

William of Orange and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1572-84

K.W. Swart

Edited by
R.P. Fagel, M.E.H.N. Mout and
H.F.K. Van Nierp

Translated by
J.C. Grayson



St Andrews Studies in Reformation History

William of Orange and the Revolt of the
Netherlands, 1572–84



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K.W. SWART

With introductory chapters by
ALASTAIR DUKE and
JONATHAN I. ISRAEL

Edited by
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Foreword

After the sudden death of Koenraad Wolter Swart on 27 July 1992, many who had known him wondered about the state of completion of the great biography of William of Orange on which Swart had been working almost uninterruptedly for the last 25 years of his life. It very soon became clear that only the second half of the manuscript was as good as finished, the part which dealt with the period from the renewed outbreak of the Revolt in Holland and Zeeland in 1572 to the assassination of the Prince in 1584. In March 1992, about four months before his death, Swart had sent these chapters to his former pupils Alastair Duke and Jonathan Israel with a request for their comments. In his accompanying letter Swart called this text ‘the more or less completed part of my book about William of Orange’.

Swart’s literary estate also included a large number of folders of notes and drafts for chapters about Orange’s life until 1572. These were in various states of completion: some of them were written in English, others in Dutch, some handwritten, others in typescript; annotation was absent almost everywhere. On this collection Swart had written rather discouragingly, ‘Biography of William of Orange. A first attempt to sketch his life before he took up arms against Spanish domination (1533–72). A great deal will have to be altered in this. Almost entirely worthless for anyone else.’

After studying Swart’s manuscripts we soon concluded that publication of the first part of the biography would indeed be impossible. On the other hand, publication in some form or other of the more or less completed part appeared to us to be very important, for in these chapters Swart gave a new view of Orange’s policy and action in the crucial years of the Revolt, based on a thorough study of all the published and a great many unpublished archive sources. Swart’s insights are important, not only for our knowledge of the figure of William of Orange, but also for a better understanding of the Revolt of the Netherlands.

In a sense it was fortunate that Swart had concentrated on the end of Orange’s life. The monumental biography by Felix Rachfahl, *Wilhelm von Oranien und der niederländische Aufstand* (three volumes, The Hague, 1906–24) had not gone beyond the year 1569. The historian Jan Romein remarked of this 2342-page study that ‘unfortunately it

remained a torso'. If the 1897 article of Robert Fruin, 'Prins Willem I in het jaar 1570' (*Verspreide Geschriften*, II, pp. 111–66), can be regarded as the neck, then the publication of Swart's manuscript provides the picture of Orange with a head.

It thus very soon became clear to us that Swart's more or less completed account of the last 12 years of Orange's life must be published. But the question was in what form. Two possibilities were open to us. The first was to find an author who was willing and able to relate the prince's life up to 1572, whether or not he chose to rely on the notes Swart left on his death. In this way a complete biography would be produced, which was always Swart's intention. The second possibility was to publish only the part of the manuscript dealing with Orange's life after 1572 more or less as it stood. It would, of course, have to be preceded by a brief introduction on his life up to 1572, to provide an intelligible context for Swart's first chapter, which begins *in medias res*.

We soon rejected the first option and chose the second. To write a biography of the first part of Orange's life would demand many years of work. This would delay the publication of Swart's manuscript, which would lose much of its freshness. A collaborator might also arrive at quite different interpretations, which would compel him to make radical changes to the text, for reasons of composition. This appeared unacceptable to us.

The difficulty, however, was that Swart's manuscript was 'more or less' complete but certainly not ready to go to press. Before the typescript could become a book, a great deal of editorial work had to be done on the text, and above all the notes. Thanks to a subsidy from the Prince Bernhard Fund, Raymond Fagel could be entrusted with the preparation of the manuscript. The greater part of Fagel's work consisted of checking and where necessary correcting the references to literature and archive sources. In his work Fagel was able to use the extensive and well-arranged collection of literature, photocopies and notes that Swart had left. Where this material fell short of his needs, he visited the university libraries in Leiden and Utrecht, the Royal Library in The Hague, and the municipal archives of Rotterdam, Delft, Leiden, Utrecht, Gouda and the General State Archives in The Hague. Except for the city archives in Antwerp, foreign archives and libraries were not visited. Fortunately it soon became clear that Swart had been extremely reliable in drafting his references. In only a very few cases was it impossible to trace a note as a whole. Where possible, incorrect references have been silently corrected or completed. The style of annotation has been harmonized and titles of literature and source publications have been corrected. Fagel also compiled the bibliography.

Finally, the whole text was edited. Our starting point was respect for Swart's original text. The spelling of placenames and proper names was made uniform, and a few spelling errors or less happy phrases were improved.

We are grateful to many people for their help. The Prince Bernhard Fund reacted promptly and generously to our application for subsidy. The heirs of K.W. Swart and his brother Meester P.J. Swart were extraordinarily helpful in making available all Swart's manuscripts and notes. They also put at our disposal Swart's extensive collection of literature and photocopies about sources on William of Orange, which made the editorial work considerably simpler. Alastair Duke of the University of Southampton and Jonathan Israel of University College London reacted immediately and enthusiastically to our request to write introductions to this book. The Dutch publisher Sdu was willing to honour its original agreement with the author by publishing the completed half of his biography of Orange in the Netherlands in 1993.

The book now before you is not a memorial volume. Although there is every reason to remember Swart as a person and as a historian with friendship and respect, we see this book in the first place as Swart intended it: a thorough, scholarly study of William of Orange, indispensable to the specialist, readable for a wider public interested in history. We should be grateful if it were received not with piety but critically, for that would do most honour to the spirit of Koen Swart.

In this English edition the opportunity has been taken to correct a number of errors in the Dutch text. The editors and translator are grateful to Mr A.C. van der Lem of the University Library, Leiden, who pointed out many of the corrections required.

H.F.K. van Nierop
M.E.H.N. Mout

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Abbreviations

<i>Apologie</i>	A. Lacroix (ed.), <i>Apologie de Guillaume de Nassau, ... Justification du Taciturne de 1568, correspondances, etc.</i> (Brussels, 1858)
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief [General State Archives], The Hague
ARA B <i>Archives</i>	Algemeen Rijksarchief, Brussels G. Groen van Prinsterer (ed.), <i>Archives ou correspondance de la maison d'Orange-Nassau</i> , first series, 8 vols and supplement (Leiden, 1835–47)
BL	British Library, London, manuscript division
Blok	P.J. Blok, <i>Willem de Eerste, prins van Oranje</i> , 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1919–20)
BMGN	<i>Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden</i>
BMHG	<i>Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap</i>
Bor	P.C. Bor, <i>Nederlantsche oorloghen, beroerten ende borgerlijcke oneenicheyden, 1555–1600</i> , 6 vols in 37 books (Leiden, 1621–34)
BVGO	<i>Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde</i>
CSPF	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Foreign</i> , 1533–84 (London, 1861–1914)
CSPS	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Spanish</i> , 1568–84 (London, 1896)
<i>Documents Anjou</i>	P.L. Muller and A. Diegerick (eds), <i>Documents concernant les relations entre le duc d'Anjou et les Pays-Bas</i> , 5 vols (Utrecht, 1889–99)
FB 1572–74	Formulaerboek 1572–75 (KHA A II, XIV-i–12)
FB 1575	Formulaerboek 1575 (KHA A II, XIV-i–II)

- Fruin R. Fruin, *Verspreide geschriften*, 10 vols (The Hague, 1900–1905)
- GA Gemeentearchief (municipal archives)
- Gachard, *Actes* L.P. Gachard (ed.), *Actes des Etats-Généraux de 1576–1585*, 2 vols, 1576–80 (Brussels, 1861–66)
- Granvelle* C. Pilot and E. Pouillet (eds), *Correspondance de Granvelle, 1565–1586*, 12 vols (Brussels, 1878–97)
- Justification* see *Apologie*
- K W.P.C. Knuttel, *Catalogus van de pamflettenverzameling in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek* (The Hague, 1909–20)
- Kervyn, *Documents inédits* J.M.B.C. Kervyn de Lettenhove (ed.), *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire du XVI^e siècle* (Brussels, 1883)
- Kervyn, *Huguenots* J.M.B.C. Kervyn de Lettenhove (ed.), *Relations politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre sous le règne de Philippe II*, 11 vols (Brussels, 1882–1900)
- KHA Koninklijk Huisarchief (archives of the house of Orange-Nassau)
- Lodewijk van Nassau* P.J. Blok (ed.), *Correspondentie van en betreffende Lodewijk van Nassau en andere onuitgegeven documenten* (Utrecht, 1887)
- OA Oudarchief
- Oranje* N. Japikse (ed.), *Correspondentie van Willem den Eersten, prins van Oranje*, vol. 1, 1551–61 (The Hague, 1934)
- P L.D. Petit, *Bibliotheek van Nederlandse pamfletten. Verzameling van de bibliotheek van Joannes Thysius* (The Hague, 1882–84)
- PBN Bibliothèque nationale Paris, section des manuscrits
- Philippe* L.P. Gachard (ed.), *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas*, 7 vols: 1559–77; and J. Lefèvre (ed.), II^e partie, 2 vols: 1577–84 (Brussels, 1848–1953)
- PRO, SP Public Record Office, London, State Papers

RA	Rijksarchief (state archives)
Rachfahl	F. Rachfahl, <i>Wilhelm von Oranien und der niederländische Aufstand</i> , 3 vols (The Hague, 1906–24)
<i>Res. Holland</i>	<i>Resolutiën van de Staten van Holland en West Vriesland 1524–1795 (c. 1750–98)</i>
<i>Res. St. G.</i>	N. Japikse (ed.), <i>Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal</i> , vols I–IV, 1576–84 (The Hague, 1915–19)
SA	Stadsarchief (town archive)
<i>Taciturne</i>	L.P. Gachard (ed.), <i>Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne</i> , 6 vols (Brussels, 1847–66)
Van Schelven	A.A. van Schelven, <i>Willem van Oranje</i> (Amsterdam, 1943)
W	J.K. van der Wulp, <i>Catalogus van de tractaten, pamfletten enz. over de geschiedenis van Nederland aanwezig in de bibliotheek van Is. Meulman</i> (Amsterdam, 1866–68)



The Netherlands



Holland and Zeeland



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K.W. Swart: His Career as a Historian

Jonathan I. Israel

There can never be a right time to lose a valued colleague and respected scholar, but the death of Professor Emeritus Koenraad Wolter Swart (1916–92) on 27 July 1992 was especially untimely, since he was then nearing completion, after many years of research and writing, of his long and keenly awaited revisionist study of William the Silent. This he intended to be, and despite its having been left incomplete, it undoubtedly is, his *magnum opus*, his third book and the work for which he researched most extensively and expended the greatest time and effort. It can also in several other respects be seen as the culmination of his development and endeavours as a historian.

Swart was born in Rotterdam, the son of the well-known journalist P.C. Swart, who succeeded G.G. van der Hoeven as editor of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* (NRC) in May 1936. Originally he studied law at Leiden, taking his candidate's degree in 1939 and his master's in 1941. He then went on to do postgraduate research, and was one of the very last research students to be supervised by the great, but, as Swart himself related to me, almost painfully aloof and remote, Johan Huizinga, who remained at Leiden until 1942.

It was after attending the Nuremberg War Trials as the representative of the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation in the years 1947–49, and meeting numerous Americans there, as well as completing his Ph.D. thesis on the sale of offices in early modern Europe,¹ that he resolved to seek a career as a historian in the United States. His first post in America was as visiting professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana (1950–52), after which he was Assistant Professor of History at Georgetown University (1952–53), Professor of European History at Brenau College (1954–60) and Assistant Professor of History at Agnes Scott College (1956–66), with teaching assignments also at Emory University in Atlanta.

¹ K.W. Swart, *Sale of Offices in the Seventeenth Century* (The Hague, 1948, reprinted Utrecht, 1980).

It was at this point, after 16 years of teaching on American campuses, that he was brought into the running to succeed E.H. Kossmann as Professor of Dutch History and Institutions at University College, London. 'It came as a great surprise', he recalled in an interview he gave in February 1984, 'that I was suddenly asked to fill this very well-known chair.'² His surprise was due to the fact that previously he had worked almost entirely in other fields, and especially French history, rather than the history of the Low Countries. Also surprised, and by no means pleased by the choice, was the first holder of the chair, the famous historian Pieter Geyl, who taught at University College from 1920 to 1936, and who was then approaching the end of his long and productive life (1887–1966). Swart held the chair in London from 1967 until his retirement in September 1984, after which he lived for most of the remainder of his life at Wassenaar, near The Hague.

As a Dutch historian who spent virtually his whole career in the United States and Britain, one of Swart's favourite topics of conversation was the state of contemporary Dutch history writing and studies, and not least the interaction between Dutch scholars and foreign colleagues, usually British or American, who work in the field of Low Countries history. Not without justification, he saw himself as being in a uniquely apt position from which to appraise this relationship and treat both the defensiveness Dutch colleagues often show in the face of this invasion of their national history by foreigners and, equally, the insensitivity of the foreigners regarding numerous aspects of the Dutch past. On the one hand, he was a Dutchman trained in the best Dutch historical traditions at Leiden; on the other, he shared in the advantage enjoyed by outsiders: their greater detachment and propensity to place the Dutch past in a wider European and world context. In a situation such as his, he explained in the 1984 interview, 'you can look at the subject from a distance, but you are so familiar with the language, opinions and history of the country that you are better able to pass judgement than a foreigner; as an expatriate I have the best of both worlds. I am a bit of a rare bird, a mixture of Dutchman, American and Englishman.' During his years in London he assiduously encouraged younger British colleagues such as Geoffrey Parker, Leslie Price, Alastair Duke, Graham Gibbs and others, including myself, to approach Dutch (and Belgian) history in a broad international context, judging this a pertinent and useful counterweight to what he regarded as the sometimes excessively narrow approach to 'the history of the fatherland' current in the Netherlands itself. In this way he did much to continue the remarkable

² Mechtild Witlox, 'Interview met Professor K.W. Swart', *Spiegel Historiae* (February 1984), p. 103.

tradition, established by Geyl and cultivated further by G.J. Renier and E.H. Kossmann, of encouraging and spreading interest in Dutch history in the British universities.

After his arrival in London in 1967, Swart concentrated almost exclusively on the study of the early modern Low Countries, and especially on the career of William the Silent, the most famous figure in Dutch history and one about whom an extensive literature already existed. By contrast, before 1967 he had worked scarcely at all in the field of Dutch history. It is thus tempting to assume (as is often done) that there is a sharp dividing line between his pre-1967 work and what he did and wrote subsequently. Yet, as so often with what seems obvious at first, a closer look reveals that this is, to some extent, a misconception. There is in fact a considerable element of continuity between what he published before and after taking up the chair in Dutch history. As it seems to me, the driving preoccupation behind his historical work, connected doubtless with his wartime experiences, his hatred of Fascism and his work at Nuremberg, was a fierce distrust and dislike of all forms of chauvinism, self-glorifying national myths and political ideologies, which encourage self-congratulatory or aggressive group identities and simplistic, conventional ways of thinking about national history. While he cared little for Geyl's greater Netherlands nationalism, he was a warm supporter of Geyl's critique of the narrower Dutch nationalism based on glorification of the Revolt and the rise of Dutch Protestantism. Possibly no Dutch historian of the Revolt against Spain has been less inclined to heroicize William the Silent and his principal subordinates, and more inclined to question the value of breaking up the pre-1572 unity, or partial unity, of the Habsburg Netherlands. An essentially non-religious personality himself, albeit stemming from a Protestant background, his detached, sceptical outlook rendered him eminently willing to contemplate the Revolt from the point of view of the Catholic population of the Netherlands, and to show sympathy for Charles V's and Philip II's predicament in the Low Countries. Though always measured and cautious in his published work, as befits a serious historian, here and there one gleans a hint of the more emphatic and provocative revisionism which spiced his seminar papers and the many lively discussions about the Dutch Revolt which he initiated as leader of the Dutch History Research Seminar of the Institute of Historical Research in London.

It is both fascinating and instructive to follow through the continuities in Swart's oeuvre. At the time he was working on his Ph.D. thesis, the topic of venality of offices was receiving extensive attention and was beginning to be widely discussed, under the stimulus of Roland

Mousnier's research and publications – but almost exclusively within a French context. So much so, indeed, that many non-French scholars were inclined, as Swart points out in his introduction, to see the phenomenon of institutionalized venality as an especially French development inherent in the supposedly corrupt tendencies of early modern French absolutism and society. Swart's basic point was that the universality of sale of offices in early modern Europe 'indicates that this phenomenon was caused by factors which had a more general character than is usually assumed'.³ He went on to emphasize the crucial part sale of offices had also in Spain and England, and while conceding that Holland after the Revolt was to an extent an exception, and 'particularly watched that sale of office did not penetrate into the courts of justice and prescribed an oath of purgation for all public servants',⁴ he argued that this was essentially due to Holland's exceptional ability to raise sufficient money to pay for the processes of government, without needing to raise extra sums and spread the cost of government through institutionalized venality. He pointed out, however, that other Dutch provinces were weaker than Holland financially, and that here venality was adopted as a method of coping, most extensively in the case of Friesland.

Over many years, in the 1950s and early 1960s, Swart researched the works of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French writers, commentators and intellectuals. His most substantial work published during his lifetime deals with the widespread sense of decadence prevalent among the French intelligentsia, particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵ It is a study in French cultural and social history, yet here again his chief concern was to extract the topic from the realm of alleged national failings and propensities which coloured it in the eyes of many scholars, both French and foreign. What he set out to show was that the greater prevalence of a sense of decadence, and of pessimistic philosophies and expectations, to be found in French cultural life and literature in the nineteenth century, than was the case in Britain, Germany or America, should not be regarded as something running against the main trend in western thought and culture, or as evidence that France was, in fact, fundamentally decadent when compared with other supposedly more vigorous western nations. Rather, he interpreted the French sense of decadence and deepening *fin-de-siècle* gloom as merely a more

³ Swart, *Sale of Offices*, p. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵ K.W. Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague, 1964).

precocious and intense expression of what was fast becoming a general western European tendency. He agreed that many of the views expressed by French intellectuals of the late nineteenth century ‘impress us as unduly pessimistic’, but maintained that in some respects French observers of the age were simply ahead of their British and German counterparts, and in some of their analyses of the trends of the times, nineteenth-century French authors showed a remarkable insight into the development of modern society, and expressed fears and anxieties that have become much more widely shared in our own time. Many of them, for example, clearly perceived the dangers inherent in an increasingly standardized, centralized and industrialized society, expressing a degree of apprehension which was until then still unusual elsewhere of ‘the frightful power that modern science was to place at the disposal of man’.⁶

National myths and myths about nations, formed at crucial junctures in history, lay at the centre of Swart’s historical concerns, both before and after his move to University College London. He delighted in exposing the pressures and preoccupations which gave rise to such myths, and the roles they played, not only in the historical process itself, but also in the shaping of modern ideas and assumptions about history. He considered it essential to dissect and reveal the true nature of such myths and to demonstrate their origins in propaganda, prejudice and special pleading. A classic instance of this approach was his eloquent piece on the Black Legend of Spanish cruelty.⁷ He was struck by the intensity and power of the propaganda campaign to vilify Spain, commencing in Italy in the early sixteenth century and culminating in the Dutch Revolt and later in England. There is no doubting the impact of the Black Legend on generations of Europeans; but the fact is that, as Swart put it, it ‘grossly exaggerated Spanish misdeeds, and entirely ignored the tangible benefits which the Low Countries derived from the personal union with Spain’. In a highly typical passage at the end of this article Swart remarked that

‘in arguing that the Dutch greatly exaggerated Spanish misdeeds, this paper may seem to place the Dutch struggle against Spain in a far from favourable light. But my quarrel is not so much with the Dutch patriots who resorted to the time-honoured expedient of vilifying the enemy, as with the many later historians who perpetuated anti-Spanish propaganda. With the ending of the Eighty Years War the myth of Spanish tyranny ceased to play any role in Dutch foreign and domestic policy, but hispanophobia

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 262–3.

⁷ K.W. Swart, ‘The Black Legend during the Eighty Years War’, in J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kossmann (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands*, V (London, 1975), pp. 36–57.

remained deeply ingrained in the Dutch mind, and had a lasting influence on the historiography of the Revolt.⁸

There is a noticeable affinity between Swart's 'Black Legend' article and his inaugural lecture on 'the Miracle of the Dutch Republic', delivered at University College London, and published in pamphlet form in 1969.⁹ It was assuredly no part of Swart's purpose to deny the impressive achievements of the Dutch seventeenth century or the glories of its art and general culture. But he did see the need to explore the origins and context of the idea of the Dutch 'Golden Age', demonstrating that it possessed many of the attributes of a national myth, and that it fulfilled a specific function, or set of functions, in the building of a sense of Dutch national identity at various times, not least during the seventeenth century itself. Rather typically he pointed out that it was just as much among the ruling patrician elite as among the common people that the image of the Dutch achievement and Dutch culture was in need of enhancement. He observed that the Dutch ruling class of the seventeenth century 'readily accepted the superiority of the aristocratic, courtly civilisation of France, with its baroque and classicist style of life, and looked down upon Dutch painting and literature in so far as these did not live up to foreign standards'.¹⁰ As with the 'Black Legend' of Spanish cruelty, the notion of a Dutch Golden Age in the seventeenth century served a purpose which has long been redundant, but nevertheless continues to colour historians' assumptions and premises about early modern history.

One of the most striking and important features of Swart's work is his opposition to the compartmentalization of historical studies which has become so prevalent in recent decades. His most typical and original work, such as the *Sense of Decadence*, or the study of the Black Legend, defies classification as intellectual, political, cultural or social history, and is fundamentally a mixture of all these. The emphasis which he placed on the role of image, myths and propaganda in history, like the no less marked stress he put on the centrality of towering personalities such as William the Silent, Napoleon and Hitler, lent itself to a broad, all-encompassing approach to the historical process. He was always prompt to reject deterministic explanations based on a single category or type of factors. In the case of the Dutch Revolt he simply did not believe that the phenomenon could be basically attributed to economic, religious or constitutional causes, but rather to all of these and more: the

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁹ K.W. Swart, *The Miracle of the Dutch Republic as seen in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1969).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

more being myth, propaganda and personality. Rather characteristically, when asked to venture onto the terrain of economic history and comment on the phenomenon of Dutch industrial retardation since the seventeenth century for an international conference held in Canada in 1974, he produced an explanation which combined political elements (the highly decentralized political structure and legacy of the Republic) and cultural factors (the overpowering role of bourgeois attitudes and values among the general population) with such specifically economic factors as high wage levels. An important part of his argument was the idea of the bourgeoisification or deproletarianization of the masses: 'the bourgeois conception of life, prizing orderliness, honesty, thrift, respectability, material success, quiet family life and domestic comfort, was adopted as a standard by the lower ranks of society, as well as by patricians and rich merchants'.¹¹ Here again we discern the power of image and myth in his conception of history.

K.W. Swart may well prove to be one of those rare historians who exert more influence after their death than in their lifetime. For the extent of his revisionism with regard to William the Silent and the Dutch Revolt only began to be generally realized around the time of his retirement, in the mid-1980s, and will only be fully apparent now with the publication of his principal work. Arguably, he is the most fundamental revisionist on William the Silent to have appeared for over a century.

¹¹ K.W. Swart, 'Holland's Bourgeoisie and the Retarded Industrialization of the Netherlands', in K. Frantz and P.M. Hohenberg (eds), *Failed Transitions to Modern Industrial Society: Renaissance Italy and Seventeenth Century Holland* (Montreal, 1975), p. 46.

From ‘Loyal Servant’ to ‘Irreconcilable Opponent’ of Spain: Koenraad Swart’s Interpretation of William of Orange, 1533–72¹

Alastair Duke

Koenraad Swart was approaching his fiftieth birthday when appointed to the Chair of Dutch History and Institutions in the University of London. Like his distinguished predecessor, Ernst Kossmann, Swart came to the London chair a comparative novice in what the Dutch themselves call the ‘history of the fatherland’. As if to serve notice of his commitment to Dutch history, the new professor elected to make William I of Orange, at once the most celebrated yet enigmatic of all the heroes in the Dutch pantheon, the centrepiece of his future research. It would have been a bold choice for an aspiring historian at any time; it was an especially courageous decision for an established scholar who came to Dutch history in the high noon of his academic career.

We do not know why his choice fell on William the Silent, though we may conjecture that his responsibility for the third-year Special Subject on the Dutch Revolt at London contributed. In some respects the timing seemed inauspicious. Swart would quickly have discovered, if he had not already known, that the historiography of the Revolt had at least temporarily declined into an arid debate between those who held that the programme of the rebels was ‘modern’ and those who emphasized the ‘conservative’ traits in the Revolt.² The Revolt itself had receded from the forefront of the public mind, while the ‘Father of the Fatherland’ had lost much of his symbolic significance for a generation schooled in ‘world history’. The subdued and largely academic nature of the exhibitions and publications held to commemorate the

¹ I am indebted to the author’s brother, Mr P.J. Swart, who allowed me to consult the unpublished papers of Professor Swart relating to William of Orange’s life before 1572.

² See J.W. Smit, ‘The Present Position of Studies regarding the Revolt of the Netherlands’, in J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kossmann (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands*, 1 (London, 1960), pp. 11–28.

quadracentennial of Orange's assassination in 1984 points up the changed mood since 1933, when exuberant public manifestations were held throughout the country to commemorate Orange's birth in 1533.³

Perhaps because Swart came to Dutch history after an academic career outside the Netherlands, he looked on Dutch history from a different perspective. In the Anglo-Saxon world the birth of the Dutch Republic continued to stand out as the most significant period in the history of the Low Countries. Within that perspective the absence of a critical biography of William of Orange seemed a particularly surprising gap in Dutch historiography. Though the lives of the Prince written by Veronica Wedgwood (1944), J.W. Berkelbach van der Sprenkel (1946), Henriëtte de Beaufort (1950) and Yves Cazaux (1970) all had their merits, they made no claim to scholarly originality.⁴ Swart aimed to fill that lacuna with a political biography of Orange based on a scrupulous (re-)examination of the printed and manuscript primary sources. It was an ambitious task and one sadly that he did not live to complete. But the knowledge that he was engaged on an enterprise where others had conspicuously failed surely added spice to the challenge.

Typically he did not broadcast his new research interest: William of Orange received not a single mention in the inaugural lecture he delivered at University College London on 6 November 1967.⁵ He set to work without any fanfare, and it was not until 1973 that he ventured his first scholarly contribution on the Revolt. The occasion was the fifth Anglo-Dutch Historical Conference, where his sensitive and even-

³ For the conspicuous lack of public interest in the commemoration of 1984, see F. Postma, 'Willem van Oranje, 1585–1984. Een literatuuroverzicht. Een recensieartikel', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 99 (1984), 708; J. Blokker, 'Telkens op een schone lei', in *Geschiedenis zonder verleden? Over Nederlandse identiteit en geschiedschrijving* (De Volkskrant, 1990), pp. 42–3. Perhaps the popularity of recent major exhibitions such as 'De eeuw van de beeldenstorm' and 'The Dawn of the Golden Age', and the public debate about Dutch identity herald a revival of interest in the early history of the Republic. In addition to the discussion which *De Volkskrant* organized, mentioned above, see also the thematic issue of the *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 107 (1992), devoted to the Netherlands identity.

⁴ See G.A.C. van der Lem, 'De Prins in de geschiedschrijving van de laatste halve eeuw', in E.O.G. Haitsema Mulier and A.E.M. Janssen (eds), *Willem van Oranje in de historie 1584–1984. Vier eeuwen beeldvorming en geschiedschrijving* (Utrecht, 1984), pp. 191–219. For a succinct and recent biography accessible to the general public see A.Th. van Deursen, 'Willem van Oranje', in *Willem van Oranje. Een strijd voor vrijheid en verdraagzaamheid* (Weesp-Tielt, 1984), pp. 101–56.

⁵ K.W. Swart, *The Miracle of the Dutch Republic as seen in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1969).

handed dissection of the Black Legend amply attested to his mastery of the voluminous pamphlet literature.⁶

From the time of his appointment to the London chair until his death 25 years later the Prince and the opening phase of the Eighty Years War almost entirely absorbed Swart's intellectual energies.⁷ When he died in July 1992, he left a substantial typescript, in which he examined William's career from the time when he assumed the leadership of the Revolt in Holland to his assassination at Delft 12 years later. Swart considered this part 'more or less complete',⁸ though his diffidence caused him to seek critical commentary from colleagues. Apart from essential editorial work, the original publication in Dutch and the present translation faithfully follow that typescript. No doubt he might have wanted to cross t's and dot i's, but there is no reason to suppose that he had planned to make extensive revisions. If this had been delivered as a lecture, Swart might well have concluded with the customary and defiant 'I have spoken'.

One caveat should, however, in fairness be entered. Swart's *William of Orange* is indeed a work of scholarship, yet it was written, as he himself said, with an eye to the 'general reader'. Though he was as familiar as any with the literature of the Revolt, it seemed to him inappropriate to polemicize in a book intended for the wider public. He had no wish to refute what he believed were 'inaccurate views of Orange or of the course of the Dutch Revolt'. Instead, Swart had planned to append 'a bibliographical survey of the most important sources and studies concerning Orange that I have consulted'.⁹ To supply the want of such a survey and to provide fuller annotation Raymond Fagel has prepared a bibliography.

The appearance of this biography in print is in part a salute to a meticulous and dedicated scholar; it is not, however, an act of piety, and it requires no puffing to justify its publication. Those responsible for seeing this posthumous work through the press believe that Swart's critical study goes far to provide that fundamental reappraisal of Orange's role in the Revolt of the Netherlands which has been long

⁶ 'Black Legend', pp. 36–57.

⁷ Having set to work, he published only two pieces on subjects outside the history of the Revolt, namely his 'Holland's Bourgeoisie and the Retarded Industrialization of the Netherlands', in F. Krantz and P.M. Hohenberg (eds), *Failed Transitions to Modern Industrial Society: Renaissance Italy and Seventeenth Century Holland* (Montreal, 1975), already discussed by Jonathan Israel, and his review of L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, entitled 'The Fortunes of War', *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 November 1975, p. 1428.

⁸ Personal communication from K.W. Swart to the writer, 9 March 1992.

⁹ *Ibid.*