Clash of characters: Theodore Roosevelt's encounter with Queen Wilhelmina (1910)

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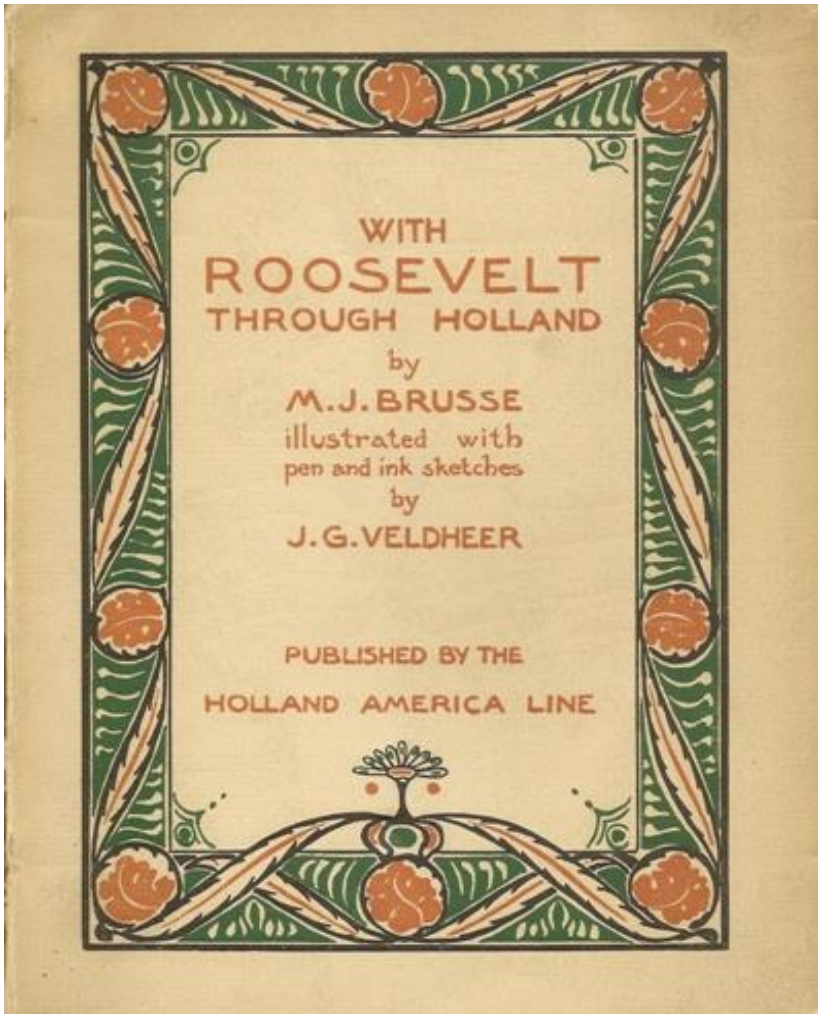
Immediately after leaving office in early 1909, former president Teddy Roosevelt left the United States for a 10-month African safari and a triumphal tour of European cities, where he enjoyed international acclaim. During this tour he also visited his forefather's country Holland, where he had lunch with the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina. According to a commemorative book, *With Roosevelt through Holland*, and two of the most important papers of the moment – the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* – it was a fantastic journey which Roosevelt enjoyed intensely. The highlight of the program would have been his meeting with Queen Wilhelmina. In comparison to these ecstatic descriptions Roosevelt's version of the visit to Wilhelmina was, as expressed in a letter to a friend, very disappointing to say the least. She "wasn't nice, attractive or gentle, […] but commonplace, arrogant and bad tempered … a conceited middle-class frau", who he almost detested. The question what aroused his anger is the subject of this article. While the always smiling, easy going and open minded president was consistently in favour of the idea of democratic leadership, the queen's rigid personality was more prone to favour an autocratic government. Due to the differences in personalities between the two a clash of characters was inevitable.

Key terms: President Theodore Roosevelt; Queen Wilhelmina; Roosevelt's tour of Europe (1910); Dutch-American relations.

Introduction

Passengers on the 1911 maiden trip of the *S.S. Rotterdam*, the flagship of the Holland-America Line (De Boer 1923) could find a brochure in the library entitled *With Roosevelt through Holland* (Brusse 1911), written by the then well-known journalist for the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* (*NRC*) Rie Brusse (Teychiné

Stakenburg 1974).[1] The interested reader would get a very positive picture of the reception of Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), former president of the United States, in the Netherlands in the spring of the year 1910. The visit was a component of a larger European tour made by Roosevelt shortly after he resigned as president. According to Brusse, the visit to the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina was the highlight of this journey.



M.J. Brusse: With Roosevelt through Holland. *Rotterdam: Holland America Line, 1911. Front cover.*

One and a half years later, however, on October 1st 1911, the president wrote a long letter with his personal experiences of the trip to an English friend,

[1] This article is an updated and expanded version of an earlier one in an unpublished Festschrift (Geurts 1995, 27-44, 119-125).

statesman and historian Otto Trevelyan (Morison 1954, 348-399; about Trevelyan see *Dictionary of National Biography* 1922-1930, 1993). In comparison to the description by Brusse, Roosevelt's version of the visit to Wilhelmina was totally different. It had turned out to be very disappointing. While they were having lunch at the palace the Queen had deeply offended Roosevelt and in his eyes she had lost every royal status. This article will describe what the reception in the Netherlands was really like and why Roosevelt was so negative about Queen Wilhelmina.

With Roosevelt through Holland

Russe's booklet not only describes the enthusiasm the Dutch felt for Roosevelt, but simultaneously gives a more than ecstatic description of the most beautiful cities, regions, and curiosities of the Netherlands, all illuminated with splendid pen drawings. Of each city, even the ones Roosevelt did not visit, Brusse indicates the attractions for American tourists, because, after all, everyone knew about the great impact of the Netherlands on the United States: the Pilgrim Fathers had lived for twelve years in Leiden; the Dutch West Indies Company had founded *Nieuw Amsterdam* (New York); the founding father of Rhode Island, Roger Williams, had been educated in the Netherlands; and William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, had a Dutch mother. It seemed fair to talk about "THE NETHERLANDS, THE MOTHERLAND OF AMERICA" (Brusse 1911, 15-16; capitals in original).

The book emphasizes the beauty of the Netherlands and that it was a country well worth visiting. Potential American tourists should know that the still very popular former president of Dutch descent – "our own distant cousin TEDDY OF DELFT" (Brusse 1911, 4) – had enjoyed his tour through the Netherlands immensely.[2] Implicitly, every American of Dutch origin was called upon to visit the country of his forefathers some day; the best way to do so was, of course, with the ships of the Holland-America Line, which had maintained a regular service between New York and Rotterdam since 1872 (De Boer 1923). The book opens with a drawing of a Dutch galleon with the image of a half-moon on its stern, a clear reference to Henry Hudson's ship *De Halve Maen*, the English explorer who in 1609 discovered the island of Manhattan while working for the Dutch East-Indian company. A permanent settlement in 1624 meant the beginning of the city of New Amsterdam, later to become New York. The

[2] The city of Delft as birthplace of Theodore Roosevelt is of course nonsense. Brusse refers here to the Pilgrim Fathers, who fled first to Delft, and hence to Plymouth from where the Mayflower had taken its famous journey. Perhaps the author was trying to connect the former president with Holland's most illustrious founding father, William of Orange, who was buried in Delft.

brochure very appropriately ends with an image of the S.S. Rotterdam, with which the circle is completed.

At the same time the author understood that (Dutch-)Americans would no longer accept the well-known myths of wooden shoes, mills, and tulips. The Netherlands, according to Brusse, was no open air museum and its people did not live in the past anymore.[3] It was nonsense to think that all Dutch were immensely rich, or to think that every Dutch emigrant had profited from the American Dream. Existing prejudices should be suppressed. The Netherlands was not an anachronistic country of mills, tulips, lift bridges, wooden shoes, and traditional costumes; "Our country is a modern nation with major industries. We are an example to the whole world, and our culture and civilization are admired everywhere" (*NRC*, April 25, 1911).[4]

Roosevelt's tour was of course front-page news. All large newspapers – *Arnhemsche Courant*, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* and *Algemeen Handelsblad* – followed his journey meticulously. On the eve of the great day, leading articles of welcome appeared in all papers. People were very anxious to know how it all would turn out. The Dutch recognized Roosevelt's spirit and strength of character because he preached decency, zeal, and a sense of duty, but also ingenuity and honesty. Although he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he was considered a self-made man for his victory over various illnesses in his youth and for choosing a strenuous life notwithstanding his serious heart problems. According to all newspapers the tour through the Netherlands was a fantastic event with no sign of any disharmony.

Theodore Roosevelt

Although nobility is lacking in the United States, Americans are not indifferent to blue blood. Theodore Roosevelt and his distant cousin, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) (1882-1945), were fascinated by royalty. Despite the protocol, which they found very amusing, both had the flair to deal with royalty in an informal way. FDR usually addressed kings and queens by their first names. Only with Queen Wilhelmina was he more formal, although he addressed her as "Minie" in his personal letters (Kersten 1992, 85-96, 226-228; Kersten 1994, 111-125; Hassett 1958, 76-77). Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt were proud of their Dutch descent because it referred to one of the old families who had founded

[3] To be on the safe side the author also tells the (American) reader that Brussels is no more situated in Holland than Holland is in Belgium (Brusse 1911, 11).

[4] Yet it is remarkable that pictures of a landscape with windmills and two girls from the isle of Marken in old costumes are depicted on the same pages. Incidentally, more than one third of the brochure consists of illustrations of windmills, costumes, picturesque churches and buildings, vistas, and rural tourist attractions such as the Alkmaar cheese market.

Nieuw Amsterdam. 'Dutch origin' granted, at least in these decades, prestige and implied not only an understanding of trade and commerce, but also a democratic spirit, tolerance, a sense of public responsibility, diligence, and cleanliness; ideals that, according to John Lothrop Motley's very popular book *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856), had strengthened the Dutch in their struggle for democracy and religious tolerance against Spain. Moreover, the Dutch Stadtholder-king William III, who had recognized the privileges of his British subjects in the Bill of Rights (1689), was a shining example for American democracy.[5]

Theodore Roosevelt, in his youth a weak and sickly boy suffering from severe asthma, had tried all his life to compensate for this psychological humiliation with physical and mental vigor by boxing, horseback riding, and shooting almost every day. Whenever possible, he visited his ranch in the 'Wild West' – the Dakota Badlands – to join the cowboys in their fights with cattle rustlers and to hunt for grizzly bears (Beale 1983; Burton 1968; Harbaugh 1975; Blum 1975; Morris 2001a, b; Chessman 1969; Gould 1991; Cooper, jr. 1983; McCullough 1981). In his spare time he returned to his books, mainly works by major historians and men of letters.[6]

After law school, Roosevelt immediately plunged into politics and quickly played an increasingly important role within the Republican Party. In his eyes a strong government should stand not only for the general interest of the country, but also for the historical mission of the nation. Every country had a special place in the world and the United States was well suited for a major role in world affairs. Like many in his day he believed in a complex racial ideology, but the term 'race' was in these days still so vague that it was interchangeable with 'nation' or 'people'. Despite his apparent racial theory, Roosevelt was a staunch opponent of racial discrimination (Dyer 1980, especially 28-32; Lammersdorf 1994). He believed, however, that the Western white race had such a political, economic, technological, and military advantage over the 'primitive' peoples that

[5] In reality most of Roosevelt's ancestors were of British descent, and there was a drop of blood from Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Germany present; thus virtually the only thing "Dutch" was probably their family name, but there is no direct link with the alleged founding father of the family, Claes Maartenszn van Rosenvelt from Tholen (Zeeland), who embarked in Manhattan in 1649 (Freidel 1982, 149-167; about Motley, see Edwards 1982, 171-198). Mary Mapes Dodge drew upon Motley's history for her *Hans Brinker, or, The Silver Skates* (1865), which introduced the virtues of the Dutch to generations of American children and made the little Dutch boy legendary in the United States.

[6] Roosevelt wrote to Trevelyan that during his tour of Europe he at last benefited from his extensive study of history. Everywhere people were deeply impressed by his specific knowledge of the history of their country (Morison 1954, 348-399). His books *The Naval War of 1812* (1882) and *The Winning of the West* (four volumes, 1889-1896) were regarded as classics on those subjects (Harbaugh 1975, 269-274; K. Roosevelt 1963, 270-274).

it had a duty to impart civilization to them. On the basis of this theory the United States had a special destiny. Therefore Roosevelt was a proponent of an active foreign policy. This meant, among other things, that for self-preservation the United States had to stave off the European influence in South and Central America.

But Roosevelt also expected every single man to do his duty for the community and emphasized the obligation of everyone not only to make his own life perfect but also that of the nation: "Character that does and dares as well as endures, character that is active in the performance of virtue, no less than firm in the refusal to do aught that is vicious or degraded" (Roosevelt 1900). Time and again he emphasized his belief in hard work, family life, performance of duty, learning as much as possible, seeking adventure, and living joyously without complaint of self-pity. During the Spanish-American War (1898), which he himself more or less unleashed, he resigned as Secretary of the Navy and fought at the head of a group of cavalry, the Rough Riders, against the Spaniards at Cuba.

After one term as governor of the State of New York, he was elected vice-president, but the assassination of William McKinley in 1901 made him the twenty-sixth President of the United States, the youngest so far. As president he 'busted' trusts, preached a 'Square Deal' for all Americans, reduced the national debt, secured the regulation of the railroads, protected labour, and introduced consumer protection in the *Pure Food and Drug Act*. In foreign affairs he naturally supported a vigorous policy. Among other things, he supported a revolt against the government of Columbia to establish the Panama Canal, the highly desired connection between the Atlantic and the Pacific. In 1904 he announced the Roosevelt Corollary, an addition to the Monroe Doctrine, which gave the United States the right to interfere in all countries in Central and South America. But he realized that he could not always wave the 'Big Stick'. As a practical president he was able to contain his belligerence very well – so well, in fact, that he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his negotiations in the Russo-Japanese War (1905) (Collin 1985).

In 1904 Roosevelt was elected president in his own right, but he promised the voters that under no circumstances would he accept a third nomination. Four years later he helped his old friend William Howard Taft to become his successor because he believed him to have the same progressive ideas. Immediately after his presidency he went to Africa for a hunting vacation, which gave him the necessary distance to the policy of his successor. For ten months he hunted big game in the 'Dark Continent' (Roosevelt 1910; K. Roosevelt 1963).

Due to his spectacular actions on both the domestic and foreign front, Roosevelt had become a hero and not just to the Americans. He had stepped in during the European intervention in Venezuela in 1903, the Franco-German struggle for Morocco in 1913, and the segmentation of China. Through his active, sometimes even dramatic, interventions, Roosevelt was for many the symbol of the energetic American. Several years later, a close friend remarked that his name, whether in Beijing or Patagonia, "means America, Americanism, Freedom, the ideals on which the nation has been supported to rest" (Gould 1991, 298). In short, Teddy Roosevelt was arguably a brave man, courageous, charming, and humorous, but also conceited, rude, and convinced of being right. He loved war, and to him the most important thing in life was doing something big for the nation. Yet he did not doubt the American political system, in which president and Congress were elected and checked by the people. The democratic system was sacred to him, although he had little confidence in the political understanding of the masses. He saw the majority of the citizens only as potential troublemakers with the only duty to assess the actions of the national government every four years.[7]

A 'royal' tour through Europe

The tour through Europe following his African safari was not planned. Originally Roosevelt wanted to travel directly to England because the chancellor of the University of Oxford, Lord Curzon, had asked him to deliver the prestigious annual *Romanes* Lecture, which the former president considered to be a recognition of his scientific work.[8] As soon as word got around that Roosevelt would speak at Oxford, however, the Sorbonne in Paris invited him as well. Thereupon the German ambassador to the U.S., Hermann Speck von Sternberg, a close friend, invited him to give a guest lecture at the University of Berlin. Sternberg hinted implicitly that a refusal would seriously offend His Majesty the Emperor. Now the floodgates had been opened. The king of Italy simply assumed that the president would visit Rome on his way from Africa to England. Next, Roosevelt had to promise the Austrian emperor to go to both Vienna and Budapest, capitals of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thereupon the Norwegians let him know that they would be forever offended if Roosevelt refused to come

[7] The following statements illustrate his love for war: "No triumph of peace is quite so great as the supreme triumph of war", and his comment on the death of his son Quentin in France during World War I: "it's very dreadful that he should have been killed, (but) it would have been worse if he had not gone" (Gable 1987, 142-147).

[8] George John Romanes (1848-1894), professor at Oxford, founded this series of lectures in 1891, where "a man of eminence" should give a paper on a literary or scientific subject. The first speaker was the then Prime Minister Gladstone (*Dictionary* 1909, 177-182).

and accept the Nobel Peace Prize that had been awarded in 1904. Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands followed, with the latter country claiming a kind of "proprietorship" in the light of Roosevelt's descent.

The only European countries he refused to visit were Switzerland and Russia. In Switzerland he would have had to attend a celebration of the protestant reformer John Calvin, which for political reasons was out of the question. He would undoubtedly offend Catholic countries like France and Italy. The Pope, who had granted him an audience, would be especially insulted. Roosevelt could not foresee that this invitation would lead to an open quarrel with the Vatican. For years, a group of American Protestant Methodists had been trying to convert the inhabitants of Rome, calling the Pope "the whore of Babylon" (Morison 1954, 355). Pope Pius X, however, asked Roosevelt to take action in such a blunt way that the president cancelled his visit to this "worthy, [but] narrowly limited parish priest" (Morison 1954, 354-5). He could not even resist blaming the papacy for the first systematic segregation of Jews and dissenters (Paul IV in 1555) (Morison 1954, 354-358; Gardner 1978, 150-151; Pringle 2010, 363-366). Although the Czar had cordially invited him, he refused to go to Russia because of the occupation of Finland and the brutality of the authorities against Jewish and liberal-minded citizens – in short, the iron despotism of the Russian government.[9]

We know all this from his long letter to Trevelyan which he considered so personal that publishing it was "out of the question" (Morison 1954, 348). In vain, he asked Trevelyan to destroy the letter. His memories give a very clear and amusing picture of Roosevelt's views on the various European nations, their kings and presidents, and ultimately on democracy and authoritarian systems. Ultimately, the letter says a lot about Roosevelt himself. His view on 'the white man's burden' is not surprising. In Egypt he chose the side of the English colonizers as a matter of course. The Egyptian nationalists were described as "noisy, emotional, rather decadent, [and] quite hopeless" (Morison 1954, 351). In his eyes, the inhabitants were still not capable of governing themselves and should therefore cooperate with the white man's civilization attempts. Later, at King Eduard VII's funeral (1910), he pointed the British government to its responsibility for the administration of Egypt and Sudan. In the interest of "civilization" they had to continue to perform their duty (Morison 1954, 365-367; K. Roosevelt, 274-275; Gable 1987).

[9] The question is to what extent these were opportunistic arguments. As long as Russia supported the U.S. Open Door Policy in China, he considered the country a civilized nation. When some years later the Anglo-American interests in the Far East were threatened by Russia this attitude changed completely. The victory of the Japanese fleet in 1905 was therefore warmly welcomed (Beale 1983, 260-299).

Roosevelt's complacency is reflected in his own view on the success of his lectures. The presentation at the Sorbonne, entitled *Citizenship in a Republic*, however, was considered a trifle, although the French newspapers cheered his remarks that in a republic such as France and the USA, the efforts of each individual citizen were important to the political course of the country, by which any hereditary and autocratic system was rejected. Neither was England impressed by his *Romanes* lecture *Biological Analogies in History*, in which Roosevelt compared the evolution in the animal world to the rise and fall of European countries. The Archbishop of York rated the content as "Beta Minus", but the speaker "Alpha Plus" (Gardner 1978, 151-152; Gable 1987, 50-75). A disappointed Roosevelt answered that it would have been much better if a good friend, Henry Orban, director of the Museum of Natural Science, had not advised him to delete a number of passages. Orban, however, stated later on that "thus a certain war between the United States and some mentioned governments had been avoided" (Pringle 2010, 365-367).

The letter also gives a clear picture of the daily events during this trip. Roosevelt was frequently astonished that he was still received as president of the United States, although he was in reality an ordinary citizen, a private person. When reading between the lines, however, it becomes obvious that he enjoyed his trip and that the 'royal' receptions were, in fact, appropriate. According to his son Kermit, Roosevelt did not take the honours too seriously (K. Roosevelt 1963, 274-275). The letter also shows some personal observations on the heads of state he had met. He held the royal family of Italy, King Victor Emmanuel II and his wife Queen Helen, in high esteem. At least they both had the intellectual level Roosevelt appreciated. The Belgian king was an intelligent figure too. Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria-Hungary was on the one hand a true gentleman, on the other not really a capable ruler as was the case with the French President Briand.

From his American background it is understandable that Roosevelt seemed oblivious to protocol. For example, he declined an invitation to go hunting with the emperor, much to the dismay of the Austrian court because such an invitation was seen as an order. At the English king's funeral he was very amused at the fuss the French Secretary of State Pinchon made as to who should take the seat of honour in the carriage. He was also greatly amused by the complaint of the Russian ambassador in Denmark that Roosevelt, "not even an Excellency" (Morison 1954, 384), had been allowed to stay overnight in the same room of the royal palace as the czar the summer before. Sometimes he found the behaviour of the aristocracy absurd; for example when during a dinner at the German court the guests used the water in the finger bowls to rinse their mouths, or when the protocol in Berlin required that he as a former president

should spend the night at the royal palace, while his wife had to stay elsewhere. His revenge was sweet, though; it gave him great satisfaction to refuse signing some pictures of him and the Emperor with the rather indiscrete text: "When we shake hands, we shake the world" (Pringle 2010, 518).

He also had strong views on the role of the monarchy. Roosevelt thought it an artificial institution. In his eyes, the kings and queens had only a symbolic role and their lives were boring and useless. Because most had reconciled themselves to the fact that they did not possess any real influence, he looked upon them as losers. They behaved so nicely, because he represented the danger of a republic, something that could happen to their country too. Moreover, they know their position was weak. A constitutional monarch, Roosevelt said, is no more than a sublimated U.S. vice-president. Yet he sometimes felt treated as a barbarian, and he did not think very highly of their intellectual level: "there was no use trying to talk of books" (Morison 1954, 388; Pringle 2010, 326-329). He could not resist pointing out their mutual jealousy. The German emperor especially had frequently shown his disdain for some of his fellow rulers. In general, however, Roosevelt showed some respect for the royalty in Europe, except for Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands.

The trip through the Netherlands

Roosevelt's journey through the Netherlands is described in full in the booklet *With Roosevelt through Holland*. The author Brusse was the only Dutch journalist who was accepted – with some American reporters – on Roosevelt's private train.[10] No doubt he owed this to a recommendation by Arthur M. Beaupre, American ambassador to the Netherlands, who knew that Brusse's journalistic skills and mnemonic technique enabled him to reproduce interviews in all their directness. At the same time he had the literary skills to depict the events in a beautiful atmosphere. The fact that Queen Wilhelmina had responded positively to one of his contributions of her official visits will also have played a role (Teychiné Stakenburg 1985, 81-83).

The successful 'infiltration' of Brusse was a heavy blow to the major competitor of the *NRC*, het *Algemeen Handelsblad* (*AH*), printed in Amsterdam.[11] Editor Charles Boissevain was, in fact, well known for his descriptions and impressions of the United States, in which he quoted America as an example for Dutch self-confidence. To reduce the negative stories of uncivilized materialist

[10] As one of the first presidents Roosevelt realized that newspapers were an ideal instrument to give his policy all the attention he wanted. He therefore maintained close contacts with numerous journalists and writers (Juergens 1981). Franklin Delano Roosevelt used the radio in the same way in his famous "fire-side chats".

[11] On the competition between the various papers, see Schneider & Hemels (1979, 150-163).

Americans with their conformism, hypocrisy, and vulgarity, Boissevain explicitly portrayed them as a people with a youthful vitality and courage sometimes lacking in Europeans. He portrayed the United States as a counterpart to Europe and as a country where a new beginning was possible. Now that Roosevelt "with his energy, determination, and vitality" came to visit Holland, it was necessary for the *AH* to contribute to the visit. But the *NRC*, printed in Rotterdam, had the exclusive rights to the trip. Boissevain was therefore delighted that Roosevelt decided not to go to Rotterdam, but to visit only Amsterdam, "the mother city of New York" (*AH*, 29 April 1910; Lammers 1989; Van Berkel 1990, 9-27).

Brusse himself was of course proud he had made it onto the private train of the president. Extensively and very expressively he describes how an excited crowd of aristocrats penetrated the station hall in Brussels where Roosevelt was having lunch, knocking over exotic plants and an aviary. Upon leaving the Belgian capital he wrote one of those descriptions that had made him so famous. Due to the inability to print pictures all papers regularly had to give descriptions of Roosevelt's posture, looks, clothing, etc.:

> a man of medium size, but strongly built; correctly but plainly dressed in his long black coat; a pearl-grey tie with a diamond pin; a low collar showing his sunburnt neck. His ever mobile face with its intelligent, short-sighted eyes puckered up in fine wrinkles, looks cheerfully round.
>
> (Brusse 1911, 14)

Smiling and nodding kindly, Brusse continues, Roosevelt struggled through a large surging crowd of ministers, generals, members of the corps diplomatique, marquises, earls, baronesses, and courtiers. Numerous American ladies blow him kisses with tears in their eyes. Finally they enthusiastically tap on the windows of the coach and some even press their lips against the glass. Then a sunny smile breaks over Roosevelt's face and laughing heartily he shows his dazzling teeth. When the train approaches the Netherlands, Brusse reveals the Dutch origin of the president because his descent had to convince Dutch-Americans to travel to the land of their ancestors. After the American ambassador Beaupre had greeted him on arrival in Roosendaal, the president invited the journalists into his compartment and told them that he was very happy to be at last in "the home of my forefathers!" (Brusse 1911, 15). Then he stepped onto the platform and clearly became very emotional when he heard his name pronounced in Dutch.

The trip from Roosevelt to the Netherlands gave Brusse also in the NRC the opportunity to sing the praises of the beauty of the Netherlands: "Yet, it's a shame that the greatest art treasures have been sold abroad in earlier years – even to the United States – but the remaining works are exhibited in museums, so that everyone can admire them" (NRC, April 29, 1910). The booklet had to

convince the reader that the natural environment had not changed since the 17th century. It described Romanesque churches and Gothic towers, Dutch polders with healthy livestock and activities on rivers and canals. And, of course, Brusse described "our" struggle against the elements. The fight against the sea had formed the Dutch character, which is perhaps serious and devout, but also persistent and ingenious in solving problems. Simultaneously, he busted up the myth of Hansje Brinker, the very popular story of the little Dutch boy who saved the country by putting his finger in a leaking dike. Brusse wanted to emphasize the technical skills of the Dutch involving dikes, bridges, overpasses, and buildings, and referred to the trading relations, which had brought prosperity, but had also led to many wars.

The reverie was interrupted in 's-Hertogenbosch. A very warm welcome from hundreds of people, who burst forth in "A GENUINE DUTCH HURRAH" (Brusse 1911, 23), surprised Roosevelt and, delighted, he told the crowd that he was proud of the Dutch, the pioneers of the American nation. He ended with "tears in those keen, expressive eyes, while his face wrinkled up alarmingly. Then he called out in quite correct Dutch: "Ik dank u." [Thank you]" (Brusse 1911, 24), after which a long ovation follows. Brusse, then, described the beauty of the landscape through which they traveled: the slow rivers and busy water traffic. At Nijmegen he pointed out the Roman history of the city, which was built in the form of an amphitheater on seven hills (!). On the way to Arnhem, he reiterated that the Netherlands was no vaudeville theater and had become a modern country, only primitive somewhere in the periphery such as in Volendam and Marken. But he immediately used this information for a touristic excursus on the beautiful construction of the fishing boats and the clothing of the people on these islands. Again, his book resembles one of those modern brochures written to attract tourists.

At Arnhem railway station, a chamberlain to the queen, Taets Baron van Amerongen, awaited Roosevelt to take him by car to *Het Loo* palace. Prince Hendrik, Queen Wilhelmina's husband, greeted him on the steps of the palace, while the queen herself received Roosevelt in the great hall. They had lunch together in a very cordial atmosphere, according to all Dutch newspapers. Accompanied by Hendrik, Roosevelt left in a carriage for Apeldoorn railway station, where again many admirers had succeeded in penetrating to the platform.

Brusse used the trip to Amsterdam to sing the praises of the natural landscape of the Veluwe and the city of Utrecht, with its cathedral, its monasteries, and university. Of course the most beautiful spots along the Vecht River were recalled. Finally, he ran out of superlatives to describe Amsterdam: city of Vondel, Rembrandt, and Kuyper, with its world famous museums and

beautiful canals. But he also pointed out the modernity of Amsterdam; behind the facades of the stately seventeenth-century mansions beats the financial heart of the Netherlands with its famous diamonds, tobacco, and shipping industry.

The reception in Amsterdam was also magnificent. Through streets crowded with cheering people, Roosevelt first went to the *Nieuwe Kerk*, where he visited the tomb of Holland's most famous admiral, Michiel de Ruyter. After a brief tour of the famous diamond factory of Asscher, the president visited the *Rijksmuseum*, where he admired, according to its director, Rembrandt's *Night Watch* for ten minutes. Other painters, including Jan Steen, Peter Paul Rubens, and Vermeer were also greatly appreciated. Finally he addressed the citizens of Amsterdam in the building of the *Vrije Gemeente*, now well-known as the iconic rock music venue and cultural center Paradiso.[12] The hall was overcrowded and when Roosevelt arrived the people stood up to cheer and wave their handkerchiefs. Charles Boissevain welcomed the president to the land of his ancestors and praised him as a great man, a man of action, and an example to us all because of his life of struggle and effort for the right cause. Traits that were partly due to his Dutch ancestry. Then Roosevelt took the floor and "all smiles and with twinkling eyes" he said, "I unfortunately do not speak your language anymore and the only Dutch I know is a baby-song I learned from my grandfather" (Brusse 1911, 42).

And with an indescribably comical expression on his face, he tried to phonetically recite a nursery rhyme of which the first line ran "Trippel trippel toontjes" (Brusse 1911, 42). It is doubtful if anyone knew which song he meant, but a thunderous applause followed.[13] Then Roosevelt became serious again:

[12] The *AH* (logical) and the *AC* made it clear that this speech was due to the mediation of Boissevain. The *NRC* (= Brusse) paid hardly any attention to this speech. According to Brusse this was not necessary, since Roosevelt "squeezes" every word like "a hammer" and knowledge of the English language in Holland was very scanty. This contrasts with the view of Roosevelt, who praises the knowledge of English of the Dutch people one year later (Morison 1954, 383).

[13] Every newspaper printed a different version of the children's song, and this instantly created a controversy about the correct text. Brusse (1911, 42) was probably the first one who quoted the text exactly: *Trippel trippel toontjes/ kippen in de boontjes/ koetjes in de klaver/ paardjes in de haver/ eendjes in de waterplas/ 'k wou dat het kindje groter was*. The same song was a big success during Roosevelt's visit to the Boers in South Africa during his safari (Morison 1954, 357).

A nice anecdote on the proficiency of the Dutch: "One, who has not succeeded in getting in, asks: "What was it like?" The other answers: "Well, first a whole yarn in English – that I could not understand. Then he assured us that he spoke German (he had taken Dutch for Duitsch) I did not understand that either. He also spoke some Dutch, but that was quite unintelligible, and I did not hear him speak any American at all" (Brusse 1911, 43).

> Three hundred years ago my ancestors belonged to the generation, even before De Ruyter and Rembrandt, that made Holland great and I hope that my son has adopted these traits – honesty, common sense and determination. I am pleased to be here. This is the homeland of political and religious freedom. Democracy is necessary, but the right of freedom also means that one must respect the rights of others. This includes the duty of mutual aid, but only insofar as the other person cannot help himself.
>
> (*AH*, April 30, 1910)

Then he brings up the issue of women's liberation, which had gained momentum in the last years. The focus of the feminists was concentrated on the right to work for the sake of economic independence, as well as to obtain the same civil rights as men. The struggle for the emancipation of women can be seen, among other things, in the Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance in 1908 in Amsterdam, where Queen Wilhelmina had shown great interest. Although Roosevelt used to be fairly conservative in these matters he now kept his options open. He thinks it silly to keep women indoors, but the family is paramount to him:

> Like a man who neglects his wife and children is despicable, so is the woman, who lets her husband and children down. Healthy families, where parents and children keep together, are necessary for a healthy nation. The man is needed for his courage, strength and bravery, the wife and mother to educate the children to become valiant patriots.
>
> (Grever 1994, 71)

At the end everyone is standing and "gave their kinsman an ovation that shook the walls" (Brusse 1911, 41).

During the following dinner, Roosevelt thrilled the guests with his remark that he still possessed the old *Statenbijbel*, which his ancestors had brought with them from the Low Countries.[14] Finally he found it a pity he could not visit more cities and regions of the Netherlands in addition to which he mentioned Rotterdam first. This gives Brusse, at last, the chance he has been waiting for; page after page he describes the splendor of this city in the most lyrical terms. He rejoices in the industrial activity, the shipping companies, the ports, docks and quays, the many trade possibilities, and the number of ships calling at the harbor every year. In short, Rotterdam was the most active and important city in the Netherlands.

[14] Could this be the same Bible that was later used to swear in F.D. Roosevelt four times? (Freidel 1982, 149-167, especially 154.)

Later that evening the streets in the Hague were so crowded that Roosevelt had some difficulty reaching hotel *Des Indes*, not the palace *Noordeinde* where the Japanese princely couple were spending the night. The masses went home only after he had stepped out on the balcony to receive their stormy applause. The next day, April 30, was a day of festivity, as Juliana, daughter of Hendrik and Wilhelmina, celebrated her first birthday. After a short visit to the Queen-Mother Emma, who was "kind and cheerful and considerate, and not in the least pretentious" (Morison 1954, 383), he made a wonderful tour through the city of the Dutch government. In his gratitude speech after a dinner offered by the Hague city council, the president – with a Juliana Flower (daisy) in his buttonhole – emphasized again that the Netherlands had a great future.

At this passage in the book, Brusse used the opportunity to praise the beauty of the residence with its palaces, parks, and squares, the *Mauritshuis* and the *Binnenhof*, the seat of the Dutch government. Trips to Leiden and Delft, where Roosevelt visited the graves of William of Orange and Hugo Grotius, were a great success too.[15] During a short visit to a flower exhibition in Haarlem in the afternoon it turned out that Roosevelt, accidentally, was the hundred-thousandth visitor. As a gift, he received a silver replica of 'The Half Moon', the ship with which Henry Hudson had discovered Manhattan.

Although Roosevelt prior to his trip had never shown much interest in the Netherlands, he starts his autobiography (published in 1913) with his Dutch descent. The very warm reception probably had created a positive image: "I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in Holland", he wrote to Trevelyan, "[…] The people were charming. […] I was surprised to find how widely English was understood and even spoken. […] I had to make a speech in a church, which was crowded, and evidently a very large proportion of the audience followed me carefully and understood practically all that I said, not only applauding but laughing at the points I made" (Morison 1954, 384). Roosevelt was struck by the strength, alertness, and lively spirit of the people. After the misery of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars (1795-1814), the country had completely recovered. The courage of the Dutch should be an example for the USA, he said, because the guidance of his "uninspiring" successor Taft was not very good. The Dutch proved that the temporary maladies in America and even in Britain could be improved. Roosevelt showed his positive attitude towards the Dutch during World War I, when he donated $1,000 of the money that was attached to the Nobel Prize for assistance to the thousands of Belgian (mostly Flemish) refugees who had fled to the Netherlands because of the atrocities of war (Brusse 1911; Morison 1954, 375-387, Pringle 2010, 366-368).

[15] For the (American) reader Brusse repeated once more that William of Orange was murdered in the struggle for freedom for "Holland".

De Koninklijke Familie met het Prinsesje ('The Royal Family with the little Princess'), Postcard, Origineel Guy de Coral, Uitgeverij Blanckwaardt & Schoonhoven, 's Hage en W. de Haan, Utrecht

Clash of characters

All this shows that Roosevelt was very pleased with the reception in the Netherlands. Only the lunch with Queen Wilhelmina went very wrong. The president had high hopes when he went to the palace. Alas! Queen Wilhelmina was the only royalty whom he did not like at all:

> I had supposed Queen Wilhelmina to be a very nice attractive little woman in a difficult position, and had sympathized with her in her apparent loneliness, and had been glad at the birth of her little daughter. I suppose we had pictured her to ourselves as being very attractive, sweet-tempered and dignified. As a matter of fact she was excessively unattractive and commonplace, and obviously both conceited and bad-

> tempered. Moreover she was not only commonplace, but common. She was a real little Dutch middle-class frau, immensely impressed with the dignity of her position, and not only taking herself very seriously from the social standpoint, but also under the solemn impression that she was as important governmentally as socially.
>
> (Morison 1954, 382-3)

She reminded him of the inflated wife of a small-town grocer who, proud of the position of her husband, lorded it over everyone both in church and in daily life. All the other princes of the smaller countries had good manners and were polite without any pretension. "One could have sympathy and respect and liking for the sovereign of a small country honestly endeavoring to do his or her duty without pretense and without being tormented by a swelled head," said Roosevelt (Morison 1954, 383). Her attitude was all the more ridiculous because the Netherlands was an unimportant nation, smaller even than some U.S. states, and her position was therefore less important than that of the governor of such a state. It was laughable how she acted like a person chosen by God. Her mother (Queen-Mother Emma) was very nice, but Wilhelmina made a fool of herself time and again. She controlled her "boring" husband, who had no intellectual interests, with an iron fist.

> When we got up from the lunch table the queen said to him: "Take Mr. Roosevelt into your room." He did not catch what she said, turned around with his mouth open and asked what it was; whereupon she promptly lost her temper, grew red in the face, almost stamped her foot, and snapped out at him: "I said, *take Mr. Roosevelt to your own room*," [italics original] whereupon he gave a little start, and took me into the room, in gloomy silence. Hoping to distract him, I said: "I am glad that your daughter, the little princess, seems so well." However, he declined to be diverted, and responded more gloomily than ever, and with appalling frankness: "Yes; I hope she has a brother; otherwise I pity the man that marries her."[16]
>
> (Morison 1954, 383)

Roosevelt's wife, Edith, who accompanied him on the journey, even called Wilhelmina "stupid" in her diary (Morris 1980, 356-357).

The question remains whether Wilhelmina noticed Roosevelt's indignation. Probably not; as a member of a family superior to all others, she found her behaviour very normal (Fasseur, 1998; Manning 1997, 359-379; Udink 1998; de Jong 1969, 1-49, [Koningin] Wilhelmina 1959; Lammers 1998). As an

[16] Roosevelt first imagined that Hendrik had said this out of shame, but he subsequently learned that this was a regular statement of the prince, presumably "to salve his self-respect" (Morison 1954, 384).

only child, she had never experienced the remedial effects of siblings. An air of superiority had arisen from the hard constraint of etiquette and royal setting, a tight straitjacket of conventions. Moreover, she was never submitted to a normal penalty and never punished when she was hot tempered or in one of her moods. The behavior of others in awe of her position confirmed her idea of being superior. Wilhelmina was accustomed to the fact that no one dared to contradict her. First and foremost, she was the queen, the inviolable head of state. This idea was reinforced by her Christian faith, in which God had placed her on the throne. She was convinced of her divine right to serve, but also to be served. As head of state, she made demands on others, and those who failed to comply were soon out of favour. She was constantly at odds with her secretaries of state because the constitutional restriction of royal intervention often led to frustration and aroused irritation. Her husband, Hendrik of Mecklenburg, the type of a friendly country gentleman, had absolutely no chance to intervene in state affairs. The affection they had felt for each other at first quickly disappeared. In the long run they both led their own lives.

Queen Wilhelmina was full of contradictions: impatient, capricious, impulsive, and sharp-tongued. She was ruthless but also full of mercy, ungrateful and loyal at the same time, highly formal but also warm-hearted, bold and shy, sophisticated and unworldly, opportunistic, vain, and ostentatiously simple (Fasseur 1998).

Roosevelt's comments on the queen say much about her, but also about the president himself. The meeting had a very negative impression on him which is illustrated by the fact that his personal dislike of the queen did not disappear. On the contrary, one and a half years later, in his letter to Trevelyan, his rage is still noticeable. So the question naturally arises by what this anger was aroused. First, the different positions of the two at the time must be pointed out: Queen Wilhelmina was a hereditary head of state and Roosevelt 'only' a former president. In addition, both had very different views on the political system: divine right versus a democratically elected parliament. Finally, both were personalities with strong characters. Neither of them, high-handed and certain of their position, was willing to give in or accept a different view. Roosevelt was indignant at the formality of the reception at the palace. The former president had to pay her a visit; while everywhere else, emperors and kings had paid their respects in person at railway stations, the queen sent but a chamberlain to meet him in Apeldoorn. While other heads of state entertained him with dinner parties, military parades, and operas, all he got at the palace was a cold lunch. He, representative of the most powerful country in the world, was treated by a haughty "frau" as an errand boy. Roosevelt probably had not expected that Wilhelmina would pay so little attention to him and America, but the queen was

preoccupied by other matters. The United States were far away and the next day it was her daughter's birthday. Add to this the way she dealt with her husband, which the aristocratic Roosevelt certainly did not appreciate, and the president's anger is understandable. He was insulted to the core.

One may wonder whether Wilhelmina had noticed Roosevelt's anger, but he was probably too much of a gentleman and politician to show his outrage. Two months after his visit, on July the fifth, Roosevelt had even sent the queen a picture of himself, showing in the caption his "respect" for her. Moreover, the queen was so utterly convinced of her position that it seemed normal to act as she did. Whether she heard of Roosevelt's opinion after his letter had appeared in print in 1954 is not known.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Fortunately, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (who was president from 1933-1945) set the matter right. FDR was, like many, inspired by the early exploits of 'cousin Theodore'. Having worked as a lawyer for several years, he decided to go into politics too. Like his namesake, he was proud of his Dutch ancestry, supported the *Holland Society*, was active in the *Netherlands-America Foundation*, and had great interest in the Dutch colonial architecture in New York. Later, when accepting the presidency, he took the oath on his Dutch family Bible.[17]

His first political contact with the Netherlands during World War I in March 1918 was, however, strange. As Secretary of the Navy he asked the Dutch government, against the express wishes of President Wilson, if the island of Curaçao was for sale. The Dutch Secretary of State, Loudon, rejected this claim for fear of giving the Germans a reason to attack the neutral Netherlands (Freidel 1982, 153-157; Freidel 1954, 134-136).

Although FDR frequently visited Europe in his youth, he did not meet Wilhelmina personally at that time. Nevertheless, FDR himself felt so connected with the Netherlands that during the rise of Nazi Germany he was increasingly concerned about the safety of Wilhelmina and her family (Kersten 1994, 111-114; Fasseur 275-278; Van den Doel 1992, 275-278; Freidel 1954, 149-167). When the threat of war in 1939 grew larger, he could not give any direct help given the isolationistic policy of the United States. However, during the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 and later on during the imminent attack on the Netherlands in the spring of 1940 he offered the queen and her family on a personal basis a safe refuge in the United States. Although Wilhelmina was

[17] The FDR Library in Hyde Park is based on Dutch colonial architecture (Freidel 1982, 157-158; Van den Doel 1992, 275-278).

deeply moved, she refused. Even after the Germans had conquered the Netherlands in May 1940 she did not accept an invitation to come to the US, but preferred to lead the resistance from England.[18]

Despite her fear of flying Wilhelmina visited the United States twice during World War II when visiting her daughter Juliana in Canada. She then took the opportunity to also visit FDR. The first meeting gave rise to a cordial relationship. In her memoirs Wilhelmina speaks of "an old friend", although FDR himself was originally a little ambivalent. Rumours had it that she was "stiff and stern and arbitrary". His most important adviser, Henry Hopkins, told him, however, that she was very kind and gracious. However, before the first meeting FDR was "scared to death" of Wilhelmina, but she exceeded his expectations. Hassett, one of Roosevelt's secretaries, wrote in his diary that "the Boss said he liked her" (Hassett 1958, 91; Gardner 1978, 151-152; Fasseur 1998, 393-39; Wilhelmina 1959, 325).

Both had great admiration for each other's abilities. Wilhelmina admired his strong personality and perseverance. She knew he would never give in to evil. Roosevelt praised her style of government and had respect for her performance in these difficult times. The only stain on their relationship, at least for Wilhelmina, was the fact that Roosevelt had different ideas on the significance of the Netherlands as an ally, especially after the loss of the Dutch East Indies. Moreover, both had different notions on colonial policy. For Wilhelmina the Dutch East Indies were inextricably linked to the Netherlands, and she categorically rejected a different opinion. The famous speech to Congress on August 5, 1942, in which she spoke in a very cryptic way of independence of the Dutch East Indies, was primarily intended to reassure the U.S., not as a contradiction of her ideas.[19] Differences were unavoidable because Wilhelmina continued to act as a head of state, even in the U.S. According to the president,

[18] Roosevelt had not only consulted the State Department in advance, he had also asked some members of his cabinet for advice. Wilhelmina, however, regarded the relationship with Roosevelt as personal, and not any of the cabinet's business. Yet to her great anger she had to accept that, during the war, the Dutch Secretary of State Van Kleffens, accompanied her on every visit to Roosevelt (De Jong 19 , 1099 -1101: Van Kleffens 1983: 105-10; Kersten 1992: 114-115; Kersten 1992: 85-96).

[19] Through statements such as "[…] the development of democracy and progress in the Netherlands Indies has been our constant policy"; "Increasing self-government has been enacted ever since the beginning of this country", and "The voluntary cooperation […] between people of oriental and western stock toward full partnership in government on a basis of equality has been proved possible and successful", Roosevelt himself truly believed that Wilhelmina did refer to the independence of the Dutch East Indies (Rosenman 1952, 524-526). See also F.D.Roosevelt (1943, 563 [12.02.1945]). About the American involvement in the Indonesian question see Wolthuis (1968); Kersten (1983, 91-117). The text of the address of Wilhelmina is published by Van Minnen (1992, 13-20).

she interfered too much with the political post-war plans. The queen therefore found her visits to him often disappointing despite the stimulating meetings in Hyde Park: "He did not have the time to talk about the future. This is a man who always tells stories" (Van Kleffens 1983, 71). When she felt out of place among the loud Americans she could become very moody and even a little pathetic. According to the diary of the Dutch Secretary of State Van Kleffens, "nothing would have been more beneficial for the Queen than enjoying the company of more common people in her life" (Van Kleffens 1983, 107; De Jong 1979, 1099-1103). Yet in her biography, there is no reference to this disappointment. Both the president and his wife are described in the most cordial terms. And Roosevelt was too much of a politician to show his disappointment in any way. He and his wife Eleanor had too much appreciation for "Minie" ([Koningin] Wilhelmina 1959, 325-327; Fasseur 2001, 420-440; E. Roosevelt 1950, 258-259).

Conclusion

Although authoritarian in nature, Theodore Roosevelt was a democrat at heart. The notion of an elected ruler who is accountable to Congress was sacred to him. According to 'Teddy', he owed his opinion on democracy and his notions of tolerance, fairness, and duty to the community to his Dutch ancestry. While Roosevelt was consistently in favour of the idea of democratic leadership, Wilhelmina was more prone to autocratic government, despite the limitations imposed by the Dutch constitution. Due to their personalities a clash of characters was inevitable, and Teddy Roosevelt's visit to Queen Wilhelmina became the biggest disappointment of his tour of Europe. Afterwards, Wilhelmina established a much better personal relationship with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The queen's rigid personality was apparently not a problem for this president. Their characters were much more compatible.

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