

COURAGE OF THE DUTCH



by Ralph Berry

The Dutch have long been known as a stiff-necked people accustomed to doing things their way. They earned their reputation in the struggle for independence from Spain, and later the sea battles with England.

Their great Admiral Van Tromp had the nerve to cruise up the Thames with a broom at the masthead, signifying dominance, while the Navy in a less assertive period had to let him do it. They repeated this feat in our time very recently when the Royal Navy was happy to applaud as the Dutch ships took the lead up the Channel, broom at the helm. We like tradition

too.

They kept their tradition on land. In the Prado there's a fine painting by Velasquez, 'The Surrender of Breda'. The Dutch have been defeated, but the courtly Spanish nobleman bowing over his foe makes clear his respect for the fight they put up. Post-1945 the Dutch had to give up their colonial empire, for the same reasons as Britain, and with a similar outcome. Both nations welcomed heavy immigration from their former colonies, which in the Dutch case meant Indonesia. And now the Dutch experience diverges sharply from the British.

In a general election that echoed like a shot around the world, Holland voted decisively for Gert Wilders, the notorious anti-Islamist. He has been a pariah to the liberal left for many years, and was prevented from entering Britain. He wants Holland to leave the European Union. The Dutch now signal that they have had enough of Indonesian immigration and the symbols that go with it.

Holland will have to review its entire policies on its own population.

Britain will not follow. The British policy is to keep Islam happy, to flatter, reward, and advance Muslims, who in any case hold vast numbers of the electoral vote captive in the great cities of Birmingham and Manchester. The diaspora is now on show in the streets, while the Government promises ever more legal immigration (the boat people have dropped back in the alarm ratings).

There is nothing but trouble on the horizon. For its epitome I find nothing more apt than the Ulster poet Louis MacNeice, whose 'Bagpipe music' (1938) ends:

'The glass is falling hour by hour, the glass will fall for ever, But if you break the bloody glass you won't hold up the weather.'