰⁸ Bossenbroek, *De Boerenoorlog*, 426.

expression of pro-Boer sentiments. The Dutch government therefore tried to distance themselves from any pro-Boer expressions in relation to Kruger's voyage, as they regarded the offer of the Gelderland as a personal not a diplomatic action.

To enforce that idea, De Beaufort and Leyds had agreed during an exchange of letters on October 24th that Kruger was not allowed to receive anyone while on the ship. This was to prevent the suspicion that Kruger still gave orders and functioned as the president, where the Gelderland functioned as his safe house. Kruger not meeting anyone safeguarded that the offer of transportation via a Dutch Royal Navy ship offered by the Netherlands was used by the individual Kruger as intended, not to further his position as the president of the South African Republic which could offend the British.¹⁰⁹ In this same letter, De Beaufort defines the conduct of behaviour for the Gelderland and its crew as well. Kruger would be picked up from the Gelderland by a barge, only accompanied by his fellow travellers from South Africa. De Beaufort adds: "Still it does seem to me that all the reasons exist for the ship with President Kruger on board to leave Marseille again as soon as possible. Festivities in honour of Sir Kruger will likely not fail to appear at Marseille and it seems to me considering our international ligatures has to be avoided because the crew of the Gelderland could get

involved with the festivities."¹¹⁰

In preparation of Kruger's arrival at Marseille, the Dutch consul to Marseille, Story van Blokland, asked De Beaufort for instructions



President Kruger verlaat H M S. Gelderland.
Image 9. President Kruger disembarking the Gelderland in the port of Marseille.

¹⁰⁹ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801.

¹¹⁰ Idem. "Nog zoude het my voorkomen dat er alle rede bestaat om het schip dat President Kruger aan boord heeft zoo spoedig mogelijk Marseille weder te doen verlaten. Feestelijkheden ter eere van de Heer Kruger zullen waarschijnlijk te Marseille niet uitblijven en het schijnt my toe met het oog op onze internationale verbanden dat alles moet worde vermede waardoor de bemanning van de Gelderland in deze feestelijkheden zouden kunnen betrokken worden."

regarding his course of behaviour in a letter from November 10th. Blokland received his instructions two days later. He had to board the *Gelderland* and offer his assistance to Kruger as a particular person, not as the President of the South African Republic. Just as with the crew of the *Gelderland*, Blokland was not allowed to participate in any of the festivities, unless colleagues of other nations would participate.¹¹¹ Doing so, the Netherlands protected itself from offending the British by not participating or by hiding behind nations who did participate and therefore following others instead of taking the initiative.

Kruger and Boer representatives in Europe

The Netherlands really distinguished itself from other pro-Boer European nations by how they welcomed the European mission of the *Driemanschap* (triumvirate) in April 1900, and Kruger's arrival in the Netherlands in December 1900. In an attempt to increase support and funds for the Boer cause, three South African representatives (Fisher, Wessels and Wolmarans) went on a European and American mission. Upon their arrival, they requested De Beaufort for an audience with Queen Wilhelmina. During this time, the men asked Wilhelmina if she would request the Russian Tsar to receive them. The triumvirate knew that the German Emperor and Russian Tsar did not want to receive them. After consulting with De Beaufort, De Beaufort advised the Queen not to send a letter. The Russian Empress was very close with Queen Victoria. He was afraid that the letter was conveyed to the British, which could harm the Anglo-Dutch relation even further.¹¹² However, after reading the innocent content of the letter, De Beaufort changed his mind.¹¹³ Nevertheless, they received a negative response from the Russian Tsar.¹¹⁴

On the 26th of April, De Beaufort had an official meeting with the Boer representatives. It was De Beaufort's opinion that the Boer representatives already knew that the Dutch government would not do anything to help the Boers.¹¹⁵ However, the Boer representatives expressed their utmost disappointment. It was their opinion that if even the Netherlands were not going to support the Boers, they could already give up the war. If the Netherlands were not supporting the Boers, their mission to other countries would be useless.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the Boers still wanted to try to persuade the American government to support them.

¹¹¹ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801.

¹¹² Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2.

¹¹³ Valk, *Raadsman achter de troon*, 97.

¹¹⁴ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54.

¹¹⁵ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 81.

¹¹⁶ Idem.

Overall, the mission of the triumvirate was a failure. They did not accomplish anything in France and the Netherlands, Germany and Russia did not want to receive them, and in America they only succeeded in getting more support from the American public, but not the government.¹¹⁷

As mentioned before, Kruger came to Europe to increase and intensify European support for the Boer cause Kruger wanted to make a trip to the major European powers which had so far been pro-Boer, such as France, Germany and Russia. Although his arrival in Marseille was attended with great festivities, it would quickly stand in great contrast with what happened after his arrival. Kruger arrived on November 24th in Paris, and was warmly greeted by the Parisian inhabitants. Just as in Marseille, the Dutch ambassador Van Swinderen offered his services to Kruger. He also presented a telegram from Queen Wilhelmina. However, a transcript of this telegram was not found in the archives. Despite the warm welcome by the French government, Kruger did not get the active support for the Boers he desired. The sole small success Kruger got was that if the notification of the annexation of the South African Republic would be received by the French government, the French government would not ratify it.¹¹⁸

In Paris, Kruger received a message from the Belgian government with a request to not visit Belgium. The British government was not amused by the acquittal of Jean-Baptiste Sipido (1884-1959). Sipido had tried to assassinate the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) at the Brussel-Noord (Brussels-North) railway station on April 5th 1900. Sipido accused the Prince of causing the slaughter of thousands during the Second Anglo-Boer War. Because Sipido was only 15 years old during his act, the court ruled that he could not be held legally responsible.¹¹⁹ To avoid any further escalation of Anglo-Belgian relations, the Belgium government asked Kruger to not visit Belgium.¹²⁰

The next stop was Germany. However, the German Emperor was not in Berlin, and did not know when he would be back. Despite this uncertainty, Kruger still took the train on December 1st. He would travel via Cologne and Magdeburg to Berlin, where he if necessary would wait for the Emperor. However, once in Cologne, Kruger received Sir von Tschirschky and Bögendorff, who informed Kruger that the Emperor would not receive Kruger and asked him not to come to Berlin.¹²¹ Kruger, who still believed that the German Emperor would support him, was shocked by Wilhelm's refusal. "The Kaiser has betrayed us," Kruger told Leyds.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 81.

¹¹⁸ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 801.

¹¹⁹ Speyer, 'The Legal Aspects of the Sipido Case' in: *Journal of the Society of Comparative*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1900), pp. 434-439, 436.

¹²⁰ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 85.

¹²¹ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 801.

¹²² Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger*, 252-254.

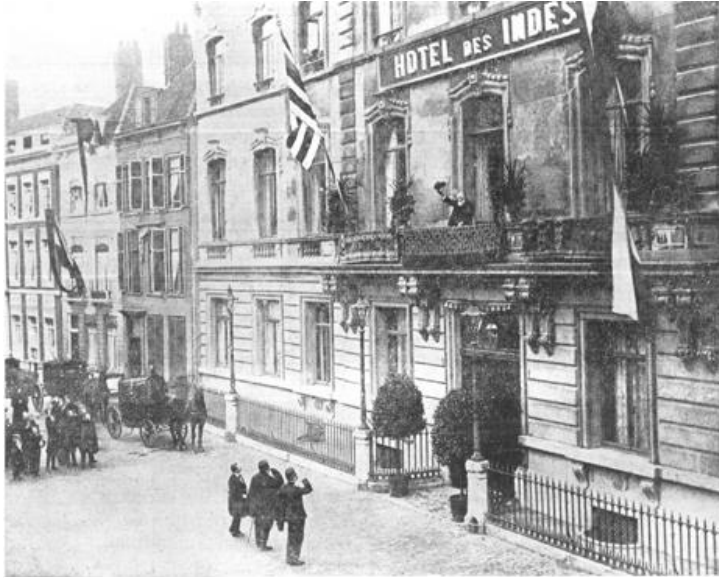


Image 10. People greet Paul Kruger in front of Hotel des Indes, The Hague. The hotel was Kruger's residence during his stay in The Hague, 1900.

On December 3rd, Leyds sent a telegram to De Beaufort, in which he informed him that Kruger wished to leave Cologne for The Hague. The Netherlands was his final destination, as he was going to stay there for an unspecified period. De Beaufort had no objections. Kruger would leave on December 6th at 10.06 am.¹²³ For his arrival, schools and businesses were closed. Wilhelmina wrote in her journal about Kruger's arrival:

“Everyone was dressed with a

Transvaal coloured bow, flags were waved, many interested people were present; the youth formed guards of honour on horseback (...).¹²⁴ Two days later, Kruger had an audience with Wilhelmina. Wilhelmina did not reveal what was said during this audience, only that Kruger came with Leyds, and that both gentlemen came a few days later for dinner with her and her mother.¹²⁵

On December 15th, Kruger had a dinner with all the Dutch ministers, the vice-president of the Council of State Schorer, and some others. Everyone felt sorry for Kruger as he was traveling through Europe, without his wife, asking for help without being heard. Kruger was deaf and had problems with his eyesight, but still kept his humour. He spoke about the war and his beloved family.¹²⁶ Kruger would eventually move to Utrecht to get treatment for his eyes and bronchitis by Professor Snellen. His health improved quickly and he seemed in better health, so Kruger moved back to The Hague. It was then decided to move to Hilversum at the beginning of April 1901 for 8 months. His health continued to improve so markedly that he began to give interviews again. His general appearance even seemed to improve. Also the health of Kruger's wife Gezina, which caused her not to travel with her husband to Europe, seemed to improve.¹²⁷ Kruger's life seemed to improve in many aspects.

After returning from a brief vacation spent visiting Dutch towns such as Scheveningen, Dordrecht and Rotterdam, bad news was waiting for Kruger in Hilversum. Despite her seemingly

¹²³ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 801.

¹²⁴ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. “Ieder tooide zich in een strikje met Transvaalse kleuren, er werd gevlagd, drommen belangstellende waren op de been; jeugd vormde eerewachten te paard (...).”

¹²⁵ Idem.

¹²⁶ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 100.

¹²⁷ Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger*, 256

improving health, Gezina had again become ill and passed away.¹²⁸ A difficult time began for Kruger in which he lived in absolute retirement, despite an attempt by Wolmarans to bring Kruger back to Scheveningen to distract his thoughts. However, Kruger found joy in writing his memoirs, an initiative by Pieter Grobler and Manie Bredell, who felt it their moral obligation for prosperity to document Kruger's life, as he was president during a very important time in South African history.¹²⁹

In December 1901, Kruger moved again to Utrecht to villa Oranjelust. After Gezina's death, his daughter Elsje Eloff and her family came to the Netherlands and lived next to Kruger.¹³⁰ Kruger was asked if he would like to move to a milder climate to ease his rheumatics, but he did not want to have luxuries while his country and his people were still suffering. Kruger's health started to decline again, as he became more deaf and blind.¹³¹

The first months of 1902 were very interesting times for Kruger. Lord Kitchener started overtures for peace negotiations. On May 31st 1902, the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed, officially ending the Second Anglo-Boer War. Kruger still had difficulties believing that this was the end of his beloved Transvaal and Orange Free State, as long as the flags were still flying in front of his house. Bredell had them removed at sunset on June 14th, two weeks after the signing of the treaty.¹³² After that realisation, Kruger again became increasingly solitary. He would go to Montene on the French Riviera in the summer of 1902 and 1903, together with the Eloff family, for his bronchitis and rheumatics. Kruger found it comforting that they were around, but did not need the interaction itself.¹³³

At the beginning of summer 1904, Kruger moved to Clarence in Switzerland, again accompanied by the Eloff family. His health was constantly degrading. He was likely no longer able to enjoy the beautiful Swiss Alps. He was now almost completely blind and deaf, and Kruger was not able to move around without support. Kruger's body was tired and fragile, as became clear on July 9th. Kruger contracted pneumonia and died eventually on July 14th 1904.¹³⁴

The fact that Kruger lived and died outside his beloved South Africa was due to a personal decision. Even after the war, Kruger decided to remain in Europe. There were many reasons for Kruger to stay in Europe.¹³⁵ Although his farm Boekenhoutfontein, despite being slightly damaged, was still standing, it did not seem right for Kruger to return to his home. Not while the homes of many Boers, including those of close friends and family, were gone. Also, Kruger refused to die under

¹²⁸ Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger*, 256

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, 256-257

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, 258

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, 259

¹³² *Ibidem*, 260

¹³³ *Ibidem*, 262

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, 267

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, 261

British rule, nor being a subject of the British Empire. It would also be impossible for Kruger to stay at Boekenhoutfontein without interfering in South African politics, which would only cause problems in his opinion.¹³⁶ Before a final decision was made, Kruger wanted to discuss the matter with generals Botha, De la Rey and De Wet, who were on their way to Europe to raise funds for their stricken people. He met them on August 20th 1902.¹³⁷

A decision on Kruger's exile was made - he would not return to South Africa. Besides Kruger's own motivations, the Boer generals also had political reasons to support Kruger's desire to remain in Europe. The concept of an old man who was forced into exile could be used as a fundamental story within the Afrikaner identity. Kruger would become a martyr around whom myths could be woven, a symbol of the Afrikaner identity in itself. His mind found satisfaction in being sacrificed for this cause.¹³⁸ Although a peace treaty was signed, for many Afrikaners, the war was not over, and for some it is still not over to this day. The desire to protect the Afrikaner identity or re-found the Boer Republics would persist along with these myths. To enforce these myths however, it was necessary that Kruger remained in exile.¹³⁹

Secret activities

As previously mentioned, Wilhelmina had an audience with Marez Oyens on July 27th regarding the repatriation of Kruger's remains. During this meeting, Wilhelmina stated: "(...) but I have done more for the Boers than my fellow countrymen will ever know (...)." ¹⁴⁰ With this statement, Wilhelmina suggests that she did more than what was known. She might have suggested the sending of letters to Queen Victoria, the Russian Tsar and German Empire, which will be discussed in the following chapter. However, she might be referring to another secret activity. In her journal, Wilhelmina refers to a conversation she had with De Beaufort, where she asked if she could do something to help the Boers. Apparently, the Netherlands were already helping, but Wilhelmina was kept in the dark about it. The German government provided the Boers with intelligence and advice. Because the Germans did not want to cause any British suspicion, the German ambassador in The Hague gave the messages to De Beaufort. In his turn, De Beaufort used the Dutch secret code to message the reports to the Dutch Consul in Pretoria, who again transferred them to Kruger.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger*, 260

¹³⁷ Ibidem, 261

¹³⁸ Idem.

¹³⁹ G. H. L. Le May, *British Supremacy in South Africa: 1899-1907* (Oxford 1965) 261.

¹⁴⁰ Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers*, 200. "(...) maar heb meer gedaan voor de Boeren dan mijne landgenooten weten (...)"

¹⁴¹ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2.

This was done throughout the war. In the end it became necessary, as Kruger now resided in The Hague and later in Utrecht. During peace negotiations between Boer Commander J.C. Smuts and Lord Kitchener on June 1st 1901, the Dutch ambassador wired the reports to Kruger.¹⁴²

In Fasseur's biography about Wilhelmina, a small paragraph is dedicated to this matter. Fasseur states that it bothered Wilhelmina that she was not informed about the German telegrams.¹⁴³ He refers to one of Wilhelmina's self-written journals from April 1st 1902 as a source. In this journal, Wilhelmina states the reasons why the messages were sent via the Netherlands and what the German messages contained in general. However, Wilhelmina does not say if it bothered her that she was not kept informed. She wrote: "I had initially been left unaware of this matter by Beaufort and later, when it was looked into whether I could do something for the good cause, he showed me the exchanged telegrams."¹⁴⁴ It seems that Fasseur was trying to exaggerate quite a normal statement, as Fasseur also adds an exclamation mark at the end of another normal statement regarding the telegrams.

Boer refugees

As in every war, people will flee the country. Some were even exiled by the British government. As many inhabitants of the Boer republics had some connections with the Netherlands, many sought asylum there. Some were housed in the *Afrikaner Tehuis* (Afrikaner shelter), located at the Nieuwe Herengracht in Amsterdam. Many of the inhabitants were Boers from the Cape Colony, who joined the Boer forces and could not return home as they were considered rebels by the British, which was punishable by the death penalty. The Dutch public showed their sympathy for them. Also, Wilhelmina came to visit them and to personally meet the people living in the shelter.¹⁴⁵ Wilhelmina also made an effort to stop the repatriation or banishment of Dutchmen and Boers. After long consideration, and after advice from a British commissioner, the British government decided to reimburse these people. Although a small sum, money was paid to the Dutch government, who had to divide it amongst the recipients.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie 097 W.J. Leyds, nummer toegang 2.21.105, inventarisnummer 1186.

¹⁴³ Fasseur, Wilhelmina: De jonge koningin, 341.

¹⁴⁴ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. "Ik was door Beaufort van deze zaak aanvankelijk onkundig gelaten en eerst later, toen er beraamd werd of ik misschien voor de goede zaak iets kon doen, legde hij mij de gewisselde telegrammen voor."

¹⁴⁵ Kuitenbrouwer, *War of words*, 126.

¹⁴⁶ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. HA A50-XVI, nr. 57.3.

Dutch intervention

During the Second Anglo Boer War the Netherlands were known for their passive support for the Boer cause. Discussion of active involvement in armed struggle tends to focus on the approximately 3000 Dutch volunteers who went to the Boer republics and fought against the British. Most famously, however unsuccessful, is the Hollanderkorps, a unit of Dutch and Belgian volunteers. Although it should be noted that the Dutch volunteers were not unique, as volunteers came, for example, from Scandinavia, Russia, France, Ireland, Canada and the United States.

It is unknown if Wilhelmina and the Dutch government were investigating possible ways to intervene, either with force or at a diplomatic level. This chapter will therefore discuss the multiple occasions in which Wilhelmina and the Dutch government were preparing interventions with different characteristics.

Wilhelmina and armed forces

Queen Wilhelmina, but also Queen-regent Emma, were heavily interested and involved with the Dutch armed forces. They were both actively involved in the policies and doctrines of the army, especially in regard to the Aceh War. They were outspoken supporters of a hard, expansive policy in Aceh, and therefore very passionate about the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger* (Royal Netherlands East-Indies Army (KNIL)).¹⁴⁷ One of the first things Wilhelmina did when she became queen was to reorganise the armed forces.¹⁴⁸

As discussed in the previous chapter, Wilhelmina was not in favour of the peace conference. Besides her previously mentioned reasons, Wilhelmina did simply not believe in, as she described, “childish utopia”. Wilhelmina wrote: “Who would ever disarm? Certainly not those who to great effort had increased their defensibility! Furthermore I had plans for reorganizing our armed forces; saving what was left to save of the army, to slowly bring our troops to that point where it is properly useable in times of war; how the plans for the disarmament ran against it!”¹⁴⁹

Since the outbreak of war, Queen Wilhelmina was very interested in the military organisation, capabilities and odds of both the British and Boer armies. In November 1899 she made a list of the military/tactical advantages and disadvantages for the Boers and British troops. For

¹⁴⁷ Bossenbroek, *Holland op zijn breedst*, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv A50-XVI, nr. 57.1.

¹⁴⁹ Idem. “Wie zouden er ooit ontwapenen? Toch zeker niet zij die met inspanning van krachten zich in de laatste jaren weerbaar hadden gemaakt! Buitendien ik had juist plannen van reorganisatie onze strijdkrachten; wat redden van het leger wat er nog te redden viel, van langzaam onze troepen te brengen op het standpunt waarop hij moet staan om goed bruikbaar te zijn in oorlogstijd; hoe druisten de ontwapeningsplannen daartegen in!”

example, she points out that the Boers have the knowledge of the terrain and are used to the South African climate but have limited resources and troops. About the British, she remarks that they are well disciplined but lack the sympathy of the population from the occupied territories and have to endure long transports over sea for resources.¹⁵⁰ This shows that Wilhelmina was well aware of the advantages and disadvantages of both parties, but moreover how they affected the conduct of the war.

Intervening with force

In the Royal House Archive, one specific document, only consisting of four phrases, proves that Queen Wilhelmina was seriously considering intervention with force in South Africa. On September 23rd 1899, De Beaufort wrote this letter:

“Advising Wilhelmina

- The army is in bad condition
- England is too strong

For the time being it is not in the Netherlands interest nor in the interest of the South African Republic.”¹⁵¹

It is not clear why De Beaufort sent this message to Wilhelmina, and no documents referring to this case were found in the National Archives. It seems most likely that Wilhelmina asked De Beaufort for the possibilities, but without the other letter, we can only guess. What De Beaufort also did not mention is that the Dutch armed forces were probably already weakened, as the Netherlands were fighting the Aceh War. To some extent, most of the weight was carried by the KNIL, but the regular army and navy were also involved in the conflict. Overall, this meant that a lot of the resources were already engaged in hostilities. This would presumably also have an effect on the Dutch possibilities to intervene with force.

It is clear that this is an important document, in relation to what Wilhelmina did or was thinking of doing. It seems as though Wilhelmina is hinting at active military intervention. However, there are some problems regarding the interpretation of this document. It seems that De Beaufort wrote this letter as a response to a letter from Wilhelmina. Despite further research in the Royal House Archive and the National Archive, no letter from Wilhelmina or any letter relating to this

¹⁵⁰ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54.

¹⁵¹ Idem. “Adviseert Wilhelmina. Leger is in slechte staat. Engeland te sterk. Vooralsnog niet in het belang van Nederland zoude zijn en evenmin in dat van de Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek.”

subject was found. Therefore, we do not have the context the letter was written in, and it is therefore impossible to know the exact meaning and seriousness of the letter.

A more problematic issue is that on a second visit to the Royal House Archive, this document was no longer included in the previously consulted documents, and it was not found again. This research was therefore not in the position to consult the document again to verify if the document was transcribed properly. It is still unclear what happened to this document.

Creating a coalition

Wilhelmina was aware that if she wanted to act, she could not do it alone. Throughout the conflict, Wilhelmina stayed in close contact with specifically the Russian Tsar and the German Emperor, two of the major powers in Europe.

In the same document of November 1899 in which she describes the advantages and disadvantages of the Boer and British troops, she also estimates how the major European powers are going to react.¹⁵² But it seems that Wilhelmina is estimating who she could form a coalition with. Wilhelmina describes France, Germany, Russia and the United States. She states that despite the fact that France had not forgotten about Fashoda (in 1898, an armed confrontation between armies of France and Great Britain was just avoided) the internal affairs and the lack of ships made the French powerless. For every nation, the lack of ships was a problem, and therefore no one could really harm the British at sea.¹⁵³

Although the Germans were pro-Boers, the German government and emperor followed to some extent the same policy as the Netherlands. They would support the Boer republics, without harming their relationship with Great Britain. The relationship between Germany and Great Britain had improved in recent years. Also, there was a “secret” treaty between the nations about dividing Portuguese colonies. The possibility of increasing their territory even more limited the commitment of Germany.

Wilhelmina believed that Russia was the best candidate to do something against Great Britain. She believed that Russia could harm Britain in Asia. Given any opportunity, Russia would not ignore a chance to increase their territory in Asia, especially as Britain had interests in Persia, Afghanistan and China. However, it seemed that Russia would remain neutral in the conflict.

The United States were not regarded as a possible ally against the British. It was Wilhelmina’s opinion that the political policies of the United States were too inconsistent for the time being, as there were upcoming elections. However, if they would threaten Great Britain it might perhaps have

¹⁵² Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54.

¹⁵³ Idem.

a positive result, as Britain had many commercial dealings with the United States, and the fact that it shared a border with Canada meant that they had to remain on good terms.

Preventing war

Willem Johannes Leyds, a Dutchman who made a career in the government of the South African Republic and who eventually became a special ambassador of the South African Republic, expressed the idea that Queen Wilhelmina could write a letter to Queen Victoria. Leyds maintained a friendly correspondence from mid-July until September 1899 with his former teacher and friend J.P. Moltzer, a member of the Council of State. Moltzer, who supported the Boer cause, wrote that if Leyds knew something that the Dutch government could do to avoid a war between the Boer republics and Great Britain, he should let him know.¹⁵⁴ In a letter to Pretoria on August 8th 1899, Leyds wrote that he had a meeting with prime minister Pierson, also a former teacher of Leyds, and minister of Foreign Affairs De Beaufort. During this meeting, Leyds suggested that Queen Wilhelmina could write a letter to convince Victoria to avoid a war at all costs.¹⁵⁵ However, Pierson and De Beaufort refused the suggestion. According to Pierson, a request from Queen Wilhelmina, still very young and at the beginning of her career, to Queen Victoria, an old lady at the end of her career, was too risky. He did not want to expose Wilhelmina to such a risk. He said, also in the name of De Beaufort, that from the Dutch government nothing could be expected. Wilhelmina was kept unaware of the whole situation.¹⁵⁶

However, De Beaufort changed his mind when he received a letter from the British historian Frederic Harrison. In this letter, Harrison stated that a war between Great Britain and the South African Republic was imminent. Harrison was opposed to a possible war and was trying to turn British opinion against a conflict with the South African Republic. Harrison asked Wilhelmina if she would like to write a personal and private letter to Queen Victoria.¹⁵⁷ At that time, the Dutch government had refrained from any interference regarding the tensions between Great Britain and the South African Republic. De Beaufort stated that it was the government's desire to continue this policy. However, a letter as proposed by Harrison would be acceptable. On September 6th 1899, De Beaufort sent a letter to Queen Wilhelmina, informing her about Harrison's letter. Wilhelmina should decide for herself if she would like to write such a letter. If she wanted to write one, De Beaufort would have no objections.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Bossenbroek, *De Boerenoorlog*, 192.

¹⁵⁵ Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers*, 169.

¹⁵⁶ *Idem*.

¹⁵⁷ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54.

¹⁵⁸ *Idem*.

Wilhelmina decided to write a letter to Queen Victoria, in which she emphasised the misery a possible war would bring, including to the British side.¹⁵⁹ The letter Wilhelmina wrote were solely her words. De Beaufort did not proofread the letter, as Wilhelmina purposefully gave him the draft of the letter after sending it. However, Victoria's response was as Wilhelmina expected it: "The Queen could not do anything, the matter depended on Kruger's attitude."¹⁶⁰

Mediation

On March 9th 1900, the Dutch ambassador in Pretoria had received a message from the presidents of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic. In this dramatic letter, both presidents expressed the wish for mediation by a foreign nation in order to end the bloody conflict. The Boers specifically requested the intervention of the United States, France, Germany, Russia, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Switzerland and the Netherlands.¹⁶¹ It is not surprising that the presidents sent the message at this time. The war had not gone well for the Boers. The Boer general Cronjé had been captured together with around 4000 of his men; the siege of Ladysmith and Kimberley had been broken by the British; and the Boer generals De Wet and De La Rey were fighting against an overwhelming British force. Also, the British persuaded the native tribes to harass the Boers, and Portugal now allowed the transport of war material and resources over their territory in Moçambique.¹⁶²

On March 10th in the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury said that negotiations on the basis of independence for the Boer republics were unlikely. On the 11th, the German government had already sent a telegram to Pretoria in which they made it clear that Germany would like to mediate, if both parties would accept mediation by the Germans. However, the German government knew that the Boer republics demanded independence, but also that because of Lord Salisbury's statement, mediation was already doomed to fail, as Great Britain would not accept the independence of the Boer republics.^{163 164}

On March 12th, De Beaufort immediately instructed the Dutch ambassadors to the addressed nations to let him know how the respective nations were going to react. The other countries did this as well.¹⁶⁵ On March 13th, De Beaufort received the transcription of a meeting between the Dutch

¹⁵⁹ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54..

¹⁶⁰ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2.

¹⁶¹ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Kabinet en Protocol, nummer toegang 2.05.18, inventarisnummer 799.

¹⁶² NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 799.

¹⁶³ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 71.

¹⁶⁴ Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers*, 179.

¹⁶⁵ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 799.

consul in Paris, De Stuer, and the French minister of foreign affairs, Delcassé. Delcassé expressed the opinion that a positive result for mediation by any nation was highly doubtful because of Salisbury's statement and the Boer demands of independence. It was his opinion that France was not in the position to initiate the mediation. He also stated that Russia was in a difficult position. As the recent initiators of the peace conference in The Hague, they were qualified for this intervention. However, their seemingly neutral position was affected by Russia's interest in Asia. As a mediator in a conflict, it is necessary to be neutral and objective. Because both Great Britain and Russia had interests in Asia, Russia was not objective. It could use its position to direct the course of events in its favour, with a possible outcome of increasing its influence in Asia. It is also clear that the French government did not know how other governments would react (or already had reacted) on the invitation for mediation. In the opinion of Delcassé, Germany was the best candidate. Because of the good relations between Wilhelmina and Emperor Wilhelm, Delcassé suggested that Wilhelmina write a letter to Wilhelm to find out the exact meaning of Germany's offer.¹⁶⁶ As stated before, Delcassé was not informed that Germany had made an offer for mediation on the 11th, but he knew that it would get declined.¹⁶⁷

Together with De Stuers report, answers of other nations reached De Beaufort on the 13th. A response came from the Dutch ambassador in Saint Petersburg, who had met with Count Mouravieff. Mouravieff said that the timing of the request was excellent, as ten days before the Russians were looking for a way to help the Boers. It was also his opinion that, by including the smaller European nations in the request, the major powers could not watch silently. However, similar to the French, it was thought that Russia was not in the position to take the lead. Mouravieff suggested that the United States should take the lead. Great Britain had reasons to keep the United States as a friend, and if the United States acted first, other powers would immediately follow.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, a more positive response came from Washington. In a telegram to De Beaufort, it was stated that the following Saturday the United States would offer their mediation if requested by Great Britain.¹⁶⁹

On the 14th, De Beaufort sent Lord Salisbury's statement made on the 10th in the House of Lords to Wilhelmina, along with Russia's response that it would not offer mediation. Also on the 14th, a British answer to the American offer came in. Lord Salisbury thanked the Americans with the utmost feelings of friendship, but the British government could not accept the intervention of any power "for the moment". This was the start for all the other nations to decline the request of the

¹⁶⁶ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 799.

¹⁶⁷ Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers*, 180.

¹⁶⁸ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 799.

¹⁶⁹ Idem.

Boer republics. Russia, France and the other smaller powers gave a definite answer that they would not take the initiative.

De Beaufort received Lord Salisbury's statement on the 15th, and informed Wilhelmina that same day that the decisive statement of the English government made every intervention impossible, as "it would undoubtedly be an unfriendly act against England."¹⁷⁰¹⁷¹ Therefore, the Dutch government sent a telegram to its ambassador in Pretoria, saying that the Dutch government would not take initiative regarding the intervention, but would support any other action by another power that was aimed to restore peace in South Africa.¹⁷²

According to the remarks in De Beaufort's diary, Wilhelmina was very nervous and disappointed by Emperor Wilhelm's answer of rejection. He recorded in his diary that Wilhelmina wanted to write a letter to Tsar Nicholas, in an attempt to convince him to take the initiative instead. However, De Beaufort supposedly convinced the Queen to wait for new developments in Russia and the United States.¹⁷³

Wilhelmina's letter to Kaiser Wilhelm

A possible reason why Wilhelmina was nervous during her conversation with De Beaufort might be because she had written a letter to Emperor Wilhelm on the 20th of that month, as suggested by Delcassé, but without the consent of De Beaufort.¹⁷⁴ Either Wilhelmina had told De Beaufort about the letter during this conversation, or De Beaufort had found out by himself. Nevertheless, Wilhelmina had to now face De Beaufort in this light, which might explain her nervousness. In this letter to Kaiser Wilhelm, Wilhelmina tried to convince Wilhelm to take the initiative for mediation, but also to ask for advice if there was anything he or they could do together to "avert the worst for the Boer people."¹⁷⁵

There is much discussion in the literature whether De Beaufort was informed. Wilhelmina writes in her journal: "The only monarch that I knew and of whom I knew he was a supporter of the Boer-cause, actually the German Emperor. I wrote him private and in the utmost secrecy a letter in which I asked the German Emperor if he did not know a way to end the bloodshed. Before doing so, I discussed my intentions with De Beaufort who did not have any objections, if it was done with the

¹⁷⁰ NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 799. "(...) zulks ongetwijfeld als een onvriendschappelijke daad tegenover Engeland zoude worden aangewent."

¹⁷¹ Bossenbroek, *De Boerenoorlog*, 328.

¹⁷² NL-HaNA, BuZa / Kabinetsarchief, 2.05.18, inv.nr. 799..

¹⁷³ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 71.

¹⁷⁴ Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers*, 182.

¹⁷⁵ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54. "(...) das Schlimmste von den Buren abzuwenden (...)"

utmost secrecy.¹⁷⁶ Fasseur (following Wilhelmina's statements from her journal) writes that De Beaufort was informed, while Van Raalte says that he was not informed. In contrary to Fasseur, Van Raalte provides in his book a clear explanation why De Beaufort was likely not informed.

The events discussed in the previous paragraphs, following Van Raalte's book, happened in the period from March 9th to the 15th. De Beaufort informed Wilhelmina about the events on the 14th and 15th. Wilhelmina sent her letter to the German Emperor on March 20th. Lord Salisbury's statement on the 15th and De Beaufort's remarks about that statement make it highly unlikely that someone with the experience and knowledge of international diplomacy like De Beaufort would permit Wilhelmina to write such a letter five days after Lord Salisbury's statement. Besides the archival evidence, De Beaufort does not mention nor refer to a letter during this period to the German Emperor in his published diaries. In addition, after her audience with De Beaufort, Wilhelmina spoke to Schorer directly after. Wilhelmina asked Schorer what was considered a personal letter and what was considered a political letter.¹⁷⁷ This question can also be interpreted as: About what do I need to inform the minister and what can I leave out? It is therefore more likely that De Beaufort was not informed, and that Wilhelmina is not telling the truth in her journal.

Apart from the question of whether De Beaufort was informed, Wilhelmina must have been aware that Germany would most likely respond in a negative way, and that she took a large risk to get an answer which she already knew. By not informing De Beaufort, Wilhelmina had acted in contradiction with the Dutch constitution and it posed a danger for relations with Great Britain. Wilhelm had already notified King Edward VII about a Russian attempt to persuade Wilhelm to take an initiative for peace on March 3rd. Luckily, Wilhelmina's correspondence remained confidential and without consequence.¹⁷⁸

Van Raalte states that the rejective letter of Kaiser Wilhelm could be interpreted as an admonition to Wilhelmina that the Netherlands were not armed well enough.¹⁷⁹ However, it is the author's opinion that this letter is not an admonition, as the tone is very caring, friendly, realistic and comforting. Wilhelm shows a very clear understanding of the international political situation at that time. Apart from the reasons previously mentioned why none of the nations (especially Germany) would take the initiative for mediation or any other kind of initiative, such as Russia's promise not to use the war to increase its influence and Lord Salisbury's statement, Wilhelm blames Kruger himself

¹⁷⁶ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2. "De eenigste monarch die ik ken en waarvan ik wist dat hij voorstander der Boerenzaak was, namelijk de Deutsche Keizer, schreef ik toen particulier en in het diepste geheim een brief waarin ik den Deutschen Keizer vroeg of hij niet een weg wist om een einde te maken aan het bloedvergieten. Alvorens daartoe over te gaan besprak ik mijn voornemen met Beaufort die er geen bezwaar in zag mits onder de stipste geheimhouding."

¹⁷⁷ Valk, *Raadsman achter de troon*, 97.

¹⁷⁸ Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers*, 182.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 188.

for the situation his country is in. Wilhelm states in his letter: “I dare to remember you that we once both gave advice, which however, has not been followed”.¹⁸⁰ During the prelude to the Second Anglo-Boer War, the German embassy in the Netherlands had contacted De Beaufort to persuade Kruger to request mediation from the United States. De Beaufort did inform Kruger, but Kruger dismissed this proposal. When Kruger did request the mediation of the United States during the war, it was already too late. After a terrible start of the war with some “humiliating” defeats, Britain now had to defend its international prestige and would do so at all costs. Wilhelm tried to comfort Wilhelmina by writing: “Although there will be much in here (the letter) that must sadden you, you can say with a clear conscience that your government has done timely its best to avert the current misfortune of the Boer people.”¹⁸¹ Therefore the Netherlands were not to blame in Wilhelm’s opinion.

From this it appears that the European powers feared to take the initiative in light of possibly offending the British by the gesture. There was no clear advantage to take the initiative for any nation. The prospect of soured relations with Great Britain became a real danger after Lord Salisbury made his statement, and any effort could have resulted in harming national interests.

Presenting the position of stadtholder

An interesting document was found in the National Archives in The Hague, written by Bas Veth, a Dutch painter, after a conversation with Willem Johannes Leyds. In this document dated July 3rd 1900, Veth describes a plan of how the Boer republics could persuade the European powers to intervene between the fighting parties. Although this research examines what Wilhelmina actually did for the Boers and their cause during the Second Anglo-Boer War, and therefore looks at her actions, a special role in this plan is reserved for Wilhelmina and therefore is worth mentioning.

This plan states that the position of stadtholder, as it used to exist in the Netherlands before the French Revolution, over both the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal) would be offered to Wilhelmina. Veth describes the position of stadtholder as a purely personal bond, without interference in the day-to-day affairs of the Boer republics. The stadtholder would ratify the chosen president, be informed about the chosen ministers and either represent the republics in foreign affairs or be informed about them. Russia, France and Germany, and if possible

¹⁸⁰ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54. “Ich wage daran zu erinnern, dass wir beide bereits einmal Rat erteilt haben, der aber nicht befolgt worden ist”.

¹⁸¹ Idem. “Aber wenn auch manches darin sein mag, was Dir Kummer verursachen muss, so kannst Du Dir doch mit gutem Gewissen sagen, dass Deine Regierung rechtzeitig das ihrige getan hat, um das jetzige Unglück von dem Burenvolke abzuwenden.”

the Netherlands and the United States, should guarantee this situation.¹⁸² Overall, the position of stadtholder was foremost a symbolic position without much legal base to act on.

It was thought that Russia, because of their desire to end the conflict, would support this idea. In France it would find support as well. Amongst the American people, it was thought that this proposition was received with great sympathy, as they wanted the Boer republics to remain independent from British rule. But especially Germany would also support the idea, as the relationship between the Emperor and Wilhelmina was very close. This relationship might result in Germany taking the decisive step.¹⁸³

Veth's plan was not only focused on provoking the intervention of the previously named European powers, but was already looking at the aftermath of the war as well. Veth states: "Revenge and bitterness and great misery will be the results of this war. A woman, working in the government can make the hate and bitterness disappear and ease the misery and a seal that this will happen lies in the name of the family that in the case of freedom has done such great services."¹⁸⁴ Veth believed that a woman was more suitable to normalize the situation in the Boer republics, and saw in Wilhelmina the ideal person, as she had done much for what he stated as the case of freedom.

Although it is not clear to what extent Veth's idea was supported by the South African Republic's government, nor who knew about the plan, we can conclude that this idea was not known to the Netherlands, nor to any other European nation. Nor are references to this idea or document found either in the archives, or in the existing literature. However, this document demonstrates support for the idea of Wilhelmina playing an essential role, either active or symbolic, for the Boer effort.

¹⁸² Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie 119 Bas Veth, nummer toegang 2.21.167, inventarisnummer 128.

¹⁸³ NL-HaNA, Veth, 2.21.167, inv.nr. 128.

¹⁸⁴ Idem. "Wraak en verbittering en groote ellende zullen de gevolgen van dezen oorlog zijn. Eene vrouw, medewerkende in het staatsbestuur kan de haat en verbittering doen verdwijnen en de ellende lenigen en een waarborg dat dit zoo zal gebeuren ligt in den naam van het geslacht dat in de zaak der vrijheid zulke groote diensten heeft bewezen."

A comparison

It seems clear that many European countries and their heads of state were supporting the Boer cause. The Dutch government generally tried to help the Boers without causing a possible diplomatic conflict with Great Britain. Wilhelmina herself wished to do more for the kinsmen on a different continent, but was limited by her position as queen of the Netherlands.

To answer the question of what Wilhelmina actually did for the Boers and their cause, we have to understand her contribution in relation to that of other heads of state in Europe. It would be too much to compare every European nation and the United States. This chapter therefore compares the actions, positions and restrictions placed on Wilhelmina with those of the heads of state of two other major powers in Europe: Russia and Germany. As discussed throughout this research, Wilhelmina actively sought to collaborate with these nations.

The position of head of state

The three countries discussed in this chapter are all monarchies. However, there are multiple forms of monarchy. Germany was a federal constitutional monarchy and Russia was an absolute monarchy. The Netherlands, with Wilhelmina as the head of state, was a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. This means that the power lies with the head of state, the ministers and the parliament. However, the power of the head of state is very limited. Also, the head of state is inviolable, as the ministers were responsible for the acts of Wilhelmina. However, Wilhelmina needed permission from ministers when she acted on an official capacity.

Wilhelmina had only the ability to sign laws and therefore ratify them, and as previously stated she had right to command the armed forces and designate someone for the formation of a government. Wilhelmina used this power in 1901 to appoint Abraham Kuyper. But she first wanted Kuyper to agree that the policy in regard to the Aceh War and the neutral position of the Netherlands regarding the Second Anglo-Boer War remained as they were.¹⁸⁵ Beyond this, she did not command any influence on the policies of the Netherlands. The real power rested with the Dutch parliament, which had the power to form and pass new laws, make foreign and interior policies and express statements on the policies of foreign nations.

¹⁸⁵ Valk, *Raadsman achter de troon*, 106.

This was in sharp contrast with Germany. The German Empire was a federal constitutional monarchy, meaning that it consisted of multiple principalities, duchies and kingdoms, with Emperor Wilhelm II as the head of state and King of Prussia (the largest and strongest element of the federation) but with extended powers. Wilhelm ruled as an autocrat with divine right. He saw himself as the intermediary between God and his people, and therefore ignored all criticism. Although under the rule of his grandfather, Wilhelm I, the Reich Chancellor still possessed some power and influence, this changed from 1890 onwards.¹⁸⁶ Wilhelm also had the power to determine the policy of both army and navy, which Wilhelmina could only do to a far lesser extent.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, Wilhelm regarded the other monarchs in Europe, such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Great Britain as “automatic signing machines”.¹⁸⁸



Image 11. Emperor Wilhelm II, 1902.

The Russian Empire was similar to the German Empire, as Nicholas II was also an autocratic ruler, but he had to get used to his new position after his accession in 1894, which might explain his inconsistent early rule. Although an absolute monarchy, the Russian public believed that Nicholas would be a “softer and less autocratic” ruler than his predecessors.¹⁸⁹ Representatives of the Tver zemstvo (Zemstvo were local rural governments) took this opportunity to propose something close to a constitutional regime. The autocrat in Nicholas emerged and he punished all who were involved. However, as stated in a biography of Nicholas II by Robert D. Warth, “Nicholas reigned but did not rule, at least in the pragmatic sense of providing effective and knowledgeable leadership.”¹⁹⁰ The personalities of each individual minister and adviser had an impact on how Nicholas ruled Russia, in contrast to Germany, where Wilhelm ruled from his personal opinion, and the Netherlands where the parliament decided the policy.

¹⁸⁶ J.C.G. Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1859-1941: a concise life* (Cambridge 2015) 53.

¹⁸⁷ Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1859-1941*, 55.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 41.

¹⁸⁹ R. D. Warth, *Nicholas II: The Life and Reign of Russia’s Last Monarch* (Westport, 1997) 20.

¹⁹⁰ Warth, *Nicholas II: The Life and Reign of Russia’s Last Monarch*, 31.

Their actions

As discussed in previous chapters, Wilhelmina wanted to do a lot in favour of the Boer cause, but could not do much because of her position as queen. That does not mean that she did not press the limits of the acceptable regarding her position. Regarding the letters sent by her to Queen Victoria, Emperor Wilhelm II and Tsar Nicholas II, it was concluded by van Raalte in his book *Staatshoofd en ministers* (Head of State and ministers) that she sometimes crossed those constitutional limits, likely by accident, as she asked Schorer during an audience on September 19th 1900 the difference between a personal and a political letter.¹⁹¹ A personal letter should only contain personal subjects that are written to an individual and not their position, and follow ordinary postal routes. A political letter contains official subjects written to a person's position and sent through the official diplomatic channels, with (in the case of Wilhelmina) permission of a minister.¹⁹² However, one does not exclude the other. In his book, Van Raalte analyses Wilhelmina's letter to Queen Victoria on September 8th 1899, and Wilhelmina's letter to Wilhelm II on March 20th. Van Raalte concludes that the letter to Victoria was not a personal letter. Wilhelmina had the authorisation of De Beaufort to write the letter; the letter went via official diplomatic channels; the discussed subject was not personal but political; and Wilhelmina appealed to Victoria's "powerful influence", meaning the position Victoria had.¹⁹³ Wilhelmina's letter to Wilhelm II was also in contradiction with the Dutch constitution. Wilhelmina was not authorised by De Beaufort or any other minister.¹⁹⁴

Because of their positions, Wilhelm and Nicholas were more free to act the way they wanted from a constitutional perspective. Germany had closer ties with the Boer republics since the First



Image 12. Tsar Nicholas II, 1903.

Anglo-Boer War. German companies sold weapons to them and invested in businesses. After the Jameson Raid, Wilhelm went on January 3rd 1896 to the Reich Chancellor's palace and demanded dramatic action. As noted by the foreign secretary, Adolf Marschall von Bieberstein, in his diary: "His Majesty developed some weird and wonderful plans. Protectorate over the Transvaal, which I at once talked him out of. Mobilisation of the marines. The sending of troops to the Transvaal. And on the objection of the Chancellor: "That would mean war with England," His Majesty says: "yes, but only on land." (...) Finally at my suggestion, His Majesty sent a

¹⁹¹ Valk, *Raadsman achter de troon*, 97.

¹⁹² Raalte, *Staatshoofd en ministers*, 170.

¹⁹³ *Ibidem*, 179.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 182.

congratulatory telegram to President Kruger.”¹⁹⁵ This so-called Kruger telegram tremendously damaged Anglo-German relations. The Germans continued to provide assistance to the Boers after the outbreak of war, providing intelligence and advice to the South African Republic’s government.¹⁹⁶ However, aside from statements of sympathy, not much more was done.

Wilhelm’s position even started to change. As he had previously supported the Boers, he now helped the British. During the conflict, the Anglo-German relationship started to improve, as the outcome of the war seemed more and more in favour of Great Britain. De Beaufort states in his diary, dated September 1900: “Germany is these days very close with England, because I even received sometimes messages from London via the German ambassador.”¹⁹⁷ He even had sent Queen Victoria a campaign plan for defeating the Boers, a plan which included the infamous concentration camps and the scorched earth policy. The plan was used by Field Marshal Lord Roberts to secure victory in South Africa.¹⁹⁸

Meanwhile, Nicholas did not agree with Great Britain’s policy regarding the Boer republics, but Russia did not have major interests in South Africa.¹⁹⁹ Despite the fact that he assured the British that Russia would not take advantage of their difficulties, he did consider pressing for gains in Asia. In a letter to his sister Xenia on October 9th 1899, he confessed that: “it is entirely in my hands to decide the ultimate course of the war in Africa”. All he needed to do was “telegraph orders to all the troops in Turkestan to mobilize and advance to the (Indian) frontier. That is all! No fleet in the world, however strong, can prevent us from striking at England at her most vulnerable point.”²⁰⁰

Nicholas also wrote to King Edward VII on 22nd May, 1901, in which he expressed the opinion that it seemed more like a war of extermination.²⁰¹ Despite Nicholas’s occasional expression of pro-Boer feelings, Russia did not take action as contemplated in his letter to his sister. Besides the occasional messages of sympathy, Russia did not take the lead as a major European power in any kind of intervention. It seems that Wilhelmina was the only one who felt kindred with the Boers as opposed to looking to take advantage of British difficulties, as Russia and Germany did.

British relations

The three countries were cautious because of their relations with Great Britain. As previously stated, every nation in the world was to some extent depending on Great Britain, including the Netherlands.

¹⁹⁵ Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1859-1941*, 75.

¹⁹⁶ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 57.2.

¹⁹⁷ Valk and Faassen, *Dagboeken en aantekeningen van Willem Hendrik de Beaufort 1874-1918*, 85.

¹⁹⁸ Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 112.

¹⁹⁹ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54.

²⁰⁰ Warth, *Nicholas II*, 50.

²⁰¹ *Idem*.

Therefore, the Dutch government did everything possible not to offend the British government. The Dutch war in Aceh, which was only possible because of British support, finally started going well. Britain themselves were also interested in conquering that rich territory. Offending Great Britain might threaten Dutch domination over the island (or even all of the Dutch Indies and other Dutch colonies in the area). On top of that, the Dutch army was not able to fight a war against Great Britain, not overseas, nor in the Netherlands itself. However, this had nothing to do with the personal relationship between Queen Victoria and Queen Wilhelmina, who was her niece. The constitutional position of Wilhelmina, together with the international (weak) position of the Netherlands, might have as well influenced the Anglo-Dutch relations. Great Britain was aware of the pro-Boer opinions in the Netherlands, and of Wilhelmina personally. But Britain knew that Wilhelmina was limited by the parliament and their policy of neutrality, and furthermore that the Dutch actions were to ease the Dutch population as previously mentioned by the reaction of Sir Henry Howard, the British ambassador in The Hague, on the sending of the Gelderland.

A close family tie might have contributed to the reserved actions by Germany and Russia. Wilhelm was a direct grand-child of Queen Victoria. However, the German interests stood in sharp contrast with those of Britain. The desire to expand in Africa and the construction of a large navy to do so were cautiously watched by the British government.²⁰²

Also Nicholas was a first cousin of the later British King George V. The two looked like twins. But then again, Russia's interests in Asia were in conflict with those of Great Britain. Although not having a large navy, which was often seen as a requirement to defeat Great Britain, the Russians could attack Britain over land in Afghanistan, Persia and China.²⁰³ As previously stated, Russia assured Britain that it would not do so.

Wilhelmina's position as queen within a parliamentary constitutional monarchy greatly influenced her ability to act throughout the war. Despite the restrictions, she pressed the limits of what was acceptable regarding her position. She even crossed, either consciously or unconsciously, the line of her constitutional responsibilities by writing the German emperor without the consent of a minister. As autocratic rulers, Wilhelm II and Nicholas II were more free to act the way they desired. However, besides the occasional messages of sympathy, Russia and Germany did not take the lead as major European powers in any kind of intervention. Also, their support for the Boers diminished, as the war turned against the Boers. It seems that Wilhelmina was the only one who felt

²⁰² Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 76.

²⁰³ Koninklijk Huisarchief, inv. A50-XVI, nr. 54.

kindred with the Boers as opposed to looking to take advantage of British difficulties as Russia and Germany did. Both leaders did not use the full extent of their powers as Wilhelmina did.

However, the major difference between the Netherlands on one hand and Germany and Russia on the other was that Germany and Russia were in direct rivalry with Great Britain. Germany was trying to expand their international influence, especially in Africa, where Great Britain was omnipotent. The same counts for Asia, where Russia was trying to expand its influence. The Netherlands wanted to expand their influence on the present-day Indonesian islands, but they did that with Great Britain's approval. The Dutch foreign policy was not focusing on expanding any further, thereby not challenging British influence on other aspects nor territory. Furthermore, the Netherlands as an internationally weak, insignificant nation would not be as threatening as a major European power such as Russia or Germany. Altogether, this means that Russia and Germany had a different agenda. By supporting the Boers, they were technically weakening the British position on the international stage, which opened opportunities for them to expand their influence. However, the Netherlands were looking after the continuation of their kinsmen on a different continent, thereby not challenging Britain's power in South Africa or in the world as such.

Conclusion

Despite founding the original cape colony and VOC refuelling stations, the Netherlands was never really interested in the region and this interest declined even further as Dutch maritime power, and power in general, waned. The Netherlands lost their leading position. Their empire had shrunk dramatically, and on a national level things were not much better. Although a small power, the Netherlands still had the characteristics of a great power. However, the country was far too weak to engage in power politics. It was not able to protect its colonial empire, nor the motherland in case of a conflict. The Netherlands had to follow a strict policy of neutrality.

Wilhelmina grew up in a time in which Dutch interest in the Boers increased and Dutch nationalism was on the rise. Dutch nationalism was characterized by a new colonial interest, the kinship and struggle of the Boers, but more importantly a re-found pride in the Dutch royal family. Emma managed to increase the popularity of the royal family as a whole, but in particular that of Wilhelmina through well organised PR events. This made it possible for the young Wilhelmina to rise as the respected and loved international symbol of the Netherlands. At the same time, Wilhelmina grew up in a society which became increasingly anti-British. It was an atmosphere of re-found nationalism, pride and moralistic struggle that influenced her ideas and actions. As the tensions between the Boers and the British kept on rising, anti-British sentiments increased amongst Wilhelmina and the Dutch population.

Because of the idea of kinship, mutual favourable disposition and Dutch support for the Boer cause, the Boers and Dutch saw themselves as family. Because of the renewed Dutch nationalism, which caused Wilhelmina to become the symbol of the Netherlands and everything that was Dutch, and that Dutch became synonymous for the Boers, Wilhelmina became one of the most profound advocates for the Boer cause on an international level.

Despite her great sympathy for the Boers and her urge to help them in any way, Queen Wilhelmina was ironically limited by her position as queen to actually do anything. Also the Dutch government was limited by their policy of neutrality. This stood in sharp contrast with Germany and Russia, where Wilhelm II and Nicholas II were autocratic rulers, and were therefore more free to act the way they desired. Although both leaders expressed great sympathy for the Boer cause, their actions proved differently. As the war turned against the Boers, both Germany and Russia's support diminished. Wilhelm II even sent a campaign plan to Queen Victoria for defeating the Boers. Although asked by Wilhelmina to take the initiative for mediation between the fighting parties, both declined. Also, both Wilhelm II and Nicholas II refused to receive Kruger or the *Driemanschap* (triumvirate) at their courts, while Wilhelmina received them with all honours. Wilhelmina, together with the Dutch government, continued their support for the Boers until the very end of the war.

However, the major difference between the Netherlands on one hand and Germany and Russia on the other was that Germany and Russia were in direct rivalry with Great Britain. Germany was trying to expand their international influence in Africa and Russia was trying to expand its influence in Asia. Both were threatening British influence. By supporting the Boers, they were technically weakening the British position on the international stage, which opened opportunities for them to expand their influence. Through the policy of neutrality and the absence of an aggressive expansion policy, the Netherlands were not a danger for British rule whatsoever. Furthermore, as an internationally weak, insignificant nation, the Netherlands would not be as threatening as a major European power such as Russia or Germany, and therefore was allowed to voice their disapproval over British policy in South Africa.

Despite the opinion of the Dutch public, Wilhelmina and the government knew that first and foremost they had to protect the interest of the country. Therefore, they had to do everything to prevent the British from being offended, along with all its consequences. However, Wilhelmina did everything within her reach to help the Boers. Wilhelmina and the Dutch government did so by internationally promoting the Boer cause, receiving Kruger and the Boer representatives with all honours and using their contacts to help and promote the Boer cause. Wilhelmina wrote letters to Queen Victoria in an attempt to prevent war and wrote letters to the German Emperor and Russian Tsar to persuade them to mediate between the fighting parties and even informed for a potential Dutch military intervention. She even crossed, either consciously or unconsciously, the line of her constitutional responsibilities by writing the German emperor without the consent of a minister. The *pièce de résistance* of the Dutch support was the sending of the ironclad Gelderland, foremost a symbolic act. Of course, in an argument against Wilhelmina as the patroness of the Boer cause, one could argue that she did not take risks. She took comfortable decisions, of which the estimated results did not affect the Dutch interests. But that was what all the heads of state did. Wilhelmina distinguished herself by supporting the Boers until the very end of the conflict with a one-faced, honest and realistic agenda. It is therefore justified to state that Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, through these actions, was able to overshadow the major powers and their heads of state, such as Germany and Russia.

It is difficult to understand exactly what Wilhelmina meant by: “(...) but I have done more for the Boers than my fellow countrymen will ever know (...)”. The events in which Wilhelmina took part were often also the events which were accessible by the public and press. However, some events played in the higher political arena, such as interaction with heads of state and politicians such as De Beaufort and Schorer. These were not accessible for the press, nor by the public. It is also not clear if she is referring to one or multiple actions, or what these actions actually are.

Further research is needed which would analyse diaries, newspapers and other documents which were at that time widely used and accessible. Comparing Wilhelmina's actions with what we find in these documents should provide a clearer image of what the public knew. Only then can we answer the question what the public did not know about Wilhelmina's actions.

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