

The Pamphlet that Woke a Nation

By

John Sterk

B.A., University of Alberta 1964

LL.B. University of Alberta, 1967

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**We accept this thesis as conforming
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Supervisor: Dr. Paul B. Wood

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the Patriot revolt that dominated Dutch political life during the 1780s. An anonymous pamphlet, An Address to the People of the Netherlands, was distributed throughout the Dutch republic in September 1781, during the Fourth English War. Its author was Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol. A detailed study of his pamphlet, its printing history, its author and its readership can help us assess the extent to which the pamphlet and the political press generally shaped the Patriot movement and the new political culture which emerged. Methods used include analyses of Dutch newspapers, pamphlets and other literature of the period to gauge the impact of the pamphlet and the study of other manifestations of the new political culture. The conclusion is that the pamphlet in particular and the political press in general had a profound impact on the Patriot movement and the new political culture.

Examiners:

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DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Geertje Louisa Sterk-Strangmann and the memory of my late father, Jan Sterk. They brought me to Canada in 1951 when I was ten years old. They taught me the importance of assimilating into Canadian society, while at the same time, respecting and taking pride in my Dutch origins. This thesis is one manifestation of that respect and pride.

This thesis is the result of the encouragement, endeavors and input of many people. I would first thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Paul Wood for his critical advice and guidance throughout the research and writing stages. I acknowledge and thank the committee members, Dr. R.S. Alexander, Dr. Sara Beam, and Dr. Susan Lewis Hammond for the time and energy expended in reading the text and providing valuable comments which improved the final product.

My research in the Netherlands was made easier because of the assistance of the personnel of the *Gemeentearchief* (Municipal archive) of Amsterdam, the Library of the University of Amsterdam, the Press Museum at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, and the Royal Library in the Hague. Without their untiring efforts in guiding me through the intricacies of Dutch archives and the library systems, and in ensuring I joined them for lunch on time, this thesis would not have been completed.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank my relatives in the Netherlands who not only put me up during my ten week stay there, but also put up with me. Finally, I could never have written this thesis without the unfailing support of my wife Jane. She was patient in teaching me to use computer programs to prepare the thesis, and her proofreading of the text was invaluable.

NOTE ON TEXT AND TRANSLATION

The fact that much of this thesis is based upon Dutch sources poses a problem of presentation. To increase the readability of the text, I have opted to put some of the original Dutch language on which the translations are based, into the body of the text, while some of the lengthier originals are placed into the footnotes. As well, I have provided a Glossary of several oft-used Dutch words such as *Stadhouder*, which, when used in the text, are not translated.

All textual references to Joan Derk van der Capellen's pamphlet *Aan het Volk van Nederland* are to the English translation of 1782, as cited in the Bibliography. Several Dutch family names contain the particles "van", "van der", or "de". In both the footnotes and Bibliography, I have followed the tradition of both Dutch and English language texts and alphabetized them according to the family name. Thus van der Capellen would appear as "Capellen, van der".

All translations in the text and Bibliography, unless otherwise indicated, are my own. The full titles of the works referred to in the footnotes may be found in the Bibliography.

ABBREVIATIONS

Libraries and Archives

- BVBBB:** Bibliotheek der Vereeniging tot bevordering van de belangen des Boekhandels, in De la Fontaine Verwey Zaal in de Universiteitsbibliotheek, Universiteit van Amsterdam (Library of the society to promote the importance of book trade).
- GAA:** Gemeentearchief, Amsterdam (Municipal archive).
- ISH:** International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
- KBH:** Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the Hague (Royal library).
- UB:** Universiteitsbibliotheek, Universiteit van Amsterdam (University library).

Bibliographical

- B&N:** Britain and the Netherlands, vol. IV, eds. J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kossmann (Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).
- BMGN:** Bydragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden (Studies and announcements regarding Dutch history).
- DAE:** De Achttiende Eeuw (The eighteenth century).
- DBL:** De Bataafsche Leeuw (The batavian lion).
- Dv/dR:** De Droom van de Revolutie: Nieuwe benaderingen van het Patriottisme (The dream of the revolution: new approaches to patriotism), eds. W.W. Mijnhardt and H. Bots (Amsterdam: DBL, 1988).
- DNR:** 1787: De Nederlandse Revolutie? (The Dutch revolution), eds. Th. S.M. van der Zee et al (Amsterdam: DBL, 1988).
- DW:** De Wekker van der Nederlandse natie: Joan Derk van der Capellen, 1741-1784 (The alarm clock of the Dutch nation), ed. E.A. van Dijk Zwolle: Waanders, 1984).
- JMH:** Journal of Modern History.

- KG:** Kantelend Geschiedbeeld. Nederlandse historiography sinds 1945 (Reversal of historic images. Dutch historiography since 1945), ed. W.W. Mijnhardt (Utrecht-Antwerp: Het Spectrum, 1983).
- Kn:** Knuttel catalogue of pamphlets situate in KBH
- TDR:** The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, eds. Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).
- ThG:** Theoretish Geschiedenis (History theory).
- T&S:** Theory and Society.
- TvG:** Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis (Journal of history).
- TvSG** Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis (Journal of social history).
- VVV:** Voor Vaderland en Vryheid (For fatherland and freedom), eds. F. Griizenhout et al (Amsterdam: DBL, 1987).

GLOSSARY

Burgemeester. The ruling magistrate of a town, appointed by the regency.

Burger. Citizen of a town with voting rights either inherited or purchased, as opposed to a mere resident.

Drost. In Overijssel, a regional administrative and judicial official, appointed by the provincial Staaten.

Drostendiensten. Feudal labour service required of rural farmers in favour of the drost.

Generality Lands. Territory recaptured from Spain after 1579, not sovereign or autonomous, under the direct rule of the Staten-Generaal.

House of Orange. The dynasty constituting the Stadhouders, Captains-General and Admirals-General of the Republic.

Orangist. Supporters of the House of Orange.

Patriots. Opponents of the Stadhouder and his Orangist supporters, who rose to prominence in the late 1770s.

Patriottenbeweging. Patriot movement.

Patriottentijd. Patriot times.

Regents. Governing oligarchy of the towns and cities of the Republic.

Ridderschap. Provincial nobility.

Staten. Provincial Estates or assemblies.

Staten Generaal. Estates General, a permanent assembly constituting the delegates of the provinces and members of the Ridderschap.

Stadhouder. The leading official of the Dutch Republic, appointed by the Staten, with patronage powers, but less than a monarch.

Union of Utrecht. The 1579 defensive alliance of the 7 provinces which came to be regarded as the Dutch constitution.

Volk. The people of the Netherlands

Vrijkorpsen. Voluntary militias, independent of civic guards (*schutterij*).



Map of the Seven United Provinces, Circa 1775

Mapmaker unknown

University of Amsterdam Library #80-23-19

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The main objectives of this thesis are: to discuss the pamphlet Aan het Volk van Nederland (hereafter abbreviated to Aan het Volk),¹ its author and its readership; to study the influence of Aan het Volk in the larger context of the rising political periodical press; to trace the role of the press in politicizing the Dutch Republic and in giving voice to the new political culture which emerged; to analyze the extent to which Aan het Volk augmented this process; and, finally, to assess the extent to which Aan het Volk and the political periodical press more generally shaped the Dutch Patriot movement in the period 1781-1787, otherwise known as the *Patriottentijd*. The methodology used is partly derived from the work of Robert Darnton. In particular, I have used Darnton's concept of the "communications circuit" to structure and provide unity to the thesis.²

This thesis includes a review of English and Dutch literature on the rise of the political periodical press and an assessment of the reception and readership of the pamphlet made on the basis of an examination in various archives of Dutch newspapers, journals, periodicals, pamphlets, and lists of libraries' and booksellers' catalogues of the *Patriottentijd*. Inasmuch as there is no extant statistical evidence surveying actual readership of the day, or published bestseller lists that make reference to the pamphlet, I rely on other evidence. To study periodicals and pamphlets from the period, I undertook archival research at the Press Museum housed in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. To the extent that the Press Museum did not provide inclusive enough press materials, I supplemented this work with research from the

¹ [J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol], Aan het Volk van Nederland (Ostende: N.p., 1781, Kn. 19864).

² Robert Darnton, The Kiss of Lamourette (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1990), 110-1.

Gemeentearchief (municipal archives) of the City of Amsterdam, from the special collections section of the University of Amsterdam Library, and the valuable records section of the Royal Library at the Hague. Using these sources, I was able to conduct a comprehensive review of numerous periodicals and pamphlets. Archival records of literary, reading, and cultural societies provided valuable insight into, and data with which to assess, the extent of the pamphlet's readership and its reception within the Republic.

Darnton's "communications circuit" derives from his conclusion that there is a general pattern in the life cycle of a book. He argues that a book begins the cycle with the author, and then moves on to the printer or publisher, the distributors and sellers, until it finally reaches the reader.³ Darnton asserts that the phases of the circuit are interrelated and that all of them are subject to external influences such as press freedom and the economic, social and political circumstances existing at the time.⁴

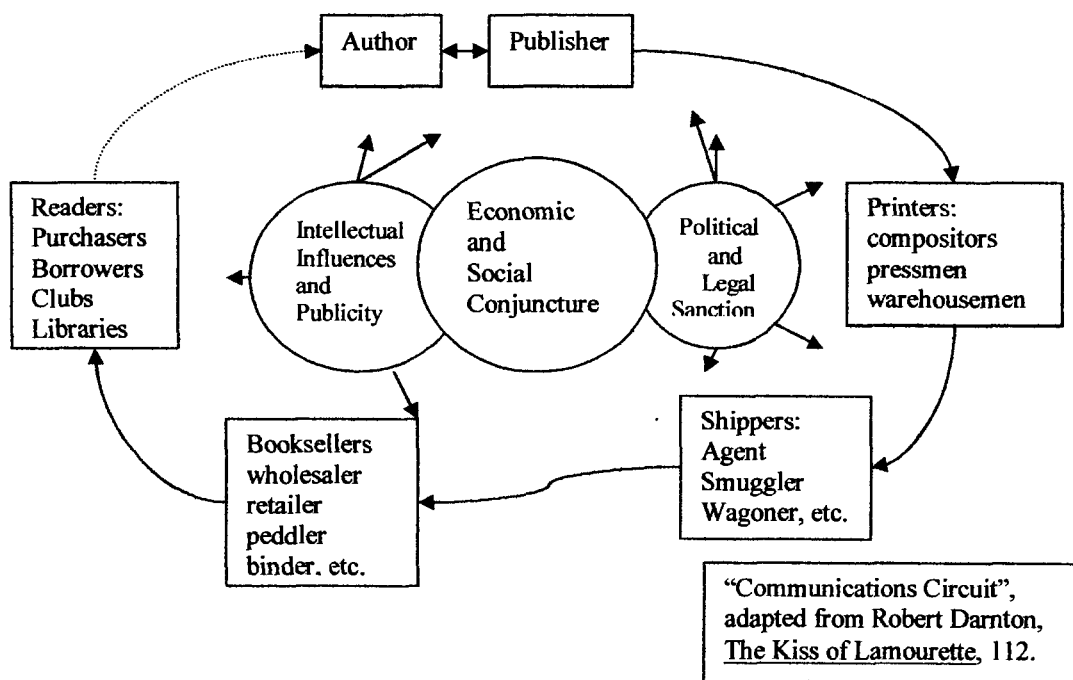
To assess the usefulness of Darnton's model to my research, I looked at a number of Dutch sources similar to those that Darnton consulted in Switzerland and France when he formulated his theory. This allowed me to acquire sufficient information to frame several major components of his "communications circuit". Darnton's sources include archives of bookseller guilds, societies and judicial records, as well as various cultural phenomena.⁵ Although I was able to consult similar sources, neither judicial nor societal archival records produced any relevant information, and I was unable to explore all of the

³ Darnton, *Lamourette*, 110-1.

⁴ Darnton, *Lamourette*, 112-3.

⁵ Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1982), vi; and *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 189.

phases of Darnton's "communications circuit". But to the extent that the sources allow, in this thesis I develop a "communications circuit" for Aan het Volk using some of Darnton's techniques. The following schematic model illustrates a way to envisage the entire "communications circuit".



In framing this thesis, Darnton's model was useful because of its ability to tie the author, the printer(s), the distributors, and the ultimate readers together inasmuch as the activities of each of them relate to those of the others. As well, Darnton's identification of the economic, social, political, cultural, and intellectual systems existing in the surrounding environment and serving to influence each stage of the cycle guided my research on the broad social, cultural and political milieu into which Aan het Volk entered and to suggest how its publication reverberated within the Dutch Republic. These external influences form an essential element of the "communications circuit", and it is

arguable that political and economic factors had a greater impact on each stage of the circuit than the relations among the various stages *inter se*.

Darnton's model has proved to be extremely influential, but his work remains controversial. He has been criticized for his focus on the commercial aspects of the book trade and on the printing, publishing, selling and consumption of books, rather than emphasizing their content and the ideas emanating from those contents.⁶ Moreover, the "communications circuit" as sketched by Darnton does not incorporate an important feedback loop, namely the impact that readers can have on the economic, political, cultural and social systems shaping the "communications circuit" as a whole. Consequently, Darnton's model proved an insufficient tool for a comprehensive analysis, given that one objective of this thesis is to determine the impact of Aan het Volk on the political culture of the Patriot movement. Furthermore, the scarcity of material concerning the pamphlet's printing and dissemination, that is, those phases of the "communications circuit" about which Darnton has the most to say, further limited the utility of the model for this study.

In Chapter Two, I undertake a detailed examination of the historical development of Dutch state structure and governance, since the political problems that the Republic faced in the eighteenth century contributed to the author's motivation to write his pamphlet. The author's background, his literary and political career and his personality are the subject of Chapter Three. Chapter Four inquires into the next phase of the "communications circuit", namely the printing history of Aan het Volk. This chapter also

⁶ For a sustained assessment of Darnton's approach to the history of the book see the various studies in The Darnton Debate, ed. Haydn T. Mason (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998), 105-28. Another way of conceptualizing the history of the book is to be found in Roger Chartier, The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1994), *passim*.

surveys the pamphlet's contents and how the identity of this anonymous pamphlet's author was discovered. The last phase of the circuit, the pamphlet's readers, forms the subject of Chapter Five. As part of my investigation into the pamphlet's readership, I examine the rise of the political press and the new political culture which emerged in the 1780s, as well as sketching an outline of the Patriot movement. The thesis will conclude with an assessment of van der Capellen, his pamphlet, and the political legacy of the Patriot movement after its demise in 1787.

Review of the Literature

A survey of the literature upon which the body of this thesis is based will attempt to address some of the questions raised: was van der Capellen the author of Aan het Volk? What was the printing history of the pamphlet? What was the reception and readership? Overall, the thesis relies mainly on Dutch literature in discussing the political culture extant during the *Patriottentijd*. Much of the literature relating to Dutch political culture is of recent origin, the result of various symposia, conferences and exhibitions held during the 1980s to commemorate the *Patriottentijd* generally and van der Capellen's pamphlet and his death specifically. There are no detailed English works available which deal with van der Capellen's life and contributions. The same may be said for the printing history of Aan het Volk and the search for the identity of its author. English works, including translations from the Dutch, are available in sufficient quantities to provide a complete study of Dutch political and diplomatic history from 1581 to 1787. Some Dutch reviewers have questioned some of the nuances and interpretations of English and

American writers, but, on the whole, such critiques do not detract from the utility of those works for the purposes of this thesis.⁷

The best contemporary English work of general Dutch history is Jonathan Israel's The Dutch Republic.⁸ Israel's work deals with all aspects of the Republic's history: its ideas, religion, culture, economics as well as its politics and diplomacy. It is useful because it combines both *Annales* and narrative history in a single work. Israel draws on secondary literature for data, and he also used archival sources. Earlier general histories are Petrus Blok's five volume History of the People of the Netherlands,⁹ and Pieter Geyl's History of the Low Countries.¹⁰ A study of the Republic's foreign relations is informed by several English works, including the British historian Alice Carter's scholarly analysis of Dutch global foreign policy from 1667 to 1795.¹¹ Country specific sources are K.H.D. Haley's The British and the Dutch and Alfred Cobban's Ambassadors and Agents,¹² the latter dealing with the British role within the Republic during the *Patriottentijd*. Dutch sympathies toward, and relations with, the Americans are assessed in the work of J.W. Schulte Nordholt, The Dutch Republic and American

⁷ See for example, the review of Simon Schama's Patriots and Liberators in N.C.F. van Sas, "Simon Schama: exponent van een nieuwe orthodoxie?", Kleio 19 (1978): 276-83; in the same vein: E.O.G. Haitsma-Mulier, "De geschiedschrijving over de Patriottentijd en de Bataafse tijd,," in KG, where he discusses Palmer's The Age of the Democratic Revolution, at 217; Schama's Patriots at 222; and Leeb's The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution, at 224.

⁸ Israel, The Dutch Republic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁹ Petrus Johannes Blok, History of the People of the Netherlands, vol. V, trans. O.A. Bierstadt and Ruth Putnam (New York: AMS Press, 1970).

¹⁰ Pieter Geyl, History of the Low Countries (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1964).

¹¹ Alice Clare Carter, Neutrality or Commitment; The Evolution of Dutch Foreign Policy, 1667-1795 (London: Edward Arnold, 1975).

¹² K.H.D. Haley, The British and the Dutch (London: George Philip); Alfred Cobban, Ambassadors and Secret Agents (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954).

Independence.¹³ Barbara Tuchman adds her perspective in detailing Dutch trade with America during the American Revolution.¹⁴

The role of the *Stadhouder* bears some detailed analysis because that office and the persons occupying it were the subject of much discord during the Republic's history. Most of the general histories briefly sketch the origins and development of the Stadholderate within the Dutch political system. The stadholderate as an institution has never been examined across its whole history in the republican period, except for the detailed works of the American historian Herbert Rowen.¹⁵ There are biographies of various *stadhouders*, but there is no adequate scholarly study of William V, the last *Stadhouder*.¹⁶ The origins and development of the Republic's constitution and its political structure are succinctly discussed by I.J.H. Worst in his essay on the eighteenth-century political debate.¹⁷ Likewise, Leonard Leeb and Herbert Rowen share their perspectives on the documents and ideas underlying the Dutch constitution.¹⁸ E.H. Kossmann adds his analysis of "Dutch decline" in the eighteenth century, and how that decline was one of

¹³ J.W. Schulte Nordholt, The Dutch Republic and American Independence, trans. Herbert H. Rowen (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

¹⁴ Barbara Tuchman, The First Salute (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).

¹⁵ H.H. Rowen, The Princes of Orange (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); "The Dutch Republic in Comparative Perspective," in The Rhyme and Reason; and "Neither Fish nor Fowl: The Stadholderate in the Dutch Republic," in Political Ideas and Institutions in the Dutch Republic (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles: 1985), 3-31.

¹⁶ Rowen, "Neither Fish nor Fowl," 29-31.

¹⁷ I.J.H. Worst, "Constitution, History and Natural Law: An Eighteenth Century Political Debate in the Dutch Republic," in TDR, 147-69.

¹⁸ Leonard Leeb, The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973); Rowen, Rhyme and Reason.

the underlying causes of the Patriot movement's emergence in the 1780s. He also provides some reasons why the movement was bound to fail.¹⁹

The Patriot movement itself received scant attention from historians until the early twentieth century. Any study must begin with the multi-volume De Patriottentijd by H.T. Colenbrander, which includes much documentary and archival material.²⁰ Colenbrander holds the Patriots in low regard, dismissing it as a movement guided by foreign influences. Geyl's De Patriottenbeweging (The Patriot Movement) took issue with Colenbrander's view that the movement was guided by foreign influences and concluded that it was a uniquely Dutch reform movement.²¹ A further reassessment of the period was given by C.H.E. de Wit, who introduced a class basis for the movement and its revolution.²² A further refinement was provided by Nick van Sas who favoured both political and cultural emphases based upon the concept of "political culture" as defined by Keith Baker.²³ Simon Schama's well known Patriots and Liberators²⁴ contains a general account of the Patriot movement, though it must be noted that it is now somewhat dated in light of the voluminous materials published during the 1980s. As well, the Patriot movement itself is discussed in only one of thirteen chapters, for Schama chose to concentrate on the Batavian Revolution of 1795 and its consequences. Similarly, Leonard

¹⁹ E.H. Kossmann, "1787: The Collapse of the Patriot Movement and the Problem of Dutch Decline," The Creighton Trust Lecture, University of London, London, 1-11, in 1987.

²⁰ H.T. Colenbrander, De Patriottentijd (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1897-99).

²¹ Pieter Geyl, De Patriottenbeweging (Amsterdam: P.N. Kampen, 1947).

²² C.H.E. de Wit, "Het jaar 1787 of wel de nieuw-republikeinsme beweging van de jaaren tachtig, in DNR.

²³ N.C.F van Sas, "The Patriot Revolution: New Perspectives," in TDR, 91-119.

²⁴ Simon Schama, Patriots and Liberators (London: Collins, 1978).

Leeb's The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution²⁵ emphasizes the 1795 revolution, but Leeb does trace the development of Patriot and Orangist ideology prior to 1795. R.R. Palmer sketches the Dutch Patriot movement as one of a series of eighteenth-century democratic revolutions throughout Europe and America.²⁶

Several micro-histories exist of the Patriot movement in specific locales. The most comprehensive is Wayne Te Brake's Regents and Rebels²⁷ which traces the development and consequences of the Patriot revolution in Deventer in the eastern land province of Overijssel. Te Brake uses the local revolution for a comparative analysis with the more broadly based Patriot activities. He stresses that the Patriot movement was not monopolized by the strong maritime provinces such as Holland. As well, Te Brake explains the international context of the Patriot movement.

As noted above, much of the Dutch literature surveying the *Patriottentijd* arose from several celebrations and symposia during the 1980s to commemorate the Patriots' aborted struggle against the old regime. First, an exhibition was held in Zwolle which focused on the life and death of van der Capellen and which produced De Wekker van de Nederlandse Natie (The alarm clock of the Dutch nation),²⁸ which includes a series of essays by various academics dealing with van der Capellen's life, his friends, his influence, the poetry, dramas and funeral orations on his death, as well as a listing of the prints and engravings which were exhibited. The Zwolle exhibition was followed by four

²⁵ Leonard I. Leeb, The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).

²⁶ R.R. Palmer, The Age of the Democratic Revolution (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1959).

²⁷ Wayne Ph. Te Brake, Regents and Rebels (Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989).

²⁸ DW.

major historical conferences in 1987 in Utrecht, Nijmegen, Paris and Washington, D.C. The papers delivered at the Nijmegen Conference were edited and published.²⁹ The essays emphasized both the breadth and diversity of the Patriot movement and its long-term impact on Dutch politics.

Utrecht, considered the center of the Patriot crisis, held an exhibition in 1987 entitled '*Voor Vaderland en Vrijheid*' (For fatherland and freedom). This was followed by a publication of the same name which brings together a number of essays intended to generate a new historical image of the Patriot revolution.³⁰ It includes essays on the military dimensions of the political movement, an account of the battle for control of public opinion, and a survey of historiography of the period.

The Utrecht conference itself was organized by the multidisciplinary *Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw* (Workgroup for the eighteenth century), which, since 1968, has produced the journal *De Achttiende Eeuw*. The essays produced for that conference were published as *De Droom van de Revolutie* (The dream of the revolution) and emphasize the political-cultural interpretation of the *Patriottentijd*.³¹ Finally, the papers from the conference in Washington were published in 1992 as *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century*.³² This volume represents the Dutch revolutionary process as "the

²⁹ DNR.

³⁰ VVV.

³¹ Dv/dR.

³² TDR.

shaper of Dutch national identity,” and contains many instructive studies on both the political and cultural aspects of this period.³³

Taken as a whole, these five volumes have done much to open up this important period of Dutch history to a wide audience. They provide information and insights about many cultural aspects covered in this thesis, especially the rise of the political press and its impact upon the politicization of the general public. The discussion of the political press, of course, ties into van der Capellen’s pamphlet Aan het Volk. The historical importance of pamphlet literature in the Republic is revealed in the catalogue compiled by W.P.C. Knuttel between 1899 and 1921, which lists over twenty thousand pamphlets produced between 1486 and 1784.³⁴ There are, in addition, several catalogues which list pamphlets not contained in the Knuttel collection.³⁵

The starting point for any study of Dutch newspapers is Sautijn Kluit’s 1881 Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Dagbladen (History of Dutch dailies).³⁶ It contains a complete listing and the publication details of Dutch dailies to the late nineteenth century. De Nederlandse Krant 1618-1978³⁷ updates the earlier work and also analyzes the editorial bent of major newspapers. The chapter “Opkomst van een politieke pers” (Rise

³³ Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, “Introduction,” TDR, 15.

³⁴ W.P.C. Knuttel, Catalogus van de Pamfletten-verzameling berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek, vol. 5 (The Hague: N.p., 1905).

³⁵ Catalogus der Pamfletten van de Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen 1542-1853, prepared by G. van Alphen (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1944); Catalogus van de Nederlandse pamfletten, vol. 2 (Middelburgh: Zeeuws Bibliotheek, 1944); Catalogus van de pamfletten aanwezig in the Bibliotheek Arnhem – 1537-1795, eds. M.W. Huiskamp *et al* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995).

³⁶ W.P. Sautijn Kluit, Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Dagbladen (N.p, n.p., 1881).

³⁷ M. Schneider and J. Hemels, De Nederlandse Krant 1618-1978, 4th ed. (Baarn: Het Wereldvenster, 1979).

of a political press) is particularly useful to this thesis.³⁸ Van Sas' article "Opiniepers en politieke cultuur" (Press and political culture)³⁹ covers the entire spectrum of publications from pamphlets and newspapers to journals, and explores the battle for public opinion among the various factions in great detail. Other works which focus on the *Patriottentijd* in particular include P.J.H.M.Theeuwen's lengthy analysis of the leading Patriot oriented newspaper, De Post van der Neder-Rhijn and the career of its editor, Pieter 't Hoen,⁴⁰ and its counterpart by J.M. Peterse which examines the Orangist De Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot.⁴¹ Jeremy Popkin has also studied print culture in the Republic and provides statistical information on literacy and booksellers throughout the country.⁴²

Several other components of the political culture in the Dutch Republic are discussed below. Details of societies and similar organizations during the period are listed in J.J.Kloek's "Literaire genootschappen, 1748-1800"⁴³ and W.W. Mijnhardt's work covering the same period is useful for its analysis of these organizations.⁴⁴ Henk Reitsma explores societies in Amsterdam⁴⁵ while C.F.B. Singeling studies literary

³⁸ Schneider, De Nederlandse Krant, 85-104.

³⁹ N.C.F. van Sas, "Opiniepers en politieke cultuur" in VVV, 97-130.

⁴⁰ P.J.H.M. Theeuwen, Pieter 't Hoen en de Post van der Neder-Rhijn (1781-1787) (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002).

⁴¹ J.M. Peterse, "Publicist voor Oranje. R.M. van Goens en de Ouderwetsche Nederlandsche Patriot (1781-3)" BMGM 103 (1988/2): 182-208.

⁴² Jeremy Popkin, "Print culture in the Netherlands on the Eve of the Revolution," in TDR, 91-122.

⁴³ J.J. Kloek et al, "Literaire genootschappen, 1748-1800," DAE 15 (1983): 21-89.

⁴⁴ W.W. Mijnhardt, Tot Heil van 't Menschdom: Cultureele genootschappen in Nederland 1750-1815 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988).

⁴⁵ H.Reitsma, "Genootschappen in Amsterdam en de revolutie van 1787," in DNR, 146-55.

societies in the context of the 1787 revolution.⁴⁶ The British economic historian Charles Wilson has analyzed Dutch economic history from its “Golden Age” to the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁷

One of the best original sources for the study of van der Capellen’s life is the diary of his co-Patriot van der Kemp.⁴⁸ Further, the collection of van der Capellen’s correspondence assembled by W.H. de Beaufort forms a vital source of information which was relied upon by his biographer M. de Jong.⁴⁹ De Jong and others also put much reliance on the five-year study of Aan het Volk by A. Loosjes.⁵⁰ The reprints of Aan het Volk in 1981 by W.H. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijze Weenink⁵¹ and in 1987 by H.L. Zwitzer⁵² both contain detailed introductions revealing much of van der Capellen’s life and thought.

Details of Aan het Volk and its printing history can best be obtained by concentrating on the writings of Loosjes, G. van Rijn, and the 1924 pamphlet by de

⁴⁶ C.F.B. Singeling, “Van eendracht naar broederschap. Literaire genootschappelijkheid en 1787,” in DNR, 166-73.

⁴⁷ Charles Wilson, “The Decline of the Netherlands,” in Economic History and the Historian: Collected Essays (New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 22-47.

⁴⁸ F.A. van der Kemp, Francis Adrian van der Kemp, 1752-1829: An Autobiography edited with an historical sketch by Helen Linklaen Fairchild (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1903).

⁴⁹ M. Hzn. de Jong, Joan Derk van der Capellen: Staatkundig Levensbeeld uit de Wordingstijd van de Moderne Democratie in Nederland (Groningen and the Hague: J.B. Wolters, 1922).

⁵⁰ A. Loosjes, Een krachtig libel: studie over het pamflet Aan het Volk van Nederland (Haarlem: de Erven Loosjes, 1886).

⁵¹ [van der Capellen], Aan het Volk van Nederland: het democratisch manifest van Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol 1781, with an introduction by W.F. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijze Weenink (Weesp: Heureka, 1981).

⁵² [van der Capellen], Aan het Volk van Nederland: Het patriottisch program uit 1781, with an introduction and annotations by H.L. Zwitzer (Amsterdam: DBL, 1987).

Jong.⁵³ Following the 1879 publication of van der Capellen's correspondence, Loosjes embarked on a five year study of the pamphlet to identify its author, its printing and its distribution history. Van Rijn followed the Loosjes' study with two of his own based upon research in the Rotterdam library and archives. De Jong tried to resolve some confusion inherent in the Loosjes' and van Rijn works. Van Rijn and de Jong concentrate only on the printing history, whereas Loosjes also discusses the contents of Aan het Volk.

The discussion of the history of Aan het Volk in this thesis tests whether Darnton's vocabulary and research methods are useful tools to study the pamphlet.⁵⁴ There are several Dutch studies which use some of the same methods that Darnton used. Among them are Han Brouwer's "Rondom het Boek,"⁵⁵ J.L. Bodel Nyenhuis' book on the laws and their enforcement as they related to booksellers,⁵⁶ and H. Verweys' Uit De Wereld van het Boek.⁵⁷

As noted earlier, there was ample literature in both languages to do a comprehensive study of Aan het Volk and its place in the Patriot movement of 1781-1787. The studies of the 1980s mentioned above were particularly useful in enhancing our knowledge of various interesting aspects of the Dutch political culture. Local studies done in the last twenty years in the larger centres have contributed to this knowledge and

⁵³ Loosjes, Krchtig Libel; G. van Rijn, Het Pamflet 'aan het Volk van Nederland. in Bijlage tot de Rotterdamse Librye (Rotterdam: N.p., 1884), 2-24. and Het pamflet 'aan het volk van Nederland, reprinted from the Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje voor 1888, 1-50; M. Hzn. deJong, De oudste uitgaven van het pamflet Aan het Volk van Nederland (Groningen and the Hague: J.B. Wolters, 1924).

⁵⁴ Robert Darnton, The Kiss of Lamourette (New York: W.W., Norton & Company. 1990).

⁵⁵ Han Brouwer, "Rondom het Boek," DAE 20 (1998/1): 51-120.

⁵⁶ J.I. Bodel Nyenhuis, De Wetgeving of Drukpers en Boekhandel in the Nederlanden tot in het begin der XIXde eeuw (Amsterdam: P.N. Kampen & Zoon, 1892).

⁵⁷ H. de La Fontaine Verweys, Uit de Wereld van het Boek (Amsterdam: HES uitgevers, 1997).

there is still much more to be learned in the rural areas and smaller villages. Further studies of the social forces and political consequences of the Orangist counter-revolution of 1787 may reveal the depth and relative permanence of the divisions it exposes in Dutch society.⁵⁸

In summary, this chapter has presented the objectives of the thesis, the role of Darnton's "communications circuit" in providing a guide to research on Aan het Volk, its author, its printing history and readership, and the external influences which shaped the circuit's various stages. The main body of literature relied upon has been outlined. A detailed history of the Republic and its institutions is necessary to understand the background to the problems faced by the Dutch Republic during the 1780s. For this reason, we now examine the history and state structure of the Republic.

⁵⁸ Wayne Ph. Te Brake, "Staking a new claim to an old revolution: A review article," TvG: 22.

CHAPTER 2

DUTCH GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Setting the Stage

Except for a brief period early in the nineteenth century and during the German occupation in the Second World War, the modern nation that we know of as the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been free of foreign domination since it declared its independence from Spain in 1581. For over two centuries, it was a small republic known as the United Provinces of the Netherlands (hereafter sometimes the United Provinces, the Dutch Republic, or the Republic), which consisted of seven provinces and various territories known as the Generality Lands. The largest, wealthiest, and most powerful province was Holland.

During the seventeenth century, the Republic was a leading political, economic, and cultural participant on the European stage. It was a country of commerce whose ships explored and traded in the far corners of the world. As well, the Republic was involved in various wars (including its eighty year struggle with Spain), which culminated finally with peace with the signing of the Treaty of Munster in 1648.¹ The Dutch Republic also engaged in three wars with England during the third quarter of the century, and became a victim of the expansionary aggression of France in 1672.

The seventeenth century represented the Dutch “Golden Age” when the Republic had the highest per capita wealth in Europe, it was at its most influential in international politics, and it was counted among the power elite. Its society and culture were admired

¹ The Treaties of Munster and Osnäbruck are commonly known as the Peace of Westphalia, from which the modern state system emerged, and the era of religious conflicts which had begun with the Reformation ended.

and envied throughout Europe. It was the age of Rembrandt and other famous painters. In the physical sciences and mathematics, the names Huygens and van Leeuwenhoek are prominent. Hugo Grotius, who was influential in his time, is still respected as the 'father' of international law. Dutch citizens enjoyed liberty, tolerance and civil order. The Republic was highly urbanized and literate, with an active press. The country was stable and was able to withstand several *coups d'état* and various changes of government without the devastating civil wars that characterized other European nations. E.H. Kossmann posits that some of the state's flaws actually contributed to this stability. He suggests the Dutch constitution's vagueness made it adaptable to changing circumstances. As well, religious divisions played a role in the sense that the various dissenting religions could not agree *inter se* "about the fundamental problems of life,"² contributing to flexibility and debate. Clearly, the country's prosperity helped as well.

The favourable position of the Dutch Republic in Europe deteriorated during the eighteenth century, creating a situation which stood in sharp contrast to the prominence it enjoyed during the "Golden Age" of the previous century. In the international sphere, it was no longer one of the main actors in European politics and diplomacy. Its economic structure was in decline; its armed forces were depleted; and its cultural life rested on references to its past glory and a general desire by everyone to return to that former age. As a result, internal turmoil manifested itself in various ways. Underlying the tensions was a mood of dejection or malaise in all levels of Dutch society. The nostalgia for what was gave rise to the establishment of numerous improvement societies determined to find solutions to the many problems then facing the Republic.

² E.H. Kossmann, The Low Countries, 1780-1940 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 34.

Dutch politics during the eighteenth century represented a return to the kinds of internal conflicts which had marked the country's history after its declaration of independence from Spain. The primary hostility existed between sections of the ruling patricians, the Regents, and the House of Orange in the person of the *stadhouder* as to which would provide leadership for the entire country. Another important conflict was the perpetual discord between dominant Holland and its main city of Amsterdam on the one hand, and the remaining six provinces on the other.³ Dissension also existed between urban and rural populations, as well as between the various dissenting religions and the Dutch Reformed state church.

Following the Republic's participation in the War of the Austrian Succession in the middle of the eighteenth century, its foreign policy became one of neutrality. This stance favoured the mercantile province of Holland. During the American War of Independence in the late 1770s, the Republic traded with the American colonists, supplying provisions as well as armaments and munitions. As a result of its decision to join the League of Armed Neutrality in the fall of 1780, coupled with British displeasure with the Dutch trade with the Americans, war was declared on the Dutch Republic in November, 1780. The Anglo-Dutch War of 1780-1784 became known as the Fourth English War and the war represented humiliation for the Dutch, a condition that was reinforced when they were not invited to participate in the peace conference that ended the American War of Independence in 1784.

The Fourth English War served to divide the Dutch people as never before, and it exacerbated their internal problems. Not only was the war a series of disastrous military

³ H. Wansink, "Holland and Six Allies: The Republic of the Seven United Provinces" in *B&N*, 133-55 *passim*, discusses in some detail the intricacies of the relationship between these two political factions.

defeats, but it was also a political and economic calamity. The Republic's treasury was bankrupted, it lost colonies and trading posts, and its shipping, so vital to its economic health, was severely damaged. Political factions began to attribute blame for this state of affairs. Orangists accused the Amsterdam Regents of treasonous conduct for their trading activities in the Americas. The anti-Orangist Regents and their supporters defended Amsterdam's policies and blamed the *Stadhouder*, William V, and his advisers for the disastrous course of the war.

The widespread discontent, the changed status in how the Republic defined itself and how it was viewed internally, together with the war, all contributed to the rise of the Patriot movement during the 1780's. The movement grew and precipitated a crisis during the summer and fall of 1787, when, at the request of William V, it was suppressed by Prussian troops to prevent the breakout of civil war. Evidence of the heightening internal divisions was found in the increase in the pamphlet literature that was circulating within the Republic. This occurred during the late 1770s and early 1780s at the same time as the Dutch press became highly politicized and began to lead public opinion, rather than simply reporting and commenting on political events.⁴ As a result, politics became more popular than ever before, and most of the reading public was affected by one or other press organ. Politicization of society was not the exclusive domain of the press however. The civic militias, societal memberships of various kinds and petitioning were also instrumental in this regard, as were music and theatre.⁵

⁴ W.R.E. Klein, Patriots Republikenisme. Politieke Cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787) (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 92-3.

⁵ N.C.F. van Sas, "Opiniepers en politieke cultuur," in VVV, 105, 122.

The rising and increasingly influential voice of the Patriots was expressed in September 1781 in the compelling pamphlet Aan het Volk. It was a frontal attack on the *Stadhouder* and ended with an agenda for popular political action. The author, unknown at the time, turned out to be Baron J. D. van der Capellen tot den Pol. Among the several causal factors of the rise of the Patriot movement, the publication and distribution of this pamphlet had a significant impact. It was widely referred to in other pamphlets and was a subject of broad debate in the political press. As well, many of the ideas contained in Aan het Volk were reflected in the Patriot reform proposals known as the *Grondwettige Herstelling* (Constitutional Restoration), a two-volume work published in 1784 and 1786. As Jonathan Israel notes, if Aan het Volk “was the clarion call of the Dutch Patriot Revolution, its weightiest publication was the *Grondwettige Herstelling*.”⁶ In the foreword to this proposed constitutional change, the authors paid homage to van der Capellen’s participation and acknowledged the instructive suggestions he had made prior to his death.⁷

The pamphlet was, therefore, one of the factors which raised the level of debate and political activity within the Republic. Aan het Volk especially, but other pamphlets as well, reveal the depth of the social and political crisis that was occurring. For the first time in the Dutch Republic’s history, the Patriot movement offered the Dutch a choice for their political allegiance other than the traditional antithetical Regent or Orangist factions.

Coupled with this generalized discontent was the weakness and complexity of the Republic’s political system. There was no central power to unify the country; rather, the

⁶ Jonathan Israel, The Dutch Republic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1102.

⁷ W.F. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijze Weenink, “Introduction” in Aan het Volk van Nederland: het democratisch manifest van Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol (Weesp: Heureka, 1981), 39.

Republic was highly decentralized. Much sovereignty resided at the local level in the towns. Political leadership of the country was notionally exercised by the office of the *Stadhouder*, who was appointed by the provinces in their assemblies. At times, there were different *Stadhouders* occupying the position in different provinces; at other times, the post was vacant in several provinces, and, sometimes one *Stadhouder* served in the position in several provinces. As a result of this state of affairs, decision making was cumbersome. To enhance our comprehension of some of the causes of the political conflicts of the 1780s, the remainder of this chapter will examine the development of the Dutch constitution, the Republic's political institutions, and the problems faced by the country in the late eighteenth century.

The Historical Setting

The Dutch Republic had its origins in the eighty-year struggle to gain independence from its Spanish rulers from 1568 to 1648, with an interim twelve-year truce from 1609 to 1621. The first leader of the revolt was the *Stadhouder* William I, or 'the Silent', so called because of his taciturn nature. The seventeen provinces then constituting the 'Low Countries' included the seven northern provinces which became the United Provinces, the duchy of Luxembourg, and what is today the nation of Belgium. These provinces concluded the Pacification of Ghent in 1576, which united them in their opposition to Spanish rule. This union only lasted until 1579, when Spanish military forces regained control of the southern provinces. In response, the seven northern provinces joined in a defensive alliance in the same year by signing the Union of Utrecht. The purpose of this treaty was to create a defensive structure for those provinces but as we shall see, it had enduring political consequences as well.

The Union of Utrecht was not yet a declaration of independence from Spain, though it does “represent the real beginning of the Dutch Republic as a federal state.”⁸ The Dutch declaration of independence was proclaimed in 1581 in the Act of Abjuration, and the state henceforth became known as the Republic of the Seven United Provinces. The Republic also comprised various territories known as Generality Lands.

William I was appointed as *Stadhouder*, Captain-General and Admiral-General of the maritime provinces of Holland and Zeeland, and acted in those capacities until 1584 when he was assassinated. The role of the office of the *stadhouder* will be examined in more detail below, but it should be mentioned at this point, that until 1747, several provinces appointed someone other than the *Stadhouder* of Holland and Zeeland, and at times, appointed no *stadhouder*. William I was followed in turn by his sons Maurice and Frederick-Henry in 1585 and 1625 respectively. Maurice was appointed as *Stadhouder* by several additional provinces: Utrecht and the inland province of Overijssel in 1590; Gelderland the following year; and adding Groningen and the territory of Drenthe in 1620. Thus six of the seven provinces were part of his stadholderate by 1620.

It was during the Twelve Year Truce, when Maurice was *stadhouder*, that the Republic experienced its first internal crisis. This crisis began over religious differences within the Dutch Calvinist state church, but soon the quarrel assumed political overtones. The occasion of the crisis was a quarrel over the relationship between church and state. Within the Calvinist church, moderate Arminians advocated the supremacy of the state’s secular authority, while the traditional Gomarians took the opposite view. By 1618, the quarrel became a full-blown political struggle. The Arminians were supported by the

⁸ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 209.

powerful Holland regents, led by Holland's leading spokesman and advocate, its Grand Pensionary Johan Oldenbarneveldt, together with Holland's Attorney-General, Hugo Grotius. This coalition wished the Truce to continue so that Holland's commercial interests could remain competitive and expand. The orthodox Gomarians were supported by Maurice himself who favoured continuation of the war against Spain. The crisis came to a head when Maurice ordered the arrest of Oldenbarneveldt and Grotius for treason and subversion of the state.⁹

The exact course of this controversy is beyond the scope of this thesis, except to note that Oldenbarneveldt was beheaded in 1619 while Grotius was imprisoned, and the war against Spain was resumed in 1621. What matters is how these events affected the office of the *stadhouder*. Until this time, there had been no antagonism between the Holland regents and the *stadhouder*. After these episodes, however, the tensions and, at times, hostility between the regents and the *stadhouder* became a regular feature of the Dutch political scene until the end of the Republic in 1795.¹⁰

Following the death of Frederick-Henry in 1647, his son William II was appointed *Stadhouder*, but he served only three years in that capacity before he died. William II was survived by an infant son, William III, who would become known as William of Orange, the future King of England. The various *Staten* determined not to appoint a *stadhouder* at that time, and the first Regent Regime in the Republic was created to govern the seven United Provinces and Generality Lands. Johan de Witt was the leader of this Regime which lasted until 1672, when William III attained the age of majority and became

⁹ Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 421-47, *passim*.

¹⁰ Pieter Geyl, *History of the Low Countries* (London: MacMillan and Co Ltd., 1964), 154-5.

Stadhouder of all of the provinces except Groningen. De Witt and his brother were attacked by an Orangist mob in the Hague and murdered in the same year.

When William III died without an heir in 1702, the Republic entered a second period without a *stadhouder*. This second Regent Regime lasted until 1747, when the cousin of William III, William Friso, then the *Stadhouder* of Friesland, became William IV and was appointed as *stadhouder* of all seven provinces and the Generality Lands. For the first time in the Republic's history, the entire country was now served by one *stadhouder*. In addition, the *Staten* resolved to permit succession in both male and female lines. Following William IV's early death in 1751 leaving an infant son (the future William V), his widow, Princess Anna, daughter of King George I of England, assumed the regency of her son during his minority, assisted by the Prussian Duke of Brunswick. When Anna died in 1759, Brunswick became young William's guardian and at the same time became acting Captain General of the Dutch army. When William V came of age in 1766, he signed a secret Act of Advisorship appointing Brunswick as his legal adviser.¹¹ This was to have far-reaching implications as we shall see.

To this stage of its evolution, the Dutch Republic had been involved in a number of wars beginning with its war with Spain and the three seventeenth century commercial wars with England previously mentioned (See p.16). Between 1688 and 1697, the Republic allied with Prussia, Austria, England and Spain to contain French expansion. The next confrontation with France was the War of the Spanish Succession from 1702 to 1713, when the Republic and several allies fought to prevent the union of France and Spain under a single crown. It should be noted here that the Peace of Utrecht of 1713

¹¹ The actual title was Acte van Consulentschap, a *consulent* being a legal advisor. Herbert H. Rowen, The Princes of Orange (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 196.

which concluded that war, provided that the southern provinces (today's Belgium) be ceded by Spain to Austria, thereafter becoming the 'Austrian Netherlands'. Rowen notes that although Dutch strategic security was assured by a barrier of fortresses along the border of the Austrian Netherlands with France, the Peace of Utrecht "marked the definitive passage of the United Provinces from the status of a first-rate power to one of the second rank."¹² The last war to this point was the War of the Austrian Succession from 1740 to 1748, when England and the Republic fought alongside Austria against French claims to succeed Austria's deceased Emperor Charles VI. The historical account will resume after the discussion of the machinery of the Dutch state, its constitution and the office of the *stadhouder*.

State Structure and Governance

An examination of the political structure of the Republic reveals the existence of a combination of archaic institutions which served as an impetus for the Patriot cause. The starting point for this inquiry is an analysis of the nature of the Republic's constitution. I then assess the various institutions and their functions and discuss the unique role of the *stadhouder*.

The Union of Utrecht of 1579 is generally recognized as the constitution of the Dutch Republic. The Union created a federation of seven equal and relatively independent provinces, and within each province, there existed several autonomous cities and towns. However, the creation was not a true federal state because there was no central executive authority to unite the constituents. As well, it was not really a federation of equals because of the dominance of the province of Holland. In addition, the Union did

¹² Rowen, Princes of Orange, 152.

not provide mechanisms to settle differences or to coordinate joint actions among its signatories. In reality, the Union was an alliance for defensive purposes which preserved all privileges and rights that existed prior to its enactment, without specifying the nature of those rights and privileges.

Both Herbert Rowen and Leonard Leeb assert that the Union of Utrecht was not really a constitution in the formal sense, if the main function of a constitution is to provide a framework of government and to delineate the specific jurisdiction and powers of each of its constituent parts. In the Republic, the political institutions had been in existence for some time preceding the Union.¹³ The Union itself did not confer sovereignty; sovereignty was eventually created in 1581 when the Act of Abjuration was proclaimed. Leeb cites other shortcomings of the Union: the republic it created was without explicit legislative, executive or judicial branches; and, the role of the *stadhouder* was ambiguous because it was unclear who was to appoint him or what was his mandate. Leeb goes on to suggest that the vagueness of leadership “must have been deliberate [because the drafters of the Union of Utrecht] had among them experienced lawyers and politicians” who were fully aware of the historic rights and privileges of various officials and their right to oppose the ruler in certain circumstances.¹⁴

As a consequence of a debate over which of the Republic’s institutions was the repository of sovereignty, an attempt was made to clarify the issue in the mid 1580s. The Gouda Pensionary, François Francken was appointed to provide an opinion on the matter.

¹³ Herbert H. Rowen, The Rhyme and Reason of Politics in Early Modern Europe, ed. Craig E. Harline (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 217; Leeb, Ideological Origins, 16.

¹⁴ Leeb, Ideological Origins, 16.

In what became known as the “Francken Deduction of 1587”, Francken concluded that on the basis of historical precedent, the ultimate source of political authority resided in the *staten* of each province, and that the *exercise* rested with the ruling patricians of the towns and cities. He argued that the *stadhouder* was appointed by the *staten* “with the ‘advice and consent’ of [the] Nobles and Cities.”¹⁵

The Republic’s political system was both unique and complex. It was unique in that it combined some elements of similar institutions found elsewhere in Europe, but in distinctive ways. For example, it was a republic like the Swiss confederation, but unlike the Swiss, its system included the institution of the *stadhouder*’s office.¹⁶ The political machinery of the Dutch state was also complex. Dutch government and its administration were limited by highly decentralized and particularistic institutions. Decision-making was a slow and cumbersome process. Some decisions required unanimity and every matter of importance was referred back to the next lower, though more significant, level of government for consultation and direction.¹⁷ There was great variety in the political institutions and the manner in which they functioned differed, both among and within the seven provinces. The localized nature of the Dutch political structure meant that the towns and cities, particularly the major ones of Holland, “served as the political centres of gravity.”¹⁸ Holland’s dominance is not surprising when one considers that it had almost one-half the population and contributed almost sixty per cent toward the general

¹⁵ Leeb, Ideological Origins, 22. The full translated text of the ‘Francken Deduction’ is contained in the Appendix.

¹⁶ Rowen, Rhyme and Reason, 206.

¹⁷ Leeb, Ideological Origins, 17-8.

¹⁸ I.J.L. Worst, “Constitution, History and Natural Law: An Eighteenth Century Political Debate in the Dutch Republic,” in TDR, 148.

revenue of the Republic.¹⁹ I.J.H. Worst asserts that the most effective governance prevailed when powerful Holland or “a determined and capable stadholder imposed its view of the common interest” on the other provinces and authorities.²⁰

The function of the *Staten-Generaal*, situated in the Hague, was limited to foreign affairs, defence of the Republic, the waging of war, and the administration of the Generality Lands which had been recaptured from Spain after 1579. Its delegates were appointed by the *Staten* of the several provinces. The mode of appointing delegates differed in the seven provinces, and each province was permitted to send as many representatives as it wished, although each province was limited to one vote.²¹ It was not so much a national legislature as an assembly for the purpose of discussing issues of national importance and its powers were strictly limited by the provinces. The *stadhouder* was an *ex officio* member with one vote.

The ultimate legal power to enact laws resided in the *staten* of each province. It was these bodies which had sovereignty and their powers were unlimited within their own province. On a practical level, sovereignty rested with a small number of wealthy Regent families in the cities and towns. The functions of the *staten* included the duty to pass legislation, to provide for the provincial military force, to control the province’s finances, and to choose delegates to the *Staten-Generaal*. The composition of the *staten* included members of the nobility, organized in the *Ridderschap* of each province, as well as the

¹⁹ E.H. Kossmann, “The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century,” in *TDR*, 22.

²⁰ Worst, “Constitution, History and Natural Law,” 148.

²¹ Katherine Wallberger Lindley, “The Rise of the Dutch Patriots and the Revolution of 1787” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1949), 21, 28-30.

cities and towns.²² The voting mechanism of the *staten* illustrates the point made above about cities and towns being the “political centers of gravity” of the nation. The *ridderschap*, as a unit, was entitled to one vote while, for example, the eighteen enfranchised cities and towns in Holland each had one vote. The nobility in Holland was therefore of little significance in political matters. The situation differed in some of the eastern land provinces. In the *Staten* of Overijssel, the three enfranchised cities of Zwolle, Kampen and Deventer together possessed only one vote, while the *Ridderschap* as a bloc also voted as one. There were, not surprisingly, several instances of legislative inertia when the cities and nobility could not agree on some proposed action.²³

The cities and towns were ruled by small, closed bodies of the leading wealthy families, the Regents. As a result, the large majority of the population had no representation in the municipal government. The Regents were bourgeois and their ultimate power was exercised in municipal councils (*vroedschappen*). Within the municipal borders, they ruled supreme, administering their own laws and customs. Amongst themselves, they chose the *burgemeester* to act as the civic leader and spokesman, and they also appointed various judicial and other officials from within their ranks. During periods when a *stadhouder* was in office (i.e. excluding the periods 1650-1672 and 1702-1747), he selected new council members from a slate of candidates submitted by the Regents.²⁴ As a result of this control by the wealthy few, membership

²² Rowen, *Rhyme and Reason*, 207. Note that the members were not the representatives sent by the cities and towns, but the corporate bodies themselves.

²³ Hetty Wertheim-Gijse Weenink, “Early 18th century Uprisings in the Low Countries: Prelude to the Democratic Revolution,” *History Workshop Journal* 15 (1983): 98.

²⁴ Rowen, *Rhyme and Reason*, 207-8.

increasingly became hereditary amongst a small number of families until the latter part of the eighteenth century when the “ruled”, who had been excluded from membership in the ruling elite for so long, demanded a voice in their own governance. Until then, Regents controlled both the *staten* and *Staten-Generaal*, and always ensured that local interests predominated. This situation epitomized the decentralized and particularistic nature of the Republic.

The office of *stadhouder* in the Dutch Republic was vaguely defined. The institution was unique and it functioned like “no other political structure of the time, and political theory had no category for it.”²⁵ The *stadhouder* was an elected servant of the provincial *staten* who was without sovereign status. However, to conclude that the *stadhouder* was a mere figurehead, an emperor with no clothes, would be a mistake. The *Stadhouder* was the leader of the Dutch army and navy. He had rights of nomination to the *staten* and to municipal bodies, and had the power to grant pardons. As well, he headed the Dutch East and West India Companies. Internally, the *stadhouder* acted as a counterweight to the Regents and was “a unifying force in a state that lacked a real centre.”²⁶ Foreign powers recognized the *stadhouder* as the leader and spokesman of the Dutch Republic. Thus a strong *stadhouder* could be and was very influential.

Various *stadhouders* made attempts to increase their influence at the expense of the Regents, by trying to extend the authority of the *Staten-Generaal* and by increasingly direct involvement in the nomination of municipal officials. It was William of Orange

²⁵ Herbert H. Rowen , “Neither Fish nor Fowl: The Stadholderate in the Dutch Republic.” In Political Ideas and Institutions in the Dutch Republic (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles: 1985), 3.

²⁶ Kossman, “The Dutch Republic,” 22-3.

(William III) who was particularly successful in the latter regard. When he became *stadhouder* in 1672, France had invaded and occupied the inland provinces of Gelderland, Utrecht and Overijssel. At the end of the occupation, the *Staten-Generaal* required the three provinces to alter their provincial governance as a condition for their readmission to that institution. The resultant Government Regulation (*Regeerings reglement*) of 1674 gave the *stadhouder* the exclusive right to nominate members of town councils, the *burgemeesters* and high provincial officials.²⁷ The Regulation also provided that in disputed matters within the *staten*, the *stadhouder* was given the exclusive right to arbitrate and determine the controversy. In this way, William III gained greater power within the Republic than had any of his predecessors.²⁸

Rowen contends that the reasons why the Republic's institutions lasted as long as they did was that the Dutch 'federal' system was not seriously questioned until the early eighteenth century, when the cumbersome decision-making process in foreign policy became a severe problem. He also argues that criticism of the lack of internal unity did not become widespread until the advent of the Patriot movement.²⁹ It is to that movement that we now turn.

Dutch Decline and the Rise of the Patriot Movement

A combination of forces after William V attained the age of majority in 1766 produced the political climate that resulted in the Patriot movement, which flourished from 1780 to 1787. The underlying political problems of the Republic recounted above

²⁷ Rowen, *Princes of Orange*, 138.

²⁸ Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 814-5.

²⁹ Rowen, *Rhyme and Reason*, 222.

did not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they were constantly influenced by economic, cultural and other factors. Before examining the Republic's political culture, a political and military debate serves to introduce the topic. From the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a constant rivalry between Holland which wanted to strengthen the navy, and the *stadhouder*, supported by several inland provinces, who wanted to augment the army. The Republic's finances could not afford to reinforce both. As a result, nothing was done, and both the army and navy deteriorated.

Kossmann suggests that the army-navy debate exemplified a more general problem which had occupied the Dutch public for some time, namely that of "Dutch decline".³⁰ The Dutch decline represented a major cultural shift and pervaded all levels of society. There was nostalgia for the Golden Age of the seventeenth century and a desire to resurrect it in the eighteenth century. The debate was also fuelled by what Kossmann terms "a moderate version of the Enlightenment."³¹ Such a version was adapted to the "religious, political and intellectual values of the Republic."³² In the literature of the period, this brand of Enlightenment stressed a moral revival to solve the nation's economic and political crisis and halt "Dutch decline". Schama asserts that the ideas of the *philosophes* had limited attraction in the Dutch Republic because the Dutch already enjoyed toleration and there was little press censorship. As well, religion was highly socialized and the Republic's citizens enjoyed a great deal of political liberty. Schama

³⁰ E.H. Kossmann, "1787: The Collapse of the Patriot Movement and the Problem of Dutch Decline" (The Creighton Trust Lecture, University of London, 1987), 2, 3.

³¹ Kossmann, "Dutch Decline," 3.

³² Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, "Introduction," in *TDR*, 12.

continues by noting that Dutch universities were more receptive to North German idealism rather than French “iconoclasm and secularism”.³³

The political culture extant during this period embraces many components. A useful definition of “political culture” is provided by Keith Michael Baker:

If politics, broadly construed, is the activity through which individuals and groups in any society articulate, negotiate, implement and enforce the competing claims they make one upon the other, then political culture may be understood as the set of discourses and practices characterizing that activity in any given community.³⁴

Among the components of political culture are the press, religion, literary, debating and other societies, the manner of dress, drama and music, as well as the role of women.

Many of these are discussed below in the context of the Patriot movement.

One of the key concerns in the “Dutch decline” debate was the economic downturn in the Republic during the last half of the eighteenth century. Charles Wilson traces the history of Dutch commerce and notes that the Republic functioned as “a world entrepôt” and served as a middleman to other nations.³⁵ Wilson ascribes the reason for the Republic’s seventeenth-century success to its geographic location (the crossroads of trade between north and south Europe) and to the fact that other powers such as England and France were distracted by wars. The Dutch economy began to deteriorate after 1730, though the aggregate volume of trade did not begin to decline until the 1780s. It was the composition of Dutch trade which changed significantly. The Baltic trade, a key

³³ Simon Schama, “The Enlightenment in the Netherlands” in The Enlightenment in National Context, eds. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 54-7, 68.

³⁴ Keith Michael Baker, “Introduction,” in The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture, vol. 1, ed. Keith Michael Baker (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987), xii.

³⁵ Charles Wilson, “The Decline of the Netherlands,” in Economic History and the Historian: Collected Essays (New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 22.

component of its earlier success, fell off, and the economic nationalism of Britain and France excluded Dutch trade. Foreign competition in the textile manufacturing, shipbuilding and refining industries also hurt the Dutch economy. As well, Dutch venture capital began to flow into foreign investments, and high wages plagued the country. The lack of natural resources and its small population were also contributing factors.³⁶ More and more money flowed into fewer and fewer hands. The distress of the poor was evident, especially in rural areas. In short, the Republic's society was stagnant in all its manifestations, politically, economically and culturally. The Dutch psyche was badly damaged. Yet the picture was not all doom and gloom.

To address some of the economic problems pervading Dutch society, several philanthropic experiments were conducted in various industries. Throughout the Republic, there was a movement not only for economic reform but also to promote this "moral rearmament" of society as a whole.³⁷ Many organizations, clubs and societies emerged, ranging from debating, intellectual, and scientific academies to Masonic lodges, from reading and literary clubs to improvement societies. All attempted to find solutions to the problems of the country. These organizations reached their apex in the 1770s and 1780s. They began to influence public opinion and many became a vital part of the Patriot organization. Moreover Dutch society was highly urbanized, and its citizens were well informed and exceptionally literate. The Dutch literary press had long been active and much foreign material was printed and published in the Republic. Many libraries, scientific collections and especially the intellectual and religious freedom which pervaded

³⁶ Wilson, "The Decline," 26-42, *passim*.

³⁷ Leeb, Ideological Origins, 105.

the United Provinces had for some time attracted outstanding philosophers such as Descartes, Locke and Montesquieu.³⁸

I now turn to some of the immediate causes and events that gave rise to the Patriots as a political force. An emerging middle class of merchants, bankers and industrialists began to demand inclusion in the nation's decision-making process. This group would become a leading force within the Patriot movement. The Regents saw many of their privileges and powers diminish as a result of the *Stadhouder's* increasing control of various government institutions by exercising his rights under the 1675 Government Regulation. More broadly, everyone resented the presence of William V's foreign adviser, the Duke of Brunswick. The American Revolution had a profound impact on the Dutch. The commercial interests of Amsterdam and Holland encouraged the American insurgents by trading and supplying them with arms and provisions. The British and Orangist supporters of the *Stadhouder* viewed such trade as a violation of Dutch neutrality.

The Fourth English War was a disaster for the Republic and the *Stadhouder* became the repository of all blame. It was this war which gave momentum to the Patriot movement. The movement was an unusual confluence of discontented Regents, intellectuals and the rising middle class. The movement began as a general opposition to the *Stadhouder* and the closed oligarchic system of government which prevailed throughout the country. The Patriot movement grew into a reform movement, attracting many of the nation's disaffected to its cause. The Patriots and an emerging political press played important roles in politicizing the country's people. The political culture of the

³⁸ Israel, Dutch Republic, 3.

Republic underwent changes during the *Patriottentijd* and the Patriots assumed power in various cities, towns and provincial *staten*. The movement was suppressed by Prussian troops in 1787, who had been summoned by the *Stadhouder* to prevent an all-out civil war from breaking out.

To conclude, the malaise which gripped the Republic during the eighteenth century became worse as the century wore on. At the time of the restoration of the *stadhouder* in 1747, an urban middle class was emerging which began to question the traditional power structure which left them without a voice in their governance. During the 1760s, the *stadhouder* assumed increased control of the various institutions of government and, in so doing, exceeded the powers of his office as set out in the Dutch constitution and abrogated some of the historic privileges of the regents. During the 1770s, an anti-*stadhouder* movement developed around the expanding middle class and the disaffected regents. This broadly based Patriot movement was also directed against those members of the ruling regent oligarchy who continued to support and remain loyal to the *stadhouder*. It was, to be sure, an uneasy and, at times, an unstable coalition, yet it held together for a number of years. The political positions of the Orangists and the Patriot alliance became polarized. In the meantime, the Fourth English War was not going well for the Dutch. The autumn of 1781 was a particularly disastrous period. Humiliating military defeats, confusing diplomatic initiatives, and a stagnating economic climate cast a gloom over the entire nation. The *Stadhouder* and his advisers became the focus of blame for the perceived decline of the Republic. The time appeared ripe for a catalyst to arouse the public and transform the stalemate between the parties into political action.

The following chapter will identify the catalyst, namely Aan het Volk, and discuss the pamphlet's author, thereby introducing the first phase of Darnton's "communications circuit".

CHAPTER 3

“A NOBLEMAN TAKES THE LEAD”¹

Background

In the previous chapter, the complexity of the Dutch Republic’s political institutions was investigated, and it was noted that the problems facing the nation in the late eighteenth century were exacerbated during the Fourth English War. That investigation identified the external influences which had an impact on the various phases of Darnton’s “communications circuit”. The focus of the present chapter will first be on the political pamphlets which aroused the Dutch public. A biographical sketch of the author of one of those pamphlets will then be presented. The study of the author’s life provides some of the context for the first phase of Darnton’s circuit, that of the author. The search for the author’s identity in the next chapter will provide additional information pertinent to my discussion of Darnton’s first phase of the “communications circuit”.

Two famous pamphlets published in 1781 solidified and galvanized the political divisions within the Republic. The first was a tract entitled Politiek verhoog over het waar systema van de stad van Amsterdam (Political treatise on the true system of the City of Amsterdam) written by Rycklof Michiel van Goens, who became the editor of the Orangist De Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot (Old fashioned Dutch patriot).² In it, he attacked the commercial interests of Amsterdam, citing many harmful acts by its leaders over a period of two hundred years, which had had detrimental consequences for other

¹ The title of this chapter is taken from c. 1, J.W. Schulte Nordholt, The Dutch Republic and American Independence, trans. Herbert S. Rowen (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 19.

² N.C.F. van Sas, “The Patriot Revolution: New Perspectives,” in TDR, 105.

areas of the Republic. In particular, van Goens denounced Amsterdam's secretly negotiated draft treaty with the American colonies, which, as outlined in the last chapter, was found in the papers of the American envoy, Henry Laurens, when he was captured by the British.

The second, and more sensational, pamphlet was distributed on the streets of the major towns and cities throughout the Republic during the night and early morning of September 25 and 26, 1781. It was entitled Aan het Volk van Nederland (hereafter Aan het Volk) (To the people of the Netherlands).³ The author was anonymous at the time; he signed simply "your faithful fellow-citizen", with an additional reference, "Ostende, Sep. 3, 1781."⁴ Research in the late nineteenth century concluded that the pamphlet was written by a nobleman from the eastern, landlocked province of Overijssel, Baron Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol.⁵ Van der Capellen was a controversial and influential political figure who was a leading actor on the Dutch political stage for much of the last quarter of the eighteenth century.⁶ The fact that van der Capellen's pamphlet was almost immediately banned, that it triggered a political call to action by both Orangist and Patriot factions, and that it continues to elicit discussion today, all suggest that a study of van der Capellen's persona and an attempt to locate his pamphlet within the larger context of the

³J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol, Aan het Volk van Nederland (Ostende: N.p., 1781, Kn. 19864).

⁴ J.D. van der Capellen, An Address to the People of the Netherlands, anonymous translation (London: J. Stockdale, 1782, Kn. 20137), 137.

⁵ The discovery of his identity was revealed by studies of his correspondence and an autobiography of one of his close confidants. Details of these studies will be outlined in the next chapter. His Christian name Joan is an abbreviation for Johan; Derck is sometimes referred to as Dirck or Derk in the literature; tot den Pol refers to his estate.

⁶ Schulte Nordholt, American Independence, 21-2; and H.L. Zwitzer, Introduction to Aan het Volk van Nederland: Het patriottisch program uit 1781 (Amsterdam: DBL, 1987), 7.

rise of the political press in the Dutch Republic, would be a useful contribution to understanding Dutch history during the *Patriottentijd*.

Van der Capellen: Education and entry into the nobility

Van der Capellen was born at Tiel, in the province of Gelderland, on November 2, 1741, the eldest son of Baron Frederik Jacob van der Capellen van Appeltern, an army major, and Anna Elisabeth van Bassen. The family was active in politics. Both his father and his maternal grandfather were influential in honing the political instincts which were to become so prominent later in his career. His father Frederik became a member of the Gelderland knighthood in 1740,⁷ a fact van der Capellen used later in his life “to present himself as the ‘born regent,’”⁸ when he attempted to gain admission to the *Ridderschap* of the *Staten* of Overijssel. His maternal grandfather, Dirck Reinier van Bassen was descended from an old and influential Gelderland noble family. Unlike most other members of the nobility, the grandfather was not a supporter of the House of Orange, and was forced to leave his native Arnhem and relocate to Tiel as a result of his anti-Orangist activities.⁹

Van der Capellen spent his early years under the tutelage of his grandfather as his father was away much of the time attending to army activities.¹⁰ Van der Capellen

⁷ W.F. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijze Weenink, Introduction to *Aan het Volk van Nederland: het democratisch manifest van Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol 1781* by J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol (Weesp: Heureka, 1981), 15.

⁸ Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators* (London: Collins, 1977), 65.

⁹ F.A. van der Kemp, *Francis Adrian van der Kemp, 1752-1829: An Autobiography*, edited with a historical sketch by Helen Lincklaen Fairchild (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 32-3.

¹⁰ Schulte Nordholt, *American Independence*, 23.

received much instruction from his grandfather in the history and politics of his country, an education which had profound impact on his life.¹¹ At the age of eleven, he departed Tiel for nearby den Bosch (sometimes 's-Hertogenbosch) to further his education at the Latin school.¹² In 1758, at age 17, he enrolled in the Utrecht Academy where he spent six years studying jurisprudence, with emphasis on the constitutional law of the Netherlands.¹³ He also learned English and French during this period. At the conclusion of his studies in Utrecht in 1763, van der Capellen found himself in poor health and with no plans for his future. He had no desire for a traditional career in the army or navy of the Republic. His father viewed him as a weakling and kept him at a distance. As a result, van der Capellen chose to live with various relatives.¹⁴ This unsettling state of affairs no doubt played a role in his development.

Unusual as it seems to us today, in light of the fact that he was twenty-three years old and estranged from his father, van der Capellen did ask for his father's consent to marry a noblewoman from Overijssel, Hillegonda Anna Bentinck van Wittenstein. The consent was not immediately forthcoming. W.F. Wertheim suggests that the father also had aspirations to marry his son's betrothed, having himself been a widower since the death of his wife in 1758.¹⁵ Nonetheless, consent was granted and the marriage took place

¹¹ Van der Kemp, Autobiography, 33.

¹² Adraan Loosjes, Een krachtig libel: studie over het pamphlet Aan het Volk van Nederland (Haarlem: De Erven Loosjes, 1886), 72.

¹³ Leonard I. Leeb, The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 137.

¹⁴ Van der Kemp, Autobiography, 34.

¹⁵ W.F. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijze Weenink, "Beknopte levensloop van Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol, in Joan Derk Bulletin (Zwolle: Werkcomite Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol, 1984), 2.

on July 4, 1766. For the first few years of his marriage, he led a private life on the estate of his wife's parents at Wittenstein, where he continued to study theology, law and history.¹⁶

Fairchild asserts that while van der Capellen recognized a duty to become politically active, "he showed as yet no turn for political life."¹⁷ He did, however, wish to become a member of the *Ridderschap* of his native Gelderland. His application was rejected because he failed to meet the requirements.¹⁸ In 1769, not wishing to have his ambition thwarted, he took up part-time residence in Zwolle, in neighbouring Overijssel, and applied to join the *Ridderschap* of that province.¹⁹ He acquired an interest in the noble estate of Bredenhorst. This transaction was undertaken to satisfy one of the requirements to become a member of the Overijssel *Ridderschap*.²⁰ A year later, he divested himself of Bredenhorst and purchased the noble Pol estate, and thereafter became van der Capellen tot den Pol.²¹

His application was supported by Zwolle, Deventer, and Kampen, the three enfranchised cities of Overijssel, as well as by some disaffected *Ridders*. However, van der Capellen was opposed by the leaders of the *Ridders* because he was perceived as an

¹⁶ Loosjes, *Krachtig Libel*, 59.

¹⁷ Van der Kemp, *Autobiography*, 34.

¹⁸ Friedrich Edler, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution* (Baltimore: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 31; the exact reasons are not known beyond "technical grounds" according to Professor TeBrake; See Wayne Ph. Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels* (Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989), 44.

¹⁹ The lengthy struggle to gain admission is outlined in F.A. van der Kemp, *Historie der admissie in de Ridderschap van Overijssel, van Johan Derk van der Capellen, Heer van den Pol* (Leiden: L. Herdingh, 1785).

²⁰ The other normal requirements were to be of noble birth, to be at least twenty five years old, to have a net worth of 25,000 Dutch guilders, and to be a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. R.C.C. de Savornin Lohman, "J.D. van der Capellen in prosographisch perspectief." in *DW*, 27.

²¹ Loosjes, *Krachtig Libel*, 59.

outsider. There were, however, more substantive reasons for the resistance, namely the right of the *Staten* to choose its own members and because he was not a *native*²² holder of qualified property (emphasis mine). The *Ridderschap* saw fit to add two additional requirements for van der Capellen to meet, namely, to gain admission to the *Ridderschap* of his native Gelderland, and to have held a position in the government of that province. These conditions, of course, were impossible to meet. In addition, there were some complications surrounding his interest in Bredenhorst, as some *Ridders* questioned the legitimacy of the transaction because the former owner funded the entire purchase, continued to reside on the estate, and reacquired legal title when van der Capellen purchased the Pol property.²³ After waiting almost two years, van der Capellen sought the assistance of the *Stadhouder*, William V. He was able to convince the *Stadhouder* that it was in the latter's interest to support his quest for admission. William sent a letter to the *Staten* and threatened to exercise his ancient prerogative to break deadlocks between the enfranchised cities and the *Ridderschap*.²⁴ Van der Capellen was eventually admitted to the *Ridderschap* of Overijssel on October 22, 1772.²⁵ As we shall see, the *Stadhouder* would soon regret the support he gave to van der Capellen, and the *Ridders* of Overijssel would have their revenge in 1778.

²² Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 44.

²³ Wertheim, "Beknoopte Levensloop", 2.

²⁴ M. Hzn. De Jong, *Joan Derk van der Capellen: Staatkundig Levensbeeld uit de Wordingsstijd van de Moderne Democratie in Nederland* (Groningen and the Hague: J.B. Wolters, 1922), 127-8.

²⁵ Friedrich Edler, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1901), 31.

Political Development and Influences

Once admitted to the *Ridderschap*, van der Capellen began to play an active political role, in both the foreign and domestic affairs of the Republic. He used the occasion of his maiden speech to the *Overijssel Staten* in 1773 to forcefully oppose the *Stadhouder's* proposal to increase the size of the Dutch standing army at the expense of the navy. Van der Capellen recognized that the navy was needed to protect Dutch trade and commerce, a fundamental facet of Dutch existence. Van der Capellen contended that "even all the provinces which are not directly engaged in commerce, [owed] their safety, prosperity, yes even their agriculture, to commerce."²⁶ He perceived that the army of mainly foreign troops was the tool of the *Stadhouder* and his supporters, and as such, could easily become an instrument of tyranny.²⁷ Van der Capellen's stance in favour of the navy was noteworthy for two reasons. First, his position was enunciated in the assembly of the landward province of *Overijssel*, which was somewhat less developed than that of economically dominant *Holland*. Some viewed his position as "provincial treason, if not madness" because *Overijssel* looked to the army to defend it from enemy incursions on its eastern border.²⁸ Second, he addressed a matter of national concern and thereby drew attention to himself on the national stage.

The next significant political debate in which van der Capellen became involved also focussed on a military issue, and one with international implications. This was the attempted recall of the *Scotch Brigade* by the English government in October 1775, in order to use the regiments against the rebellious colonists in America. The Brigade had

²⁶ Quoted in Leeb, *Ideological Origins*, 140.

²⁷ De Jong, *van der Capellen*, 187-8.

²⁸ Leeb, *Ideological Origins*, 139-40.

been in the service of the Dutch since its struggle for independence from Spain in the late sixteenth century.²⁹ The English request was made to the *Stadhouder* “to use his good offices to gain approval of the *Staten Generaal* for the transfer”.³⁰ In accordance with the decision-making process in the Republic, the matter was referred back to the provincial *Staten*. The issue required unanimity at both the local and national level,³¹ and it was in this context that the English request was debated in the Overijssel assembly in December 1775.³²

Van der Capellen’s speech during the debate marked the beginning of his commitment to the American cause. He pleaded that it was a fundamental necessity for the Republic to remain neutral, and argued that a release of the Brigade would breach that neutrality unless similar assistance was provided to the Americans. He continued by pointing out that previous Dutch involvements in war had resulted in economic decline and political unrest,³³ and concluded by praising the Americans as just and honourable men whose cause he considered akin to that of mankind generally, namely the defence of “the rights which ... they had received from God Almighty and not from England.”³⁴ Van der Capellen’s position aroused public opinion to such a degree that England withdrew its

²⁹ Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 44. In an extensive article by John Childs entitled “The Scottish Brigade in the Service of the Dutch Republic” the author does not mention this particular event; *DAE* 16 (1984/1): *passim*.

³⁰ Leeb, *Ideological Origins*, 142.

³¹ Unanimity was required on certain fundamental issues such as the declaration of war, granting of privileges, and the creation of new taxes. De Jong, *van der Capellen*, 228.

³² Schulte Nordholt, *American Independence*, 25.

³³ Leeb, *Ideological Origins*, 142.

³⁴ Edler, *The Dutch Republic*, 32.

request. If he did not earn the enmity of the *Stadhouder* with his opposition to the augmentation of the standing army in 1773, he now incurred William's anger by publishing and distributing his speech, in violation of the custom of the *Staten*.³⁵ Van der Capellen also spoke against the proposal outside the assembly.³⁶

Following his speech on the Scotch Brigade question, leading Americans expressed their gratitude to van der Capellen for his public defence of their cause. He received letters of commendation from the President and members of the Congress, the Governor of Connecticut and Benjamin Franklin, among others.³⁷ Van der Capellen next felt obliged to inform his fellow Dutchmen about the real issues in the dispute between Britain and the Americans. In 1776, he translated Richard Price's Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, followed in 1777 by a further translation of Price's Additional Observations.³⁸ More noteworthy was his earlier translation of Andrew Fletcher's 1698 pamphlet Discourse of Government with Relation to Militia. In his preface to this translation, van der Capellen revealed he was not prepared, as was Fletcher, to advocate an abolition of a standing army, to be replaced by a citizen militia. Rather, the citizen militia he proposed would complement the standing army.³⁹ Van der Capellen used arguments from Dutch history to support his views and pointed out that the Union of Utrecht required all adult males to provide military service.⁴⁰ The reliance on Dutch

³⁵ Schulte Nordholt, American Independence, 25.

³⁶ Harry F. Jackson, Scholar in the Wilderness: Francis Adrian van der Kemp (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1963), 32.

³⁷ Edler, The Dutch Republic, 32.

³⁸ Schama, Patriots, 65.

³⁹ Schulte Nordholt, American Independence, 271.

history was to be a widely used strategy of van der Capellen to support his arguments in Aan het Volk and the subject of citizen or burger militias was to become a main theme therein.⁴¹

In addition to Fletcher and Price, van der Capellen translated Joseph Priestley's Essays on the Principles of Government in 1783. His correspondence reveals he was familiar with the works of Grotius, Pufendorf, Locke, Hume and Montesquieu, though it is difficult to know how much these political thinkers inspired his own ideas. Schama does point out, however, that all of them had some relevance to the Dutch situation.⁴²

Van der Capellen supported the American efforts in other ways. He attempted to raise funds for the Americans by pressuring Dutch lenders to make loans and he personally invested in American bond issues.⁴³ He also recommended that the United States send an envoy to the Netherlands and he lobbied for the formal recognition of the new republic. When John Adams arrived in Amsterdam in August 1780, van der Capellen introduced him to a number of his Patriot allies, including van der Kemp, whose friendship with Adams would last forty years.⁴⁴

Van der Capellen's stance with respect to the Scotch Brigade and army augmentation elevated his profile on the national scene and demonstrated his opposition to the political norms of the time. Though he did not attack the *Stadhouder* specifically, his stance was interpreted as such by his opponents. The *Stadhouder* began to refer to van

⁴⁰ The reference is to Article VIII of the 1581 Union of Utrecht, which never became operative; Van Sas, "The Patriot Revolution," 113.

⁴¹ See below c. 4.

⁴² Schama, Patriots, 65.

⁴³ Van der Kemp, Autobiography, 67.

⁴⁴ Schulte Nordholt, American Independence, 112.

der Capellen as “*notre Wilkes*,” a reference to the radical English libertarian, John Wilkes.⁴⁵ He also gained the censure of his fellow *Ridders* who removed his speech from the official records of the *Staten* on the basis “that it was not conceived in decent terms.”⁴⁶

Following his forays into military matters, van der Capellen next turned his attention to local concerns within Overijssel. In 1777, he targeted the *Stadhouder*’s method of appointing provincial officers under a Government Regulation (*Regeerings Reglement*) operative in Overijssel since the 1747 restoration of the office of the *stadhouder*. The Regulation enabled the *stadhouder* to confirm municipal election results, and to appoint senior municipal and provincial officials from a list of nominees submitted to him by the *Staten*. During the 1760s, William began to appoint such officials directly without consulting the nomination lists.⁴⁷ In a speech, van der Capellen called for strict adherence to both the letter and the spirit of the Regulation. As Te Brake notes, the speech “had no practical effect because it was sent to committee for further study.”⁴⁸ When published, however, the speech did open up public scrutiny of government operations.

The next instalment in van der Capellen’s political battles would have dire consequences for him. His objective was to free Overijssel farmers from the last burden of feudal rule, namely the performance of service to a *drost*, a regional administrator. He demanded the abrogation of these *drostendiensten* in a speech to the Overijssel *Staten* in

⁴⁵ Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 44.

⁴⁶ Edler, *The Dutch Republic*, 32.

⁴⁷ Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 30-1.

⁴⁸ Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 45.

April, 1778.⁴⁹ Van der Capellen's research revealed that the Overijssel *Staten* had formally abolished these obligations in 1631, yet the *drosten* continued to enforce them, some more forcefully than others.⁵⁰ This time, determined to gain a wider audience, van der Capellen made certain his speech was published *before* it was delivered to the *Staten*. For this transgression, van der Capellen was suspended as a member of the assembly.⁵¹ As a result of the distribution of the speech, petitioners from every corner of the province began to demand that the *Stadhouder* and the *Staten* intercede to free them from the "slavery of the *drostendiensten*."⁵² Motivated by this outcry, van der Capellen's close friend and ally, Francis van der Kemp, a radical Mennonite preacher, drafted a number of pamphlets to bring the issue to the national stage. It should be noted here that the publication of van der Capellen's speeches in the Overijssel *Staten* on such subjects as the recall of the Scotch Brigade, army augmentation, the *drostendiensten* and the *Stadhouder's* prerogatives, was contrary to the long established convention against such practice.⁵³

By the fall of 1778, the members of the *Staten* had reached the limit of their patience. They ordered the province's judicial officials to prosecute van der Capellen for publishing documents still being considered by the assembly, and for libelling its members. As well, they suspended him from his seat for the duration of the legal

⁴⁹ Van der Kemp, *Autobiography*, 63.

⁵⁰ Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 45.

⁵¹ W.R.E. Klein, *Patriots republikanisme. Politieke Cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 84-5. "Het overtreden van die grenzen leverde van der Capellen een *schorsing* (emphasis mine) op als lid van de Staten." Some English language texts described this as an expulsion, but the correct translation of *schorsing* is 'suspension'.

⁵² Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 46

⁵³ Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 45.

proceedings. The case ended in an irreconcilable stalemate within the *Staten* between the three enfranchised cities and some *Ridders* on the one hand, and the majority of the *Ridderschap*, on the other.⁵⁴ Van der Capellen would remain suspended until 1782. Needless to say, the *Stadhouder* did not intercede on van der Capellen's behalf on this occasion, as he had done in 1772. In addition to the ignominy of losing his seat, placards appeared at the gates of many of the towns and on the doors of churches denouncing him as a liar and traitor.⁵⁵

The Anonymous Personality Behind the Pamphlet

As a result of his exclusion from the Overijssel *Staten*, van der Capellen was denied a public forum in which to advocate his ideas. He despaired about his inability to accomplish his aims, yet politics remained a preoccupation. The Fourth English War with its attendant political and military difficulties presented an opportunity for him to re-enter the political arena, albeit anonymously. As Te Brake suggests, “[t]he war was his kind of issue.”⁵⁶ The inadequacy of Dutch armed forces and the perception of many that the *Stadhouder* was not prosecuting the war as well as he could because of his dynastic ties to the English throne, were both seen as contributing to the worsening Dutch situation. A four-hour battle with the English at Doggersbank in the North Sea in August resulted in a stalemate, with each side claiming victory. In addition to the fallout of the war, two other matters prompted van der Capellen to act. He felt that the van Goens pamphlet mentioned earlier in this chapter (see p. 38) required a response and an Orangist newspaper, De Ouderwetse Nederlandse Patriot, began publication in the summer of 1781.

⁵⁴ Te Brake, Regents and Rebels, 46.

⁵⁵ The actual translation was “deceiver and seducer of the people.” Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 61.

⁵⁶ Te Brake, Regents and Rebels, 47.

All of the above events weighed upon van der Capellen and induced him to spend the entire summer composing the document that would become the “most successful and influential pamphlet of its time,”⁵⁷ namely Aan het Volk. In order to understand the message and contents of the pamphlet and the author’s motivation in writing it, historians have attempted to analyze van der Capellen’s personality. The starting point of any assessment is the work of van der Capellen’s biographer de Jong.⁵⁸ De Jong opines that the purpose of the pamphlet was to awaken all Dutchmen to the increasing might of the *Stadhouder*. He also speculates why van der Capellen’s chose anonymity for Aan het Volk, when he had not previously been afraid to speak or write about the various causes which constantly occupied his mind. De Jong ascribes this contradiction to the nature of van der Capellen’s dual personality: at times van der Capellen was a very public figure and, at other times he became very private to the extent that he even wished to remain mysterious to his best friends. De Jong reaches this conclusion after examining certain of the latter’s subsequent correspondence to other Patriots.⁵⁹ Wertheim assert that de Jong’s opinion about the ambivalence of van der Capellen’s personality is exaggerated and has resulted in a confusing interpretation by subsequent writers. According to them, van der Capellen feared the political power of his Overijssel opponents as well as the military might of the *Stadhouder*.⁶⁰ This view is supported by the fact that when the American envoy Laurens was captured on September

⁵⁷ Leeb, Ideological Origins, 59.

⁵⁸ De Jong, van der Capellen, *passim*.

⁵⁹ De Jong, van der Capellen, 393.

⁶⁰ Wertheim, “Introduction”, 19.

3, 1780,⁶¹ van der Capellen fled Overijssel to take refuge in Amsterdam and even considered leaving the country, because he was aware that Laurens had in his possession letters from van der Capellen strongly supporting the Americans.⁶² In light of the banning of the pamphlet and the offer of a hefty reward,⁶³ the anonymity seems well justified. Moreover, many pamphlets of the time were published anonymously or their authors used pseudonyms to hide their true identities.

To be sure, van der Capellen's personality was complex. He was at various times fierce, radical and moderate, and appeared to his opponents as a revolutionary, but as Schelhaas points out, what reformer did not have these characteristics? Schelhaas argues that they are not symptomatic of a split personality; rather, any ambivalence may be explained by the metaphor of looking at the sun through a prism. One has various views at different times; it is the same when one looks at great persons through a prism.⁶⁴ Schulte Nordholt adds that one of the problems in Dutch history is that certain reform leaders are seen as radical in a Dutch context, but were actually conservative in a general sense.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Schulte Nordholt, *American Independence*, 147.

⁶² Van der Kemp, *Autobiography*, 70.

⁶³ Details of which will be examined in c. 4.

⁶⁴ Harm Schelhaas, "Inleiding," In *DW*, 10.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Schelhaas, "Inleiding," 10.

The Final Years

During the remaining three years of his life, van der Capellen travelled throughout the Republic to support the cause of the Patriots. He was instrumental in the establishment of burger militias in various towns. He also increased his correspondence with other leading Patriots as well as with his circle of foreign associates, often writing twelve to fifteen hours a day.⁶⁶ However, increasing ill health precluded a more active role in the political arena.

The high point of van der Capellen's political career was a dinner held in his honor in Amsterdam in April 1783. It was attended by his admirers throughout the Republic and was a tripartite celebration of several victories or achievements attained by him or through his efforts. First, he had gained readmission to the *Staten* of Overijssel in the fall of 1782. Van der Capellen's reinstatement represented a key success for the Patriots and was greeted by celebrations throughout the Republic.⁶⁷ Second, the *drostendiensten* were abolished in Overijssel. Lastly, the new Republic of the United States was recognized by all seven provincial *Staten* and by the *Staten-Generaal*. A gold medal was presented to van der Capellen by the Overijssel farmers to express their gratitude for his stand on their behalf with respect to the *drostendiensten*. Silver medals were presented to all other attendees at the dinner.⁶⁸

Late in 1783, van der Capellen continued to attend several gatherings of Patriots where representatives of various provinces met to coordinate their activities on a national

⁶⁶ Wertheim, "Introduction," 37.

⁶⁷ Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, 49.

⁶⁸ Van der Kemp, *Autobiography*, 62.

scale.⁶⁹ Eventually he wore himself out and died on June 6, 1784, aged forty three. His funeral was attended by many mourners, and he was honoured by many eulogies, orations, prose and poetry. Hartong has listed three dramas, two eulogies, ninety-three poems and two funeral orations, together with various other writings, which have honoured van der Capellen.⁷⁰ Many of these were published in the Patriot press.⁷¹

We have seen that van der Capellen was full of personal contradictions. He was a nobleman, yet was full of democratic ideas. He hailed from the land province of Overijssel but was supportive of the maritime and commercial province of Holland and its largest city, Amsterdam. This, together with his commitment to strengthen the Republic's navy, set him apart from other Overijssel nobles who were traditionally much more provincial in their outlook, and who favored a strong army headed by the *Stadhouder* as Captain-General.

Van der Capellen is described by E.H. Kossmann as having “a revolutionary temperament ...but [he is] ultimately a conservative in quest of restoring an old constitution.”⁷² According to Kossmann, the passion that drove him was an early form of nationalism. We have also noted how van der Capellen's habit of publishing his speeches in the *Staten* was contrary to the custom of the day. His transgression did “more than trouble the normally placid waters of aristocratic government; he opened up government to public exposure.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Leeb, *Ideological Origins*, 177.

⁷⁰ G.T. Hartong, “Joan Derk, Bejubelt en beschimpt,” in *DW*, 63-71 *passim*.

⁷¹ *De Politieke Krayer*, #144, 2153-4 and #160, 29-32.

⁷² E.H. Kossmann, “The Crisis of the Dutch State 1780-1813: Nationalism, Federalism, Unitarianism” *B&N*, 164.

To summarize, this chapter has reviewed the life of van der Capellen and introduced us to the first phase of Darnton's "communications circuit". The lasting interest in van der Capellen will be discussed later. In the next chapter, I complete my discussion of this first phase of the "communications circuit" by discussing the questions of why Aan het Volk so aroused the Dutch, and how the author's identity was discovered. I will also turn to the second phase of Darnton's "communications circuit" by examining the printing history of Aan het Volk.

⁷³ Te Brake, Regents and Rebels, 45.

CHAPTER 4

THE PAMPHLET AAN HET VOLK VAN NEDERLAND

In the previous chapter, the first phase of Darnton's "communications circuit" introduced us to the author of the pamphlet Aan het Volk,¹ J.D. van der Capellen. This chapter concludes our discussion of the author by surveying the pamphlet's contents. This discussion will provide further information about the author's thoughts and motivation in writing Aan het Volk. An inquiry into the extensive research that was conducted to discover the identity of the anonymous pamphlet's author follows. The focus then shifts to the next phase of Darnton's life cycle, namely the printing history of Aan het Volk, and touches briefly on the cycle's distribution phase.

The Message and the Medium

The pamphlet Aan het Volk, its author and the entire *Patriottentijd* were all but forgotten by nineteenth century historians and other academics. All three resurfaced triumphantly in the twentieth century. Aan het Volk, together with the 1581 Act of Abjuration, have been jointly described by E.H. Kossmann as the only manifestos in Dutch history which could be compared to the American Declaration of Independence of 1776, the French Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen and the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights.² This is high praise indeed. In the same vein, Nick van Sas considers Aan het Volk to be one of the classic texts of Dutch political literature and

¹ [J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol], Aan het Volk van Nederland (Ostende: N.p., 1781, Kn # 19864).

² E.H. Kossmann, Politieke theory en geschiedenis: verspreide opstellen en voordrachten aangeboden aan de schrijver bij zijn aftreden als hoogleraar aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1987), 250.

without doubt, the most sensational pamphlet of the period.³ This is not to suggest that Aan het Volk did not have its detractors, both during the *Patriottentijd* and by later scholars. For example, it has been criticized as “violent”, “revolutionary”, and “inflammatory”.⁴ In the years following its appearance, the pamphlet attracted as much criticism by Orangist supporters of the *Stadhouder*, William V, as it received praise by the Dutch Patriots. This mixed reception is discussed below.

What was the message of Aan het Volk and why did it arouse the Dutch? To address the latter question first, Te Brake observed that the pamphlet was a clear attack on the *Stadhouder*, unlike any previously seen. One simply did not criticize publicly the titular head of the Republic. Aan het Volk contained a plan of action to reduce the increasing influence of the *Stadhouder* and that of his followers among the Regents of the towns and cities. Its author, anonymous at the time, was Baron Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol, who explained the cause of the Republic’s problems simply: “it was the megalomania of the Prince of Orange.”⁵ Schama adds that Aan het Volk was effective because it reduced “a complicated political situation to a simple description resting on an historical account: on the one hand, the nation: on the other, absolutism and privilege.”⁶ While Aan het Volk inspired the Patriots, it had the opposite effect on the *Stadhouder*’s supporters, as we shall see in Chapter Five (See p. 84-5 and 98).

³ N.C. van Sas, Review of Aan het Volk van Nederland: het democratisch manifest van Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol 1781, with an introduction by W.F. Wertheim and A.J. Wertheim-Gijze Weenink, Theoretisch Geschiedenis 10 (1983): 409.

⁴ Respectively, in Petrus Johannes Blok, History of the People of the Netherlands, vol. V, trans. O.A. Bierstadt and Ruth Putnam (New York: AMS Press, 1970), 207; Jonathan Israel, The Dutch Republic, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 9; and Simon Schama, Patriots and Liberators (London: Collins, 1977), 64.

⁵ Wayne Ph. Te Brake, Regents and Rebels (Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989), 41-2.

⁶ Schama, Patriots and Liberators, (London: Collins, 1978), 66.

Aan het Volk was secretly published and was initially distributed on the streets of the major towns and cities as well as in the rural parts of the country. The publication and dissemination was supervised by the Mennonite preacher Francis A. van der Kemp, a Patriot and close confidante of van der Capellen.⁷ Its original Dutch version contained seventy-six pages and its language was marked by both simplicity and passion. The intended audience excluded no one. Aan het Volk was addressed to the entire nation, the *volk*. The eminent Dutch historian Pieter Geyl has noted that this pamphlet is the first document in Dutch history to address the Dutch people as a national unit.⁸ The pamphlet condemns the existing structure and operation of the institutions of government and specifically blames the sitting *Stadhouder*, William V, for the precarious state of affairs in which the Republic found itself in 1781.

The title page of the English translation of Aan het Volk bears some scrutiny for it summarizes some of the pamphlet's contents for English readers:

An Address to the People of the Netherlands, on the present alarming and most dangerous situation of the Republick of Holland: showing the true motives of the most unpardonable delays of the executive power in putting the Republick into a proper state of defence, and the advantages of an alliance with Holland, France and America.⁹

The title page of the original Dutch version of the pamphlet does not contain such an extended title, and I assume the wording is that of the translator or the publisher, J. Stockdale of London.

⁷ F.A. van der Kemp, Francis Adrian van der Kemp, 1752-1829: An Autobiography, ed. with a historical sketch by Helen Linklaen Fairchild (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 54.

⁸ Pieter Geyl, De Patriottenbeweging, 1780-1787 (Amsterdam: P.N. van Kampen, 1947), 53.

⁹ [J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol], An Address to the People of the Netherlands, anonymous translation (London: J. Stockdale, 1782, Kn #20137).

The author of Aan het Volk feared that the *Stadhouder* and his supporters would gain total control over the state and the general population would lose what little influence remained for them to check the domination of the *Stadhouder*.¹⁰ The attitude toward the *Stadhouder* is revealed in the opening pages of the pamphlet. The author purported “neither [to] seek fortune nor titles”: rather, his only motive was to save the nation. In his own words, he had “an utter abhorrence of the scandalous manner in which you are betrayed and sold ... and a desire ... to save *you*, and to save us all, from total ruin.”¹¹ In short, the aim was to save the *volk* and open their eyes, or to quote the author’s biographer, to “wake up” the Dutch nation.¹²

The author uses arguments drawn from Dutch history to make his case. In a few pages, he suggests that the struggle of the Dutch people for liberty was a long one by reminding them that the ancient Batavians who inhabited the country governed themselves and that they were libertarian and egalitarian. The author points out that the Batavians fought their battles without the use of foreign mercenaries or commanders, who only served their own and their families’ self interest.¹³ He then describes governance through feudal times to the sixteenth century revolt from Spain, and begins a lengthy denunciation of all the *stadhouders* who had occupied that office. The author accuses them all of seeking control over the Republic and of behaving as if they were

¹⁰ Leonard I Leeb, The Ideological Origins of the Dutch Republic (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 156.

¹¹ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 1,2.

¹² M. Hzn. De Jong, Joan Derk van der Capellen: Staatkundig Levensbeeld uit de Wordingsstijd van de Moderne Democratie in Nederland (Groningen and the Hague: J.B. Wolters, 1922), 389. The actual words were “*om de natie op te wekken*.”

¹³ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 3. This is a reference to the Prussian Duke of Brunswick, adviser to William V.

monarchs for two centuries. He warns the *volk* that it is time to stop them. He denounces the *stadhouders* further for their continual antipathy toward Amsterdam and the other commercial interests of Holland. The author also criticizes the marital ties of the various *stadhouders* to the English royal house.¹⁴

The author then invokes the Union of Utrecht to urge the people to arm themselves in order to avert the disasters which he foresaw from happening.¹⁵ This is the first mention in Aan het Volk of one of the pamphlet's major recommendations, namely that citizens should form militias. The Patriots implemented this recommendation throughout the entire Republic during their ascendancy. Indeed, it was in these militias or *vrijkorpsen* that the "democratic wing of the Patriots came to have an organized existence".¹⁶ Van der Capellen was much influenced by English political thinkers, many of whose ideas he borrowed to solidify his own thinking, and his concept of a citizen's militia derives from Andrew Fletcher's Discourse of Government with Relation to Militia of 1698.¹⁷ Fletcher's work was translated by van der Capellen in 1774 as mentioned in Chapter Three. Fletcher viewed liberty as the most important part of a free society and realized that liberty was in danger when a standing army was controlled by a monarch. Central to Fletcher's thinking was that a citizen militia was necessary as a counterweight to the standing army. Van der Capellen was at one with Fletcher and his translation presented a

¹⁴ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 16-27, *passim*.

¹⁵ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 35-6.

¹⁶ R.R. Palmer, The Age of the Democratic Revolution (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), 332.

¹⁷ Schama, Patriots, 65.

practical program to implement such a militia.¹⁸ It is not surprising that citizen militias received prominence in Aan het Volk.

The concept of a citizen militia was not a new one. Urban guards (*schutterijen* or shooters) had existed since the twelfth century and functioned not only in a military capacity but also as a representative institution for their *burger* members.¹⁹ During the Dutch revolt against Spain, the *schutterijen* acted to defend their towns against the Spanish threat. Their position as an institution of the Republic was formalized in Article Eight of the Union of Utrecht (as van der Capellen notes). By the late seventeenth century, the *schutterijen* became anachronistic and served mainly as “a social ornament for the ruling elite.”²⁰ How the Patriots were able to use the ancient institution for their own purposes and the role of the Patriot press in implementing the Patriot militias will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Van der Capellen was also influenced by Richard Price’s theory of political liberty. Price set up a theoretical foundation for liberty which was absent in Fletcher. According to van der Capellen, Price’s theory of the omnipotence of the people encompassed freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of religion.²¹ These concepts informed much of the contents of Aan het Volk.

Democratic ideals and principles appear throughout Aan het Volk. Its author uses a metaphoric reference to a corporate entity to emphasize that sovereignty resides in the people, that everyone has rights, and that everyone is equal. The people were the owners

¹⁸ M. Evers, “Angelsaksische inspiratiebronnen voor de patriottische denkbeelden van Joan Derk van der Capellen,” in DNR, 206.

¹⁹ N.C.F. van Sas, “The Patriot Revolution: New Perspectives,” in TDR, 113.

²⁰ Schama, Patriots, 81.

²¹ Evers, “Angelsaksische inspiratiebronnen,” 209.

of that entity in the same way as shareholders are of a body corporate, and the rulers, be they *stadhouders* or Regents, are the directors and officers who are servants of and accountable to, the shareholders. The authority of the Regents, and indirectly that of the *Stadhouder*, is derived from the people.²² To attain that sovereignty, the author reminds people to join together in societies, to defend their property and other rights, and to resist aggression and violence.²³

The author is full of praise for the two *stadhouder*-less periods (1650-1672 and 1702-1747), and notes that commerce flourished during these years, and that the state was well governed. Yet even then, all commoners were excluded from the seats of power by the Regents, who restricted membership in their ranks to a very small and ever-decreasing number of families within the towns and cities.²⁴ In addressing the 1747 restoration of the *stadhouder*, the author, revealing his anti-English bias, comments sarcastically that “the *Stadhouders* are a present from the English,” and that the English had never given anything of benefit to the Republic. Instead, the author indicates that the English had embroiled the Republic in various wars against France.²⁵ He continues by asking the nobility, in a manner not dissimilar from modern politicians who challenge incumbents, if they are better off with the new *Stadhouder* William IV in charge.²⁶

It is some two-thirds of the way into Aan het Volk that the author addresses the sitting *Stadhouder*, William V, directly, citing the latter’s many breaches of the country’s

²² [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 38-40.

²³ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 40-1.

²⁴ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 47, 65.

²⁵ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 70-1.

²⁶ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], Address, 72.

constitution and laws since assuming office in his own right in 1766. He emphasizes William's lacklustre leadership as commander-in-chief of the Dutch armed forces in the Fourth English War. The author then attacks the *Stadhouder's* private conduct, accusing him of drunkenness, childish behaviour, and of being an adulterer.²⁷ Over the course of several pages, he expresses (anonymous) indignation at van der Cappelen's removal from the *Staten* of Overijssel in 1778 as well as other indignities suffered by him and others at the hands of the *Stadhouder*.²⁸ The author conveniently omits acknowledging the *Stadhouder's* assistance in 1772, when William did support the author's application for admission to the *Ridderschap* of Overijssel.

Having set forth this long list of accusations against William V, the author concludes with the message that his countrymen must save the country. He calls for representative committees to monitor the Republic's existing institutions. To paraphrase, he summons them to assemble peacefully, to elect trusted Patriots, to meet at the earliest convenience and inquire why the Fourth English War was going so badly, and to publish proceedings of their deliberations. And, finally, "Arm yourselves [and] choose your commanders."²⁹

Several observations are in order. While the author's arguments are historical in nature, some of the 'facts' he cites are not necessarily accurate. For example, there is no evidence that there was an uninterrupted occupation of the country by the ancient Batavians. For seven centuries, little was known of the people who occupied the region until the county of Holland arose during the reign of Charlemagne in the ninth century.

²⁷ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], *Address*, 113-23, *passim*.

²⁸ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], *Address*, 88-90.

²⁹ [Van der Capellen tot den Pol], *Address*, 137.

The Batavians were completely forgotten during this period. The Batavian Myth, as it became known in Dutch history books, consumed Dutch historians from the early seventeenth century onward, and was recognized for what it was, a founding myth to justify the revolt from Spain. Yet the Myth survives: it gave its name to the Batavian Republic established in 1795 which lasted until 1806; and the first act of a drama performed in Amsterdam following the liberation of the Netherlands in May 1945 was entitled 'Batavian Daybreak.'³⁰

The author also realized the risk he would face if he affixed his name to Aan het Volk. He anticipated the banning of his pamphlet and the reward offered by the authorities for information about the identity of the author or its printer.³¹ It is noteworthy that he did not advocate abolishing any of the Republic's institutions, nor did he propose the creation of new entities. R.R. Palmer surmises that what the author had in mind was to create a "public inspection or scrutiny" over the many government institutions.³² Aan het Volk set forth the principles of the Patriots who were gaining strength in the Republic, namely a republican, anti-*stadhouder*, anti-English position, along with a democratic spirit. Such democratic concepts as participation in government, equality, the rights of man and sovereignty of the people found fertile ground among Patriot supporters.³³ It meant that they could join newly created militias, *burger* committees and societies to participate in the political process from which they had been excluded.

³⁰ I. Schöffer, "The Batavian Myth during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in B&N, v. V., 78-9.

³¹ [Van der Capellen, tot den Pol], Address, 132.

³² R.R. Palmer, The Democratic Revolution (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1959), 330.

³³ Katherine Wallberger Lindley, "The Rise of the Dutch Patriots and the Revolution of 1787" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin), 55-6.

In analyzing the pamphlet, I counted twenty references by the anonymous author to himself and his earlier writings. E.H. Kossmann comments that the reader's concentration is often broken by laughter at the self-praise, and imagined tears of pride in van der Capellen's eyes. Kossmann continues that the step from the sublime to the ridiculous is a very small one in Aan het Volk. Kossmann further notes that the military question of the *vrijkorpsen* was one of the most important subjects of the pamphlet. Kossmann's assessment is that the author did not propose that the militias should replace the Republic's standing army; rather, they were intended to supplement it. The problems surrounding overall command of the two forces and integrating them into one was not addressed.³⁴ Kossmann recognizes van der Capellen as a democrat, though he qualifies that assessment by noting others were more democratic. As well, he asserts that there were better political writers in the Republic, and names the Orangist Elie Luzac. Finally, though Kossmann judges the author not to be of the stature of Rousseau, he commends him for bringing the Republic's problems into the open so that political discussion could begin.³⁵

The use of the pamphlet as a medium for political discourse was an old tradition in the Republic, although the term itself did not become used until around 1700.³⁶ The function of a pamphlet was to inform and, more importantly, to persuade its readers that some facet of the Republic's internal political governance or its external relations with

³⁴ The editor of the primary Patriot newspaper, De Post van den Neder-Rhijn would provide a plan to address these problems. See c. 5, p.106.

³⁵ E.H.Kossmann, Politieke theorie en geschiedenis, 253-4.

³⁶ Craig E. Harline, Pamphlets, Printing and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic (Dordrecht, Boston and Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 2.

other states, required revision.³⁷ They were attractive because they were brief and were framed in a simple, common language to orient the reader, and pamphlets could be prepared and printed much more quickly than other print media.³⁸ They were intended for readers who were outside the political structure.³⁹ Craig Harline observes that political literature increased markedly during crises and major events within the Republic.⁴⁰ The accuracy of this observation is exemplified by the explosion of pamphlet literature in the late 1770s and during the Fourth English War, as we shall see in Chapter Five (See p.100).

At this stage, we may inquire what it was that made Aan het Volk such an influential instrument of political discourse. The pamphlet was the first synthesis of the Patriot program. As I noted above, the simplicity and forcefulness of its language and the practical plan of action which van der Capellen recommended, appealed to many who were dissatisfied with the Republic's governance. The pamphlet received extensive comment in the political press from both Patriot and Orangist supporters. Van der Capellen's ideas identified him with the English republican tradition rather than the French or American varieties. Aan het Volk set the political debate between the rival factions, and its importance lies in the fact that its author's recommendations for implementation and reform of the Republic's political structure were subsequently achieved as we shall see below. The pamphlet was also reprinted fifteen times between 1781 and 1795, which is persuasive evidence that it reached new levels of the public.

³⁷ Harline, Pamphlets, 3.

³⁸ Harline, Pamphlets, 11.

³⁹ Harline, Pamphlets, 26.

⁴⁰ Harline, Pamphlets, 10.

The Search for the Author

As noted above, Aan het Volk was written anonymously and the identity of its author, while a matter of widespread speculation, was not known for over a century. It was only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century that the author of the pamphlet began to occupy the agenda of Dutch historians. It was the appearance of W.H. de Beaufort's collection of the correspondence of Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol in 1879⁴¹ which served as impetus to the Mennonite minister A. Loosjes to begin a five-year study of Aan het Volk in 1881.⁴²

Various reasons have been suggested for the lack of discussion regarding Aan het Volk, its author and the *Patriottentijd* during the nineteenth century. Historians preferred to concentrate on the more pleasant phases of the Dutch historical past, such as the successful Revolt from Spain and the Golden Age of the seventeenth century. Not only was the *Patriottentijd* ignored, but the entire so-called 'French period' from 1795 to 1815 was seen as a dark period of Dutch history and given short shrift. After the House of Orange was installed as the reigning dynasty of the new Dutch kingdom created by the Vienna Settlement in 1815, publication or discussion of any anti-Orangist tracts such as Aan het Volk was extremely difficult.⁴³

Loosjes' study is an inquiry into the pamphlet Aan het Volk, its author, printers and distribution which was published in 1886. Loosjes' work at times reads like a detective

⁴¹ W.H. de Beaufort, ed., Brieven van en aan Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol (Utrecht: Kemink, 1879).

⁴² A. Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel: studie over het pamflet Aan het Volk van Nederland (Haarlem: De Erven Loosjes, 1886).

⁴³ Schama, Patriots, 15-6.

novel and, at other times, like a scientific inquiry into printing methods. Loosjes examined other writings of van der Capellen to test his theory that van der Capellen was the author of Aan het Volk noting the latter's writing style, phrasing and spelling peculiarities, and comparing these to the pamphlet. This analysis is almost universally cited as the first inquiry into Aan het Volk and its author. However, prior to the completion of Loosjes' study, J.I. Doorninck's treatise on anonymous authors of the Republic appeared in 1883. Doorninck lists Aan het Volk and briefly records that despite the high reward offered by the authorities at the time of its publication, neither the author nor the printer were identified. He names F.A. van der Kemp, the radical Mennonite friend of van der Capellen, as the probable author, but identifies others who could have written Aan het Volk, including the editor of a Delft newspaper, the Patriot Wijbo Fijnje.⁴⁴ Doorninck also observes that he found three copies of Aan het Volk in the bundle of correspondence compiled by de Beaufort and wonders, inasmuch as van der Kemp was known to have been a close friend of van der Capellen, if van der Capellen could have participated in the writing of the pamphlet.⁴⁵

Loosjes refers to Doorninck's discussion of the pamphlet's authorship and adds additional suspects, including the Patriots Ihrhoven van Dam and De Bosch Kemper.⁴⁶ By a process of elimination, and by comparing the writing styles and syntax of both van der Kemp and van der Capellen, Loosjes concludes that van der Capellen is the *principal* author of Aan het Volk, but adds that van der Kemp is *co-author!*⁴⁷ There the matter of

⁴⁴ See Christina Kroes-Ligtenberg Dr. Wybo Fijnje (1750-1809) (Assen: van Gorcum & Co, 1957) for a biography of Wijbo Fijnje.

⁴⁵ J.I. Doorninck, Vermomde en Naamloze Schrijvers (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1883), 6.

⁴⁶ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 54-5.

the authorship of the pamphlet rested until Loosjes produced a further pamphlet in 1891 that eliminated van der Kemp from the equation and left van der Capellen as the sole author.⁴⁸

In 1890, Loosjes received a copy of an autobiography of F.A. van der Kemp in manuscript form from a Mrs. Fairchild of New York.⁴⁹ Loosjes took this work as his starting point for a follow-up study of Aan het Volk and announced that he was now certain the van der Capellen was the only author, based upon the following passage in the autobiography:

[A]t the same time my noble friend had written a manly appeal *To the People of Netherlands*, while I visited him at his country seat, and entrusted me with its publication and distribution.⁵⁰

The 1903 published version of van der Kemp's autobiography contained the additional comment by Mrs. Fairchild, immediately following the above quotation:

An anonymous note on the MS copy in the Paris National Library states that Professor Valkenaer said that Mr. Capellen de Pol made this work and that it was printed at Lingen.⁵¹

Loosjes and subsequent writers have used this passage to conclude that the 'noble friend' therein referred to was Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol. Loosjes was aware from reading some of van der Capellen's correspondence that van der Kemp had visited the latter at his country home in the summer of 1781. In addition, Loosjes received

⁴⁷ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 57, 74.

⁴⁸ Adriaan Loosjes, Nog een en ander over het pamflet Aan het Volk van Nederland (Amsterdam: F.W. Engeling, 1891).

⁴⁹ The manuscript was subsequently published in 1903 as Francis Adrian van der Kemp, 1752-1829: an Autobiographie, ed. Helen Linklaen Fairchild (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903).

⁵⁰ Van der Kemp, Autobiography, 54.

⁵¹ Van der Kemp, Autobiography, 54.

information from his network of friends who did some research on his behalf, and reported that several poems and songs had appeared in 1782 identifying van der Capellen as the author of Aan het Volk.⁵² There the search for the author of the pamphlet appeared to end.

Some years following the Loosjes study, W.P.C. Knuttel prepared a chronological list of forbidden books within the Republic from 1583 to 1794, wherein he lists Aan het Volk and its author among its entries for that period.⁵³ However, van der Capellen's biographer, M. de Jong, was hesitant to accept Loosjes' conclusion. De Jong observed that Loosjes did not provide sufficient detail regarding van der Capellen's life and doubted the accuracy of van der Kemp's statements quoted above.⁵⁴ De Jong sought further evidence as proof of the authorship and found it among van der Capellen's correspondence. Several letters which van der Capellen wrote to his friends referred specifically to Aan het Volk and two of them in October 1783 mentioned that he contemplated writing *another* or *second* "BAHVVN", the initials for the Dutch 'Letter to the People of the Netherlands.'⁵⁵ These letters and de Jong's study of van der Capellen's admission to the *Ridderschap* of Overijssel finally convinced him that van der Capellen was indeed the author.

No one since has seriously doubted de Jong's (and, indeed, Loosjes'), conclusions. In truth, on the basis of the evidence cited above, and a lack of any evidence to the

⁵² Loosjes. Nog een en ander, 11-2.

⁵³ W.P.C. Knuttel, Verboden Boeken (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1914), 125.

⁵⁴ De Jong, van der Capellen, vi.

⁵⁵ De Jong, van der Capellen, 392-3. Van der Capellen referred to his pamphlet as a 'letter' to the People of the Netherlands within the text thereof at 72. The Dutch translation of the acronym is *B(rief) A(an) H(et) V(olk) V(an) N(ederland)*.

contrary, it is accepted that Joan Derk van der Capellen is the author of Aan het Volk. While not proven beyond a reasonable doubt (few historical facts are), on the balance of probabilities we can accept the claim that van der Capellen is the author.

Even though it took well over a century to solve the mystery of authorship of Aan het Volk, there were some contemporary hints in the press of the day and elsewhere that van der Capellen was the author. It appears certain that some of his friends were aware of his secret. We have van der Kemp's autobiography and the letters noted above in corroboration. The editor of the Orangist newspaper De Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot, who we encountered in the previous chapter, published a letter from the anonymous "PRPPP" on February 12, 1783 which suggested that the ideas of the scandalous pamphlet Aan het Volk are attributable to the "Overijsselse Cromwel" known as Baron van der Capellen tot den Pol, the seducer and inciter of the writer's poor countrymen.⁵⁶ The Patriot De Politieke Krayer announced the death of van der Capellen underneath the heading "*Aan het Volk van Nederland*," followed by several pages of praise for the deceased Patriot leader.⁵⁷ Mention should also be made of the fact that both a 1784 and 1795 edition of Aan het Volk contained a portrait drawing showing a remarkable likeness to van der Capellen, though in neither case was his name affixed.⁵⁸

In order to understand van der Capellen's importance, one needs to refer again to the phases of Robert Darnton's "communications circuit" and their inter-relationships,

⁵⁶ De Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot, vol. 5, LII, 241; the actual Dutch wording was "*het schandelijk geschrift aan 't Volk van Nederland, waarvan de beginsels en ideën te vinden zijn in de schriften van den Overijsselsen Cromwel die zich noemt Baron van der Capellen tot den Pol Regent, den verleider en opstoker van mijne arme Landgenoten.*"

⁵⁷ De Politieke Krayer, vol. 3, 145, p. 2166.

⁵⁸ H.L. Zwitzer, "Introduction" to Aan het Volk van Nederland: Het patriottisch program uit 1781 by J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol (Amsterdam: DBL, 1987), 9.

and to address the impact of external influences. Darnton suggests that authors usually modify their behaviour as a result of pressure, anticipated or actual, from state, church or social groups.⁵⁹ Van der Capellen can be seen to have responded to such pressures. His decision to publish his pamphlet anonymously had important consequences. The anonymity of the author initially heightened interest in the work both amongst Patriots and Orangists who wanted to figure out “who” could write such an incendiary text. The interest in the anonymous pamphlet would have been amplified by the immediate attempts to suppress the work and to bring its treasonous author to light. As well, the very fact of its anonymity allowed time for the pamphlet to be circulated and the ideas to percolate in Dutch society. In turn, this provided a period of time during which Aan het Volk could become the voice of the Patriot movement rather than the voice of its author.

Our perception of Aan het Volk might be much different if we were unaware of van der Capellen’s background, his ideas and his motivation in writing it. Had the pamphlet been written by someone less prominent, it might not have had the impact that it did. Because van der Capellen was a previously published author, he likely had built up relationships within the publishing community which he could take advantage of to produce the pamphlet clandestinely. In addition, he probably had access to the publishers’ distribution networks supplemented by transmission through trusted colleagues and friends who supported his work and who would maintain discretion. Being a noble meant he could mobilize financial resources to ensure publication. The fact that he was of the aristocracy and proposed broadly-based progressive views inclusive of all *volk* would likely produce both greater readership and more followers.

⁵⁹ Robert Darnton, The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 184.

We cannot know for certain all of the influences on van der Capellen and the complete story of the genesis of Aan het Volk. Darnton found it difficult to trace the complete “communications circuit” even for major authors like Voltaire. As well, he found it problematic to trace the complete circuit of a work produced in Germany because of the fragmented nature of that state. The Dutch Republic was likewise disjointed. With reference to Aan het Volk, therefore, there remains some obscurity in identifying the actual importance of the work and a similar difficulty in completely tracing the “links between authors, publishers, and readers”.⁶⁰

The Printing History of the Pamphlet

Now that the authorship of Aan het Volk has been determined, it remains to discover how and by whom the pamphlet was printed, how it found its way to its readers, and what its impact was. The influential work of Robert Darnton demonstrates the value of many practical research methods and of previously untapped sources of information. These will prove useful in discovering Aan het Volk's printing history and its readership, and more importantly, in studying the rise of the political press and the impact of the press on Dutch political culture during the *Patriottentijd*.

Darnton is an American cultural historian who has conducted research on the production, publication and distribution of books in pre-Revolutionary France. His aim is to understand how books affected the political, cultural and moral lives of the French prior to the Revolution. His sources are extensive. His primary source is the archive of the Soci t  typographique de Neuch tel, with its over fifty thousand documents including

⁶⁰ Darnton, Kiss of Lamorette, p. 125.

bills of lading, letters, receipts and other records.⁶¹ Darnton also looks into police archives and the records of bookseller guilds. His studies have dealt with readership, the demographics of authors, book reviews and the contents of public and private libraries. His methodology is interdisciplinary in that it uses many of the investigative techniques of the '*Annales School*' of cultural history.⁶²

Darnton notes that there is a general pattern in how books found their way from the author to the reader.⁶³ From these patterns, he postulates that most books pass through a similar life cycle which he calls a "communications circuit". This cycle begins with the author and proceeds in turn "to the publisher ... the printer, the shipper, the bookseller and the reader."⁶⁴ Each of these phases is related to the activities of the others, as well as being shaped by outside influences such as the social, political, and economic conditions of the time.⁶⁵ In addition to authors, Darnton asserts that printers, booksellers and readers also usually modified their behaviour in the face of pressure from state, church and social groups as well as the condition of the economy.⁶⁶ He continues by observing that book historians generally analyze one segment of the cycle such as printing, but cautions that each such segment should be related to the entire "communications circuit". Because of the lack of source materials from the time, only two of the phases of Darnton's

⁶¹ Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1982), vi.

⁶² Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1990), 109.

⁶³ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 60.

⁶⁴ Darnton, *Lamourette*, 111.

⁶⁵ Darnton, *Lamourette*, 112-3.

⁶⁶ Darnton, *Best-Sellers*, 184.

“communications circuit” are applied in what follows. Nevertheless, Darnton’s model contributes substantially to my discussion below.

The business of the printer is the best known of the stages according to Darnton.⁶⁷ He suggests that each book bears a cultural imprint, based on its language, its typography, layout, format and binding, all of which are intended to orient the reader.⁶⁸ An investigation into the printing history of Aan het Volk cannot follow Darnton’s model exactly, because the identity of the printer is unknown and there has been extensive debate over the exact number of editions or reprints of the pamphlet. The reason for the anonymity of the printer is likely the same reason that the identity of van der Capellen remained a secret, namely the fear of fines and banishment for those who printed, published or distributed Aan het Volk.

Dutch historians and this writer are fortunate that the printing history of Aan het Volk during the eighteenth century has been extensively canvassed in the works of A. Loosjes, G. van Rijn, and M. De Jong.⁶⁹ A few passages in van der Kemp’s autobiography are also informative. As was the case with the search to identify the author of Aan het Volk, the search for the details of the pamphlet’s printing history begins with Loosjes’ two pamphlets. Loosjes spends some thirty pages attempting to identify the printers and the various editions and reprints of Aan het Volk. He begins by observing that the pamphlet went through many printings and editions, that it was read by

⁶⁷ Darnton, Lamourette, 127.

⁶⁸ Darnton, Best-Sellers, 186.

⁶⁹ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel and Nog een en ander over het pamflet Aan het Volk van Nederland (Amsterdam: F.W. Engeling, 1891); G. van Rijn, “Het pamflet: Aan het Volk van Nederland,” in Bijlage tot de Rotterdamse Lybrye (Rotterdam: N.p., 1884), 2-24 and further, Het pamflet ‘aan het volk van Nederland,’ reprinted from the Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje voor 1888, 1-50; M. Hzn de Jong, De oudste uitgaven van het pamflet Aan het Volk van Nederland (Groningen and the Hague: J.B. Wolters, 1924).

“thousands upon thousands,” and that it led to a state of rebellion within the Republic.⁷⁰

Other than this reference, there is no further mention by Loosjes of the number of copies which were printed.

The original printing from the handwritten manuscript was clandestinely completed at the home of Professor F.A van der Marck at Lingen, Germany, just across the border from Groningen.⁷¹ This information is recorded in a handwritten note on the “MS copy” in Paris. Loosjes lists seven different Dutch editions or reprints of Aan het Volk and an English translation which followed the Lingen printing. Loosjes’ listing notes that these appeared between 1781 and 1795. The most original “*uitgave*” (edition or publication) is the one which he designates as “A”, followed by six later ones which he labels “B” through “H”.⁷² Loosjes’ method of inquiry is to compare the various later editions to the one he found to be the most correct reprint of the Lingen original, namely “A”.⁷³ He scrutinized the number of pages of each version, the number of lines on each page, and the number of letters in each line. The manner of pagination is noted as are the spelling and punctuation differences. The quality of the paper used and the watermarks also caught Loosjes’ attention as did the font of the type and various printing errors. He concludes that edition C is a later version of B because it contained more errors of various kinds than B. Except for dating the original A as September 3, 1781, no dates are provided for B or C. The English translation designated “G” by Loosjes followed in 1782

⁷⁰ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 25.

⁷¹ W.P.C. Knuttel, Catalogus van de Pamfletten-verzameling berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek, vol. 5 (The Hague: N.p., 1905), 102.

⁷² Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 30-1.

⁷³ This is the original edition designated as Kn. 19864.

as An Address to the People of the Netherlands.⁷⁴ Edition "D" is a translation from the French edition back into Dutch and dates from 1784.⁷⁵ It is entitled The ambition for power of the House of Orange.⁷⁶ It is this edition which contained a portrait of van der Capellen accompanied by a flag and the words "*Vindex Patriae et Libertatis Batavae*".⁷⁷ There is also a German translation of Aan het Volk, but it is not listed in the Knuttel catalogue.

Regarding editions "E" and "F", Loosjes noted that both have greater discrepancies from the original "A" than do editions "B" or "C", but he does not specify the year or the sequence of their publication. Finally, Loosjes comes to edition "H" of 1795, which also contains a portrait of van der Capellen, this time accompanied by a drawing of an inkwell, paper and pen.⁷⁸ This edition commemorates the newly established Batavian Republic and the flight of the *Stadhouder* to exile in England.

Loosjes next addresses the question of how the original edition "A" was created. Interestingly, it is a dramatic comedy which was presented in February 1782, which he focuses on.⁷⁹ The plot revolves around one Koos Horrel, a printer, and various other characters with names such as "*Le Roi*", "*Lion*", and others. The storyline involves an anonymous pamphlet which was distributed in various Holland cities. Loosjes also uncovered information about the trial, fines and banishment of three people who were

⁷⁴ Edition 'G' bears Kn. 20137.

⁷⁵ Edition 'D' bears Kn. 19866.

⁷⁶ W.P.C. Knuttel, Catalogus, vol. 5, 102; The original Dutch was "*De Heerschzucht van het Huis van Oranje*".

⁷⁷ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 30.

⁷⁸ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 32.

⁷⁹ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 32-3.

convicted of printing and distributing Aan het Volk. The three convicted men were a Leiden printer, Jacobus Bronkhorst, Jan de Leeuw and Izaak de Koning. The connection between the drama and the judicial proceedings requires some explanation.

“Koos Horrel” was so-called because he suffered from a clubfoot (“*horrel*” translates as “clubfoot”). It turned out that Bronkhorst was similarly afflicted. De Leeuw translates as “the Lion” and de Koning translates as “the King” or “*le Roi*”.⁸⁰ On the basis of this evidence, Loosjes concludes that these men and a Leiden bookseller named Cornelis Heyligert,⁸¹ were responsible for printing and distributing the pamphlet in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leiden, Utrecht, Delft and several other small towns.⁸² Loosjes further suggests that printing presses were transported to a warehouse in Leiden where Aan het Volk was printed, assembled and hidden in boxes. The participants in this process are named and are said to be under the overall direction of F.A. van der Kemp,⁸³ a fact subsequently confirmed in the latter’s autobiography.⁸⁴

Before Loosjes’ 1886 pamphlet was published, G. van Rijn conducted his own study of Aan het Volk which was published in 1884. Van Rijn followed up with a second study in 1888. He covers much of the same ground as Loosjes but identifies fourteen separate editions of the pamphlet, including all translations, the last being the 1795 edition marked as ‘H’ by Loosjes. Van Rijn also examined the differences in the binding

⁸⁰ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 39.

⁸¹ It is not known if he was a Patriot, but I assume if he was an Orangist, he either would not have participated or would have sabotaged the operation. Furthermore, Heyligert was a friend of the fiery van der Kemp, a Patriot leader, so it is likely he was a Patriot.

⁸² Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 37, 44.

⁸³ Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel, 42.

⁸⁴ Van der Kemp, Autobiography, 54.

processes of various editions of Aan het Volk in arriving at his conclusion that there were seven more editions than Loosjes had recorded. He points out that it was not unusual for pamphlets to be left on the streets in 1781; what he found unusual was that the dissemination of Aan het Volk was conducted in so many cities at the same time, a remarkable organizational feat.⁸⁵ Van Rijn then concludes that the radical Patriot bookseller Jan Verlem, editor of De Politieke Kruyer, was responsible for printing and selling the 1795 edition, noting that Verlem had previous convictions for publishing subversive materials.⁸⁶

What is of interest about Verlem is the fact that he was a vital link in a network of Patriot writers, printers and booksellers in the Republic, and, after 1787, abroad, which provided a continuous flow of illegal books. Among his connections were Jacob Bronkhorst of Rotterdam, Hermanus Koning and Jan de Leeuw of Dordrecht, all of whom assisted in the printing and distribution of Aan het Volk.⁸⁷ This network of Patriot writers, publishers and booksellers fits into Darnton's model of a "communications circuit".

In the second van Rijn study in 1888, the author provides much detail of the trial of Messrs. Bronkhorst, de Leeuw and de Koning.⁸⁸ The evidence revealed that the participants in the printing process were paid a premium to produce Aan het Volk in as short a time as possible and to maintain their secrecy. The last bit of evidence reveals that

⁸⁵ Van Rijn, Het Pamflet, 3.

⁸⁶ Van Rijn, Het Pamflet, 15-6.

⁸⁷ Sofie Cerutti, "Illegale handel in boeken rond 1791. Paapes biografie van Willem V of hoe een boekhandelaar in het rasphuis belande," DAE 30 (1998/1): 66-7.

⁸⁸ Van Rijn, Het pamflet, 17-22, *passim*. One of the witnesses was Bronkhorst's typesetter, Adrianus Sterk; this is a coincidence.

several hundred copies of the 1795 edition of the pamphlet were found in the personal effects of Verlem after his death.⁸⁹ Van Rijn also tells us that Bronkhorst appeared as a witness in a 1791 trial of Verlem, where Bronkhorst admitted printing the original Aan het Volk.

The last writer to examine the printing history of van der Capellen's pamphlet was his biographer, M. de Jong. In his 1924 study he reviews the conclusions of Loosjes and provides further analysis of the pamphlet's printing history. De Jong criticizes Loosjes for using the terms "reprint" and "edition" interchangeably and then recounts how his investigative approach differed from that of Loosjes. He analyzes copies of the pamphlet that Loosjes had labelled "A", "B", and "C" which were located in various Dutch libraries and discovered eleven libraries had different copies of pamphlets "A" and "C" and five had different copies of "B". Some were bundled together with other, unrelated, pamphlets, while the paper quality and binding were also different in the several libraries. What this did was to raise doubt over the exact number of reprints or editions of Aan het Volk, from 1781 to 1795. De Jong does, however, confirm that the 1781 pamphlet "A" is the original on which all the others are based. His conclusion is based on the evidence in the Bronkhorst trial, and in particular, the persuasive evidence of the witness, A. Sterk, Bronkhorst's typesetter.⁹⁰ De Jong also notes that demand to have a copy of Aan het Volk was so great that several handwritten copies were made.⁹¹

In researching the printer's phase of the "communications circuit", Darnton examined a number of the areas related to printing a book. These included the type of

⁸⁹ Van Rijn, Het pamflet, 25, 37.

⁹⁰ De Jong, De Oudste uitgaven, 14.

⁹¹ De Jong, De Oudste uitgaven, 3.

paper used by the printer, the typography of the text and how a book was bound. In their research on the printing history and the identity of the author of Aan het Volk, Loosjes, van Rijn and de Jong used similar techniques to those of Darnton, again illustrating, albeit almost a century earlier, the utility of Darnton's model.

We have seen how van der Capellen's thoughts and fears influenced the contents of Aan het Volk and the reasons for his anonymity. The printing phase of Darnton's "circuit" was discussed. It remains to examine the most difficult and final stage of the "circuit", namely the readership and the external influences which governed the reception and interpretation of the van der Capellen pamphlet. As we shall see, those influences include the immediate proscription of the pamphlet by the authorities, the emerging political press, the Patriot movement and the impact that of all of these factors had on Dutch society.

CHAPTER 5

RECEPTION AND READERSHIP

Initial Reactions

We last encountered Aan het Volk packed away in boxes in a Leiden warehouse after it was printed. Before that, we learned that the pamphlet was distributed simultaneously on the streets of various major cities and towns throughout the Republic. Who the readers were, what their reactions were, and how the pamphlet played a substantial role in the politicization of the Republic's inhabitants during the *Patriottentijd* of the 1780s, are the subjects to be explored in this chapter. The storylines of the readership of Aan het Volk, the rise of the political press, the politicization of the nation, and the Patriot movement all intersect and overlap. For convenience, I propose to treat them separately.

The reactions to Aan het Volk were immediate and multi-faceted and cannot, at least initially, be attributed solely to those of the Orangist and Patriot factions.¹ A simplistic view suggests that the Orangists considered the pamphlet to be a grave danger to the Republic, while Patriot sympathizers regarded it as the first building block toward a free republic.² M. de Jong writes that he has no doubt Aan het Volk was widely read by both Patriot sympathizers and their Orangist opponents.³ However, he cites no authority for this general statement, and it leaves us to wonder who did read the pamphlet.

One of the first reactions to Aan het Volk was by the authorities. The *Stadhouder* wrote to various provincial *Staten* and municipalities and requested that they take

¹ W.R.E. Klein, Patriots Republikenisme. Politieke Cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787) (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 115.

² Klein, Republikenisme, 91.

³ M. Hzn. de Jong, Joan Derk van der Capellen: Staatkundig Levensbeeld uit de Wordingstijd van de Moderne Democratie in Nederland (Groningen and the Hague: J.B. Wolters, 1922), 390.

appropriate measures to forbid distribution and to punish the author, printer and distributor of the pamphlet, which he naturally found to be offensive.⁴ We may therefore conclude that William read Aan het Volk, or at the very least, was aware of its contents. The first edict was promulgated by the *Staten* of Utrecht on October 3, 1781, scarcely a week after the distribution of the pamphlet. The edict offered a reward to anyone who revealed the identity of the author, the printer and the distributor of Aan het Volk. The edict went on to levy hefty fines for the offending participants in the pamphlet's preparation and distribution, and threatened to banish them if they were identified and convicted. Thereafter, several other *Staten* and the *Staten-Generaal* issued their own similarly worded edicts. Some added mere possession of Aan het Volk as an offence and deemed anyone found to have it on their person to be the author unless they immediately surrendered it to the authorities.⁵ In this manner, booksellers and libraries were added to the list of those caught within the net of offenders. Several municipalities also banned Aan het Volk, including the Hague where the *Stadhouder's* court was situated, and the cities of Utrecht and Haarlem, the latter banning the pamphlet as late as 1789.⁶ As is the case with censorship today, it appears that the banning of Aan het Volk attracted as many readers as did the actual contents of the pamphlet.⁷

The immediate impact of van der Capellen's pamphlet on the Patriot movement was considerable. Previously scattered and disparate groups of Patriots quickened their efforts

⁴ De Jong, van der Capellen, 391.

⁵ A. Loosjes, Een Krachtig Libel: studie over het pamflet Aan het Volk van Nederland (Haarlem: De Erven Loosjes, 1886), 25-30, *passim*.

⁶ W.P.C. Knuttel, Verboden Boeken (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1914), 125.

⁷ Klein, Republikanisme, 117 *et seq.* See also N.C.F. van Sas, "Opiniepers en politieke cultuur," in Vaderland en Vrijheid, eds. F. Grijzenhout et al (Amsterdam: DBL, 1987), 108.

to coordinate local plans for civic militias and citizen committees as advocated in Aan het Volk.⁸

Other than the edicts by the Orangist authorities, the *Stadhouder* and his supporters were slow to react to the implications of the pamphlet's contents, seeing the Stadholderate to be the main issue in van der Capellen's attack. Thus the leading Orangist writer of the time, Elie Luzac, began to write and publish a series of letters aimed to free the *Stadhouder* from blame for "Dutch decline" and the Fourth English War, and to protect him from unwarranted criticism.⁹ There are several reasons for the initial reluctance by the Orangists to react to Aan het Volk and the Patriots activities to which it gave rise. Wyger Velema identifies three main reasons for their delay: the uninspired leadership of William V; the early Patriot successes in attracting a substantial portion of public opinion to their side; and, most importantly, the need to develop a proper theoretical framework to respond to the new Patriot phenomenon. Velema laments that discussions of the anti-Patriot literature has not been prominent in subsequent historiography.¹⁰

The Orangists responded by trying to demonstrate that the Dutch Republic was a free, tolerant and prosperous society, and that the Patriot ideas extracted from Aan het Volk were archaic and primitive. They argued that the introduction of popular government would have disastrous consequences. It was the *Stadhouder*, they maintained, who protected the liberty of the Dutch people from abuses by the town

⁸ Alice Clare Carter, Neutrality or Commitment: The Evolution of Dutch Foreign Policy, 1667-1795 (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1975), 104.

⁹ Wyger R.E. Velema, Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic (Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1993), 163.

¹⁰ Velema, Enlightenment, 158.

Regents, a liberty subject always to the rule of law, and “not the classical republican liberty exalted by the Patriots.”¹¹

It appears that the readership of Aan het Volk at this stage included both leading Orangists and Patriots. According to the assessments of A. Loosjes and G. van Rijn mentioned in Chapter Four, (See p. 78) there were fifteen editions or reprints of the pamphlet between 1781 and 1795. We have no evidence about the number of copies which were made of each edition, but if we assume that more than one person read at least some of the copies, then we may reasonably conclude that readership of Aan het Volk was significant. How far the pamphlet’s reach extended into the population at large is the next topic to be addressed.

The Search for Readers

There are several ways to obtain books: from booksellers, circulating and public libraries and reading societies, among others. The location and size of the reading public are closely related to their ability to obtain books and to the level of literacy existing in a particular region. In order to assess the readership of Aan het Volk, I return to Robert Darnton’s “communications circuit” in order to determine which of his methods are useful in this task. The readership is the final and most difficult stage of the circuit to study because of a number of factors, including the differing interpretations and reactions of each reader as well as external influences on them such as the cultural context in which works are read.¹² My hunch is that the banning of Aan het Volk led to secrecy among its readers, and that any printed comments anyone dared to make would only be of a critical nature. There were no polls, statistics or bestseller lists in the 1780s to provide direct

¹¹ Velema, Enlightenment, 158.

¹² Robert Darnton, The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 184.

evidence of readership. Therefore, to test the readership of the pamphlet, recourse to indirect evidence must be had.

Darnton lists several sources which he consulted to acquire the information he needed to complete the “communications circuit” for the illegal literature extant in France before 1789. Among these sources were judicial and bookseller guild archives.¹³ He lists further sources such as broadsheets, pamphlets and periodicals.¹⁴ To this list may be added an examination of advertisements and translations of the underground literature, as well as cultural phenomena such as dramas and songs about the illegal literature.¹⁵ In a study of book histories within the Dutch Republic, Han Brouwer lists additional sources such as estate inventories, letters, diaries, autobiographies and reader annotations.¹⁶

The method I have chosen to attempt to gauge the readership of Aan het Volk is to examine Dutch newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets which appeared in the Republic after the pamphlet’s publication and distribution to determine if it was mentioned or discussed. By this process, one may assume that multiple readers became aware of Aan het Volk, depending of course on the circulation of any such materials. One may similarly assume that copies of the pamphlet in libraries and reading or literary societies were passed around and discussed by several people.¹⁷ In addition, judicial records may reveal valuable information if they contain records of charges laid for possessing or distributing Aan het Volk. The numbers of reprints and editions have already been studied in Chapter Four, and the printing history of the pamphlet also points to a wide

¹³ Robert Darnton, The Literary Underground (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1982), vi.

¹⁴ Darnton, Forbidden Bestsellers, 189.

¹⁵ Jonathan Rose, “The history of books: revised and enlarged,” in The Darnton Debate, ed. Haydn T. Mason (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998), 85-91 *passim*.

¹⁶ Han Brouwer, “Rondom het Boek,” DAE 20 (1988/1): 119.

¹⁷ N.C.F. Van Sas, “The Patriot Revolution: New Perspectives,” in TDR, 115.

readership. As well, minutes of various reading societies, catalogues of booksellers and libraries will all assist in gauging the readership of Aan het Volk.

Some of my inquiries were less successful than others. A review of the judicial archives in Amsterdam for the relevant period revealed no record of charges for distributing or possessing the forbidden Aan het Volk in the Amsterdam area.¹⁸ This finding is surprising because Amsterdam had an extensive network of booksellers and reading rooms. The number of booksellers in Amsterdam alone in the late 1770s was over one-third of the total in the Republic.¹⁹ The absence of legal proceedings relating to Aan het Volk in Amsterdam and elsewhere may suggest that the enforcement of the ban was difficult.

Another unsuccessful search was made in the records of the proceedings of various societies throughout the Republic, which were housed in the Amsterdam archives.²⁰ Most of the documents of those societies recorded only a list of their members, some financial information, dates of their meetings and the nature of the subjects under discussion. Many of the groups were improvement societies, and I did not, therefore, expect to find any mention of Aan het Volk. It is estimated that between 1760 and 1800, some three hundred reading societies were established throughout the Republic.²¹ Some of these had political purposes such as a *Vaderlandsche Sociëteit* (Fatherland Society) in both Amsterdam and Leiden, and *Pro Patria et Libertate* in Utrecht, but none of their records revealed that Aan het Volk had ever been the subject of discussion in those organizations.

¹⁸ GAA, Rechdelijk Archief 5061.

¹⁹ Jeremy Popkin, "Print Culture in the Netherlands on the Eve of the Revolution," in TDR, 275.

²⁰ GAA, Cultuur Archief, Genootschappen inventaris, 209-33.

²¹ Brouwer, "Rondom het Boek," in DAE 20 (1988/1): 72.

Here again, I suspect that records of any mention of the forbidden pamphlet were purged because of the ban and fear of detection by its members.

Historically, Dutch booksellers and printers operated in relative freedom even though there had been edicts issued by the authorities sporadically to control the dissemination of critical political tracts.²² The prosecution of such edicts was inconsistent, partly because there was no coordinated central authority to enforce them. The fragmented political structure of the Republic made it almost impossible to control the press.²³ There were multiple jurisdictions which issued edicts, from each town, each provincial *staten*, and the *Staten-Generaal*, as we saw earlier. Thus it was easy to evade a municipal ban by simply walking to the next town where a forbidden work was not banned. Moreover, there was no preventive censorship in the Republic; rather, some booksellers and authors received official protection from the authorities. P.G. Hoftijzer notes that these privileges were unique to the Dutch Republic in the sense that their function was to protect rather than to censor.²⁴

My next area of inquiry was to examine catalogues of booksellers and libraries. I randomly selected bookseller catalogues which were geographically representative between 1781 to 1787. Most of these catalogues were found in “The library of the society to promote the importance of the book trade”, housed in the University of Amsterdam Library. They are listed in the bibliography. For the *Patriottentijd*, I selected for study bookseller catalogues in Amsterdam, the Hague, Leiden and Haarlem, the main cities in Holland, as well as Maastricht, Franeker and Groningen as representative of some of the

²² Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, Boston and Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 111.

²³ Van Sas, “Patriot Revolution,” 104.

²⁴ P.G. Hoftijzer, “Nederlandse boekverkoopersprivileges in de 18e Eeuw,” *DAE* 22 (1990/2) 180.

other provinces of the Republic. Since Aan het Volk's author remained anonymous, I searched under the title of the pamphlet rather than its author. Catalogues of twentieth century booksellers in various locales were also examined. In some instances, I only had recourse to indexes where they existed. None of the bookseller catalogues of the 1780s or later contained any listing for Aan het Volk. Once more, I suspect that the ban of the pamphlet had much to do with the absence of entries for it in these catalogues as well as the general tendency of booksellers not to include political literature in their advertising catalogues. This is borne out by the fact that I found only isolated references to political works. This is not to say that they did not stock or sell the pamphlet. In any event, there were several other methods to disseminate political literature. The underground, clandestine distribution of forbidden literature was a well-known practice in the Republic, and the widespread dispersion of Aan het Volk in this manner attests to the success of the practice. Patriot booksellers were well known and people knew where to find the prohibited material.²⁵ My investigation of public and private library catalogues likewise failed to turn up any listing for Aan het Volk. Of particular interest was the catalogue of the *Stadhouder* located in the Royal Library at the Hague, which contained a listing of book subjects ranging from science, music, religion and geography to state papers, but nothing on the pamphlet.²⁶

More fruitful results came from my investigation of those library catalogues dealing specifically with pamphlet literature. Over a period of twenty one years, W.P.C. Knuttel assembled almost thirty thousand pamphlets which appeared in the Dutch Republic between 1486 and 1853. Knuttel organized the pamphlets by subject matter and dates into

²⁵ Arie Berg, De papieren oorlog tussen patriotten en prinsgezinden (Nymegen: Nymeege Museum, 1987), 10.

²⁶ KBH, 72E 7/8.

nine volumes, and, for entries after 1780, added summary comments at the front of each volume. The original pamphlets are all located at the Royal Library at the Hague but most main Dutch libraries have microfilm copies of the collection.²⁷ In addition to the Knuttel collection, a number of libraries throughout the Netherlands have catalogues which list pamphlets which are not contained in the Knuttel catalogue. I was able to consult these additional sources at the special collections room at the University of Amsterdam library.

The Knuttel catalogue reveals that pamphlet literature in the Republic greatly increased after 1778 and I will discuss this below. Knuttel lists the version of Aan het Volk marked 'A' by Loosjes, followed immediately by three reprints. The next twenty entries contain some of the edicts by the several *Staten*, discussions praising the pamphlet as well as rejoinders by Orangist supporters.²⁸ All of these subsequent pamphlets are anonymous and take the form of discussions among friends or letters from a friend in one city to his colleague in another, together with the latter's responses. Pseudonyms or initials are used to hide the identity of their authors. Some of the pamphlets are dated though many are not. All of them appeared in 1781. Their lengths vary from eight pages to forty-eight pages.

Several of these pamphlets are of interest. One which was favourable to Aan het Volk wonders why the earlier pamphlet by van Goens attacking the Amsterdam Regents was not banned.²⁹ Another discusses the contents and implications of Aan het Volk.³⁰ A pamphlet which reveals the lengths some political activists of the day will go to details an unsuccessful attempt by the same van Goens to trick a Utrecht bookseller into selling him

²⁷ W.P.C. Knuttel, Catalogus der Pamfletten-verzameling berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 9 vol. (The Hague: N.p. 1899-1920).

²⁸ Kn. 19864 to 19887.

²⁹ Kn. 19874.

³⁰ Kn. 19868.

a copy of Aan het Volk.³¹ One writer speculated that Aan het Volk was actually composed by Orangist supporters to bring discredit to the fledging Patriot movement.³² Knuttel next lists some thirty-one pamphlets which raise the subject of the sudden emergence of the Patriot press and the Orangist responses to it.³³

Knuttel's entries of pamphlets for 1782 list fewer which refer directly to Aan het Volk than the previous year, but mention a couple which appeared shortly after the English translation was published in London. One included a report of the Bronkhorst trial and the dramatic comedy.³⁴ That said, the references to van der Capellen, his pamphlet, its ideas, and the Patriot movement were not insignificant. Knuttel's catalogue lists over sixty entries dealing with the strife between the Patriots and their opponents.³⁵ These were followed by both attacks on and defences of the *Stadhouder* and his advisers, the state of the Dutch armed forces, as well as press freedom.³⁶

I found no direct entries for 1783 and only one in 1784 after van der Capellen died.³⁷ However, again for these years, the pamphlets dealing with some of the ideas propounded in Aan het Volk were significant, just as they were in 1782. In 1783, there were fifty-six pamphlets relating to the *Stadhouder* and his advisers; sixty-three related to the Patriots and their press activities; and six covering military matters.³⁸ In 1784, there

³¹ Kn. 19877.

³² Kn. 19869.

³³ Kn. 19888-19918.

³⁴ Kn. 20129-42, 20164-5, 20169.

³⁵ Kn. 20094-20199.

³⁶ Kn. 20137-20199 for the *Stadhouder* and advisers; Kn. 19987-20015 and 20030-20058 for armed forces; and 20348-20355 for press freedom.

³⁷ Kn. 20820.

³⁸ Kn. 20473-20528; 20409-20472; and 20570-20575.

were thirty-five pamphlets attacking William's principal adviser, the Duke of Brunswick; thirty-three dealt with Patriot activities, and thirty-eight spoke of van der Capellen's death and his political legacy.³⁹ Various pamphlets which are not in the Knuttel catalogue but are listed in the pamphlet catalogues of some libraries also discuss Aan het Volk in various contexts.⁴⁰ One may conclude that on the basis of the pamphlets noted above, that interest in and discussion of Aan het Volk and its ideas was widespread within a very short time following its appearance and continued for several years thereafter if the Knuttel catalogue is any indication. It may also be said that Aan het Volk became a model for subsequent pamphlets which used history to attack the *Stadhouder* or used the notion of ancient liberties to uphold press freedom and the establishment of civic militias.⁴¹ Moreover, the periodical press began to supplant pamphlets as a preferred medium for political discourse for reasons which are discussed below.

Another productive investigation I was able to undertake dealt with Dutch newspapers circulating during the *Patriottentijd*. There were many to choose from and most were identified with, or representative of, the two opposing political factions of the 1780s, the Patriots and the Orangists. Some were in existence for the entire period, but many lasted only a short period of time. Some had countrywide attraction, but most were locally oriented.⁴² In order to present a balanced review, I have selected for discussion here only the most successful and representative newspapers of the *Patriottentijd*, two oriented toward the Patriots and two toward the Orangists. The Patriot newspapers are De

³⁹ Kn. 20777-20812; Kn. 20851-20883; and 20813-20850.

⁴⁰ Catalogus der Pamfletten van de Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen 1542-1853, prepared by G. van Alphen (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1944), 1475; and Catalogus van de Nederlandse pamfletten, vol. 2 (Middelburg: Zeeuwse Bibliotheek, 1994), 3730-3.

⁴¹ Wayne Ph. Te Brake, Regents and Rebels (Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989), 42.

⁴² H. Reitsma, "'Altoos gedenkwaardig.' De herdenkingsliteratuur naar aanleiding van twee honderd jaar Nederlandse Revolutie," Theoretisch Geschiedenis 6 (1989/3): 263-5.

Post van den Neder-Rhijn (herein abbreviated to De Post) and De Politieke Krayer; the Orangist representatives are De Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot and De Post naar den Neder-Rhyn. To be sure, I will refer to some of the others in passing insofar as any of them contain references to Aan het Volk. Some publications were not complete in the archives, so I have chosen editions of them which are temporally proximate to the appearance of Aan het Volk and to the death of van der Capellen in 1784.

By far the most successful and influential newspaper of the period was De Post, which commenced publication in Utrecht in January, 1781, just weeks after the outbreak of the Fourth English War. It remained in existence until 1787. During this period, it became known for its support of the Patriot cause and rapidly gained a large, nationwide circulation, some twenty-four hundred to three thousand copies per issue, which is a remarkable number when it is compared with London at the start of the nineteenth century where the largest newspaper circulation was four thousand.⁴³ De Post appeared weekly to 1784, and bi-weekly thereafter. It was not initially a specifically Patriot newspaper, though it gradually became one.⁴⁴ To illustrate this point, W.R.E. Klein notes that the editor of De Post, Pieter 't Hoen, initially labelled Aan het Volk a dangerous piece of writing. By 1784, the same editor referred to the pamphlet as “a masterfully written work.”⁴⁵

Over the course of its existence, De Post contained many references to Aan het Volk. In his lengthy book about the history of De Post and its editor, P.J.H.M. Theeuwen reports that Aan het Volk had the second most references (some twenty-one in fourteen

⁴³ M. Schneider and J. Hemels, De Nederlandse Krant, 1618-1978, 4th ed. (Baarn: Het Wereldvenster, 1979), 88.

⁴⁴ Klein, Republikanisme, 95.

⁴⁵ Klein, Republikanisme, 116. The Dutch text reads “*een meesterlijk geschreeven boekje.*”

separate issues), of all the pamphlets which were mentioned in De Post.⁴⁶ It was exceeded only by the van Goens pamphlet mentioned above.⁴⁷ I noted some sixty-two references to van der Capellen himself in Theeuwen's book. These references included the following:

- The importance of van der Capellen as a correspondent and his friendship with De Post's editor (pp. 22 and 647-57);
- Van der Capellen's political career, ideas and influence (pp. 52, 227, 261, 445, 627, 641);
- Van der Capellen's relationships with other Patriot leaders (pp. 428, 435, 442, 455)
- The similarities of other pamphlets to Aan het Volk (pp. 664, 677, 681, 682, 686, 750).⁴⁸

De Post typically reported on scandals, and published petitions as well as excerpts from various anonymous, subversive pamphlets. In particular, it constantly attacked the *Stadhouder* and his adviser, the Duke of Brunswick, while idolizing van der Capellen.⁴⁹

De Politieke Kruyer which began publication in Amsterdam in September, 1782, was issued weekly and is described by one writer as a "decidedly yellow sheet".⁵⁰ It ceased operation in 1787. Like De Post, its circulation extended throughout the Republic.⁵¹ It was a decidedly Patriot tract from the beginning. Its name derives from the

⁴⁶ De Post van den Neder-Rhijn, #38, 42, 50, 52, 61, 69, 70, 126, 213, 223, 232, 234, 241, and 255.

⁴⁷ P.J.H.M. Theeuwen, Pieter 't Hoen en De Post van den Neder-Rhijn (1781-1787) (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), 664.

⁴⁸ Theeuwen, Pieter 't Hoen, *passim*.

⁴⁹ Simon Schama, Patriots and Liberators (London: Collins, 1977), 79-80.

⁵⁰ Henrik Willem van Loon, The Fall of the Dutch Republic (Cambridge, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), 417.

⁵¹ Reitsma, "Altoos gedenkwaardig," 263.

delivery of the Patriot message by a porter with a wheelbarrow (*Kruiwagen*) to a residence. De Politieke Kruyer consisted only of letters to and from its editor, Jan Verlem, all of which had a political slant. The paper used much stronger language than De Post. Its intent was to reach the “ordinary *burger*” (*gewoone burger*), and its editor and its regular correspondents used a simple, common language to spread the Patriot message.⁵² Correspondents used a wide variety of colourful pseudonyms to hide their identity. Some examples are “simpleton”, “William the bad”, and “nosy”.⁵³ Throughout the period from 1782 to 1785, there are many supportive references to the ideas of Aan het Volk such as the citizen militias, *burger* committees, popular sovereignty and the attacks on the *Stadhouder* and his advisers. There were few specific references to van der Capellen’s pamphlet itself. One was from *Ultrajustinus* in 1784 who had received the French translation of Aan het Volk and who speculated, correctly as it turned out, that van der Capellen was its author.⁵⁴ On the first anniversary of van der Capellen’s death, there were further letters of praise from his admirers, citing various of the ideas the author had raised in Aan het Volk.⁵⁵

The success of De Post and other Patriot newspapers⁵⁶ led Orangist supporters to establish their own weekly papers in an effort to influence public opinion in favour of the State. The De Ouderwetse Nederlansche Patriot was the first such venture.⁵⁷ Its name,

⁵² Schneider, De Nederlandse Krant, 89.

⁵³ The Dutch translations are “*eenvoudig*”, “*Willem Slegt*”, and “*nieuwsgierig*”.

⁵⁴ De Politieke Kruyer, vol. 3, #132, 1947.

⁵⁵ De Politieke Kruyer, vol.5, #241, 495-6.

⁵⁶ The Noord-Hollandsche Courant, Zuid-Hollandsche Courant, De Courier van Europa, and others cited in Schneider, De Nederlandse Krant, 80-96, *passim*.

⁵⁷ KBH 123D (9-11) and ISH PM 17918

“The Old Fashioned Dutch Patriot,” was confusing and was an attempt to regain the term “patriot” from their opponents whom they described as “new patriots”.⁵⁸ The paper was printed in The Hague and it was financed by the *Stadhouder* and his court. It lasted only a year, its last issue being dated December 21, 1782. It dealt mainly with the Fourth English War, which it blamed on Amsterdam’s regents, as van Goens, its editor, had done in his pamphlet (see above pp. 39-40).⁵⁹ Jonathan Israel asserts that the central message of De Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot was that a difference existed between the type of journalism practised by it, and the “licentious press” of the Patriots.⁶⁰ Although it was well written and its tone was moderate and civilized, its circulation never exceeded seven hundred. Its content was too intellectual for many of the less educated Orangist supporters. As a result, a majority of the Orangist supporters were more attracted to the rhetoric of the popular articles appearing in the Patriot press.⁶¹ However, Nick van Sas reminds us that the paper played a significant role in the “political renewal [of] the Dutch Republic” by emphasizing that the values it propounded were in sharp contrast to those of the Patriot press.⁶²

At the press archives of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, I examined indexes to all five volumes of the De Ouderwetse Nederlansche Patriot as well as an addendum of the correspondence received by its editor during its existence, to determine how often, if at all, Aan het Volk was mentioned. I expected that any

⁵⁸ Reitsma, “Altoos gedenkwaardig,” 263.

⁵⁹ J.M. Peterse, “Publicist voor Oranje. R.M. van Goens en de Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot (1781-3),” Bydragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden, 103 (1988/2): 199.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Israel, The Dutch Republic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). 1111-2.

⁶¹ Schneider, De Nederlandse Krant, 97.

⁶² Van Sas, “Patriot Revolution,” 103.

references to the van der Capellen pamphlet would be negative in tone because anyone criticizing the pamphlet could do so without fear of punishment. I suspected that there would be more references in this Orangist paper than in the Patriot press for the similar time period. This suspicion turned out to be correct.

In the October 6, 1781 issue, for instance, some twenty-one pages are devoted to discussing and complaining about Aan het Volk.⁶³ Again, twenty-three pages by an unidentified writer attacking Aan het Volk fill the February 16, 1782 edition.⁶⁴ There are further references later that year about the identity of Aan het Volk's author.⁶⁵ The addendum of letters which is appended to volume five contain several which mention Aan het Volk in the latter two months of 1781, three in 1782 and one in 1783.⁶⁶

My search for De Post Naar den Neder-Rhyn (The post to the lower Rhine) was unsuccessful because its copies were unfortunately not on file at the Royal Library at the Hague. Information concerning this paper was also scarce. The only sources available to me note that it appeared as a weekly for less than a year between 1782 and 1783. Its editor was paid by the Stadhouder and the newspaper ceased publication in July 1783 when its editor was incarcerated for offending the Regents of Gouda.⁶⁷ The name chosen for the newspaper was an obvious attempt to play on the name of the Patriot De Post. Another Orangist paper was just as blatant in choosing its name. This was De Politieke Kruyersknecht of 1783 (The political porter's Assistant).⁶⁸ The close similarity to De

⁶³ De Ouderwetse Nederlansche Patriot, October 6, 1781, VIII, 135 – 56.

⁶⁴ De Ouderwetse Nederlansche Patriot, February 16, 1782, XXIV, 537 – 60.

⁶⁵ De Ouderwetse Nederlansche Patriot, November 2, 1782, LIX, 155, 172 – 3.

⁶⁶ De Ouderwetse Nederlansche Patriot, *Brieventas*, 11, 25 – 8, 79, 103 – 4, 204 – 51 and 241.

⁶⁷ Theeuwen, Pieter 't Hoen, 579.

⁶⁸ Schneider, De Nederlandse Krant, 97.

Politieke Kruyer could not be missed. Other Orangist newspapers were De Prinselijke Courant, De Geldersche Historische Courant, De Brielsche Courant and the Haagse Courant. The last-mentioned paper reprinted articles from De Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot and distributed them to smaller centres surrounding the Hague.⁶⁹

Some of the reactions of Orangist newspapers and writers to Aan het Volk and its ideas are recounted earlier in this chapter. The responses reveal a fear that the Patriot program proposed by van der Capellen's pamphlet and the Patriot press "threaten[ed] every aspect of [Dutch] civilized life." Elie Luzac proceeded to counter the "assault on civilization" by writing some six thousand pages of polemics over a ten-year period. Luzac also wrote extensively for De Ouderwetse Nederlandsche Patriot.⁷⁰ This is persuasive evidence for the powerful influence Aan het Volk and the Patriot press had on Orangists.

In addition to examining the aforementioned newspapers, I also found a number of lesser known *courants* extant during the *Patriottentijd*, some of which contained references to Aan het Volk or quoted passages or ideas extracted from it. These included the Amsterdamse Courant, De Batavier, De Courier van Europa, the Diemer of Watergraafsmeersche Courant (edited by Jan Verlem, also editor of De Politieke Kruyer), De Hollandsche Historische Courant, the Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant, the Noordhollandsche Courant, and the Zuid-Hollandsche Courant.⁷¹ All of these newspapers were published in Holland and I also found references to van der Capellen and his contribution to the Patriot movement in these papers. In addition to these Patriot

⁶⁹ Schneider, De Nederlandsche Krant, 100-2.

⁷⁰ Velema, Enlightenment, 164-5.

⁷¹ Klein, Republikanisme, 72.

newspapers, there were several smaller and cheaper weekly publications, some merely one or two pages, which used a common vernacular (*volkstaal*) to spread the Patriot message.⁷² These included De Politieke Praatmoer and De Politieke Snapster, both intended for female readers. Some, such as Saturdag's Kroegpraatje and the Republikein aan de Maas had connections with Patriot societies.⁷³

As a result of my investigations into the readership of Aan het Volk, we can accept De Jong's claim that van der Capellen's pamphlet was widely read by Patriots and Orangists alike. The discussions of Aan het Volk may now be placed within the context of the rise of the political press in the Republic and the politicization of Dutch society which followed.

The Rise of the Political Press

The political press which began to develop in the Republic in the early 1780s was a new phenomenon in Dutch culture. It was the Fourth English War which gave rise to the emergence of a periodical press. The crisis of the War generated a partisan debate about the deteriorating state of the Dutch Republic and its embarrassing performance against the English. The blame for this state of affairs was focused on the *Stadhouder* as leader of the armed forces. The result of the debate was to ruin whatever prestige and honour the *Stadhouder* had, and a power vacuum arose as a result of the breakdown of central authority.⁷⁴ It was this phenomenon that was seized upon by those who would become leaders of the Patriot movement.

⁷² E.M.F. Sassen, "Republikeinse Kroegpraatjes aan de Maas," Holland 19 (1987): 268.

⁷³ Reitsma, "Altoos gedenkwaardig," 265.

⁷⁴ Van Sas, "The Patriot Revolution," 98.

The rise of the Dutch political press, however, preceded the outbreak of the War. The role of political comment and criticism had been filled by a long history of pamphlet literature within the Republic. The Knuttel catalogue of pamphlets lists over 19,000 entries prior to 1780. These pamphlets did not appear on a regular basis, but seemed to become more frequent during the crises faced by the Republic during its existence.⁷⁵ The interest of the Dutch in the American Revolution during the late 1770s and the Fourth English War produced an atmosphere that generated a significant increase in pamphlet literature. In 1776, Knuttel recorded twenty-seven entries for that year. In 1778, the entries increased to fifty-four and in 1779 and 1780, the number doubled for each year. It was in 1781 that the list exploded to 463 entries. This level was maintained for succeeding years until the number of publications started to decrease in 1784. Notably, the annual volume remained above 200 until 1787.⁷⁶

Jeremy Popkin observes that the Republic's "complex political structure generated an immense amount of publishing" and cites Dutch yearbooks and publications from various municipalities and provincial *staten* which contain resolutions and similar documents to illustrate the volume of print created, "even in normal times."⁷⁷ Popkin continues that successful newspapers such as the Amsterdamsche Courant and the Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant had been in existence for many years and that their circulation exceeded most London newspapers of the time, as was the case with the later De Post.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Van Sas, "The Patriot Revolution," 105.

⁷⁶ Knuttel, Catalogus, vol. 5, index.

⁷⁷ Popkin, "Print Culture", 283.

⁷⁸ Popkin, "Print Culture", 283-4.

The power vacuum created as a result of the War debate was exploited by the Patriots who recognized the fundamental importance of public opinion and the potential role of the political press in guiding such opinion.⁷⁹ There were several conditions within the Republic that permitted the amazing growth of the political press during the *Patriottentijd*. The war made people eager to read and the high degree of literacy within the Republic enabled such growth in the 1780s. Popkin writes that adult male literacy in Amsterdam was equal to “the most advanced French provinces and the western regions of Germany ... and that female literacy was over sixty per cent” in most of the communities studied.⁸⁰ He notes that the extensive network of publishers, booksellers and reading rooms throughout the country was also a precondition for the rise of the political press as was the freedom from censorship.⁸¹ The Republic’s efficient and extensive communication and distribution system also contributed to the efflorescence of the political press. All of these phenomena can be illustrated by reference to the success of De Post in Utrecht. The city was the geographic centre of the Republic. From that vantage point, De Post could be readily distributed to booksellers throughout the country. Utrecht itself had a flourishing and active book trade, second only to Amsterdam, and many reading and literary societies were located there. As well, the city’s university stimulated a large informed reading public.⁸²

Popkin’s study of Dutch print culture analyzes, *inter alia*, the geographic distribution of booksellers in the Republic in 1778 and notes that at least forty-one cities

⁷⁹ N.C.F. Van Sas, “Drukkers, politisering en openbaarheid van bestuur in de Patriottentijd Enkele kanttekeningen,” In *1787: De Nederlandse Revolutie?*, ed. Th. S.M. van der Zee et al (Amsterdam: DBL, 1988), 174, 181.

⁸⁰ Popkin, “Print Culture,” 274.

⁸¹ Popkin, “Print Culture,” 273.

⁸² Theeuwen, Pieter 't Hoen, 587-8.

had a bookstore of some kind. Each province had at least one, though most were concentrated in the more heavily populated provinces of Holland and Utrecht.⁸³ It is not unreasonable to conclude that the presence of so many booksellers is linked to the high degree of literacy. Yet the absence of booksellers in some locales did not preclude access to newspapers, pamphlets and books. Popkin observes that the Republic's small size, its efficient transportation system, and publisher's newspaper advertisements in widely distributed newspapers, enabled most citizens to obtain the print materials they desired. Popkin observes that Dutch readers were not dependent solely on booksellers to obtain books, for reading groups and libraries expanded their sources for materials.⁸⁴ Popkin also claims that literacy in the land provinces of Overijssel and Gelderland was comparable to that of Holland.⁸⁵

If we accept that the presence of booksellers reflects the degree of literacy, and if we accept Popkin's claim that the level of literacy in Overijssel was the same as that in Holland, then by mapping the geographic concentration of the Patriot press and Patriot activity, it appears that the main urban centres of Holland, Utrecht and Overijssel had the greatest Patriot activity. It is acceptable to conclude, therefore, that there is a link between regions of high literacy and Patriot activities.

There are a few significant comments which may be made here. First, some long existing periodicals had restricted themselves merely to reporting on political matters. De Post and other newspapers went from informing readers on political matters to

⁸³ Popkin, "Print Culture," 275.

⁸⁴ Popkin, "Print Culture," 281.

⁸⁵ Popkin, "Print Culture," 276.

commenting and providing background information.⁸⁶ Second, the format of the new political press made it a more attractive vehicle to readers than pamphlet literature. The regular weekly or bi-weekly appearance, the price, and the simple and moderate tone of the writing all appealed to an expanding reading public. The readers were fed a broad spectrum of political opinions and the media of the *Patriottentijd* were inventive in their ability to communicate political messages through a mixture of literary conventions, including poetry, descriptions of dreams, the literary convention of ‘dialogues with the dead’ and dramas, as well as editorials and letters to the editors.⁸⁷ In this manner, readers came to identify with the factions promoting such messages.⁸⁸ Third, many weekly publications were created as a result of pressure from booksellers seeking a profit; thus, public demand and other market forces added a commercial element to the new press.⁸⁹ Fourth, while the new periodical press replaced pamphlets as the preferred medium to transmit political opinions, pamphlet literature continued to flourish in the 1780s as indicated by the statistics above and, in particular, by the impact which Aan het Volk had on the Dutch political scene.

Both Patriots and Orangists used the political press to influence public opinion as part of the strategy to gain popular support for their causes. The Patriot press was more successful than that of the Orangists in monopolizing public opinion. Van Sas observes that the Patriot press “set the tone ... [and] Orangist journals were reduced to reacting and refuting the claims and accusations of their opponents.”⁹⁰ One of the most significant

⁸⁶ Klein, *Republikanisme*, 92.

⁸⁷ Klein, *Republikanisme*, 93.

⁸⁸ Peterse, “Publicist voor Oranje,” 180-8.

⁸⁹ Van Sas, “The Patriot Revolution,” 103.

roles which the Patriot press played, especially De Post and De Politieke Krayer, was to unify and provide cohesion to the Patriots in the decentralized and fragmented political structure of the Republic. Inasmuch as both De Post and De Politieke Krayer had nationwide circulation, they provided a connection between various local Patriot movements. In this way, a spirit of opposition to the status quo was forged that extended beyond municipal and provincial boundaries.⁹¹ Both papers published articles on Patriot activities elsewhere as well as local topics from all over the Republic. It is Theeuwen's view that De Post played a crucial part in the Dutch Patriot movement because it included the contributions of over seven hundred correspondents, including some of the foremost Patriot activists.⁹²

Politicizing the Nation

One consequence of the rise of the Dutch political press was the influence the press had on Dutch society generally. Politics pervaded all aspects of Dutch social life during the *Patriottentijd*. Public discourse like that found in De Post and De Politieke Krayer helped form a new kind of political culture. Many smaller and lesser known periodicals contributed as well to the political education of a broad segment of the reading public. Politics became popular as never before. The Patriot press contributed to this popularity by reporting on Patriot activities, by encouraging petition campaigns, by publishing government regulations and edicts as well as the results of votes in municipal and provincial government bodies.⁹³ The Patriot press also provided the political vocabulary

⁹⁰ Van Sas, "The Patriot Revolution," 102

⁹¹ Van Sas, "The Patriot Revolution," 102.

⁹² Theeuwen, Pieter 't Hoen, 877.

⁹³ Van Sas, "Drukpers, politisering en openbaarheid," 177.

of the *Patriottentijd* with concepts such as “*vrijheid*” (freedom or liberty) and “*volkssoevereiniteit*” (Sovereignty of the people) as well as monopolizing the term “patriot”.⁹⁴ Moreover, some periodicals such as *De Post* organized evening study groups to discuss political matters which had been recently reported.⁹⁵ It is thus not surprising that the press had such an enormous impact on all of the reading public, and arguably, on that portion of the public who could not read but were members of reading societies that discussed political matters. Simon Schama does note that without dependable circulation statistics, it is difficult to be precise about Patriot press influence on the Dutch *burgers*. He concludes that the Patriot press spread Patriot ideas, and that

it seems obvious that papers like *De Post van den Neder-Rhijn* must have played a formative role in popularizing the militant language of the Patriot activists, [and that] as much as any other factor, the press was responsible for providing Patriot politics with a language independent of the Dutch past.⁹⁶

The politicization of the Dutch people did not only stem from the press. Participation in civic militias, each with their own uniform and weekly drill exercises, was a popular activity for many Patriots.⁹⁷ Militia members took part in various other military activities such as parades, unfurling regimental banners and swearing noble oaths.⁹⁸ Various Roman Catholic and other dissenting religions formed societies which mixed religious topics with political and martial discussion.⁹⁹ There was even a report

⁹⁴ Van Sas, “The Patriot Revolution,” 48

⁹⁵ N.C.F. Van Sas, “Opiniepers en politieke cultuur,” in *Voor Vaderland en Vrijheid*, eds. F. Grijzenhout et al (Amsterdam: DBL, 1987), 107.

⁹⁶ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 80.

⁹⁷ Klein, *Republikanisme*, 180.

⁹⁸ J.W. Schulte Nordholt, *The Dutch Republic and American Independence*, trans. Herbert H. Rowen (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 273.

that van der Kemp had delivered a sermon in Leiden wearing his drill uniform.¹⁰⁰ I discovered a political cartoon of van der Kemp which depicts “him half as a minister and half as a soldier.”¹⁰¹ Around him are Patriot symbols and, on the pulpit, there are quotations from the Bible and from Thomas Hobbes’ Leviathan.

The civic militias formed a key component of the Patriot program. They differed from the *schutterijen* in various ways. They were not controlled by the regents but by councils of *burgers*, which were to select the officers. They were open to everyone, whatever their religious affiliation, and all were encouraged to participate in civic politics. Their purpose was to maintain order in the towns, to complement the standing army against foreign troops, and to act as a counterweight to the regular troops.¹⁰² There were two types of militias. Many were merged with the dormant *schutterijen*, and some were independent *vrijcorpsen*, a term coined by De Post.¹⁰³ These organizations also served as political pressure groups.¹⁰⁴ The first Patriot militia was established in the fall of 1782 in the Frisian district of Oostergo and it became a model for similar militias in other centres. The editor of De Post, Pieter ’t Hoen, undertook a lengthy press campaign designed to encourage the paper’s readers to organize themselves in the manner of the Oostergo model, and as recommended by van der Capellen in Aan het Volk. ’T Hoen also made suggestions for uniforms, age limits and how to integrate the militias with the

⁹⁹ Simone Rijs, “Was er en Nederlands revolutionaire kostuum?” In De Droom van de Revolutie, eds. W.W. Mijnhardt and H. Bots (Amsterdam: DBL, 1988), 82-91, *passim*.

¹⁰⁰ R.R. Palmer, The Age of the Democratic Revolution (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), 332.

¹⁰¹ Schulte Nordholt, American Independence, 234.

¹⁰² Jonathan Israel, The Dutch Republic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1101.

¹⁰³ Klein, Republikanisme, 186.

¹⁰⁴ Van Sas, “The Patriot Revolution,” 113.

schutterijen. By the end of 1783, Patriot militias were established in major urban centres throughout the Republic.¹⁰⁵ Theeuwens suggests that De Post was an important stimulator and catalyst for the rise of civic militias.¹⁰⁶

Various creative endeavours such as the theatre, music and painting were affected by politics. Of particular interest is the effect of politics upon the material culture of the day. Orangist supporters favoured distinguishing marks of the *Stadhouder* and his family on portraits, often in bold orange colours; the Patriots used a traditional Dutch barge dog, a “*keeshond*”, or the mark “*V*” for liberty, as their symbol. The Orange party organized popular displays of orange cockades; Patriots countered with black. Patriots sometimes wore white lilies with an accompanying inscription that they would be “*liever Frans dan Prins*” (rather French than Orange).¹⁰⁷ Normal household items such as plates, buttons, tobacco boxes and similar items were adorned with party symbols in order to convey political messages and to display allegiances. Dress also became indicative of a person’s political sympathies, with the different uniforms regularly worn by the Patriot militias being an example. Images of famous Dutch historical figures were created by both factions; the Orangists chose previous stadhouders while the Patriots chose their heroes, the ancient Batavians, Oldenbarneveltdt, de Witt, or van der Capellen. While the material culture of the Republic had traditionally produced symbolic representations of the House of Orange and the *stadhouders*, the rival political factions of Orangists and Patriots began to use them for their own political purposes during the 1780s. The political press for both

¹⁰⁵ Theeuwens, Pieter ’t Hoen, 225-234 *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ Theeuwens, Pieter ’t Hoen, 234.

¹⁰⁷ Schama, Patriots and Liberators, 98.

factions ensured that political symbols and their meanings had a wide circulation among the Dutch public.

Further illustrations of the extent to which politics penetrated Dutch life can be found in the many civic rituals and festivals that marked an event or visit by the *Stadhouder*. Public oaths by politicians following an election were accompanied by much pageantry. Festive dinners by various guilds and other organizations would be preceded by decorating the entire hall with the political symbols of the political faction to which the group attached itself. Funerals became an occasion for large political demonstrations.¹⁰⁸ The funeral of van der Capellen was one such event, where hundreds attended to pay tribute with poems, songs and eulogies, all with a strong Patriot message.¹⁰⁹ Most booksellers oriented themselves either toward the Patriots or Orangists.¹¹⁰

Political indoctrination also found its way into the education system with the printing of several children's books that featured Patriot ideology.¹¹¹ Nor was literature immune to the political process according to André Hanou. He argues that almost all Dutch writers were deeply involved in the political changes that took place during the *Patriottentijd*. Their political involvement can be seen in satires, magazines, novels and

¹⁰⁸ Van Sas, "Opiniepers en politieke cultuur," 122.

¹⁰⁹ G.T. Hartong, "Joan Derk, bejubelt en beschimp," in *De Wekker van de Nederlandse natie*, ed. E.A. van Dijk. (Zwolle: Waanders, 1984), 63-71.

¹¹⁰ Frans Gryzenhout, "De Patriotse Beeldenstorm," in *Voor Vaderland en Vryheid*, eds. F. Grijzenhout et al. (Amsterdam: DBL, 1987), 131-4.

¹¹¹ Reitsma, "Altoos gedenkwaardig," 286.

plays. Hanou suggests that Dutch literature matures during this period.¹¹² Novels began to link moral virtues, education and history with Patriot values.¹¹³

Many societies were established during the 1780s to foster political ends. In addition to the civic militias, there were exercise societies with links to the militias. As well, reading or literary societies were formed to read and discuss a wide range of subjects, including politics. Some societies combined military and political activities such as the “*Pro Patria et Libertate*” in Utrecht. This organization served as a model for similar societies in other cities. Another similar form of society which was established to appeal to the Patriot political elite was the “*Vaderlandsche Sociëteit*” (Fatherland Society). One was formed in Amsterdam in 1783, followed by one in Leiden in 1784. Though they shared the same organizational form and had similar aims, they were unrelated.¹¹⁴ Citizen committees of the kind advocated by van der Capellen in *Aan het Volk* were established in a number of cities to act in an advisory capacity to the Regents in municipal councils. Some Masonic lodges were sympathetic to the Patriot cause. Trade guilds and rural organizations also became instruments of Patriot activity.¹¹⁵

So far in this chapter, we have traced the rise of the political press and noted that it had a major role in politicizing Dutch society. However, just as press circulation is difficult to measure, the determination of the extent of political participation presents even greater challenges. To test it, one could examine records of political societies, militias, the number of correspondents to the press who wrote on political topics, as I

¹¹² André Hanou, “Literaire en Politieke Vrijheidsstrijd 1780 – 1800: Raadvlakken?,” *DAE*, 28 (1996): 61-74, *passim*.

¹¹³ I. Leonard Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 184.

¹¹⁴ Klein, *Republikanisme*, 188-190, *passim*.

¹¹⁵ Klein, *Republikanisme*, 191.

have done. The extent of public participation in political demonstrations would also need to be examined. What may be said is that political activity became more popular than ever before, and that people became more politicized, in part, because of the political press, but also through membership in the militias and political societies. Yet Reitsma cautions that even in 1787, three-quarters of the *volk* remained outside the political conflicts which had troubled the Republic during the 1780s.¹¹⁶

Van der Capellen's biographer, M. de Jong, noted that the aim of Aan het Volk was to "wake up" the Dutch nation.¹¹⁷ Van Sas similarly argues that the political press generally, and the Patriot press in particular, brought the new political nation to life.¹¹⁸ In sum, we may reasonably conclude therefore that Aan het Volk and the Patriot press were among the important causes of the nation's awakening. We shall now examine how the Patriots responded to the "wake up call."

The Patriot Movement

The Patriot movement arose during the Fourth English War when the weaknesses of the Republic became painfully clear. As well, the *Stadhouder* was seen by many to be approaching the position of an absolute monarch. Anti-*Stadhouder* factions grew among the disaffected Regents, especially in the larger cities. They saw the chance to regain the power they had lost in 1747 when the stadholderate was reinstated under William IV. These Regents were able to attract much support from many economically declining middle class elements in all provinces but especially in commercial Holland.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Reitsma, "Altoos gedenkwaardig," 272

¹¹⁷ De Jong, van der Capellen, 389.

¹¹⁸ Van Sas, "Opiniepers en politieke cultuur," 129.

¹¹⁹ E.H. Kossmann, The Low Countries, 1780 – 1940 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 44-5.

W.R.E. Velema notes that the Patriots attracted all socio-economic groupings of Dutch society and could be found among “the intelligent and the stupid, the literate and the illiterate, among rich and poor, among theologians and unbelievers.”¹²⁰ They were led by various professionals such as journalists, lawyers and intellectuals and included guild members, shopkeepers and various dissenting religious groups such as Roman Catholics, Jews, Baptists and Mennonites who had been shut out from political participation and government positions, which were awarded only to members of the State church. The political sympathies of the lower classes had traditionally favoured the *Stadhouder* according to various historians.¹²¹ However, a recent study of the population of Amsterdam between 1780 and 1800 concluded that the lower classes were actually split in their political support between Patriots and Orangists. The authors studied the judicial records of some 235 Orangists and 149 Patriots to determine their social status. Their study revealed that there were almost no differences in the social composition of the representative samples of the Patriots and Orangist supporters, a conclusion which is confirmed by a study of their places of residence. According to the authors, the religious and social or economic motives scarcely played any role in the choice of party. The lower classes made their choice solely on political grounds.¹²² In their conclusions on the social composition and motives of the lower classes, the authors opposed the views of C.H.E. de

¹²⁰ Wyger R.E. Velema, Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic (Assen and Maastricht: van Gorcum, 1993), 169.

¹²¹ I.J. van Manen and K. Vermeulen, “Het lagere volk van Amsterdam in de strijd tussen patriotten en oranjegezinden 1780 – 1800,” TvSG 20 (1980): 332.

¹²² I.J. van Manen, “Het lagere volk van Amsterdam,” TvSG 21 (1981): 33-7.

Wit, for whom the “proletariat” had become an instrument of the *Stadhouder* and his supporters.¹²³

The aims of the two groups, the disaffected Regents and the Patriots, differed from the beginning. The Regents wished only to end the patronage system of the *Stadhouder*, whereas the Patriots wanted to end the Regent oligarchy of governance as well. De Wit observes that the Regent faction took a significant risk in attempting to include the middle classes in positions of political influence and surmises that the Regents’ hate of the patronage system must have been great in order for them to have taken the risk.¹²⁴

The Patriot program consisted of four elements; a free political press, a republic without a *Stadhouder*, a citizen militia and participation in government by everyone.¹²⁵

The chief city for Patriot activity was Utrecht, where the main Patriot newspaper De Post was published. Utrecht also was the home of one of the most active Patriot societies, *Pro Patria et Libertate*, and one of the largest civic militias was based there. It was at Utrecht that the first national assembly of citizen militias took place in December 1784.¹²⁶

By 1785, the Patriot movement had become a strong, influential force in Dutch politics. It was in March of that year that the first real confrontation between the Patriots and the authorities occurred. After a Utrecht council member died, his position was filled by a conservative without regard for a proposed electoral system which was then being negotiated. Patriot leaders and their Regent allies met with the Utrecht Council while a

¹²³ I.J. van Manen, “Het lagere volk van Amsterdam,” TvSG 20 (1980): 332.

¹²⁴ C.H.E. de Wit, “Het jaar 1787 of wel de nieuw-republikeinse beweging van de jaaren tachtig,” in 1787: De Nederlandse Revolutie?, eds. Th. S.M. van der Zee et al (Amsterdam: DBL, 1988), 30-1.

¹²⁵ Klein, Republikanisme, 6.

¹²⁶ Israel, The Dutch Republic, 1102.

large group of Patriot supporters gathered outside. Fear led the Council to revoke the appointment it had made. A few days later, nineteen councillors resigned in protest.¹²⁷

The Patriot movement continued to gain ground throughout the Republic with national petitioning campaigns and demonstrations in various cities. There was some violence. A riot in The Hague in September 1785 between Patriots and Orangists raised fear in the *Stadhouder* court and he left the city for his country home in Gelderland, accompanied by his family. The entire Republic became polarized into Patriot and Orangist zones.¹²⁸ The provincial *Staten* of Utrecht left the city *en masse* for the safety of nearby Amersfoort, where an army garrison was stationed. The Patriots established a rival assembly in the city of Utrecht, having earlier established themselves on the municipal council.¹²⁹

By the summer of 1786, the Patriots had gained control of much of Utrecht, Holland and Overijssel, as well as some centres in Gelderland where the *Stadhouder* was now living. In August 1786, the situation became alarming when the *Stadhouder* sent troops to restore order to two small Gelderland towns, Elburg and Hattem. This action raised a storm of protests from the Patriot press throughout the Republic. The danger of civil war lurked and the entire country became divided into defence zones. Utrecht resembled an armed camp.¹³⁰

At this point, the unstable coalition of Regents and Patriots began to fall apart when several Regents left the movement, realizing that their oligarchy was in danger from the

¹²⁷ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 91.

¹²⁸ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1106.

¹²⁹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1107.

¹³⁰ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1107-8.

Patriots, who wished to establish “genuinely democratic civic government and election of *vroedschap* [council] members by the citizenry.”¹³¹ The Patriots continued to gain control of various cities in Holland and Friesland in 1787. There was considerable political, social and ideological tension during the summer of 1787. The Orangists regained control of several centres in Gelderland.¹³² By midsummer, the Republic was deadlocked. Patriots controlled three provincial *Staten*, Holland, Groningen and Overijssel; Zeeland and Gelderland were under Orangist control and control of Utrecht and Friesland was being claimed by both factions.

It was foreign intervention that brought an end to the Patriot movement. The *Stadhouder*'s wife, a sister of the Prussian monarch, decided to travel back to The Hague to negotiate a truce with the Patriots who controlled that city. She was detained by Patriot militia at the border between Gelderland and Holland. This affront eventually resulted in Prussian troops invited by the *Stadhouder* entering the Republic in September 1787 to suppress the Patriot militias.¹³³

The Patriot dream to revitalize their nation ended. The militias were disbanded, Patriots were removed from every institution and arrested, while Orange crowds ransacked Patriot property. The press was silenced and Patriot societies were dissolved.¹³⁴ Thousands of Patriots left the Republic to go into exile.¹³⁵

Our examination in this chapter has covered a wide range of topics. We began with reader reactions to *Aan het Volk*. Thus the last phase of Darnton's “communications

¹³¹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1108.

¹³² Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1109.

¹³³ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1113-4.

¹³⁴ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1114.

¹³⁵ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 131.

circuit” has been examined. We have surveyed the use of the political press by both Patriots and Orangists and discussed its role in giving voice to the new political culture which emerged in the 1780s. Finally, we have noted how and to what extent Aan het Volk and the political press shaped the Patriot movement.

It remains to assess van der Capellen, his pamphlet and the political legacy of the Patriot movement after its demise in 1787

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Although the Patriots and their newspapers, citizen militias, and citizen committees were gone after 1787, one may ask what happened to the many other manifestations of Dutch political culture that changed so much during the 1780s. As well, an assessment of van der Capellen's role and his place in history is appropriate here. Finally, the lasting contribution of the Patriot movement to Dutch politics and culture is examined.

As we have seen in Chapter Five, Dutch political culture in the 1780s changed because of a number of different but related phenomena. Van der Capellen's Aan het Volk was an important manifestation of the rise of the political press, and it also provided impetus to the emerging Patriot movement. The increasing political role of the press, in turn, was an important stimulus for the politicization of Dutch citizenry. Politics found its way into every aspect of society, from literature, religion, and education to the creative arts such as painting, sculpture, theatre and music, and into the material culture of the household itself.

After 1787, the functions of the suppressed Patriot organizations were assumed by other seemingly non-political bodies within the Republic, and by Patriot exiles who continued to promote Patriot ideas from their foreign vantage points. Politics continued to penetrate many aspects of Dutch society and the body politic was permanently expanded.¹

¹ N.C.F van Sas, "Drukkers, politisering en openbaarheid van bestuur in de Patriottentijd. Enkele kanttekeningen," In 1787: De Nederlandse Revolutie?, eds. Th. S.M. van der Zee et al (Amsterdam: DBL, 1988), 174.

The role of van der Capellen has been assessed in divergent ways, both during the *Patriottentijd* and in the twentieth century. The pejorative description of him as “*notre Wilkes*” by William V seemed appropriate at the time, certainly to Orangist supporters.² There are many similarities between the two men. Both van der Capellen and Wilkes had comparable careers; both attempted to mobilize people for political purposes by publishing provocative texts: both suffered ignominy by being removed from the assemblies to which they had been elected; and both were able to return to politics as a result of favourable public opinion.³ Yet they were also very different and one cannot overlook the positive accomplishments that van der Capellen was able to achieve. J.W. Schulte Nordholt has noted that the comparison is unfair when he writes “how humane and noble a man van der Capellen is by comparison with the dissolute Englishman.”⁴

The Overijssel farmers were relieved from performing feudal services in the form of *drostendiensten* as a result of van der Capellen’s efforts on their behalf. Van der Capellen was successful in his advocacy of recognizing the new American Republic, first in the Overijssel *Staten*, then in the *Staten-Generaal*. His contribution as a major figure in the Patriot movement has been noted, and *Aan het Volk* had a significant impact on the political culture of the Republic.

There have been several tributes to van der Capellen in the twentieth century. His pamphlet was translated into modern Dutch in two editions, one in 1966 and a

² Wayne Ph. Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels* (Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 50.

³ W.R.E. Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme. Politieke Cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 77.

⁴ J.W. Schulte Nordholt, *The Dutch Republic and American Independence*, trans. Herbert H. Rowen (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 182), 24.

bicentenary commemorative edition in 1981.⁵ In 1987, H.L. Zwitzer published a reprint of the original Aan het Volk,⁶ accompanied by an introduction and annotations.⁷ Earlier, in 1984, an exhibition focusing on the life and death of van der Capellen was held in Zwolle. Many items exhibited were mentioned above in chapter five. Following the exhibition, several municipalities in Overijssel named streets and districts after van der Capellen.⁸ His prominent place in Dutch history appears secure.

The value of the Patriot movement deserves mention because it was the most forceful challenge to an old regime before 1789, and because it occurred in a decentralized republic. It was a broadly based and innovative movement. The Dutch nation became politicized and the body politic had been significantly expanded from what it had previously been. The will of the people gained expression and they had political choices not previously available to them. Most consider the Patriot movement to have failed in 1787, and the reasons given for such failure vary. Fundamentally, the movement was overwhelmed by the forces which opposed it; the *Stadhouder*, the Regents who remained loyal to him, the nobility and the Prussian troops who defeated their much smaller militia forces. The Patriots had no central authority so that local forces continued to press their particularistic programs, and although the Patriot press went some way to unify the movement on a nation-wide

⁵ J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol, Aan het Volk van Nederland: het democratisch manifest van Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol 1781, with an introduction by W.F. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijze Weenink (Weesp: Heureka, 1981).

⁶ The edition designated "A" by Loosjes.

⁷ J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol, Aan het Volk van Nederland: Het patriottisch program uit 1781 (Amsterdam: DBL, 1987).

⁸ W.F. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijze Weenink, "Beknopte levensloop van Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol," in Joan Derk Bulletin (Zwolle: Werkcomite Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol, 1984), 3.

basis, it was not enough.⁹ The Dutch considered themselves citizens of Amsterdam before one was a Hollander, and a Hollander before one was a Dutchman.¹⁰ As C.H.E. de Wit has noted, it was difficult to reform a decentralized state when the reformers themselves lacked unity.¹¹ Yet when one examines events subsequent to 1787, the issue of failure becomes less clear.

The 1795 Batavian Revolution was led by Patriots who returned from exile. Societies which had gone underground earlier emerged again. Patriot rhetoric was the same as it was in 1787. Now it was the *Stadhouder's* turn to go into exile. A unitary state was created and Orangists were replaced by Patriots in the same fashion, and with the same dispatch, that Patriots had been replaced in 1787. The Patriots were able to implement many of their earlier reform proposals. When the Kingdom of the Netherlands was created in 1815, many of these reforms were carried forward.¹²

On balance the Patriot movement was a success if one views it over the longer term. They provided a firm foundation for the new political culture which emerged, and which the Patriots were able to build upon, in 1795.¹³ The contributions of van der Capellen and his famous pamphlet to the movement and the role of the political

⁹ E.H. Kossmann, "1787: The Collapse of the Patriot Movement and the Problem of Dutch Decline," (The Creighton Trust Lecture, University of London, London, 1987), 8.

¹⁰ Herbert H. Rowen, The Rhyme and Reason of Politics in Early Modern Europe, ed. Craig E. Harline (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 221.

¹¹ C.H.E. de Wit, "Het jaar 1787 of wel de nieuw-republikeinse beweging van de jaaren tachtig," in 1787: De Nederlandse Revolutie?, eds. Th.. S.M. van der Zee et al (Amsterdam: DBL, 1988), 33.

¹² Katherine Wallberger Lindley, "The Rise of the Dutch Patriots and the Revolution of 1787: (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1949), 201.

¹³ N.C.F. van Sas, "The Patriot Revolution: New Perspectives," in TDR, eds. Margaret C. Jacob and W.W. Mijhardt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 118.

press are noteworthy because they were the initial materials out of which that foundation was made.

The impact of Aan het Volk may be measured by events subsequent to its publication. The major recommendation of the pamphlet was that Dutch *burgers* should form militias. The Patriots implemented civic militias throughout the Republic as outlined in Chapter Five. The campaign of the major Patriot periodical, De Post, to raise public awareness of these militias played an important role. Many of van der Capellen's ideas for reform were contained in the Patriot's *Grondwettige Herstelling*, and, here again, De Post was prominent in its support.¹⁴ Other examples of subsequent events being affected by the issues raised in Aan het Volk include the removal of the Duke of Brunswick from his post, the abrogation of the *drostendiensten*, and the establishment of *burger* committees in several cities.¹⁵ De Post and most of its correspondents supported these initiatives.¹⁶

My research has changed the understanding of the Patriot movement by utilizing a new way to conceptualize van der Capellen's famous pamphlet, using Darnton's "communications circuit", and by demonstrating the impact of Aan het Volk on the Patriot movement, a movement which affected a wider segment of Dutch society than previous political developments.

I conclude that van der Capellen, through his pamphlet and his other activities, was one of the important catalysts that gave impetus to both the rising political press

¹⁴ P.J.H.M. Theeuwen, Pieter 't Hoen en De Post van der Neder-Rhyn (1781-1787) (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), 825.

¹⁵ Simon Schama, Patriots and Liberators (London: Collins, 1977), 78.

¹⁶ Theeuwen, Pieter 't Hoen, 825-6.

and the Patriot movement. His ideas and recommendations were painted with a broad brush, and specific details were left to other Patriot leaders. Whether the Patriot movement and the 1787 rebellion would have happened if Aan het Volk had not been published is a question to which no definitive answer can be given. What may be said is that there was a broadly based concern and awareness in the population. As with the concept of the “hundredth monkey”, the pamphlet proved to be an important catalyst for a broadly based movement for political change that was sustained throughout the 1780s, and that is still relevant to the Dutch psyche and the political culture of the Netherlands today.

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