



STATE ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED PROVINCES OF THE NETHERLANDS

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ABSTRACT: - This article analyzes the history of public administration in the United Provinces of the Netherlands. The activities of the General Staff, the highest state body in the country, and the role of the Grand Pensioner in its management are covered. The reasons for the decrease in the influence of the Council of State in the Dutch administration and the increase in the position of the General States are analyzed. The impact of the political struggle between the Republican and Orangeists parties on governance is highlighted.

KEYWORDS: Netherlands United Provincial Republic, the province, the General States, the Grand Pensioner, the Stathouder, the Council of State, the Orangeists, the Republicans.

INTRODUCTION

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Located in Western Europe, on the North Sea coast, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has a long tradition of statehood. In the XVI century, the Dutch Revolution liberated the country from Spanish oppression and formed the United Provinces Republic. As a result of trade and maritime development in the XVII century, the Netherlands became one of the most developed countries in Europe and acquired new lands. In the process, his statehood traditions and public administration have improved. Therefore, it is necessary to study in depth the issues of public administration in the Netherlands in the XVII century, the ratio of political forces that govern the state.

THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

It is known that in the XVII century the United Provincial Republic consisted of seven provinces: Geldern, the Netherlands, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Overeussel and Groningen, as well as the province of Drente, which has no representation in the General States. The highest state body in the country was the General States. Although it has traditionally been associated with the General States, which previously existed under feudalism, its powers in the new state have increased significantly. Until the 1980s, generals were convened by royal decree only in emergencies. However, the Utrecht Union of 1579 gave them the right to resolve war and peace unanimously and to conclude treaties with other states [1; p. 575].

The United States, known as the “Honorary Gentlemen” of the United Provinces, held its meetings in The Hague. The number of deputies was not limited, but each province had only one vote, regardless of the composition of the delegation. Not all deputies took part in the day-to-day work, only a special panel of “business advisers” took part. The General States passed general laws, approved taxes, oversaw the activities of the

highest administrative and judicial institutions, approved high-ranking officials, and administered republican lands (“Generality Lands”). However, the decision-making process was difficult because the deputies voted on the basis of an imperative mandate, which meant that the representatives of the provinces had to fulfill the demands and tasks of their constituents. The decision had to be made unanimously.

The first position in the General Staff was occupied by the Grand Pensioner of the Netherlands - the head of the executive power of the richest province in the Netherlands [2; p. 554]. Initially, it was a state defender representing the interests of the Netherlands in the General States. He later became the head of the Holland state, and gradually, due to the position of the Netherlands in the republic, the United Provinces gradually consolidated in their hands all the important issues of public administration. He was elected for a term of five years (with the right to be re-elected) from among the most prominent members of the Dutch merchant oligarchy. The Grand Pensioner prepared and submitted proposals to the General Staff, chaired their meetings, and oversaw the republic’s financial and foreign policy. The position of Grand Pensioner lasted until 1795 [3; p. 167]. The Secretary-General, who was almost the second person in the General Staff, handled all the paperwork.

The position of stathouder was retained in the republic. Stathouders from the Oransye-Nassau dynasty had great military and administrative power, and they usually held office in several provinces at once. But in peacetime, their rights were not clearly defined. Stathouder could have attended the General Assembly, but was not initially allowed to vote. Military and financial matters were considered by a 12-member State Council formed by the United States. The

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council now had fewer rights than before. The council was chaired by a stathouder, and decisions were made by a simple majority vote. In the absence of Stathouder, he was temporarily retired. However, by the beginning of the XVIII century, this governing body had almost lost its influence, and much of its powers had passed to the General States.

At the same time, the power of the General States in the republic was apparent. All power was in the hands of the people of the provinces, and the deputies only carried out the will of their constituents. Deputies had to present all important issues to them, and therefore it was very difficult to reach a unanimous agreement of the seven provinces. The internal affairs of the provinces were governed by local governments - the Provincial States. In the absence of a truly central government, the republic was primarily characterized by a great deal of independence from various social groups. The existence of such a state would have been almost impossible if the two main opposing forces had not resorted to various means to unite these social groups.

One of these forces was a stathouder from the Oranje dynasty who sought to consolidate his power and turn the country into a true unitary monarchy [4; p. 244–245]. Around him formed a party of orangutans, consisting of aristocrats who had succeeded in military service [5; p. 266]. They supported the stathouder's attempt to expand the powers of the government and saw it as a way to unite the provinces. That is why orangutans are also called unitarists.

The Orangeists were opposed by the ruling "Republican" Party of the Dutch ruling regent merchant oligarchs. The Great Pensioner, who represented his interests, was one of the most powerful figures in the state. The party brought together members of the provincial

states, provincial and city regents, and Dutch merchants. The most privileged stratum of Dutch society, its bourgeois aristocracy, were regents who held important positions in every city or province, especially in the western part of the country, and had almost unlimited power in finance and the judiciary, as well as in the local economy. The regents, most of them from commercial families, formed a closed group of very influential and wealthy people, which was almost inaccessible. All the relationships in it are built on kinship, inheritance, and money.

The Republican Party, in support of the principle of provincial sovereignty, sought to weaken the power of the General States and to resolve the Union's affairs primarily in the interests of the Dutch provinces. Throughout the history of the Netherlands in the XVII and XVIII centuries, Republicans and Orangeists opposed each other's right to become the country's leading political force. The parties have had a series of priorities, which have been accompanied by serious crises in the public administration system. The foreign policy situation during the change of government was very important.

The relationship between the local authorities, the provincial states, and the General States during the United Provincial Republic was also a reflection of the Republican and Oranje struggle, although in the early stages this struggle had a confessional meaning [3; p. 169]. The imperative mandate of U.S. lawmakers led to the resolution of the most important issues of the state, including increasing the size of the army, whether or not to participate in the war, often for months or even years. In the XVII and XVIII centuries, the provincial social institutions of this federal state, which had a complex and unique structure for each region, became the center of active political life. The central government, as it had been until 1581, never had enough

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authority and power to eradicate the particularism of the Dutch provinces, whether it was a matter of the Spanish crown, or belonging to the Oranye dynasty of later times, or stathouders of the General States.

The Church of Calvinists was the official church of the United Provinces and was subordinate to the government. By 1650, Protestants made up half of the country's population [3; p. 170]. There was persecution of Catholics in the Netherlands, but laws against them were rarely enforced. Many Catholics in the country have even held master's degrees and served in the army [2; p. 555.].

CONCLUSION

In short, the highest state body in the republic was the General States. One of the peculiarities of the statehood of the United Provinces was that the number of deputies in the General States was not limited to a certain number. Only each province had one vote. The decision-making process of the supreme body was complicated by voting on the basis of an imperative mandate system. The first position in the General Staff was held by the Grand Pensioner of the Netherlands. The position of stathouder was retained in the republic, and he presided over the Council of State. The internal affairs of the provinces were governed by local governments - the Provincial State.

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