

The Netherlands

The Northern Netherlands is the first country in history where the bourgeois revolution won. It was also called Holland, and at that time it was called the Republic of the United Provinces (Republic of the Seven United Netherlands), with a population of about 3 million people, mainly of the Protestant faith. This is not including the large number of colonies (actually a colonial empire) scattered throughout the world. Since 1747, the hereditary rule of the stadtholders was established in Holland (governor or stathouder, in Dutch stadhouder, literally - "seat holder" - an official who exercised state power and government) from the House of Orange. At the same time, they were hereditary General Directors of the East India campaign.

In the seventeenth century, the united provinces were able to compete with the great European powers and become the financial center of Europe. For this, the Dutch effectively used the system of ocean ports, developed shipbuilding and maritime trade, and with the help of a great in size fleet they seized the colonial enclaves belonging to Portugal and Spain. Over time, with the use of military force, a huge empire was formed, but the country's resources were insufficient to compete with Great Britain, which took over the highly efficient Dutch financial system. Already by the 18th century, occupying one of the central places in the world economy and trade, but losing in naval competition with England, the Netherlands tended to "politics of the moment" and "adaptation" to the existing alignment of forces, taking a rather neutral or passive position in collisions of large states. In fact, it limited its involvement in continental politics, being a small European country with large colonial possessions. The center of economic power and influence shifted to Great Britain, and Holland was pushed aside to the "second echelon" of European states. And starting from the moment of the revolutionary Napoleonic wars, the Dutch found themselves, due to the loss of their leading positions in world trade and colonies, hostages of the irreconcilable struggle between France and Great Britain.

In 1792 the French conquered the Southern Netherlands or Belgium, where mainly Catholics lived - Flemings and Walloons. As a result of wars and dynastic marriages, these lands first came under the rule of the Spanish Habsburgs, and then, after the Dutch Revolution of the 16th century and the War of Spanish Succession, the Belgian provinces were included under the Rashtad Treaty of 1714 into the Austrian Habsburgs.

The Austrian Netherlands had an area of more than 27 thousand square meters, and they included regions that had relative autonomy: the counties of Flanders, Namur and Hainaut, the duchies of Brabant, Luxembourg and Limburg, Mechelen, Tournai and Tournesi. The revolutionary process in Belgium initially proceeded in parallel with France. The Brabant Revolution broke out in the country in 1787. It became the third revolution of the eighteenth century among the bourgeois (after the American 1776-1783 and French 1789-1799) and is considered poorly studied in historiography. To some extent, the Brabant Revolution found itself in the shadow of the French Revolution, the events and influence of which were decisive for the history of Europe.

First, in 1787, opposition sentiments arose in Belgium against the administrative reforms of the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, which infringed upon Belgian self-government (what Belgian historians called the "small" Brabant revolution). The opponents of Austrian reforms were the states (elected regional representative bodies), partially supported by the local clergy. In 1788 the States-General of Brabant and Hainaut refused to approve taxes and then pay them.

The next powerful explosion of the anti-Austrian movement occurred in 1789 under the influence of the French Revolution, when many Belgians took up arms. In August 1789, in Brabant, the local population revolted against the Austrian authorities and was subjected to repression. The leader of the dissatisfied rebels (from 4 to 20 thousand people) was Henri Charles Nicolas van der Noot.

A national front was formed, whose members took refuge in neighboring Holland in the city of Breda, where they formed a rebel army. Soon this army (about 4 thousand soldiers), headed by General Van der Merschom, crossed the Dutch border and defeated the Austrians at the Battle of Turnhout. The movement was also supported by uprisings in Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, Ostend, Liege and other Belgian cities. This made it possible in December 1789 to complete the liberation of almost the entire territory of the Austrian Netherlands. As the historian Norman Davis wrote, "General Van der Mersch gathered a patriotic army to repel the Austrians. In November, demonstrations in Ghent ended in a bloody massacre; and finally, in December, Brussels expels the Austrian garrison. By the end of the year, the independent United States of Belgium were proclaimed. They existed for 13 months before the Austrians entered Belgium again in February 1791.

On January 7, 1790, the National Congress of the Liberated Provinces was convened in Brussels, which announced the deposition of Joseph II and on January 11, 1790 proclaimed the independence of the United States of Belgium. Executive power was entrusted to a government headed by Van der Noot, who was elected president of the republic. Despite the tacit support of Prussia, the independent United Belgian States did not receive recognition from foreign powers. Soon, the former rebels were divided into two parties - the Wonkists, led by Jan Frans Wonck, and the Nootists, led by Henri Van der Noot. Serious contradictions between them quickly became clear. They relied on different social strata and territories, looked at the future of their country in different ways and had different programs of action. This split led to a fierce struggle, the Nootists opposed the Wonkists, and on the night of March 15-16, 1790, they defeated them. The new Austrian emperor Leopold II, taking advantage of the difficult internal political situation in Belgium, brought an army of 30,000 soldiers into the country and suppressed the Brabant revolution almost without much resistance. Van der Noot fled to Holland and retired from political activities. The domination of the Austrians was short-lived, already in 1792 the French occupied the territory of Belgium and it remained in the possession of France until 1815, when all the Belgian and Dutch provinces, by decision of the Congress of Vienna, were united into a single Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Dutch, as allies of the British, joined the First Anti-French Coalition and took part in the hostilities. But the French Revolution divided the country and its citizens into two camps: supporters of the current government of the hereditary stadgalter ("orangeists") and supporters of the revolution ("patriots"). Underground groups were active everywhere, supporting the French, and up to 5 thousand emigrants (revolutionary elements) ended up in France, where the "patriots" in 1792 formed the Batavian Revolutionary Committee on the initiative of the Dutch supporter G.V. Dandels, then transferred to the French military service. At the same time, the "patriots" formed the Batavian Legion (officially: Foreign Volunteer Legion - Légion franche étrangère), which operated as part of the French army. In 1793, a British army under the command of the Duke of York landed in Holland. They were supported by 22,000 Dutch soldiers who joined the Allied Austrian army under the

command of Prince F.J. Saxe-Coburg. But on June 26, 1794, the Austrians, together with the Dutch, were defeated at Fleurus and retreated from Flanders.

Already in 1794, the French army captured a number of Dutch fortresses and the Batavian legion was operating in their ranks. At the beginning of 1795, Stadtholder Willem V was forced with numerous supporters to flee first to Berlin, then to England, where he died in 1806. The English troops of the Duke of York retreated to Hanover. The patriots proclaimed the creation of the Batavian Republic (named after the ancient German Batavian tribe, who rebelled against Roman rule), organized following the example of revolutionary France.

At the same time, on May 16, 1795, an alliance treaty with France was signed in The Hague, which served as the basis for relations of "close friendship" between the two states.

A defensive and offensive alliance was concluded, according to which the Batavian Republic sent 30 warships and half of its army under the command of French generals, and also provided 7 warships at the disposal of France and pledged to keep 25 thousand French soldiers within its borders, paid France 100 mln. guilders, and more than 70 ml of guilders were spent on the maintenance of the French troops. But most importantly, the Netherlands found themselves drawn into the Anglo-French confrontation and the struggle for its colonies. After 1795, the Dutch lost most of their overseas possessions - the British, under the pretext of protecting the legal possessions of Willem V's stadgalter (and with his consent), eventually captured Surinam.

In 1797, a naval battle took place in the North Sea near the Dutch village of Camperdown between the English and Dutch fleets. Dutch ships were concentrating to cover the planned landing of French troops in Ireland. And when they went out to sea, they ran into an English squadron. This was the last major battle of the Dutch sailing fleet. In this battle, the Dutch suffered a crushing defeat, and the Netherlands forever lost its status as a strong maritime power. They lost 7 battleships and 4 frigates, killed and wounded about a thousand Dutch sailors, not counting those who surrendered. The British had all the ships on the move with losses of 244 killed and 720 wounded. This catastrophe at Camperdown significantly weakened the fleet of the Batavian Republic, and most importantly, it undermined the morale of the Dutch sailors. In the future, the Dutch preferred not to engage in battle with the British. In 1799, in Gelder, the entire Dutch fleet (12 battleships) surrendered without a single shot to the Anglo-Russian squadron under the command of Admiral E. Mitchell.

In 1799, at the suggestion of the British government, an Anglo-Russian military expedition to Holland was organized - 47 thousand people (including 18 thousand Russian soldiers) against 34 thousand Franco-Batavian troops. The ultimate goal was to restore the rule of the Oran dynasty. For the allies, it ended in complete failure, due to the poor organization of the supply of troops and the inept command of the Duke of York. The allies' hopes for a general uprising of the Dutch, dissatisfied with the French yoke, did not come true either. The population turned out to be indifferent to the calls of the Orangemen. Only the British operation to block the Dutch Navy in the Havana Texela was successful - 22 ships surrendered and were taken to England. But after two months of hostilities on land, the Allies were forced to leave the country.

After a brief period of peace in Europe in 1803, the war between Great Britain and France continued. Napoleon began to prepare an invasion of Great Britain, and in his plans a large place was given to the Batavian Republic. On the basis of a military agreement with France, the Dutch allocated funds for the maintenance of 34 thousand French troops and fielded 18 thousand of their own soldiers, as well as 18 ships. Most of the expenses before the Battle

of Trafalgar in 1805 for organizing the crossing of troops to Great Britain fell on the Batavian Republic.

But the heaviest burden for the Dutch was their participation in the continental blockade of England. This was especially evident in the period 1806-1810, when Napoleon created the Kingdom of Holland (at the request of the official delegation of the Netherlands), and appointed his brother Louis (Louis), the married stepdaughter of the emperor Hortense Beauharnais, as king. And all four years separating both dates were the time when Napoleon's brother did everything possible to save the country from complete ruin, in view of the consequences of the continental blockade, which destroyed the remnants of foreign trade, and the national debt exceeded 1 billion guilders. Holland turned into an economic tributary to France and at the same time lost all its colonies (in 1811 the most important of them, the island of Java, was lost). In addition to the colonies, by this time the country lost its maritime navigation, and as a result of this many industries (whale, fish, forestry, etc.), and the smuggling of British goods began to flourish on the coast. All industries were damaged, affecting trade and finance. In 1809, during the war against Austria, the British tried to unsuccessfully attempt to land on the island. Walcheren of the British expeditionary corps numbering 40 thousand people under the command of General A. Chatham in order to capture Antwerp. The venture failed, but it pushed Napoleon to the decision to annex Holland to the empire itself.

For Napoleon's plans, the territory of the Netherlands was strategically important. Dutch troops fought alongside the French in the 1806-1807 campaigns, in Germany, in 1808-1809, in Spain, in 1809 during the liquidation of the uprising of the Brandenburg hussar regiment of Major F. Schill. Just as the fleet was important, and even more importantly, its colonial possessions, their narrowing and the fear of final losses accelerated the incorporation of Holland into the Napoleonic empire. And in 1810 a decree followed on the annexation of the Dutch lands to France, and French laws began to operate on their territory, and a special administration of the "Dutch Departments" began to function in Amsterdam. The royal army was disbanded, and the troops went to complete the new "French" regiments. From the royal guard to his Imperial Guard, in 1810 Napoleon transferred a whole regiment known in the literature under the name first the 2nd (Dutch) regiment of foot grenadiers, then in 1811 the regiment received number 3. In 1812 the regiment's personnel almost completely died in Russia. In total, more than 15 thousand Dutch took part in the Russian campaign of 1812. The Netherlands gave France one of the best cavalry regiments of the Guards. On the basis of the Dutch Guards Hussar Regiment, the 2nd Shevlezher Regiment, also known as the Red Lancers, was formed, the last time the regiment distinguished itself in the battle of Waterloo in 1815.

In April 1813, a forced conscription into the French army was announced in the country, which caused widespread discontent. At the end of 1813, after the battle of Leipzig and the liberation of Germany, unrest broke out in the Netherlands, an uprising broke out in Amsterdam on November 15-16, 1813, and the French governor-general C.F. Lebrun left the city urgently. A provisional government was formed in the country, the restoration of the rule of the House of Orange was announced, Prince Willem of Orange-Nassau (in 1815, proclaimed under the name of King William I) arrived in Amsterdam. The territory of Holland was liberated by Russian and Prussian cavalry troops with the support of local volunteers, as well as the landing of British troops. By the will of diplomats and by decision of the Congress of Vienna, the Kingdom of the United Netherlands was created in 1815 (comprising Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg) to play the role of a buffer state and serve as a "bastion against

France." This scheme was developed after the Vienna Congress by the Allies to establish a European equilibrium. For the successful formation of a new state, Great Britain even returned the Dutch possessions it had seized, with the exception of Guiana and Ceylon. In 1815, in the battle of Waterloo, Dutch troops made up a significant part of A. Wellington's army. In 1830, as a result of the uprising (military operations continued until 1833), Belgium separated from the Netherlands. In general, it must be admitted that France and Great Britain played the Dutch card (shuffling it here and there) in a giant chess game called the Napoleonic Wars.