

# WHY THE DUTCH BEAT BACK THE SEA

by John Ross Schroeder

For a thousand years the Dutch people have battled the North Sea. Were it not for multiple thousands of acres of reclaimed land, half of Holland would now be under water. What secrets are locked up in these 10 centuries of land reclamation?

**T**HE STORY of the Netherlands is a story of the sea!

Uniquely, the Dutch fulfill an ancient prophecy pertaining to one of the tribes of the so-called lost 10 tribes of the House of Israel. Zebulun's descendants were to "dwell at the haven of the sea" and "be for an haven of ships" (Gen. 49:13). Moreover they were to rejoice "in [their] going out" (Deut. 33:18).

These ancient prophecies have been fulfilled in the Dutch, a seagoing, colonizing people. Is it mere coincidence?

## Reshaping the Coastline

Before A.D. 1000, it is said that the Dutch were content to "let God's water flow over God's land." After that time they began to resist the natural flow of the seawaters.

The prophet Jeremiah reveals that God "placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it" (Jer. 5:22).

God himself determined the basic limits and boundaries of the sea. Yet he permits nature to alter the coastline over long epochs of time. And he has allowed the Dutch peoples to artificially extend and straighten their coastlines.

About 2,000 years ago the Roman historian Tacitus described what is now known as the Netherlands as an inhospitable area—neither land nor sea—a marsh intersected by numerous creeks. No real progress came about until a millennium had passed. Then the struggle really began.

The first efforts were rather primitive and could only be accomplished at low tide. Then came the invention of the windmill and later the steam engine to pump out the water much more efficiently.

## How Sea Becomes Land

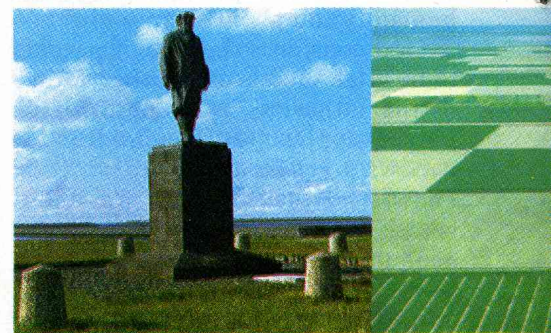
In more modern times, the reclaiming of land from sea has been boiled down to quite a simple process known as impoldering. It is the conversion of submerged land into fertile polders (a polder is a piece of low-lying reclaimed land) through dikes and drainage.

The first step is to build a dike around that portion of sea area to be reclaimed. When this con-

struction is completed there is, of course, water still on both sides of the dike. This problem is simply solved by the careful placement of one or more pumping stations.

After the dike is closed, the water is then drained out of the designated area by modern pumping equipment. It takes a number of months, but the bottom of a new

**THE NETHERLANDS TODAY—A Kinderdyke windmill, right, dominates landscape. Modern technology has made the traditional Dutch windmill obsolete. Below, left to right: statue of Dr. Lely, father of the IJsselmeer project; farmlands on a polder in the region; downtown Amsterdam, one of the great cities of Europe; the IJsselmeerdam; a Dutch smile, with Amsterdam residential area in background.**

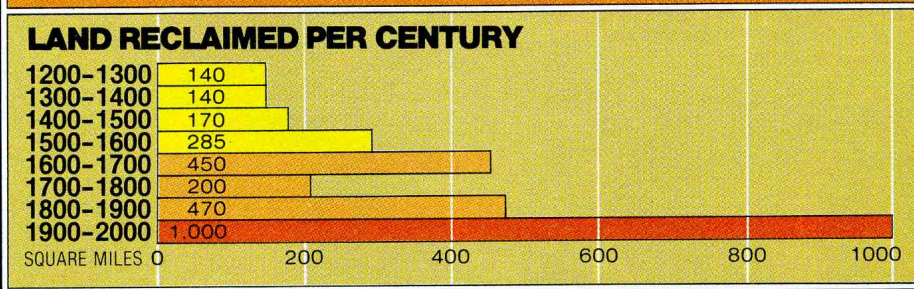
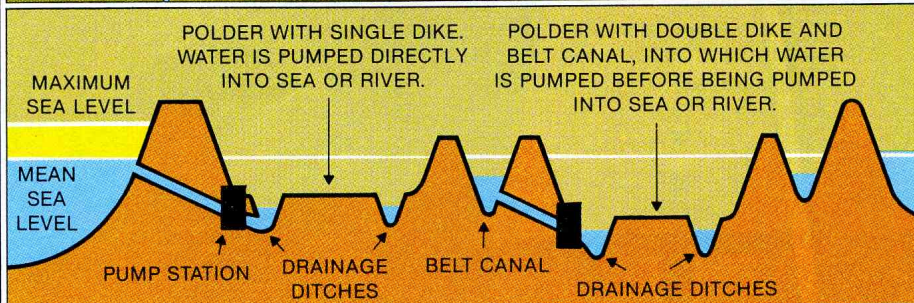


The PLAIN TRUTH



# THE NETHERLANDS — A HISTORY OF LAND RECLAMATION

- Land reclaimed 1200-1600
- Land reclaimed 1600-1900
- Land reclaimed 1900-1970
- Possible land reclamation



property. The sea level and weather factors are continually monitored and fresh ideas and efforts to defend the reclaimed lands are part of an ongoing plan of survival.

But creating and protecting a polder is not an end in itself. New lands must produce abundant crops and support herds of healthy livestock. New towns and villages must be constructed to serve and shelter the people who come to live in the new polder area. Remember that the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with 14¼ million human beings—including 537,000 unnationalized foreigners, 133,000 Dutch nationals of Surinamese extraction and 30,000 Dutch nationals of Molucan extraction. They live in an area one-seventh the size of Great Britain and one-third the size of the state of South Carolina.

This the Dutch have done. A number of new towns were planned and built in the polder areas. However imperfectly, the Dutch peoples have followed some vital biblical principles in their overall planning and construction. For instance, barns are almost always built before farmhouses. What does Solomon say in the book of Proverbs? "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and *afterwards* build thine house" (Prov. 24:27).

Monocultures are not allowed. Trees are planted to attract beneficial birds and insects. Scientifically discovered ecological principles and a sense of balance in nature are encouraged. Farmhouses are usually built in twos so neighboring farmers can help each other.

### Knowledge for the Future

Of course conditions in Holland are far from perfect. Much of Dutch culture is still not what it should be. Amsterdam has become a mecca for dangerous drugs and illicit sex. Crimes of all description are on the increase in the Netherlands.

For such immorality and law breaking, the wise among the Dutch are aware that retribution cannot be far behind. The nation will have to be punished to one

polder will gradually emerge. Wheat fields can actually be found in bloom in the third year after reclamation.

As an ongoing process, a vast network of dunes and dikes has been built to promote and protect the west and north of the Netherlands. Continually at risk are the densely populated areas encompassing Amsterdam, Rotterdam and

The Hague. The danger is never altogether past. A dike can never be too strong.

Dutch engineers have not forgotten their land level is gradually sinking (one twenty-fifth of an inch a year) and the sea level is rising. On rare occasions in the past the sea has swept over the dikes to penetrate the polders and do untold damage to land and

PT MAP BY MONTE WOLVERTON

## Land Reclamation and Sea Defenses

The Netherlands has a long tradition of winning land from the North Sea. In 1919 the Dutch launched an ambitious project to gain more than half a million acres in about 70 years time. The Zuider Zee gulf area (renamed the IJsselmeer) was dammed up into a freshwater lake in 1932. Two big polders, the Wieringermeer and North-East, have been diked, drained and converted into land ideally

suitable for farming and animal husbandry. Eastern Flevoland became the third polder to be diked in 1956.

Southern Flevoland finally fell dry in 1968. The area town of Almere is well under way as a major shopping and urban center. It also serves as a shipping point for the surrounding agricultural area. Recreation and entertainment have not been overlooked in Southern Flevoland. Up to a quarter of the polder area has been

zoned for woods and natural beauty spots.

Another potential polder area, the Markerwaard, is under discussion at this time. Some think that a polder in this area could only be developed at the loss of a unique body of water.

Farther south, the Dutch have been working on what is known as the Delta Project. Its purpose is to dam the mouths of the Rhine River and form

another large freshwater lake. Three big dams are fully completed; the fourth is slated to be finished in 1985.

These dams were designed to prevent flooding disasters like the storm of 1953. About 375,000 acres were then temporarily submerged, threatening the livelihood of some four million people.

The long-term goal is to construct a continuous sea defense line extending all the way to the Frisian Islands in the north.

## Ethnic Origin of the Dutch People

Though the biblical prophecies referring to the Dutch people are relatively few, we can understand their origins by comparing their modern characteristics with early prophetic details.

The people of the Netherlands fulfill the prophecy given about the descendants of ancient Zebulun, who were to lose their ancient language, migrate northwestward from Palestine and finally dwell at the "haven of the sea" (Gen. 49:13). That is what Holland is today. The Netherlands truly has been, and is, a "haven of ships"

(Gen. 49:13). Rotterdam is world renowned as a Europort—a vitally important shipping link in the European Economic Community.

A further prophecy in the book of Deuteronomy shows that Zebulun would "rejoice"—be blessed—"in thy going out" (Deut. 33:18). Zebulun would be blessed in vast commercial enterprises arising through his colonial efforts in intimate association with the sea.

Notice what author Luigi Barzini says about the Dutch peoples in his book, *The Europeans*: "This passion for the sea drove them [the

Dutch] to conquer not neighboring provinces . . . but to set up distant trading points all over the world. . . . They settled in New Amsterdam [which became New York City], a vast natural port, cluttered with flat sandy islands large and small, at the mouth of a big river, which evidently reminded them of home; in South Africa, Japan, Formosa, Brazil, Ceylon, Indonesia, the West Indies and other profitable places." Indeed the Dutch are a great colonizing people who have been truly blessed in their "going out."

Consider now another

statement in the same chapter of Deuteronomy. Zebulun was to "suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand" (verse 19). Holland has consistently fulfilled this ancient biblical prophecy in more than one way. The obvious way is through international commerce as a direct consequence of her shipping fleet. Also, the Dutch are world famous for building dikes and reclaiming land for use by farming and for animal husbandry. Holland's tulip industry is utterly dependent on lands reclaimed or "sucked from the sea."

No other country fits the prophetic descriptions of Zebulun as does the Netherlands.

degree or the other—along with the rest of the modern descendants of the ancient 10 tribes of the House of Israel residing in Northwestern Europe, the British Isles, the Commonwealth nations and the United States.

But after this prophesied coming period of severe divine correction, God will usher in a new era of unparalleled growth and development—both spiritually and materially. This millennial utopia will be marked by the restitution of all right things (Acts 3:21) and will

offer those with a proper pioneering spirit a unique opportunity to rebuild and redevelop the surface of this physical planet.

It is then that the Dutch peoples will truly come into their own. Centuries of struggling with the sea have produced a fund of creative knowledge that is unsurpassed in the field of land reclamation and real estate development. That knowledge will be put to a vital use in the fulfillment of God's master plan.

Notice the prophet Ezekiel's

description of the world to come. "Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities [*first* the punishment] I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, *and the wastes shall be builded*. And the desolate land shall be tilled. . . . And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited" (Ezek. 36:33-35).

God speed that day. □