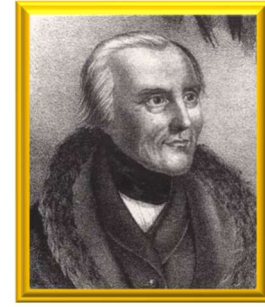




United Netherlands



Sovereign Prince: William Frederick, Prince of Orange (left).

Delegate: Baron Hans von Gagern, Prime Minister (right).

Background

Before the French Revolution, the Dutch Republic (formally the 'Seven United Netherlands') controlled approximately **half of the low countries**, with the other half ruled by Austria. Despite **inventing capitalism** and owning 40% of Britain's national debt, the Dutch economy suffered in 1780 when they opened trade with the fledgling United States and had war declared on them by Britain. The republic lost, and Dutch prestige was so badly damaged that the **Stadtholder** (effectively the republic's hereditary monarch) was ousted twice, firstly by his own people and secondly by the French revolutionary army.

Despite the recent war, historic ties between the British and Dutch¹ enabled the Prince of Orange (the former Stadtholder) to spend his **exile in England**, where he sent letters to his naval commanders and colonial governors petitioning them to resist France and support Britain. Meanwhile, France established a series of puppet governments in the Netherlands, finally annexing the region in 1810². When the allied forces advanced on France in 1813, the Netherlands were liberated, and local officials proclaimed a **provisional government** in the name of **William Frederick**, son of the former Stadtholder. William was offered the title of King, but refused to take it, styling himself 'Sovereign Prince' of the United Netherlands.

Objectives

The main question concerning the Dutch was the future of the old Austrian Netherlands, a.k.a. **Belgium and Luxembourg**. In theory, these lands were **rightfully Austrian**; and many of the local elites supported an Austrian restoration. On the other hand, the 1814 Treaty of Paris had promised the Dutch an '**increase of territory**', and the British had suggested these lands be awarded to the Netherlands, to create a strong buffer state against future French expansionism. The Netherlands' objectives were to **maintain their alliance with Britain**, and obtain **as much additional territory as possible**.

¹ The Dutch Stadtholder (William V) and British monarch (George III) were first cousins.

² France had earlier annexed the Austrian Netherlands in 1797.